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Bearing Witness:
**Women and the South African Truth and
Reconciliation Commission.**

Fiona C. Ross

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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Abstract

The study is concerned with forms of bearing witness to past violence in South Africa. Its ethnographic focus is on women's experiences of harm in the Apartheid era. These are traced through the testimonies women offered before public hearings of the Human Rights Violations Committee of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and among women who were politically active in Zwelethemba, a small town that was an epicentre of resistance to the Apartheid State in the Western Cape. The juxtaposition of different kinds of testimony indicates the breadth of damage caused by Apartheid and highlights the gendered nature of the official record of the past offered by the Commission.

The Commission was established to document the nature, cause, patterns and extent of gross violations of human rights between 1960 and 1994. The Act that brought it into being defined a narrow range of harms about which people could testify and created a limited range of subject positions from which people could speak about violation. The category 'women' emerged as important in the Commission's work as a result of marked patterns in testimonial practices, namely, that women testified mainly about others, usually men, whereas men testified about harms they had suffered. Although similar in their focus on men, women's narratives were diverse. They drew from different narrative conventions depending on their familiarity with political power, repression and protest, their social and cultural backgrounds, and their ages.

The study traces patterns in testimonies, showing that the range of narrative forms on which women drew calls for different forms of attention, including an awareness of silence or absence. The difficulties that arise in efforts to elicit and describe the full range of women's experiences, particularly those of the young are demonstrated: the complexity, details and contexts of suffering can be captured only through specific methodological focus.

The dissertation records some of the consequences of damage caused by Apartheid. It is argued that the Commission's emphasis on embodied harm had the effect of naturalising particular forms and experiences of violence and concealing other forms. In particular, too close a focus on bodily violation obscured the impairment of and destruction to domestic worlds and relationships caused by Apartheid. Drawing from both the testimonies of those who appeared before the Commission, and the research conducted with those who did not, continuities and disjunctures in women's efforts to secure the quotidian world are shown.

Acknowledgements

The research is part of an ethnographic study of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission conducted by Professor Pamela Reynolds of the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town. Professor Reynolds and I worked closely on the project in the latter part of 1995, and in 1996, she appointed me as her research assistant. We have continued to work together on different aspects of the project until the present. I am grateful for her vision, determination, criticism, intellectual direction and companionship, and her support.

I owe thanks to my colleagues in the Department of Social Anthropology for their willingness to adjust their teaching schedules in order to accommodate my research and writing, and for their assistance in the process. Particular thanks to Associate Professor Andrew 'Mugsy' Spiegel, who helped me to manoeuvre through the University's administrative process during a time of considerable change in the institution.

The members of the post-graduate reading group in the Department, particularly Sally Frankental, Patti Henderson, Stuart Douglas and Lesley Fordred, provided intellectual stimulation. Susan Levine gave freely of her knowledge of Zwelethemba and worked with me on a film about the young women with whom I worked.

Sally Frankental gave more time than she could afford to read and comment on drafts of the chapters and the thesis and I am grateful for her critical eye, kind support and generous comments. I have relied heavily on her kindness, often trespassing on her willingness to assist.

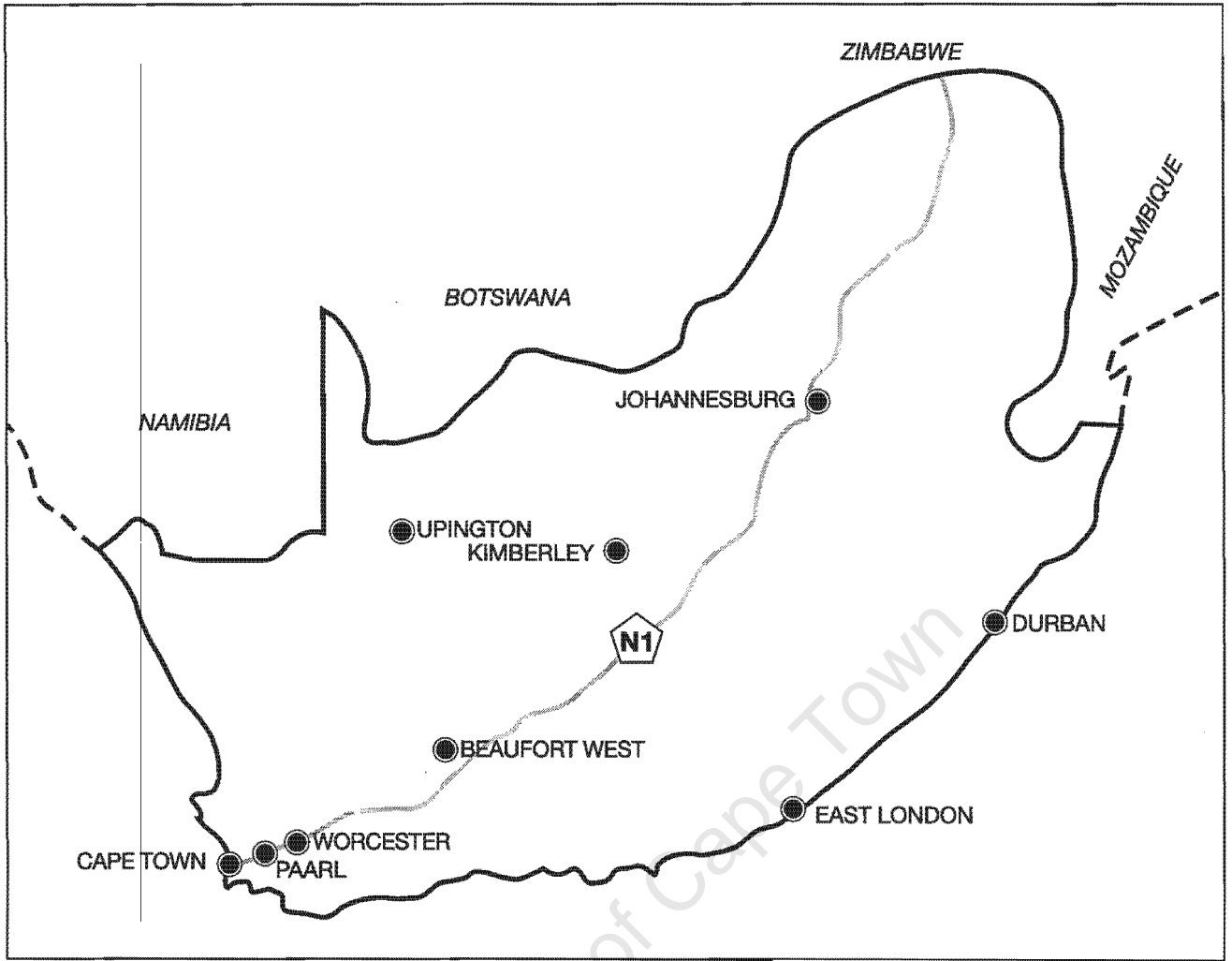
I have benefited tremendously from my friendship with Patti Henderson, artist, performer, political activist and Social Anthropologist. She read and commented on drafts and provided emotional support and intellectual companionship. We have spent many hours sharing ideas emerging from our research and I have drawn from her past experiences as a political activist and a researcher in considering the data.

Andy Hackland created a space in our home that was free from the strictures of attending to pain that the research imposed. His determination has set an example and his support and intellectual challenges have sustained the processes of research and writing up. I am grateful for his patience in enduring my absence from home and my preoccupation while writing.

My greatest thanks must go to those with whom I worked closely in Zwelethemba: Nowi Khomba, Yvonne Khutwane, Nomeite Mfengu, Mirriam Moleleki, Neliswa Mroxiswa, Nokuzola Mtamo, Nothemba Ngcweewe, Ntsoake Phelane, Noluthando Qaba, Thandiwe Silere, Ntombomzi Siwangaza, Nokwanda Tani, Xoliswa Tyawana, Vuyelwa Xuza, and Noluntu Zawukana. I also worked with some members of their families. I intruded on their spare time, their memories and their personal experiences and they were kind in allowing me to do so. I am especially grateful to Sylvia Khomba and Monica Qaba, who welcomed me into their homes and to Nana Khohloloane and Xolile Dyabooi who assisted me in verifying data. Mirriam Moleleki and Mawethu Bikane were important in establishing the initial contacts from which I generated my research network. Nana Khohloloane, a long-time resident in Zwelethemba, youth activist and post-graduate student in the Department of Social Anthropology, negotiated with and obtained permission from the Zwelethemba Civic Association, the governing body in the area, for the research to be conducted.

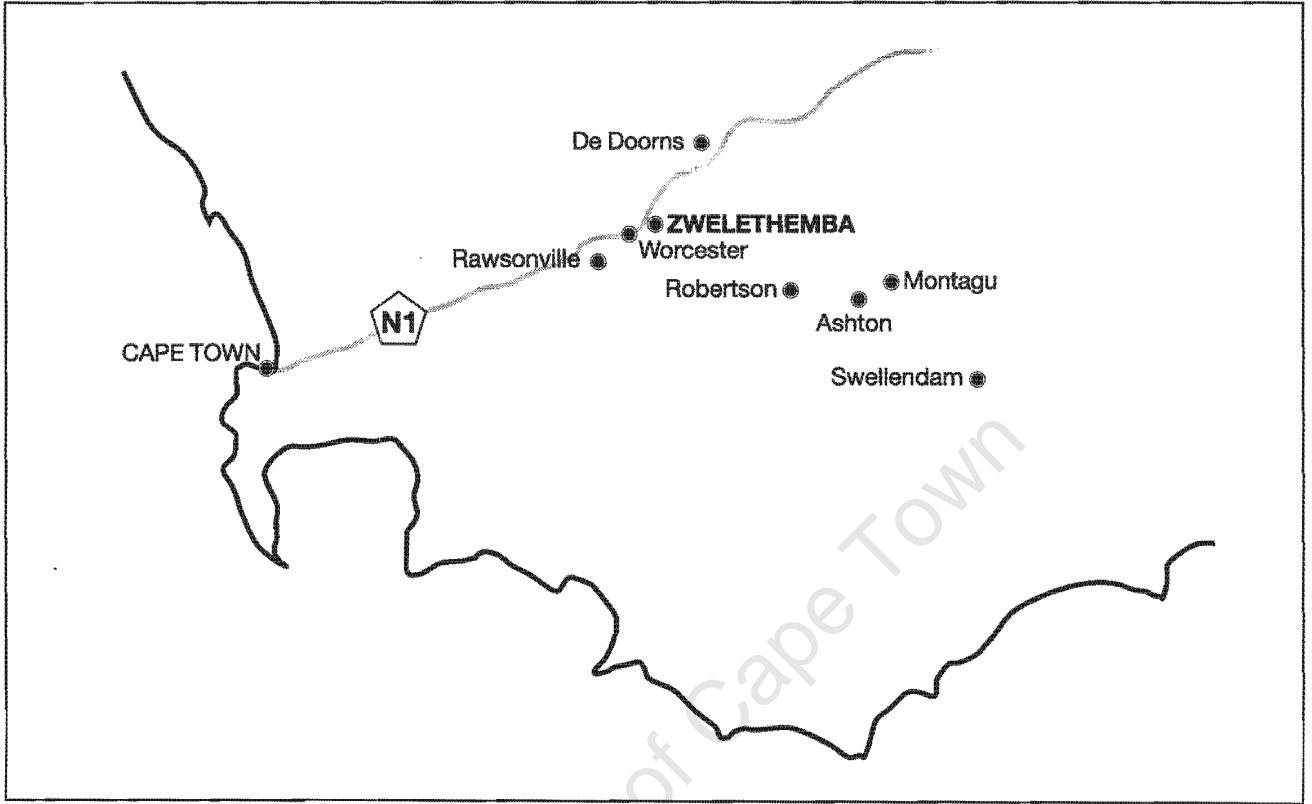
Glossary of Terms

ANC WL	African National Congress Women's League
ANC YL	African National Congress Youth League
ANC	African National Congress
APLA	Azanian People's Liberation Army: Armed wing of the PAC
ARM	Armed Revolutionary Movement: a break-away from Alan Paton's Liberal Party
Askari	Member of liberation army who was captured by the Defence Forces and 'turned' into an informer or assassin
Black Local Authorities	Local authorities established by the State.
Black Sash	An organisation of white women that monitored and protested State repression
BMW	Bonteheuwel Military Wing: base in Cape Town and linked with MK
BOYCO	Boland Youth Congress. Aligned with UDF and formed after COSAS was banned in 1985.
CCB	Civil Co-operation Bureau
Civic organisation/association	Associations formed in opposition to Black Local Authorities
COSAS	Congress of South African Students. Banned in 1985.
Councillor	Official representative of the Black Local Authorities
CRADOYA	Cradock Youth Association
DET	Department of Education and Training. The Department responsible for provision of education to Africans
DPSC	Detainees Parents' Support Committee. Aligned to UDF
ECC	End Conscription Campaign
FEDTRAW	Federation of Transvaal Women
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party (previously, Inkatha).
Impimpi	'Sell-out'
MK	'Umkhonto We Sizwe'. 'Spear of the Nation': the ANC's armed wing, formed in 1960.
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NP	National Party
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
PAC	Pan African Congress
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
SACC	South African Council of Churches
Sjambok	(Afrikaans) whip
Street committee	Local governance structures established by Civic Associations in the 1980s in opposition to Black Local Authorities
Toyi-toyi	Protest chant accompanied by rhythmic dance
UBJ	Union of Black Journalists
UDF	United Democratic Front. A broad-based alliance of organisations opposed to Apartheid. The UDF had strong links with the ANC in exile and underground. It was launched in 1983, banned in 1988 and disbanded in 1991.
UWCO	United Women's Congress. Formed by the amalgamation of UWO and the Women's Front in March 1986. Affiliated to the UDF
UWO	United Women's Organisation. Launched in 1981 by women who had been members of the ANC prior to its banning in 1960. Affiliated to the UDF
WOYCO	Worcester Youth Congress
ZWEYO	Zwelethemba Youth Organisation



Map One

South Africa, showing sites of hearings I attended.



Map Two

Western Cape: Showing Boland Region

Introduction

*An ear for this, an ear for that. Who to believe? ...
The struggle for truth continues ever afterwards.
Because afterwards is where we live.... Afterwards is
where stories begin.*

(Nicol, 1995: 1)

University of Cape Town

Recent decades have seen the emergence of new forms of enquiry into the nature and extent of violence practised in and by States. Although trials, tribunals, commissions of enquiry, courts-martial and other institutionalised forms of accounting for past violence are not new, phenomena glossed as Truth Commissions have emerged as important mechanisms by which modern societies may begin to acknowledge the individual and social damage wrought by violence (CODEPU 1989; Hayner 1994 and 1996; Ignatieff 1997; see also Weschler 1990; Rosenberg 1992; Boraine, Levy and Scheffer 1994; Taylor 1994; Boraine and Levy 1995; Minow 1998; Meredith and Rosenberg 2000). To date, eighteen such Commissions have been held worldwide (Hayner 1996) and a number more have been mooted. Truth Commissions link together complex ideas about accountability, witnessing and the assertion of what Richard Werbner (1998) has called 'rights of recountability'. Alongside legal practices, then, Truth Commissions involve and invoke memorial and narrative practices.

The present study reflects on the work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (henceforth, the Commission) in relation to women. The Human Rights Violations Committee, one of the Commission's three Committees, was given the task of affording victims the opportunity to recount the violations they suffered. I have characterised its work as a form of bearing witness to past violence. The study traces the Committee's work through the public hearings at which 'victims' described the 'gross violations of human rights' inflicted on themselves and others. As I show in Chapter One, public hearings gave rise to marked patterns in testimonial practices, in which women spoke mainly of the suffering of men. As a result, and through the efforts of some Commissioners, gender activists and academics, 'women' emerged as a category of concern in the Commission's work. In June 1996, after the first five weeks of hearings, I analysed the patterns of testimonial practice before the Commission's public hearings (Ross 1996) and observed the tendency for women to address their own experiences of harm and activities of resistance to the Apartheid State only indirectly. The findings informed my study, which examines the Commission's work from the perspective of women – both those who did and those who did not appear before it.

I was interested in the effects of and responses to Apartheid in rural areas in the Western Cape, and identified Zwelethemba, a small 'township'¹ near the town of Worcester, as a field-site in November 1996, after four women resident there published life histories

¹ Apartheid planning terminology for residential areas for those who were classified as 'African' in terms of the Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950.

describing their experiences as political activists in the town (see Chapter Six). Nestled in a beautiful valley between high mountains, approximately 120 kilometres from Cape Town on the main north-bound highway (see Map One), Worcester is the centre of the Boland wine-making and fruit-growing district of South Africa. Zwelethemba was built for those defined as 'African' by the Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950². In 1954, Africans were forcibly removed from their homes in Worcester in terms of the provisions of the Group Areas Act No. 41 of 1950 that demarcated distinct residential areas for each of the 'population groups' defined in the Population Registration Act. Africans were relocated to Zwelethemba, which became a site of active resistance to the State and remained the centre of organised resistance in the Boland until the demise of the Apartheid State. I began my research in Zwelethemba in November 1996 and continued to work there until 1999, while lecturing in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town. In conducting the research, I have reflected on the Commission with men and women who were active in Zwelethemba in a variety of organisations opposed to the Apartheid State. I worked closely with women and developed a critique of the Commission's work from the perspective of women who opposed the Apartheid State.

Research method

The study is part of a larger ethnographic study of the Commission, its workings and effects conducted by Professor Pamela Reynolds of the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cape Town. In conducting the research, I aimed to be a critical witness to the Commission's work, its assumptions, and its methodological approach. I have drawn on diverse research techniques in order to investigate the form and content of the Commission as a process. The research differs in many respects from conventional ethnographic studies in that it traces the work of an institution that had a finite life, rather than focusing on 'a people' or 'a place'. I have used both conventional anthropological techniques and a multi-sited research method, a kind of travelling anthropology (Hastrup 1994; Augé 1995; Marcus 1995; Clifford 1997; Gupta and Ferguson, 1997; Nordstrom 1998). I followed the Commission's public hearings from place to place around the country and then worked closely with political activists in a small town to trace the ramifications of the Commission's work.

In 1996, I worked as Professor Reynolds' research assistant. Together we attended public hearings of the Human Rights Violations Committee throughout the Western and Northern Cape and in the major metropolitan areas of East London, Johannesburg and

² The Act was the cornerstone of Apartheid. It classified all those who lived in South African in terms of four 'Population Groups' based on physical appearance.

Durban. In 1996, I collected data on the Commission's working, on selected cases heard by the Commission and on detention figures for the period under review. I continued to follow the public hearings of the Human Rights Violations Committee and the Amnesty Committee throughout 1997. The dissertation draws on data collected from twelve public hearings of the Human Rights Violations Committee, held in East London (April 15-18 1996); Cape Town (April 22-25 1996); Johannesburg (April 29-3 May 1996); Durban (7-10 May 1996); Kimberley (10-11 June 1996); Worcester (24-26 July 1996); Cape Town (August 5-7 1996); Beaufort West (12-14 August 1996); Upington (2-4 October 1996); Paarl (October 14-16 1996); Cape Town (26-28 November 1996 and 20-22 May 1997), at which 390 testifiers spoke of 416 incidents of violation. The hearings account for sixteen percent of the total number of Victim Hearings the Commission held between 1996 and 1997 and seventy-five percent of the Victim Hearings held in the Commission's Western and Northern Cape Region. The locations of hearings are shown on Map One.

The public hearings form the backdrop for and part of the substance of my study. Data on women's testimonies and roles presented in Chapters One and Two are derived from the public hearings that I attended, from informal discussions during and after hearings and from interviews with some of the testifiers. I have also drawn from my work in various forums instituted by the Commission and by members of civil society, including a Commission 'Think Tank on Reparation and Rehabilitation', the 'Religious Responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission', and the network, 'Mental Health Responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission'.

Chapter Three draws on testimonies given before hearings that I attended and on transcripts of testimonies from selected public hearings that are carried on the Commission's site on the World Wide Web (<http://www.truth.org.za>) and on the CD-ROM of the web-site (Crawford and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission 1998).

Data presented in Chapters Four, Five and Six are drawn from research conducted between 1996 and 1999 in Zwelethemba with fifteen women who had engaged in opposition to the Apartheid State during the 1980s and earlier. Together, we mapped their histories of political engagement, their childhood and kinship relations, and reflected on the extent to which women's experiences were acknowledged in the Commission's work. In addition to interviews, I held focus groups and discussions with a group of nine women. They kept notes which they called 'Struggle Diaries', about their memories of their activities in the Apartheid era. We made a short documentary-style film together, called '*Wathinth' Abafazi*' ('Strike A

Woman³), in which they recorded their activities in the protests of the 1980s, their grief and losses and their hopes for the future. In addition to working with the women, I discussed the research more widely, interviewing kin, neighbours and peers in 'the struggle'.

As I am a full-time lecturer in the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town, my research in Zwelethemba was conducted mainly over weekends and during university vacations. On occasion, I was able to integrate teaching and research: in April 1997, I took a group of postgraduate students to Zwelethemba to conduct fieldwork as part of their module on research methods. The students' fieldwork helped to establish networks on which I later drew. Students interviewed youth activists and scoured the archives of the Worcester Standard, the local weekly newspaper, for material relating to Zwelethemba. They found little in the archive: the activities of black residents were seldom reported. Even the violence that wracked Zwelethemba between 1980-1981 and 1984-1989 is scarcely reflected in the newspapers of the time. In December 1997, I appointed Nomana Appollis as a research assistant through the University of Cape Town's Vacation Research and Training programme, designed to equip students from disadvantaged backgrounds with skills. Her efforts to obtain interviews with young women activists in Zwelethemba, her home town, failed, revealing the distrust of researchers among young people, a point that I explore in detail in Chapter Five.

Conducting research in Zwelethemba was difficult. I did not live there and the limitations of working only over weekends and holidays was compounded by peoples' frequent absences from home to visit friends, attend funerals and vigils, attend to family matters or visit kin in the Eastern Cape⁴. It is still not common for white people to visit residents in Zwelethemba and in the eyes of the residents with whom I worked, my safety was not always assured.

The research and writing process has been emotionally, intellectually and physically taxing. It is extremely painful to listen attentively to stories of pain and to revisit them to identify patterns in testimonies, narrative forms, and silences. The experiences of 'gross violations of human rights' that people described in the Commission's public hearings and in the conversations and interviews that informed my research, were cruel, the more so when set

³ The women selected the title. It is drawn from a protest song that was made famous by a huge gathering of women who protested against influx control laws – 'the pass laws' – outside the Houses of Parliament in Pretoria in 1956. The song is a celebration of women's strength. It says, 'You strike a woman, you strike a rock'.

⁴ The Eastern Cape contains the former Transkei and Ciskei regions that, prior to the democratic elections of 1994, were 'independent homelands'. Apartheid law stipulated that Xhosa-speakers should live in these two areas. Many people in Zwelethemba have extended family networks in the Eastern Cape and maintain close links with them.

against the backdrop of Apartheid's racial discrimination, its violent interpolation into everyday life and the poverty and structural violence that it entrenched and that still endure. I am grateful to those who allowed my intrusion – a young white woman – into their lives and who have been so generous with their time.

Conducting research on experiences of violence and harm foregrounds ethical considerations. I have drawn on testimonies given with informed consent before public hearings of the Commission and have refrained from naming or otherwise identifying those with whom I have not worked closely in Zwelethemba.

Research as witness

Stories of harm are intricate. Their complexity emerges slowly over time, the product of careful and sustained mindfulness. Without focused attention, certain kinds of experience of harm slip easily from the record. Take an example drawn from my research. Siblings, a young man and a young woman, were detained and held in separate prisons for three months in terms of section 29 of the Internal Security Act No. 74 of 1982. The young woman was held in solitary confinement for the full duration of the detention and was interrogated regularly as was her brother. Once, during an interrogation, the Security Branch interrogators played the young man a recording of a woman screaming as she was tortured. He recognised his sister's voice. His mother, coming to visit him in prison one day, heard his screams echoing down the corridors. She knew her son was being tortured. The young woman does not know that her screams were recorded and played as part of the torture her brother endured. The young man does not know that his mother heard his torment.

A space of silence exists within the family. It may be respectful, a kind of will to silence, generated to protect one another from the knowledge of the extent of hurt. It may also be the silence of being unable or unwilling to meet the extent of pain suffered. To confront any member of the family with the knowledge would be to breach the barriers they have constructed and to force new spaces of acknowledgement that may not be beneficial to any concerned. In such a case one can only acknowledge the strategies used to cope with violence, acknowledge a right to silence and to amnesia of particular kinds.

In instances such as these, research may become a form of bearing witness. As Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub argue (1992:70), witnessing is a social process that rests on careful attention, 'listening'. Although what they write is addressed specifically to the witnessing of testimonies of Holocaust survivors, it can apply equally in other contexts. They argue that witnessing is central, that, 'Testimonies are not monologues; they cannot take place in solitude (p.71); and warn that

The absence of an empathic listener, or more radically, the absence of an *addressable other*, an other who can hear the anguish of one's memories and thus affirm and recognise their realness, annihilates the story (p. 68; emphasis in the original).

My study creates four registers of witnessing. (i) It considers the public hearings of the Human Rights Violations Committee of the Commission as a form of witness and (ii) examines the testimonial practices of those who appeared before it and some of those who did not. In doing so, (iii) it places the researcher as a critical witness and (iv) positions the reader as beholder of the preceding three registers.

Witnessing requires an attentive presence. Writing about Argentina's 'Dirty War', and drawing from Felman and Laub's work, Diana Taylor (1997) points out that

The term 'witnessing' is highly problematic, both in the sense of the Western scientific ideal of the 'objective' observer and in the tradition of Greek tragic drama. The first erroneously suggests that the viewer is ideologically and physically positioned outside the frame of the given-to-be-known/ onlookers. And Greek tragedy ... casts viewers as passive onlookers, thus discouraging them/us from active involvement' (p. 25).

Taylor is not oblivious to the difficulties of witnessing in Argentina. She argues that during the 'Dirty War', Argentines were forced to 'see' in some ways rather than others; to see 'subversion' rather than 'State violence'. Her description of 'seeing' as 'percepticide' emphasises the directionality of vision and its concomitant production of denial (1997: 124). To counter it, she seeks a space within which witnessing as 'an involved, informed, caring, yet critical form of spectatorship' (*ibid.*) can occur. Her characterisation resonates with the aims of participant-observation and more widely: Dominick LaCapra (1999) makes an explicit link between witnessing and empirical research. He uses the evocative phrase 'empathic unsettlement' to capture the effects on attentive witnesses of identification with others' experiences. Empathic unsettlement, 'a kind of virtual experience through which one puts oneself in another's position while recognising the difference of that position, hence not taking the other's place', is, he argues 'a desirable dimension of enquiry that complements and supplements empirical research and analysis'. (1999: 722-3). It is a dangerous dimension: too close an identification may usurp the position of the other, too great a distance may represent others negatively. I have deliberately written the dissertation in a style that underplays my presence as researcher so as to give space to testifiers, respondents and testimonies to 'speak'.

Bearing witness to harm is not spontaneous. Its difficulties are captured in South African poet Ingrid de Kok's poem, 'Bandaged' (1997: 29) in which the narrator describes both an event of testimony that echoes those made before the Commission and the effects on the speaker and listener of speaking and attending to words of horror:

Cut down as flowers,
chopped up like wood
burned in a blaze of fire.

Bones unfleshed.

Throat choked.
Cheek charred
in the cave of the mouth.
Ear burst. Eye torn.

Gravel. Grave in sand.

O listen, let us not turn away
from seeing and hearing
the witness speak with bowed neck.

Prayer, apostrophe, curse.

A bandaged story about
the broken world, stumps
on which to hang our shame
as useless hands, forever.

Horror closes the opportunities for witness: throat, mouth, ear, eye, all are destroyed, but despite its violent effects on the speaker and witness, the narrator-witness pleads for attention, even when the story told carries no hope, only the recognition of damage and the limitations of efforts to heal. Here witnessing calls for action — a ‘not-turning away’ from seeing and hearing. The dissertation follows the call, drawing attention to the interplay between words, silence and absence in the construction of knowledge about the Apartheid past.

Dissertation outline

Chapter One describes the Commission’s formation, tasks and workings. Drawing on genealogical modes of writing, the Chapter shows how ‘women’ emerged as a category of concern in the Commission’s work.

Chapter Two focuses on testimonies given before the public hearings of the Human Rights Violations Committee. It demonstrates how women used metaphor and narrative tropes to describe their own experiences of harm, showing the subtle ways that women’s testimonies about others implicated themselves. The Chapter explores the themes of lament, nurturing and silence that shaped many of the testimonies offered by women and shows how women’s testimonies described the intrusion of Apartheid at every level of life.

Women who testified before the Commission spoke from different subject positions. By focusing on those who defined themselves in public hearings as politically active, Chapter Three traces the effects of violence on women’s identities as representatives of the State

attempted to 'unmake' the self and women tried to maintain a sense of coherence and community in the face of violence and harm. The Chapter demonstrates the limitations of the Commission's data about women activists and shows that other sources, such as data concerning detentions in the period under review, do not render a clear picture of women's activities or experiences.

Chapter Four examines a founding claim made for and by the Commission: that the truth heals. Much of the rhetoric surrounding the Commission and other testimonial interventions has suggested that 'stories' of violation are intact, awaiting only the opportunity to be told, whereupon they offer release and catharsis. The Chapter traces one woman's testimony as it was elicited in the public hearing and then repeated, interpreted and reconsidered in media reports, the Commission Report, and in her hometown. It demonstrates that the frameworks within which people's truth claims are interpreted shape ideas about victimhood, blame and accountability and the reception of testimonies in the testifiers' hometowns.

Chapter Five is a critical assessment of measurements of harm in relation to young women. Drawing from my work with young women in Zwelethemba, the study traces the methodological difficulties of recording their experiences. The Chapter argues that sharing pain is an act of intimacy and requires established, trusting relationships. Harm is not easily expressed and attempts to probe deeply may jeopardise strategies to cope that are already in place. The Chapter describes the variety of harms to which young people were exposed and illustrates the need for close attention to young people's activities, experiences and the meanings that they give to these.

In the final ethnographic Chapter of the dissertation, I explore ideas about social reconstitution through women's efforts to construct an ordinary daily life different to that possible under Apartheid. Drawing on Njabulo Ndebele's (1994) ideas about the revolutionary potential of a focus on the everyday, the Chapter explores women's past political mobilisation in Zwelethemba, their reluctance in the present to identify themselves as the site of harm, and their use of particular tropes to position themselves in their descriptions of their activities in the past. Their strategies suggest alternative ways of examining past violence, different from the focus on gross violations of human rights that the Commission offered.

Chapter One

Truth Be Told

'I, the survivor, I wrap you in words so that the future inherits you. I snatch you from the death of forgetfulness ...'

'I have translated you from the dead.'

(Krog 1998: 27; 28.)

University of Cape Town

The birth of the Commission

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (henceforth the Commission) originated from an agreement on amnesty that was reached between representatives of the South African State, political parties and some liberation organisations in 1993, during negotiations to end Apartheid and institute democratic governance in South Africa.

'Apartheid', Afrikaans for 'Separateness', was the official policy of the National Party that came to power in 1948 and entrenched racial discrimination. Its core was white minority-rule and the 'Bantustan' or 'homelands' system, based on a policy of 'Separate Development'. Apartheid laws constrained the shape and scope of life for black people, from family life to education, from employment to residence. It caused misery and damage to social institutions. An outline of the harsh laws set in place by the State to police Apartheid legislation and to quell growing dissent is given below; details of the context of repression and resistance emerge in the descriptions in later Chapters.

- Laws passed and amended in 1950, 1951 and 1954 saw a clampdown on 'communism', which was widely defined.
- In 1953, the Public Safety Act No. 3 provided for the declaration of a State of Emergency.
- In terms of various new and amended laws passed between 1953 and 1960, the Minister of Justice, the Commissioner of Police, magistrates and commissioned officers could detain, ban, prohibit, place under house arrest and banish people, and prohibit public gatherings. Those affected had little recourse to the courts.
- Long standing resistance to the State increased. On 21st March 1960, the Pan African Congress organised a protest march against influx control measures in Sharpeville, Johannesburg. Police opened fire and killed sixty-seven protesters. On the same day in Langa, Cape Town, police killed three people during protests. The State responded by issuing Proclamation 91 that declared a State of Emergency that came into effect on 30th March 1960 and remained in force until 31st August of that year.
- In March 1960, the Unlawful Organisations Act No. 34 was passed, and the ANC and PAC were immediately declared illegal. In 1961, Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK), the ANC's armed wing, was formed, and the PAC formed the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) in 1967.
- As opposition to the State grew, the power of the police was entrenched through ever more harsh laws. In 1962, the General Law Amendment Act No 37 was passed. It

defined 'sabotage' in wide terms. It was amended again in 1963 to provide that any person suspected of a political crime could be held for ninety days without access to a lawyer. On their release, many detainees were immediately re-detained.

- In 1965, the Criminal Procedure Amendment Act No 96 put in place a 180-day detention, part or all of which could be spent in solitary confinement.
- The 1967 Terrorism Act No. 83 scrapped the previous detention laws and provided for indefinite detention and interrogation of detainees.
- Existing laws created what was essentially a Police State. Resistance continued. In 1976, the State issued an edict that Afrikaans should be the medium of instruction in schools. On 16th June 1976, young people engaged in mass demonstrations in Soweto. The police opened fire and many young people were killed. Elsewhere in the country, mass demonstrations, protests and strikes took place. The police responded violently and 590 people were killed that year.
- The State passed the Internal Security Amendment Act No. 79 in 1976. It provided for indefinite detention.
- Protest continued. In 1982, the Internal Security Act No. 74 was passed. Section 29 of the Act provided for indefinite detention for interrogation. Detainees were held in solitary confinement. In 1985, another State of Emergency was declared.
- In 1986, the Internal Security Act was amended again to allow policemen of the rank of lieutenant colonel to decide to hold detainees for 180 days. The State of Emergency was renewed in 1986, and annually thereafter until 1990.
- During the Emergencies, thousands of people were detained (see Appendix A).
- State officials were successively indemnified throughout the period 1950-1990.

In February 1990, political parties banned for thirty years were unbanned, and in 1993, negotiations to institute democratic governance in South Africa began. The negotiations faltered over questions of amnesty, and the negotiating parties agreed that after the first elections, the new government would establish a mechanism to facilitate the granting of amnesty to individuals¹. The amnesty agreement was incorporated into the Interim

¹ Members of the liberation organisations had been released from prison or permitted to return from exile through the provisions of the Indemnity Act No. 35 of 1990 and the Further Indemnity Act No. 151 of 1992. Government officials were indemnified through the provisions of the 1961 Indemnity Act, No. 61 and Indemnity Act No. 22 of 1977. Members of the South African Defence Force (SADF) were automatically indemnified through regulations governing the SADF and through Section 16 of the

Constitution, whose 'post-amble' describes the Constitution as an 'historic bridge' between the Apartheid past and a democratic future based on non-discrimination and a respect for human rights. It continues by pledging the new government to create a law through which to deal with amnesty, in the interests of 'understanding but not ... vengeance', 'reparation but not ... retaliation', and 'ubuntu² but not ... victimisation'.

The Interim Constitution did not oblige the new State to conduct a Truth Commission. Representatives of the State saw the options as a choice between political prosecutions (the so-called 'Nuremberg' option) and 'amnesia' characterised by blanket amnesty. A Commission was posited as a third option; one that by-passed the complexities of legal trials while still meeting the State's constitutional obligations and acknowledging some of the harms inflicted by the system of Apartheid. The proposal for a Commission drew impetus from the work of similar Commissions elsewhere, particularly in Chile and Argentina, and from two Commissions of Enquiry that the ANC conducted into abuses in its training camps outside South Africa (Skweyiya 1992 and Motsuenyane 1993). Its establishment was contentious; opponents on the right of the political spectrum argued that the Commission would be a 'witch-hunt', while those on the left argued that in offering amnesty from civil and criminal prosecution, a Commission compromised justice³ for those most affected by Apartheid.

Public Safety Act No. 3 of 1953. During the 1993 negotiations, liberation organisations opposed further amnesty or indemnification provisions for State officials while representatives of the State and of right wing political organisations sought a blanket amnesty.

² *Ubuntu*. An Nguni word that has no precise English correspondence. It incorporates ideas of 'humanity' and 'humaneness'.

³ Several legal challenges were brought against the Commission, the most important of which challenged the amnesty provisions. The case was brought by the Azanian Peoples' Organisation (AZAPO), Nontsikelelo Margaret Biko, Churchill Mheli Mxenge and Chris Ribeiro against the President of the Republic of South Africa, the Government of the Republic of South Africa, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Safety and Security and the Chairperson of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The plaintiffs held that their constitutional rights to redress were violated through the amnesty provision. The case was heard in the Constitutional Court on 30th May 1996, five months after the Commission had been established, and a judgement given on 25th July 1996 by Justice Mohammed with concurrence from the members of the Constitutional Court. In his judgement, Justice Mohammed found that although the amnesty provisions limited applicants' rights to dispute settlement through the courts, the amnesty provision was a provision of the Interim Constitution and that rights were thereby legitimately curtailed. He upheld the amnesty provision and found that Parliament could offer differential reparations to victims who suffered the same kind of violation depending on their personal circumstances.

The Commission countered claims of injustice by arguing that its enquiry offered 'social' or 'restorative' justice in lieu of criminal and/or civil justice. In the Commission's Report, Archbishop Tutu, Chairperson of the Commission, describes restorative justice thus:

restorative justice ... is concerned not so much with punishment as with correcting imbalances, restoring broken relationships – with healing, harmony and reconciliation. Such justice focuses on the experience of victims; hence the importance of reparation (Volume One: 9).

The process of devising the Commission was lengthy: the Justice Portfolio Committee consulted widely in devising the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Bill, which was passed after an eight hour debate on its second reading in Parliament on 17th May 1995. It was the first truth commission to have been passed by a democratically elected government with due parliamentary process. It was signed into law, and came into effect on 15th December 1996. The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act Number 34 of 1995 (henceforth, the Act) granted the Commission an eighteen-month mandate, later extended to two-and-a-half years. With the exception of the work of its Amnesty Committee (see below), its work ceased formally on 31st October 1998, when the five volumes that comprise its 1998 Report (henceforth, the Report) were formally handed to the President of South Africa.

According to the Act, the Commission's tasks were:

To provide for the investigation and the establishment of as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights committed during the period from 1 March 1960⁴ to the cut-off date contemplated in the Constitution, within or outside the Republic, emanating from the conflicts of the past, and [to identify] the fate or whereabouts of the victims of such violations; [to facilitate] the granting of amnesty to persons who make full disclosure of all the relevant facts relating to acts associated with a political objective committed in the course of the conflicts of the past during the said period; [to afford] victims an opportunity to relate the violations they suffered; [to take] measures aimed at the granting of reparation to, and the rehabilitation and the restoration of the human and civil dignity of, victims of violations of human rights; [to report] to the Nation about such violations and victims; [to make] recommendations aimed at the prevention of the commission of gross violations of human rights. (Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No. 34 of 1995.)

The Report identifies one of the most important tasks of restorative justice as being

to redefine crime: it shifts the primary focus of crime from the breaking of laws or offences against a faceless state to a perception of crime as violations against human beings, as injury or wrong done to another person (Volume One: 126).

⁴ Although Apartheid was instituted as a formal system of governance after the National Party came to power in 1948, the Commission did not examine violations committed throughout the full period of Apartheid but focused on the period between 1960, when the African National Congress (ANC) and Pan African Congress (PAC) were banned, and 1994, when the first democratic elections took place. The first cut-off date the Act proposed was December 1993, when the Interim Constitution was accepted. After protests from the left and right of the political spectrum, the cut-off date was extended to 10th May 1994, the date the newly elected President took office.

In order to achieve these aims, the Act created three committees. *The Amnesty Committee* attended to individuals' applications for amnesty and granted it to those who were deemed to have made 'full disclosure' of crimes committed for political objectives between March 1960 and April 1994 where the crimes were considered proportional to the objectives for which they were committed⁵. *The Committee on Human Rights Violations*, the focus of my research, invited those who had suffered 'gross violations of human rights' to make statements to the Commission and held public hearings at which some deponents⁶ testified. The measure was part of the Commission's task to 'restore the human and civil dignity ... of victims'. *The Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee* was given the task of making recommendations regarding policies of rehabilitation and redress⁷ for those identified as 'victims'.

The Act provided for an investigative unit, a research unit and a limited witness protection programme, and granted the Commission considerable powers, including rights of search, seizure and subpoena.

⁵ The work of the Amnesty Committee is not complete at the time of completing writing (March 2000). When its work is done, an addendum to the Commission's 1998 Report is anticipated. A total of 7 128 applications for amnesty were made. The Amnesty Committee reported that by October 1998, 4 303 cases had been rejected or denied amnesty because they did not meet the criteria laid down in the Act. (Report Volume One: 276 and Volume Four: 312).

⁶ The Report describes as 'deponents' both those who made statements and those who gave public testimony. Throughout the dissertation, I describe as 'deponents' those who made statements to the Commission and as 'testifiers' those who testified in public hearings before the Human Rights Violations Committee. I distinguish between the two categories for two reasons: (i) I did not have access to the statements of deponents, and (ii) selection of testifiers was made partly on the basis of selecting 'victims from all sides of the conflict'. Public hearings may have offered a skewed picture of the nature of violations in a given geographic area in the attempt to provide a broad spectrum of experiences to the viewing public. From the data presented in the Commission's Report it is not possible to ascertain the extent of the possible misrepresentation. The dissertation draws on data collected from public hearings and not from statements, which, at the time of writing, have not been made public.

⁷ By the end of the Commission's work, the Committee had devised five measures of reparation, two of which accrued directly to 'victims' identified through the work of the Human Rights Violations Committee or the Amnesty Committee. The first, grants for 'Urgent Interim Relief' (UIR) of amounts between R 2000 and R4 000 (approximately USD 350-600), were intended to facilitate access to immediate health care or to meet immediate needs of victims. The second concerned grants for 'Individual Reparation' (IRG) of approximately R20 000 (approximately USD 3 000) per year for six years. The Committee identified three other measures: 'Symbolic Reparations', such as monuments and memorials, 'Community Rehabilitation', through 'community-based services and activities', and 'Institutional Reform', to ensure that human rights abuses are not repeated (Report, Volume Five: 175-195). Although the Report was submitted to the State President in October 1998, and debated in Parliament on 25th February 1999, at the time of writing (, the government has not yet acted on the recommendations. To date, people identified as victims have received no more than UIR payments of between R2 000 and R4 000 (between approximately USD 300-650). Not all victims qualified for UIR payments. NGOs throughout the country have begun to petition the State on the matter of reparations but they represent only those who have been named as victims by the Commission.

The Commission established four regional offices, based in Cape Town (covering the Western and Northern Cape Provinces), Gauteng (dealing with Gauteng, Mpumalanga and Northwest Provinces), Durban (focusing on KwaZulu-Natal and Free State) and East London (for the Eastern Cape). The offices were staffed by 438 people, including seventeen Commissioners: Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Chairperson), Dr Alex Boraine (Vice-Chairperson), Ms Mary Burton, Advocate Chris de Jager, the Reverend Bongani Finca, Ms Sisi Khampepe, Mr Richard Lyster, Mr Wynand Malan, the Reverend Dr Khoza Mgojo, Ms Hlengiwe Mkhize, Mr Dumisa Ntsebeza, Dr Wendy Orr, Advocate Denzil Potgieter, Dr Mapule F Ramashala, Dr Fazel Randera, Ms Yasmin Sooka and Ms Glenda Wildschut. According to the Act, Commissioners had to be 'fit and proper persons who are impartial and who do not have a high political profile'. Fifteen of the Commissioners were selected by the State President, Nelson Mandela, in consultation with the Cabinet, from a list of twenty-five nominees distilled through a lengthy process of public interviews conducted by representatives of government, labour and civil society. The President appointed two further Commissioners. Commissioners were drawn from a narrow range of professions: Archbishop Tutu, Alex Boraine, Reverend Bongani Finca and Reverend Khoza Magojo were at the time, or had been, practising Christian theologians and Yasmin Sooka was President of the South African Chapter of the World Council on Religion and Peace. Eight Commissioners — Dumisa Ntsebeza, Fazel Randera, Wynand Malan, Denzil Potgieter, Richard Lyster, Sisi Khampepe, Chris De Jager and Yasmin Sooka — had legal training, four were medical professionals (Mapule Ramashala, Wendy Orr, Hlengiwe Mkhize and Glenda Wildschut), one, Mary Burton, was a civil society activist. Two — Alex Boraine and Wynand Malan — had been involved in politics. In accordance with a stipulation in the Act, a Judge, Hassan Mall, was appointed to the position of chairperson of the Amnesty Committee. Once established, the Commission appointed additional members to its three Committees; investigators, researchers, data processing and data capture staff, media liaison staff, and administrative personnel.

The Commission was a costly social intervention: the Commission Report indicates that the budget allocated to the Commission through Parliamentary processes was valued at R157 039 000.000 for the fiscal years 1995-1999 (approximately USD 26 million). In addition, substantial donations and assistance were received from extra-Parliamentary sources (see Volume One: 300-318).

The Act that established a Commission on *Truth and Reconciliation* gave no definition of either term. In the debates concerning the formation of a Commission, in the Commission's early work and in public discourse, truth was viewed as singular, uncompromisingly objective, neutral and its revelation empowering: 'the Truth'. Truth was presumed to be amenable to discovery through scientific method and quantification, and to be accessible through individuals' memories and the material remainders of Apartheid. The link between truth and reconciliation was presumed to be self-evident and consequential: that disclosing the truth would result in reconciliation. Indeed, the Commission devised a slogan that explicitly made the claim: 'Truth – the road to reconciliation'.

Although the Commission was the direct result of a juridical process (the requirement for amnesty provision), in the popular imagination it was depicted as a healing intervention. Ideas about healing drew from three models of damage. Commissioners and social commentators frequently used models that likened South Africa and South Africans to wounded bodies. They compared truth-telling with the opening and cleansing of unhealed wounds caused by gross violations of human rights, or, more frequently, by the system of Apartheid itself, and used words like 'wound', 'fester', 'cleanse' and 'operation' to describe aspects of the Commission's work. In the second model, society was depicted as a psyche. In the corresponding healing matrix, people's memories and experiences were the subject of 'analysis' in which the past was to be revealed in all its pain and ugliness. After due acknowledgement, it was assumed that the process of daily life could begin afresh. The ideas draw heavily from a simplified model of psychoanalysis: 'recollection' was presumed to ensure 'non-repetition'. Alongside these two models were the threads of another familiar discourse, that of spiritual healing generated through the process of contrition, confession and acknowledgement. A Christian model was emphasised through use of words like 'martyr', 'sacrifice', 'confession', and 'forgiveness'. The models were even drawn upon in the drafting of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Bill, the explanatory notes to which describe the Commission as originating from the principle that:

[R]econciliation depends on *forgiveness* and that forgiveness can only take place if gross violations of human rights are fully *disclosed*. What is therefore envisaged is reconciliation through a process of *national healing*.

The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Bill, 1995, seeks to find a balance between the process of *national healing and forgiveness*, as well as the granting of amnesty as required by the interim Constitution (Notes to the Bill 1995: 1, emphasis added).

What began as a political compromise became envisaged as a process of national cleansing and healing.

Implementing the Act

In terms of the Act, 'victims' were entitled in law 'to relate their own accounts of the violations of which they are victims'. The Act defined victims as,

(a) persons who, individually or together with one or more persons, suffered harm in the form of physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, pecuniary loss or a substantial impairment of human rights (i) as a result of a gross violation of human rights; or (ii) as a result of an act associated with a political objective for which amnesty has been granted; (b) persons who, individually or together with one or more persons, suffered harm in the form of physical or mental injury, emotional suffering, pecuniary loss or a substantial impairment of human rights, as a result of such person intervening to assist persons contemplated in paragraph (a) who were in distress or to prevent victimization of such persons; and (c) such relatives or dependants of victims as may be prescribed (The Act.)

The definitions of violence and violation laid down in the Act were narrow. They did not address many of the forms of 'structural violence' or of the racial discrimination that characterised Apartheid. They bifurcated violence into a concern with 'perpetrators' who committed or commissioned acts of violence, or who failed to intervene to prevent them, and 'victims' who suffered the consequences of 'gross violations of human rights'⁸. The Act defines 'gross violations of human rights' as killing, torture, abduction (often referred to in the Commission's work as 'disappearance') and/or severe ill treatment, or the conspiracy or attempt to commit such acts. Severe ill treatment is not clearly defined in either the Act or the Commission's Report (Volume One: 80; see discussion in Chapter Three).

Notwithstanding provisions in the Act for recognition of pecuniary harm and other forms of damage, the Commission's focus was, for the most part, body-bound. The Commission resolved that 'its mandate was to give attention to human rights violations committed as specific acts, resulting in severe physical and/or mental injury, in the course of past political conflict' (Volume One: 64), focusing its attention on what the Report describes as 'bodily integrity rights' (*ibid.*). The Report summarises the Commission's task as having been,

to focus on what might be termed 'bodily integrity rights', rights that are enshrined in the new South African Constitution and under international law. These include the right to life... the right to be free from torture... the right to be free from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment ... and the right to freedom and security of the person, including freedom from abduction and arbitrary and prolonged detention (Volume One: 64).

⁸ The dichotomy, 'perpetrators' and 'victims', was criticised for obscuring the roles of 'beneficiaries' in the perpetuation of political systems based on or utilising violence to maintain their ends (Mamdani 1996) and for drawing attention away from the structures and 'structural violence' that keep such systems in place (see Asmal, Asmal and Roberts 1996; submission by NGO coalition to the Commission, 1997).

The work of the Human Rights Violations Committee made an explicit link between 'experience' ('gross violation of human rights') and the resultant subject-position ('victim'). People whose experiences of harm fitted the Commission's definitions of gross violations of human rights were invited to make statements to the Human Rights Violations Committee. Statements were made to designated officials, 'statement takers', and were recorded on specially devised forms, 'protocols', the format of which was standardised and altered several times during the Commission's process to accommodate the complexity and variety of harm reported to the Commission (Buur, 1999; Report, Volume One: 139). Deponents were asked to recount the incident of violation; identify the political affiliation of the perpetrator and victim; describe the political context in the area and more generally at the time the incident occurred; record the consequences (physical, psychological and social) of the violation; and, if possible, provide supporting evidence of the incident (such as witnesses, medical or court records, etc.). Data recorded on the protocols was 'captured' and 'processed' into a database from which statistical data could be drawn and analyses made.

By December 1997, the closing date for the submission of statements concerning gross violations of human rights to the Commission, 21 298 statements concerning 37 672 violations had been received (Volume One: 166). (In Volume Three, on page four, the Commission reports that a total of 46 696 violations involving 28 750 victims were received. The reason for the discrepancy in the figures is not given, although it may be that these data refer to the total set of data received in statements whereas the former figures may refer only to those statements where a 'victim finding' was made. In public discussions of the Commission's findings, the first set of figures is usually used.)

Much of the work of data collection and analysis remained 'behind the scenes', hidden within the bureaucratic workings of the Human Rights Violations Committee and the data collection and capture units (Buur 1999). The Human Rights Violations Committee's most visible work, and that which drew the most public attention, was seventy-six public hearings lasting between two and five days that were held in towns throughout South Africa between April 1996 and June 1997. The Commission held different kinds of public hearings including Victim hearings; Institutional hearings (into the media, prisons, legal system, health system, business, and faith communities); hearings on Conscription, Children and Youth, and Women; Political Party hearings; and Event hearings⁹.

⁹ The Commission also instigated 'special investigations' into secret State funding, chemical and biological warfare, exhumations, the activities of the Mandela United Football Club (of which Nelson Mandela's ex-wife, Winnie Madikizela Mandela was patron and which was accused of numerous acts of gross violation of human rights), the death of Mozambique's President Samora Machel in an aeroplane crash on 19th October 1986 and the crash of the Helderberg aeroplane off the Mauritian coast on 28th October 1987 (commentators had accused the State of causing both crashes). Most hearings

The dissertation focuses on and draws from the Human Rights Violations hearings, 'Victim hearings', to which approximately ten percent of deponents were invited to testify. Different explanations have been given for the selection of deponents. One Commissioner told me that testifiers were selected because their experiences were either extreme or representative of a range of violations reported in a region. Volume One of the Commission Report (1998:146) states that testifiers were selected because they or their experiences were representative of: 'the nature of abuse in the community or area', 'the various groups which had experienced abuse' and 'gender, race, age and geographical location' of victims. Volume Five (1998: 5-6) states that the criteria for public hearings were: 'the hearing should reflect accounts from all sides of the political conflicts of the past'; 'the entire thirty-four year mandate period should be covered'; 'women as well as men should be heard, and the experiences of youth should also be considered'. It adds, 'there should be an attempt at least to provide an overall picture of the experience of the region'.

Notwithstanding the efforts at representivity that the last statement implies, the Commission's sample is not probabilistic. The Report states:

Section 4(b) of the Act required that the Commission accept statements from all South Africans who wished to make them. Hence, the Commission did not carry out a 'survey' of violations in the sense of drawing a probabilistic sample of victims. Those who chose to come forward defined the universe of people from whom the Commission received information.

Human rights data are almost never taken from probabilistic samples. Instead, people decide for themselves if they will make statements. (Volume One: 163)

The Report adds that the Commission's sample probably excludes those who lived at a distance from Commission Offices and had limited access to the media; were traumatised, ill or elderly; or those who belonged to constituencies antagonistic to the Commission. My data suggest that the sample excluded a large number of women who were eligible to make statements and a large number of activists who chose not to see themselves as victims. I explore the claim in more detail in Chapters Five and Six.

The Act did not provide measures by which the Commission might ascertain its success. There are no absolute indicators of the number of people who suffered violations of the order the Commission was required to investigate, and, as I have noted above, its sample was not probabilistic. Commissioners were concerned that the Commission might not obtain the 'whole story' of gross violations of human rights committed in the period under review. Their concerns grew as two distinctive patterns in testimonial practices became evident early

were held *in camera* although after appearing before an *in camera* hearing, Winnie Mandela Madikizela requested and was granted a public hearing, held between 24th November and 4th December

in the public hearings and were sustained throughout the process of the Commission's work. The first was that although approximately equal proportions of men and women made statements, for the most part women described the suffering of men whereas men testified about their own experiences of violation. The second was that women who had been active in opposing the Apartheid State seldom gave public testimony. The patterns form the substance of Chapters Two and Three and the backdrop to the remaining Chapters of the dissertation.

Whose voices?

In the twelve weeks of hearings that I attended between April 1996 and June 1997, women accounted for fifty-four percent of testifiers but made scant mention of their own experiences of human rights violations. The Tables below present data distilled from the hearings that describe the pattern of women's testimonies compared with those offered by men. It should be noted that the data presented in my analysis (like the Commission's Report) do not represent the full extent of gross violations of human rights that occurred in South Africa. The data reflect rather patterns and trends in testimonies made to the Commission. As described above, the data presented in the Commission's Report are based on a self-selecting sample. My data in the first part of the thesis are drawn from the same sample and reflect on it.

Table One compares the testimonies by sex of testifier and victim. The Table describes women's testimonies about women and men and men's testimonies about women and men as proportions of the testimonies made by each sex. The final column in the Table describes the data as a proportion of the total testimonies (i.e. those offered by men and women) at the hearings. Table One shows that the bulk of women's testimony concerned men. Men's testimony also concerned mainly men. Women were more likely than men to testify about women.

Table One. Total testimonies comparing testimonies by sex of testifier and victim¹⁰

Testimony by: Concerning	no cases	% of total testimony by sex of testifier	% of total testimonies
Women about women	45	21% of women's testimony	12
women about men	165	79% of women's testimony	42
men about women	15	8% of men's testimony	4
men about men	165	92% of men's testimony	42
TOTAL:	390		100%

1997 in Johannesburg.

¹⁰ Twenty-six (seven percent) of the victims identified in testimonies were not identified by sex. They are not included in the Table or in subsequent Tables and analyses.

Table Two deconstructs the aggregate categories presented in Table One. It focuses on women's testimonies and describes the relationships women testifiers bear to those about whom they testified.

Table Two. Persons for whom women testified, expressed as a percentage of the total number of victims about whom women testified where sex was specified (n = 210)

Women speak about:	% of victims
Sons	40
Husbands	16
Themselves	14
Brothers	9
Other male kin	7
Other men	6
Sisters	3
Daughters	2
Fathers	1
Female kin	1
Mothers	0.5
Other women	0.5
TOTAL	100%

Table Three performs a similar function to Table Two, this time for men's testimonies.

Table Three. Persons for whom men testified, expressed as a percentage of the total number of victims about whom men testified where sex was specified (n = 180)

Men speak about	% of victims
Themselves	62
Brothers	9
Sons	8
Other men	7
Fathers	3
Wives	3
Other male kin	2
Daughters	2
Other women	2
Mothers	1
Female kin	1
Sisters	0
TOTAL	100%

Read together, Tables Two and Three illustrate the differences between women and men's testimonies in relation to the people about whom they testified. What is particularly marked is the frequency with which men testified about their own experiences compared with women's reporting of their own violation. Only fourteen percent of women's testimonies given in the hearings I attended were directly concerned with their own experiences of violation, whereas sixty-two percent of men's testimonies concerned their own experiences of gross violations of human rights. Men's reporting of their own experiences of brutal treatment is almost four times that made by women. In addition, there was a marked tendency for women to speak of the violations suffered by their sons and husbands, representing forty percent and sixteen percent of women's testimonies respectively. For the most part, then, women appeared before the Commission to speak in their roles as mothers of sons and as wives:

Table Four compares the data presented in the previous two Tables by describing the relationship of testifiers to those for whom they testified. The Table enables a comparison of the frequency of men and women's testimonies in each category of relationship described. It also provides a percentage of total victims identified in each category. What is striking in the Table is the frequency with which testifiers spoke of close kin, particularly sons, testimony about whom accounts for twenty-five percent of the total number of victims identified in the hearings.

Table Four. Relationship of testifiers to those about whom they testified

Testimony concerning:	No. victims identified by women	No. victims identified by men	total number victims	Total % of all victims
Self	29	113	142	36
Sons	83	14	97	25
Brothers	18	16	34	9
Husbands	34	0	34	9
Unrelated men	13	13	26	7
Male kin	14	4	18	5
Daughters	5	3	8	2
Fathers	3	5	8	2
Sisters	7	0	7	2
Wives	0	5	5	1
Female kin	2	2	4	1
Unrelated women	1	3	4	1
Mothers	1	2	3	1
TOTAL	210	180	390	101

(Percentages are rounded up and do not add up to 100%)

Commission data

The Commission's data, drawn from statements about gross violations of human rights and presented in the Report, confirmed the patterns reflected in public hearings I attended. Volume One of the Report (page 166) reports that a total of 21 298 statements concerning 37 672 violations were received by the Commission. Africans¹¹ made eighty-nine percent of statements (Volume One: 168). Women made approximately half of the statements and sixty percent of women deponents were African women (Volume One: 169). 23 020 (or 61%) of the reported violations were committed against men. In 5 458 cases of violation (approximately fourteen percent), the sex of the victim was not reported. The authors of the Commission Report argue that 'the violence of the past resulted in the deaths mainly of men' (Volume One: 169). They continue (p. 171),

Men were the most common victims of violations. Six times as many men died as women and twice as many survivors of violations were men.... Hence, although most people who told the Commission about violations were women (sic), most of the testimony was about men.

Volume Four of the Report (p. 285) confirms that women's statements mainly concerned human rights violations committed against men. Approximately forty-four percent of female deponents were victims of gross violations of human rights (Volume Four: 285), although the data presented show marked differences by region with more than half the female deponents in the Durban regional office reporting violations committed against themselves. (No data regarding 'racial classification' of deponents are provided.) By comparison, in the Cape Town regional office, which solicited statements from deponents in the Western and Northern Cape, thirty-nine percent of cases reported concerned gross violations of human rights committed against women. Of these, approximately twenty-four percent concerned violations suffered by the women deponents themselves. A gender researcher, Beth Goldblatt, is quoted in the Commission's Report (Volume Four: 290) as stating that the data

reflect the reality that women were less of a direct threat to the Apartheid State and were thus less often the victims of murder, abduction and torture. This was due to the nature of the society that was, and is, structured along traditional patriarchal lines. Men were expected to engage with the state in active struggle while women were denied 'active citizenship' because of their location within the private sphere¹².

¹¹ In order to identify patterns in violations, the Commission drew on the terminology of the now defunct Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950 that required people to be registered as belong to one of four 'population groups'. My use of the Act's terminology in no way implies acceptance of it.

¹² The statement implies that the 'private sphere' was somehow less political than the public sphere, an implication that is challenged in Chapter Six of the dissertation.

The most frequently reported gross violation of human rights suffered by women deponents recorded by the Commission falls into the category of 'severe ill-treatment' (Volume Four: 286), a category that came under considerable debate and scrutiny within the Commission (Volume One: 64-65 and Volume Five: 12-13). No clear definition of 'severe ill-treatment' is provided in the volumes of the Report. Submissions to the Commission suggested that 'severe ill-treatment' could be interpreted more broadly than the Commission's definition (see for example, the submission by NGO Coalition 1997, and that on gender made by Goldblatt and Meintjies 1996), but the Commission retained its focus on violations of rights to bodily integrity.

Commission data (presented in Volume One: 170) indicate that women deponents were older than male deponents: most women deponents were between the ages of 37 and 60, while the largest proportion of male deponents were aged between 25 and 48 years at the time of making the statement. Most reported victims were young men (Volume One: 171, see also Volume Four: 258ff), many of whom were aged between thirteen and twenty-four years at the time of the violation they reported (Volume Four: 258). It is likely that the age differences of victims reflects the fact that men aged thirteen to twenty-four in the 1980s (the period for which most statements were received) testified about their own experiences of gross violations of human rights whereas women testified about their children (usually sons) injured in the 1980s. The Report states that the data reflect 'the perceived threat posed by males to the state' (Volume Four: 259), but also acknowledges a systematic patterning of women's testimonies concerning their own experiences of violation, a matter I explore in detail below and in Chapters Two and Three.

'Women' – a category with a history

The patterns of women's testimonies described in the data above were striking from the outset of the public hearings held by the Human Rights Violations Committee. For example, Christina Stuckey, a journalist, reported of the first week of hearings in East London:

Throughout the first hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission this week, the words 'witness' and 'victim' were alternately used to describe those giving testimony. Neither description does justice to those who came forward to tell their stories.

These people – the majority of the testifiers were women¹³ – were neither broken victims nor detached witnesses. Their courage in the face of

¹³ A total of thirty-four testifiers appeared before the Human Rights Violations Committee at the public hearing in East London. They described thirty-two incidents of violation. Nineteen testifiers (55% of the total) were women and fifteen (45%) were men. Eighteen of the women testified about violations inflicted on men.

indescribable adversity was breath-taking, their strength and grace exemplary...

It is indeed women like them and the many others who faced the Commission to recount their stories who are the key to the success of the country's healing process. Some of the women are illiterate, others educated. Some of them had been forbidden by their husbands to work and most followed the tradition of standing by their husbands and not asking too many questions about their activities outside the home ...

Their husbands' deaths forced them to take over the traditional duties of the man and to play the dual role of father and mother to their children.

The deaths also pulled them into the midst of the struggle, some willingly, some less so. As policemen continued to harass them ... the women drew from a well of strength which many didn't know they possessed...

(Sunday Weekend Argus, 21st April 1996:6; reproduced in part in The Sunday Independent, 21st April 1996: 4)

Stuckey's account of the hearings was the subject of a letter of congratulation to the editor of The Sunday Independent (5th May 1996) written by Beth Goldblatt and Dr. Sheila Meintjies, academics and gender specialists at the University of the Witwatersrand. They applaud the fact that

The article is at pains to show that women were not simply victims of our Apartheid past but were active agents in the resistance to injustice. This characterisation of women is very important since it would be quite easy for our history to ascribe its struggle as one of men fighting and women remaining invisible and uninvolved.

They do not state why women's roles in opposition to the State might not be incorporated into a historical lexicon of resistance but add:

In their resistance to this system, women were tortured, imprisoned and horribly abused. They [suffered] not only as mothers, wives and daughters, but were also leaders and sources of strength in their families and communities. Women were also perpetrators of injustice and cruelty¹⁴.

Goldblatt and Meintjies had some months earlier predicted that women would not speak easily of the harms inflicted on them, a prediction that was to hold true in many of the later hearings. On 19th March 1996, a month before the Commission's public hearings began, the Centre for Applied Legal Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand hosted a workshop entitled 'Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission' in Johannesburg. The workshop participants were drawn from a range of professions and organisations, including psychologists, lawyers, representatives of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), members of the Provincial Legislature, and, perhaps most importantly, some Commissioners and members of the Commission. Participants examined the gender

¹⁴ Women constituted less than one percent of amnesty applicants. By October 1998, forty applications made by women had been considered: two were granted amnesty, twenty-four were refused amnesty and fourteen still awaited decisions (Report Volume One: 276 and Volume Four: 312).

dimensions of violence in South Africa. Goldblatt and Meintjies prepared a submission based on the discussions and their research and submitted it to the Commission in May 1996, after the 'first cycle' of public hearings in East London, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban had been completed. Ostensibly a position paper on 'gender', the submission dealt unashamedly with 'women'. It drew on interviews conducted with eight women — Thenjiwe Mtintso, Albertina Sisulu, Amina Cachalia, Sheila Weinberg, Jennifer Schreiner, Caesarina Kona Makhoere, Lydia Kompe and Susan Conjwa — who had been actively involved in resistance to the Apartheid State inside South Africa and in exile, and on Commission testimonies and secondary materials. The submission begins with an explanation of the importance of 'gender' in an understanding of past violence, stating,

The purpose of emphasising gender relationships is to highlight the particular manner in which women have been subordinated and oppressed through socially constructed differences. Indeed, gender differences have meant that South African men and women have often experienced our history in different ways. In South Africa, as in most societies in the world, women have been accorded identities [that] cast them in particular social roles [that] have restricted their civil and political status. Intersecting with gender are also race, class and other identities, such as ethnic and religious allegiances. These form the basis of the 'public-private' divide, which has given to men the role of civil and political representative of the household, to the exclusion of women (Goldblatt and Meintjies 1996: 5).

The submission described the escalation and intensification of violence inflicted on women in South Africa between 1960 and 1990 and documented the range of violations they suffered. It stated that Apartheid laws had a differential impact on men and women and that racial classifications and class intersected with gender to limit women's positions in society. It traced the direct impact of violence on women and argued that women were 'indirectly affected' by Apartheid laws and by the violence inflicted on their children and husbands. The submission proposed that the Commission extend the definition of 'severe ill-treatment'¹⁵:

to include a wide range of abuses which took place under Apartheid. Detention without trial itself is severe ill-treatment. Imprisonment for treason against an unjust system is severe ill-treatment. Forced removals, pass arrests, confiscation of land, breaking up of families and even forcing people to undergo racially formulated education are all forms of severe ill-treatment (1996: 21).

The submission continued:

Whilst it is important to emphasise the killing and torture in our past and the extraordinary suffering of opponents of Apartheid, we need also to pause and recognise that the Apartheid system itself violated the basic rights of human

¹⁵ In the event, the Commission confined itself to a more limited notion of violation, as I have shown above.

beings in ways that systematically destroyed their capacity to survive. In addition, the gendered dimensions of this system had an added dehumanising effect on many people's lives (p. 22).

From the submission it was clear that women had been involved in anti-Apartheid activities, and that they had suffered not only for their political ideals and commitments but because they were women, especially if they were poor and black. The authors urged the Commission to examine the multiple sites in which women were violated and thereby recognise that violence against women is a political and not a private act.

The submission made twenty-one recommendations to the Commission concerning ways in which the Commission's work, its decisions and its Report might be made 'gender sensitive'. The recommendations made it clear that the contexts within which women might be prepared to testify differed from the hearing format already in place and that securing women's testimonies about their own experiences would require special intervention. They argued that it would be difficult for women to overcome the stigma attached to speaking publicly of harm, particularly sexual violation, and that public hearings were not necessarily the most appropriate forum before which to require women to speak. Five recommendations pertained directly to the statement-making and testimonial process (1996: 63-4). One was that the Commission should make it clear that statements could be made confidentially. Another, that women need not testify in public. A third was that women deponents be permitted to request that their statements be taken by women and a fourth, that women be permitted to testify in closed hearings to women Commissioners because of 'cultural and social pressures' that 'often prevent women from discussing sexual matters in front of men'. A fifth proposal was that the Commission might arrange that groups of women supported by social workers and psychologists might testify before hearings.

Ilse Olkers, a legal consultant on gender affairs, reported through the journal AGENDA to the 'Women's Movement' that the submission had little effect on shaping the Commission's initial process or its response to deponents (Olkers 1996; see also Owens 1996). She castigated the Commission for its assumption of a 'gender neutral truth', calling its failure to recognise gender as a powerful feature in determining violation 'a shameful distortion' of reality (1996: 61) and accusing the Commission of rendering women 'invisible' save for in stereotyped roles as victim and mothers of victims.

Some Commissioners were sympathetic but the Commission took no public action to identify 'women' as a special category until the patterning of testimonial practices was marked. Although the Act recognised those who suffered gross violations of human rights *and* their dependants to be victims, by June 1996 the Commission and the media often distinguished between 'primary victims' (who had been 'directly' affected by gross violations

of human rights) and 'secondary victims' (who had been 'indirectly' affected as a result of the loss of or harm to someone else). Commissioners frequently referred to women as 'secondary witnesses' because they made statements mainly about violations suffered by men and gave scant account of their own brutal treatment.

Concerned about the emergent patterns in testimonial practices, the Commission called two public meetings to which it invited representatives of the media and women's organisations in order to consider how the Commission could better elicit statements about women's experiences of harm (Volume Four: 282-3). (The Commission's archive is not yet publicly accessible and I am unable to trace its internal deliberations.) At a meeting I attended held in Cape Town on 14th June 1996, at which the Commission sought to elicit assistance from NGOs in extending and supporting its work, Commissioner Mapule Ramashala expressed her concern about the limited number of women who testified about their own experiences of violation. She said,

'Now, having had the first round [of hearings in East London, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban], I've been very disturbed that women witness stories about other people, and are totally removing themselves. Part of this has to do with the male-dominated structure of the Truth Commission, and the lack of probing questions. ... Women are articulate about describing their men's experiences but are hesitant about themselves The pain expressed has been the pain of others, not of themselves. Are we colluding by not providing space for women to talk?... *If women do not talk then the story we produce will not be complete...* Culturally, we think we understand. For example, people may not have told their spouses. We should have special *in camera* hearings, but then do men learn from these? (Emphasis added.)

From her comments it was clear that the Commission was concerned that it might not gather 'the whole truth' and that hearings might fail in their didactic intent. The explanation offered lay in conceptions of socially-sanctioned forms of interaction between women and men, in particular, cultural constraints on discussion about sex, sexuality and sexual violation between the sexes. The experiences that the Commission anticipated that women would report were explicitly framed in terms of sexual harm (see Chapter Four).

By the end of June 1996, the Commission had decided to hold 'Special Hearings on Women', that took place in Cape Town (8th August 1996), Durban (24th October 1996) and Johannesburg (29th July 1997). No Women's Hearing was held in the Eastern Cape region, a fact to which the author of the Report's Chapter on Women (Volume Four: 283) draws attention, stating, 'It should be noted that the absence of a special hearing in the Eastern Cape could, in itself, distort the picture as the Eastern Cape is known as an area in which treatment in prison was particularly brutal'. No reason for the decision is given in the Report.

The Commission undertook other measures to secure statements about violations suffered by women including training statement-takers to ask 'probing questions' of deponents and modifying the human rights violations protocol so that by April 1997 it included a cautionary note to women deponents:

IMPORTANT:

Some women testify about violations of human rights that happened to family members or friends, but they have also suffered abuses. Don't forget to tell us what happened to you yourself if you were the victim of a gross human rights abuse (Statement Concerning Gross Violations of Human Rights, Version 5, 1997:3).

The Report, published in 1998, contains a Chapter on the Special Hearings on Women¹⁶ and one on Children (Volume Four, Chapters Nine and Ten). It does not contain a comparable Chapter on Men. By October 1998, the Commission had made a specific set of findings in relation to women (Report, Volume Five 1998: 256):

The State was responsible for the severe ill treatment of women in custody in the form of harassment and the deliberate withholding of medical attention, food and water.

Women were abused by the security forces in ways which specifically exploited their vulnerabilities as women, for example, rape or the threat of rape and other forms of sexual abuse, threats against family and children, removal of children from their care, false stories about illness and/or death of family members and children, and humiliation and abuse around biological functions such as menstruation and childbirth.

Women in exile, particularly in the camps, were subjected to various forms of sexual abuse and harassment, including rape¹⁷.

The Report did not make comparable findings about men.

'Women', then, was a category with a particular history in the Commission's work. It was not initially a 'natural' category¹⁸ for the investigation of gross violations of human rights but emerged as such after specific interventions: patterns in testimonies given before public

¹⁶ The Chapter on Women draws in places on material from a paper I presented to the Faultlines Conference in 1996 (Ross 1996) but some of the material drawn from my work has not been fully acknowledged in the Commission Report. Chapter Two of the dissertation is a substantially reworked and up-dated version of the conference paper. The reader familiar with the Commission Report is cautioned to take note that the conference paper on which Chapter Two of the dissertation is based predates the Commission Report.

¹⁷ The Report does not state what proportion of violations reported as having been committed against women were committed by representatives of the State compared with other organisations or institutions.

¹⁸ For a discussion of 'natural categories', see Douglas (1966). The distinction between natural and socially constructed categories is investigated by Hacking (1999) who cautions against simplistic notions of social construction. My intention here is simply to describe the history of the category in the Commission's work.

hearings (themselves patterned by conventional distinctions between public and private realms and the behaviours and speech acts considered appropriate to each), and interventions by a variety of social specialists. The Commission's response was to modify its methodological approach and institute special hearings on women, thereby transforming women's experiences of harm into a category that could be investigated. Beginning from an assumption that any person who suffered particular forms of violation was as likely as any other to make a statement, the Commission eventually made particular findings about violations committed against women.

The Commission's work in relation to women was supplementary. Joan Scott (1991) has demonstrated the limitations of projects that supplement existing knowledge by the 'addition' of other knowledge. Criticising feminist historians for adding 'women's experiences' to existent histories in an attempt to 'render historical what has hitherto been hidden from history' (1991:775), she argues that their efforts run the risk of precluding critical analysis of the conditions within which discourses are produced. She suggests that such projects may fall into the trap of replicating or legitimating the power structures that had excluded 'women's experiences' in the first place.

Scott expressly recognises that a supplementary project poses difficulties in authorising new knowledge. She argues that one way in which feminist historians have dealt with the difficulty has been by 'appealing to experience' (*ibid.* p. 786), resting on the assumption that a subject's own account of personal experience must be true (*ibid.* p. 777). Experience becomes the bedrock for political claims but at the same time may have the effect of naturalising categories and obviating the historical processes through which people are constituted as subjects. She proposes,

[W]e need to attend to the historical processes that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experiences. It is not individuals who have experiences, but subjects who are constituted through experience. Experience ... then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoritative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced (1991:779-80).

She calls for analysis of the conditions that produce and legitimate particular forms of knowledge at the expense of others: a genealogy of discourse.

E. Valentine Daniel has found the genealogical model to be the most effective narrative mode in writing about violence. He quotes Foucault: 'The role of genealogy is to record its [effective] history' (1996: 72), and argues that the genealogical mode does not presume concordance but is ambivalent, does not seek closure but offers a caution against

normalising doctrines. My study draws from these ideas. In demonstrating the history of a category and examining it with reference to the knowledge existing within the Commission and outside it, the study attempts to destabilise the taken-for-granted categories that the Commission's work produced, in order to consider the ways that some interventions in social life may create silence.

I have taken Henrietta Moore's warning that, '“woman” cannot stand as an analytical category in anthropological enquiry', and that, 'What the category ... means in a given context has to be investigated and not assumed' (1994: 7; see also Butler 1990) as a starting point for the study, which is a critical investigation of 'women' as a category that emerged through and was naturalised in the witnessing process of the Commission. The remainder of the study is supplementary in the sense described by Deborah Battaglia (1999). Drawing from Derrida's theories of deconstruction, Battaglia argues that supplementation does not *necessarily* replicate existent frames of knowledge: In her view it is 'a process of new knowledge acting upon prior (never total or sufficient) knowledge, and in consequence destabilizing it' (1999: 120). Destabilisation of this order is, she claims, the task of ethnography. Battaglia seeks a methodological approach that recognises 'the open subject': that acknowledges that

Persons, their subjectivities and identities (selves) are shaped by and shape relations to others, under the press of historical and cultural contingency. From this it follows that selves are 'not given to us' by natural law (Foucault 1984: 341), nor fixed and unchanging. And certainly they are not ontologically prior to relations of power.... Rather, selves are from the start an open question (1999: 115).

She argues that the conjunction of 'the open subject' with ethnography as 'a discourse of reflexive awareness achieved across difference' (p. 119) works powerfully to destabilise existent knowledge or taken-for-granted frames of reference.

In Chapters Two, Three and Four, I examine the ways that women's testimonial practices were read in an essentialist fashion that positioned women as 'secondary victims' – mothers and wives – and as 'victims' of specific forms of violence, particularly sexual violence. The Chapters draw on testimonies given in the context of the history of the category described above.

Chapter Two

Testimonial Practices

*And grief is one thing nearly personal,
a hairline fracture in an individual skull;
homemade elegy which sounds its keening
in the scarred heart's well;
where it is too deep to reach
the ladder of light
sent down from land above,
where hands write words
to work the winch
to plumb the shaft below.*

(De Kok. 1997. "What everyone should know about grief")

"The saying" is born of ... fracture, separation, and exile: separation from the beloved, exile from oneself. It is born of an impasse, a stricture and constriction, an eclipse of language and thought ... Yet that speechlessness, the impasse of that fracturing, is also a passage into another scene. There, like an angel, appears the poetical word ... [F]or a poet, the loss of the object, its disappearance into a distance beyond reach, is the condition of poetical speech.

(Pandolfo 1997:11).

Describing the faculties with which one may mourn a lost lover, novelist Jeanette Winterson (1993:135) speaks of hearing thus:

Hearing and the Ear:

The auricle is the expanded portion which projects from the side of the head. It is composed of fibro-elastic cartilage covered with skin and fine hairs. It is deeply grooved and ridged. The prominent outer ridge is known as the helix. The lobule is the soft, pliable part at the outer extremity.

Sound travels at about 335 metres per second.

The starkness of Winterson's description of the physical characteristics of the ear, a description which is followed by a deeply personal account of loss and grieving, make it an appropriate way to commence a chapter on stories of loss. The description of the physical ear acts as a counterpoise to my argument about the difficulties involved in listening and attending to stories of pain and loss.

Public hearings

The hearings of the Human Rights Violations Committee were a public performance of harm, memory, loss and grief. The testimonial process of public hearings was quickly standardised and, in some ways, ritualised (Bozzoli 1999). At each hearing, audiences were seated in rows in a hall decorated with Commission slogans and a national flag. They faced a stage decked with flowers and plants and laid out in such a way that the testifier, seated at a 'witness stand', faced a panel of Commission members. The hearings usually began at nine o'clock in the morning. Audiences in the hearing hall were invited to stand as Commissioners filed in and remained standing as the testifiers took their seats in the front of the hall. Representatives of the media were given a few minutes to take pictures and were then asked to return to their designated seats in the hall. (In the later hearings, media people sat in 'media' rooms, where they watched the proceedings by television link-up. Many journalists had felt traumatised by watching testifiers speak their anguish day after day and sought to remove themselves from the immediate vicinity of the remembering of harm.)

If Archbishop Tutu (recently retired as the Archbishop of the Church of England in South Africa and a well-known figure nationally and internationally in 'the struggle' against Apartheid) was present at the hearing, he greeted testifiers personally, enveloping them in his purple episcopal robes as he embraced them. He began each day's hearing with a greeting in three official languages — usually Xhosa, Afrikaans and English — and expected the audience to respond, often repeating the greetings until they were returned in conventional fashion. He

then opened the proceedings with a prayer, switching between the three languages. At the first public hearings in East London, he lit an altar candle as part of the ceremony of opening the hearings, but later this aspect of the opening fell away¹. Other Commissioners were more circumspect and reserved in their approach to the ceremony of opening. They usually welcomed testifiers, invited guests, media and audience to the hearing; thanked the organisers and members of the South African Police Services who guarded the entrances to the hearing site; introduced the Commissioners and panellists; explained the use of the simultaneous translation devices; and declared the proceedings open. Sometimes a local choir performed for the hearing and local dignitaries made short speeches.

A panel, ranging from three to seventeen Commissioners and Committee members, heard approximately ten testifiers every day of the public hearings. Hearings continued throughout the day, with breaks for tea and lunch and usually ended between five and six in the evening. Any testifiers who had not been able to give their testimonies that day were asked to return to testify the following day. Members of the audiences were requested to remain seated as testifiers spoke in order to show respect for testifiers and not to disturb the flow of their narratives. Audiences were not allowed to participate in the testimonial process and were frequently warned that noise in hearings would not be tolerated. On occasion, Archbishop Tutu called a halt to proceedings when he felt that audiences behaved in a 'disrespectful' fashion.

Prior to the hearing, each testifier was allocated a Committee Member whose task was to assist the testifier to 'tell the stories' in public by asking prompting questions if necessary. The Committee Member usually perused deponents' statements before the hearing (although owing to the pressures on Committee Members, this did not always happen, and apparently did not happen in the case I describe in Chapter Four). Before the hearings, testifiers were briefed about what to expect from the hearing process. When giving testimony, testifiers were usually accompanied by a 'briefer', a designated official whose tasks were to 'brief' testifiers prior to hearings, 'debrief' them afterwards and provide psychological support during the testimonial process. Attending to the expression of pain was considered traumatising, or perhaps polluting, and briefers were 'debriefed' by a consultant psychologist after each hearing. Later in the Commission's process, Commissioners and journalists were offered debriefing.

¹ The discourse surrounding the Commission drew heavily on Christian motifs and assumptions and in early hearings many of the rituals had Christian religious overtones. Some Commission members and social constituencies complained about the overt emphasis on Christian norms and symbols (Meiring 1999: 29).

Kinsfolk or friends or eye-witnesses frequently accompanied testifiers to the events they described. Facing a panel of Commissioners and Committee Members, testifiers described the violations they and others had suffered. Behind the people on the stage, flags printed with the Commission's logo and slogan proclaimed its mission. A national flag was usually present on the stage.

Each testifier was called to the stage, sworn in, asked to describe his or her family background by way of introduction and then to describe the violation about which they had made a statement. The testimonies were the culmination of a series of steps: individual experiences of violence were narrated, distilled, recorded, translated from narratives of pain into 'data' about human rights violations (Buur 1999; see Chapter Four) that was entered into a database. The statements of deponents who had been invited to testify publicly were drawn from the Commission's archive and used as guidelines for the Commission Members in assisting them. On several occasions, testifiers were told by Commissioners to address only the violations that they had described in their statements. In the initial hearings, testimonies lasted from between fifteen minutes to more than an hour-and-a-half. Towards the end of the Commission's work, most testimonies lasted approximately thirty minutes.

Testimony was given in the testifier's language of choice (there are eleven official languages in South Africa) and was simultaneously translated into English, Afrikaans, and one other major language spoken in the region. Translation was undertaken by specially appointed translators, a number of whom had previously worked in the courts. Theirs was an emotionally demanding task and many commented on the psychological difficulties they experienced in having to use the first person in translating other peoples' pain². If a testifier stumbled or halted during testimony, the designated Committee Member asked 'probing questions' and the briefer comforted testifiers who wept at the memory of loss or harm. A box of tissues, placed at hand on the witness stand, was a potent symbol of the hearings. On a few occasions, when a witness cried, Archbishop Tutu led the audience in a hymn. One hearing I attended was adjourned while a testifier wept. Once a woman was deeply disturbed by the process of testifying and chose not to continue with her testimony. Usually however, a silence was preserved in the hall until the testifier recovered his or her equilibrium and then the testimonial process began once more. When each testifier had finished describing the event(s) of violation to the Commission, the Chairperson solicited additional questions (usually of clarification)

² One young male translator explained, 'It is difficult to interpret victim hearings ... because you use the first person all the time. I have no distance when I say "I" ... it runs through me with I' (quoted in Krog 1998: 129). Another translator, a woman, likened translation of victim hearings to the pain of childbirth (Lars Buur, personal communication, 5th March 2000).

from the Commission panellists. In the early hearings, testifiers were frequently asked what they desired the Commission to do for them. In media briefings, Commissioners professed themselves astonished at the limited nature of the requests: usually for assistance in caring for the children of those who had died, or for educational assistance, tombstones or reburial ceremonies. Very few asked directly for monetary compensation, partly because the public nature of hearings mitigated against the expression of such requests, and only a small number demanded the prosecution of those who had committed crimes.

Testifiers were not cross-examined. People who were named as perpetrators in testimonies were notified by the Commission and were allowed to make representation to the Commission in defence, but their legal representatives were not permitted to address questions to testifiers. This was in stark contrast with public hearings of amnesty applications, where detailed cross-examination by a Commission member and by victims or their legal representatives, and by the representatives of people implicated in applications was in order. When no further questions were forthcoming from the Commission panellists, the testifier was thanked, dismissed from the stage and taken for 'debriefing'. The next testifier was called and the process repeated.

Hearings were emotional events. Testifiers described the full range of violations that the Commission's operational definitions admitted, including terrible torture, injuries and death. They also described the everyday humiliations of Apartheid and a diversity of harms that the Commission did not consider gross violations of human rights. Their grief and feelings of loss were evident, even when they spoke with vigour. Representatives of the State committed most of the violations to which they referred (Volume Five: 212). Some testifiers described violations inflicted on them while others described harms done to other people, usually close kin. Testifiers spoke quietly, furiously, with passion, fearfully, with humour. Some were elliptical in their descriptions of horror, some spoke directly of violence. A large number of testifiers wept as they spoke; sometimes audience members did too. Commissioners were less likely to display emotion though once Archbishop Tutu wept when a man described the torture he had endured; and, as I show in Chapter Four, a close emotional attachment sometimes developed between a particular Committee Member and a testifier during the testimonial process.

Public hearings were widely broadcast: daily updates on the hearings and the Commission's work were carried in the print and electronic media and the proceedings were broadcast live on television and radio. The hearings may be likened to a mnemonic device utilised by the Commission to reflect more widely on particular practices of violation. The

audiences at hearings and those following them through the media were tacitly asked to envisage testifiers as people with unique experiences and, simultaneously, as representatives of those who had suffered similarly.

Speaking truth

Notwithstanding the patterning of testimonies described in Chapter One, testimonial forms were diverse. Below, I consider their diversity in relation to the ways that women testified about men. I begin with the testimony given on the 17th April, 1996 in East London's ornate red brick City Hall by Nyameka Goniwe about the death of her husband, Matthew Goniwe. The story has been told many times: her husband was a well-known activist and news of his death in June 1985 was carried in national and international media. She had spoken to the media and before the courts at two inquests held into his death. Her testimony to the Commission was clear and direct. Events were given in sequence and were chronologically ordered. The focus of attention was Matthew. The story as I tell it is distilled from her words to the Commission that day.

Nyameka Goniwe began her testimony at 9:30 am, in a hall full of people silent in expectation. She sat with the widows of three other activists who had been killed with her husband, on a podium facing the semi-circle of Commissioners and panellists. National flags flew from the corners of the stage behind the Commissioners, and a large banner bearing the words: 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Healing our Past. First Hearing, East London, 15th – 18th April 1996', lined the wall at the back of the stage. A lighted altar candle burned at the edge of the stage, flanked by tasselled maroon velvet curtains and potted palm trees. Mrs. Goniwe read her prepared statement in English, commencing, 'To talk of Matthew Goniwe and my life is a daunting task. I'll try to bring together the events that led to his death'. She then told a story, one of the most famous stories of a man's resistance against the State in South Africa.

Matthew Goniwe was a teacher and an anti-Apartheid activist. His life with Nyameka Goniwe was marked by his frequent arrests and imprisonment, the first of which occurred in 1976, shortly after their marriage the previous year. Arrested in terms of the Suppression of Communism Act, No. 44 of 1950, for setting up a 'political discussion group' in Transkei³ he

³ One of the 'homelands' or 'Bantustans' established by the Apartheid State in terms of the policy of 'Separate Development' that held that cultural differences were irreducible and that different cultures should have their own land and government. Four of the homelands — Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana and Venda — were declared 'independent'. In fact, the homelands remained heavily reliant on the South African State and were not recognised as independent States by the international community.

spent fifteen months as an awaiting-trial prisoner before being sentenced to four years' imprisonment, a sentence that he served in Umtata. Mrs. Goniwe had meanwhile enrolled at the University of Fort Hare, which meant living some 100 kilometres away, far from her child who was cared for by Matthew's mother in Cradock. As she described that time to the Commission panel, she remembered the hardships she faced:

My biggest challenge at the time was to be available to my baby as often as possible, to attend to my studies and also give support to my husband in prison. I remember that year being one of the toughest years I have faced in my life. I was short of money and had to rely on my brothers-in-law for assistance, and the small grant I used to get from the Dependents Conference of the SACC [South African Council of Churches].

Goniwe was released from prison in 1981. Shortly afterwards, he was transferred by the Department of Education and Training (DET, the Department responsible for the education of Africans) to the small town of Graaff-Reinet. The following year he was moved to Cradock, where he became principal of the High School, and one of the founders of the Cradock Residents Association and of CRADOYA, the Cradock Youth Association. In 1983, both organisations were affiliated to the newly launched United Democratic Front (UDF — an association launched in 1983. Prior to being banned by the Apartheid State in 1988, it comprised more than five hundred affiliated organisations in a broad front against Apartheid. It was formally disbanded in 1991 after the ANC and PAC had been unbanned.) He became involved in 'rekindling the politics of resistance' locally, his widow told the Commission.

In December 1983, Goniwe was transferred to Graaff-Reinet once more. However, seeing it as an attempt to curtail his political activity, he refused to go. The community and youth of Cradock supported him in his decision. Youths boycotted schools, demanding his reinstatement. In March 1984, he and three others were detained under section 28 of the wide-ranging provisions of the Internal Security Act, which provided for 'preventative detention' for an indefinite period. He spent six months in detention.

Nyameka Goniwe recalled that the situation in Cradock had deteriorated as protests against State action increased and the State responded with ever harsher repression:

The situation in the township worsened in their absence and violence escalated on a scale never experienced before. All school committees resigned. The pressure forced the Security Police to release Matthew and his colleagues. They were released on the 10th October 1984 and were given a hero's welcome by the community.

Matthew Goniwe immediately returned to his political work, creating street committees and rallying youth leadership. He was elected as regional rural organiser for the UDF. On the 27th May 1985, the South African Defence Force sealed off the township. Helicopters dropped

pamphlets denouncing Goniwe. Police searched the houses of known activists. Goniwe's movements were closely monitored by the Security Branch, the branch of the South African Police tasked with matters of internal security. Nyameka Goniwe described for the Commission the ways that the family was harassed by police:

The whole family bore the wrath of the Security Police which took the form of harassment, early morning house raids, constant surveillance, death threats, phone bugging, short term detentions for questioning, mysterious phone calls, tampering with cars, and so on.

Later, when tapes and transcripts of his telephone calls were produced during the inquest into his death, she learned of the extraordinary extent to which the Security Branch had monitored Goniwe's movements and actions. The last time that Nyameka Goniwe saw her husband was when he left home with Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkhonto and Sicelo Mhlawuli to attend a UDF meeting. She told the Commission that she had warned him to be careful, prompting him to consider his safety and saying, 'Please don't travel at night! Rather sleep over!' She recalled sorrowfully, 'They laughed at me, of course: they didn't take me seriously. I don't know why, perhaps they never thought that they would be killed.'

She told the Commission that when Matthew had not returned that night she knew that something had happened. The next day she telephoned friends and anti-Apartheid activists and organisations. She sought information, and, not finding it, decided look for him by travelling the route he usually used when he drove home. She and her brother-in-law, accompanied by political activists, went in search of him. They stopped at two police stations to ask if the police had seen Matthew. She told the Commission that the police behaved suspiciously when she had asked about him, renewing her fears about his safety. The searchers returned home where they received a message that the police had left with a child. It said that the remains of Matthew's burnt-out car had been found near the Port Elizabeth Race Course. She recalled, 'Immediately we knew that something serious had happened. Of course we had pointers because in May, you know, the PEPCO Three had disappeared without a trace'⁴. Alarmed, Nyameka alerted the international and local media. The community embarked on boycotts of shops and schools, a common protest tactic throughout the country at the time.

⁴ A reference to Siphon Hashe, Champion Galela and Qaqawuli Godolozzi, political activists in the Eastern Cape who came to be known as the 'PEPCO Three' after their disappearance in May 1985. They were arrested and imprisoned and were never seen again. In 1994, their deaths were linked to operatives based at the police farm, 'Vlakplaas'. Their widows testified to the Commission at its first hearing in East London on 16th April 1996, the day before Nyameka Goniwe gave her testimony. Applications brought before the amnesty committee of the Commission in November 1997 by members of the Security Branch and Vlakplaas operatives revealed that the three men had been tortured and killed in May 1985. Their bodies were set alight, and their remains thrown into the Fish River.

In her matter-of-fact reading before the Commission, Nyameka Goniwe described how the bodies of her husband and his comrades were found:

On Saturday the 29th June 1985, the bodies of Sparrow Mkhonto and Sicelo Mhlawuli were found and those of Matthew and Fort were found on the 2nd July 1985. All the bodies had multiple stab wounds and were badly burned.

Nyameka Goniwe presented the Commission with her analysis of the likelihood of police complicity in the deaths: 'He couldn't have slipped [past] the police monitoring networks. Whatever befell him on that night of the 27th was known to the police and they killed him.' She pointed out that the State 'hated him for raising rural awareness', and considered him 'a dangerous man, a threat to the State'.

She described the first inquest into his death as 'a circus', and told the Commission that the second inquest made a finding that the State Security Forces were responsible for Matthew's death but that no person could be named as culpable. When asked by a Commissioner who she thought had killed her husband and his comrades, she said, 'We have a picture of what happened, although we can't prove it to the courts', and went on to describe the similarities between the deaths of the 'Cradock Four' and the 'PEBCO Three', implicating the State in the deaths.

Nyameka Goniwe's testimony was spare, lucid, ordered and presented in chronological fashion. She held emotion carefully at bay as she read from her prepared statement. Her tempo varied little from its measured pace. The testimony implicated the State in sustained and sanctioned violence and horror. It was clear that she had a detailed knowledge of the connections between the South African Defence Force, Police, Security Branch, State Security Council and 'hit squads'⁵. Her statement focused on Matthew and the family's attempts to locate his killers, and she carefully edited herself from the catalogue of events she described. Other than a brief comment on the harassment of the family, she did not address the question of her own experiences or those of her family until expressly asked to do so by Committee Member, John Smith, who asked how she would feel if someone were to apply for amnesty for the death of Goniwe. She replied, 'Well I look forward to that. I mean I know it's difficult

⁵ 'Hit-squads': organised groups of assassins said to have worked for the State security forces. Many members of the Apartheid government continue to deny the existence of such squads (Submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission by the National Party, 21st August, 1996) although there have been convictions in the criminal courts of two leaders of the police unit C-10 based at Vlakplaas, and testimonies made both in court and before the Commission by witnesses involved in operations at Vlakplaas and in 'covert operations' (see Pauw, 1997). The Commission Report found the State responsible for, 'the covert training, arming or funding of offensive paramilitary units or hit squads for deployment internally against opponents of the government' (Report, Volume Five: 222).

after suffering such pain and trauma. But we need to know what happened and who they are, and also ... they have to show some remorse.' He pressed her to elaborate and she replied,

They have to show us remorse, [show us] that they're sorry for what they did. I don't say that it would immediately make us happy: it's a challenge; we're going to be challenged in that kind of way, and grapple with that, and it will take a long time. Healing takes a long time.

Several women testified in a similarly concise and chronological fashion. Elizabeth Floyd, for example, spoke in Johannesburg (2nd May, 1996) of the death in detention of Neil Aggett — unionist, medical doctor and conscientious objector to compulsory military conscription. Aggett had been detained on 27th November 1981 in terms of the General Law Amendment Act No. 37 of 1963 that allowed for detention for up to ninety days without access to a lawyer. He had been held in Pretoria Prison and then transferred to John Vorster Square on 11th December 1981, where he had remained until his death. On 5th February 1982, he had been found hanging from the grille across the window in his cell. The inquest into his death found that he had committed suicide and that no person could be held responsible for his death.

Elizabeth Floyd described his activities as a unionist, commenting that his activities had been monitored by the police and adding, 'We were well aware of what we were up against: a cruel, a dirty and an unjust system'. She gave a summary of his death and said that even if Aggett had chosen to kill himself, the State was still responsible for having pushed him to the point where suicide may have seemed to be his only option. She did not describe Aggett's political activities or her own in detail. She focused her attention on describing both the effects of his death on the activist community inside South Africa and the effects of torture on detainees:

With his death our worst fears about detention were confirmed. He was the first white to die in detention. For the black people involved, this was very significant; he had not held back in the struggle and had paid the price ... When I was released from detention, our community was shattered. Neil's death was a watershed, as was David Webster's death⁶.

Elizabeth Floyd told the Commission that at the inquest into Aggett's death, evidence had been presented that showed that he had been tortured with electric shocks. He had also told a co-detainee that he had been tortured. Floyd described the torture practices commonly

⁶ Webster, a Social Anthropologist, worked at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. He was assassinated in 1989. His companion, Maggie Friedman testified to the Commission on 3rd May, 1996 in Johannesburg. She accused the State and legal system of covering up his death. Ferdi Barnard, a member of the Apartheid State's covert organisation, the Civil Co-operation Bureau (CCB), later admitted to a journalist that he had killed Webster (Mail and Guardian, 21-27 November 1997: 23-4; Pauw, 1997). Barnard was tried and found guilty of Webster's death.

used against detainees: sleep deprivation, solitary confinement, suffocation and electric shocks. She explained that the combination of torture and solitary confinement was devastating to people with few defences left after the shock of capture. She argued that there was a fine line between detention and death: 'The fine line between life and death in those situations becomes a very fine line and death is clearly behind the detention system and it's not by chance that we regularly have death in detention'. She described a chronology of violence and traced changes in torture practices over the thirty-four years that the Commission investigated, making a clear and precise connection between Aggett's death and the systems that underpinned Apartheid, and linking the violent treatment of detainees to similar torture in other parts of the world. She argued that the Security Services still harboured people accused of abuse.

She testified with pedagogic intent, saying she felt it important that people who had taken little notice of the violence in the country, particularly white people, 'need to understand that ... while they may not have taken specific responsibility, they can't pretend that it didn't happen'. She added, 'I think it's critical that people do know — and not just about the events of 1981 or 1982'.

Like Nyameka Goniwe, Elizabeth Floyd presented her understanding of the State's persistent attempts to halt activism, indicating, through her familiarity with State processes, a kind of political literacy. Elizabeth Floyd's testimony was similar to many other women's in that she testified about a man. Yet her testimony differed from many others in that she did not identify herself as a victim but as someone imparting expert knowledge. Her credibility as a witness seemed predicated on her knowledge and the authoritative way she was able to present it to the Commission. Neil Aggett is named as a victim in the Commission's Report: Elizabeth Floyd is not.

In the two cases described above, the attention of the audience is focused on the stories of Matthew Goniwe and Neil Aggett, rather than on Nyameka Goniwe and Elizabeth Floyd. Their testimonies presented a coherent chronology of the State's attempts to control opposition, presented in accord with a detailed understanding of State structures and personal awareness of the processes of violence. The information was starkly given, presented linearly and with emotion carefully controlled. There are parallels between the testimonies I have described here and those of women who described themselves as political activists (see Chapter Three), most notably in the intimacy with State power implicit in the testimonies.

Elizabeth Floyd's testimony is, perhaps, more difficult to characterise than Nyameka Goniwe's in that she did not describe her relationship to Aggett (she was his partner and an activist) and presented herself as an expert witness. Testimony of this kind presented the speaker as someone who 'knows' and who has valuable information to impart. Nyameka Goniwe spoke from a single position of authority in this context — as what Mamphela Ramphele (1996) has called a 'political widow' of an activist. Widowhood is an ambiguous if not dangerous status. It was described by Sepati Mlangeni, who, on 2nd May 1996, described the Commission the death of her husband, Bheki Mlangeni, a human rights lawyer killed by a parcel bomb he received in 1990. Weeping, she said, 'Today I am a widow. I'm an outcast in our society because I'm a widow. In our community and our society you are associated with all sorts of things when you are a widow'. Ramphele shows that widowhood is state of ritual danger, a liminal state in which widows embody social dichotomies between female and male, sacred and profane, personal and political, and public and private. In their testimonies, few political widows directly imputed victimhood to self. Rather, as Ramphele shows, such women exemplify social memory, embodying the brutality of the State and the struggle of their menfolk.

Heroes as models: time and the domestic

The testimonies I now present differ from those described above in that they drew on narrative forms and tropes common to Southern African oral traditions. Writing about oral performances in Southern Africa, Harold Scheub (1975⁷, 1996 and 1998) suggests that, like culture, genres of oration shift and flow. He says, 'The oral tradition is never simply a spoken art: it is an enactment, an event, a ritual, a set of symbols, a performance' (1998: 126). Its conventions are flexible: Scheub (1998) points out that, 'Story is routinely recast in contemporary frames' (p. 296), and that, 'history is constantly being revisited and retold' (p. 21). In relation to the latter point, he describes the Commission as a new forum within which stories were performed (p. 292, endnote 5; see also Hofmeyr 1994). (I elaborate on the notion of 'story' in the Commission's work in Chapter Four.)

⁷ Scheub's early work (1975 and Zenani and Scheub 1992) is concerned with *iintsomi*, stories that have mythic or fictional underpinnings. Nevertheless, his analysis is pertinent to my argument regarding oral forms. My Xhosa-speaking informants described testimonies as *ibali* (stories based on fact) or *imbali* (histories). They used the root verb *ukungqina* for testify. In Xhosa, the 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' was translated into '*Ikomishoni yeNyani noXolelwaniso*'. *Xolelwaniso* has implications of forgiveness.

A successful performance is dependent on location (Hofmeyr 1994; Benjamin 1992 [1968]), audience imagination (Zenani and Scheub, 1992; see also Benjamin 1992 [1968]) and on emotion elicited through the patterning of performance's structural components — image, narrative, rhythm and trope (Scheub 1998: 6-15). These evoke emotional responses by drawing from three emotional sources: the life experiences and emotions of each member of the audience; the experience of past 'conjunctions' of stories; and the storyteller's own emotional history (Scheub 1998: 185). Scheub compares the resultant layering of meaning to the palimpsest (p. 240-242), which he describes as a delicate 'tracery of biography' (p. 242).

Testimonies that drew from oral tradition had deep cultural echoes, even as the contexts in which the forms were used were new. Audiences in Human Rights Violations hearings responded visibly and audibly and on occasion were warned to be silent, a warning that marked a radical break from traditional practices of listening. In their telling, women who used these forms invited audiences to participate with them in performances of memory and meaning, and drew audiences with them in the testimonial process. There was a taken-for-granted character to many of the testimonies: they were given before audiences who were often familiar with the context described in testimonies, if not the instance being described⁸. Testimonies were coloured with local knowledge and idiom and fixed to local and national events. They were often explicitly located within the domestic sphere. Some women were consummate tellers. They used rich metaphor, tone and gesture and drew on poetic language and performative convention to carry their meanings. Other women found it less easy to convey the complex stories they told: the setting, so unlike traditional spaces of telling⁹, was intimidating and the harm of which they spoke too great to bear easily in words.

⁸ The taken-for-granted nature of time in testimonies does not apply solely to testimonies that drew from oral literature forms: in both Nyameka Goniwe's and Elizabeth Floyd's testimonies there is little elucidation of the context of repression and resistance in which the deaths that they described occurred.

⁹ Traditional storytelling spaces have undergone radical change as a consequence of colonisation and Apartheid. Isabel Hofmeyr has argued that oral historical narrative relies on memory that has 'a close mnemonic relationship with place and location' (1994: 160). Her work examines what happens when 'people lose access to the topography that helps to uphold oral memory' (*ibid.*). Working in an Ndebele-Sotho chiefdom in what was then the Northern Transvaal and is now the Northern Province of South Africa, she traced changes in the forms and content of oral narratives that resulted from shifts in the topography of memory brought about by land loss, literacy and the changes in work patterns as a result of colonisation and Apartheid. Her work shows that oral traditions endure albeit in changed form. The most marked change has been a radical decrease in men's storytelling (usually drawing on historical narratives and told in public spaces) whereas women's storytelling (usually fictional and associated with the residential area of a homestead) continues.

There is perhaps an ease of empathy, a suspension of critical judgement, in listening and watching that is not present in the same way when reading testimonies. Gaps in information, poetic language, emphases, diversions, fluctuations in narrating time's flow create a rhythm in aural¹⁰ processes that may seem peculiar or limited when subjected to writing's linear rigour. Transcribed testimonies sometimes jar: events do not follow one another clearly, the narrative may seem incoherent, and the taken-for-granted nature of information and idiom does not easily survive transliteration. In places in the remainder of the Chapter I have edited the flow of testimonies in order to make clear the sequence of events and to draw out similarities and differences. Some testimonies required little intervention; where women have told the stories before, narrative forms have crystallised. In other cases, I have shaped the flow to render into words what was implicit in the performance.

Three stories by Noncebo Zokwe, Sylvia Dlomo-Jele and Eunice Miya tell about the deaths of their sons. I draw from their accounts themes that are reflected in other women's testimonies, and narrative forms that embed experience firmly in a domestic world marked by daily struggle.

On the 17th April 1996, shortly after Nyameka Goniwe had spoken of Matthew's death, Nonceba Zokwe testified about the death of her son, Sithembile. She introduced herself to the Commission by her clan name and place of origin:

I am Nonceba Zokwe, a daughter from the Nogaka Family at Inymakwe. I went to school from Sub A to higher primary until up to a teacher's certificate at Blyspoed. That is the certificate I got. As time went on I went to work only at two places, and I met an activist there called Siphabalala Zokwe.

She told the Commissioners of how she had met the man who was to become her husband, describing him as 'a propagandist of human rights'. At this point her story took on the lyric and rhythmic style that was to characterise it throughout the telling¹¹.

I went to work and I met the activist Siphabalala Zokwe. I met him there during the difficult times of struggle and oppression, when the government was removing people from place to place

¹⁰ Aural is used by David Coplan (1995) to describe the complex product of speaking and listening to oral performances among Basotho migrant labourers.

¹¹ Idiom was lost in the simultaneous translation of testimonies into English. Nevertheless, the lyric style and repetition characteristic of traditional forms remained in translation.

He would ride his horse every day, morning till night. My husband was fighting for human rights. We had children, the first one was Thobela, the second born was Sibongile, Sithembile was the third and Sibusiso, the last one.

Nonceba Zokwe continued with an account of her children's political activities. One son, Thobela, had escaped the illegal cross-border raid made by the South African Defence Force on Maseru, Lesotho in 1982, and had gone into exile, first to Zimbabwe and then to Austria. He returned to South Africa after the 1994 elections. Another son, Sithembile, had died. It was his story that she had come to tell.

As a schoolchild, Sithembile was involved in the struggle against the Apartheid regime, and, after writing his school-leaving examinations, he had left to join the liberation forces¹² in Botswana. He returned briefly to South Africa to tell his mother that he had joined 'the struggle' and then he left again for Lesotho, Angola and East Germany. The family received scant news of him. Mrs. Zokwe was told he had disappeared and later she learned from human rights lawyers that he had been arrested in Bophuthatswana, an 'independent homeland'. She was told he was being held in a prison in Soweto. Mrs. Zokwe sought her son. She wrote to the Commissioner of Police, and was told that Sithembile had been sent to Transkei (another of the 'independent homelands') to serve a prison sentence.

In 1988, after two years in prison, he returned to his mother's home at Butterworth. He told his mother about the taunts he levelled at the guards, whom he had addressed as 'oppressors', and she recounted them for the Commission:

And he said, 'Mum I was arrested in Bophuthatswana, and I was put into prison here in Soweto. [I told them] ... They must either charge me or release me.' He just stood by that fact. He went further to say, 'I was raised up, every morning, every afternoon, my family was fighting for their human rights, I want to destroy Apartheid.'

He found work at a liquor store, 'carrying beer up and down, in and out. He was in and out of jail also, accused of being a communist born of a communist mother.... It became clear that something would happen to him', his mother recalled. Sithembile had told his mother that the police would kill him and warned her to accept what would happen to him. She told the Commission that the police made three attempts on her son's life. On one of the three occasions he had been shot in the head and dumped into a river. Mrs Zokwe said that he had been rescued by 'God and the birds'. She did not elaborate on the attack or his survival but continued, telling the Commission that her son had carried on with his work as a political

¹² On 8th April 1960, the ANC and PAC were banned. The organisations established bases in neighbouring States and in 1963 the ANC launched its armed wing, Umkhonto We Sizwe (MK – Spear of the Nation). The PAC established APLA (the Azanian People's Liberation Army) in 1967.

activist: 'Then this youth would sit without doing anything. He did not want to do anything but the struggle.'

She had had dreams that she read as premonitory:

I dreamed that this child of mine was looking into death's eyes, and I think this was the second premonition on a Tuesday because I dreamed the same dream again.

In June 1988, Sithembile was killed. Mrs Zokwe related how she learned of his death. 'On that day I was [returning] from the wholesalers', said Mrs. Zokwe. 'I met him on his way to town with my grandchildren on his shoulders ... He saw me and hugged me.' She told him to go home and wait for her. She went to Chicken Licken (a fast-food outlet) where she was stopped and told that her son and his friend had been arrested¹³. Stopping at a salon, she was told the story again by passers-by, in more detail. She described to the Commission her return home where she saw a policeman silhouetted against the house, and where she was greeted by 'the leader of the Apartheid regime, a policeman, the head of the Security Branch, who said, "Here's that communist mother".' She had responded angrily: 'On these premises I am the government', and, when he threatened to kill her, she said, 'The only pain I know is the pain of giving birth.' She told the Commission that she had attempted to attack him and had been restrained by neighbours. She described trying to leap over the wall surrounding her property to reach her son near the police van in the street, and recalled: 'A few minutes later I heard the sound of a revolver. I knew I had to close my son's eyes, but I could not.' Amid threats from the police, the van reversed into the yard, breaking the gate and wall and destroying the flowers.

In response to questions from a panellist she explained 'I was hopeful that he was still alive, that he was just being arrested but I had this feeling that something terrible was happening to my son.' She did not describe how her son came to be in the van, nor how she later discovered her son was dead and his body in the State morgue. Instead, she continued her story with the search for her son, whom she feared dead. She visited the police station and hospital and a relative, a policeman, who promised to try to find out what had happened. She did not describe the complexities and ironies of asking her kinsman to assist her when he was employed as a policeman by the same government that her son — and she — was working against. She told the Commissioners that when she returned home without having found him, she saw signs of struggle everywhere. She listed them carefully: they included a burnt passage,

¹³ The time frame in her testimony became condensed at this point and it was not clear how much later she learned of his arrest. In the testimony, it appears that she heard of his arrest shortly after she had left him in the street.

bullet holes in walls, wardrobes and suitcases scattered on the floor, a patch of blood between the wardrobe and the bed, a jacket still hanging in the burned cupboard, and torn curtains. Her children were crying.

Then she moved to the identification of her son in the mortuary: 'He was on a stretcher, smiling in death. He would tell us to be strong ... He was dead but smiling ... I was proud because I *knew* why my child had died'. Later she described the return of the policeman who had promised to find out about her child. He had not performed the appropriate rituals to cleanse himself after her son's burial¹⁴. He came to the house but would not enter. He bore news that the policemen who had killed her child had been imprisoned but had escaped from prison. She greeted him and told him that her son had been buried and that he should wash his hands in a ritual to remove the polluting traces of contact with death.

Mrs. Zokwe's story was about her own experiences in relation to her child's death. In her story she described herself as protector of the child, as boss in her home, as mother. Later, when a Commissioner asked her about the source of her strength, she replied:

It depends on your upbringing ... My home was a traditional home ... Nobody was regarded as a stranger in this house ... We had the examples of heroes as models. They gave strength. I saw they could survive and therefore said I could survive, too. I *know* my struggle. I am proud of womanhood. It is womanhood which brought me this strength ... You have to decide for yourself who you are and what you'd like to be tomorrow.

Her testimony was elliptical; it used repetition and pause, gesture and silence, conventions drawn from oral culture that resonated strongly with audience members. Nonceba Zokwe saw her strength as being based on traditional values, and her narration gave form to these ideas. The largely black audience responded audibly to her narrative. Nods and repetition of well-known names punctuated her testimony. Some Commissioners nodded in response to her testimony. Others listened with impassive faces.

Other women used the metaphor of the domestic world differently. Eunice Miya, testifying on 23rd April 1996 in Cape Town, used the domestic world and chronological time as pegs on which to hang her experience of the death of her 23 year-old son, Jabulani, one of seven young men killed in what became known as the case of 'the Gugulethu Seven'. They were killed by police who claimed that the seven men were members of an MK cell and that

¹⁴ Death is considered polluting and after a burial relatives and neighbours wash their hands outside the homestead of the deceased person before entering and sharing food with the family.

they planned to ambush a police vehicle. In fact, the youths had been trained in weapons handling by *askaris*¹⁵ who had been briefed by the police to assist them and to report back on their activities to their 'handlers'. It appears that the youths had been tricked into a police ambush (Report, Volume Five: 451).

Eunice Miya told the Commission about how she learned of the death of her son:

On the 3rd of March 1986 I was working in offices in town. I left the house at half-past-four in the morning as usual, to be at work at six o'clock. Just before I left, my son [who lived in a room in the back yard] knocked on the door. I opened it – it was about quarter-past four or twenty-past – and he came and got bread and cold water and asked for two Rand. I said that I only had five Rand and would be short if I gave it to him. But I gave it to him because I wanted him to work. He said he wanted to accompany me to the station. I said 'This is the first time!', but he insisted.

He left to go to his bedroom and I closed and bolted the door. The garage is next to the house and he came through the garage and insisted on accompanying me. I was suspicious and I said 'Turn back', but he accompanied me to NY59 [a nearby street]. I told him to turn back. That was the last time I saw him. I went to work on the quarter-to-five train.

Her story is precisely located and framed: at a given time in the morning of a specific day, as she was preparing to go to work. It is placed squarely within the domestic domain that then introduces her position within the economy as she prepares for a double shift as a char, and her encouragement of her son's search for a job. The story is framed in space: the scene moves from the kitchen, now locked and bolted and secured from the dangers outside, to the garage, and outside into the street; from the relative security of domesticity into the unknown of the world at large. The story about her son's death is thus not simply the recall of an event, but of the conditions of life that characterised and shaped it.

The beginning of the day was marked in her mind because her son's behaviour was unusual; his insistence that he accompany her transformed it from an ordinary day into an extraordinary one. Her memory of the day indicates, retrospectively, a prescience of violent change. It points also to the ebb and flow of violence: Mrs Miya did not expect the intrusion of violence and death into her home, notwithstanding the contexts of violence, fear and repression that marked both that time (mid-1980s) and the place (a black township).

The way in which the story was placed in daily experience was sustained in the next part of her testimony in which she described hearing about the violence in Gugulethu that day. As usual, she went to clean offices and then went to work in a private home.

¹⁵ Members of liberation organisations who had been captured and 'turned' and who served the State.

I worked as usual, but at about half-past ten my boss, Mrs. ... came to me and said, 'Eunice.' I said, 'Madam.' She said, 'I heard on the news there are Russians [slang term for members of liberation organisation members, some of whom were trained in and received support from the USSR] in Gugulethu who were killed. Is your son in politics?' 'No', and I continued working.

At about two o'clock I went home. On the way I did the shopping, and caught the five o'clock train. [I arrived home] and put on the TV for the news. My daughter put it on.

[Pause while she cries. The panellists and audience are silent, waiting for her tears to subside.]

When the music started for the news, then I was told that seven children were killed by Russian guerrillas¹⁶. One was shown on TV with a gun on his chest and I saw it was my son. My daughter said, 'It's him!' I said, 'No. I saw him this morning and he was dressed warmly.' I prayed that the news would rewind.

Again, her testimony drew from her daily experiences; at work with the 'Madam', shopping, then the return home, watching the news with her daughter, and recalling what her child had worn that day. In her testimony, the mundane provides horrid counterpoint to the violence of loss.

Many of the women spoke explicitly about the loss of loved ones and how it changed their expectations of time, and of ageing. Sylvia Dlomo-Jele, testifying on 30th April 1996 at a hearing in Johannesburg, explained to the Commission that the death of her son, Sicelo, had altered her expectations of the future, and that his activism had affected her life. She explained,

The harassment and pain [we experienced] did not start when my child died. It started in 1985, when he began to be harassed by police as a student activist. He was harassed at school; the police and Defence Force went to the school and the headmaster would hide him with other children ... The house was petrol-bombed. I suffered a lot and my mother nearly died ... The police used to come in and out of my house and told me to tell my son not to be political.

In response to their warnings she said that she did not know what they were talking about, and that she knew nothing about politics. She passed on their warnings to her son, but he would not desist from his activities. Instead, concerned at the harassment of his family, he stopped sleeping at home and her expectations of family life, that, at least, children should sleep under the same roofs as their parents, were disrupted. She continued,

On the Wednesday before his death he came to me and said 'Mother, Father, I've come to sleep at home'. I was relieved because he had been sleeping with

¹⁶This appears to be a mistranslation. Seven youths were killed by the Security Forces.

other people or outside. He looked tired and had a headache. I used to give him my nerve tablets. A child, he knew what he was fighting for. He told us to be strong if he died; 'Pick up my spear and continue my struggle', he said.

I told him to sleep at home. He refused, saying that it would not be nice for his parents to see the police killing him. He left. He did not like to be followed, but I did so. I think he slept in the passage [the strip of ground separating houses].

On Saturday he phoned his aunt and told her to cook for him. He did not return on Saturday to fetch his food. We were worried, but prayed. On Sunday, while still preparing new food for him, at about ten o'clock, the phone rang. It was Sicelo who asked if I was okay, then kept quiet. I thought he did not have money for the phone. That was the last time I spoke to him. The next day the police arrived with his [Sicelo's] pocketbook. I said, 'Have you killed my son?' and he [the policeman] denied it.

The failure of her son to collect his meal was an indication that something was amiss, a further breach in a social order already shaped by Apartheid's intrusion. His mother had no means to ensure his well being: she could not even provide him with food and shelter. Prayer was her only remaining intervention but her prayers were to no avail. Sicelo's body was found under a tree in the bushlands. When the policeman who had identified the boy from his pocketbook and reported to his mother offered her a police escort, she refused and instead went to the site with a neighbour. There she found her dead son.

'The pain did not end there', Mrs Dlomo-Jele told the Commission. After identifying Sicelo's body, she went to the Protea Police Station to report his death. The policemen on duty accused her of having a 'big mouth' yet of being unable to control her own child. When her other son grew angry at their taunts he was detained. Later, at Sicelo's funeral, police threw teargas at the mourners and her niece almost suffocated as a result. Family members were harassed even after Sicelo's death. Mrs Dlomo-Jele suspected members of the South African Police of having killed her son. The murderers were not found. During a public hearing into violations committed by the 'Mandela United Football Club', a lead article in the Mail and Guardian (21-27 November 1997), stated that new evidence would emerge that would link Winnie Mandela-Madikizela to Sicelo Dlomo's death. On 31st January 1999, the Sunday Times newspaper ran a short front-page article that claimed that four men had applied for amnesty for killing Sicelo Dlomo. They were MK members. They claimed that Sicelo was killed because he was suspected of being a police informer. At the time of writing, the amnesty applications have not yet been heard in public. Sicelo Dlomo is not reported as a victim of gross violations of human rights in the Commission's report and nor is his mother.

Mrs. Dlomo-Jele's health suffered as a result of Sicelo's activism and death. At the Commission hearing, she spoke of the change in the shape of her future, saying that Sicelo had

been a good student who would have found work and supported her. Her husband's mental health was unstable and he had not worked for three years. Her own state of health prohibited her from regular work, and her expectations of support from Sicelo had been dashed. Her future was no longer predictable and the way she had envisaged time, prompted by cultural expectations that emphasise the obligations of children to parents, could not be fulfilled.

At the funeral, Mrs. Dlomo-Jele said, she was unable to mourn her child as her own (personal communication, November 1995). He had become a child of the community, a symbol of resistance. In the outpouring of public grieving that accompanied his funeral, she felt unable to acknowledge to herself the loss of her son. His death and burial became a public opportunity to make political statements that were otherwise impossible, a common occurrence at funerals of those killed by the police at the time. The children in the community had given her their lunch monies on that day in commemoration of the loss of her son. She explained to me that they did so because they recognised that her child would not be able to fulfil his obligations to her. For that day, at least, collectively, they took symbolic responsibility for her.

On 13th March 1999, Mrs Dlomo-Jele died. The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in Johannesburg, with which she had worked in establishing the Khulumani Support Group, a survivor support and lobby group, notified those of us who knew or had met her. The message, sent by email, stated:

Her son, Sicelo Dlomo, lost his life on the path to freedom in South Africa. Sylvia not only completed his journey while carrying the heavy burden of his death, but took many with her. Ironically, in the end, it was the stress of his death and the partial truths about him being killed by his fellow comrades that were too much for her. In this regard she symbolises the plight of so many in South Africa who have only been left with half-truths about the past. Her death reminds us that it is people like Sylvia who ultimately paid the price for the democracy we now enjoy ...

The layering of experience

Many women seemed to testify to *layers* of experience entwined in wide sets of social relations. Hidden in the discourses of domesticity are powerful forms of knowledge and agency, that need to be recognised and sensitively heard. Four themes emerge from the testimonies of Nyameka Goniwe, Elizabeth Floyd, Nonceba Zokwe, Eunice Miya and Sylvia Dlomo-Jele as resonant with the testimonies of most women who spoke before the Commission. These have to do with experiences of family life; with expectations of time; with silence and secrecy and the location of self in stories. Each weaves through the others.

Family and the domestic

Many women testified about their losses using metaphors drawn from their domestic roles. It seems that women used domesticity, a space over which women usually have more control than other spheres, to map the interpolations of violence in their lives. Perhaps domesticity is used to mark a world that is relatively ordered and predictable, in which kinship relations have a degree of coherence, and time, too, flows predictably — ‘as usual’. The domestic metaphor encompasses family life. Stories told using domestic tropes were not concerned only with an event but with the contexts of daily life, in which women are linchpins as they seek to make and maintain homes, to work and raise children. Women’s testimonies, largely about the loss of men, explicitly and implicitly indicated male absences. Women testified about the death and disappearance of men, yet were silent on the subject of men as actors in their domestic worlds¹⁷. Indeed, it is this silence about the presence of men in family life that draws attention to the contingencies of the domestic in South Africa: women told of the disruption of family life at many levels by the State and by the political activities of loved ones. They spoke of the ways that families were separated and of their efforts to secure families under the harsh conditions imposed by Apartheid.

Women’s efforts were not confined to the immediate locales of home, neighbourhood or community. In their testimonies they described the distances they travelled in order to find lost kin or to obtain news of them. They sought lost ones in police stations and mortuaries, in hospitals and prisons. They travelled to nearby towns and across borders to Lesotho, Botswana, Zambia, Angola and Tanzania. The search as motif is diffuse, spanning huge geographical spaces and long periods of time. Women testifying before the Commission still sought a proper end to their quest: the return of a body, its correct burial, appropriate reparations, and, sometimes, retributive justice.

Women described their attempts to protect family members. Frequently they were violent in their responses to State incursions into the domestic realm: Nonceba Zokwe shouted that on her property she was boss, even as a policeman was aiming a gun at her and trying to arrest her son. Eliza Adonis told the Commission that she hit a policeman on the head with a chair when he came to arrest her son (Kimberley hearing, 10th June 1996). Sometimes, as in Mrs Zokwe’s case, they confronted harm-doers with strength drawn from personal conviction and sanctified by the spirit and actions of resistance within a family or community.

At other times their efforts to avert violence and hold it at a distance were less successful. It is important to recognise the points at which efforts to secure families were unsuccessful and the pain that might endure in the recognition of a failure to keep harm at bay. The 'trace' (Werbner 1998:76) left by violence may wound in its recall. For example, Maria Mthembu recalled that her brother had been killed 'by accident' by police who were seeking her (Gauteng, 29th April, 1996). The death of one child in lieu of another points to the ways in which the body was not necessarily a signifier of individuality to the State (see discussion in Chapters Four and Five). In another testimony, Amina Abrahams testified in Cape Town on 2nd June 1996 at a Special Event Hearing into the 'Trojan Horse' incident in which, on 18th October 1985, policemen hid behind crates piled on a truck and fired on children in a street in Athlone, a suburb of Cape Town. The police claimed that they had acted in self-defence against violent children. One child, Shaun Ryklief, was killed and several children were injured. Amina Abrahams told the Commission that prior to the shooting, she had accompanied her two sons to 'Muslim school' and had passed the afternoon with Shaun's mother while waiting for them to finish their lessons. Later, she saw that the street, earlier empty save for a police vehicle patrolling, was full of people, mostly children, and, worried that their presence on the streets rather than in school indicated something out of the ordinary, she decided to collect her children early. While they were walking home, Mrs Ryklief stopped them and told her it was unsafe. Amina Abrahams reported to the Commission that she had been afraid and had a premonition that something bad would happen. She went indoors with Mrs Ryklief and shortly thereafter, heard shots: the police were shooting through the windows into the house. The women ran outdoors to search for their children. Mrs Ryklief found that one of her sons had taken refuge in the chicken coop at the back of the house. Crouching in a corner, he had strangled each chicken to stop the squawking from giving him away to the police patrolling the alley behind the coop. Amina Abrahams, screaming, gathered her children into her arms and ran into the bedroom. There she found Shaun lying in a pool of blood at the head of the bed and another child beneath it, also bleeding. Her sons were injured too but their blood was hidden against the maroon jerseys they wore. As she cradled them on the bed, the door burst open and a policeman came inside and aimed a gun directly at her. Mrs Abrahams believes that he was about to shoot them when another man came in and stopped him and called for an ambulance.

¹⁷ My thanks to Linda Waldman for pointing out the absence of representation of men in women's testimonies.

Amina Abrahams' testimony horrifies. It illustrates the kinds of counter-intuitive knowledge necessary to survive in conditions of violence. The young Ryklief child strangled the possible sources of betrayal but the presence of violence rendered Amina Abrahams vocal: she screamed and in so-doing focused the attention of the police on her and the children. In an inversion of conventional wisdom, the child knew better how to deal with the situation than did the adult. Her memory of the event wounded in its recall; like many other testifiers, she wept as she spoke.

The testimonies point to the contingencies of home and of domesticity. Locked doors could not protect families from either random or directed violence; individual activism brought harassment and death to kin. The emphasis on domestic context in women's speech highlights the failures of home to protect and contain. The care with which women detailed their domestic worlds and time points to the depths of State irruption in them.

Time and Continuity

Earlier, I described Sylvia Dlomo-Jele's expectations of a time when her child would provide for her, and how these expectations were changed by her child's death. Her expectations are paralleled in the story that Nokiki Gwedla told to the Commission in Cape Town, on the 24th April 1996. She explained that she had been brought from her rural home by her son Zongesile Kopololo, who had built a shack for her in Crossroads. Three weeks after she arrived in the city he was shot by police during the *witdoek* violence of the mid-1980s¹⁸. He was badly injured: Mrs Gwedla told the Commission that he still has difficulty in speaking, that his arm is lame and that 'bullets' remain lodged in his skull. Their roles are now reversed: instead of being cared for in her old age, she looks after her disabled son, abandoned by her husband 'because he could not stay with an abnormal son', afraid to sleep because her son roams the streets. In response to a question about her feelings posed by a Commissioner, she said bitterly,

There are many things about my child that are affecting me. ... I told myself that I wished that he was dead, I would be happy if he was dead, but now I

¹⁸The mid-1980s were marked by extreme violence throughout the country. In the Cape there were on-going conflicts between *witdoeke* ('white cloths' — the name given to vigilantes who covered their heads with white fabric) and surrounding squatter camps aligned to progressive political organisations such as youth, women's and civic organisations and unions aligned to the UDF. The *witdoeke* were widely believed to be aligned with the police. (See Cole, 1987, Volume Two of the Commission's Report: 306-308. and Volume Three: 463-474.)

have to work and I have to take care of such an old man. But sometimes when I am alone it becomes too much for me.

Her story, told to the Commission with her son seated beside her, is echoed in the words of women, who spoke of the expectations they had held of their (male) children, spouses and kin. Frequently prefaced with 'He was a good boy', or 'He was good in school, and would have supported me', or in Mrs. de Bruin's words, 'My son was like a daughter to me' (Worcester hearing, 25th June, 1996), the women's requests of the Commission were oblique. Yet implicit in their testimonies and requests were commentaries about the ideal shape of social relationships, the role of the family, the kinds of support that should be available to the aged. Sindiswa Mkhonto, speaking about the death of her husband, Sparrow, at the hands of the Security Forces, said, 'Because I have no husband, my child has no father ... Today I don't have a husband and my son has no father. The family is lost' (East London, 16th April, 1996).

Sometimes change was predicted. Many testifiers reported dreams and portents that marked an expectation of horror. As stated in one of the testimonies I described earlier, Nonceba Zokwe told the Commission that on two occasions before the death of her son Sithembile, she had dreamt that her child was looking into death's eyes. Nonthuthuzelo Mphelo testified to the Human Rights Violations Committee on 18th April 1996 about the death of her husband, who was accused by his neighbours of having betrayed Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko to the police. Nonthuthuzelo reported that her husband had told her, 'A person dies only once. Take this as an indication that I will die'. Mary Mabilo, who testified in Kimberley on 11th June 1996 about the death of her son, told the Commission that she had lain abed the night of his death and wondered, 'Whose child is being killed at this moment?'. She had gone outdoors, troubled, and, feeling that 'God was sending a message', she had knelt and prayed. Monica Qaba, a resident in Zwelethemba, who made a statement but did not testify about her son's death in exile, dreamt that she was walking alone in a desert. A river of blood ran across her path and as she waded in the blood a woman's voice told her to go no further. Mrs Qaba was deeply distressed by the dream and sought advice from neighbours who told her to go to church. While she was in church, the rumour of her son's death was brought to neighbours.

Among African people, dreams and premonitions are experiences that lie within ordinary registers and are widely held to be offerings from the ancestors who frequently require ritual intervention in response. Dreams may guide or warn. Yet in the context of Apartheid South Africa, forewarned did not necessarily mean forearmed. The dreams and premonitions were recalled retrospectively in women's testimonies as markers of beginnings of drastic change, markers, in a sense, of endings. They touched time and expectations of its usual flow with dread and the grotesque, the unimaginable and the unspeakable.

Silence and Secrecy

Women spoke about secrecy and the multiple levels at which activism and violence created silences within family life. Some women claimed not to know that children, husbands, kinsfolk were politically involved. Sylvia Dlomo-Jele (see above), for example, used the claims of ignorance to resist police demands for information about her kinsmen. Nqabakazi Godolozzi said that she and her husband used passwords to identify themselves before they entered their own house. Secrecy shaped conversation, too; information about activism was hidden from parents and children, sometimes even from spouses. Silences and secrecy played themselves out in gender struggles, and in conflict over roles. 'We are not allowed to ask our husbands about politics in my culture', was Feziwa Mfeti's wry comment (East London, 16th April, 1996), a comment that was greeted with nods and laughter from the audience, and later confirmed by Govan Mbeki's commentary to the Commission. A stalwart of the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa and in exile, Mbeki told the Commission of the difficulties that family life had generated in the early days of the struggle:

After work we went into the township to educate. The police were looking for meetings. So when you left you did not tell your wife where you were going, and when you returned, at twelve or one in the morning, they were asleep and your food was on the stove ... Women created problems for the [liberation] movement because they wanted to know (Cape Town hearings, 28th April, 1996).

Women's efforts to secure families and the safety of loved ones was sometimes read by men as interference. Sheila Masote, who testified before the Commission's special hearing on women in Johannesburg in July 1997, told the Commission that the PAC, of which her father, Zeph Mathopeng, had been President, had discouraged women's political involvement. Describing herself as member of 'a family that had been through the struggle', she detailed the effects of her father's activism on herself and her family. She spoke about her father's absences, her mother's illness, harassment and arrests, and her own anger with her mother for not confronting her father and demanding that he cease his political activities. She explained to the Commission,

Then, the PAC's policy was that women should stay home, should not participate. That is why ... even when the toyi-toyi¹⁹ ... was for us ... the policy was looked after [i.e. adhered to]. It was all by way of trying to say,

¹⁹ Toyi-toyi. A rhythmic chanting accompanied by dance performed during diverse forms of protest – marches, rallies, protests, funerals. It was powerful, creating a strong sense of unity and cohesion in a group through physical exertion, an enactment of collective goals and a clear identification of 'the enemy'.

'when we [i.e. men] go to jail, when we go out to be killed, you look after the children The husbands would not share much.

Men's efforts to secure safety differed from women's and the differences created tensions within households and sometimes even within the individual, as Sheila Masote pointed out:

I've always said I don't seem to [have] an identity that [belongs] to me. I'm always Zeph's daughter, Mathopeng's daughter or Mike Masote's wife. Or no ... Zef Masote's mother. But no, I feel I am me.

Her claim, 'I feel I am me', speaks to the difficulties of maintaining a coherent sense of self in conditions of violence, oppression and resistance, a point to which I return in Chapter Three.

The location of self

The Commission instituted Special Hearings on Women because of the 'failure' of women to testify about themselves. Yet personal suffering was not lacking from women's reports in public hearings: submerged, but structuring the form and cadence of their narratives, women spoke of the effects on their own lives of the ruptured lives of others. Most testimony began with an event in which the speaker was firmly located as witness in space and time. Sometimes Commissioners sought this information but even when it was not requested, women prefaced their stories by placing themselves firmly in the plot. Yet one is required to listen carefully to hear precisely where it is that women placed themselves. For example, when speaking to the Commission about Neil Aggett, Elizabeth Floyd did not state that she had been a political activist. Her political consciousness and its price were implicit in the way she framed her statements, prefacing them with comments such as 'When I was released from detention'. Other women positioned themselves differently, but notwithstanding the differences, the testimonies they gave to the Commission implicated self almost immediately. They did so through explicit reference to the effects of loss on women's well-being and through metaphor. Sylvia Mabija, for example, speaking in Kimberley on 10th June 1996, commenced her testimony about the death of her brother in 1977 while in detention; 'On the 7th of June, the police came. *We were all in the dining room*²⁰. They came with Phaki who was haggard ...'. Nonceba Zokwe's political consciousness was evident in her statements about her son, whom the police sought for being 'a communist born of a communist mother'. Sylvia Molekeli, testifying in Kimberley on June 10th 1996, framed her statement in time; 'It was the 16th of June 1993, in the morning, between nine and ten. *We were toyi-toying*, just a small group of

²⁰ All emphases in this paragraph are mine.

people'. (The framing was significant to a wider community: June 16th was a day of mourning and protest throughout the country in memory of the young people who were killed when police opened fire on protesting students in Soweto in 1976. The event is now remembered in a public holiday on June 16th, Youth Day. The words, 'June 16th' immediately evoke a particular context of violence and located her position within it as the day was commemorated by many opposed to Apartheid but the State did not recognise it as a special day.) Mabu Makhumane said: 'When Christopher died, *I was with my younger daughter*. I was very ill.' (10th June 1996). Busiswe Kewana's testimony opened with a comment on the separation of families: '*While I was in Grahamstown [at school], I received a telegram from my grandmother to say my mother had died [in Colesburg]. She was burned.*'²¹ (Cape Town hearings, 24th April, 1996).

The harm wrought on others changed women's lifestyles and expectations. In their testimonies they explicitly identified their health as having suffered as a consequence of the harm done to those about whom they testified. Drawing from testimonies made by women during hearings held in the Eastern Cape, Ruth Smithyman and Glynnis Lawrence (1999) argue that women 'were ... more likely than men to talk about the psychosomatic and psychological problems experienced' (p.3). Many women attributed ill health, particularly 'high-blood' or 'low-blood' (pressure), diabetes, stress and dizziness to the losses and anxieties they suffered. The objective correlates for these conditions are not clear, although the Commission records that, 'There is also evidence that people exposed to trauma, even indirectly, are more likely to develop stress-related illnesses such as heart disease and high blood pressure' (Volume Five: 141). This is confirmed in material drawn from other parts of the world. Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman (1994) have suggested that in conditions of state-sponsored violence, bodily symptoms can also be read as forms of circumspect social criticism (see also Desjarlais and Kleinman 1994; Scheper-Hughes 1992).

In describing and analysing the somatic components of loss, Smithyman and Lawrence argue that another's pain can indeed be shared – a point to which I return below. What is clear from their work is that even expectations of health and the security were affected in the aftermath of loss and damage.

²¹ People suspected by members of their communities of having been police informers were sometimes set alight and burnt to death. Sometimes the method of burning was to fill a car tyre with paraffin or petrol and put it around the victim's neck before setting it alight. This method was known as 'necklacing'.

The Commission identified women as 'secondary witnesses' because they seldom described their own experiences of gross violations of human rights. Yet the wealth of detail about their daily lives indicates the variety of harms to which people were exposed under Apartheid. The subtlety of testimonies raises problems to do with listening. Researchers need to recognise the delicacy of the forms through which women report violence and to take note of what it is that they say. Different ways of telling require that attention be differently focused. Some women represented their experiences in narrative forms that appeared on the surface to mark silence and absence but in their testimonies about others, women told of their own experiences. Their telling was couched in metaphor and implied in the narrative structure of stories and their performance. Some women drew from oral tradition while others spoke in clipped speech. Some spoke using forms rounded with rhetoric and gesture, others in words bleached by pain. Part of what women described to the Commission concerned the disruption of the communal, the social, cultural expectations of time and place. Women described the absences of men, the diffusion of family over extended spaces, the silences that activism wrought, and the effects of these silences on the ways that their political consciousness and personal identities could be shaped and expressed both at the time and in the present. They told about the ways that daily life was shaped by Apartheid and of their attempts to oppose the ordinariness of oppression, to maintain families in the face of great odds: aspects of experience that need to be witnessed.

It is, perhaps, in these kinds of stories rather than those which speak more directly to the experience of violation, that the breadth of Apartheid's degradation is revealed. The laments over violence and destruction offered in testimonies bear the weight of pain that go beyond the individual. Hidden within women's words are narratives of the destruction of kinship, of the alteration of time's expected flow, of the power of economies in shaping experience, of the intrusion of the State, and of women's determined attempts to create and maintain families. Read together, the accounts describe the penetration of violence into everyday life. The fact that the contexts of violence were so little elucidated – their taken-for-granted presence in testimonies – is evidence of the power of Apartheid in shaping the everyday.

Researchers need to develop ways to 'hear' the effects of the dissolution of the everyday, the taken for granted nature of time and relationships that underlie the testimonies of

many women. The question that arises is how those who listen²² — whether the audiences of the public hearings, or of television and radio — are to witness the stories that women told and those that were left unsaid. The form of witnessing matters. Scholars need ways to map the reverberations of violence and horror outwards from the individual to kin and friends and communities. The physical experience of pain is but a part of a far wider destruction that is the legacy of Apartheid. The Commission interpreted its mandate to investigate gross violations of human rights as a responsibility to focus on rights to bodily integrity. Yet by focusing too closely on bodily experience, we narrow our gaze and close our ears, failing to hear the experiences of which women speak. A focus solely on the body and its violation fixes experience in time, in an event, and draws attention away from ways of understanding of that experience as a process that endures across bodies and through time.

At the same time, witnessing needs to take into account that which is left unsaid in testimonies. What was taken for silence in women's speech is meaningful. I suggest not that we excise and excavate words in order to reveal women's experiences, but that we reformulate a context, in which, as in music, the silences give meaning.

Veena Das, quoting Wittgenstein, asks whether it is not possible to experience another's pain in one's own body (1996: 69-71). For her, the question begins to provide a philosophical grammar for the exploration and experience of pain; pain becomes amenable to expression and sharing, rather than being that point at which language fails, thereby demarcating the self most distinctly from the world, as Elaine Scarry (1985) and Lawrence Langer (1991) have it. Pain is not confined to the individual body, in Das's formulation, but is shared and possibly transformed by the relationships between people. Das argues that failure to recognise an affirmation of pain ('I am in pain') is to participate in and perpetuate violence. Drawing from a question posed by Wittgenstein about the possibility of experiencing another's pain in one's body, she suggests that pain be considered 'as asking for acknowledgement and recognition'. She continues,

Denial of the other's pain is not about the failings of the intellect but the failings of the spirit. In the register of the imaginary, the pain of the other not only asks for a home in language but also seeks a home in the body (1996: 88).

The recognition of pain rests on words and on an acknowledgement of the validity of silence (or the apparent erasure of self) as a means of communicating particular kinds of

²² There was no opportunity for interaction between audiences and testifiers in the hearings, and Commissioners' responses to testifiers were often formulaic. In Chapter Four I describe the interactions between a testifier, a Commission member and members of the testifier's home community, showing the differences in how her testimony was constructed and received.

experience. Das proposes that some horror is not and cannot be articulated, arguing that it is silence that marks particular kinds of knowing, and that silence is gendered. In other words, silence is a legitimate discourse on pain but needs to be recognised as such. Das's argument differs from that of Langer, who also writes of the inexpressibility of some experiences of horror and pain (1996; 1995; 1991). Das is insistent that the silence of Indian women about the violations they experienced during the Partition that divided Pakistan from India is an act of conscious agency. Langer argues that massive violence, as in Holocaust experience, are not knowable in common language and that time is fractured in such a way as to make experience unrepresentable. Showing how some women *create* silence out of their experiences of violation, Das points to constructions of agency that do not lie in linguistic competency but in the refusal to allow that competency; in the ability to *do* something with the experience, namely to hold it inside, silent. As she comments elsewhere, '...in reading history we must learn how to read silences, for the victim rarely gets an opportunity to record his or her point of view' (1987: 13; see also Das 1997).

The Commission's work relied on giving words to experience. Yet, women's 'silence' can be recognised as language. To do so requires carefully probing the cadences of silences, the gaps between fragile words, in order to hear what it is that women say. Words can be weapons; giving voice to the voiceless, the specific aim of the Commission, assumes, perhaps patronisingly, that the world is knowable only through words and that to have no voice is to be without language, unable to communicate. The testimonies reported here suggest otherwise.

Chapter Three

Negotiating Extremity

I carried the truth like a mountain: it was heavy like a mountain.

(El Sa'awadi, 1991: 21)

University of Cape Town

The previous Chapter considered the nature of women's testimonies, tracing their experiences of daily life under Apartheid through their words about the harms inflicted on others. Their testimonies are perhaps best described as lamentations, forms of sorrowing and grieving¹. Although predominant in testimonial patterns, these were not the only ways of describing the violence inflicted in the Apartheid past. The present Chapter describes the testimonies offered by women who were active in resistance to the State². The Commission Report does not differentiate between political activists and others. Owing to the fact that those who were members of liberation organisations or organisations of opposition to Apartheid seldom testified before the Human Rights Violations Committee (see Table Five), and that when they did testify they did so in ways that differed considerably from women who were not activists, I have drawn a distinction between 'activists' and others. These women bore witness drawing on different narrative techniques and tropes from those used by other testifiers. The testimonies offered by activists focused the attention on violence located in specific spaces, usually those of detention and imprisonment. Their stories of harm describe the State as the locus of blame, and resistance to Apartheid as a moral good.

In the Chapter, I draw on testimonies given at hearings of the Human Rights Violations Committee that I attended (see Chapter Two). I also draw on testimonies from Women's Hearings held in Cape Town (7th August, 1996), Durban (24th October, 1996), Johannesburg (29th July, 1997). The hearings were aimed at eliciting from women descriptions of their

¹ The patterning of testimony bears resemblance to conventions of mourning elsewhere in the world, where it is often women's work to lament the dead. See for example, Nadia Seremetakis (1991), who shows that through rituals women perform at death, death is witnessed and given social meaning.

² My definition of activists is broader than that currently in use by the State. For the purposes of providing pensions to activists, the State recognises as activists 'persons who made sacrifices or served the public interest in the cause of establishing a democratic constitutional order' through the Special Pensions Act No. 69 of 1996. The Act lays down stringent eligibility criteria for prospective pensioners, predicated on age and sustained engagement with either a liberation organisation or against the State. The applicant must have been over 35 years of age in 1996. S/he must have served for at least five years as an active member of a political organisation that, before 2nd February 1990 (the date that a number of political parties were unbanned), was restricted or unlawful, and that had a permanent governing body. Or s/he must have been banned, banished, imprisoned or detained for political activities. The definition does not recognise the key role played by young people in 'the struggle' and favours those in exile and those operating 'Underground' at the expense of those engaged in or organising mass protest and resistance. To date some 31 000 people have applied for Special Pensions, although very few applications have yet been processed. Administrators are unable to differentiate between male and female applicants (A. van Heever, personal communication 18th March 1999). The eligibility criteria that shape access to the Special Pension posit a particular interpretation of the past: that 'the struggle' was fought (and won) by commissars and military people and not through popular protest. My definition of activists differs in this regard – I have defined as activists those people who were members of and actively involved in sustained anti-Apartheid protest or clandestine anti-Apartheid activities. I include the UDF and its affiliated organisations in this definition.

experiences of violation, especially rape. Some women, styled as having particular expertise on the basis of their personal experiences and professions, spoke at Institutional Hearings. I have used testimonies given on 21st and 22nd July 1997 at a special hearing on Prisons in the former prison, The Fort, in Johannesburg.

Table Five describes the political affiliations of women who testified about their own experiences of violation during these hearings. The Table identifies the hearing, the name of the testifier, the human rights violation, the date of violation, the organisation to which the testifier claimed allegiance, the political activities in which the testifier was involved, and the victim status of the testifier as reported in the 1998 Report. The representation in the Table is based on information available from the testimonies and may not necessarily represent people's affiliations with complete accuracy as Commission representatives in public hearings did not always seek testifiers' political affiliations.

The shading on the Table represents testifiers' political commitments. Red represents those whose affiliations with anti-Apartheid organisations were explicitly stated in their testimonies, blue indicates those women whose claims to particular political identities were implicit, yellow indicates those employed by the State and an absence of colour indicates testifiers who presented themselves as politically disengaged.

From the Table, fifty-five women came before the Commission to testify about their own experiences of human rights violations at specified public hearings of the Human Rights Violations Committee. Sixteen women testifiers were not affiliated with political or mass movements. One woman, Marina Geldenhuys, worked as a secretary for the Air Force and was injured in a bomb blast. In two cases, political identification is not clear. Ivolyne de Bruin, who was tried in connection with what has come to be known as the Uppington Twenty-Six case, found 'guilty by association' and incarcerated, did not state a political affiliation. She told the Commission that her arrest, trial and imprisonment were wrongful. Ntobeko Feni appeared briefly before the Human Rights Violations Committee hearing in Cape Town in April 1996 where she provided supporting evidence for Lucas Sikwepere who described being injured in a confrontation with the police in Cape Town in 1985. Mrs Feni was also injured in the attack.

Using elliptical language, five women implied that they were engaged in political activities. For example, Ellen Moshweu said she was detained 'at the toyi-toyi', implying that she had been engaged in protest activities. Nomatise Tsobileyo said that she was 'with the comrades' at a 'protest' against forced removals when she was injured with birdshot. Dee Dicks, who described her detention, spoke about joining youth protests. Sylvia Moleleki was at 'umzabalazo, [Zulu - 'the struggle'] toyi-toyiing' when she was shot by police.

Table Five. Women's political identities as these were declared in specified public hearings.

DATE, PLACE AND TYPE OF HEARING	NAME OF TESTIFIER	HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS (HRV)	DATE	AGE AT HRV	ORGANISATION AFFILIATION	ACTIVITIES	VICTIM STATUS
April 1996 - East London, HRV	Beth Savage	Injured in bombing by PAC	1992	Not given	-		Yes
April 1996 – Cape Town, HRV	Nomakula Zweni	Detained/assaulted by police	1960, 1977, 1978	Not given	ANC? Civic	Organised pass protest, 1960. Exile?	No
	Nomatise Tsobileyo	Injured in forced removal	1985	Not given	Indirect association of self with 'comrades'	Protest	Yes
	Nontobeko Feni	Injured by police	1985	Not given	-		No
April-May 1996 – Johannesburg, HRV	Marina Geldenhuys	Injured in bomb blast	1983	± 20	SADF		Yes
	Mamgotle Mohale	Detained, torture	1976	26	Student Christian Movement	Help people cross border into exile	Yes
	Shanti Naidoo	Torture	???	28	Indian Congress		Yes
May 1996 – Durban, HRV	Helen Kearney (& clients)	Injured in bombing by ANC	1985	Not given	-		Yes
	Tryphina Jokweni	Detention, torture	1987	63	ANC (MK?)	Help people cross border into exile	Yes
June 1996 – Kimberley, HRV	Ellen Moshweu	Injured at funeral by police	1990	Not given	Indirect association of self with 'comrades'	'toyitoyi'	Yes
	Sylvia Moleleki	Injured by police	1993	Not given		'toyitoyi'	Yes
July 1996 – Worcester, HRV	Yvonne Khutwane	Detained, torture, sexual assault by police	1985	45	ANC Civic		Yes
	Mina Day	Injured by police, possible sexual violation	1986	Pensioner	-		Yes
	Nowowo Tsenze	Injured by police	1985	Not given	-		Yes
	Annaleen Abrahams	Injured by police	1990	Not given	-		Yes

August 1996 – Cape Town, HRV/Women’s Hearing	Shirley Gunn	Detention, arrest, torture, wrongful accusation and imprisonment	1990	± mid-30s	ANC-MK		‘Underground activities’	Yes
	Monica Daniels	Injured by police	1985	Teenager	-			Yes
	Zubeida Jaffer	Detained, torture	1980, 1985	± mid-20s	ANC		Journalist, trade union organiser	Yes
August 1996 – Beaufort West, HRV	Zanele Zingxondo	Detained, torture	1986	± mid-20s	Youth organisations			Yes
	Rosi Hugo	Detained, torture	1986	Not given	Civic			Yes
	Nonight Qayi	Detained, torture	1985	Not given	ANC ?			Yes
October 1996 – Upington, HRV	Ivolyn de Bruin	Detained, arrested, tried	1985	54	?			Yes
October 1996 – Paarl, HRV	Lizzy Phike	Detained	1985	Not given	Women’s organisation			Yes
	Maria Segrys	Injured by police	1990	Not given	-			Yes
October 1996, Durban, Women’s Hearing, HRV	Sophia Liphoko	Injured by police	1986	Not given	-			Yes
	Sylvia Dlamini	Detention without trial, torture	1986?	15	UDF, ‘comrade’		Political education	Yes
	Unnamed by request	Assault and rape by Inkatha member or vigilantes (not clear from testimony)	1992	Not given	-			Yes
	Unnamed by request	Abduction and rape by ‘comrades’	1992	16	-			Yes
	Marie Magwaza	Police harassment, detention, solitary confinement	1985?	Not given	Links to various organisations, including NUSAS and ECC			No
	Virginia Mkhwanazi (Mbatha)	Police harassment, detention, torture, solitary confinement	1986	Not given	UDF		Assisted people cross border	Yes

	Ntombenkulu Ngubane	Police harassment, banning orders, detention, solitary confinement	1963	23	ANC		Yes
	Dorah Mkhize	Rape (by Inkatha members? Testimony unclear)	1990	35	-		Yes
	Stephanie Kemp	Solitary confinement, torture	1964	23	Communist Party, ARM		Yes
	Phyllis Naidoo	Arrest, detention, restriction and banning orders, exile	1960-1976, 1977	Not given	ANC?	'underground operative'	Yes
	Fatima Meer	Detention, banning orders, arson, assassination attempt	1952-1985	Not given	Natal Indian Congress, ANC, Black Women's Federation		No
November 1996 – 'Pollsmoor hearing', Cape Town, HRV	Amina van Dyk	Injured by police	1985	30	-		Yes
May 1997 – 'Children's hearing', Cape Town, HRV	Dee Dicks	Detained, imprisoned	1985	17	Youth organisation?		Yes
	Sandra Adonis	Detained	1987	15	Bonteheuwel Military wing		Yes
May 1997, 'Trojan Horse hearing', Cape Town, HRV	Zainab Rykklief	Injured by police	1985	Not given	-		Yes
July 1997, Johannesburg, Prison Hearing (special event hearing)	Deborah Marakalala	Detention, assault (while pregnant), solitary confinement	1986	Not given	Church organisation/advice office	'helping the youth and comrades'	No
	Jean Middleton	Imprisonment	1964	Not given	Communist Party		Yes
	Zahrah Narkedien	Detention, torture, solitary confinement	1986	Not given	ANC - MK		Yes
	Theresa Ramashamola	Death row	1984	24	-	-	?+

July 1997, Women's Hearing, Johannesburg, HRV	Kedibone Dube	Rape by 'comrade'	1992	?	-		Yes
	Deborah Jokazi	Injured in grenade attack (by rival unionists?)	1992	Not given	Food and Allied Worker's Union		Yes
	Winnie Makhubela	Rape by hostel residents	1993	14	-	-	Yes
	Joyce Marubini	Detention, assault	1986	Not given	Youth congress, Phalaborwa	Executive member of youth organisation	Yes
	Sheila Masote	Detention, torture	1977	Not given	-	(Father was PAC head)	Yes
	Deborah Matshoba	Detention, torture	1976	Not given	South African Students Organisation	Organise student protest	No
	Thandi Mavuso	Arson, shot (not clear by whom)	1992	Not given	ANC		No
	Jubi Mayet	Detention, banning	1977, 1978	Not given	Union of Black Journalists		?*
	Lita Mazibuko	Detention by ANC, Rape by 'Comrades'	1988, 1993	Not given	ANC - MK	Assist people cross into exile (Swaziland) and infiltrate MK soldiers into South Africa	Yes
	Nozibonela Mxathule	Attempted rape by informer, Assault by police	1991	Teenager	Youth Congress		Yes
	Joyce Sikhakhane Ranken	Detention, torture	1969	± mid-20s	ANC?	Investigative journalist DPSC	No
	Thandi Shezi	Assault, Detention, Torture, Rape	1988	± mid-20s	Youth congress and Women's organisations	Transporting arms	Yes

Source: transcripts of hearings and Commission Report, 1998, Volume Five

* = In two instances women may have been identified in the Report by different names to those they used when testifying. The Report identifies only one victim with the surname Ramashomola. The first name given is Machabane and not Theresa. The Report shows Zubeida (not Jubie) Mayet to be a victim.

It is difficult to identify the political commitments of some of the women who testified. This is especially the case for some of the women who told the Commission about rape in the Durban Women's Hearings. The women testified from behind screens and, to protect their privacy, their names were not released to the public during the hearings (although their names are given on the transcripts released on the Commission's official website and on the CD-ROM that was produced from the website).

Thirty-four of the testimonies concerned events that occurred between 1980 and 1990. Nine concerned events between 1991 and the first democratic elections in 1994. Four were concerned with events that took place in the 1970s and the remainder described violations that were inflicted in the 1960s.

Table Six describes the political affiliations of the twenty-seven testifiers who unambiguously described themselves as engaged in political activities against the Apartheid State. As is clear from Table Five, a number of women were members of more than one organisation, but for ease of analysis, Table Six categorises the women based on their stipulated primary political affiliations. The twenty-seven women are of all races. Most claimed allegiance to the ANC or to organisations linked with the UDF. There were no representatives of AZAPO or the PAC (although Sheila Masote described how the activities of her father, Zeph Mathopeng, who was the President of the PAC between 1986 and 1990, impacted on her life. In addition to police harassment, she was detained in connection with his activities. I have quoted part of her testimony in Chapter Two). No woman identified herself as politically engaged on behalf of Inkatha (now the Inkatha Freedom Party or IFP) in the hearings summarised in the Table. Two women, Stephanie Kemp and Jean Middleton, were members of the Communist Party. Six women (Mamgotle Mohale, Zanele Zingxondo, Joyce Marubini, Deborah Matshoba, Nozibonela Mxathule and Thandi Shezi) described their political activities in youth or student organisations. Lizzy Phike and Marie Magwaza were members of organisations affiliated to the UDF and Virginia Mkhwanazi and Sylvia Dlamini said they were members of the UDF. Two testifiers, Deborah Jokazi and Jubie Mayet, were members of trade unions. Rosie Hugo and Nomakula Zweni were representatives of civic associations established in the 1980s in opposition to the State-sponsored councillor systems.

Five of the twenty-seven women identified themselves as members of armed resistance movements: Shirley Gunn and Zahrah Narkedien were members of (MK), the ANC's armed wing, as was Litha Mazibukho; Sandra Adonis was a member of the Bonteheuwel Military Wing (BMW), an organisation affiliated with MK that operated out of the Cape Town suburb of Bonteheuwel. Stephanie Kemp was a member of both the Communist Party and of the

Armed Revolutionary Movement (ARM³). In addition to the five, Tryphina Jokweni, was an ANC member whose testimony, and its introduction by Hugh Lewin, a member of the Human Rights Violations Committee, implied that she was an MK operative. (Lewin welcomed her before the panel, saying ‘I’d like to welcome you as one of the first, and I am not sure, possibly the first, person to come as a woman combatant to appear before the Commission.’ In her testimony, Tryphina Jokweni sketched her task of assisting young people cross the borders into exile and infiltrating MK soldiers back into South Africa. She did not state that she was a combatant and her testimony does not offer such evidence.)

Table Six: Women’s political affiliations

Organisation	No. members
ANC	7
Youth	6
UDF	5
Armed wings of Liberation Organisations	3
Communist Party	2
Union	2
Civic	2
Indian Congress	1

All the women who described themselves as political activists spoke about experiences of violence visited upon them as a consequence of their political actions and beliefs. Lita Mazibuko explained that she had worked for the ANC in exile, assisting people to cross the Swaziland border into exile and infiltrating MK soldiers back into South Africa. After an attack in which nine MK soldiers were killed, she was suspected of being an informer by the ANC, a charge of which she was later cleared. In her testimony, she described the ill-treatment, including rape, of women by ANC comrades in the training camps outside South Africa. All the other women activists described their experiences of detention and in prison.

With the exception of ten women, all of those whose testimonies are presented in the Chapter have been declared by the Commission to be victims. Extracts from testimonies made by Fatima Meer, Marie Magwaza, Joyce Sikhakhane Ranken, and Deborah Matshoba appear in the section of the Commission Report that deals with women (Volume Four: 282-316), but their names are not included in the Report’s victim list (Volume Five: 26-107). In addition,

³ ARM grew out of the Liberal Party of South Africa. Its formation and activities are described in Hugh Lewin’s book, *Bandiet*, published in 1989. Hugh Lewin, who had been a member of ARM, was a member of the Commission’s Human Rights Violations Committee in Johannesburg.

Nontobeko Feni, Nomakula Zweni, Deborah Marakala, Theresa Ramashamola, Jubie Mayet and Thandi Mavuso gave testimonies before the Commission but are not identified in the Report. (Theresa Ramashamola and Jubie Mayet may be registered as victims with different names to those they used in testifying: in the Report, Volume Five, on pages 58 and page 93 Zubeida Mayet and Machabane Ramashamola are identified as victims.) The absence of the women's names from the list of victims does not indicate that they have not been found to be victims: in some cases, names were not included at victims' behest and in other cases, investigation and corroboration is not yet complete. In still other cases, people were invited to testify as expert witnesses and may not have made statements that implicated themselves as victims to the Commission.

I have identified as important three analytic themes that crosscut the testimonies of women activists, some of which have resonance in the testimonies offered by women who recounted the sufferings of others. These have to do with gender-specific violence and vulnerabilities, with activists' senses of self, and with the transformation of public and private spaces. The themes feed into and are implicit in one another.

Violence and vulnerability: the embodiment of harm

The Commission's definitions of gross violations of human rights focused on violations of rights to bodily integrity⁴. The author of the Chapter on Women's Hearings in the Commission's Report (Volume Four: 282-316) recognises the gender bias inherent in the Commission's definitions of gross violations⁵:

⁴ In an unpublished paper, Stuart Douglas (1998) suggests that the Commission's perspective on gross violations of human rights can best be seen as a consideration of events marked by excess, even under Apartheid's laws. In other words, the Commission's interpretation of gross violations of human rights constituted those actions or events that under Apartheid legal structures would also have generated criminal or civil consequences. In the Commission's reading and process, the excesses were embodied in that the rights violated were those to bodily integrity. Note, however, that the Commission considered detention without charge or trial, solitary confinement, banishing and banning to be gross violations of human rights, but these were legal in terms of Apartheid laws.

⁵ The Commission reviewed the period 1960-1994, a purview that excluded women's protests against the pass laws that culminated in 1956, when some 20 000 women marched to Parliament to protest against carrying passes. Many were harshly treated. Fortunately, some excellent writing on women's resistance prior to 1960 exists, most notable of which are the works of Walker (1991) and Wells (1991a, 1991b, 1993). Published materials that focus specifically on women's experiences as activists in the 1980s are scarce, notwithstanding a fine literature on resistance, 'civil disobedience'

The Commission's relative neglect of the effects of the 'ordinary' workings of Apartheid has a gender bias, as well as a racial one. A large number of statistics can be produced to substantiate the fact that women were subject to more restrictions and suffered more in economic terms than did men during the Apartheid years. The most direct measure of disadvantage is poverty, and there is a clear link between the distribution of poverty and Apartheid policies. Black women, in particular, are disadvantaged, and black women living in former homelands remain the most disadvantaged of all. It is also true that this type of abuse affected a far larger number of people, and usually with much longer-term consequences, than the types of violations on which the Commission was mandated to focus its attention.

The Commission found that eighty-five percent of women who testified about their own experiences of violation spoke about experiences defined as severe ill-treatment (Volume Four: 286). The Commission's definition of severe ill-treatment (Volume One: 80) is circuitous⁶ but the following violations were considered to fall into the category of severe ill-treatment: rape and punitive solitary confinement, sexual assault, abuse or harassment; physical beating resulting in serious injuries; injuries incurred as a result of police action during demonstrations; 'burnings'; injury by poisoning, drugs or other chemicals; mutilation; detention without charge or trial; banishment or banning; deliberate withholding of food or water to someone in custody; failure to provide medical attention to someone in custody; destruction of a house through arson or other attacks (Volume One: 81-2).

Throughout the duration of the Commission's work, Commissioners and representatives of civil society expressed concern that few women had come forward to testify about violations, particularly those to do with sexual abuses (see Goldblatt and Meintjies 1996; Owens 1996; Olkers 1996). Owing to the patterns in women's testimony, the Commission referred to women as 'secondary witnesses'. Yet, women's silence should not be taken to suggest that women were not physically abused. As I have earlier described, Beth Goldblatt's and Sheila Meintjies' (1996) submission on 'Gender and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission' documents both direct and indirect forms of violence that women suffered under Apartheid. At a Special Event Hearing for Women held in Johannesburg in July 1997, Sheila Meintjies reiterated the submission's argument:

and State violence, especially concerning the violence inflicted on children (see Foster 1987; Chabanyi Mangani and Du Toit 1990; Straker 1992; McKendrick and Hoffman 1990).

⁶ 'Acts or omissions that deliberately and directly inflict severe mental or physical suffering on a victim, taking into account the context and nature of the act or omission and the nature of the victim. Whether an act or omission constituted severe ill treatment was thus determined on a case by case basis.' The Commission cites two legal cases 'where it was argued that severe is a relative concept...' (Volume One: 80, footnote 24).

We emphasised in that submission the different experience of men and women during the Apartheid era. In particular we pointed to the significance of gender interwoven with race and class as an important category in determining this experience. These and other efforts of women to highlight the particularity of women's experience led the TRC to hold separate women's hearings and we commend this very important process....

She also expressed a concern that,

The issue of sexual violence, in particular, was one which women found and still find very difficult to speak out about or even to admit that it happened. Indeed, we know that very few women have, in fact, come forward to recount their experience of sexual abuse in the context of political violence. Of nearly 9000 cases of violations only about nine have claimed they have been raped. Yet, in our research we came across many cases of violations [that] could be described as rape or where women knew of others who had been raped.

Sexual violation, rape and the threat of rape mark violent incursions that were not restricted to women. Men also made statements to the Commission about their experiences of sexual violation and rape, although the public disclosure of rape and/or sexual violation was more usually heard during the amnesty process and was seldom made at human rights violation hearings. Reports of the rape or sexual violation of men in detention were not a surprise: these are institutionalised forms of violence in South African prisons.

Beth Goldblatt (1997: 8) quotes an unnamed Commission researcher who stated that by May 1997, only three hundred of some eight thousand statements concerned sexual violation. Women made eighty of the statements. 'Ten or eleven' of the eighty concerned rape (*ibid.*). By the time the Commission's Report was published in October 1998, forty per cent of cases of sexual abuse where the victim's sex was specified in statements were women (Volume Four: 296) and, 'Rape was explicitly mentioned in over 140 cases' (*ibid.*).

Rape and sexual violation were represented in the hearings and in public discourse as defining features of *women's* experiences of gross violations of human rights. Sexual violation was located as an experience about which women *could* and *should* testify, and about which they *would* testify under certain conditions. For example, the submission prepared by Goldblatt and Meintjies (1996) suggested that insufficient attention had been paid to women's experiences of sexual violation and urged the Commission to create testimonial spaces that would enable women to speak publicly about sexual harm. The Commission and members of civil society considered it incumbent upon *women* to describe in public the kinds of sexual harms to which they were subjected⁷. It is interesting and disturbing that men were not called

⁷ For example, the testimony given by Teddy Williams (alias Wellington Sejake), before the Human Rights Violations Committee at a hearing in Umtata on 18th June 1996 included descriptions of sexual harms inflicted on women in the ANC training camps in Angola. Ntsiki Sandi, a Commission

to testify about sexual violation. It seems to me that the focus on women's experiences of sexual violation, important as it was in focusing attention on the gender dimensions of violation, distracted attention from an understanding of the ways in which the exercise of power has gendered dimensions. (See Taylor 1997).

Researchers attributed women's 'silence' about sexual violation to a 'general stigma' that attaches to women in a society that regards rape as 'private' (Goldblatt 1997:10). Yet, the act of rape is not necessarily private, and indeed, in the context of political violence or detention, may be deliberately public. Michelle Anderson (1993: 23-27) describes women being raped outside police buildings and in open fields while detained. My research with women activists confirms that sexual violence was not confined to the place of detention. Ex-detainees report having been taken from police buildings to open lands and taunted or violated. What is private is not the act but the ways in which society acknowledges it as a form of violence. At the 'Women's Hearing' in Cape Town, Cheryl de la Rey (a psychologist at the University of Cape Town) and Nomfundo Walaza (Director of the Cape Town-based Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence) pointed out that it is frequently difficult for women to speak in public about sexual violation: 'Often the taboos and codes of silence surrounding this specific experience make it very difficult for women to come forward and say, "This is what happened".'

The few women who testified about sexual violation or rape at the Commission's hearings described how tortures that focused on sexuality were viciously enacted. Zanele Zingxondo, who testified at a human rights hearing in Beaufort West in August 1996, told the Commission that she had been detained ten years previously in the small coastal town of Knysna. The policeman who detained her said that she was wanted in connection with the burning of a man called Africa in the neighbouring town of George. She denied having been part of his death but was held in detention, interrogated at length and tortured. Her interrogator slammed her breasts in a drawer repeatedly. Later, a man she presumed to be a policeman entered the cell where she was kept in solitary confinement and tried to rape her. She screamed and when inmates of the next cell added their calls to hers, he left without molesting her further. She was moved to another prison and interrogated further:

The interrogations kept on up until August, then I was transferred to George prison, known as Rooihel, there at least there were quite a lot of woman inside, people I knew and we told each other experiences. But mine at the time were too difficult to tell. I was kept there up until 1987, on June 17th, when just on

member repeatedly told him to concentrate on his own experience of violation and not 'peripheral issues'. (Cape Times, 19th June 1996; SAPA reports, 18th June 1996).

my release, when I was on my way out, detectives from Knysna came to pick me up, claiming that I have a case still in Knysna. They went off with me up to Knysna police station where I was again put in a cell till the next day and they accused me of public violence.

She was released on bail and eventually charges against her were dropped. She described her anguish at the charges and their effect on her family, particularly her mother:

People in George still believe that I was part and parcel of the murder of Africa, the man who was burnt to death. I was not. I cannot, until today [i.e. to this day], tell where I was, and I am quite sure that the person who I was with can also confirm that I was not there during the evening of the scene, during the evening of his death.

His parents are also putting the blame on me, yet I was not [there]. My late mamma died, not knowing if I was innocent or guilty. She died having a question mark whether her daughter was a murderer or not. I was not.

Yvonne Khutwane, whose testimony and its reception are the subject of Chapter Four, also spoke of sexual torture. She described how two young policemen humiliated her and thrust fingers into her vagina while taunting her about sex. Thandi Shezi testified at the Johannesburg Women's Hearing about how she had been gang-raped by four policemen when she refused to succumb to their demands for information under torture⁸. In an unpublished paper, Michelle Anderson states (1993: 20) that, 'The fear of rape in prison has been described as one of the biggest concerns of women held in political detention.' At a public hearing of the Commission, Yvonne Khutwane told the panel that she and her comrades knew that the police raped detained women. Nomvula Mokonyane, who made a submission on behalf of FEDTRAW (the now defunct Federation of Transvaal Women), commented that,

Young girls at the age of twelve, coming from Kagiso, coming from Alexandria, were victims of detention without trial ... [and] ... victims of abuse, victims of rape during interrogation, victims of unwanted pregnancies from security forces who were taking them in and out of detention. (Johannesburg Women's Hearing, 29th July 1997.)

The violence visited upon young women and girls was seldom given focused attention, save for a series of testimonies offered by anonymous women in Durban. Testifying to the Commission from behind screens, the women spoke of the ways in which men from opposing sides of the political spectrum in KwaZulu and Natal (the ANC and Inkatha) abducted them and subjected them to rape. Their testimonies illustrate the interpenetration of public and

⁸ Thandi Shezi's experience has become well known. Together with Sylvia Dlomo-Jele (see Chapter Two), she was instrumental in establishing the support and lobby group, 'Khulumani'. The play devised by the group, 'Now I am about to tell my story', features Thandi Shezi acting out her experience of appearing before the Commission. She appears in the video made by Khulumani to promote the Commission and the work of the support group.

private spheres, and the ways that the personal and the political interweave. One woman, for example, spoke of how she was raped by her neighbour, a member of an opposing political party. A personal relationship of neighbourliness was redefined twice over, once by a violent act and then by the political motivation she envisaged as having initiated it.

The testimonies on which I have drawn show that women's bodies became sites of practices of power, frequently violently enacted. Addressing the Commission's Women's Hearing held in Johannesburg on 28th July 1997, Thenjiwe Mtintso⁹, previously a commander in MK, and at the time of the hearing the chairperson of the Gender Commission, suggested that the violation of women was also an indirect attack on men, driving home their failure to protect women in their care. She accused men of using women's bodies as a terrain for male struggle. Through the infliction of sexual violence, women's bodies became the instruments of their own and others' shame. (The argument is further addressed in Meredith Turshen and Clotilde Twagiramariya's (1998) edited volume, What Women Do In Wartime; see also Das 1995). Mtintso described herself as unready to testify about her own experiences before the Commission, saying,

When today they [testifiers] make their sobs, they must know that there's a flood of tears from those who did not even dare to come here today. They must know that when they make their sighs when they remember, that many of us are groaning inwardly, because we are not yet ready to make those outward sighs of the pain.

As they try to free themselves today of the burden, they must know that they are freeing some of us who are not yet ready, Chairperson. I speak as one of those. I speak, Chairperson, I could not sleep last night, because I sat with myself, I sat with my conscience. I sat with the refusal to open those wounds.

Most of the descriptions of (sexual) violations that women gave before the Commission occurred in detention¹⁰. Detention was not the only space in which women confronted violence, but testimonies imply that it was a space where violence and a resultant pain that challenged women's identities and senses of self was inflicted. It seems to me that detention is best

⁹ A partial record of Thenjiwe Mtintso's life is documented in June Goodwin's (1984) book, Cry Amandla! South African women and the question of power. Mtintso was active in Black Consciousness movements and student politics in the early 1970s. In December 1976, she was issued with a five year banning order. The Black Consciousness organisations in which she was active were banned in 1977, and Steve Biko, a leading intellectual in the organisations, was killed in police custody in September of that year. Between 1977 and 1978, Mtintso spent ten months in prison for breaking the terms of the banning orders. After having been detained five times, she left the country in 1979, and eventually joined the ANC in exile. There she became a commander in MK. See also the 1992 interview with Mtintso conducted by Devan Pillay and carried in Work in Progress, no. 80:18-19.

¹⁰ Detention figures for the period 1960-1994 are included in Appendix A.

considered as a space of ugly intimacy¹¹. Women who spoke about detention described the variety of harms they experienced during incarceration. Subjected to many of the same kinds of treatment as men, women were beaten, held in solitary confinement (a state the Commission defined as a gross violation of human rights), verbally abused, threatened, tortured with electric shocks, raped, sexually violated and experienced a range of other tortures. With the exception of solitary confinement, most of the violence seems to have taken place after they were detained but before they had been formally charged. I suggest that in part this had to do with the formal ending that sentencing implied of particular kinds of liminality inherent in detention.

Sentencing and imprisonment mark an increased formalisation and legitimacy of State power over a person. The liminality implied in detention is decreased through the increased visibility of sentenced prisoners, political and otherwise. This is not to say that prisoners were not ill-treated. It is rather to suggest that the nature of ill-treatment changed after sentencing.

Detention is a demarcated space that seems engineered to facilitate a state of liminality in those who experience it. In the Apartheid years, the South African State created detention laws that ensured detention's liminal status. For example, under laws enacted as part of the successive States of Emergency, detainees could be held for up to 180 days without being charged¹². Many were released only to be detained again as they left prisons. Detainees were not necessarily always held in the same place but were shifted from police station to police station. Testifiers reported to the Commission that the police would lie about who was held in jails so that it was extraordinarily difficult to ascertain the whereabouts, let alone the well-being, of detainees. Detainees charged under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act, for example, could be held indefinitely, in solitary confinement. They were entitled to medical assistance from a District Surgeon and to make their complaints known to a magistrate. In practice, neither of these mechanisms was strictly adhered to (Foster *et al.* 1987; Rayner 1990;

¹¹ In their study of the psychological effects of detention, Don Foster and Donald Skinner (1990: 228) argue that, 'Detention may be characterised as one of the moments in a dialogue of violence'. They describe the contradictions that emerge when detention is viewed in this way: at the same time as repression increases, so the forms of repression, including detention practices, spur greater resistance, solidarity and political education among those whom the repressive practices are designed to control. The sense of commitment of some women political detainees and prisoners is portrayed in some of the writings contained in Barbara Schriener's (1992) edited volume, *A Snake with Ice Water*, in which political detainees recorded their determination to continue with the struggle against Apartheid. Commenting on precisely the potential for violence that lies in opposition to it, Etienne Balibar (1998) suggests that violence and ideality are linked, and that their residue is cruelty.

¹² According to Commissioner Yasmin Sooka, between 1960 and 1990, 78 000 people were detained as under various pieces of legislation (introductory statement prior to testimony by Mrs Salojee, 29th April 1996 in Johannesburg.) Many of them were children (Report Volume Four). See aggregated data presented in Appendix A. For accounts and analysis of torture in detention, see Foster, Davis and Sandler (1987); and contributors to Chabanyi Mangani and du Toit (1990).

van Heerden 1996, 1997; hearings held by the Commission in 1997 into the Legal and Medical Professions and the findings of these reported in Volume Four: 93-164). The State's laws and the interpretation of these in practice created a space of formal 'not-being' into which violence in many forms could be and was inserted — and one that was invisible to the world outside the prison or cell walls.

Detention as both a space and a practice of 'not-being' was marked by counter-tendencies. The first was to 'hide' detainees from visible gaze while at the same time making detention a visible category of policing, of governmentality. The second, practices of violence inflicted in detention, had the effect of rendering visible traces of ordered (albeit illegal) State power on detainees while at the same time, through the inaccuracies or elisions in State records on detention (as I show below), rendering the extent of the State's involvement in cruelty less visible.

Researchers elsewhere point to the complex relationships between ideas of place and what is normatively perceived as women's legitimate action. Inger Agger (1994), drawing on interviews conducted with women exiles from the Middle East and Latin America, suggests that violence against women in prisons may be a form of punishment for women 'out of place', that is, women who have broken the conventional boundaries of social placement by becoming involved in the 'male' sphere of public politics. In asserting that violence has to do with marking social boundaries, Agger's argument parallels and draws on that offered by Agnes Heller (1985), in The Power of Shame. Heller's 'general theory of shame', posits that shame is the primary, socialised affect that ensures conformity to a given cultural environment. Heller suggests that shame is both externally imposed and internally generated, and operates from the level of the taken-for-granted in the world. Shame, she argues, is neither rational nor irrational, but is a response given when social and cultural norms are broken (p. 13). Shame and pain are linked: 'Bodily pain, the other main 'socialiser' is mostly effectual only if accompanied by shame' (1985: 6). Shame is a powerful tool of conformity. Yet, Heller points out, while shaming is an important mechanism in legitimating systems of domination, shame cannot regulate 'out-group relations' (p. 40). That is, where people reject the legitimacy of a form of domination, then shame is not likely to be a regulatory mechanism in ensuring *compliance* with that domination. In such situations, conflict is settled by force or negotiation (*ibid.*). Rape in detention may be considered precisely such a form of force, a violence expressed in sexual form against those who do not conform to the mores of a given social order. Its intention is, at least in part, punishment — a mechanism to coerce compliance. Nevertheless, shame does attach to rape: it is both experienced as shaming and read by outsiders as shameful.

What is clear is that in Apartheid South Africa, both men and women detainees were transformed into objects of violent, sometimes carnal knowledge. Yet, it was not only in detention that women faced the threat of rape or sexual violation, as the testimonies offered by anonymous women in KwaZulu-Natal indicate. Rape is common in South Africa. The special hearings on women took place during a period when the frequency of violence enacted against women was headline news. Current statistics offered by Rape Crisis, an NGO, project that one woman is raped every thirty-six seconds in South Africa, usually by men they know (Shifman, Madlala-Routledge and Smith 1997). Very few cases are reported and still fewer are successfully prosecuted. The need for anonymity, or at least concealment of some testifiers, suggests that neither the threat of violence nor the stigma attached to rape have abated.

Notwithstanding the importance of a focus on sexual abuse, I suggest that too close a focus on sexual violation imposes limits on an understanding of the diversity of harm and humiliation suffered by women. Most women who testified about detention or imprisonment spoke about indignities and humiliations visited upon them in interrogation rooms and cells. Their testimonies in this regard have parallels elsewhere (Agger 1994; El-Sa'adawi 1991. Kate Millett [1994:174] argues that detention is marked by violation of both privacy and taboo). From women's testimonies before the Commission, it is clear that their bodies were turned into the sources of their humiliation. Women were exposed to the gaze of interrogators and wardresses when forced to strip for searches on entering and leaving prison for the courtrooms. Many were not allowed changes of clothes for extensive periods. Mamagotla Mohale said that she had not been allowed a change of clothes for six months. She had not been given sanitary towels when menstruating and was embarrassed by her smell. Some women described being made to undress in front of others while menstruating. Menstruation, usually private, became public. The externalised appearance of blood emphasised the lack of control granted to women over even the most intimate aspects of their bodily comportment, and emphasised too an inversion of boundaries so that what was usually private and taboo became public.

Haunting and hauntedness

Power did not operate solely at the level of bodily transformation. Other indignities and humiliations added to and compounded the pain inflicted on the bodies of detainees and political prisoners. For example, testifiers explained that criminal prisoners were frequently told not to talk to political prisoners. Theresa Ramashamola, who spent seven years on death row for a political crime she says she did not commit, spoke of the devastation of being 'estranged from others while still alive'. She explained, 'I was not supposed to meet ... other

prisoners at all. If a prison [were to be] constructed because of me there would be a place designated alone for me, so as not to meet others.’ Prisoners were told not to have eye contact with her when passing her or bringing her food. Joyce Sikhakhane Ranken described similar experiences. She said,

Within the prison yards any awaiting-trial or convicted women prisoners who crossed the path of my heavily armed Special Branch brigades would automatically hide their faces to avoid being whiplashed or booted with the accompanying vulgar command, ‘Do not look at the terrorist¹³’.

The word — ‘terrorist’ — and the violence with which commands could be enforced had the effect of estranging prisoners from the ‘politicals’ in certain cases, almost as though political prisoners might somehow contaminate other prisoners. Limiting contact with other prisoners had the effect of making detained and imprisoned women activists doubt themselves in some contexts. Yet at other times within the prison or detention context, their corporeality was overemphasised. Torture, imprisonment and solitary confinement rendered the body an object, emphasising flesh and blood and the ease with which pain could be inflicted at the same time as demonstrating the fragility of life and the contingency of sociality. Treated as little more than recalcitrant bodies in need of violent discipline in interrogation rooms and cells, political prisoners were often treated as ghosts outside of them. Alongside the lowered gaze of prisoners not allowed to meet the eyes of political prisoners, the State’s medical and legal systems, too, did not always ‘see’ detainees. The absence or failure of the State’s surveillance structures in some contexts and their hideous efficacy in others meant that detainees and prisoners were cast upon their own ingenuity in sustaining personal identities that were consistently undermined through systematic and cynical manipulation of women’s bodies and their relationships with others.

Sustaining a sense of self

At the Prisons hearing, Jean Middleton spoke about conditions under which political prisoners were held during the period under review by the Commission. She had joined the Communist Party in the early 1960s after the ANC and PAC had been banned. Arrested in 1964, she was incarcerated in The Fort in Johannesburg and later in Barberton Prison for the duration of her three-year sentence. She told the Commission about the powerful sense of personal identity and political commitment that sustained political prisoners,

¹³ A term used by the State to describe those who opposed it, particularly those who were engaged in clandestine anti-Apartheid activities.

I think they [the wardresses] used to get annoyed about the political prisoners because it's not easy to humiliate a political prisoner, you know. You're proud of what you've done: you're not ashamed of it....

Her sentiments were reiterated by other witnesses. Zahrah Narkedien testified on 21st July 1997¹⁴ in a Special Hearing on Prisons in Johannesburg. She told the Commission that policemen had tortured her after she was arrested when trying to cross the border into exile in Botswana. She described the strength of her sense of self that enabled her to hold to a form of resistance and a sense of power. She said,

For the first seven days they did torture me quite a bit because I felt that I didn't have to co-operate.... I was proud of who I was as an MK comrade and I was proud of the fact that I joined the struggle, that I was a revolutionary and I was willing to just suffer the consequences.

Her pride in her commitment to the cause of liberation and her Christian faith stood her in good stead. She described her tactic of 'transporting' herself away from the scene of her pain so that she became 'like a person who was physically there but spiritually and mentally I wasn't there'. In so-doing she said she was able to endure the horrific torture to which she was subjected, tortures so extreme that, with a peculiar sensibility, the policemen would ask the policewoman usually present during the torture if she would like to leave as 'they were going to intensify the treatment.'

An ability to make oneself bodily present yet mentally absent is, perhaps, an ironic inversion of the 'ghosting techniques' that I have described above. Detention and the violent practices inflicted on detainees marked a closeness to a state of death. Zahrah Narkedien made the connections explicit when she described her experiences in solitary confinement. After an argument between herself and two political prisoners with whom she was incarcerated, Zahrah Narkedien was sent into an isolation cell in the basement of the prison, where she spent seven months. She described the isolation units as making her feel like one of the living dead:

I became so psychologically damaged that I used to feel that all these cells are all like coffins and there were all dead people in there because they were not there, no-one was there, it was as if I was alive and all these people were dead. I was so disturbed but I would never, never let the warders know.

She added, 'I felt as the months went by that I was going deeper and deeper into the ground. Physically I wasn't but psychologically I was.' As a consequence, 'I had to accept

¹⁴ Ms Narkedien was also subpoenaed to testify before the Commission in an *in camera* hearing concerning a bomb-blast at Magoos bar in Durban on 14th June 1986, in which three people were killed and sixty-nine injured. (Volume Two: 330-1). She had been a member of the cell that planted the bomb.

that I was damaged, a part of my soul was eaten away as if by maggots, horrible as it sounds, and I will never get it back again.'

The extremes of torture and deprivation faced by Zahrah Narkedien and others are an ironic pointer to their strength in resisting the State's incursions. Interrogations became increasingly violent with a concomitant increase in women's objectification. Activists' strength in holding to a coherent sense of self during detention, solitary confinement and torture was sometimes turned back against themselves.

Tokyo Sexwale, who, on 27th July 1997, when he addressed the Women's Hearing in Johannesburg, was the Premier of Gauteng Province, described the extremities of the 'treatment' to which women were subjected. He told the Commission panellists that he and his comrades were amazed at the power of women to withstand the extremes of torture visited on them. He began,

It has been said that a nation that does not accord a human status to its womenfolk is a nation that lacks integrity and that does not belong to a future. Such an assertion can never be more true than in a country such as South Africa where the pain that has been felt by a whole nation has been felt even more by our mothers, our sisters, our aunts, our daughters, our women....

Sexwale's frame of reference was the male self, moving outwards to encompass female kinsfolk and other women. His focus of attention then narrowed to one woman, Paulina Mohale, to whom he paid tribute and who stands in his representation as emblematic of the unsung heroine:

I was on trial in 1977, 1978.... One of us was a woman. She is hardly known by many people. We were tortured, we were electrified, we were beaten ... [A]mongst those people, when all of us resumed the trial from detention, we learnt with horror what one of us, Paulina Mohale, went through. It will be difficult for me here to speak for her, but the kind of pain that even we, as men, could not withstand, was doubly inflicted upon her.

She was humiliated, her dignity was violated, her values were questioned, alone resisting ... and when the whole Pretoria Twelve as we were known at the time, resumed, Paulina Mohale stood tall. She nearly lost her mind, but she stood tall. To us that represented a focal point of admiration. We often thought that it is only the men who were supposed to withstand the kind of pain.... [T]hat name - Paulina Mohale - I thought I should invoke here to indicate that in the chambers of torture many such unsung heroines also stand to be counted....

Mamagotla Paulina Mohale testified before the Commission in April 1996, in the first hearing held in Johannesburg. She told the panel of Commissioners that she had worked for the Student Christian Movement, mobilising and supporting student protest. In 1976, police detained her at the Swaziland border while she and her brother were trying to help young

people cross the border into exile. She was beaten frequently during her three day interrogation, made to hold a telephone book in front of her without lowering her arms, forced to stand for hours on end, made to write a statement that was torn up on completion. She was tortured with electric shocks. After three days she collapsed and was taken to the District Surgeon, who, she said, examined her and found nothing wrong, despite the clotted blood that seeped from her body. The police continued to interrogate her throughout the period of her pre-trial imprisonment. They accused her of having hidden guns and demanded that she tell them where the arms were. Once they threatened to kill her mother if Mamagotla did not co-operate. Once they threatened to make her 'fly like a bird'¹⁵ from the window of the interrogation room. She described the policemen as being 'like cannibals', with huge, luminous eyes. She spent six months in prison without even a change of clothes before being moved to The Fort in Johannesburg where she stood trial as the only woman in a case that was known as the case of the Pretoria Twelve. In total she spent eighteen months in prison.

In Mamagotla Mohale's telling, detention had the trappings of nightmare. She envisaged her torturers as brutal, cannibal-like men, closer to animals hunting in the night than to human beings. In this, her testimony differs from descriptions about those who committed violent acts. In most narratives of violence, perpetrators are marked by their normality, their banal appearances belying the evil of their actions or intentions (Arendt 1964). Mamagotle Mohale identifies those who tortured her as not sharing even the most basic of human taboos — those against the consumption of human flesh.

Mamagotle Mohale's survival, celebrated by her comrades, came at considerable cost to her own sense of her sanity. Ms Mohale briefly described to the Commission panellists her 'nervous breakdown', the irritability and tension that characterised her sense of self for a long time after her detention and imprisonment:

It really made me feel bad. At times I would dream. I couldn't adjust to the situation, to the normal situation of the family. I got quickly irritated, even by music because where I was I couldn't listen to music. Even if a child was crying I felt this cry in my nerves.

Eventually she consulted a neurologist. She currently takes medication for a condition she did not name.

¹⁵ A reference to the deaths of detainees in police custody. Between 1963 and 1972, 20 political detainees died in police custody (Report, Volume Three: 538, citing the journal *Pro Veritate* as its source. The Commission identified 91 victims who had died in detention or shortly after their release as a consequence of torture in detention (Volume Two: 205-11). Ex-detainees described to the Commission tortures such as being hung upside down from the windows of interrogation rooms in the upper stories of John Voster Square (named after a previous Prime Minister), threatened with being thrown out of the windows or forced to look down out of the windows during interrogation sessions.

Mamagotle Mohale's testimony is a reminder of the duration of damage and the effort of sustaining a sense of self. Other women also described the difficulties they suffered after detention. Of the twenty-seven women who identified themselves as political activists, three — Shirley Gunn, Zubeida Jaffer and Virginia Mkhwanazi — described themselves as having suffered from post-traumatic stress. Sandra Adonis and Marie Magwaza said that their efforts to cope with having been detained had been complicated by the fact that their husbands, both political activists, had suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after being released from prison. Thandi Shezi explained to the Commission that after being gang-raped by policemen in 1988, her anger threatened to overwhelm her family.

'I wasn't coping...when I started feeling this anger inside me, I would beat up my children. I'd be angry with my children. Even with my mother, I used to fight with my father, because deep down within me I was trying to grapple with this painful experience....'

In 1996, she joined the Khulumani Support Group for survivors of violence and began to receive counselling. She is now a fieldworker for the Group.

Jean Middleton was asked by a Commissioner to describe the effects of solitary confinement. She said, 'I can't describe its effects to you very well because you go slightly crazy and it's very difficult to describe your own craziness, but you do.' Zahrah Narkedien, who spent seven months in solitary confinement, stated,

I'm out of prison now for more than seven or ten years but I haven't recovered and I will never recover. I know I won't: I have tried to. The first two years after my release I tried to be normal again and the more I struggle to be normal, the more disturbed I become.

The women's words suggest the enormity of personal investments in constructing and maintaining coherent identities as political activists and the courage required to rebuild identities that have suffered under the full onslaught of violence.

That their efforts were by and large successful is confirmed in the Commission Report. Drawing from Jacklyn Cock's (1990) work on political violence, the Report states, 'Political activists were less prone to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder [than non-activists], owing to their commitment to a cause and their psychological preparedness for torture' (Volume Five: 133). For some, ideological commitments enabled them to withstand extreme hardship and, if detained, to return to struggle activities on their release. Not all women were able to do so.

Ideologies of womanhood

Women's identities were attacked on many fronts. Warders and policemen taunted women about their failures to be 'women'. Prison authorities made women's political choices seem aberrant, inappropriate. It is as though an ideal form of womanhood existed against which all women, black and white, were measured. Implicitly, an ideal woman was one who was acquiescent to the State, a woman who remained in the confines of the domestic realm.

Goldblatt and Meintjies, academics at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, commented on the humiliation caused by the taunts and the damage done to women's sense of security in their identities and their political choices. At the Women's Hearing on the 29th July 1997 held in Johannesburg, Meintjies quoted an anonymous woman detainee:

[The police] may try many ways to make you feel that you should not be here, a woman should not be here. You are here because you are not the right kind of woman. Constantly undermining women, saying you are the equivalent of a whore to be doing this. You are irresponsible, you are an unnatural woman, an unnatural mother. They say all sorts of things to you.

The taunt of unnaturalness levelled at the detainee marks a model of womanhood that political activists contravened. Underlying the model is a notion of the correct occupation of space that finds its echoes elsewhere in the world, particularly in Latin America, where women were punished for taking to the streets in political protest (see Fischer 1989, 1993; Schirmer 1993, Taylor 1997).

At the Women's Hearing in Johannesburg, Thenjiwe Mtintso said,

For instance, I am sure that women will confirm, that when you come into to the clutches of the security police, statements like, 'you have joined these men, because you have failed as a woman, you have failed to find a husband, you have failed to look after your children, you are a failure. This is why you have joined. You are not a proper woman.'

Another favourite statement would be, 'you are with these men, because you are a whore, you are an unpaid prostitute, you have come to service these men.'

This consistency of drawing away from your own activism, from your own commitment as an actor, was perhaps worse than torture, was worse than the physical assault, because you could deal with that.

Political activists drew on the experiences of others to learn what might befall them if they were arrested and to devise strategies to resist interrogation or to accommodate themselves to the demands while causing the least possible damage to others. Organisations that were

sympathetic to 'the struggle' drew up pamphlets that explained the rights of detainees and described the kinds of treatment detainees could expect (DPSC n.d.; Foster and Skinner 1990). Activists coached one another, describing the torture that they could expect in detention (Donald Skinner, Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence, personal communication, October 1995). Phyllis Naidoo told the Commission that people with links to clandestine organisations were told, 'If somebody is detained, don't assume that they [will] not break, assume they [will] break and move out.'

In some ways, women who were members of political organisations, especially those that were banned, may have been better prepared to face the ugly intimacies of State power in the confrontations that took place in interrogation rooms and cells. In so saying, I do not wish to detract from the pain suffered by the women, but rather to emphasise the importance of political knowledge in facilitating women's coping mechanisms even where these were ultimately unsuccessful. When detained and interrogated, the resources on which women drew to sustain themselves came from their relationships with others, an attribute that offered them strength but also rendered them vulnerable to the manipulation of biological attributes and their relationships with others.

Ripple effects: fracture and solidarity

Women who testified spoke about the effects of their activism on personal relationships. Those who had been detained frequently reported threats of violence against others, usually family members and especially children. Most of the women who offered testimony about their own experiences spoke of the ways in which they had been subjected to such threats. They described the ways that the threats undermined their sense of self and called into question the consequences for others of their own political commitments. The threats were described by those who made them as being a result of detainees' own intransigence. Zahrah Narkedien explained that when her interrogators realised that the physical abuse alone to which they were subjecting her was not having the desired effect of 'breaking' her, the police resorted to 'psychological treatment'. It included threatening to collect her nephew from the house she and her sister shared, taking him to the building in which she was being tortured and dropping him from the thirteenth floor. She believed the Security Police were capable of carrying out their threats and felt that,

I could risk my life and I could let my body ... be handed over to these men to do what they liked but I couldn't hand over someone else's body so at that point I fully co-operated.

Mamagotla Mohale told the Commission that the police threatened to kill her mother unless she co-operated. Zubeida Jaffer, speaking at the Cape Town Women's Hearing in August 1996, expanded on the diverse threats faced by women detainees, particularly rape and threats of pain inflicted on family members. She described the emergence of her political consciousness when, as a young reporter, she covered stories of the violence that wracked the Cape Flats in 1980. She was detained and for five days was not allowed to sleep while she was interrogated in different police offices in the Cape. She was forced to write her life story, which the police did not believe because it carried no mention of the ANC, for which they believed she worked. She fell ill during the interrogation, dizzy with palpitations. A doctor who later examined her told her that he suspected she had been poisoned by the police. When she still did not tell the police what they wished to know, the Captain in charge of the interrogation turned to a policeman who had entered the interrogation room and told him to rape her. The man did not do so, but the threat of rape was so real that Ms Jaffer said that she felt she would die at that point. After days of interrogation she signed what she thought was a confession of ANC membership but was actually a statement that incriminated a student in showing her banned literature. The Security Branch representatives also tried to make her disclose the name of a journalist who had covered a story on the military. She resisted. Then,

[T]hey said that later in the morning after they continued questioning me, they said that, 'Zubeida if you ... don't cooperate with us and tell us — give us the answers, then we are going to detain your father.' And I thought that they were ... just trying to trick me again or something, but then in the course of the morning they made a phone call and then they called me to the phone and they handed me the phone and it was my father on the phone. And they had detained him in Cape Town I was shattered at that point. I just felt, it's fine if they involve me, it's okay, but why involve my family to this extent, and why involve my father? And so ... after they put the phone down, I signed the statement....

In 1985, Zubeida Jaffer, by then a member of the ANC and a trade union organiser, and her husband were arrested. Captain Frans Mostert, a police officer with a reputation for harassing activists in the Western Cape, interrogated Ms Jaffer. She was newly pregnant. He learned of her pregnancy and used the unborn child as a lever against her to attempt to elicit a confession. He said that he had prepared a chemical that would force her to miscarry and told her that 'he was going to burn the baby from my body.' Her previous experience of being drugged was warning enough. She was faced with the choice of either giving the police the information they wanted and in doing so, betraying her comrades but possibly saving her child, or refusing to divulge the information and possibly losing the baby. She decided on the latter course:

I felt that I didn't want my child to grow up with that burden on her, because I felt that ... she is not even brought into this world yet and if she is brought into this world, thinking that - that her mother gave this information so that she could live, that, that's a heavy burden for a child to carry. So I think that that unborn baby inside of me, made it possible for me to be strong enough to tell them or not to give in to their threats. So ... eventually he didn't ... actually give me the chemical to drink, when I said I didn't want to give them any information, and I was a step past him [in] that there was nothing that he could really do.

Nomvula Mokonyane told the Commission that people like her, pregnant when detained, faced not only the humiliations inflicted by prison warders but also the medical interventions of district surgeons. She accused the latter of attempting forcibly to abort pregnancies. She said,

The district surgeon in collaboration with the security forces as well as the prison warders would insist that, 'your fallopian tube is blocked' and they had to make sure they unblocked them so then you can begin to [menstruate] and if you begin to resist that then torture will take its own course. You will be subjected to electrical shock, you will be subjected to solitary confinement without a meal and all that you would only be served with is a jug full of salted water.

The close ties between women and children presumed to shape women's identities were frequently played upon by the police during interrogation and detention. Joyce Sikhakhane Ranken, an investigative journalist who also worked with political prisoners and their families, was detained at dawn on 12th May 1969. She described to the panel at the Johannesburg Women's Hearing her anguish at leaving her son, Nkosinathi, a toddler, when she was detained. She explained how solitary confinement, deprivation and the interrogators' manipulation of maternal sentiments by the introduction of reminders of children during interrogation were used to break people's intellectual and emotional stability.

It is not only your intellect which is important in your life, it is also emotions, your relationships with other people, how to deal with those people. So, when they brought that child [a toddler] they knew how much I was in love with my son. They knew that I would break down immediately. So this is part of the warfare, part of the game. They put the child there.

Shirley Gunn, too, described the ways that her child was used as a weapon against her. Shirley Gunn was an MK cadre at the time she was arrested and detained in connection with the bomb that exploded in 1988 at Khotso House, headquarters of the South African Council of Churches and a place long associated with the limited resistance politics that the Apartheid government tolerated. Her arrest and incarceration were part of a larger disinformation campaign. It emerged that the State had been responsible for the bomb and had blamed it on

the liberation organisations¹⁶. Shirley Gunn was detained under section 29 of the Internal Security Act and spent part of her detention in solitary confinement. Her infant son, Haroon, was detained with her. Gunn and her son were taken first to a police cell near Cape Town and then to the Security Branch headquarters, Culembourg, in the city centre. She was interrogated and tortured but was able to resist betraying her comrades. During the interrogations a recording of her son's cries was played to her. She was constantly afraid both for her own safety and that of her child. The interrogating policemen taunted her, calling her a bad mother. She reported that they said,

I am a very terrible person, that I can put my son through this episode.... That I am subjecting my child to these conditions in a prison and to gruelling interrogation sessions. And that if I had any heart, I would hand him over to my family or I would hand him over to them and they would... put him in a place of safety....

She refused. Trained as a social worker, she believed that conditions in places of safety were not always optimal, and she believed that her son was safest with her. Then, in July, two social workers came with a warrant for Haroon's arrest. Shirley Gunn argued, pleading that Haroon be allowed to remain with her. She showed the two women that she managed to keep him clean and cared for despite the foul conditions in the cell, but they took him away, screaming and calling for her. He was held in a place of safety for children. Cde Gunn decided to embark on a hunger strike until her child was returned to her¹⁷. During the strike, her interrogation intensified. Spyker van Wyk, a policeman notorious for his brutality, was called in to question her. 'I named my son after Imam Haroun¹⁸, and here was his murderer in front of me', commented Shirley Gunn in a moment of awful irony.

She decided to continue to breastfeed her son. She stopped her hunger strike and demanded that the police take the milk she expressed to the child, wherever he was. The police

¹⁶ Adrian Vlok, Minister of Law and Order at the time, applied to the Commission for amnesty for his role in authorising the bombing. At the time of writing the case has not been considered by the Amnesty Committee.

¹⁷ In a later interview I conducted (15th April 1999), Shirley Gunn described the removal of her child as a calculated decision, designed both to break her and also to enable the police to 'eliminate' her. She believes that the police had had no intention of capturing her alive and that they were desperate to kill her. She described also the vociferous campaign mounted on her behalf by her mother and the ANC Women's League when Haroon was removed. Haroon was returned to her after a judge ruled that if the place in which his mother was incarcerated was unfit for a child, the police were obliged to find a place where the child could be kept with his mother. She was later moved to Caledon Women's Prison where she was held in the hospital so as to be isolated from other prisoners.

¹⁸ An anti-Apartheid activist who died in police custody in 1979. His family were invited to testify before the Commission but declined.

refused to deliver it. Haroon was returned to her eight days later, sick and thin. He had not been eating.

Shirley Gunn and Haroon were taken from Cape Town to the Caledon Women's Prison, some one hundred kilometres from the city centre and held together in a cell. One day, Haroon fell ill. Eventually the commanding officer of the prison allowed Haroon to see a doctor, who told her that there was nothing wrong with the child, but that there was something wrong with his mother. Shirley Gunn felt that he treated her as 'the bomber' and not as the mother of a sick child or as a patient in her own right.

Shirley Gunn was released after 'sixty-four days of hell and fear'. She described to the Commission's panellists her post-traumatic stress disorder and her attempts to cope with the fear that her child might be stolen from her. The Commission found both Shirley Gunn and Haroon to be victims.

At the end of her testimony to the Commission, Shirley Gunn requested permission to tell a story. It was a humorous story directed at women in the audience.

I want to explain something to you. At Culemborg when I was interrogated ... I used to say to these men, these big white men, that they must clear out of the room because I wanted to express my milk now, I was in agony. And that I needed hot water, and only the woman could be present naturally, and I was brought big container — a big container of warm water, which cooled down very quickly because it was a wide ... pan and as soon as it was cold, I could no longer really express milk very easily, so I asked for more. But I want to show you something - that if you pour a little bit of water in a litre of water, a little bit of milk in a litre of water, it [the water] goes milky white. [She demonstrated as she spoke, using a water jug on the witness stand and some milk that she had brought with her from an earlier tea break to illustrate her point.] And these buckets of water — of 'milk' — were coming out of the interrogation room ... and the men were hopelessly intimidated by this.

Sometimes we have to seize being a woman and take advantage of that.

Shirley Gunn's intervention with humour mapped a particular language of pain, its acknowledgement and its distancing that had wider currency outside of the Commission hearings (see Chapter Six). Her testimony pointed to the power of imagination in confronting the State's officials and in sustaining a coherent identity. It also implies possibilities for solidarity that exist among women, based on biological attributes. In her testimonial intervention, Gunn suggests that women share in common the potential for motherhood, and that this can be mobilised to form solidarities and a united front against the abuses of State power. Her argument is both reminiscent and subversive of that offered by Sarah Ruddick (1989). Ruddick suggests women's biological attributes and what she presumes to be the innate characteristics of nurture and mothering that accompany them fit women for pacifism in

the face of State power. The intervention described in the story above, made by a trained MK cadre, presents a different possibility. Shirley Gunn's intervention marks the potential to transform vulnerabilities to temporary advantage as acts of resistance.

Jubie Mayet also spoke of the taunts she levelled at policemen. On 29th July 1997, at the Women's hearing in Johannesburg, Mayet described being arrested in 1977 after a protest march in Johannesburg. Mayet was a member of the Union of Black Journalists (UBJ), an organisation that was banned. Policemen had harassed her frequently prior to her arrests in 1977 and 1978. In December 1977, she was arrested and charged with having stolen money from the state liquidator after the UBJ was banned. She was tried and acquitted on the grounds that when she withdrew the money the UBJ had not yet been banned. In 1978 she was again detained. She was released from prison under banning orders that she frequently broke. She told the Commission,

I must admit that I had great fun with the various cops who tried to harass me. I do not think any of them quite knew what to make of me, being a so-called Indian who hobnobbed so freely and naturally with Africans. ... I was harassed too often to remember each and every occasion. I know one time I got charged with calling a cop a pig, because ... they were hassling me at home and he asked me whether I had lunch for them and I said, 'I am sorry, but I do not eat lunch with pigs', and ... he hauled me off to Soweto Cop Shop.

She recalled having being detained after having broken the conditions of a banning order and attended a public meeting in Lenasia. The police knew she was at the meeting and captured her. She was wearing trousers with the logo of a banned organisation printed down the leg. The arresting officer, Major Visser, told her she ought not to be wearing them. She offered to take them off immediately and stood up. Flustered, he said, 'No, no, I do not mean here. I do not mean now, but you must put them away.' The incident made her smile during the hearing: 'So that is why I say I had fun with these cops, because, I mean, my life is a bit boring at the moment, you know.'

The small resistances Gunn and Mayet describe occurred in a context in which the State and its functionaries ultimately had the upper hand, where the threat of violence — if not its actual infliction — was incipient and where patriarchal assumptions were flagrantly paraded and frequently violently enacted.

Yet solidarity did exist and was nurtured by women. They were resourceful in forging relationships in prison. Testifying at Human Rights Violations hearing held in Worcester in July 1996, Yvonne Khutwane told the panel that she had used the time held in detention with criminal prisoners to 'conscientise' them about politics. Some women managed to create relationships with wardresses. A few of the wardresses would assist women detainees but

some appeared to go out of their way to express cruelty to detainees and political prisoners. Gender did not forge automatic ties: race, class, gender and political ideology were important in structuring daily life in South Africa and life in the prisons was no different.

Women's relationships and solidarities were vulnerable under the conditions of extreme hardship that marked detention and imprisonment. Yvonne Khutwane told the Commission that she had been deeply afraid when she was put into a cell with another woman at night. Her first fear was that her companion was a man who would rape her. Discovering that her cellmate was a woman, she was afraid that the woman was there to spy on her.

Opportunities to generate solidarity were not available to all political prisoners or detainees. A number were held in solitary confinement. Not all women were automatically held as political prisoners. Women recounted the pleasure they felt when they were introduced to cells housing other 'politicals'. Testifiers recited the names of those with whom they shared cells, or whom they knew to have been detained. In doing so, they brought back into a public space the memory of those who had been with them. By implication, their testimonies extended beyond their own experience to include the experiences of others. A list of women detainees offered by Joyce Sikhakhane Ranken during her testimony is comprised of women whose roles as political activists have become well known. Ms Ranken said,

I listed here the names of women detainees I knew: Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Ruth First, Dorothy Nyembi, Winnie Mandela, Rita Mzana, Martha Dlamini, Tobozile Ngomo, Shanti Naidoo, Albertina Sisulu, Thandi Modise, Barbara Hogan, Thenjiwe Mtintso and Jenny Schreiner.

The women she named were engaged in different forms of anti-Apartheid activity between the 1950s and 1994. Although they were of different political persuasions, they were united in their opposition to Apartheid across the racial divides that Apartheid tried to implement. Some belonged to women's organisations they had been instrumental in creating, some to the Communist Party, others to the ANC. One had been a member of the Black Consciousness Movement, some were MK soldiers, and one was active in parliamentary politics as a member of the Opposition. In calling to mind these names, Ms Ranken's testimony bears witness to a kind of community of detained women, linking women detained at different times to generate a sense of inclusivity and, perhaps, community. Nomvula Mokonyane's statement on behalf of FEDTRAW at the Johannesburg Women's Hearing is peppered with examples of hardship and suffering inflicted on women, each example of pain illustrated with the name of a woman who had experienced it. In drawing together names of those who suffered harm, she created a community. The solidarity implied through inclusive naming might be a form of symbolic resistance to State practices that tried to destroy or

dissolve social relationships and networks of support. They may also be attempts to generate a sense of ontological security and political commitment in a context that was marked with danger. The names may bring to life again the relationships wrought in prison that often could not endure with the same intensity outside the prison walls when activists had to be more guarded about their interactions.

Intimacies and silences

Activist women who testified before the Commission made use of particular narrative tropes that marked their chilling intimacy with the State and its apparatus of power. They tended to speak more directly of pain, its agents and its consequences than did those women who were not politically active, who, as I have shown, used frames drawn from domestic life as markers for their experiences of suffering. Activists frequently framed their experience in terms of a coherent and enduring commitment to political ideologies in opposition to the State. The women often named those responsible for their pain and that of others. They used their knowledge of the extent of the powers conferred by the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act to demand accountability and particular action from the Commission. Some offered lists of people whom they believed the Commission should subpoena to answer questions. Others were less clear on their expectations from the Commission, but spoke powerfully about the consequences of their encounters with and against the State.

Striking in the testimonies is the absence of direct reference to the forms that political activities took. Earlier in the Chapter and in Chapter Two, I showed that some women testifiers located themselves as activists through the use of a language of inclusion. Yet from the testimonies offered at hearings, the activities that women undertook remain a rough sketch, implied through statements such as Mamagotle Mohale's reference to assisting students cross the borders into exile, or Zubeida Jaffer's comments that she became involved in organising trades unions. Zahrah Narkedien, who, in June 1985, had been caught trying to leave South Africa for Mozambique and was detained under section 29 of the Internal Security Act, did not describe her activities as a member of MK during her testimony at the Special Hearing on prisons on 21st July 1997. She applied for amnesty for a range of activities that may have included bomb attacks¹⁹.

¹⁹ Amnesty applications are not disclosed until such time as there is a hearing or a finding. At the time of writing, Narkedien's amnesty hearing is still underway and no finding has been made. Only four women have thus far been granted amnesty: none of the amnesties concerned acts of gross violations of human rights.

Through their silence about the precise forms of their activism, it seems to me that women testifiers continue to resist an incursion of the State, perhaps now benevolent (and most of those women who testified as activists were members of or sympathetic to its ruling party), but an incursion nevertheless. Indeed, the process of giving testimony was problematic. Some testifiers felt that they were being subjected to a process similar to interrogation. For example, after testifying at a hearing on Human Rights Violations one woman told me that she was afraid of the possible repercussions of witnessing. She had feigned illness in order to leave work and appear before the Commission. During the time set aside for questions by the panellists, she began to cry and decided not to continue with the testimony. Later she explained to me that the earphones that she wore in order to hear the translation of panellists' questions reminded her forcibly of the device used to give her electric shocks during interrogation.

Detention

From the Commission's work, it is not clear how many women may have experienced the violence that activists described. The Report does not differentiate between women who were politically engaged and those who were caught in violence inadvertently. It also does not provide data pertaining to the numbers of women arrested or detained by the State, who may therefore have experienced the kinds of harm that women described in public hearings.

It is difficult to trace how many women were detained between 1960 and 1994 and the extent of damage caused. State detention figures are notoriously unreliable. I include them here in part because of the difficulty of tracing women's membership in banned organisations. Scant records of organisational memberships were kept. Representatives of the ANC informed me that it was too dangerous to keep record lists during the period of its banning (1960-1990). Neither the PAC nor AZAPO replied to my correspondence. The UDF did not recruit individual members as its membership consisted of affiliated organisations. Jacklyn Cock (1991) estimates that women comprised twenty percent of the ANC's armed wing. Thenjiwe Mtintso (in Pillay 1992) has suggested that women's involvement as formal recruits into armed wings was substantially lower. She does not provide figures, but holds that women represented 'a low percentage' in MK structures.

Detention figures released by the State, while not an accurate record of women's activism by any means, do provide some insight into the extent of women's involvement in political activities that countered the State. They also offer some limited indication of the extent of damage caused through detention. In including and analysing State figures in the thesis, I do

so not to legitimate the figures but to place them on record as being the minimum data currently available²⁰.

The figures released by the State concerning detention are for the most part not disaggregated by gender (House of Assembly, 1960-1990). It is thus not clear what number of detainees at any one time were women or young girls. Take for example, the years 1960, 1976 and 1985-7, years that were marked by extremes of violence and resistance. In 1960, the issuing of Proclamation 91 followed the protests that took place at Sharpeville and Langa against the passes that Africans in urban areas were obliged to carry. The Proclamation declared a State of Emergency that came into effect on 30th March and remained in force until 31st August 1960. The ANC and PAC were banned that year and operated in exile and clandestinely until their unbanning in 1994. 1976 marked the Soweto Uprising by young people who protested against Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in schools. No State of Emergency was declared but many children were detained and all questions about detentions were referred to the Cillie Commission, established to investigate the Uprising. 1985 marked the onset of an extended State of Emergency that remained in force until 1990. In these three periods of considerable 'Unrest', detention figures were at their height and one might anticipate that most women were detained during this time. Drawing from Parliamentary Question and Answer sessions, as reported in Hansard's House of Assembly documents (1960-1995) and from the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) Race Relations Handbook (1960-1994), the following picture emerges for the three periods. In 1960, the State acknowledged that it held 11 503 political detainees, but the figures are not disaggregated by gender. In the same year, the SAIRR reported only 35 women detainees. In 1976, the State refused to divulge data on the number of detainees. Citing 'the interests of national security' as the reason for its refusal, all questions asked in Parliament about detention were referred to the Cillie Commission that was established to investigate the 1976 Soweto Uprising in which black school-children protested the use of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction. The SAIRR reported 2 403 detainees in that year, but did not state how many were women. In 1985, the State did not disclose the numbers of people detained under the Emergency Regulations or the Internal Security Act (ISA), although the SAIRR publicised a figure of 11 750 detainees. Again, it is not stipulated how many of the detainees were women or girls. The Minister of Law and Order stated that 2 016 children under 16 years were detained under the Emergency

²⁰ The Commission's Report does not provide further data about detentions. The Apartheid State was notorious for its under-reporting of detentions, particularly of women and children. The data released by the State frequently did not include detentions in the 'independent homelands'. In addition, the official statistics may obscure the full extent of young people's detentions. See Appendix A.

Regulations but did not stipulate the age ranges or gender of those detained. In 1986, the State indicated that 3 989 people were held in terms of Emergency Regulations, and that 48 of these were women. The SAIRR recorded a total of 25 000 detainees in the same period. Other sources suggest a higher proportion of female detainees than either the State or SAIRR figures indicate. For example, the DPSC (1988) estimated that women comprised twelve per cent of detainees held by the State in 1986-87 under the State of Emergency laws, and Coleman (in Russell, 1990:15) estimated that fourteen per cent of children detained in the same period were girls. Coleman (1998: xi) states that between 1960 and 1990, 80 000 opponents of Apartheid were detained for up to three years without trial. Ten thousand of these were women and fifteen thousand were children under eighteen.

It is possible that a considerably larger number of women and children were detained than the available figures suggest. Many people were detained only briefly. Often they were shifted between police stations during interrogation. They were not necessarily recorded as arrested or detained, no charges were laid, and they were released from police 'custody' after a relatively short period of holding or interrogation. The length of time they were held does not, of course, bear any necessary relation to the treatment received during that time. My research in Zwelethemba indicates that women activists frequently experienced multiple detentions of short duration, often for less than forty-eight hours (see Chapter Five). While in detention, they were beaten, tortured, sexually harassed, verbally abused. Some were hooded, taken to a nearby river and repeatedly held under water. It also cannot be assumed that the effects on kin and community were less destructive than if people were held for longer periods.

In the Commission's Report, women are depicted as passive victims of violations inflicted upon them. Yet, as I have shown in the Chapter, women's testimonies show both the damage wrought by violence and their efforts to create a coherent sense of self and continuity through time. Their words describe the ways in which violence is inserted with devastating effects into the social fabric. State-sanctioned practices of detention created spaces in which detainees' identities were challenged through violence or the incipience of its presence and through practices that made detainees doubt themselves, their political commitments and their relationships with others. The sense of doubt described in the testimonies is not confined to South African women. Nawal El Sa'adawi, an Egyptian scholar and activist, describes detention in Egypt during Anwar Sadat's Presidency. She writes,

Prison is doubt. And doubt is the most certain of tortures. It is doubt that kills the intellect and body — not doubt in others, but doubt in oneself The baffling, crushing question for the mind: was I right or wrong? (1991:136).

The testimonies offered by many of the South African women bear witness to the importance political commitments in withstanding the violence visited upon them in detention. Their testimonies indicate both the hardships involved in maintaining a coherent sense of self after detention or torture and the strength of those who were able to resist the assault on identities. In the testimonies I have presented, women who described themselves in unambiguous terms as political activists spoke of carefully nurtured solidarity and of strong yet simultaneously fragile trust in selves and others. That trust was circumscribed by violence inflicted sometimes on themselves and sometimes on their kin. Women testified also to particular vulnerabilities that frequently coalesced around their biological identities as women. Vulnerabilities wrought through women's relationships with children, through menstruation and the threat of rape are interwoven with an intimate knowledge of the raw power of the State.

Women reconstituted their identities through diverse mechanisms, both in the past and in the context of remembrance offered by the Commission. They reaffirmed their political commitments, made choices that held to particular values, such as the right to endanger oneself but not one's kin, tried to forge a sense of solidarity with other prisoners, within an imagined community of other (women) detainees and even more broadly, with women as a category. In testifying about their experiences of hurt before the Commission, women activists reworked their identities, reconsidered the nature of the harm inflicted.

The testimonies I have drawn from here imply that the terms used to describe violation should be expanded to consider the effects of harm on social relationships, on people's experiences of self, time and place. The words point to the historical location of women's resistance and the political and social visions that sustained them and engaged their opposition. It is misleading to consider as harm only that which is visibly embodied. The measurement of harmful consequences of violence needs care (see Chapter Five and Appendix B). The Commission's findings on women, clustered as they are around an idea of bodily violation, do not allow for a serious consideration of the nature of power in its manifestation as violence. As I have shown, the testimonies can be read to indict a system of law that allowed for perpetration of particular kinds of violence. Yet, the focus on bodily harm in the hearings does not allow for sufficient consideration to be placed on damage done to relationships or on the ways that people reconstitute identities, relationships and commitments in contexts of violence and its aftermath, a point that I examine in Chapter Four and to which I return in Chapter Six.

Chapter Four

Narrative Threads

The event is not what happens. The event is that which can be narrated. (Feldman. 1991: 14)

Everything can be narrated. But what is narrated is no longer what happened. (Daniel. 1996: 208)

Stories provide us with truth; they take the flotsam and jetsam of our lives, and give those shards a sense of narrative, of form, and therefore of verity. But that truth is slippery and a crucial characteristic of stories is that they can be revised ... So if story is truth, then truth is never absolute ... Story provides insight but never closure. (Scheub. 1998: 1)

[M]emory operates most frequently by the threads of narrative However, stories require interlocutors, and the right to establish authoritative versions never rests with the individuals telling the story alone. It shifts from communal institutions and collective memory to the domain of experts and beyond — to market forces and the power of the state. (Lambek and Antze. 1996: xvii)

'Testimony' has been deemed a powerful mechanism through which 'healing' may occur by means of recounting experiences of harm so that they may be 'integrated' into the psyche. Testimony is considered by Ingrid Agger and Soren Jensen (1990) to be a universal 'ritual of healing' that has both personal, private and public, judicial components. They argue that through testimony, the individual reintegrates painful experience into the self (thereby becoming 'whole') and makes a public statement about harms inflicted, thereby serving both to record harm and to denounce those who inflicted it. Ingrid Agger (1994: 9) writes,

'Testimony' as a concept has a special double connotation: it contains objective, judicial, public and political aspects as well as subjective, spiritual, cathartic and private aspects. Testimony thus contains the quality of uniting within its structure the private and the political levels.

Agger's and Jensen's work has been drawn on by others who are engaged in trying to assist in healing after traumatic experiences (see Herman 1992). The principles of Agger and Jensen's work — that spoken pain enables ownership and reintegration for the individual and has a juridical role in society — lies at the basis of the projects generically described as 'truth commissions', and predicated on testimonial practices¹. In South Africa, the Commission was hailed by its proponents as offering healing to victims of human rights violations through testimonial practices of relating experiences of gross violations of human rights for the public. These practices were often described as 'story-telling', a motif that ran through the Commission's process. Victims were encouraged to come forward and relate their experiences of harm. Posters featuring a portrait photograph of an elderly, black, unnamed woman alongside an invitation to people to 'Tell Your Story' were made by the Centre for the Study of Violence to advertise the Commission's work prior to the first hearings. Commissioners and committee members frequently spoke of the healing power of story telling. Archbishop Tutu, the Chair of the Commission, stated,

Storytelling is central, not only to many religious practices in this country but also to the African tradition of which we are a part. Ellen Kuzwayo is quoted ... as saying: 'Africa is a place of storytelling. We need more stories, never mind how painful the exercise may be ... Stories help us to understand, to forgive and to see things through someone else's eyes' (Tutu, 1997: 7).

Commission posters that decked the walls of hearings outlined the harms that might result from an inadequate knowledge of the past. For example, one read, 'The truth hurts: silence kills'; and another stated, 'Revealing is healing'. The implication of the posters is that it

¹ Testimonial practices as a means of denunciation and of integration have a long history. See for example Fitzpatrick and Gellately 1997; Felman and Laub 1992; Agger 1994; Minow 1998.

was a civic and moral duty to narrate one's experiences of violation and pain. In so doing, deponents and testifiers could bring about both personal healing and a healing of the national body. By way of a further illustration, take the conclusion to the discussion on consequences of gross violations of human rights contained in Volume Five of the Report. It states,

People came to the Commission to tell their stories in an attempt to facilitate not only their own individual healing processes, but also a healing process for the entire nation. Many of those who chose not to come to the Commission heard versions of their stories in the experiences of others. In this way, the Commission was able to reach a broader community (p. 169).

Personal experiences and national interests were presumed to mesh through stories of harm inflicted.

The Commission explicitly used story telling as part of its methodological approach to ascertaining 'truth'. The Report (Volume One: 112) states,

By telling their stories, both victims and perpetrators gave meaning to the multi-layered experiences of the South African story ... In the (South) African context, where value continues to be attached to oral tradition, the process of story telling was particularly important. Indeed, this aspect is a distinctive ... feature of the legislation governing the Commission ... [:] The Act explicitly recognised the healing potential of telling stories.

The Report adds in a footnote to the extract cited above,

This was highlighted in section 3 (c) of the Act, which stated that one of the objectives of the Commission was to 'restore the human and civil dignity of victims by granting them an opportunity to relate *their own accounts* of the violations of which they are the victims' (emphasis added).

Most striking about the relationship between 'experience' and 'story' was the way in which the narration of experience was assumed in the Commission's work to be a simple act, a release of 'stories' of pain that already existed intact within those who had experienced violations. All that was apparently required was a forum through which the stories could be released and channelled. Yet, as I show below, individual testimonies and statements are complex products and not intact stories.

Statements about gross violations of human rights emerged as a product of a lengthy process of decision-making, narration, distillation and crystallisation of experiences of particular kinds of violence. The preliminary processes of data-collection during the research and statement-taking stages of the Commission's work shaped statements and testimonies to varying degrees. Lars Buur, an anthropologist who conducted research on the everyday work of truth finding in the Commission, describes the tasks of generating and corroborating statements about violations. Working alongside Commission investigators, statement-takers and data-capturers, Buur (1999) details the processes by which stories of harm told by deponents to

statement takers were transformed into 'data' using a positivistic methodology. For example, he describes the effects on the kinds of information produced in statements of the changes in protocols used by statement takers to record deponents' stories of violation (1999: 17-18).

Initially, the statement takers tried to capture the narrative of the victim word-for-word, but this strategy was abandoned for several reasons. One ... was that it produced too much information ... another reason was that the stories of victims were 'badly organised'

This ... points to a change in the ... manner in which narratives are captured. From initially writing down the victim's story word-for-word, a statement taking session, including writing down the 'narrative', the 'statement' ... came to follow more or less this sequence: First the victim would tell her or his story in the language preferred ... then the statement taker would ask a few questions in order to clarify questions related to time, place, kind of violation, persons involved, etc., next the statement taker would write down the narrative in English. Seldom was the statement taker's version read aloud to the victim for approval.

After this initial accessing of the victim's story, around one-and-a-half hours was spent on dissection of the story so that detailed information of the victim's identity was captured [T]his ... was aimed at generating information that, through the intervention of the data processors, could be 'fed' into the database of the [Commission].

Buur suggests that the changes had the cumulative effect of reducing and decontextualising narratives into a set of uniform, comparable data to be used for statistical purposes (1999: 29). Richard Wilson (1997) suggests that such processes have the effect of taming violence, removing it from the purview of harmed bodies and resistance practices to the domain of statistics, words and legalities.

Testimonies made before the Human Rights Violations Committee's public hearings emerged as a product of a dialogue between a testifier and the Human Rights Violations Committee member assigned to assist him or her. The dialogue was shaped by the interpretation of the Commission's mandate, the statements given, and, as I show below, the empathy and interaction between a Commission representative and a testifier. Each process of eliciting public testimony was unique and each Commission member had different techniques for eliciting stories of harm. Some were silent in the face of pain; others probed testifiers' accounts, seeking greater detail of and explanation for the experiences they described.

Giving public expression to violent experience was an ambivalent experience for some victims: 'Not all storytelling heals. Not everyone wanted to tell his or her story' (Report, Volume Five: 352. See also Volume One: 112). Despite this, the Report claims that on the whole, telling one's story was beneficial. It claims (Volume Five: 352) that, 'Many ... were able to reach towards healing by telling the painful stories of their pasts'. The Report

illustrates its claim with extracts drawn from the testimonies and post-hearing debriefing sessions of three testifiers, one of whom is a woman named Yvonne Khutwane. Her testimony is the focus of the present Chapter. It warrants close attention for a number of reasons. She was one of few women activists to testify before the Commission and the only woman activist in Zweekhamba (the area that became a focus of my research) to testify in a public hearing of the Commission's Human Rights Violations Committee. She was the first woman to include a description of sexual violation in her public testimony, a factor that, as I have shown in Chapter Three, was a matter of considerable import to the Commission and members of civil society. Although few testimonies are cited in the Report, fewer still appear more than once. Statements made by Gender Commissioner, Thenjiwe Mtintso, about the importance of an understanding of gender discrimination and violation against women are included in five places in the 1998 Report. Brief extracts from Zubeida Jaffer's testimony at the Woman's Hearing in Cape Town on 8th August 1996 (see Chapter Three) are included in ten places in the Report. Extracts from Yvonne Khutwane's testimony are cited in four places in the Report (Volume Three: 448; twice in Volume Four: 298; and Volume Five: 352-353) where they are offered mainly as illustrations of the kinds of *sexual* violence visited upon women. The telling and reinterpreting of her experiences at the human rights violations hearing, in media reports and in the evaluations offered by political activists resident in her home town, provide the elements of a critique of the Commission's rather simplistic, albeit indirect, assumptions about violence, testimony, truth and healing.

A Human Rights Violations Hearing in Worcester

The Commission's sixth public hearing on Human Rights Violations was held in Worcester, the town at the heartland of the Boland wine and fruit-growing region in the Western Cape. Between 24th and 26th June, 1996, twenty-four residents of the towns that dot the Breede River valley — Worcester, Rawsonville, Robertson, Ashton and Montagu and their townships² — testified about gross violations of human rights.

The hearing was held in Songhe College, a teacher training institute that lies between the town centre and residential areas previously decreed Coloured, close to what used to be

² I retain the usage of 'township' in places in the Chapter because people in Zweekhamba use the word. Some, young and old, use the older term 'location'. As in many of the small towns in the Boland, black residential areas were set at a distance from the main town and consist of little more than houses laid out in grid formation. Some, such as Zweekhamba, have schools, a police station, post-office and basic shopping facilities.

Potjiesstraat and Sakkiesdorp from which 'African' residents were forcibly removed³ in 1954 when the residential areas were declared to be for Coloured and White residents only. Africans were removed to Zwelethemba, 'Place of Hope', some five kilometres away from the College, across a river that residents believe was diverted to create a 'buffer zone' between the Black and White areas of town. The Human Rights Violations hearing was held in the College's main hall during the winter vacation. All the entrances to the hall save one were cordoned off with the same plastic ribbon that police use to mark the scene of a crime. Few people attended the hearings in the draughty hall that bitterly cold week in early winter. As usual, the events taking place on the flower-bedecked stage were televised and broadcast daily in print and electronic media.

The twenty-four testifiers represented approximately fourteen percent of the total of 177 deponents in the area who made statements to the Commission. Five people spoke about killings; eight described detentions and torture and eleven described injuries. Police were identified as responsible for harm in eighteen of the testimonies: one woman and seven men described instances of torture and detention; police shot and killed four men; shot and injured three men and one woman; and beat and injured two women. Members of the Zolani vigilante group known as the *Amasolomzi* (Eyes of the Community) injured four men. Police were implicated in two of the four cases. One man reported that he had been shot by 'comrades'. A civilian killed a youth during a protest march.

Approximately half of the testifiers had been young when the incidents they described to the Commission had occurred. Thirteen young men were under the age of twenty-five at the time of the violation they or others described. Three testifiers were middle-aged women. Eight testifiers were middle-aged or elderly men. With the exception of one person, all testifiers were Coloured or African. Nine were residents of Zwelethemba. Two of the nine (Maria Bahume and Yvonne Khutwane) were women. Seven of the Zwelethemba testifiers (Xolile Dyabooi, Zandesile Ntsomi, Amos Dyantyi, Yvonne Khutwane, Nyembezi Makhubala, Mzikhaya Mkhabile, and Nthando Mrubata) spoke about their own experiences of violation. Maria Bahume testified about the death of her son, Nation Bahume, in 1985, the first child to be killed by the police in Zwelethemba (see Chapter Five). Mbedele Dyasi spoke of the death of his son, William, also killed by the police in 1985. Seven of the Zwelethemba testifiers described the violence in the township in the mid-1980s. Two elderly men (Nyembezi Makhubalo and Mzikhaya Mkhabile) described events in 1960, when residents in Zwelethemba burnt their

³ Some of the former residents have made claims for the return of their property or compensation for its loss to the Land Claims Commission established by the post-Apartheid State.

passes and protested. Both men were arrested and tortured. Mkhabile, was imprisoned on Robben Island for twelve years.

Eight of the nine testimonies made by Zwelethemba residents at the hearing concerned violations committed by the police and/or Security Branch. The same policemen, Warrant Officer van Loggerenberg, Lieutenant Nieuwoudt, and Sergeant McDonald, were frequently named by testifiers as perpetrators of gross violations of human rights⁴.

All the Zwelethemba residents who testified about their own experiences of violation considered themselves to have been politically active; some as students engaged in protest and boycotts, others as members of the ANC 'underground'⁵. The image presented to the public through the hearing was one of committed activists confronting the State in its manifestation as the police and its infamous Security Branch. Taken together, the accounts offered point to the strength of anti-apartheid resistance in the area over a long period. The testifiers or those about whom they spoke are named as victims in the Commission's Report. It was in the context of a representation of overt and sustained resistance that Mrs Yvonne Khutwane gave her testimony.

A woman's pain

A middle-aged woman dressed in red and wearing a beret, Yvonne Khutwane was accompanied to the stage to testify by her friend, Mirriam Moleleki, who was also a 'community debriefer' (see Chapter Six). Mrs Khutwane was sworn in at 3.10pm on 24th June 1996 before a panel consisting of four Commissioners (Denzil Potgieter, an advocate, Wendy Orr, a doctor who had exposed torture of detainees while a district surgeon in the Eastern Cape, Alex Boraine, who had been a member of Parliament in opposition to Apartheid and Mary Burton, one time head of the Black Sash, an organisation of women that monitored State repression) and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, a young woman psychologist and member of the

⁴ The Commission Report (1998, Volume Three: 447) states that in the 1980s all three men were charged with numerous cases of assault and torture. They denied the charges at the time they were laid and the Attorney General did not prosecute. van Loggerenberg still resides in Worcester and a number of activists who had brutal dealings with him report having encountered him in the town's streets. The Commission Report does not make specific findings in respect of the men.

⁵ The hearing was unusual in this regard. In most previous hearings, the majority of testifiers did not describe themselves or the people about whom they testified as politically active. In the testimonies about Zwelethemba, only Mr Dyasi, whose son, William, had been shot while running from two policemen, did not claim a political identity for his son. When asked about his son's political activism, he replied, 'As far as I know he was a very sweet child. He couldn't [wouldn't] tell where he was going to, he was just going out saying nothing so I had no idea how involved he was or where.' Young political activists in Zwelethemba regard William Dyasi as a martyr in 'the struggle' against Apartheid.

Human Rights Violations Committee. Yvonne Khutwane was the sixth person to testify that day and the fourth to testify about events in Zwelethemba in the 1980s. She spoke in Xhosa⁶, assisted by Ms Gobodo-Madikizela. Her forty-minute testimony began with her warning to the panellists that her memory for dates was failing. She then began to describe a political meeting held in the Zwelethemba school hall after mourners returned from the funeral of the 'Cradock Four'— Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkhonto and Sicelo Mhlawuli — in Cradock in 1985 (see Chapter Two). A few minutes into her description, Ms Gobodo-Madikizela, interrupted her and asked, 'Are you trying to clarify how you got involved in politics?' Yvonne Khutwane replied,

I started in 1960 to be involved in the ANC struggle. I was still a young girl. We worked underground, and it was very difficult for us even to hold meetings. I became prominent specifically when the Municipality offices were establishing community councillors, as you see this lady next to me on my left [a reference to Mirriam Moleleki], we were the people who didn't like that.

Ms Gobodo-Madikizela intervened again and asked her to explain the events that led to her arrest and trial between 1985 and 1986. Mrs Khutwane said that she had been interrogated in 1984 about her involvement in protest activities designed to remove local councillors from power. She was a founder member of the Zwelethemba Residents' Association (affiliated to the Western Cape Civic Association, a grouping that stood in opposition to the State's local councils.) She explained to the Commission that when she had made a statement to the police, she realised that she may inadvertently have betrayed a comrade:

It is then that I was affected severely, to the extent that, even today, I cannot explain [how it came] about that I should seem [to] have betrayed my friend. But fortunately ... [he] won the case, he was acquitted.

Immediately after the description of her inadvertent betrayal, Yvonne Khutwane embarked on a long and detailed explanation of her arrest in 1985 after the meeting to which she had alluded when she opened her testimony. The description was punctuated by questions from Ms Gobodo-Madikizela. On one occasion Ms Gobodo-Madikizela asked, 'In other words you are giving a statement in which you were degraded by the police: could you please just explain that?' Yvonne Khutwane described being interrogated about weapons possession and the burning of the municipal bar in Zwelethemba⁷ in June 1985. She had been called to the

⁶ Quotes are drawn from my notes taken during the hearing and from the Commission's transcripts of testimonies, which were available only in translation from the Xhosa. My interviews with Yvonne Khutwane were conducted in English and Afrikaans. She is fluent in both languages.

⁷ The State established municipal bars in the townships. Money raised by the sale of alcohol was supposed to be used to augment municipal incomes and so keep rentals on municipal housing low. The institution was widely disliked by progressive youth, and in 1985 there was a wave of arson attacks on municipal bars all over the country.

magistrate's court by a local black policeman, who told her that she was wanted in connection with charges she had laid against a young man who had stolen her car battery some months previously. She had dressed smartly for her court appearance and had gone with the policeman willingly, only to find that she had been duped. Instead of going to court to give evidence in the case, she was taken to the police station for interrogation. During the interrogation, she was hit in the face and verbally abused by a white policeman 'young enough to be my son'. She fought back.

When the fight continued, you could hear that there was somebody coming along and then they were ridiculing me and then saying I am a John Tait and a Gerrie Coetzee, the boxers. At the end I could see that they were also embarrassed because some of the black detectives came in. My shirt was in tatters and then one of them said, 'Are you fighting back, you *kaffir*⁸?' Then they kept on insulting me.'

She was detained with 'children', whom she heard screaming and crying in the cells alongside hers. In response to questions posed by Ms Gobodo-Madikizela, she explained that she had been pushed into a police van and driven to the township in leg irons and handcuffs⁹. She was taken to her house which, she said, was 'infested' with policemen searching for weapons and the makings of petrol bombs. 'When we got there ... there were still a lot of policemen around my place. You would think that a male person was arrested!', she told the panel.

The police did not find any weapons, but Yvonne Khutwane was arrested. At this point in the narration, Ms Gobodo-Madikizela intervened, prompting, 'Excuse me mama, can you please tell me what they did to you?' Yvonne Khutwane explained that she was locked in a cell with a warning:

They [the police] said if I defy them I will be detained for years and I will never get out of prison again ... I said I didn't care; they can do whatever they liked. I was arrested and I was detained again. I was alone in the cell ... I was really in solitary confinement. I was concerned about my child because I left him whilst I was taken to those offices. So I didn't know where they have taken him.

She then explained that that night two policemen had taken her from the cell and bundled her into an armoured vehicle, a 'Hippo', that drove out of Worcester and through Rawsonville, a village a few kilometres away. As Mrs Khutwane embarked on a careful

⁸ Lit. 'Unbeliever'. Used as a derogatory term to describe Africans.

⁹ In an interview, she told me that she asked a policeman to drape her coat over her shoulders to spare her mother the sight of her hands cuffed behind her back. The policeman obliged, much to her surprise.

description of the route, Ms Gobodo-Madikizela intervened, prompting her to address the human rights violations about which she had come to testify: 'What were they doing to you, as you are here?' In response to persistent questions posed by Ms Gobodo-Madikizela, Mrs Khutwane described how two young white soldiers sexually molested her.

I was just alone at the back of the hippo and they were just driving - it was pitch dark outside. They alighted from the hippo and then they came to take me out of the hippo. One of them said to me can I see what [situation] I have put myself in, and then they asked me when did I last sleep with a man. I was so embarrassed by this question. And I felt so humiliated. I informed them that I have nobody; I didn't have a partner. Then they asked me with whom am I staying. I informed them that I was with my family. The other question that they asked me is how do I feel when ... I am having intercourse with a man. This was too much for me because they were repeating it time and again, asking me the same question, asking what do I like with the intercourse? Do I like the size of the penis? Or what do I enjoy most?

So the other one was just putting his hand inside me [into] the vagina, I was crying because I was afraid. We had heard that the soldiers are very notorious for raping people. This one continued putting his finger right [into] me, he kept on penetrating and I was asking for forgiveness and I was asking them, 'what have I done, I am old enough to be your mother. But why are you treating me like this?' This was very, very embarrassing.

At the end ... I think maybe God just came inside them and the other one said, 'Let's let her go', and then at the end they took me back to this police station and then they locked me up in the cell again. When I got inside there, I could see that there was one person inside the cell, I was afraid because this person was also - looked as if he is a male also, I was not trusting anybody now, I was suspicious of anything that was moving around.

A day later, Mrs Khutwane was interrogated by members of the Security Branch. One, Geritt Nieuwoudt, emptied the breach of his gun of its bullets and hit her repeatedly on the head with its butt as the other questioned her. Mrs Khutwane's description of the interrogation was interrupted again by Ms Gobodo-Madikizela's questions about what information the police sought from her. Yvonne Khutwane replied, with a hint of impatience, 'I am still saying my story'. She continued by describing meetings held between blacks and whites in Zwelethemba. Ms Gobodo-Madikizela intervened once more, returning to the event of sexual violation¹⁰. She asked Yvonne Khutwane to describe how she had felt about the experience of being molested by the policeman:

¹⁰ In an e-mail correspondence, Ms Gobodo-Madikizela said that she identified very closely with Mrs Khutwane's experiences. Her identification was so close that some of her colleagues in the mental health field wondered 'if I had had a personal experience of rape or other sexual abuse in the past and [whether] my reaction to Mrs Khutwane's testimony could be attributed to this past!' (personal communication by e-mail, 5th April 1999, cited with permission).

I want to know and want to identify the situation that you were while these people detained you. You have given us the - the other way that they treated you during that period and we got what you are trying to say and the way they treated you while you were in the van... As I was sitting ... there listening [to your testimony] I couldn't take it, because our mothers are just the same age as yours and yet where there are people who ... couldn't respect you - dishonour you as little [young] as they were.

I just had the feeling that you could be my mother. That's where the pain is. We would like you to tell us, how were you feeling that time?

Yvonne Khutwane replied that the event had been painful and humiliating, not least because the men involved were young enough to be her children:

It was so painful because I couldn't stand it, because these kids were young and ... they had all the powers [i.e. ought] to respect and honour me. They were just the same age as my children and what were they doing to me. I ... think maybe they thought that I was just a black person who is out of her mind ... not knowing anything.

Ms Gobodo-Madikizela responded,

Yes, it's like that, because like the one who slapped you hard on your face he was also a youngster. So I think they dishonoured you, humiliating you, lowered your dignity as much as they can. We would like to come to an end of this so that my colleagues [can] ... ask you some questions. I would like to know how many children do you have? ...

Mrs Khutwane replied that she had four adult children, and, in response to further questions, revealed that she had been married but was divorced and owned her own house (that is, was a woman of independent means). Ms Gobodo-Madikizela continued,

I am just saying that you are also a mother. It's because I am imagining the way these children, these policemen ... treated you. I had a picture in mind ... [of] the way they were treating you.

Yvonne Khutwane went on to describe the appalling conditions of the jail, the lice in her cell and the brutal interrogation sessions in which Lt. Nieuwoudt repeatedly partially suffocated her. She explained that she had contracted meningitis and had been given wet blankets when she complained of the cold. She was refused medical attention until a lawyer intervened. After receiving medical attention she was sent back to prison. She was released after a friend paid her bail. At the end of a trial in which she stood accused of inciting public violence, she was acquitted. During the trial, her house was bombed:

During the period when I was detained, I was just in confused state. I didn't know what was happening to me. I didn't even know whether I was going to be acquitted or I was going to be kept for quite a long time. One of the people informed me that while I was detained my place was burnt down while I was in

prison¹¹ and I was informed that ... [a] petrol bomb was thrown at it. So, one of my children died because he had an epileptic attack¹².

When she returned home after she was acquitted on all charges, she found herself alienated by her political community. Ms Gobodo-Madikizela asked Yvonne Khutwane to describe her feelings and the responses of residents in Zwelethemba:

I had a picture in mind looking at the way they [i.e. the police] were treating you - even the people - the community people what were they feeling then. I ... am wondering what was on your mind by the time they [the police] were moving with you in the van right around the location.

Mrs Khutwane answered,

I thought that as I was one of the ANC members they wanted me to withdraw from the ANC not to hold meetings again because I would know what will be the treatment I will get, even now

The response did not provide a clear answer to the question and Ms Gobodo-Madikizela asked, 'Were there people who said you betrayed others?' Mrs Khutwane replied by describing her feelings of alienation:

I could see that even the community was ostracising me — I was being ridiculed by everybody because my house was destroyed through arson. But I have never turned my back against them. I am still an ANC member.

Ms Gobodo-Madikizela summarised Yvonne Khutwane's requests to the Commission: 'In your statement, you mentioned that we should find out why your house was burnt down ... why you were degraded and why you were reported as an informer.' Mrs Khutwane agreed, asking that the case be investigated. Ms Gobodo-Madikizela then asked whether Mrs Khutwane knew the names of the policemen who had verbally abused and sexually molested her. She did not. Ms Gobodo-Madikizela asked what Mrs Khutwane would say to the young men if they were to ask for forgiveness. Yvonne Khutwane answered that she would tell them that, 'they should try to have manners'. At this point, her testimony came to an end. One third of the time had been taken up with questions and answers about the event of sexual violation. The panellists did not pose questions. Dr Alex Boraine, the chairperson for the day, concluded,

You have been through a very hard time. Not only were you very badly molested and insulted, imprisoned, solitary confinement, charged, kept waiting for two years before your case was heard and found not guilty [but] then to find that your own friends and comrades suspected you of giving information and informing. You lost your house, your family has been unwell, you have

¹¹ This appears to be a mistranslation. The house was attacked while she was on trial, having been released from prison on bail.

¹² From her Commission testimony, it is not clear whether the child died of an epileptic attack triggered by the arson or in a separate incident. In fact the child's death was not linked to the arson attack.

suffered very, very deeply and we are very aware of the pain that you have experienced.

After thanking her, he asked her to step down from the stage and called the next witness. Yvonne Khutwane and her companion left the stage.

Three years later, during one of the interviews I conducted with her¹³, she described her feelings after testifying:

When I sat there in the seats [after testifying], the time came when I felt that I was not there. My brain was *deurmekaar* [An Afrikaans word meaning 'confused']. I returned to my seat alone. No-one from the Truth Commission talked to me [that is, she was not debriefed]. We went out of the hall. The members who had spoken to the Commission had to leave first and the others last. After the hearings there were people from Zwelethemba who were going home. People congratulated me. You know, I did not know if I did right or wrong. I asked myself if I should have gone before the Truth Commission. I did not know if people would understand. I just told myself [prior to testifying] that I would tell the truth and hope. That was the end.

There were lots of people at the Truth Commission that day. Some of them said, 'we did not know what happened to you'. They said that they would not have been able to speak themselves about something like this. They congratulated me for being so strong. Others thanked me. Many said I was very strong. I did not think so. I felt I had to speak the truth I knew.

No-one has mentioned it since except a woman from Ashton who came about rehabilitation¹⁴. I told her that I am okay, I don't need to be rehabilitated. I am not sick, I am alright. I said, 'I am strong, I do not need trauma help, *ntoni, ntoni*' [Xhosa – 'and so on and so on']. The second time it was the priest with no hands¹⁵. I said, 'I am not feeling anything [bad]. I do not need intervention.

¹³ I conducted three formal interviews with Yvonne Khutwane in Zwelethemba and spoke with her informally and telephonically several times between 1997 and 1999. I discussed her testimony with a number of other people, including youth activists, and, with the exception of one woman, I spoke to the people she named in Zwelethemba. I corroborated material by email with Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, Wendy Orr, and Martha Minow (see below), discussed the reporting of the case with correspondent Roger Friedman who reports for the Cape Times, and spoke with representatives of the Commission regarding her testimony and the debriefing process. I have been unable to gain access to Yvonne Khutwane's file at the Commission as the statements given to the Commission are not yet public documents and are protected.

¹⁴ The Cape Town-based Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence had a branch in Ashton at the time of the hearing. A fieldworker offered debriefing to those who testified.

¹⁵ Father Michael Lapsley, an Anglican minister and ANC member whose hands were blown off in 1990 when a parcel bomb sent to him in Harare, Zimbabwe, exploded. His life history is recorded in Michael Worsnip's book, Priest and Partisan, published in 1996. Lapsley testified before the Commission on 10th June 1996 at a hearing on Human Rights Violations in Kimberley. Lapsley established an initiative called 'Healing of the Memories Workshops' that operated through the auspices of the Trauma Centre. The workshops aimed to effect reconciliation by bringing together people from a wide spectrum of society to discuss and share with one another the personal effects of Apartheid. The workshops were modified to provide support for those who had given testimony before the Commission.

One white woman stopped me in the street. She said, '*Ek het jou 'speech' by die Waarheids Kommissie gehoor*' [I heard your speech at the Truth Commission]. I used to work for a dentist — *inslaapwerk* [sleep-in domestic work] — and she [the dentist's wife] saw me in town and she said she had heard me.

I didn't know it would be like this.

You know, people came from Groote Schuur Hospital to Masikhule [a centre from which several former women activists run development initiatives – see Chapter Six] one Sunday [before the Commission hearing]. They said, 'You must not keep things inside. Speak it out. You can't sit and think always, thinking, thinking, thinking.' At the Truth Commission I said I would speak out so that the world would know that we were under such conditions, so that even the people who did these things would change and would know that we are also people and they did not have the right to do such things to us (Interview, June 1999).

A diversity of harms becomes a story of sexual violation

In her testimony before the Commission, Mrs Khutwane described diverse experiences of harm and damage that included the severe punishment meted out to political prisoners and the torture that women experienced. Her testimony described the connivance of the medical and legal systems in her ill treatment. These were common complaints among the testifiers in the Boland. There is substantial evidence from public hearings of the Commission of collusion between state, police, and certain medical and legal practitioners throughout the country. (Report, Volume Four: 109; 154; 155-7). Mrs Khutwane told of the fragility of community relationships during violence: the apparent ease with which accusations of betrayal led to arson and ostracism, notwithstanding her claim to twenty-five years of work in the underground structures of the ANC. Her testimony linked several events into a continuous narrative of both tribulation and commitment. She described her experiences as a series of disasters that followed on from one another in rapid chronological and accumulative order and that were mediated by her self-conscious political knowledge. Carefully, she charted the intrusion of violence into her life: practices of violence that moved from her body's surface to its intimate spaces; a widening spiral of violence that once again impinged on the space of the domestic and destroyed her home. The descriptions presented her experiences as a seamless set of activities and relations in which she, as a political activist, was pitted against the state and as a consequence later came into — and appeared to have overcome — conflict within the community. Both Yvonne Khutwane and the Commission portrayed her story as emblematic of the experience of some activists: under surveillance by the police, detained or arrested, interrogated, tortured, her kin threatened, released, faced with community suspicion.

Yet, despite the diversity of harms that Mrs Khutwane described, many of which fell into the Commission's definition of gross violations of human rights, the print media and later the representations of her testimony in the Commission's Report depicted her as the *victim of sexual violation*. Prior to Mrs Khutwane's testimony, few women had testified about their own experiences of violation and none had spoken in public hearings about experiences of sexual violation, although these had been intimated in some testimonies (see Chapter Two) and described in the Gender Submission (Goldblatt and Meintjies 1996)¹⁶. At the time that Yvonne Khutwane testified, as I have shown in Chapter One, there was an anxiety within some sections of the Commission that women's experiences of violation were not fully represented in public hearings.

Mrs Khutwane's testimony at the Worcester hearing was not an unmediated flow of words that described her experience but was marked and shaped by interventions and questions from Ms Gobodo-Madikizela. The latter had been present at a meeting between some Commission members and members of Cape Town's NGOs on the 14th June, 1996 at which Commissioner Mapule Ramashala had expressed her concern that 'the whole story' of Apartheid violation would not be told if women did not testify about their own experiences of harm (see Chapter One). Ms Gobodo-Madikizela's interventions were important in view of the fact that Mrs Khutwane did not include the story of sexual violation as she told it before the Commission in her prior written statement. The statement apparently¹⁷ described her arrest and torture, the arson attack on her house and the accusation that she was a sell-out. It also stated that she was 'threatened' with rape. Ms Gobodo-Madikizela later told me that she did not know about the incident of sexual violation, saying that the first time she had learned of it was when it had emerged from the dialogue of the testimonial process (personal communication, 5th April 1999). Ms Gobodo-Madikizela wrote in response to my questions about Mrs Khutwane's testimony,

¹⁶ The submission was presented to the Commission in May 1996 and was read into the record at the Women's Hearing in Johannesburg on 29th July 1997. In June 1996 I presented an early analysis of data drawn from testimonies offered at the first five weeks of Human Rights Violations Hearings to the Faultlines Conference in Cape Town (Ross 1996). The data described the tendency for women to speak of men's suffering and to allude to their own rather than addressing it directly. Ms Gobodo-Madikizela was present at my presentation.

¹⁷ I verified the statement with a Commission employee on 29th March 1999, who confirmed that the deponent included a statement on 'the *threat of rape*' but not about acts of sexual violation.

Her testimony about the behaviour of the young military police¹⁸ came to me as a total surprise. It would be more correct to say I *identified* more closely with her story But because I am a woman there has to be something more intriguing in the story than simply the fact that I was identifying closely with the story of another woman, because of the humiliation I shared with her at that point, which only another woman can understand I think ... that there is something between a TRC member and a witness that elicits certain responses from the witness (emphasis in the original e-mail, 5th April 1999, cited with permission).

Particular facets of Mrs Khutwane's experience were emphasised in the public record as a result of the empathy and personal engagement described by Ms Gobodo-Madikizela. Mrs Khutwane seemed reluctant to talk of sexual violation. She sometimes evaded the questions posed, or answered them briefly. She did not offer her emotional responses until prompted. Sometimes she responded impatiently. She was not reticent in describing the other violations she had experienced. She told of being threatened, hit, beaten with the butt of a gun, strangled, suffocated, squashed. She described arson and her child's death, and her feelings of alienation from her political community. In so doing, she located the sexual violation as one particularly harmful incident among many, but the questions posed by Ms Gobodo-Madikizela returned her on several occasions to the event of sexual harm. Indeed, as I sat in the audience at the hearing, it seemed that the testimonial process began increasingly to resemble a public psychotherapeutic session, in which Mrs Khutwane was brought back time and again to the memory of an event of sexual violation. It seemed this violation was presumed to be *the* traumatic event and the *primary* human rights violation. The process appeared to be predicated on an assumption that that which happens to or is inflicted on the body endures as pain remembered in a different and more profound fashion than the pain of, for example, a loss of community trust and engagement. The Commission and the audience at the hearing did not learn how Mrs Khutwane coped with her experience of detention and the harms inflicted there. They did not learn about the consequences of being ostracised by political peers or about how Yvonne Khutwane was able to cement relationships sufficiently to remain in the community that she believed considered her to have been an informer. The testimonial interaction revealed only the details of one specific event-period in her life — an event that, as I show below, she had not intended to describe in such detail.

¹⁸ It is not clear whether the men were military police, policemen or soldiers. The English translation offered at the hearing was 'policemen', but Mrs Khutwane recalls that the men wore berets, suggesting that they were military police. The lack of clarity is reflected in media reports (see below).

The press reports that followed the hearing represented Mrs Khutwane's testimony as having been about sexual violation. For example, the South African Press Association (SAPA) reported the story as follows:

WORCESTER June 24 1996 — Sapa

WOMAN TELLS TRUTH BODY OF SEXUAL ABUSE

A Worcester mother of four on Monday told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission how she was sexually molested and tortured by security force members following her arrest in June 1985 for her involvement in African National Congress activities. Testifying before the commission at its hearings in Worcester, Yvonne Khutwane gave graphic details of the abuses she suffered after two white soldiers removed her from her cell in the middle of the night and drove her to a remote spot in a Hippo armoured vehicle. She was in her mid-40s at the time of the attack.

"They asked me when I had last slept with a man. They asked how I felt when I had intercourse with a man. I was so humiliated. I told them I did not have a partner. One of them put his finger into my vagina. I was just crying. He kept on penetrating me. I kept on asking for forgiveness and asking why they were treating me like this. I said I was old enough to be their mother. One of them then said 'let her go'. I think God came into him."

Khutwane, a former member of the Western Cape Civic Association, said she also suffered terrible injuries when she was interrogated by Paarl-based security police. She named one of her alleged torturers as a Lt Gerhardt Nieuwoudt, who she claimed sat on her chest. "They also tried to suffocate me with a towel. I was bleeding all over my body. My condition was very bad and I was taken to hospital."

During her detention her house was petrol-bombed after rumours spread that she had become a police informer. In spite of being shunned by her community, she had remained a loyal member of the ANC, Khutwane said.

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(www.truth.org.za/SAPA/9606/S960624C.htm)

The SAPA report describes Mrs Khutwane in diverse ways. She is described as a mother of four, a middle-aged woman, a person involved in ANC activities. She is not described as a political activist, and her political 'involvement' in ANC 'activities' is secondary to the fact of her motherhood. Her identities are described in almost the reverse order to her own presentation of self in the hearing. The story also highlights the sexual violation. The SAPA report excludes the interventions by Ms Gobodo-Madikizela that shaped Mrs Khutwane's testimony in the hearing so that the testimony is presented as an uncomplicated story of sexual molestation and torture. It is only in the last two sentences that the complexities of returning to her community are mentioned.

The Worcester Standard, the town's local weekly newspaper, mentioned Mrs Khutwane's testimony in its description of the week's hearings (Worcester Standard, Friday

28th June 1996). Under the caption *'WVK hoor talle verhale'* ('TRC hears diverse stories'), Mrs Khutwane's testimony is summarised in one paragraph. It is represented as a single incident, that of sexual molestation, despite the variety of harms and violations to which Mrs Khutwane testified. The report reads:

'Volgens Yvonne Khutwane, wat sedert 1962 'n ANC lid is, is sy in Julie 1985 seksueel gemolesteer deur 'n polisieman. Haar huis is deur inwoners van Zweletemba afgebrand omdat hulle geglo het dat sy 'n polisie-informant was.'

(Yvonne Khutwane, an ANC member since 1962 [sic], was sexually molested in July 1985 by a policeman. Her house was burnt down by residents of Zwelethemba because they believed that she was a police informer.)

Yvonne Khutwane's testimony was also reported in the Cape Town daily newspaper, the Cape Times, on Tuesday June 25th 1996 (page 3). The article, written by journalist Roger Friedman, differed in important respects from Yvonne Khutwane's testimony. Friedman did not interview her after the hearing. (My comments on the difference are italicised alongside the report.) The story read:

ANC veteran tells of sexual abuse

Soldiers the same age as her own children sexually assaulted African National Congress veteran Mrs Yvonne Khotwane (*sic*).

Khotwane told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission yesterday her involvement in the struggle went back to before 1960 — 'I was still a young girl' — but it was in 1985 that she was made to suffer the greatest indignity of her life. (*She did not make this claim.*)

Accused of giving local youths petrol to make petrol bombs (*in fact, she was interrogated about a community meeting held the previous night and later her house was searched. Only then was she arrested in connection with a claim that she had provided materials for bombs*) — she was prominent in the Zwelethemba township community's action against the community council system — Khotwane was arrested in June 1985 and held in Worcester.

Tortured, beaten and threatened continually after her arrest, Khotwane did not dream things could get worse. (*She did not make this claim*) Then they did. (*Again, she did not state this in her public testimony. The statement implies that the incident of sexual molestation was worse than any other experience.*)

One night, two young soldiers loaded her into a car and drove about. Then they broached the subject of sex. (*Here it appears that they were gauche youths asking for information, rather than taunting and humiliating her.*)

'They were asking me horrible things about intercourse. They wanted to know what I liked about intercourse, whether it was the size of the penis.'

One touched her.

'The other one was putting his hand inside me, on to my vagina. I was frightened because we had all heard how notorious the security forces were

about raping people. He kept on penetrating me, and I was asking for forgiveness ... I was old enough to be his mother, I was very frightened.

'They were very young children. They were just the same age as my own children. I think maybe they just thought I was a black person...'

When she cried, they threatened to shoot her. (*Mrs Khutwane did not state that she cried or that the men threatened to shoot her.*)

Then they took her back to the police station. The threats and torture resumed. After three months in detention, Khotwane was charged with public violence. The case dragged on for two years before she was acquitted. But her suffering was not over.

Some members of the Zwelethemba community thought she had cracked under the torture and passed information to the police.

Her house was burnt down.

'But I have never turned my back on them. I am still an ANC member.'

All of the newspaper articles focused on the event of sexual violation as *the primary event of harm*. Those that covered the story in some detail used extracts from Mrs Khutwane's testimony to describe the sexual violation but not any of the other violations. Two of the reports conclude with her assertion of political loyalty, a point to which I return. In all the media representations, Yvonne Khutwane's story was presented as complete: none of the reports showed how the testimony had been constructed, drawn from her through persistent questions and repetition. Rather, the event of sexual molestation was presented as though she had intended to speak of it all along and had done so without prompting. The testimony is represented in a manner that suggests that it pre-existed the Commission's intervention, as if there was a coherent narrative, 'Testimony', intact in form, awaiting an opportunity to be spoken in public.

The print media was not the only representation of Yvonne Khutwane's testimony that focused mainly on sexual violation. Summaries of or direct quotes drawn from her public testimony are included in four places in the Commission's 1998 Report. All but one describe the event of sexual violation. In Volume Three (page 448), quotations are included in a discussion of torture practices in the rural areas of the Western Cape. Extracts from Yvonne Khutwane's description of sexual violation are quoted verbatim but the interventions by Ms Gobodo-Madikizela are erased from the narrative. In Volume Four (page 298), Mrs Khutwane's description of the humiliation of being asked questions of a sexual nature by young men is included in a discussion of humiliations suffered by women. At no point in the Commission's Report is there a discussion of the possible humiliation of being asked questions about sexual violation by a young woman in public before an audience and in the knowledge that hearings were broadcast live on TV and radio and reported in the print media. A short

description of the fight in which she was described as a 'Gerry Coetzee' is also included in the Chapter of the Report that deals with Women (Volume Four: 298). In Volume Five (page 352-353), in a section dealing with reconciliation and restoring the civil and human dignity of victims, extracts drawn from the section of Mrs Khutwane's testimony that described sexual violation are quoted in a discussion of the possibilities of healing offered through testimony. The author of the Volume states that Mrs Khutwane did not include the incident of sexual molestation in her statement concerning gross violations of human rights and states that the public hearing was the first time that Yvonne Khutwane had spoken about her experience of sexual violation:

Quite often, witnesses revealed far more in oral testimony than they had in their written statements. This is illustrated by the testimony of a middle-aged woman, Ms Yvonne Khutwane, at the Worcester hearing (*ibid.*).

The discussion continues by quoting her description of sexual humiliation and molestation. None of Ms Gobodo-Madikizela's interventions are included in the extract, which is presented as an intact and entirely unmediated testimony. The author of the Volume then states,

In her written statement, Ms Khutwane had made no mention of this sexual assault. In her debriefing session¹⁹, she said that this was the first time she had spoken of it and that she felt tremendously relieved (*ibid.*).

According to the Report, Yvonne Khutwane did not intend her public testimony to be concerned with sexual violation. Her written request to the Commission, included as part of the written statement and summarised in the hearing by Ms Gobodo-Madikizela, was that the Commission investigate why and how the house was burnt, why she was 'degraded' and who described her as an informer. Yet these facets of violence were displaced in the ways in which her experience of sexual violence became the focal point of the panellist's interventions, and later, the media reports and the Commission's use of her testimony in its Report²⁰. Initially an event that she did not intend to describe in public (if her written submission to the Commission is read as a statement of intent), the sexual molestation gradually repositioned Mrs Khutwane

¹⁹ Yvonne Khutwane does not recall having been debriefed after testifying, although post-testimony debriefing was a standard feature of the hearings. The files that would indicate the nature of her debriefing are not currently open to public scrutiny and I have been unable to verify that debriefing took place.

²⁰ The reframing of Yvonne Khutwane's testimony resonated with Rajeswari Sunder Rajan's (1993) descriptions of how representations of rape or sexual violence assume that women's lives end at the traumatic event. Women are depicted both as isolated in the moment of violation and as unable to move beyond the experience of violence. Rajan comments (1993:72) that the effect is to turn the woman into a symbol, 'a cypher', and to detract attention from the woman's concerns.

as a victim of sexual abuse. The experience of sexual violation was depicted in both the print media and the Commission's Report as the defining feature of Yvonne Khutwane's testimony.

The testimony has since been taken up elsewhere, and its framing in terms of sexual harm retained. In *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness*, Martha Minow's (1998) study of the alternatives that face countries in confronting and dealing with genocide and mass violence, Yvonne Khutwane's testimony is summarised in the context of a discussion on the limitations of truth commissions in attending to women's voices. Minow writes, 'One woman volunteered testimony about a sexual violation committed by police that she found extremely humiliating: she had not mentioned the incident in her written statement' (1998: 84). Minow drew the case from a talk prepared by Dr. Wendy Orr, a Commissioner, for the World Peace Foundation South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission Meeting, May 1998. (Minow, 1998: 175, footnote 145).

Local interpretations

Yvonne Khutwane was approached to testify to the Commission by Mirriam Moleleki, a political activist in Zwelethemba who worked closely with the Commission (see Chapter Six), and who felt it was important that women testify about their experiences in prison. The Commission considered Yvonne Khutwane's testimony to be true and found her to be a victim of gross violations of human rights. The Commission made its findings on the basis of corroborating evidence and the balance of probabilities (Volume One: 91, 142). Many of the experiences about which Yvonne Khutwane testified (including solitary confinement, torture, beating, sexual molestation and arson) fell into the ambit of the Commission's definitions of gross violations of human rights. However, the 1998 Report does not offer summaries of findings and so it is not clear on what basis the finding is made. In 1998, the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee of the Commission granted Mrs Khutwane an Urgent Interim Relief payment of R2 000.00 (approximately USD 350.00).

Yet the truth-claims she made at the hearing were not accepted at face value in Zwelethemba, her hometown. Not everyone responded in the same way to the testimony, news of which was spread through radio and television coverage and by word of mouth of those who had been present at the hearing. Those who took on the mantle of political leadership and action during the 1980s separated out the events of which Mrs Khutwane spoke, subjecting each to critical scrutiny. They tended to focus on two events in particular: her claims of sexual violation and the arson attack. Young activists frequently discounted the former claim,

suggesting that she had fabricated the story about sexual violation in order to improve her chances of reparation.

In Zwelethemba, unlike in the Commission's workings, Mrs Khutwane's testimony was evaluated in the light of recent and past political events in the township. The press reports and Commission Report did not pay much attention to the story of arson. Yet Yvonne Khutwane considered the arson attack on her home sufficiently important that in both her written and oral statements she asked the Commission to investigate it. The remainder of the Chapter examines the arson attack and the events that followed it. Drawing from interviews with Yvonne Khutwane and other activists in Zwelethemba, I focus on different interpretations of the petrol bombing incident and on competing claims for legitimacy by those articulating different kinds of moral and emotional discourses in the context of confrontation with the state and its aftermath. In order to examine these, I begin by tracing her experiences in prison and during the trial in 1985²¹.

Illness, bail and the arson attack

When Yvonne Khutwane was incarcerated as an awaiting trial prisoner in 1985, she was not allowed visitors for the first few weeks. She embarked on a hunger strike in protest against the prison food. She described the hunger strike feistily: 'No-one told me about this hunger-strike story. No! I thought, "Not a damn! I will not eat this!"' As described in her Commission testimony, she fell ill with meningitis. She complained about her illness to the prison warder, who, she said, gave her a single Disprin (an Asprin-based painkiller) and watched her drink it, saying that if she were not watched she might use the Disprin to make 'Mandrax' (a recreational street drug. Here 'Mandrax' refers to 'home made' drugs made from crushed Disprin and tobacco). She was later taken to a doctor who asked her to tell him whether she was sick and what the problem was. 'He wanted *me* to tell *him*! I couldn't even speak! The saliva was dripping down my face.'²² He gave her tablets that, she said, made her feel worse. She was sent back to the cells. Held in a cell close to but separate from the young male scholars and activists who had been arrested with her, she was accustomed to sending them messages of support.

²¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the material presented in the remainder of the Chapter is drawn from my field research in Zwelethemba and not from the Commission hearing.

²² Her reference has dual connotations. It alludes both to the extent of Mrs Khutwane's illness – she was too sick to describe her pain – and to traditional healing practices in which the healer divines the source and explanation for illness.

I was the only woman. I was Accused Number One. I was in the cell alone. The boys were next door. They used to speak. They told me they did not feel like they were in jail because at least they were together. I was alone and they were ashamed because I was arrested with them. I did not want to make them weak. At night they would sing, not loudly, just quietly. In the boys' quarters they were toyi toying: 'We know Mandela is our father'. One day, they [the police] threw teargas into the boys' cell to stop them singing. Where can you go in a cell? Where can you move?

When the youths did not hear from her for a few days, they learned that she was ill and asked their lawyer, Vali Moosa, to make enquiries. Yvonne Khutwane said, 'You know, if that lawyer hadn't arrived, I would be dead now'. She did not have a lawyer to intervene on her behalf. When Moosa saw how ill she was, he insisted that she be taken to a doctor. Dizzy, vomiting and unable to stand alone, she was bundled into a police van. Its floor was covered in sheep dung in which she rolled as the van sped to the hospital. She was unconscious by the time she was hospitalised.

Three days later she awoke. Realising that her head rested on a pillow, she thought she was at home:

I was so glad. I opened my eyes. The first thing I saw was a big white policeman. I looked at him. He did not speak. He just looked at me. I asked, 'How am I here?' He said, 'I don't know'. I asked for tablets. He said, 'I am not a doctor.' I asked for water. He brought water. I asked him to help me sit. He helped me sit. I was saying in my heart, 'God is there.' I was longing for my mother and my children. I was wondering, 'Where are my children now?'

After two days she was allowed to receive visits from her mother and friends from Zwelethemba. The police, who had guarded her in two shifts, twenty-four hours a day, were no longer present at her bedside. After four days in hospital, the magistrate and court interpreter came to visit. Having checked that she could speak and understand Afrikaans, the magistrate said, '*As hulle jou 'discharge', moet jy huis toe gaan en op hierdie datum moet jy op die hof verskyn.*' ['When they discharge you, you must go home, and on this date you must report to the court']. Yvonne Khutwane wryly commented, 'As you can imagine, I was not happy about that. The day I was discharged I knew they would arrest me again'. She was discharged the following day. Weak and scarcely able to stand, she was sent to the dispensary to collect her tablets. Two coloured policemen came to the dispensary and asked if she was Yvonne Khutwane. When she said she was, they told her they were taking her to court. She argued, saying that the magistrate had said she was to go home, but they took her, protesting and fighting, back to the court.

'Outside the court, there were people toyi-toyiing, toyi-toyiing. They were jumping high and the police had dogs and they were toyi-toyiing, toyi-toyiing. Yo! What a goings-on!

She was led into the docks in court. The courtroom was full of people from Zwelethemba:

People in Zwelethemba wanted to see me. They had heard I was ill and they wanted to see if I was still alive. They wanted to see me. They couldn't believe it was me, I was so sick.

The magistrate postponed the case for three months. She was sent to the communal cells to await trial. The jail warders seemed surprised to see her and asked her what she was doing there given that she was ill but had been discharged from hospital.

She spent two weeks in the communal cells during which time many people visited her. They were permitted to visit only one at a time and were told by warders that 'they had to speak Afrikaans, not *Bantutaal*' [Afrikaans – 'Bantu language'; a pejorative reference to African languages, in this instance, Xhosa] so that the warders could understand the conversations. Conditions in the prison were horrific. The cell was cold and lice infested. The food was almost inedible. Women prisoners were treated very badly. As an example of the conditions in the cells and the callousness of the warders, Yvonne Khutwane described an occasion when a young woman who had been arrested for sheep theft gave birth unassisted in the cell. She had told Mrs Khutwane that her stomach hurt. 'Then her waters broke: she was giving birth! There was blood everywhere and out came a child. [But] the child was dead already.' The guards would not help. Eventually two men were called in to take the woman to hospital. Yvonne Khutwane demanded to see the prison authorities and complained about the way the women were treated in the prison. 'Yo, I was cheeky in those days!', she recalled.

Then one day, she was called to the cell door: 'The worst sound of all in jail is the sound of those bunches of keys', she recalls. She was told to collect her coat and leave: she had been released from prison on R500 bail. The bail was paid by a friend and not the UDF as she had anticipated: 'They [UDF representatives] told me they had no money for my bail', she said. 'When I was told I could go, I thought they were joking, but they weren't', she recalled. She was surprised that she had been granted bail: her first application had been turned down. 'The first time, my comrades had to make an appeal for me in Cape Town for bail. They [the court] said I could not be bailed because I was misleading the children in Zwelethemba.' None of the young men with whom she was arrested were granted bail.

In terms of her bail conditions, Mrs Khutwane was to report to the police station in Zwelethemba every day. She refused to do so, saying she was too ill to walk from her house to the station. The police said she should report weekly. She agreed to do so if she was well

enough, but did not. She was not allowed to attend meetings or gatherings although she frequently slipped out of the house at night.

A few weeks after her release, she met a colleague, who warned her that she was suspected of being an informer. 'I was still on bail. [She] told me that she had heard rumours that I was a sell-out. I thought it was a joke.' A few days later, the house was attacked in the incident she described to the Commission. Mrs Khutwane, her mother and two of her three children were watching television in the sitting room. Her daughter was asleep in the bedroom. Her son saw lights outside and lifted the curtains to look. He called his grandmother but she disregarded him.

They threw bombs in the windows. They burnt the curtains and the mat. My baby girl was sleeping in bed. They threw bombs in the other window. Luckily she was not facing the window.

My neighbours were afraid to help me in case the youth²³ were watching and they would also be burnt. My child was bleeding from the glass [of the window that had shattered when the bomb was thrown through it]. I was throwing water on the flames [in the other room]. Then my mother called me to see the child. We rushed to hospital. I was worried about my family at home and I phoned to make sure they were okay.

The arson attack did not cause death or serious damage²⁴, although it could easily have done so. A few days after the attack, Yvonne Khutwane approached members of the youth organisations in the township to ask for a meeting to discuss the attack. A preliminary meeting was held, but she was not allowed to be present. She was told that she was accused of breaking the consumer boycott that she had been instrumental in implementing and enforcing. For the duration of the boycott people were not permitted to purchase goods from shops owned by whites. Yet a few days after the decision to boycott was implemented, Mrs Khutwane was rumoured to have a new bedroom suite in her home. A worker at the company from which the suite was bought confirmed the purchase. Yvonne Khutwane countered this interpretation, saying that she had purchased the suite prior to the boycott and had simply taken possession of it during the boycott. She was told that she stood accused of breaking the rent boycott implemented some months earlier (she denied the claim) and of having betrayed a comrade to the police during interrogation.

²³ 'The youth': a reference to young political activists.

²⁴ Her child was injured but recovered quickly and wrote the Matriculation examination, passing with a university exemption. The damaged windows were replaced and the sole remaining physical reminder of the petrol bombing is a burn mark on the dressing table.

Yvonne Khutwane approached the Zwelethemba branch of the United Women's Congress (UWCO) to take action on her behalf. At a meeting called to address the situation she asked how she came to be called a 'sell-out' given that she was on trial for her political activities and had not been granted immunity as a state witness. In our interviews, she recalled that the meeting had been tense and had been called to a close without the matter being resolved.

When she testified before the Commission, Mrs Khutwane described the cause of the attack as her inadvertent betrayal. In interviews with me, she described tensions in Zwelethemba as having been running high at the time of her release from prison on bail. At that time, Zwelethemba was wracked with violence. Police guarded the only entrance to Zwelethemba; policemen patrolled the township on foot and in open vans; there was a curfew in place from 18:00 to 06:00. By late 1985, most of the adult leadership of the underground and resistance organisations was jailed, detained or in exile. Leadership in resistance activities had been taken over by young people. Boycotts and protests were the order of the day. Between August and November 1985, eight people had been killed in confrontations with the police. The police appeared to have a well-developed network of informers in Zwelethemba and 'the Movement' was under considerable threat.

Mrs Khutwane consistently attributed the arson to the complexities of personal and political matters in Zwelethemba in the tense circumstances that prevailed in the 1980s. Yvonne Khutwane believed that the rumours that she was a sell-out had their basis in personal and not political relations. 'Someone was jealous of me and told the comrades I am a sell-out and they must not trust me.' At the time of the attack, she had been having an affair with the wealthy ex-'boyfriend' of 'a powerful woman comrade'. It was he who had paid Yvonne Khutwane's bail of R500. Yvonne Khutwane believed that the woman had spread a rumour of political betrayal. In the interpretation Yvonne Khutwane offered me, the arson attack was the product of tensions between women over a man.

Her children were jealous when they saw me riding about with their mother's ex-boyfriend. They influenced the youth. It was only an old people's affair that was the reason my home was burnt. People said to me, 'Why did you take her boyfriend?' I said, 'No, he left her'. They said, 'This is why you were burnt'. She accused me of taking her boyfriend. I said, 'No, he told me he was not involved with you'. She was cross with me. Maybe she spoke to the children and made their anger even bigger.

Yvonne Khutwane's interpretation traces the power relations between women in a small town. She suggests that what underlay the apparently political nature of the attack was a personal matter.

Other explanations I have been offered have not clarified the reasons for the attack. For example, one young man who had been a leader in underground structures at the time attributed the attack to *imigwenya*²⁵, undisciplined followers, some of whom may have been double agents for the police. His interpretation further complicates the narratives of blame that accompanied the explanations for the arson attack.

Notwithstanding the attack on her home and her failed efforts to understand the reasons that lay behind it, Yvonne Khutwane remained in Zwelethemba. She stood trial with eighteen young men on charges of public violence in connection with the burning of the municipal bar. The state witness who was to testify that Yvonne Khutwane had provided the youths with petrol for bombs and with arms did not appear before the court. Yvonne Khutwane pleaded '*Andinatyala, dankie, makhosi!*' ('not guilty, thank you sir!'), and was acquitted in 1987. Several of the young men with whom she had stood trial went immediately into exile. Two joined MK and were killed in 1989 in the Angolan war where MK cadres fought alongside the MPLA against incursions by the South African Defence Forces into Angola. Local community leaders suggested that Yvonne Khutwane should also leave the country but she refused: 'I said, "I am old and my mother is old and I have small children. Who will look after them if I go?"'²⁶. She remained in Zwelethemba and continued mobilising support for the campaign to render the townships ungovernable, a national campaign that, together with strike action, mass protest, sabotage, MK attacks and international measures, was eventually successful in forcing the Apartheid State into negotiations with the liberation movements.

After the ANC was unbanned in 1990, she returned with vigour to political campaigning. Her work in recruiting membership for the ANC was respected and she was reincorporated into the political fold:

I volunteered ... I was running around like a mad dog! Every morning, I closed my shop to go and teach people [about politics]. On the street corners, on the farms, I taught the people. I went to Swellendam, Ceres, the farms, all around. I have a driver's licence. I can drive. I asked a friend to loan me a *kombi* and I collected all the old people to learn to vote.

Yvonne Khutwane intended to run as a ward candidate in the municipal elections of 1995:

Then it was the time of the local elections. I took the forms and gave them to youths to go door-to-door. I began with the first house in ward 10. House to

²⁵ Among exiles, *umgwenya* (singular. Pl.: *imigwenya*) was used as a term of respect. In Zwelethemba, it was used as an antonym to describe those who comprised 'the rank and file', or, as one man's phrase, 'the loose molecules'.

²⁶ Several of the women I interviewed faced the same dilemma. Only one woman, Nowi Khomba, attempted to leave the country. The police captured, interrogated and tortured her. See Chapter Five.

house, house to house, house to house, house to house, house to house
When I was finished, I came to the next street. When I was finished that one, I
came to the next street. *Njal' njalo* [Xhosa – 'And so on and so on'].

She had been confident of winning the candidacy race. The ward is historically the centre of resistance activities in Zwelethemba; she was well known, had been instrumental in organising popular resistance to the Apartheid State and had canvassed extensively for the ANC in the period preceding the 1994 elections. Yet she lost the candidacy to a young man, also an ANC member but widely acknowledged as having no 'struggle credentials'. Mrs Khutwane linked the candidacy defeat explicitly to the arson attack (and implicitly with the accusation of betrayal) on her home ten years previously and the memory residents in the township still hold of it. In interviews, she ascribed her loss in the candidacy race to her opponent's ability to manipulate the social imagination of the community:

[He] called the youth and said I must not be councillor. I saw no parents at the meeting, only children. When I asked at the meeting, the children started to toyi-toyi and do funny things. He hyped them up. When I heard the children singing again like that, ooooh! I decided to go home. They chose him. He wasn't a single day in the struggle! He hyped them up. 'Yvonne, you are no good. Your house was burnt. We will not elect you as councillor', they said.

Yvonne Khutwane is not the only person to link the failure in the election with the memory people held of the attack on her house. A number of people stated that the arson provided concrete evidence of betrayal in the past and imputed a consequent untrustworthiness in the present. A negative value was retrospectively inferred from a remembered event. The arson attack became a marker of value that carried weight. It was partly to counter such negative evaluations that Yvonne Khutwane had made the public assertion of loyalty and commitment, 'I am still a member of the ANC', at the end of her Commission testimony, seven months after her defeat in the ward candidacy race. Indeed, those people in Zwelethemba who expressed cynicism about her reasons for testifying suggested that the hearing had offered her a public platform from which to make a statement about her political affiliations given her recent defeat in the ward elections.

The failure to win enough support to stand as a candidate in the local election did not rest solely on the memory of arson, however closely Yvonne Khutwane and others tied the two events. Youth activists described changes in leadership ideas that made her political claims, which rested on her past activism, seem outdated. One man from Zwelethemba stated their views succinctly: 'Power does not only reside in your "resistance C.V."'. He added, 'the discourse of remembrance is not a very reliable in politics'.

Some of the personal tensions generated over the arson incident were short-lived. Yvonne Khutwane returned with vigour to political campaigning, reasserting her worth as a member of the resistance and later in the formal structures of the ANC and community civic associations. Her work in recruiting membership for the ANC after 1990 was respected by 'youth comrades' and she was reincorporated into the political fold, even after her spoilt chances at local political office. Yvonne Khutwane accepted the defeat and remains a member of the ANC. She does not intend to run for candidacy in the 2000 local government elections.

Although resolved at the political level, however, personal tensions between Yvonne Khutwane and some of the women endured for almost a decade, despite the fact that the women live close to one another and are members of the same political organisations. Indeed, it was only at a meeting of the ANC Women's League in March 1999, three months prior to the second general elections in South Africa, that Mrs Khutwane formally made peace with the woman she held responsible for the attack on her home. Their reconciliation served an expressly didactic purpose: it was designed to set an example to the young people of Zwelethemba prior to the elections. Yvonne Khutwane explained, 'We were saying there should be no divisions between us [or else] the youth can say that the ANC is no good because its members fight each other'. She continued, 'Before, [we] were not sitting together. We were not at one fire together. Now [we] are sleeping with one blanket!'

This was not the only instance of reconciliation in which Mrs Khutwane was engaged. She described her pleasure when, walking in the street one day after testifying, she was recognised by a woman who had been the prison warder. The woman, now retired and running a bicycle shop, asked her forgiveness and invited her to visit. When Mrs Khutwane did so, the woman introduced her to her husband, saying, 'This is the woman who I treated so badly. She has forgiven me!'

Not all the tensions have been resolved. Mrs Khutwane remains unhappy that the Commission was unable to find the youths that had sexually violated her and bring them before her to ask for her forgiveness. Reconciliation is not automatic. She works in a forum to facilitate interaction between the police and community members. Alongside her works the policeman who had beaten her with the butt of his gun during the interrogation in 1985. He has never asked to be forgiven, and, indeed, has never shown signs of recognising her or of remorse. 'I hate that man', she says.

Memory and interpretation

The Chapter has traced a single set of events related in different places and at different times over a period of more than three years. It is clear that the memory of violence is neither isolated nor singular. Its recall is an act of imagination that incorporates the self and others in relationships that change over time²⁷.

Yvonne Khutwane's public testimony, its representation in the media and Commission Report, and its local evaluation point to the ways in which truth is constructed from fragments of memory differently weighted and analysed. Her testimony described diverse experiences of harm, but in reporting on it, the media, and later, the Commission, emphasised the sexual violation. In Zwelethemba, people seemed to have paid less attention to the claims of sexual violation. Part of the reason for their response may lie in the fact that her testimony intruded on patterns of silence that are conventional about matters of sexuality and sexual violation in many African communities where sexual violence is considered to have shamed the survivor and speaking of it draws attention to the shame (see Goldblatt and Meintjies 1996, and Henderson 1999). That Yvonne Khutwane testified about sexual violation is indicative of her bravery: others who had similar experiences did not make statements or testify about them. Yet those people in Zwelethemba who discounted her claims about sexual violation instead subjected her truth claims about arson to scrutiny in the light of recent political events in the area.

David Lowenthal (1996: 207) has suggested that the past is 'contingent and disorderly, patterned only by hindsight'. The differences in interpretation of Yvonne Khutwane's testimony and the events she described offered by key participants do not lie simply in competing memories or inadequacies of recall. Read in conjunction with one another, they highlight the difficulties of retrospective examination of events. The fact that Mrs Khutwane's house was burned is not in dispute, although who burned it and why is unclear. It is the interpretation of facts and the attributions of veracity and falsehood that are contested. The event of arson has become a marker in the minds of some people in the community, a signifier of untrustworthiness, even where the precise details about the event have been lost. The different explanations that circulate in Zwelethemba about the events in question suggest that

²⁷ Yvonne Khutwane envisaged a long term interest in her testimony: when I gave her a copy of her testimony transcript, downloaded from the Commission's site on the Internet, and of the newspaper reports, she put them in a large brown envelope and tucked them away under the table damaged in the arson attack. "For my grandchildren, so they will know about me", she said.

the reception of testimonies as truth and the acknowledgement of those who made the testimonies as truthful do not follow automatically from testimonial interventions. Taken together, the various interpretations of a single event suggest a complexity and subtlety of truth telling and its reception that is not apparent when Mrs Khutwane's Commission testimony is considered outside of the context of its reception in Zwelethemba.

Writing about violence in the Eastern Cape town of Uitenhage in 1985, Robert Thornton suggests that,

... the multiple perspectives from which the event was described, the modes of its representations, and the attempts to interpret it must still perplex us once we have evaluated [the event's] moral status. Once it becomes a political symbol, the various descriptions of the event – 'what happened' – are also not enough: these alternative accounts must be understood as symbols that provision the political process and *as narratives that provide the mind with meaningful order* (1990: 224, my emphasis).

His assertion is useful in considering the nature and meaning of the explanations offered for the arson attack on Mrs Khutwane's house. Each explanation draws on different ideas of social order and its maintenance. The ideas correspond more or less closely with the stories retold here. In the first, Yvonne Khutwane's Commission testimony, the model in use by the Commission is one that holds the violation of *bodily integrity* as the primary locus of harm. A close focus on the body allows the testimony to stand as an embodiment of similar damage done to others, a mnemonic device for representing and recalling harm and damage. In the second explanatory model, Mrs Khutwane describes the betrayal of trusting *relationships* between powerful women. Other, historical narratives of struggle into which her testimony was slotted in Zwelethemba and against which it was measured and found partly wanting draw from notions of the *collectivity* of political struggle. The collective, the community in resistance, is itself envisaged as under siege. Models based on ideas of bodily integrity, rights and their violations do not necessarily mesh neatly with models of blame, accountability and punishment already forged in a community in times of considerable social stress.

My analysis draws attention to the convoluted and contested nature of truth claims made in public testimonies. A close examination of how people consider testimonial claims suggests that testimonies may be objectified but are not static. Once spoken as truths, claims do not rest but are constantly reworked and revised in different contexts, at different times and by different people. As Michael Lambek and Paul Antze point out (1996: vi), memory is not distinct from social action but shapes responses in the quotidian world. Memories are always told in present contexts and are informed by the contingencies of present location. Witness given in one context is reformulated in others. Having gained what Liisa Malkki (1997: 242)

describes as 'voice' – 'the ability to establish narrative authority over one's circumstances and future, and, also, the ability to claim an audience' – in one context (the public hearing), Yvonne Khutwane's testimony became a social fact, open to discussion and disputation. Some of her truth claims, made and accepted in one context, were denied in others. They were contested in terms of differing models of activism and confrontation, attributions of responsibility and blame, and in terms of consequences. Her truth claims were re-evaluated in the light of events that were not necessarily central to the concerns of the Commission but that nevertheless carried both explanatory potential and moral weight in local contexts.

The finding that testimonies are reworked and re-evaluated in different contexts matters in relation to claims that speaking 'truth' gives rise to 'healing'. Much of the research that informs a growing literature on testimonial interventions has been conducted with people living in exile from their home communities (see Sideris 1999). Where testimonies are made may matter: testimonies may not exist as 'Truth' independent of the contexts in which they are given. Yvonne Khutwane told the Commission debriefer that she felt relief at having spoken about the event of sexual violation. Yet the fact that in her hometown and among her political peers her claims were not necessarily believed suggests that the relief offered by testimonial interventions may be short-lived or partial.

Chapter Five

Harm and its Measurement

What is political activism, anyway? I've been asking myself.

It's something both prepared for and spontaneous – like making poetry.

When we do and think and feel certain things privately and in secret, even when thousands of people are doing, thinking and whispering these things privately and in secret, there is still no general, collective understanding from which to move... But these thoughts and feelings, suppressed and stored-up and whispered, have an incendiary component. You cannot tell where or how they will connect, spreading underground from rootlet to rootlet till every grass blade is afire from every other. This is that 'spontaneity' which party 'leaders', secret governments, and closed systems dread. Poetry, in its own way, is a carrier of the sparks, because it too comes out of silence, seeking connection with unseen others.

(Rich. 1995:57.)

The dissertation has thus far considered the forms of witness women bore before the Commission, the experiences about which they testified, and the ways in which testimony was elicited and reconsidered in multiple contexts. I turn now to a consideration of the Commission's work in recording and measuring harm. I do so in relation to young women. The Chapter draws on the methodological challenge described in Pamela Reynolds' quest to document both 'accounts of culture from the point of view of youth' and 'intimations of their voices' (1995b: 193). The Chapter reflects on the lives of young women in Zwelethemba who grew to adulthood in the 1980s. It begins with the Commission's findings about violence in the Western Cape and in Zwelethemba and the findings of research with ex-detainees, exiles and political prisoners in Zwelethemba in order to provide a backdrop against which both young women's experiences and their exposure to violence may be read and the Commission's methods of eliciting experiences of harm assessed.

The Commission's findings on violence in the Western Cape

The Cape Town office of the Commission received 1 780 statements that represent 8.4 percent of the total number of statements received by the Commission. The statements reported on 4 267 violations, of which 3 122 constituted gross violations of human rights and 1 145 were 'associated violations' (violations that did not fit the categories as established in the Act and elaborated in the Commission's work. See Volume Three: 3, footnote 1. It is not clear what these were: no reference is made to 'associated violations' in the section of the Report dealing with definitions or in the Act). The statements identified 2 350 victims. The Commission data indicates an average of 1.3 victims per statement and 1.8 violations per victim. (Volume Three: 3). In other words, a large number of those who testified in the Western Cape, as elsewhere, described more than one event of violation and identified more than one victim in each instance. (Throughout the country, deponents implicated an average of 1.4 victims per statement and 1.6 violations per victim –Volume Three: 3). Most deponents in the Cape were young men. More than one-third of statements concerned violations committed in 1985 and young men between the ages of thirteen and twenty-four were the primary victims (Volume Three: 393).

For the period 1983-1989, 53 percent of violations reported in the Cape concerned severe ill treatment; sixteen percent concerned torture; fourteen percent concerned killings and twelve percent described associated violations. Three percent of statements concerned attempted killing and one percent of statements concerned abduction (Volume Three: 393). Age and gender analyses

of the data by year and by sub-region are not provided in the Report. It is therefore not possible to describe regional variations or particularities in patterns of violation or reporting or consequences¹.

Seventy-seven residents of Zwelethemba made statements to the Commission. Twenty-six women (representing approximately one-third of Zwelethemba deponents) made statements. As far as I have been able to ascertain², nine of the women made statements concerning their own experiences of violation.

In addition to numeric data about violence, the Report provides a narrative description of events in each region. Describing events in the Cape in the 1980s, the period on which my research in Zwelethemba focused, it states:

The political revolt unfolding in the rest of the country reached the western Cape in 1985. The first six months of 1985 saw extensive unrest in the rural areas of the southern Cape, Karoo, Boland and the northern Cape ...

With some notable exceptions, the high levels of open street confrontation seen in 1985-86 generally subsided during 1986. The countrywide state of emergency imposed in June 1986 [sic] led to large-scale detentions in both rural and urban areas ...

The period 1983-89 generated the highest peak of violations in this region, in both the urban and rural areas (Volume Three: 419).

In a section dealing with rural violence (Volume Three: 428-30), the Report describes violence in Zwelethemba in 1985:

During 1985, protest meetings were often broken up violently by security forces and street protests became more militant. Many towns saw at least one or two deaths of youth activists during 1985, which served to propel the townships into wider protest and attacks on those seen as collaborators....

Worcester

In Worcester [Zwelethemba], the spark was provided by the killing of Mr Nkosana Nation Bahume, after which a cycle of deaths and injuries took place until the end of the year.

¹ Appendix B provides further analysis and critique of the Report's description of the consequences of gross violations of human rights.

² At the time of writing, statements are not public documents and the Commission has not released details of the statements. On 6th March 2000, I checked a list of names that I had obtained with Mirriam Moleleki, who had taken statements for the Commission in Zwelethemba (see Chapter Six). She was unable to identify five names on the list of twenty-six women and I have been unable to trace the women. Nine women made statements about their own experiences of gross violations of human rights; eight described violations committed against their sons, three were about husbands, and one statement was about a father.

On 16th August 1985, student activist Nkosana Nation Bahume (CT00547)³, aged twenty-one, was shot dead by the security forces. On 30th August, the local magistrate issued restriction orders⁴ on the funeral of Bahume, who was to be buried the following day. At the funeral, police fired on mourners, killing Mr Mbulelo [Nondatsu] Kenneth Mazula (CT00528), aged twenty. An eyewitness testified that 'police dragged his body to the vehicle and took him to the mortuary'. People were assaulted, shot and detained by security forces in the uproar.

Mbulelo Mazula was buried on 8 September without incident. However, on 21 September 1985 Mr Andile Feni (CT08402) and two others were shot and injured by a policeman in Zwelethemba after a crowd had thrown a petrol bomb at a police officer's house after a mass meeting that had resolved to chase all police from the area following the killings.

On 1 October 1985, Mr Thomas Kolo (CT08400), aged 18, was shot dead by security forces. He was buried on 11 October and the funeral was restricted by the magistrate. The following day, security forces shot Mr Zandesile Ntsomi (CT00320). Ntsomi's leg was amputated and he was discharged from hospital back into police custody the following day

On 13 October, Douglas Ndzima (CT00821) was shot twice by police in Zwelethemba. That day Ms Martha Nomathamsanqa Mooi's house (CT03026) in Zwelethemba was petrol-bombed by UDF members. Mr Mpazamo Bethwell Mbani (Yiko) (CT03026), her brother-in-law, was shot dead and his body set alight.

On 2 November 1985, Mr Cecil Roos Tamsanqa van Staden (CT00132) was shot by police and died two days later. The following day, Mr William Dyasi (CT00823) was shot dead by police in Zwelethemba. An inquest was held and Constable Michael Phillip Luff was found responsible for the murder but he was not prosecuted. At the intervention of the Commission the case was reopened, following which Luff applied to the Commission for amnesty (AM3814/96).

On 9 November, at the night vigil of one of the victims, Mr Buzile Fadana (CT00131) was shot dead after the police arrived and an 'armed encounter' resulted. His death marked an end to this cycle of killings and injuries that year.

By November 1985, an extreme environment [sic] of repression existed in Zwelethemba, which was declared out of bounds to all except residents. Roadblocks were set up and residents were only allowed to go to their homes on producing identity documents. There were twenty-four hour foot patrols, and searchlights swept the streets at night. Residents reported a heavy presence of

³ Numbers in brackets refer to the case numbers of the statements made to the Commission.

⁴ In terms of the Public Safety Act No. 3 of 1953, magistrates had wide-ranging powers to limit the size and scope of funerals. By 1985, the Act had been amended to permit the state to limit the number of mourners, and to specify that there were to be no political speeches or political songs and no flags flown. If a number of people had been killed in the same incident, they could not be buried at the same time. In terms of the 1986 Security Laws Amendment Act No. 13, a person caught and charged with attending a restricted funeral could be imprisoned for up to ten years.

Zulu speaking⁵ policemen. Funerals of unrest victims were restricted to only fifty people and the family of the deceased. In one instance, forty young people were detained whilst participating in a funeral vigil.

The Report adds:

The Commission finds that the killing by police of Mr Nkosana Nation Bahume on 16 August 1985 triggered a sequence of violence in which numerous residents of Worcester were killed or injured by police and a number of persons or buildings were attacked in retaliation. The draconian response of the authorities, including curfews, roadblocks and sweeping detentions, only aggravated the situation.

The Report's description of Zwelethemba offers a litany of death, interspersed with accounts of injury and torture. Police killed six young men, one man was burnt to death, five men were injured by police fire and several people were assaulted, shot and detained. One woman's house was burnt. The police and legal authorities imposed curfews, roadblocks, detentions, restrictions and surveillance mechanisms.

The Report says little about the conditions of resistance or the contexts of violence in Zwelethemba. It stipulates that violence was triggered by the death of Nkosana Bahume. In fact, Bahume's death occurred after fierce protest in Zwelethemba against the Black Local Authorities ('councillors', as they are locally known) began in 1983 and reached its zenith in 1985. Bahume's death followed in the wake of at least two school boycotts: one in recognition of the deaths of the 'Cradock Four' and the other in support of children and youths in detention. There had been a heavy police presence in Zwelethemba since 1981 and a large number of young people had been detained or arrested on political charges between 1980 and Bahume's death. According to research notes compiled by members of the Commission and issued to the media during the Worcester Hearing, fifty-two people had been detained and charged with public violence on 10th August 1985, a week before Bahume's death. Twenty-five of them were under eighteen years old.

Other research findings suggest that violence was more widespread than the Commission Report implies. In 1995, the Cape Town-based Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture conducted a study (Skinner 1998) and found that there were 71 ex-detainees and 18 ex-political prisoners in Zwelethemba. Most had been between the ages of 18 and 30 years at the time of trauma. Twenty percent (n=14) of the ex-detainees were women. It should be noted that the

⁵ In a divide and rule strategy, policemen brought from elsewhere in the country were frequently used to enforce Apartheid legislation.

study reports only those who experienced detention periods of longer than forty-eight hours. My work indicates that a large number of women were detained for shorter periods. For example, young activists identified twenty-five women who, as students, had been detained in 1985 alone. None was over the age of twenty-two at the time of detention. Few were held for periods longer than 180 days and most were held for periods ranging between twenty-four and seventy-two hours. It cannot be assumed that the treatment of the latter was any less brutal or the effects on family and community less destructive than if they had been held for longer periods (see below). Five of the young women with whom I worked closely were detained. None was included in the Trauma Centre's research.

There is scant mention of women, particularly the young, in either the Commission Report or the Trauma Centre's findings. The omission matters. The Commission Report makes the point that protest activities were both gender- and age-specific:

In the 1980s, for example, when much of the activity was undertaken by scholars and students, these young women did not have the same social constraints against engaging in the struggle that might have been felt by slightly older women or those with more family responsibilities. In terms of the public/private distinction, women scholars and students were more firmly located in the public sphere, the sphere in which political action is most explicit, and where it was most likely to provoke state retaliation. (Volume Four: 292)

According to the Commission's Report, young women were more likely to be exposed to State violence than were older women. The remainder of the Chapter draws from my research with ten women⁶ who had engaged in resistance activities that ranged from school boycotts and protests to attempts to join MK in exile, to consider young women's exposure to violence and responses to harm as they grew to adulthood in Zwelethemba.

An instance of detention

Noluntu Zawukana, her friend Xoliswa Tywana, and Ntsoake Phelane, Xoliswa's cousin, were detained in mid-July 1985. Noluntu and Ntsoake were seventeen years old at the time of their detention and Xoliswa was fifteen. They were detained in three separate incidents on the same day at a time of considerable tension in Zwelethemba. The students at Vusisizwe Secondary School were engaged in a school boycott, earlier that year, angry residents had razed the local Rent Office, Post Office and the offices of the Advisory Board, and youths had destroyed the municipal

⁶ Demographic details are contained in Appendix C.

beerhall. Police patrolled around the clock and a six-to-six curfew was in place. Residents of Zwelethemba had created a range of institutions to manage civic life. Local branches of the Civic Association, United Women's Organisation (UWO) and Congress of South African Students (COSAS⁷) had been formed and with the Zwelethemba Youth Organisation (ZWEYO) had been affiliated to the United Democratic Front. Street and area committees administered matters of local governance.

On the day of her detention, Noluntu was one of a group of young people who were boycotting school. The police patrolled the township in Casspirs (armoured vehicles). They chased children and youths, beating them with whips and forcing them to attend school. As a Casspir approached the group of young protesters, of which Noluntu was a part, the young people scattered. Fleeing, they vaulted fences into yards. Five of the youths ran to Noluntu's grandmother's house in Hlalele Road. The old woman assessed the situation rapidly. She bundled the youths indoors and locked the doors from outside, telling them to keep quiet. Then she left the house, hoping that the police would think that no one was home.

Unfortunately, the police had seen them run inside. They kicked down the door and began looking for the youngsters.

Noluntu had hidden behind a door in her grandmother's bedroom and the four young men had slipped under the beds in her grandmother's room and the room next door. They heard the sounds of the police breaking the door and searching the small house. A policeman entered the room with another close behind him. Opposite him there was a wardrobe. Its door was open and, horrified, Noluntu realised that its mirror reflected her image to the police. They grabbed her. In her shock, she blurted out that others were hiding under the beds. The police flushed them out.

All five of the young people⁸ were captured. Two were youth activists who had long been sought by the police. A third was a student on holiday from Durban and was not known to the police. Noluntu and one other were students at Vusisizwe High School in Zwelethemba. Neither had a position in the leadership structures of the anti-Apartheid organisations. All five young

⁷ COSAS was banned in August 1985. In terms of the Internal Security Act, anyone found furthering the aims of a banned organisation (the Communist Party, the ANC, the PAC, and COSAS) could be charged with terrorism.

⁸ To protect people's identities, I have not revealed their names unless they participated in my research or gave testimony to the Commission.

people were pushed into the Casspir. There, Noluntu recognised other students and scholars, including Ntsoake Phelane and Ntsoake's cousin, Xoliswa Tyawana.

The young people were taken to the Worcester police station cells and detained. They were not told under which law they were detained nor were they permitted to make any phone calls. The five were not the only young people to have been captured that day. The police had detained students boycotting school and young people on buses and the police station was full of people waiting to be 'processed'.

Noluntu was held in the cells with others for two nights. On the afternoon of the third day she was taken from the cells and driven to a vacant piece of land in the mountainous area near Worcester. Noluntu does not know exactly where the site is; she thinks it was in an area known as De Wet. There she was tortured with electric shocks. The policemen told her that she could scream all she liked because she would not be heard. Even now, fourteen years later, Noluntu finds it difficult to describe the torture she endured. The words to express harm do not come easily in either Xhosa or English.

In July 1996, Noluntu made a statement to the Commission. In October 1998, she was found to be a victim of gross violations of human rights. Her name is recorded in the Commission's Report.

Xoliswa was detained when the police set up a barrier at the only entrance to Zwelethemba and searched the bus on which she was returning from shopping in the town of Worcester nearby. The police held all the young people on the bus for questioning in connection with the Zwelethemba Post Office that had been razed during protests a month previously. She and others were taken to the police station. There they encountered the young people detained in the township, Noluntu among them. At the police station Xoliswa was told to write her name down. The police recognised her surname: they had long been seeking her 'cousin-brother' (father's brother's son), Christopher Tyawana, a UDF leader involved in organising youth resistance in the area. They asked Xoliswa about her relationship to Christopher. She replied that he was her cousin-brother. They began to interrogate her. At first they asked questions. Later she was beaten with fists and a whip.

The police took Xoliswa with Noluntu to be interrogated and tortured. In her statement to the Commission, Noluntu described the torture that Xoliswa endured. As a consequence the Commission found that Xoliswa was also a victim of gross violations of human rights.

Xoliswa was detained a second time shortly afterwards for questioning concerning Christopher's whereabouts. Again she was tortured. She did not tell the police that Christopher, like other activists, was no longer sleeping at his home but was hiding in the graveyard at night. She was detained for ninety days. She shared a cell with twenty other women and was not allowed to see a lawyer or any member of her family. At the end of the three-month period of detention, she was released. No charges were laid against her. She was not detained again in part, she believes, because in 1986 Christopher Tyawana was captured and detained under section 29 of the Internal Security Act after a collaboration between the members of the Security Branch and the Allied Bank in Worcester (Commission Report 1998, Volume Three: 439)⁹.

Xoliswa is troubled by memory and hearing losses as a result of the beatings that were inflicted on her during both periods of detention.

Ntsoake, Xoliswa's cousin, was detained on the same day as Noluntu. Like Noluntu, she had been part of the group of students who had scattered at the sight of a Casspir approaching. She and others ran into the house next door to that where Noluntu sought refuge. There, too, the owner of the property locked them inside, vainly hoping to thwart the police.

The policemen [broke] the property's windows and doors and beat us with *sjambokke* and led us to the vans. We were all arrested and sent to the detective offices in town. We ... [had] our photos taken and we were divided and kept in different cells. There was a list of names of comrades who were well known and during this time we were privately investigated [interrogated] to give relevant information about what is happening in school and the location and who are the perpetrators

We were sent to the magistrate's court and kept there for three days under unfavourable conditions ... I was with Noluntu and Xoliswa Tyawana, experiencing this terrible torture. Refreshments were unstrained black coffee, without sugar, and brown bread. As we were living there we carried on singing freedom songs, praying. There was also a time during singing when we were sprayed with teargas to keep us quiet. Comrades were taken individually to go for investigation and tortured privately. I was in the third group to be tortured and investigated by the authorities.

Like the others with whom she was detained, Ntsoake was questioned about student activities in Zwelethemba. The policemen had a list of names of student and youth activists and they

⁹ Tyawana was invited to testify before the Commission's special hearing on Business and Apartheid. He did not make a statement or testify but the story of his arrest is included in the Report. Later, when he wished to make a statement, he was told that the deadline for the submission of statements had passed and it was too late for him to do so. His name is not recorded on the Commission's list of victims.

interrogated detainees about people on the list, demanding the details of their activities. After seven days in detention Ntsoake was taken from the cells. Together with a group of men she was put into a van and driven out of Worcester:

The van that was carrying us was covered with black plastic [so that we could not] see where we were and how [we got] there. When we arrived there, we were individually carried out for torture and the ones who are left behind will just hear the screaming and crying as if you are near, because of the echoing sound which was heard.

Only men comrades were tortured on this day but it was late and when it was nearly my turn they stopped and sent us back to prison. We were free then to go home.... Their aim was to torture us to death but luckily [we] were saved and escaped death because the officials had a quarrel among themselves. [The men] were sent back to the cells and kept.

Ntsoake was not detained again, but the memory of detention and the scars she bears from the beating she received remain with her:

My entire body was scarred with *sjambok* marks that won't fade away for the rest of my life.... In 1987 I went back for schooling with emotional and physical hatred and scars. I [later] passed my Matric.

The Commission considered detention without trial and beating to be forms of severe ill treatment that qualified as gross violations of human rights, but, although her name was included on Noluntu's statement, Ntsoake was not found to be a victim. She did not volunteer a statement to the Commission.

Each of the three women's experiences bears similarities to the experiences of young people elsewhere in the country at the time. The power of state officials, the extent of violence and damage, the ways in which police harmed youths in lieu of those for whom they sought and the nature of resistance are important components in how young women describe the recent past.

Powers of the State

The Commission found that,

Detention was a major weapon in the former state's armoury of terror and repression. At times, during the years of greatest conflict, children under the age of eighteen years of age represented between 26 per cent and 45 per cent of all those in detention. All the available figures indicate that the largest number of children and youth was detained between 1985 and 1989, during the two states of

emergency. Of 80 000 detentions, 48 000 were detainees under the age of twenty-five (Volume Four: 261).

The Report states,

Very early on, the former state became aware of the pivotal role of children and youth, identifying them as a serious threat and treating them accordingly.... Children and youth faced the full force of state oppression as they took on their role as the 'foot soldiers of the struggle' - as what were called the 'young lions'. Youth challenged the state by organising and mobilising their schools and communities against illegitimate state structures (Volume Four: 252).

Although Noluntu, Xoliswa and Ntsoake were involved in protest activities, they were not leaders in local politics or in youth organisations. They were detained for different periods of time and for different reasons and were severely treated. None of the three women recalls having been told under which Act they were detained. They were fortunate to be held in Worcester. Detainees were not automatically held in their home towns. Frequently they were shifted from prison to prison, or were held in prisons at a distance from their homes or the places where they were captured (see Reynolds 1995a; and Skinner 1998: 177).

Not all young people detained in Zwelethemba were held in prisons or police cells close to home. For example, on one occasion Nokwanda Tani, was held in terms of Section 50 of the Internal Security Act which allowed for 'preventive detention' of fourteen days. A person 'deemed to be threatening to public safety' could be detained by a low-ranking police officer. Nokwanda was detained after she was 'picked up' during a random police check on buses in August 1985. The bus stopped at the roadblock at the entrance to Zwelethemba, three policemen boarded it, the occupants taunted them and the policemen retaliated by randomly detaining people. Nokwanda was selected and was sent to Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town, 120 kilometres away. There she was held in a communal cell with a number of other women from the Boland. She says that she was held for four months, although the law provided only for detention of fourteen days. She was released without being charged. Her mother had been unable to trace her until she was released.

The holding of detainees at a distance from their homes caused considerable distress for families who had first to trace the detainees, then to secure visiting privileges and then to muster the resources to travel for visits. The detention of kin was emotionally draining for families. Nokwanda's sister, Mandisa, remembered Nokwanda's second imprisonment as being the hardest for her and the family to bear:

We had to take her food and when I first went into the cell I saw my sister, to whom I was very close, cowering like a child in the corner. I cried and cried and could not be comforted.

Nokwanda had been detained in May 1986 after youths set fire to a delivery van in Zwelethemba as part of the on-going protests and consumer boycotts. She was the only female detained and was held for a week in solitary confinement. She was charged with public violence and was released on bail of R200, paid by her family. The charges against her were eventually dropped.

The experiences of the young women in Zwelethemba indicate the arbitrariness with which detention powers were exercised. Ntsoake's friend, Noluthando Qaba remembers that the police were often brutal in their efforts to force young protesters back to school:

When I was in Standard One or Two (in 1981: she was aged eleven), the police were beating our sisters and brothers. We ran from class. We were afraid of the police. I cried. In Standard Three, still the police were coming, and in Standard Four. If we were not going to school at that time, they would come door to door and beat us to go to school. We ran in our nighties and without shoes to go to school. At school they harassed us In 1985 at Vusisizwe, [when] I was in Standard Six or Seven [and aged fifteen] ... we marched [i.e. protested] for our education. They threw teargas. They took us in a van to the police station. I was young then. The police released us.

In addition to the uncertainty and fear of detention, many in Zwelethemba considered contact with prison cells to be defiling. Detention was believed to expose young people to (symbolic) pollution and on their release, some young people, including Nokwanda, were ritually cleansed (*ukuhlanjwa*) in an attempt to remove the effects of contact with evil and to protect against a repetition of detention. Not all families subscribed to the ritual but even those who did not subscribe to notions of ritual pollution felt defiled by their contact with prison.

Violence

Physical violence, suffering and cruelty

All detainees reported having been harshly interrogated. They were hit and beaten and whipped. Noluntu was tortured with electric shocks. Ntsoake reported that police threw teargas into the confined space of a cell to stop the youths from singing to keep their spirits high.

The women's accounts include descriptions of other kinds of suffering. All detainees spoke about bad conditions in cells and the inadequacy of the food. Xoliswa was not allowed to see her

family or a lawyer for 180 days. Ntsoake described her uncertainties and fears about possible violence. When they were detained, none of the women knew for how long they would be held nor where. Ntsoake heard the screams of others being tortured and anticipated that similar violence would be inflicted on her. She described her sense of fear and insecurity in being confronted with a list of names and not knowing what the police knew about those listed and therefore what would be safe to reveal. Noluntu was deeply upset that her inadvertent betrayal had led to the detention of others beside herself.

The treatment to which the police subjected the young seems to have been deliberately calculated to terrify them. An example, described by Nokwanda, relates to the death of Mbulelo Mazula, killed at Nkosana Bahume's funeral. The Commission Report (1998, Volume Three: 428) records only that Mazula's body was dragged to a police vehicle and taken to the mortuary. Nokwanda and two other women, Mkhononzi and Mburiswa, were hiding from the police in an outside toilet at the time of the attack. The police saw them. Nokwanda recalled the incident:

They saw us and told us to take the body into the van. Can you imagine that? Three women to carry a dead person into the van. There was a roadblock at the entrance (to Zwelethemba). They took us [captured us] at Tusha Street with the dead person. They kept us for three hours in the van with the dead body. We had already seen that he was dead ...

We were taken to the mortuary and the body was put there.

"Your man is dead, so now you may go", they said.

Nokwanda's account glosses over the horror of her situation. The three women were young: in 1985, Nokwanda was twenty-one years old. She knew what to expect from detention, having been released from detention only a few days earlier. This, however, was different: the three women were driven around Zwelethemba and held in a police van in winter with the dead body of a friend and comrade.

Damage to property

Noluntu and Ntsoake described how the police kicked in doors, displaced and damaged furniture in their search for the children. Others in Zwelethemba said that policemen entered homes and small shops and took food from shelves and cupboards. Material reminders of violence are visible everywhere in Zwelethemba. Several properties, including churches, still bear the marks of violence such as bullet holes in walls.

The Commission Report states that throughout the country the police and security forces operated within 'a culture of impunity' (Volume Five: 160). Several testifiers at public hearings described how policemen entered their homes at will and by force if they so wished. The damage to property indicates that even domestic space could not be considered safe. Privacy or safety at home could not be secured (see Chapter Two). Many householders in Zwelethemba left the doors to their houses ajar day and night to enable young people and children fleeing from the police to escape or take shelter. Yet homes were too dangerous as places in which to hold young people who were involved in anti-Apartheid protest or those who had been injured. Young people and elders met under cover of darkness to hold meetings and plan protests. Many youths stopped sleeping at home regularly. Their absence from home generated an extraordinary mobilisation of resources and ingenuity on the part of those who cared for them as women took it in turns to cook and deliver food to 'safe-houses', the siting of which changed frequently. Women had to avoid being seen delivering extra food to those who were hiding her children lest they inadvertently gave away the hiding places. If injured, people were afraid to go to home lest police found them there. They feared seeking medical attention in hospitals because personnel reported injuries to the police. For this reason, Nokuzola Mtamo, one of the young women with whom I worked, spent three days in June 1985 hiding in the AME church in Zwelethemba. Her knee had been badly injured when police chased protesting youths during a march after a memorial service for those who died in the Soweto Uprisings of June 16th 1976. Afraid to seek medical attention, she treated her damaged knee with salve. It healed badly. In 1994, when she sought to become a member of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF), she was found medically unfit.

Violence and the structure of time

Violence did not only permeate physical spaces but worked its way into the structures of time. Vuyelwa Xusa's accounts of her political commitments and family history show the effects of violence on time and the quotidian world. She traced the emergence of a political consciousness to her childhood. She said,

I was involved because I was suffering. *Ek ken nie my ma se gesig nie. Die ouma wat my groot geraak het was my ma se ma. Ek het gesukkel om skool toe te gaan. My ouma was oud, sy kry pensioen.* [I do not know my mother's face. My mother's mother brought me up. I battled to go to school because my grandmother was old, a pensioner]. In 1973 her pension was worth R45 [a month].

In 1978, she met and fell in love with a man who was a student at the University of Cape Town and involved in the underground movement. In that year, she became pregnant with his child. She recalled:

It was difficult to be pregnant. That guy *was te besig met die storie van umzabalazo* [was too busy with the story of 'the struggle']. The police were searching for him so he could not live here, and so I *sukkeled* [battled]. When he left Worcester, the child was one-and-a-half years old. We were still together when he left. I never received any support for the child and I was a school child myself.

Her partner went into exile in 1981 and returned to South Africa in 1992. After he left, the police harassed Vuyelwa but when they realised he had gone they left her alone. She was never detained nor did she suffer what the Commission identified as gross violations of human rights. That does not mean that she did not encounter violence or that danger was distant.

Members of Vuyelwa's extended family were no strangers to political engagement and police harassment. Vuyelwa was brought up to consider members of her grandfather's clan as her immediate kin. One woman, Miriam Colidiza, was detained during the pass law protests of 1960, when people protested against Apartheid's stringent controls on labour and residential rights. She spent several months in prison before being released. While in prison, Miriam contracted tuberculosis. She had an operation on her lung but the damage to her lungs continued to cause her considerable distress until she died in early 1999¹⁰.

During the 1980s States of Emergency, two of Vuyelwa's relatives were killed by police. On 2nd November 1985, police shot Thamsanqa van Staden. He died two days later. Earlier that year, on the 8th September, Thamsanqa's cousin (*kwinana*: mother's sister's son) Brasilo Jacobs was shot and injured when he tried to assist a friend, Mbulelo Mazula, whom the police had shot in the street. A friend of Brasilo's, Ntando Mrubata, described what followed:

¹⁰ She attributed the root cause of her chronic lung ailments to the tuberculosis she contracted in prison. Members of her family believe that her condition was aggravated by the dampness of the walls of her home; a fact they attribute to the use of cheap building materials, including cement blocks 'that soak up the water', and a high water table in the area. They claim that the water table is the remainder of a small seasonal river that was diverted in the early 1950s before Zwelethemba was built in order to separate Zwelethemba from Worcester. Their emic explanations for her death rested heavily on a history of State aggression: detention, the forced removal to Zwelethemba, a re-sculpted landscape, and inadequate housing are all features of their explanation.

The police threw a tearbomb into the toilet when Brasilo ran to hide from the police.... He ran out. The police were there: they shot him right there [i.e. at point-blank range]. They dragged him round the front of the house. His mother was standing at the window. She saw it. They lifted him and threw him like a sack of wool into the van. They took him to hospital.

When Brasilo was released from hospital, he went to live in hiding in Cape Town. He was killed there. His mother, Nombuyiselo, believes that police shot him. Young activists in Zwelethemba suggest that he died in a confrontation between taxi-owners during the 'taxi wars'¹¹ in Cape Town. Nombuyiselo made a statement to the Commission and Brasilo is identified as a victim in the Commission's Report.

It was not only Brasilo's death that was marked by violence. Vuyelwa's uncle, Sibango Jacobs, told the story of his birth.

Brasilo was born the day of a terrible raid in Zwelethemba. On 28th March 1960, a week after the Sharpeville and Langa protests¹², we [the residents of Zwelethemba] engaged in a pass protest of our own. Young people went door-to-door collecting [each adult's] *dompas* [the pass that recorded people's rights to live and work in urban areas]. We burnt the passes in Freedom Square in Zwelethemba, then we marched towards Worcester to protest. When we got to the entrance to Zwelethemba, police barred the way. They wanted the leaders to come forward to negotiate. At first the people said that they were all leaders, to protect their leaders. Then, negotiations began and lasted for half an hour. Then someone shot. Everyone scattered back to the township, then we realised we were not safe at home and so we ran to the graveyard, where we jumped into open graves. Open graves! Six foot deep! And we lay there without moving for four or five hours before we dared to show our heads and creep out and go back home.

Nothing moved in the township after all that shooting, not a dog or a bird. When I got home I saw that my sister had a son, Brasilo. Our sister got a baby that day, a boy, the one who was shot, Brasilo. Now he's a dead somebody.

Nombuyiselo Jacobs believes that Brasilo was killed in error. The police had long sought his brother, Booyisie, who had escaped into exile earlier in 1985. She said that after Brasilo was killed the policeman who was responsible for his death boasted to her that he had killed Booyisie. She did not lay charges against him.

¹¹ Rival taxi associations competed over routes. Different political organisations were embroiled in the war in an attempt to bring it to an end. There is some evidence to suggest that state operatives worked to heighten tensions (see Report, 1998 Volume Three: 495-96) that resulted in considerable violence.

¹² On 21st March 1960, in Sharpeville, a peaceful march organised by the PAC in protests against the passes that Africans were forced to carry that circumscribed their residential and occupational rights, became a massacre when police opened fire and killed sixty-nine people. On the same day, two protesters were killed in a similar incident in Langa, Cape Town.

Even where individuals were not engaged in acts of resistance or protest, they were not exempt from violence. The violence of the State reverberated through social networks, affecting the lives of everyone.

Support and bodily substitution

All of the women with whom I worked identified school peers as having been most instrumental in their politicisation, but those women whose activism was the most sustained and enduring are also those whose kin are recognised as having been important in political struggle. This was not accidental. Youths brought up in homes where political activity was an accepted part of the domestic world were more likely to be supported in their stances by parents than those unfamiliar with political activity. Kin groups also mobilised because the police frequently detained siblings and parents instead of those for whom it sought. Many cases were reported to the Commission of young people abused in lieu of their siblings or parents. Extreme pressures were brought to bear on young people who were detained in place of their kin. Sometimes siblings of activists were detained and tortured. The police set out to persuade young people and children to act as informants, betraying the activities and whereabouts of their siblings. The damage wrought to family relationships in such instances may be enormous and is hard to repair.

All former detainees report having been questioned about the activities of others. Sometimes the questions were about youth activities in Zwelethemba and at other times detainees were questioned about named youth leaders. Sometimes young people were hurt during interrogation. Ntsoake's cousin, Xoliswa, was held for questioning about Christopher and she was tortured. Another of Ntsoake's cousins, Zanele Kolo, was detained and tortured by police who sought information about her family's political activities, particularly those of Thomas Kolo, a youth activist. In 1985, police killed Thomas as he returned from the funeral of a young man, Mawethu Mzima¹³, in Zwelethemba.

In addition to the direct impact on individuals and their immediate families, violence affected the extended kinship networks that provided both social and material support. It may be that the brutal treatment inflicted by police was deliberately intended to damage social relations

¹³ Mawethu Mzima's death is not included in the chronology of deaths in Zwelethemba recorded by the Commission. Residents in Zwelethemba say that police killed him after a 'sell-out' mistakenly identified him as youth activist Mbuyiselo Mroxisa. They state that the death led to the series of events that culminated in the death and burning of Mpazamo Mbani.

beyond repair. This seems to have been the case elsewhere. For example, Marcelo Suarez-Orosco, describing Argentina's 'Dirty War', argues that the State made its power known through a 'grammar of terror' inscribed into communities through harms inflicted on the bodies of its members (1992). He suggests (1987: 238) that the State's objective was to re-organise society, a reorganisation effected through sundering the family in highly visible ways: through torture, disappearance and other forms of a 'theatrics of power' (1987: 244; see also Perera 1995; Taussig 1984 and 1992; Taylor 1997).

The Commission Report states that, 'indiscriminate victimisation was intended to serve as a warning of the dangers of dissent' (Volume Five: 160). Yet, if social reorganisation of the scale envisaged in Argentina was the aim in South Africa, violence did not always have the intended effect. In some instances, violence consolidated political commitments, confirming the Apartheid system as an evil one and therefore one against which people struggled.

The nature of resistance

The lives of those who were young in the mid-1980s were marked by intrusions of violence and by the structures of oppression and poverty. For many, poverty formed the basis from which young people developed their ideas about politics and justice. Ntombomzi Siwangaza framed her emergent political consciousness thus:

It was not very nice to be grown in Zwelethemba through poverty. We had no choice, we had to accept. It is like being in prison. I have not been in prison. I accepted blackness. Poverty pulled us.

During the early years we had to accept poverty. We went to school with no shoes. Sometimes we had no jersey if it was washed. My mother used to smear Vaseline [petroleum jelly] on us to warm us. Sometimes I wore my mother's jersey, even if it was too big.

I accepted it until I was grown and then I felt that enough is enough, despite our parents' fears.

A too-large jersey, a body covered in petroleum jelly, the pull of impoverishment: everyday features were powerful material influences on young people's recognition of injustice. The mundane aspects of enforced inequality and its disastrous consequences propelled a fiery future vision. Ntombomzi described the pull to protest in the mid-1980s:

In the day, nothing. At night, freedom songs. If you heard them, you could not stay at home, despite your parents. There was a burning thing inside you that sent you there.

We used to sing in a place different to where the comrades would attack so as to distract attention from them.

Performances, such as the *toyi-toyi* – singing and dancing – created a sense of unity and cohesion and were an important dimension of protest activities. The *toyi-toyi* and the liberation songs¹⁴ that accompanied it gave people a sense of purpose and power, a sense of the collective and of future possibility. According to Nana Khohlokoane (1998), an anthropologist and youth activist from Zwelethemba, they were a powerful means of mobilising support in Zwelethemba and elsewhere. As Ntombomzi points out, the performances were a deliberate strategy to distract attention from the site of attacks.

Resistance took many forms. Rent boycotts, protests against Apartheid education, class boycotts are all mentioned in women's accounts, as are instances of arson, stone-throwing and of people leaving South Africa to join banned political parties and armed movements. For the most part, young women were involved in student protest. Few young women were involved in banned or underground organisations or in military organisations¹⁵. In part, this was a strategy of young men, who believed that women were incapable of holding secrets. 'Women were seen as potential informers' is how one of their male peers describes his comrades' perceptions.

Some women were exceptions to that generalisation. Nowi Khomba and Nomeite Mfengu played a central role in local anti-Apartheid organisations. Both were actively sought by the police for their roles in organising youth resistance in the Boland. Their chronicles of the 1980s in Zwelethemba provide insights into young women's exposure to danger and the shape and complexity of political commitment that brought them into confrontation with the State.

¹⁴ Patricia Henderson, an anthropologist, activist and performer, describes liberation songs as both expressions of loss and as containing peoples' aspirations for the future. She writes, 'In the context of war, fear and death, these songs sung collectively galvanise those immersed in conflict and mobilise them not to lose courage or hope' (1992: 1). She adds that the songs are important in overcoming the social wounds of war, challenging 'hegemonic constructions of peoples' place in political configuration and ... [overturning] people's current objective subjugation' (*ibid.*).

¹⁵ I know of only three women in Zwelethemba who were members of MK. Only one was recruited while a student and her military training was not completed. Membership and recruitment was secret and the women were recruited into different cell structures. Cell members still do not know the members of all other cells in Zwelethemba and do not lightly disclose their membership. The web of secrecy that held cells together is strong. Some members committed actions for which they could still be prosecuted.

In 1983, at the age of eighteen, Nomeite joined and became secretary of UWO. A relative, her father's brother's wife, recruited her¹⁶. Nomeite joined COSAS in 1985 and held the portfolio of Organiser. She was also an 'ordinary member' of ZWEYO, WOYCO and the Civic Association. She was engaged in recruiting young people to join UDF-affiliated organisations. The police knew of her activities and sought her throughout the 1980s. To some extent it was chance that enabled her to evade arrest.

Her decision to join UWO was not lightly taken. Young women's positions as students, youths and mothers offered them a range of organisational affiliations. At the age of sixteen Nomeite had borne Bandile, the first of her three children. She and Bandile lived at home with Nomeite's mother, three sisters and extended family. Nomeite was the youngest member of UWO. Her decision to join the organisation had put her into conflict with members of the youth organisations in Zwelethemba who believed she should join their structures, and with the parents of young people involved in protest who were angry that she encouraged youths to engage in resistance against the State.

Often young women faced difficult choices between the demands of political life and the traditional requirements of family life. Nomeite confronted conflicting demands when, in 1986, at the age of twenty-one, she decided to leave Zwelethemba and go into exile. She left her two sons, Bandile, aged five, and Zuko, aged three, in her mother's care.

Once installed in a safe house in Cape Town, Nomeite changed her mind about leaving the country. In the notes she called her 'struggle diary' that she wrote for my research she recalled her decision:

I started to think about my two children [and] I changed my mind about leaving the country. I decided to hide at Cape Town. When I was in Cape Town I was hiding in New Crossroads I stayed there for six months without contact from my family and my children and I was so worried because I left my young ones and they knew nothing about where I was One time I tried to phone ... home because I wanted to know about the situation, because of homesickness. They said to me, 'You must not come back now because even last night the police were at home, searching the whole house looking for you'....

Sometimes I used to cry when I was thinking of my sons. When I phoned them they also cried and asked where I am and when I am coming back to be with them again I was [their] mother and father.

¹⁶ The relative, Mrs Mfengu, died in 1983. The funeral is frequently cited as a marker of the intensification of local protest and struggle in Zwelethemba.

Nomeite faced stark choices: between being involved in struggle activities or not; joining the UWO or the youth organisation; going to exile or remaining at home; leaving the country or remaining with her family. She eventually returned to Zwelethemba in 1987. There she continued working alongside Nowi Khomba in organising youth structures in Zwelethemba. In 1999, Nomeite is aged thirty-four. She is unemployed, unmarried and the mother of three children and a respected member of the ANC Women's League. She did not experience 'gross violations of human rights' and did not make a statement to the Commission.

Nomeite's close friend, Nowi, is widely acknowledged as, and greatly respected for, having been the most politically active of the young women in Zwelethemba. As a teenager, Nowi became involved in political organisations in part because of the activities of her family members. Her oldest sister, Nomonde, was a founder member of the Zwelethemba Youth Organisation, ZWEYO, and a member of its executive committee, as was her brother, Amos, who became a well-respected youth leader. The activities of the three siblings in organising youth protest in the 1980s soon focused the attention of the police on them, their home and family. Like many other young people at the time, they ceased sleeping at home in an attempt to protect their kin from the constant surveillance and interventions by policemen. Nevertheless, the police tormented the Khomba family.

A friend of Nowi's commented, 'Amos and Nomonde were double-trouble for the Khomba family and it was triple-trouble, for that matter, when Nowi joined!' They became a quartet when Mrs Khomba joined the Zwelethemba branch of UWO. Anxious about her children's activities, she used her involvement in the organisation to provide support for them and to agitate for political change. She remained an active member of UWO and its later incarnation as UWCO. After the ANC was unbanned in 1990, she helped to establish the local branch of the Women's League, of which she became the vice-chairperson. Nowi's father supported protest activities but did not join any of the anti-Apartheid organisations active in Zwelethemba.

As part of the research, Nowi kept notes that described her past activities. She wrote,

In 1985 when I was doing Standard 9¹⁷ in Vusisizwe Secondary School, two classmates from Oudtshoorn encouraged the whole class to join COSAS ... At

¹⁷ Nowi was 22 at the time. Students who were able to attend schooling regularly and who passed each year could complete the twelve years of schooling until their graduation (matriculation) by the age of 17 or 18 years: Only a minority of black children did so. Nowi missed schooling during school boycotts and protests in 1976, 1980-1981 and in 1986-7. During the mid-1980s, schooling was frequently disrupted.

this time my older brother Amos [had] already passed Standard 10 and couldn't further his studies because of the financial situation. He was working at 'Slagpal', the place that was selling meat. My sister, Nomonde, was doing Standard 7, also at Vusisizwe. She also joined the Congress [COSAS]. My class was most active.

In May 1985, COSAS held a conference in Durban. Nowi was one of the students elected to represent the Zwelethemba branch of COSAS. On their return from Durban, the students negotiated with the principal of the school for permission to meet on the school premises to discuss political matters. The principal permitted them to meet twice a week for two hours. Nowi's political activities and those of her family continued:

Amos was busy recruiting those who were not scholars to join the Zwelethemba Youth Organisation, ZWEYO. Nomonde joined ZWEYO and informed the students to join ZWEYO after school. Luckily this was very successful.

Nomeite [Mfengu] and Maqoma [Dyabooi¹⁸] were elected to attend the umbrella committee on Wednesdays, where UDF, UWCO, the civic association, ZWEYO and COSAS members met. This committee reported back to the organisations. When ZWEYO decided to form the street committees, ZWEYO wrote a letter to COSAS asking the whole committee to attend their meetings. It was easy to form street committees because we were all from different streets.

In 1985, five of the nine portfolio-holding members of the executive committee of COSAS were women, Nowi among them.

In June 1985, news of the deaths of Matthew Goniwe, Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkhonto and Sicelo Mhlawuli, 'the Cradock Four', reached Zwelethemba (see Chapter Two). Residents collected money and arranged transport to take mourners to Cradock for the funeral. Sixty thousand people came from all over South Africa to attend the funeral (Volume Three: 23). Nowi was among the mourners. On their return, police were waiting at a roadblock at the entrance to Zwelethemba and dispersed the chanting mourners.

That night, a meeting was called in the civic hall. Students addressed the meeting, announcing that a consumer boycott was to be instituted nationally and requesting community support in their on-going protests against Apartheid education. The following day, COSAS students met separately. Nowi remembers that:

¹⁸ Maqoma is Xolile Dyabooi's nickname. Dyabooi testified before the Commission on 26th June 1996. He had been detained in 1987 when captured while trying to leave the country to go to exile in Botswana. He was severely tortured, charged and tried for terrorism. He was 21 years old when he began his sentence. He was indemnified and released in 1990.

On Monday, those who went to Cradock gave a report back to the other COSAS members about the consumer boycott. The students decided to take the zinc doors [in protest against inadequate educational facilities] to the police station. And we went to the beer hall and asked our parents not to support the beer hall. Our main reason was that it did not support the community. We also went to the *shebeens*¹⁹ and asked them not to sell beer for a certain time and said that some of our parents spend most of their money on beer while the children have no school uniforms. Most of the *shebeens* supported the boycott.

Some people were detained [after the beerhall and school protests. Noluntu, Ntsoake and Xoliswa were among these]. The police shot Nondatsu [Nation Bahume, who, at the time of his death was President of the Student's Representative Council at Vusisizwe Secondary School] and we continued the struggle.

In August 1985, COSAS was banned. The students intensified the work of ZWEYO and held nightly meetings to educate themselves in political matters and to develop strategies of resistance. Nowi was detained on 28th November 1985. She was released on 23rd February 1986, having spent three months in prison in solitary confinement in terms of Section 29 of the Internal Security Act.

Nowi's accounts veer away from the personal. She did not describe the circumstances that led to this, the first of three detentions. It was only through careful probing that the details emerged. She was detained in November 1985 after she was caught with eight others, six from Zwelethemba, while trying to cross the border ('skip') into Lesotho and exile.

I had a friend in Cape Town and they organised for me to skip. I asked, 'What about my parents?' They said, 'No problem!' Other women I worked with from Paarl had already gone into exile. The guys said that I was in the executive [of ZWEYO] and was successful so it would be easy to skip I asked, 'How will I get money to go?' They told me not to worry; it was already organised. So, I was persuaded.

Seven of the nine people in the group were from Zwelethemba. Nowi knew the eighth. The remaining man was unknown to the other members of the group. In her terse style, Nowi summarised the process that led to her capture in 1985. She described the assurances she had required before she would leave: that there was sufficient money to fund their escape and that someone would inform her parents so that they would not worry. She meticulously outlined the steps that had to be taken to leave the country and get safely to exile: introductions to people who could be trusted, meetings, safe houses, forged identity documents. She detailed the careful

¹⁹ Informal outlets selling liquor illegally.

planning of a route to exile, the speed with which the underground communication network adjusted to changes in plans and showed the reliance of activists on the hospitality and discretion of kin.

The group was to travel to Matatiele. From there they were to be taken across the border into Lesotho:

So, we left on Sunday with the Blue Line bus. They organised everything, even all kinds of food. We got to Matatiele. We did not see the people who were supposed to meet us there. Luckily, [one man] had family there. He wanted to find the family and he did. So we took the bus to Maluti, to his family. There was no problem with them: they put us up. [Two of the men] were sent to collect the bags because we were too conspicuous in that Sotho place²⁰. Some of us did not speak seSotho. We did not look like the people there and we dressed differently. They wore long dresses and big *doeks* [headcloths] and the men wore old clothes.

Alarmed that the next stage of their journey was not going according to plan, the group arranged that one among their number should call their contact in Cape Town and alert him to their changed plans. The man in Cape Town told them not to worry and that transport would arrive to collect them from the new venue.

The next day the transport came to fetch us. It was Tuesday. A *bakkie* [light delivery van] came to deliver us to Lesotho. We came to Maluti Station You know, on that first day at Maluti, one of us disappeared²¹. Just left. We did not notice at the time. We were caught at Matatiele. There is a police station not far from there. They drove us there. The women were put into a cell. We were two. The men were put into a different cell.

Two members of the group managed to hide from the police and were not detained. They returned to Zwelethemba where they alerted their comrades to the detention of the others. The six who were captured were held in the police cells near Matatiele. The cells were close enough for the detainees to speak to one another when the guards were not present. One man struck up a friendship with one of the policemen who smuggled notes between the cells to the detainees. The young people were held for four days. They were interrogated singly. Not having had time to

²⁰ Only two men spoke fluent seSotho. The travel documents each member of the group had been given were stamped with the same date and had been issued in Cape Town. One of the men in the group recalls that he was concerned that the documents might give the group away as they were travelling together. He recommended that they go to Herschel and then Mount Fletcher and cross the border separately so as to avoid suspicion.

²¹ This was the man who had been unknown to the other members of the group. He was later believed by residents in Zwelethemba to have been involved in the deaths of the seven youths in what has come to be known as the Gugulethu Seven incident. Some people believe that he was punished for his alleged activities as an *impimpi* ('sell-out') by being burnt to death (necklaced) in Khayelitsha in 1986.

prepare a plausible story, each told his or her version. Some of the stories contradicted one another. The police traced their route back to Cape Town.

After four days of interrogation, the six were reunited. Nowi was handcuffed between two of the men and bundled into one police car. The others were cuffed and pushed into the second car. They were driven to East London where they spent two days in solitary confinement. They were not permitted to communicate with one another. They were then moved to Le Grange Prison in Port Elizabeth and taken from there to Cape Town's infamous police station at Caledon Square. The women and men were held in separate cells for two days while police interrogated their family members. On 28th November 1985, a week after they had been captured, they were formally detained under section 29 of the Internal Security Act.

Nowi and the other woman were sent to Robertson prison, some twenty kilometres from Zwelethemba, where they were separated from one another and held in solitary confinement. Nowi was interrogated repeatedly by a black policeman who, at the time, she said, was living in the cells because his home in Robertson had been burnt down by community members who accused him of collaboration with the State.

Nowi and her comrades were not charged. They were released from detention on the same day and taken to Worcester police station where they met one another for the first time in three months. They were taken to their homes in Zwelethemba. Nowi was accompanied by the woman with whom she had been detained: neither trusted the Security Branch and the woman was afraid to return to Cape Town alone. Later, Nowi's parents contacted her family and she was collected from Zwelethemba.

Nowi is reticent to describe the detention. In her written notes and during our interviews and informal discussions, she glossed over her treatment and the interrogation sessions she endured. She did not describe her experiences of solitary confinement or its effects on her. I return to her attitude later in the Chapter.

After her release in February 1986, Nowi intensified her activities in organising resistance to the State.

When I was released I became more and more involved in the struggle. We launched WOYCO (Worcester Youth Congress) because we were [working] with the Coloured comrades ... After launching WOYCO we organised the Paarl youth and we formed BOYCO, the Boland Youth Congress. After launching BOYCO ... I was detained again for being the committee member of BOYCO.

Nowi was detained for the second time at five o'clock in the morning of 7th September 1986. She was taken from her home to Worcester police station where she joined three men who had also been detained in the predawn swoop. The four and a Coloured woman, detained later the same morning, were taken to a large house near a dam outside Worcester, on the road that runs in a southeasterly direction to Swellendam.

They took us from the Worcester police station. It was seven o'clock. It was very cold that morning. They put us in the van, all of us. They took us to that place, far from Worcester. They gave us food – they weren't so strict that you couldn't talk. We talked about how they found us. We ate together.

At about ten in the morning, Security Branch men came to us and separated us. The women were taken first and separated. They asked about organisations in Zwelethemba and why we were involved. They said we should tell the truth. They asked about the committee members of WOYCO, especially Nomeite. They never found [i.e. caught] her. I said that I knew her and that she was a committee member.

There was no point in denying that Nowi knew Nomeite – the police already knew her name and her activities. Nevertheless, they bade Nowi tell the truth:

They said that if I did not tell the truth they would throw me in the dam. They took me there and showed me. I did not know where the others were. There was a woman with them, a white policewoman. She told me to tell the truth and then she was left with me and interrogated me. Then two men came. She grabbed me and tried to throw me into the dam. The men stopped her. I did not want to talk. I was crying²². I ran along the edge of the dam. The policeman stood in front of me and threw sand in my eyes. I could not see. He beat me with a *sjambok* [whip]. I cried because I could not do anything. I stood. I tried to look and they threw sand again. My eyes were swollen.

[Her sight was permanently damaged.]

They took me to a single room and gave me lunch. It was past three o'clock. They apologised to me and took me to Eben Donges hospital. They said I shouldn't tell the others. The doctor gave me something for my eyes.

Then I was taken to Worcester prison. The next day they came. They took me to that place again. I did not know where the others I was detained with were. I was kept there for the day. I was given hotel food. I was interrogated for the whole day. I was also beaten. At about three o'clock, they took me to De Doorns [prison]. I was kept there. I was sick there – stomach problems. A doctor was

²² This is the only point in all our discussions about her experiences that Nowi admitted emotion. Later she explained her tears as originating not in pain and fear but from her frustration at being helpless.

brought there. He gave me pills but I did not drink them – I did not trust them²³. Mirriam [Moleleki] organised a lawyer. I don't remember his name. He was a white man. He came once and I did not see him again. I was in De Doorns for the whole time, for three months. They held me in solitary, under section 29 again.

In Nowi's account, place and time figure powerfully. She has etched into memory the places of detention and pain in the Boland: an isolated house, a dam, a hospital, a prison cell. Members of the Security Branch used a variety of places near Worcester to hold, interrogate and torture detainees. Nowi was held and tortured on a farm²⁴ to the south east of the town. Noluntu was tortured in the mountainous area in its north western environs; and young men reported having been tortured alongside the Breede River that runs south of Worcester.

On her release from detention, she returned home and attended school. She wrote her Standard Nine examinations at the end of the year and passed the year²⁵. In 1987 she entered Standard Ten. In that year, many of the youth activists were attending school elsewhere as parents who could afford to send their children elsewhere to better schools to study did so. Nowi recalls that their absence had a marked effect on protest in Zwelethemba, which, in the absence of older scholars, decreased.

Nowi's success at school was not repeated:

I failed standard 10 in 1987 and then in 1988 I was not learning. I joined the Civic [Association in 1987] and [a comrade] organised me to join the Unemployed Workers' Movement. I was elected as a branch secretary since the main office was in Cape Town. He was the Boland Organiser. Every month we attended a meeting in Cape Town. The structure grew very quickly and we had about 300 members in only one month.

²³ Her suspicions were not ill founded. In 1982, Siphiwo Mthimkhulu, a youth activist, was fed rat poison in detention. His mother, Joyce Mthimkhulu, testified to the Commission on 26th June 1996 in Port Elizabeth. During the Commission's investigations it emerged that the State had sponsored a chemical and biological warfare programme under the project leadership of Dr. Wouter Basson, Surgeon General of the Armed Forces (Volume Two: 504-517). Basson applied for amnesty. At the time of writing, his hearing is ongoing and no amnesty decision has been made.

²⁴ Local farmers were involved in a volunteer corps in Worcester and activists recall that the corps was particularly brutal in its treatment of young people. The complicity of farmers in violence against activists and the existence of farm prisons have received little attention in the Commission's work.

²⁵ The Department of Education and Training (DET) was responsible for the education of those defined as African. In 1982-3, the State spent eight times as much money on educating white students as on Africans (SACHED 1988:98-101). In 1976, the proportion was substantially higher: for every Rand spent on African children's education, approximately fourteen Rand was spent on white children's education (SACHED 1988:100).

Her account does not describe the difficulties involved in recruiting members and in holding meetings in the near-blackout conditions that prevailed in the community at the time. She continued, 'Unfortunately, I was detained in August and kept for two months.' She spent a week in the Worcester prison and then was transferred to a prison in the small town of De Doorns, some fifty kilometres away. Once again, she was held in solitary confinement under section 29 of the Internal Security Act. She was not allowed any books and her mother was allowed to visit only once a month for two hours. The third period of detention differed from the others in that her brother, Amos, was detained at the same time although in a different prison²⁶. Nowi's family was kept busy trying to ensure the well being of the two detainees.

Nowi did not address the period of detention at all in the written notes she kept for my research but continued:

When I came back I became active in the Women's League²⁷. In 1989 we worked underground and in 1990 all the organisations were unbanned. When Comrade President [Mandela] came from prison we again involved ourselves in the struggle. The chairperson of the Women's League was Sis' Neli Mroxisa and my mother was the vice-chairperson. I was the secretary. We did a door-to-door campaign and recruited mothers to join the Women's League.

In 1991 I was elected to be a delegate in the first conference after Madiba [Mandela] was released. When we launched the ANC Women's League in Zwelethemba, I was also the committee member. I am still an ANC member [and will be] until the day I die. Long live the ANC, long live!

Nowi's account emphasises her organisational affiliations. In 1990, at the age of twenty-seven, she was a student in the Standard Ten class at Vusisizwe Secondary School in Zwelethemba and matriculated at the end of that year. She was a member of the executive committee of COSAS until it was banned (1985); a committee member of UWCO (1986-1990); an executive member of ZWEYO (1985-1987); a member of WOYCO and later BOYCO (1987-1990). She was a member of the civic organisation (1985-1990) and branch secretary of the Unemployed Workers' Movement (1987). After 1990, she was secretary of the Women's League and an active member

²⁶ Amos was one of many young people who took on the mantle of leadership in the Boland throughout the 1980s when older leaders were detained, imprisoned, in hiding or in exile. He had been detained in 1985, when he had been held with other activists for a year in a number of prisons. In 1987, he was held in solitary confinement.

²⁷ People in Zwelethemba frequently refer to organisations that existed in the 1980s by their counterparts in the 1990s. 'Women's League' here refers to the ANC Women's League, of which Nowi has been a member since it was instituted after the ANC was unbanned in 1990. In 1988, the Women's League did not exist in South Africa: here, Nowi refers to UWCO.

of the ANC. Her accounts draw attention to the range of protest organisations in Zwelethemba. In her characteristic style, she glosses over her fear and the harshness of the treatment she endured.

After considerable prompting by her peers, Nowi made a statement to the Commission late in its process and after the closing date for submissions on human rights violations. The account she gave the Commission was spare. It described only one of the periods of detention and stated that her eyesight was damaged. She is not currently recorded as a victim and the status of her statement is unclear.

Problems of method

Nowi was not alone in her unwillingness to make a statement to the Commission. Despite having instituted a special focus on youth and holding four Special Event Hearings on Children: in Durban (14th May 1997), Cape Town (22nd May 1997) Johannesburg (12th June 1997), and East London (18th June 1997), the Commission admits that it did not capture the full range of young people's experiences. The Report states,

Given the Commission's focus on gross human rights violations, those who gave evidence at the hearings on children and youth spoke mainly of the suffering of young people. Few chose to speak of, or to report on, the heroic role of young people in the struggle against Apartheid. Many saw themselves not as victims, but as soldiers or freedom fighters and, for this reason, chose not to appear before the Commission at all (Volume Four: 249).

In part, the Commission's failure is methodological: a problem of sample and of time-scale. In the Commission's work, individuals identified themselves as victims. A self-selecting sample contains its own biases. The Report warns,

Many South Africans who experienced human rights violations did not come to the Commission and are therefore not represented Significant, too, was the fact that many women and girls chose not to testify about violations they themselves had experienced. (Volume Four: 259).

It takes time and sustained interaction to establish the relationships of trust that form the basis of a careful accounting for violence and pain. Pressures of time and the constraints of the Commission's research methodology meant that these were often absent from its work.

The Commission anticipated that those wishing to make statements would do so through its Regional Offices or through designated statement-takers (see Chapter Six). For the purpose of public hearings, the Commission's Western Cape Regional Office (based in Cape Town) divided its geographical area into six sub-regions, one of which was the Boland. A team of Commission

members was allocated to each sub-region. The team included members of the Human Rights Violations Committee and the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee, two statement takers, a briefer, a researcher, a logistics officer and a driver. Later an investigator was added to the team. In each sub-region, the team worked in a ten week cycle that consisted of pre-hearing (information dissemination and statement taking), hearing and post-hearing (follow-up and referral) phases. (Volume One: 433-34). Approximately two weeks of the cycle was spent in collecting statements. Only twenty-six women from Zwelethemba made statements to the Commission. Some did not make statements because at that time the Commission did not recognise certain experiences as falling within the definition of gross violations of human rights²⁸. Those who did not make statements but whose experiences would have qualified as gross violations of human rights offered a variety of reasons for their decisions. Some were concerned that Commissioners, who were not well-known political activists²⁹, would not understand them while others distrusted the local organisations through which the Commission established itself in Zwelethemba. Some felt their pain to be limited in comparison with that suffered by others. For some, the experiences of torture and loss are not widely known and they feared being labelled.

Young women's stories of harm are not lightly given. Tracing their experiences is complicated by the shifting positions that women take up in society. Few who were instrumental in resistance organisations remain in Zwelethemba. A number have married and in accordance with traditional practices of patrilocality have moved to their husband's parents' homes or have established nuclear families elsewhere. Others have followed career opportunities outside Zwelethemba. Still others, born elsewhere and sent to Zwelethemba to be educated, have subsequently returned to their natal homes. Convention and opportunity displace young women³⁰

²⁸ Ntsoake falls into this category: detention without trial was not clearly identified as a gross violation of human rights at the time that statements were being solicited in Worcester and she did not make a statement subsequently. Commissioner Mary Burton writes that the Commission debated detention without trial for a long time. It considered setting a minimum period beyond which such detention was a gross violation of human rights, but, on learning that the most aggressive periods of interrogation were usually within the first three days, 'the Commission eventually agreed that detention without trial itself constituted severe ill-treatment, leaving the specific period open and assessing the individual cases on their particular circumstances' (2000: 18).

²⁹ The Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act No. 34 of 1995 stipulated that, 'The commissioners shall be fit and proper persons who are impartial and who do not have a high political profile'.

³⁰ The patterns are not particular to young women: men, too, move in response to opportunities but are less constrained by marital conventions.

from the sites of their earlier political activities. Their absence makes it difficult to create an enduring record of young women's activities in a place and to investigate the extent, nature and consequences of their exposure to harm and their efforts to rebuild social worlds. In their absence, a rendering of the past in Zwelethemba takes account mainly of harm inflicted on men.

Eliciting experiences of harm and resistance in Zwelethemba required methodological innovation and establishing relationships of trust. It was easier to elicit information from women who had not been deeply involved in the decision-making structures of protest organisations than from those, such as Nowi and Nomeite, who had been integral in protest organisations. The latter were suspicious and they initially participated reluctantly in my research. Indeed, when I began working in Zwelethemba at the end of 1996, several women refused to participate in the study. One woman wrote a letter giving her reasons:

I don't think it is wise to give confidential information to someone you do not know. What [will that person] do with the information? Perhaps there are things that will lead to arrest, maybe in the near future. So I'm afraid to give any information about my political experiences, due to what is happening in the TRC.

She did not elaborate on her misgivings regarding either the Commission or the use to which information would be put. She wished to remain anonymous: I did not include her in the focus group and I did not interview her.

Nowi Khomba initially refused to participate in the research, saying that she did not see the point in being interviewed about her experiences. In comments and a letter, she gave seven reasons for not participating: (i) She felt that researchers who conducted research seldom reported on their work to their research subjects, but (ii) they made money by publishing the findings. (iii) She had not been interviewed, nor (iv) been offered psychological support or counselling by the Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence which had conducted research on political violence in Zwelethemba in 1995. (v) She had heard about the Commission but had not been invited to make a statement, and (vi) she believed that the money being spent on the Commission and on research would be better used in 'building the new South Africa'. (vii) She felt that those who had contributed to the demise of the Apartheid State through their political activities at 'grassroots level' had not been given adequate recognition in the new political dispensation. In short, she recognised that there is often little benefit to research subjects who participate in research, and in her characteristically blunt way, made it clear.

The outline of Nowi's political activities described above took patient work, drawing on many techniques, to piece together from fragments that emerged over the research period. She had agreed to participate in the research after several meetings when it became clear that my research method was participatory, flexible and based on consultation and collaboration. I drew on many different research techniques to elicit the data presented here. They included interviews with the young women and their kin, informal discussions with the women and with male activists, focus group discussions, and workshops. The women recorded some of their memories in what they called 'Struggle Diaries' and together we made a documentary film in which they recorded past activities and short descriptions of their present lives and hopes for the future. My credibility was consolidated by my relationships with male activists whom the women trusted, by my activities in following up with the Commission on behalf of residents and by the length of time (regular contact between 1996 and 1999 and intermittent contact to the present) that I worked in Zwelethemba.

Notwithstanding our mutual efforts, the description of her political activities that Nowi offered was spare, lacking detail and emotional content. Her qualities — courage, a willingness to risk, care for her family and comrades, a lively sense of justice and a strong commitment to ideals — and her frailties, and the difficulties she faces in everyday life were not all evident in her telling and were difficult to elicit. She did not easily admit the harm she suffered; she found it difficult even to talk of her partial blindness. She refused psychological assistance or other forms of support. It may be that the lack of emotional content in her description of the past is indicative of healing, a mastery of pain. It may be a refusal to admit pain. It may be a front, a mask carefully established to hold the memory and consequences of harm at a distance from herself and her family. It is difficult to know: intrusion may undermine her achievements or damage her efforts at recuperation. She holds herself with dignity, and is widely respected and recognised as a powerful figure. Members of her family and her community know no more than is presented here.

In the aftermath of Apartheid, some kinds of knowledge are held to the self. It takes time and the establishment of trusting relationships to elicit people's experiences of violence, especially where the forms and extent of violence suffered are not widely known. The Commission's tasks had to be completed within a specified time period and its methodology was such that its representatives were able to spend very little time collecting statements in an area. The result has been a sample that the Commission admits is biased by gender and age. Its findings, based on that sample, do not reflect the extent of young women's suffering or the enormity of the damage wrought by Apartheid.

Measuring harm

Measurements of harm offer prognoses for the future. They identify the extent of damage and may enable remedial action. As I have shown, it is difficult to capture the full extent and nature of violence and its effects on young people. In any attempt to recognise impairment and coping, it is important to take into account both what is considered to constitute violence and the ways it is recorded. Too close a focus on particular facets of violence may obscure other dimensions of harm. An emphasis on victims may displace from the historical record the agency of those who mobilised in the face of repression or who confronted additional dangers as a consequence of their political ardour. Considerations of harm that re-frame resistance as suffering may undervalue people's experiences and their commitments, expectations and skills. They may conceal the variety of responses to violence and disguise the full range of consequences and strategies to cope.

The Commission's Report (Volume Five: 125-6) states that,

The consequences of repression and resistance include the physical toll taken by torture and other forms of severe ill treatment. The psychological effects are multiple and are amplified by the other stresses of living in a deprived society. Hence, lingering physical, psychological, economic and social effects are felt in all corners of South African society. The implications of this extend beyond the individual — to the family, the community and the nation Human rights violations can also trigger a cascade of psychological, physical and interpersonal problems for victims that, in their turn, influence the functioning of the surrounding social system.

Drawing from a sample of two thousand statements weighted by region, the Commission concluded that exposure to violence produced problems that range from 'sleep disorders, sexual dysfunction, chronic irritability, physical illness [to] a disruption of interpersonal relations and occupational, family and social functioning' (Volume Five: 129). Its findings on the consequences of gross violations of human rights are generalised and heavily reliant on research conducted elsewhere and reported in the psychological literature on trauma. The Report does not describe the impairment of social functioning save to state that there is an association between domestic violence and 'social strain' (Volume Five: 156). It identifies families and communities as damaged, perhaps irreparably so. It does not differentiate between adults and children. Its findings in respect of youth are limited: it found that youths who were armed and trained in the mid-1980s to resist Apartheid were dehumanised, desensitized and criminalised and that they have not been reintegrated into and made valued members of society (Volume Five: 256). It suggests

that this has 'created the potential for [them to commit] further gross violations of human rights' (Volume Five: 256) but does not say why this should be so. These findings hold mainly for men and the Report makes no findings about the consequences of gross violations of human rights for young women.

The findings of the Trauma Centre study (Skinner 1998: 184-7) are more specific in relation to Zwelethemba. The study identified medical and psychological problems among its sample of forty-five respondents. When responses to questions were expressed as percentages, the following features emerge:

- Twenty-two percent of respondents reported headaches, 'physical weakness' and 'other body pain'.
- Fifty-one percent reported feeling 'sad or down' and forty percent indicated that they cried easily. One third of respondents reported being unable to 'feel emotions'. Fifty-five percent felt anxious when they thought about the trauma and thirty-three percent reported feelings of anxiety, fear or worry.
- Fifty five percent of respondents said that they tried to stay busy so that they did not think about the trauma but twenty eight percent of respondents reported that they could not stop thinking about the trauma.
- Fifty-eight percent of respondents identified themselves as angry and fifty-five percent reported hating 'those involved in the old system'. Forty-two percent felt that they had become less trusting.
- Thirteen percent reported drinking or taking drugs, although the majority of these reported that they 'seldom' did so.

The study notes high levels of unemployment and limited health and social services in the area (1998: 170-1) but does not attempt to correlate these factors with the reported symptoms. Instead it assumes that the symptoms are expressive of previous experiences of violence and violation and concludes (1998: 186) that the profile of respondents has indications of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)³¹.

³¹ The study does not question the applicability of its diagnostic criteria to the research population. Idioms of distress may differ across societies and the use of psychology's diagnostic categories may be misleading in cross-cultural applications or in conditions of poverty or in conditions where conflict has not yet ended. (See for example, Bracken, Giller and Summerfield 1995; Young 1995; Honwana and Dawes 1996; Honwana 1999; Sideris 1999.)

Neither the Commission Report nor the Trauma Centre study draws conclusions about young women nor about the effects of violence in constraining the social possibilities that define the scope of young peoples' futures.

Consider the diversity of responses to violence of young women with whom I worked in Zwelethemba. Some stood firm in the face of danger while others withdrew. Some prioritised familial needs while others braved both convention and their own emotions in order to act on their vision for a different world. Some were exposed to danger as a consequence of their political beliefs while others were caught in the emotion of the moment or were drawn into protest through the activities of kin, friends and peers. Some families supported the activities of their children; some forbade young women from participating in political activities; some were ambivalent, afraid or withheld support. Members of a few families sought to influence young people by becoming involved in political organisations. Others became involved in order to protect their children. Of those young women who were engaged in protest activities and who remain in Zwelethemba, some remember their roles in opposition, even where these might be judged limited, with pride. For some, an exposure to violence has harmed trusting relationships. Others have worked at restoring social bonds.

Now consider the young women in relation to five markers of social success. The markers — achievement in education, employment, motherhood and marriage, independence, and self-care — are drawn from local social and cultural registers that together describe a broad range of socially sanctioned possibilities for women.

- *Education:* All of the women returned to school after 1990. Nine completed the Standard Ten school leaving examinations. Four have further qualifications: Xoliswa Tyawana recently completed her Bachelor of Arts degree; Noluntu Zawukana has completed a secretarial course and will soon complete a computing course; Vuyelwa Xuza has received 'Girl Friday' training; Ntsoaki Phelane will soon qualify as a teacher. Nowi Khomba and Gertrude Siwangaza attended college in Worcester. The last two fought hard to be awarded scholarships and subsidies by the local municipality but when the money ran out, they could not complete their education.
- *Employment:* Only three of the women are fully employed: Noluntu has a three-year contract that expires in 2000 as a clerk on a government project. Vuyelwa works as a labourer on the same project and her contract expires at the same time. Noluthando is a part-time assistant at a domestic violence crisis centre.

- *Motherhood and marriage:* All of the women have children. In four instances the children born of one mother have different fathers. None of the women is married and 'damage payments'³² to their families for pregnancies were paid in only a few instances. Some of the women receive maintenance assistance from the children's fathers but most do not. In only one instance is there a lasting relationship between a woman and her child's father.
- *Independence:* Only one of the women and her children lives independently of parents or kin. After the death of her parents, Noluntu and her daughter continued to live in their house. Vuyelwa shares a house with three other people but a relative in Zwelethemba cares for her three youngest children and her oldest daughter lives with the child's father in Johannesburg. The other women continue to live with their parents or kin.
- *Self-care:* Some of the women care for themselves well. Others are ill but do not stick to treatment regimes. Some abuse alcohol and some have short-lived sexual relationships that are frowned on by family and friends.

In short, the women have tried to further their education but are not employed; they have entered motherhood in ways that are not socially sanctioned; they receive little support from the fathers of their children; they remain dependent. They report feeling helpless, angry and despairing in the face of change that does not recognise skills learned in conditions of protest. The women have worked to develop new skills but their efforts have not always been either successful or rewarded. Despite their efforts, they are not well equipped to enter a neo-liberal economy and their capacities to innovate have been reduced in the face of social and personal hardship. The gap between the registers of the ideal and the reality people face continues to grow larger.

It is difficult to interpret the social facts described in the bulleted section above. They may indicate individual trauma, such that people are unable to form lasting relationships or to be independent. They may be markers of Apartheid's destruction of social conventions and possibilities, or reconfigurations of the possibilities at hand that may become socially sanctioned in time. It is equally difficult to predict from the data what might become of the women. They may admit to harm and seek assistance, they may be able to rework their social arrangements into forms that more closely approximate social ideals, or their current configurations of family life may become more widely acceptable. Their relationships may solidify and men may take responsibility for their children and partners. The women may have the capacity to invest in their children's futures, to find employment and to forge independent lives. What is clear in the present is that there has been a foreclosure of the grounds of possibility, a narrowing in the range of options and a

³² Traditionally, the family of a man who impregnates a girl before marriage is responsible for the 'damage' and must make compensation.

distancing of the horizons of success for young women. It is felt particularly by those who engaged in protest against the Apartheid State, who feel that their stake in the future has been curtailed. For example, during a workshop in July 1998, some of the women expressed their frustration:

Nokwanda: For that matter, you get people asking some questions, like, 'You said Nowi was active in 1980, 1985, but why today she is sitting there not having any jobs?' [Or people say] 'You said Nokwanda was very active but now she's sitting there, having nothing, just sitting with a baby she must feed.'

Ntombomzi: And then you get some questions from other people who were not active. And they will ask you, 'What has the struggle done for you?'

Nokwanda: (interjects) [They ask] 'What is the pay-back?'

It matters that the experiences of the young have not been captured. In the first instance, the data provided by the Commission and other studies do not enable an understanding of the extent to which young women were exposed to danger or of the nature of efforts at or obstacles to recovery. In the second, as yet the record contains few stories of experiences that lie outside of conventional narratives of heroism and suffering that are usually masculine (Reynolds 1995b). Reynolds suggests that it is important to incorporate alternative stories into a repertoire so that new scripts for living can be held, enacted and offered for the future. In their absence, any understanding of violence and its effects is narrowed, women's experiences may be undervalued or unrecognised, and the possibility of expanding or legitimating the range of repertoires upon which people can draw in reconfiguring their lives may be missed.

Chapter Six

In Pursuit of the Ordinary

To recover is not the same as to uncover or to discover. Recovery ... is more akin to regaining one's balance, albeit in a new place and time; it is a coming to terms with contemporary forces that buffet without allowing these forces to overwhelm. Recoveries often do entail radical rearrangement of meanings and forms, but they do not necessarily presume radical ruptures, nor do they deny all continuity, all memory — whether real or imagined — and all familiarity. (Daniel, 1996: 73).

On 17th June 1996, shortly before the Commission's public hearings in Worcester, four short autobiographies by Mirriam Moleleki, Neliswa Mroxisa, Nothemba Ngcweewe and Nongeteni Mfengu¹, key figures in the formation of 'struggle organisations' in Zwelethemba and the Boland in the 1980s, were published. The books trace the development of the women's political consciousness and activities. They describe the contexts of women's mobilisation: poverty, the harsh conditions of farm labourers and domestic workers, trade union activities, youth activism, and growing State violence.

The autobiographies were Mirriam Moleleki's idea. She wished to create a record for her children of the activities that she and others had undertaken:

There was no chance for us to explain to our children what was happening. If you are an activist, you move time and again out of the house, you go to meetings, you go everywhere and you've no chance even to sit down with your children and explain ... (Moleleki 1997: 1)

She wished also to provide an example to farm labourers, particularly women:

I feel that books must go to the women, to give the women a chance... to show that we cannot stand only in the kitchen. We can march out... and do something else. I am a strong woman: I can do things in my own way. You can do something: you must trust yourself as a woman (*ibid.*: 2).

The books offered a perspective on women that was different from the images of 'secondary witnesses' that had emerged from the Commission's early hearings (See Chapter Two and Ross 1996). At the time the books were published, the Commission's language had deeply permeated the public imagination and book reviews made explicit connections between the Commission's work and the books. Take for example, a report on the book launch in the Cape Town daily newspaper *Cape Times*: Barry Streek, political writer for the paper, described the autobiographies as '*powerful testimonies* to the role played by women, particularly in rural areas' and quoted the women as saying that they hoped the books would help rural women '*break their silence*' (*Cape Times*, 17th June 1996: 2; emphasis added).

The women are well known to one another. In the mid-1980s, Mirriam, Neliswa and Nothemba worked with two others from Worcester and with the assistance of the Black Sash²,

¹ Data presented in the Chapter is drawn from the autobiographies and from interviews with the women. Quotations from their books are referenced. All other material is drawn from interviews conducted between 1997 and 1999.

² The Black Sash, an organisation of white women opposed to Apartheid that monitored State repression, established and helped fund Advice Offices throughout South Africa. The Worcester Advice Office offered a range of services to residents in the Boland. It provided basic legal advice, informed people of their rights, and provided access to support networks for those in detention and for their kin. The Worcester Advice Office also channelled money from the UDF and the Dependents' Conference of the South African Council of Churches to pay the bail of those detained for political activities.

ran an Advice Office in Worcester. Together with Nongeteni Mfengu, they worked closely in a number of organisations including UWO, the UDF, the Civic Association and later the ANC and ANC Women's League. Three of the women were detained: Nothemba Ngcwece was held several times for periods of less than forty-eight hours; Mirriam Moleleki and Neliswa Mroxisa were detained three times each, sometimes in solitary confinement. Their children were involved in student protests and were also detained.

At the forefront of protest and support structures in the Boland in the 1980s, Mirriam Moleleki is well known in the Western Cape's circle of anti-Apartheid activists and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). She was linked directly to the Commission's work in Zwelethemba. As head of the Masikhule Rural Development Centre, a community based organisation (CBO) that she established, she was approached by the Commission to facilitate their work in the Boland. She has an extensive knowledge of the violations committed in Zwelethemba and surrounding areas. Masikhule became the main conduit for collecting statements concerning gross violations of human rights and for distributing information about the Commission and its tasks.

Masikhule was not unique in this regard. The Commission drew on CBOs and NGOs throughout the country to establish networks of communication between local residents and the Commission and to improve the collection of statements concerning gross violations of human rights. Initially, the Commission drew on NGOs and CBOs to disseminate information, assist with logistical planning for hearings and provide support for those who had given statements (Volume One: 407). According to Nomfundo Walaza (2000: 251-2), Director of the Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture in Cape Town, however, NGOs received little support from the Commission in the work of sustaining deponents and testers. They drew largely on their own resources and received no funding from the Commission.

The Commission later trained local residents to take statements, a process that was formalised through the 'designated statement taker programme'. The tasks of 'designated statement takers' were to identify victims, fill in protocols, liaise with the Commission and provide referral services. The programme was useful in generating statements from victims in rural areas (Volume One: 141) and in providing corroboration of the events described by deponents. The Commission Report states,

The local recruitment of statement takers meant, too, that victims could tell their stories in their mother tongue, often to people they knew, thereby enhancing the quality and reliability of the testimony and reassuring victims who felt apprehensive. Some, however, chose not to share intimate details with neighbours and others from their own communities (Volume One: 140).

The Report is contradictory about the success of the programme: the Western Cape Office reported that,

It was ... regrettable that the official designated statement taker programme did not get off the ground earlier in the region, especially in the rural areas. In 1996, a total of sixty-two community statement takers were trained in four of the eleven sub-regions in anticipation of the launch of this programme [Zwelethemba was in one of the four sub-regions]; but funding only became available in April 1997, too late to be of significant use. (Volume One: 398).

Despite the delays in funding, Masikhule Centre had early been involved in the Commission's work. Through Mirriam's office, the Commission trained three designated statement takers — Mirriam's daughter and two others³. In addition to assisting deponents fill in statement protocols, the women identified those who had suffered gross violations of human rights in the period under review and encouraged them to make statements to the Commission. In fact, Mirriam did most of the work: she is well known in Zwelethemba, and many people saw her role as a continuation of her previous activities in the Advice Office. In some ways, this was detrimental to the collection of statements in the area, as Mirriam's relationships with many political activists have been strained by the fact that she is employed and they are not, and that money is often channelled into Zwelethemba through the Masikhule Centre, and they feel themselves to be on the margins of development possibilities in the region.

Mirriam was well placed to identify victims and corroborate their stories of violation. Born in De Doorns (see Map Two) in 1944, she had come to Zwelethemba in 1963 when she was abducted from home by the father of her child, her husband-to-be (see below). She began working at the Langeberg factory in Worcester in 1964, shortly after her marriage. Immediately blacks were allowed to join trade unions, she joined the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) and within a few years was a shop steward. In 1976, the Langeberg factory closed. Alongside seasonal employment on the grape farms of the region, it was and had been the main source of employment for many Africans in the area, and single women and widows were particularly badly affected by its closure as it was difficult for them to obtain work elsewhere. In 1976, Mirriam and others represented residents of Zwelethemba at a meeting in Parliament in Cape Town. The residents were demanding an end to the Coloured

³ One of whom is widely believed in Zwelethemba to have acted as a vigilante and possibly a police informant in the 1980s. Her presence angered a number of youth activists and may have discredited the Commission's work in their eyes.

Labour Preference Policy that curtailed the access of Africans to employment throughout the area of the Western Cape demarcated by the 'Eiselin Line'⁴.

When they returned to Zwelethemba a school boycott was underway and police deployed throughout the township. Mirriam attended the mass meeting called by the youths to explain to the parents the reasons for the boycott: the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, inadequate educational facilities, untrained teachers and no secondary school. Her son, aged fourteen, addressed the assembled meeting, asking for the support of parents in the struggle against 'Bantu education'. Mirriam then addressed the crowd, encouraging residents to support the scholars.

During student protests in Zwelethemba that year, several children were detained, including Tumelo. Although she was involved in community-based politics, Mirriam did not know much about her son's activities. He ceased sleeping at home, and spent many nights at school in political meetings. Sometimes he returned home late at night, sometimes not at all. In 1980, shortly after service in memory of the students who had been killed in the Soweto uprising of June 16th 1976, she confronted him, offering her support for his political activities. Three days later, he was arrested. He was held in solitary confinement for two weeks in mid-winter and was badly beaten. It was the first of four periods of detention⁵.

Mirriam travelled to Cape Town to seek assistance from Oscar Mphetha, the head of FAWU in the Western Cape and a member of the ANC underground. He told her to seek legal advice from Dullah Omar, a young lawyer. The two men assisted her to obtain money for bail from a network of sympathisers. Tumelo was charged with Public Violence and released on bail. After a six-month trial it became clear that the State had insufficient evidence to convict him and the charges were dropped. As a consequence of his arrest and her efforts to secure his bail and legal representation, Mirriam's network of acquaintances became wider and her exposure to political activists deepened.

Shortly thereafter, the Zwelethemba Residents' Association (ZRA) was re-activated⁶ in opposition to the local community council. Mirriam was elected to serve on the executive committee of the Association.

⁴ The policy declared that in certain areas west of an imaginary line, those classified Coloured had preference in employment. An 'African' could not be appointed to a job if there was a Coloured person who could do it.

⁵ Tumelo's political activities continued. In 1996 he was elected to the Northern Cape Provincial Government. He was killed in a motor accident on 31st December 1999.

⁶ In 1975, residents had formed the Zwelethemba Residents Association (ZRA) in opposition to the State appointed councillor system that was established through the 1971 Black Affairs Administration Act no. 45. By the early 1980s, several members of the ZRA's management committee had become councillors. A new ZRA was established in 1983. Mirriam served on its executive committee.

Later that year, Mirriam and her husband sent Tumelo to relatives in Qwa Qwa, a Bantustan approximately one thousand kilometres away, to continue his education. As I show below, it was an action that was to have considerable repercussion on her efforts to mobilise women's support in the struggle against Apartheid.

Mirriam remembers her son's arrest as having been instrumental in determining the shape of her political involvement,

I was not always so political, you know. But after my son's arrest I was starting to be very involved. I became a politician. But I was not the kind of politician the Apartheid government was calling a 'political radical'. I was a very disciplined politician. I was the person who fights in a very quiet way (Moleleki 1996:32).

Her reputation and experiences give lie to her words. She had been detained in 1977, held in solitary confinement and questioned for forty-eight hours.

They detained me because of my work with the old people. I remember the day very well. The old people were standing in queues for their pensions and the police hit one of the old women. I took the thing he hit the lady with and I started to hit him.

Mirriam was questioned about her political activities and those of the Zwelethemba Residents Association (ZRA), an organisation set up in opposition to the local councillors and of which she was an executive member. During the period of her detention, Mirriam promised the police that she would desist from her political activities. She was released only after promising to cease her political activities. She did not do so. Instead, she used her contacts with protest organisations and NGOs to assist those in need in Zwelethemba and to co-ordinate protest activities.

She became a member of the anti-Apartheid organisations at the same time as her husband worked for the municipal Police. Ironically, his job as a municipal policeman whose task it was to enforce the pass laws provided her with a source of information about the activities of the police. When he was able to warn her of an impending pass-law raid, she spread the word to those who did not have passes. He carried messages from those arrested or detained whom Mirriam then visited and for whom she tried to arrange bail.

By 1985, she was a member of the Civic Association, a founder member of the UWO in Worcester, a member of the Regional Executive Committee of the UDF, and head of the Worcester Advice Office. She was also closely linked with the Underground Movement and had received limited organisational and weapons training. In the 1980s, some of those wishing to leave and go into exile came to her and she organised safe passages for them. Some students and scholars who were involved in anti-Apartheid protest in Zwelethemba affectionately remember her as their 'mother in the struggle'.

After the launching of the UDF in the Boland in 1984, she became increasingly involved in recruiting people for its component organisations. Her methods were innovative. Sometimes she would dress in her church uniform and request permission from farmers to preach to farm workers. She had grown up in the farming region and knew how to use the language of *baaskap*⁷ to good effect. Having received permission to minister to the workers, she would gather them together, remove her uniform and, clad in the civilian clothes hidden beneath the uniform, would preach fiery messages about the political state of South Africa. Her methods succeeded in swelling the ranks of UDF-affiliated organisations.

In August 1985, she was detained again. She was captured early one Sunday morning during a night vigil at the home of Nkosana Bahume, who had been shot by the police on 16th August 1985 (see chronology in Chapter Five). Bahume was related to her husband, Zacharias: Bahume's grandfather and Zacharias' father were brothers.

I remember that night. The mother of that boy was distraught. The parents were angry that the child was killed and angry with the organisations that put children into that situation. We as community leaders had to speak and show that it was the System [Apartheid] that killed the children, not the [anti-Apartheid] organisations.

There were many women sleeping there. At two in the morning there was a bad [i.e. rude] knock. It was the police. The Security Branch. After they arrived, they looked around at the people. They were looking for me. One person said, 'She's not here'. One of the black Security Branch policemen said, 'She is here'. They found me. I was so shocked. I didn't expect that.

They picked me up and took me home. My children were there. Thabi was three years old. They searched. They were looking for pamphlets and papers. Thabi was crying for me. The police threatened him. My daughter was pregnant. In my room there were many pamphlets. She went in there and she took off her clothes and they could not enter. That is how things were saved: because there was a naked woman in the room!

The police tried to push Mirriam into a van. She refused to enter it, saying, 'I am not a criminal'. She demanded that they send a car for her and when she got into it she said, 'I will sit like *'n respekbaar persoon* [Afrikaans: 'a respectable person'], a Parliamentarian. I am Mandela's Parliamentarian'. Accompanied by a policewoman whom residents believed to be a karate expert, she was taken first to Worcester police station, then transferred to Bonnievale prison, some seventy kilometres away. The blankets in the cell in which she was held were covered in lice. The brown bread that was her dinner was stale. She refused to eat. She collapsed. A doctor said she was not well enough to be held in prison. Instead of being

⁷ *Baaskap*. Afrikaans: Lit. 'Boss'hood'. Marked a relationship of subservience between blacks and whites and was particularly marked in rural areas and on farms.

taken to hospital, she was transferred to Robertson prison and then to Paarl Women's Prison where she spent the duration of her three month detention period.

During the first thirty days of her detention neither her kin nor her comrades knew where she was. A member of the Black Sash, Di Bishop (now Oliver), eventually tracked her down and obtained legal support for her. Detained in terms of section 29 of the Internal Security Act No. 74 of 1982 that had been implemented a few weeks previously (2nd July 1985), Mirriam was held in solitary confinement. She was not allowed visitors. She was interrogated regularly by members of the Security Branch. Once, four policemen whom she identified in interviews as Heunis, van Loggerenberg, Nieuwoudt and McDonald went to her home and assaulted her children and her husband. (The last three policemen were named in a number of testimonies and statements from Zwelethemba: see Chapter Four.) They then returned to the prison and told Mirriam what they had done:

They would tell me in prison, 'Today we beat your children very badly'. And when I came out, my son told me, 'Mama, the police came to beat us'. And he showed me the marks from the *sjambok*. I was in jail, they hit the children. Can I forgive them? No. (Moleleki, 1996: 37)⁸.

After her release from prison in October 1985, she went into hiding for six months. She disguised herself in the traditional clothes of a married woman – head-scarf, shawl and apron knotted over her dress – and moved frequently throughout the Western Cape. She spent time in Mossel Bay, Outshoorn, Cape Town and Zwelethemba (see Map Two). In the first part of 1986, she gave evidence for the defence in the Delmas Trial, in which twenty-two UDF leaders were charged with treason. A leader of UWO, the Civic Association and the UDF, Mirriam was called by the defence to describe their activities in peaceful protest.

In June 1987, she attended a meeting held in Cape Town at which the underground leadership discussed how best to re-establish political structures destroyed in the police crack-down during the States of Emergency. She believes that someone revealed her name and whereabouts to the police, as she was captured on her way back to Zwelethemba. Once again, she was held under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act and served a three-month period of detention in solitary confinement. In the interim, the Advice Office had closed: it was unable to continue with its work because its members were constantly harassed by the police and detained, there were accusations of mismanagement, and its funding dried up. On Mirriam's release from prison, she returned to Zwelethemba and helped to establish the Masikhule Rural Development Centre. Funded through the offices of the Catholic Welfare Bureau, it operated from the premises of the local Roman Catholic Church. Masikhule drew on the talents of

⁸ Research notes issued to the media by the Commission during public hearings to provide background information state that the incident described here occurred on 27th August 1985.

some of the women who had worked in the Advice Office and in UWO and the Civic Organisation. It concentrated on community development through facilitating education bursaries, offering literacy classes to adults and providing leadership training to women. It was a nodal point for groups meeting to discuss land reform. The centre also boasted a crèche and, until 1998, housed a rape crisis/domestic abuse facility headed by Thandiwe Silere.

In 1989, Mirriam was detained for the fourth time and held in Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town. She does not know why she was detained: she was never questioned nor charged. She was not held in solitary confinement but in a communal cell with women who had been detained from all over the Western Cape. She spent five months in detention before being released.

Mirriam's community and political activities did not end there. Between 1996 and 1999, she was a member of the Community Policing Forum, an organisation established after the first democratic elections to liaise between the police and the Zwelethemba community. She was a member of the ANC Women's League and various committees. She protested vigorously against abuse of women even before her daughter, Cecilia, a pre-school teacher, was raped and murdered in 1996. Mirriam raised funds and built a crèche in Zwelethemba in her memory in 1998.

Although she had been detained four times, held twice for three months at a time in solitary confinement, and her home had been subject to police surveillance and searches, her children threatened and beaten, and her life threatened, and although she was in regular contact with the Commission, Mirriam did not make a statement about gross violations of human rights⁹. She stated that others had suffered more than she had and that, as she was employed, she had no need of reparation. Instead, she took on a nurturing role in relation to the community. In addition to her role as liaison person, she was a community briefer for the Commission's public hearing held in Worcester between 24th and 26th July 1996. In this capacity, she accompanied testifiers (including Yvonne Khutwane, whose testimony is the subject of Chapter Four), sitting beside them on the stage as they spoke to the panel of Commissioners and members of the Human Rights Violations Committee and comforting them if they cried. She provided support for testifiers and deponents even after the hearings ended, when she continued to liaise between the Commission and Zwelethemba residents. Her efforts in that regard were not always successful as people held her responsible for the Commission's failures to communicate information. Mirriam also facilitated referrals to the

⁹ During an interview on 6th March 2000, she told me that the previous week she had been notified by the Commission that, as her name had been mentioned in a number of statements made by other people, the Commission might identify her as a victim.

Cape Town-based Trauma Centre and created links with a programme called the 'Healing of the Memories' that provided support for testifiers (see Chapter Four, footnote 14).

In many ways, her efforts have been directed at social recuperation: through attempts to secure better working conditions and proper local governance, through support for young people's protest and the activities of anti-Apartheid organisations, through assistance to the poor and harshly treated, through the establishment of community development projects. They are activities aimed at securing the future of variously defined communities. They have not always been successful: as I explained above, many activists hold her at a distance. Yet her efforts in reshaping social relations have wider resonance with the ideals and experiences of women of her generation and political persuasions in Zwelethemba. I suggest that they have to do with labours in the remaking of everyday life.

Remaking the everyday

In considering the everyday and its reconstitution, I draw from Njabulo Ndebele's (1984) keynote address to the conference New Writing in Africa held at the Commonwealth Institute in London. In a paper entitled 'The rediscovery of the ordinary: some new writings in South Africa', he compared what he called 'literature of the spectacular' with what he characterised as 'the rediscovery of the ordinary'. The literature of the spectacular (or 'protest literature', an appellation he discards because it devalues literature) is characterised by 'a highly dramatic, highly demonstrative form of ... representation' (1994: 41) that uses a simplistic causality to generate a shock response. It consists of 'stories revealing the spectacular ugliness of the South African situation in all its forms' (p. 44). Ndebele views the spectacular critically:

The spectacular documents; it indicts implicitly; it is demonstrative; preferring exteriority to interiority; it keeps the larger issues of society in our minds, obliterating the details; it provokes identification through recognition and feeling rather than through observation and analytical thought; it calls for emotion rather than conviction; it establishes a vast sense of presence without offering intimate knowledge; it confirms without necessarily offering a challenge. It is the literature of the powerless identifying the key factor responsible for their powerlessness. Nothing beyond this can be expected of it (p. 49).

He is more approving of the shift in the late 1970s and early 1980s towards a literary concern with 'the ordinary'. The opposite of the spectacular, 'the ordinary is sobering rationality; it is the forcing of attention on necessary detail' (p. 53). A focus on the ordinary forsakes simple representations in order to engage with the complexities of people's efforts to constitute themselves and their relationships in the contexts of Apartheid. Ndebele holds the

rediscovery of the ordinary to be core to both the individual and society. He claims that it produces a growth in individual consciousness (p. 53) and provides an impetus to social regeneration through recognition of Apartheid's infliction of ugliness on people's lives and of their efforts to manage the distorted possibilities it permitted (p. 57). Ndebele points out (p. 55) that:

... [w]e must contend with the fact that even under the most oppressive of conditions, people are always trying and struggling to maintain a semblance of normal social order. They will attempt to apply tradition and custom to manage their day-to-day family problems: they will resort to socially acquired behaviour patterns to eke out a means of subsistence. They apply systems of values that they know. Often those values will undergo changes under certain pressing conditions. The transformation of those values constitutes the essential drama in the lives of ordinary people.

In *actual* contexts of extreme repression and violence (as opposed to their literary representation), such as those that prevailed in the mid-1980s — the repeated States of Emergency, the extremes and increasing scale of State repression and violence and the challenges of resistance — the ordinary must have taken on elusive qualities. Perhaps here '*recreation*' of the ordinary might be a more apt description than its '*rediscovery*' — a dreaming of and acting on new possibilities to achieve an '*ideal everyday*'. In an ideal everyday, facets of life scarcely imaginable under Apartheid — the possibilities of living coherent lives unhindered by pass laws and exploitative work conditions, for example, or the cessation of violence, or the non-disruption of efforts to secure valued goals — might be achievable, might even come to be taken for granted. In short, '*the recreation of the ordinary*' draws attention to efforts toward a *desirable* ordinariness, rather than simply the *possible* ordinary or the *permissible* ordinary available to those enduring Apartheid.

Among the events remembered with pride in Zwelethemba is the 'Peace March' held on 18th August 1985. A State of Emergency had been declared in thirty-six magisterial districts in South Africa on 21st July 1985. Worcester was not one of them, but the police presence in Zwelethemba was marked. Police patrolled the township on foot and in motor vehicles, sometimes in plain clothes. A surveillance tower was erected in the middle of the township and was manned twenty-four hours a day by armed policemen. A police tent was erected at the sole entrance to and exit from Zwelethemba. Police conducted random searches of buses entering the township and sometimes detained people arbitrarily. Youths boycotted school. The police response was brutal: they chased children, whipping them back to school and locking them inside the school property. At night, the youth organisations and members of banned organisations ('the underground') met to strategise and hold political discussions. They were constantly harassed. Many people were detained and their treatment was cruel.

Determined to put an end to police surveillance and violence in the township, Neliswa Mroxiswa addressed the members of UWO after a vigil for Nation Bahume who had been killed by the police on 16th August 1985. She remembers that she addressed them boldly:

Moeders, wat kan ons maak as hulle ons lokasie so deurmekaar is. Ons slaap nie meer nie, want bly die doef-doen-doen deur die yard in. Moet net die deur oopmaak dan hardloop die kinders in, dis onder die bed in, en reg rondom die huis, in die toilets en ek weet nie wat om te doen.

Moeders, julle weet julle kan teen by die dinge staan. Die kinders gaan seerkry. What kan ons eintlik maak? Ek is die voorsitter van die Women's League, wat kan ons maak...?

Is julle bang? Laat ons vir hulle kan loop 'face', laat hulle kan uitgaan...

Moeders, ons gaan vir hulle sê ons baklei nie, en hulle gaan sien ons is moeders. Ons baklei nie, ons doen niks met onse hande nie, ons kom praat net die dinge (Mroxisa 1997: 41).

(Mothers, what can we do about the turmoil they've caused in our location? We don't sleep any more because of the 'doef-doen-doen' [the sound of bullets or explosions] in the yard. We open the door and the children run inside, hide under the bed and run through the house, into the toilets, and I don't know what to do.

Mothers, you know you can stand against these things. The children will be hurt. What can we actually do? I am the Chairperson of the Women's League [UWO]: what can we do?...

Are you afraid? Let's make them [the police] turn around and leave....

Mothers, we'll go and tell them we are not fighting, and they are going to see that we are mothers. We are not fighting, we are doing nothing with our hands [i.e. we are not armed], we come only to discuss things.)

The women were afraid. They had just cause: police brutality was clearly in evidence. Yet they agreed to march to the tent-base at the entrance of the township. They set to work: spreading word of the proposed march, planning the route, briefing the proposed speakers and making placards. Some people tried to stop them. Men, including church ministers, warned that they would be killed or that the march would bring further reprisals on the residents. The women were not deterred. Neliswa remembers telling one minister who tried to prevent the march:

As ek moet dood, sal ek net vandag dood. Maar ons gaan nou nie meer dit toelaat laat die boere uit die dorp hier kom bly tussen ons nie, en ons slaap nie. Ons kinders hardloop op en af die hele nag (Mroxisa 1997: 42).

(If I have to die, I'll die today. But we are no longer going to allow the farmers¹⁰ from the town to come and stay here and disrupt our sleep. Our children run up and down the whole night.)

¹⁰ *Boer* (Afrikaans, pl. *Boere*) literally means 'farmer'. It is often used as a derogatory term to describe whites, especially Afrikaners and policemen.

On 18th August, the day of the march, afraid but determined, the marchers lined up in rows of five and strode to the entrance of Zwelethemba. Gradually, they were joined by the most radical members of the youth organisations and by men. The number of marchers increased: Neliswa estimated that half the township joined the march, but research notes supplied by the Commission to the media during the Worcester hearing state that there were 300 protesters.

As they approached the police station, Neliswa told the marchers to stop singing: *'Julle moet doodstil staan... net doodstil loop. En julle kan sien as ons voor die polisie kom, gaan julle almal op julle knië val, and julle roer niks nie'*. (You must stand dead still... walk as quietly as the dead. And when you see that we are in front of the police station, you must fall to your knees and do not stir up anything.)

Led by the women, the procession came to a halt before a row of policemen who stood with their weapons at the ready. The women were afraid. No one wanted to address the police. Nongeteni Mfengu, a recent recruit to UWO and heavily pregnant, stepped hesitantly forward and began to speak. Neliswa, afraid that Nongeteni's colloquial Afrikaans might jeopardise the negotiation the marchers planned, took over. She explained that the marchers did not come to cause trouble but to talk. She addressed the head of the police, Mr Swarts, and negotiated an agreement: if the township was quiet then the police presence would be reduced.

As she relayed the settlement conditions to her comrades, they shouted, *'Viva!'* in approval. Suspicious, the policeman asked Neliswa what they were saying. *'Nee, hulle se maar net, Dankie! Dankie!'* (No, they are just saying, Thank you! Thank you!) He seemed satisfied with the answer. The marchers chanted *'Qabane! Qabane!'* ('Comrade! Comrade!'). Again the policeman asked what they were saying. Neliswa replied that they were saying, *'Die baas is groot!'* (The boss is great!)

The marchers returned home and spread the word of the agreement. The policeman, Swarts, asked to see Neliswa and Harris Sibeko (a member of the 'Committee of Seven', elected from the members of the Zwelethemba Residents' Association to negotiate with the local authorities) in private the following day. Fearing a trick, Lizo Kapa, also one of the members of the Committee of Seven, told Neliswa to let Harris go alone to discuss whatever events might arise during the night. Harris met with Swarts who told him that the police had been undisturbed that night and that should they pass another night in peace, they would begin to withdraw from the township. Another night passed quietly. Neliswa recalled that the following day, a Wednesday, when she returned home from her work at the Advice Office, her husband met her at the door. Laughing, he lifted her into the air and told her that

the police had left: *'Nee man jong, julle vrouens is mos sterk. Julle het so gepraat, die groot tent is uitmekaar uit, daar's nie meer 'n tent nie!'* (He exclaimed: 'You women are so strong. You spoke: the big tent has been taken away; there's no longer a tent there!') (Mroxisa 1997: 45). A sole van remained to patrol the township.

Neliswa's recall is selective. The march was not as successful in reducing the police presence and consequent violence as she remembers it. On 25th August 1985, a week after the Peace March, a delegation of Black Sash members held talks with the police to try to defuse conflict in Zwelethemba, and Mirriam Moleleki was arrested between the time of the march and Bahume's funeral on 30th August. Whatever the reduction in the police presence, it did not last long. On 30th August Nation Bahume was buried. Mbuleo Mazula was a mourner at the funeral. He was shot and killed when police opened fire on the mourners. His death set in motion a new spiral of violence, as described in Chapter Five. By November 1985, there existed an environment of extreme repression in Zwelethemba.

Notwithstanding the selectivity of Neliswa's account, the work by those that planned the march and participated in it points to their faith in a vision of normality that prevailing conditions seemed to make entirely impossible. Seeking to regenerate a community in which time and space were not defined by the presence and actions of policemen, the women knew that they ran a considerable risk in marching. They tried to defuse the risk by walking quietly and in formation, rather than toying-toying; by supplication and negotiation; and by presenting themselves as mothers, typified, perhaps, by the bravery of a pregnant woman in addressing the police. Their gamble seemed to have paid off, confirmed in the meeting between Harris Sibeko and Swarts, and later in the police withdrawal from the township. The peace was short-lived.

Some women, like Neliswa and Nongeteni, can easily be described as heroines. Risking their lives, they stood firm in the face of danger. The actions of others are less amenable to conventional scripts of heroism. Theirs is an elusive activism. It is easy to overlook their contributions but their presence *as mothers* was essential to the aim of the march: to present a group of women who were concerned about their children and community and thereby win a reprieve from violence.

Mothering and women's mobilisation

The Peace March was undertaken in the first instance by women who had mobilised in terms of their identities as mothers of children under threat. Yet the forms of women's mobilisation and the patterns of their support for scholars and youth protesters were not universally accepted among women. Here, Neliswa Mroxisa and Vuyisile Malangeni (a young man who had worked closely with Neliswa in resistance organisations throughout the 1980s), describe women's mobilisation, the Peace March and the consequent changes in women's relationships with one another:

Vuyisile: There were boycotts that began in the 1980s and women were brought into the struggle because their children were being victimised by the system. UWO began in Cape Town - we got organised from there.

Neliswa: ... We had no public meetings, only house meetings. You would meet women and explain, recruit them in the street and in your area and explain to them why they should join. That was in the early '80s. The main problem was the question of the school boycott. The children were harassed and arrested and this took up a lot of women. The organisation [UWO] got a lot of members.

That was the 1980s. Women were afraid to join the organisations but the organisations captured women ...

During 1983 there were UWO campaigns like the rent issue ... when the rents went up. And then there was this thing with the unmarried women: they were not allowed to keep their houses and they were just thrown out, evicted by the councillors.

Vuyisile: ... Old women did everything. There was the 'One Million Signature campaign' of the UDF [a campaign to petition Parliament with signatures of those opposed to Apartheid]. The women were the main people [involved]. After the UDF was launched, the women embarked on the questions of the bus boycott because the fares went up. The [company] was forced to lower its prices.

Neliswa: In March 1983 the Advice Office was formed. I worked there ... [Its] committee ... involved [representatives of] all the organisations. Women spearheaded it. It was for legal issues, especially at work, at home. We gave advice and then the person who came [seeking advice] would join UWCO or the Civic or the Youth [organisations]. After we helped, they would join ...

Then in 1985 there was the big march.

Vuyisile: ... The women with the Youth Congress organised the march ...

Neliswa: No! The *women* organised the march and the youth joined to make it big.

Fiona Ross: You see! Already these youths are changing the history! ...

Neliswa: Some of the women hid themselves but they left children to be involved in the struggle. They did not want to go to jail, so they denied they were involved, but they were part of the struggle.

The conversation describes patterns of recruitment into local organisations in the 1980s. Those who sought assistance from the Advice Office often became members of UDF-affiliated structures: women were recruited by word of mouth to join UWO (later UWCO); people joined organisations after the successful resolution of disputes such as increases in rent and bus fares. Neliswa observes that women were afraid to join organisations. Their fear was justified — after all, the punishment endured by activists was well known and police brutality was an everyday feature of life in Zwelethemba. At other times, the fear derived from having seen the hurt experienced by an older generation that had confronted the State Security Forces. For example, Nothemba Ngcwece, who recruited women from Robertson to the Boland branch of UWO and who later worked with Neliswa and Mirriam Moleleki in the Advice Office, was initially afraid to join UWO. Her mother had been active in the ANC's political activities in Worcester in the late 1950s and early 1960. She had taken part in the pass protest in Zwelethemba on 28th March 1960 and had been imprisoned. In prison she was left to lie on a cold cement floor, given limited food of low quality and severely beaten: while there she had fallen ill with an untreated lung infection that continued to trouble her after her release. Despite her experiences in detention, she had continued with her political activities, but her health did not recover. Nothemba attributes mother's death in 1965, when Nothemba was twenty-two, to the weakness that resulted from her lung infection.

Nothemba remembers that, 'I didn't like the United Women's Organisation because I thought it was something that would take women to jail' (Ngcwece 1997: 8). She was concerned about the effects of activism: her mother's experiences and the severe injuries sustained by her sister's child who was struck on the head when the police shot rubber bullets during the student protests of June 1976, made her wary. Nothemba remembers explaining why she was refusing to join UWO early in 1984 to her friend Mirriam Moleleki:

I don't want to join you because if I join you maybe I will land up how my mother landed up. No, not me. My mother suffered [because of] the organisation. Not me! I am not going to follow her steps. Now I am motherless because of this ANC business! (Ngcwece 1997:9).

In 1985, Nothemba eventually did join. Neliswa came to Robertson to collect recruitment forms for UWO that she had asked Nothemba to distribute among farm labourers and residents in the small town. Nothemba handed over the forms and Neliswa told her, 'We can't take the forms unless they have the organiser's signature'. Nothemba replied that she would not sign. Neliswa reminded her that, 'Your husband works at the police station'¹¹ and intimated that if she did not sign, people might suspect a trap: that she was planning to ask her husband to give the list to the police. Neliswa's warning contained a hint of threat. Nothemba

¹¹ He worked as a cleaner at the Robertson police station.

joined the organisation and was elected to the portfolio of Organiser. She soon overcame her wariness and became deeply involved in organised resistance in the Boland.

As a direct consequence of ever more harsh State oppression and violence during the period after 1980, the ranks of organisations such as UWO swelled. Women's conventional roles as protectors of the domestic realm were re-framed by those who sought to articulate a different vision of family, community and nation from the one possible under Apartheid. However, women's relations with one another were neither simple nor homogenous. The activities of members of UWO generated conflict between men and women and among women themselves. Some of the tensions were expressed through the idiom of culturally appropriate mothering practices: women activists were accused of being inadequate mothers and betraying cultural ideals of motherhood both by engaging in politics (conventionally a male domain) and by supporting activities that placed young people in danger from the police. Young activists frequently recall their parents' concern about their activities and about the parenting qualities of those who were perceived as leading the youth in revolution against the State and in rebellion against traditional sources of authority in the home.

Nothemba Ngcwece described some responses to women's political organisations: 'Some women were angry. Some women had children who were involved but the women were not. They said we were misleading the children by encouraging them.' Mirriam Moleleki elaborated on the difficulties faced by women activists:

Women played a nice role, because we used the churches and the schools, you know, to pass messages when the organisations were banned. It was the only way to pass messages because the laws were so restrictive. The only way to get a message to children was in school, where they could discuss it.

But people hated some of us. They said we were misleading the children. Some women said that we were not allowing their children to be educated. Someone wrote a pamphlet [and circulated it in the high school] in Zwelethemba. It said, 'Do not listen to Mirriam Moleleki. She has sent her children to school in Qwa-Qwa and now wants to use you against the government.'

Mirriam's son, Tumelo was, at that time, attending High School in Qwa Qwa. Until 1980, there was no high school in Zwelethemba. Students wishing to continue with their education attended schools elsewhere in the country. Although Vusisizwe Secondary School was built in 1980, some parents who could afford to send their children to better schools did so. Parents' concerns about the loss of education incurred by children engaged in political activities indicate the importance of parental strategies to secure an uncertain future. The vision for which young people and those who supported them fought did not neatly articulate with the ideas of those who invested scarce resources in their children's education in the

hopes that children might be better off than they were. To see their investment put at risk must have been hard. In response, they confronted women activists suggesting that they had deviated from valued cultural and social norms. Mirriam remembered:

You know, they said we were acting against our culture in teaching those children politics. They said we were wrong. They told me I was betraying my culture. They used culture against us.

Women's mobilisation in support of institutions such as the family have sometimes been read by feminist writers and scholars as conservative and as a defence of patriarchal systems of power in South Africa (see Gaitskill and Unterhalter 1989; Posel 1991; and the discussion in Charman, de Swardt and Simons, 1991). The argument owes much to Cherryl Walker's Women and Resistance in South Africa, an historical study of women's organisations and the changing patterns of women's protest between 1910 and 1962, that was banned when first it was published in 1982. Walker argues that the mobilisation of women as mothers was inherently conservative because it did not challenge male authority or patriarchal power. In a later edition of the book, she noted 'feminist moments' (1991: xxiv) when women's demands ran counter to male domination. In 1995, Walker further modified her position. She suggested that,

The labels 'conservative' or 'progressive' are not particularly useful for understanding women's behaviour. They are normative ... and they discount both the process (the way in which identities may shift and change in relation to concrete historical developments) and women's own part in constructing their identities as mothers — identities [that] ... extend beyond relationships with men (1995: 436-7).

Women insisted on the political nature of their roles as mothers and custodians of family life. As Judy Kimble and Elaine Unterhalter (1982) point out, women who opposed Apartheid did so specifically through their understanding of the damage caused by Apartheid to family life. They argue that women's mobilisation through 'motherhood' was an explicit recognition of harm:

Whereas women in the West have identified the family as a site of women's oppression, women in South Africa point to the destruction of 'normal family life' as one of the most grievous crimes of Apartheid (1982:13).

The damage to family life is confirmed in the Commission's Report. It states,

Apartheid generated a crisis in South African family life. Group Areas legislation and forced removals have both been linked to disruptions in healthy family functioning, and the migrant labour system also deprived people of family life. ... In trying to deal with these problems, extended family networks came into play.

The pressure on families was relentless. (Volume Five: 142)

Hylton White (1994: 34) has suggested that women mobilised around what he calls 'organic domesticity'. His study of women kin of male political prisoners held on Robben Island traces ways in which appeals to an organic notion of family had the effect of transforming kin relations into a legitimate site of confrontation with the State. In this, his argument has continuities with a growing body of literature on women's mobilisation elsewhere which explores the transformation of an iconography of motherhood to make political and social demands¹². White argues that politics 'has to do with the local worlds of morality that occupy — and are occupied by — the daily concerns of social agents' (1994: 48). His argument is strongly reminiscent of Ndebele's claim that it is in the ordinariness of life that the potential for social change must lie. White's argument interrogates the too simple distinction between public and private space. He suggests that women's recourse to kinship moralities reflects their attempts 'to circumscribe the domestic arena so as to limit and reverse the damage to its relative interruption' (1994:47). In other words, formulations of kinship and of motherhood provide idioms through which an alternative image of the world *and* recuperative efforts to achieve it can be articulated.

Although motherhood was important in mobilising women, it would be misleading to suggest that their political consciousness was simply derived from their children's activities in protest. Young women were mobilised by other means, including peer education and their experiences of violence (see Chapter Five). Some of those mobilised under the rubric of 'mothering' drew from a powerful political critique generated as a consequence of appalling working conditions on farms and in factories and the establishment of and forced removals to Zwelethemba in 1954. Alongside the political education offered in resistance organisations, people drew from the examples set by predecessors, from a long history of political activities, and from their own political enthusiasms and experience. For example, although she frequently traces her political activities to her son's detention, Mirriam Moleleki had been involved in trade union activity and in the Zwelethemba Residents' Association before his detention. Nothemba Ngcwece traces the roots of her political knowledge to her mother's political activities. Nongenti Mfengu, an early recruit to UWO who worked closely with Mirriam, Neliswa and Nothemba, remembers the harsh conditions of work as a child labourer

¹² Sarah Radcliffe and Sally Westwood (1993), Jo Fisher (1989, 1993) and Jennifer Schirmer (1993) describe women's mobilisation against military juntas and dictators in Latin America. Julia Peteet (1997) shows how Palestinian women transformed ideas of motherhood to make demands on the State. Women are frequently depicted as 'mothers' of the post-colonial State in Zimbabwe (see Weiss 1986; Staunton 1990). Nira Yuval-Davis (1989, 1997) provides a stringent critique of nationalism and the representation of women as mothers (see also McClintock 1995). Pnina Werbner (1999) explores the implications of 'political motherhood' for securing new forms of citizenship in the post-colonial State.

on the grape farms of the region and in the packing yards of Langeberg canning factory as providing a stringent introductory political consciousness. Yvonne Khutwane (see Chapter Four) was involved in pass law protests in 1960. As a young woman and an ANC member, she had gone from door to door with comrades collecting the mandatory *dompas* from each adult resident and burning the passes in Freedom Square. Like many other women, Yvonne Khutwane described her political consciousness as having its roots in personal experience and in the maintenance of everyday life:

You see, here in South Africa, we live with politics. If you say the bread is stale, that's already politics! We are not all the same. You get people who can sit and shiver with worry about a problem. You get people who don't shiver, who will stand up and say, 'Maybe I can change things'. At Vusisizwe [school] the children were boycotting. I saw children jumping over high fences. They were being chased by the police. How can you then sit and say, 'I won't do politics'? What is going on? I go there, and here come the soldiers. They were hitting children with batons. I went to them and asked why they were beating girls. He did not worry about me [i.e. he didn't pay any attention] so I held his *sjambok*. Then someone threw teargas. There was smoke. I was coughing. The girl had a chance to run. The man was respectful: he did not *sjambok* me. He said, 'Go home! Your children are naughty!' Mrs Bentele brought me a wet cloth for my face to stop the burning.

Is this not politics?

One day in the cold I was standing outside in the yard of my mother's house. Two white policemen called me from a Casspir: '*Vroumens!*' [woman!]. I said, 'I have a name'. '*Kaffirmeid!*' [Kaffir girl] Why are you standing there?' 'I'm in my own mother's yard'. I stood. One came down from the Casspir. 'Can't you hear me?' he said. I said, 'Where am I standing? In my mother's yard'.

Is this not politics?

All the whites made us get into politics in South Africa. Themselves!

I was a smart [clever] teenager. One day they [representatives of the Bantu Affairs Administration Board] told us to come and collect the *dompas*. It was so hot, so hot, so hot. All of us were in a long queue [waiting to collect passes]. It was a *dompas*, in a bag to wear over your shoulder. We realised we were trapped by it.

Is that not politics?

Wat hulle vir ons gedoen het, dit maak ons politiek. [What they did to us made us political]. We had to be political. You could be endorsed out after two years¹³. I was red-stamped, '*uit Worcester uit*' [out of Worcester]. I was told to go to Mdantsane [in the Eastern Cape]. They chased me like an animal. I had to rush out of the window. Like an animal! I did not register and so I was endorsed out. It was not the ANC that made me 'mad' like this! My mother said I should go to her brother in Jamestown near Aliwal North. I

¹³ People who did not have rights to reside in given areas or whose rights had expired could be 'endorsed out': any remaining rights to remain were rescinded and they were sent back to homeland areas (see Platzky and Walker 1987).

refused to go. She had lawyers. They were *skelms* [rascals]. They said they could do nothing, 'It's the law'. My mother wasted her money. I grabbed my two children and went to BAAB [the Bantu Affairs Administration Board]. I said, in Afrikaans, 'Here I am with my two children. Call your police van and take me and the children to jail forever. I will not leave here. I'll never run.' I took the children — one was a baby — and (I wish I had a picture of it!) I sat outside the office, waiting for the van. Sitting, sitting. I had never been to prison. Sitting. People coming in and out. Sitting, sitting. The child said she was thirsty. I fed her an orange. Sitting. Gunther [the head of Bantu Affairs in the area] called Soga [the translator/clerk]. He told him to bring the reference book and he re-stamped it. I am still here in Worcester.

Is that not politics?

If I were not strong, I would not be here. Is that not politics?

My *ouma* [Afrikaans: grandmother], my *oupa* [Afrikaans: grandfather], my pa, they are all dead here. It is just my mother who remains. A European woman asked what was going on and she sympathised, but she would not say it was wrong.

That is politics.

Yvonne Khutwane describes political mobilisation as a consequence of the wrongs inflicted by Apartheid. Pass laws, police violence against children, the power of State functionaries to 'endorse out', and the failure of sympathetic whites to denounce Apartheid thus furthered self-reliance and continued to invigorate political critique and activism.

Some women extended the critique and formulated a political consciousness that expressly took account of oppressive gender relations. While working to end Apartheid, such women were simultaneously involved in activities designed to empower women in a patriarchal society. Nothemba Ngcwece described how she and others recruited women to join UWO:

We recruited by explaining and at gatherings we would speak in public. We would say, 'If we do not fight, no-one will fight for *women's rights*'. We said, 'We must protect our children who have begun this action'.

In Nothemba's interpretation, 'the struggle' was both to secure children's well being and to fight for *women's rights* against patriarchal structures, including 'Xhosa culture'. Her perspective is informed by personal experience. Even a cursory examination of her life history pinpoints at least eight moments when conventional gender scripts harmed or failed her badly or when men were able to manipulate their rights to her detriment. The instances are identified by number in brackets behind the description of the event.

In 1949, when Nothemba was six years old, her father, a teacher, abandoned her pregnant mother, her brother and herself in Sterkstroom, Transkei (i). A few years later he abducted the three children and took them to live with his other wife in Port Elizabeth (ii).

There, Nothemba cooked and cleaned and cared for her step-brother. She was not allowed to attend school (iii). Eventually the children engineered an escape and returned to their mother. She died in 1965, and, because Nothemba was not married, she was evicted from the council house that she had shared with her mother (iv). Nothemba's first relationship ended after she had borne two children who were sent to live with her partner's first wife in Herschel, Transkei. She attempted to maintain contact with them across the distance (v). In 1980, she met another man and in 1982 bore the first of their three children. He divorced his wife and Nothemba went to Robertson to live with him. He had a reputation for brutality against women but initially treated Nothemba well. By 1985, however, she discovered that he was a philanderer (vi). Their relationship deteriorated as her political activities increased. She decided to leave him. When she told him, he hit her with his fist and then began to beat her with a whip (vii). Neighbours intervened and as they were calming him, she escaped. She was forced to abandon all her possessions: at the time, adult African women were not, in law, considered to have attained majority and she was unable to secure an interdict against her partner (viii).

Miriam Moleleki, too, describes the demands that an oppressive patriarchal society may make on women. She bore her first child in 1962, at the age of eighteen. An unmarried mother, she continued living in De Doorns with her mother who had agreed to support her. Relatives of the child's father tried to persuade Mirriam to marry Zacharias Moleleki, but she refused. Then he persuaded her to visit him in Worcester. She was reluctant but went. When she arrived, she was forcibly married in a traditional ceremony. She managed to run away a few days later but the family recaptured her and she remained with them. Her husband treated her well, even forgoing customary expectations that placed an enormous weight on young married women (*makoti*). Mirriam remembers, 'Tradition is very important ... but sometimes it can make you a slave' (Moleleki, 1997:23). She and Zacharias remain married and have five children. She persisted in her political activities, despite his displeasure. (He eventually resigned from his job as a municipal policeman in 1989.)

Sometimes women's political involvement brought them into direct conflict with men. Women faced the difficulty of balancing their personal convictions and public commitments with the demands placed on them by men. Nothemba described the tactics they used to reduce conflict. The tactics ranged from appeasement to assertions of rights and drew on women's support and the threat of reprisal against recalcitrant men:

Some men tried to stop the women from attending our meetings. They did not succeed - we were very strong. We said, 'Women have rights and they have the right to go to meetings'. We used to tell [the women], 'cook early for men so that they won't hit you'. If someone was worried about her husband [i.e. afraid of a beating] then they would be accompanied by

someone from the meeting. The men knew that if he beat the woman we would face them. We said they [men] should help us at home.

Not all women made clear links between gender oppression and 'the struggle'. Some women joined in resistance activities (such as rent, bus and consumer boycotts) because they were directly affected. Others contributed to the revolutionary atmosphere that pervaded the township by attending rallies, funerals, political meetings, marches and by participating in protest and boycotts. In addition to a strong sense of personal commitment, there was considerable community pressure to engage in such actions.

There are clear patterns in women's mobilisation. Periods of peak activity in Zwelethemba occurred from the late 1950s-61; 1976-78; 1985-90 and 1990-94. These periods correspond to the broader contours of change in Zwelethemba: women were actively involved in opposing the pass laws in the late 1950s until the banning of the ANC and PAC in 1960 and the incarceration of activists who campaigned against the pass laws. They were also involved in trade union activities in that period. In the mid-1970s, women in Zwelethemba joined the Zwelethemba Residents Association and between 1976 and 1977 some supported youths involved in protest. In 1980, youths in Zwelethemba engaged in school boycotts. The Bantu Affairs Administration Board deployed constables to quell resistance. Some parents tried to force their children to attend school. The children refused. Much of the youth leadership was detained and a number of young people fled into exile. By 1985, parental support of children's activities had grown considerably, due in large measure to the roles played by female members of organisations affiliated to the UDF. Women's political mobilisation solidified with the formation of the Boland branch of UWO, which provided a clear role for women. Between 1985 and 1990, during the States of Emergency, women were involved in UWO and other organs of mass mobilisation such as trades unions. Since 1990, women in Zwelethemba have been actively involved in joining the ANC and in establishing the local branch of the ANC Women's League.

Women's political consciousness drew on an awareness of harm, a determination to maintain social relations stretched to breaking by Apartheid policies and violence, and a capacity to imagine a future in which 'ordinary' social relationships might be taken for granted. The visions of the future that different protagonists in 'the struggle' held were neither homogenous nor necessarily easily achieved over time. In generating and sustaining resistance to the State, activists had to manage diverse ideas and trajectories, different commitments and multiple forms of activism. It is not accurate to suggest a simple dichotomy between those who were active and those who were not. It seems, rather, that with the exception of a few central characters, many women's political engagement waxed and

waned. This does not mean that their political will was weak, or that it was harder to mobilise them than men. It points rather to the diversity of routes through which women achieved political knowledge and made decisions. For many, political engagement was not determined by a single trajectory of 'the struggle' but by complex and fluctuating sets of relationships with people and institutions including the articulation of patterns of intimate relations, childbirth and marriage with the shifting contours and temporalities of violence.

Writing of women's political activities and commitments in Northern Ireland, Begonia Aretxaga (1997: 8) proposes that,

the capacity of people to become historical subjects deliberately intervening in the making and changing of their worlds ... is the product of a movement that goes back and forth from discursive possibility to experience to change in the conditions of possibility. Political agency thus presupposes a degree of consciousness and intentionality ... but it is anchored in a cultural repository of largely unconscious discourses and images, modes of thinking and feeling.

She draws from Joan Scott (1991) who, in criticising social explanations that rest on unexamined appeals to 'experience', argues convincingly that agency is not an automatic characteristic of the individual but a consequence of historical discourses that constitute subjects at particular times and in certain places. Deborah Battaglia, too, suggests that agency is not fixed, that it does not attach to an autonomous individual (the 'self'), and that it has a propensity to 'travel' (1999:141). For Battaglia, 'the "self" is a representational economy' (p. 116): a 'chronically unstable project brought situationally — not invariably — to some form of order, shaped to some purpose, consciously or otherwise, in indeterminate social practice' (ibid.). For her, agency and the intentions of an autonomous individual are not coterminous. She argues that 'to represent agency as individually or constantly situated would be a breach of ethics' (p. 141) because the representation would fail to take into account the shifting grounds of verisimilitude in which subjects act or are constrained from acting. For Scott, Aretxaga and Battaglia, agency is not an attribute of the self but a product of the intersection between the mutually constitutive processes of subject formation and particular historical moments.

Some women in Zwelethemba were politically engaged for the duration of the struggle and beyond. That they did so is testament to their convictions and to the efforts of organisations that they created to wrest from changing conditions of possibility the space to reconceptualise social relations. If Battaglia's argument holds true, then the efforts of those who have managed to win to themselves the possibility of sustained action, so that it becomes both an attribute of the self and is externalised into realised visions, are still more admirable.

Narrative conventions and a trickster script

When women who were instrumental in organising resistance in Zwelethemba describe their activities and experiences they draw on many of the same narrative conventions as did women who testified before the Commission. However, they also put tropes to work in ways that are unlike those used by many testifiers. They speak of their roles in resistance with pride and passion. They seldom draw on the Commission's powerful tropes of 'heroes/martyrs in the struggle' or 'victims' or 'perpetrators' to describe themselves. In Commission hearings, the experience of violation was often recast as 'sacrifice'. Commissioners frequently identified their task as being to alert the populace to the loss, couched as sacrifice, of childhood and youth, life opportunities, and, in some cases, lives, for the struggle. Women testifiers were thanked for the 'sacrifice' of their dead or injured kin and testifiers were frequently told that their sacrifices (of health, well being or the lives of those close to them) had redemptive power for the national body. Suffering and sacrifice, heavily predicated on a Christian model, were depicted as constitutive of the foundational order of 'the new South Africa'. Older women activists in Zwelethemba seldom used notions of sacrifice when they spoke about the past. They did not often depict themselves as victors or as violated. Willing to advise about the harms inflicted on others, few give public accounting of the violence that they suffered themselves. Recognising damage in others, they do not easily attribute it to self.

Drawing on narrative conventions that are similar to those I have described in Chapter Two, women activists accounts of harm are often elliptical, allusive. Yet their expression of activism is lively and confrontational. They clearly identify the self as the locus of a powerful and enduring morality. Their sense of choice and action is carried in their use of the trickster, a figure that uses wit and skill to outmanoeuvre opponents. In its use, activists' narrative strategies are markedly different from those utilised by women testifiers before the Commission. In the Human Rights Violations hearings that I attended, only one woman drew on the trickster figure to describe her experiences. Testifying on 8th August 1996 before the Women's Hearing in Cape Town, Shirley Gunn described how she had convinced policemen into thinking that she was able to produce excessive quantities of breast milk for her child detained with her. She believed that the tactic made the police fearful of her feminine characteristics. (Her testimony and the incident are described in Chapter Three.) It may be that women are more likely to describe themselves in terms of the trickster figure when describing their own experiences, and because most women testified about men, the trope was less striking in public hearings than it was in discussions outside of the Commission. However, while older women drew readily on the trope, young women did not make use of it before the Commission or in private conversation when describing either their

political activities or the harms they had suffered. By contrast, young men made frequent use of the trickster motif.

I have already described Mirriam Moleleki's delight in tricking farmers by pretending to preach religion when in fact she was preaching politics. Some of the women recruited in this manner became important figures in local resistance practices¹⁴. On one occasion when Mirriam was detained, her daughter prevented police from searching one room in the house by removing her clothes and appealing to conventions of decency. I have also described Neliswa's quick-witted translation of her comrades' words to the policeman who demanded to know what her comrades were shouting. Realising that their chants could jeopardise the concessions she had won, she not only mistranslated their words but also altered them through a language of *baaskap* to carry overtones of submission.

Examples of the kinds of trickster tales that are told in Zwelethemba abound. Nothemba Ngcwecwe, for example, described a police search in June 1985 in the small township attached to Robertson (some thirty kilometres from Zwelethemba), where she was then living. The police were searching for all known political activists in the area after the local administration offices had been razed. Nothemba was one of the people they wished to detain, as they knew she was a leader in local resistance structures. While she was ironing her dry washing, a neighbour came to warn her of the police search. It was too late for her to hide. Hurriedly wetting her husband's newly washed and ironed uniform, which showed him to be in police employ, she hung it out on the line so that it was visible from the road. Then,

I took out his ironed shirt and put it on the sofa with his hat and trousers.
Then the police arrived [conducting a] door-to-door [search]. The police,
seeing my husband's clothes said, 'Oh, this is a policeman's house' and left.

Their expectation that a policeman would never allow his wife to be engaged in political subversion blinded them to her identity.

In describing the scene, Nothemba placed herself into the role of trickster, outwitting the police through use of gender stereotypes. The stereotypes concerned not only women's tasks (washing and ironing) but also assumptions of gender control within households, so that a man was presumed to hold power over his wife's activities, and would therefore disallow particular kinds of political engagement.

An incident of cross-dressing enjoyed wide currency in a repertoire of stories that placed activists as tricksters in relation to unimaginative state functionaries. I tell it below as related by a male colleague, Nana Khohlokoane.

One day, news came to those in the township that there was to be a door-to-door raid to find the men. Someone in the town heard about it and hurried back to Zwelethemba to spread the word: 'All the men in the township must hide.' People knew that the consequences of detention were dire. Yet, by the time the news arrived, the men could not leave the township. Zwelethemba has only one entrance and exit and it was guarded by police. At the end of the township there is a barren wasteland and a graveyard¹⁵. The area offers little space for hiding and less chance of evasion. Despite the lack of escape routes, when the police arrived and conducted a door to door search, they did not find any of the men for whom they were searching.

The men could not leave Zwelethemba. So they dressed in women's clothes, and the police did not find them.

Clad in married women's conventional daily wear — skirts, aprons, blouses, jerseys and head-scarves¹⁶ — men succeeded in avoiding both state surveillance and the consequences of detention or arrest. In the story, men took refuge in the protection offered by policemen's stereotypic expectations of women. In the *denouement* of the story, local notions of tricksterism are introduced. Harm is avoided through sly knowledge and quick use of stereotypes.

Many women described the use of religious objects and practices to disguise their political activities. For example, Mrs Khomba, an early member of the United Women's Congress in the Boland, tells a story of her activities thus:

I remember how we used to sit here in this room, all around the table. There was tea and ... our bibles and prayer books and then we used to talk politics and read banned books. All about what was going on with our organisations and the children. And when those policemen came [on door-to-door searches] they used to think we were having a prayer meeting and they would go away. Then, we laughed!

¹⁴ One was Thandiwe Silere, who became a founder of UWO and the UDF in the Boland (1984), a member of the Executive Committee of the Civic Association (1985), and was employed with Mirriam and Neliswa at the Advice Office in Worcester from 1986.

¹⁵ Another story, probably apocryphal, draws on people's attempts to escape from police by hiding in graves. While the story does not fall into the trickster pattern, it elicits hilarity by describing absurdity in the face of adversity. On April Fool's Day, 1997, Mawethu Bikane, a youth activist, told this story:

When the people protested, the police shot teargas and the people fled. One man ran and hid in an open grave, pretending to be a corpse awaiting burial. Two policemen, chasing people through the graveyard, came upon the open grave with the man lying inside, arms folded across his chest, eyes closed. One policeman said to the other, 'Leefhy?' [Is he alive?], to which the 'corpse' quickly responded, 'Nee, baas, ek is dood' [No, boss, I'm dead'].

¹⁶ The mode of dressing is part of an intricate code of respect (*-hlonipha*) practised by married women, who cover their heads in public and drape shawls or blankets over their shoulders. Some wear fabric or aprons knotted over their skirts. *Ukuhlonipha* is structured around an elaborate complex of language and spatial avoidance practices. The complex is usually formally taught to young women at marriage. The patterns differ by 'family' [clan affiliation] and with them, the density and intensity of practice.

Her words make light of the weight of the consequences that she and others would have borne had they been discovered with the banned materials they read to one another. Her son, Amos, and daughter, Nowi, both spent long periods of time in detention (see Chapter Five) in connection with their political activities, and the police had on more than one occasion damaged the Khomba's property while searching for banned materials and weapons.

Stories couched in the trickster motif describe the manipulation of social, cultural and racial stereotypes to provide protection from the police. The stories generally fall into three clusters of social experience: to do with the domestic sphere and women's roles within it, stereotypes of gender attributes, and the religious sphere. Conventional notions of women's obedience were ironically inverted or subverted. The stories, drawing on caricatures of conservative *boere* that abound in South African popular culture, show how wit, skill and courage were pitted against the might of the State.

The stories are remarkable for their allocation of blame: the State and Security Forces are held clearly and unambiguously to be accountable for oppression, repression and violence. Notwithstanding the humour with which the stories are told, the subject matter is neither superficial nor petty. Women always tell trickster stories in such a way as to elicit a smile or laughter, but tellers assume a familiarity with the dangers that faced those for whom the police sought and those taken in their place. It may be that using a trickster motif to describe encounters is part of a strategy of symbolically transforming power through ridicule. Used in these ways, tricksterism draws attention to the weight of the State and the wiliness of those attempting to outwit it.

James C. Scott (1990: 162) reads trickster tales as a cross-cultural form of 'veiled cultural resistance' by subordinate groups. Arguing that there are structural connections and similarities between the position and strategies of the trickster and 'the existential dilemma of subordinate groups', James suggests that trickster stories carry public messages about power relations (1990:163). They carve out 'a public, if provisional, space for the autonomous cultural expression of dissent' (1990:166. See also Scott 1985).

What is important about the use of the trickster motif by activist women in Zwelethemba is that its use marks the appropriation by women of scripts more usually associated with men (Scheub 1996) and diverges from the grammar of pain offered by the Commission. In the ways that women activists in Zwelethemba use the trope, the individual is reconfigured as a site of power. The narratives construct protagonists as politically engaged, as *bricoleurs* playing cultural stereotypes off against one another in practices of resistance. They place the individual at the centre of a challenge not only to the power of the State but

also to the power embedded in conventional ways of seeing and doing, including (cross-) cultural constructions of gender-appropriate behaviour. The narratives locate action at the level of the individual and highlight creativity and innovation.

There are many different ways to express harm and violence. The repeated use of the trickster trope by older women and young men contrasts with the Commission's insistence on 'victims' and 'perpetrators', that, as I have described in earlier Chapters, may reify pain and violence and have the effect of objectifying people and experience. Such objectification implies passivity on the part of those that suffered violence and harm and imputes an enduring damage. Trickster narratives open a discursive space that enables a consideration of the past different from that offered by the models of heroism and victimhood. Yet, the ironic or humorous stories told about 'the struggle' in Zwelethemba may obscure important facets of human experience in contexts of violence. It may be that these stories draw from a cultural repository to ward pain away. They may be likened to amulets of words that work in much the same way as Bruno Bettelheim (1980) describes for laughter: as a means to distance oneself from evil and the knowledge that one lives with it. If the Commission testimonies are limited in that they elide the collective then the stories couched in trickster mode perhaps neglect pain by emphasising autonomy.

Humility in acknowledging harm

Women activists in Zwelethemba are reluctant to identify the self as a site of violation. The reasons are not always explicit and people proffer diverse sets of reasons. Some women, such as Mirriam Moleleki, stated that they did not testify because they neither desired acknowledgement nor felt a need for reparation. Other women wished to testify but their experiences did not neatly fit the Commission's definitions of gross violations of human rights that were, at the time of its most concentrated period of work in Worcester (June to the end of July 1996¹⁷), still narrowly defined. Experiences such as detention without trial, which were later recognised to be gross violations of human rights, were not, at the time, considered to be such. Some women were loath to make statements that their children might one day read. It may be that the public expression of harm ran counter to local ideas about how pain should be expressed. In this respect, women who were mothers faced particular difficulties. Motherhood is a status that traditionally carries great weight. Some women felt it damaging

¹⁷ During the ten week 'hearing cycle' (see Chapter Five) in Worcester, the Commission sought information concerning Worcester and Zwelethemba and surrounding towns (Robertson, Ashton, Rawsonville and Montagu) for the public hearing. The cycle ended shortly after the hearing (24th to 26th July 1996), after which potential testifiers had either to travel to Cape Town or to make their statements through Mirriam Moleleki's offices.

both to conceptions of womanhood and to their relationships with future generations to declare the harms inflicted.

In general, activists did not make statements because they felt that giving expression to harm ran counter to the ideals that had provided the impetus for struggle. Ideas about collective action and the greater good that had informed their mobilisation seemed subverted in the Commission's insistence on the primacy of individual experience. Women involved in community struggle in Zwelethemba are proud of their achievements. They believe that resistance to Apartheid was morally sound. They acted out of a powerful commitment to a future vision of the ordinary and everyday — an ordinariness that Apartheid policies and strictures undermined.

Twenty-six women resident in Zwelethemba gave statements to the Commission. Yet, of all the women who had been instrumental in leading anti-Apartheid protest in Zwelethemba, only Yvonne Khutwane and Neliswa Mroxisa made statements. Neliswa Mroxisa was invited to testify in public, but refused, saying, 'My story carries no weight'. She was particularly concerned because she could no longer remember dates with precision. Her assertion is an effacement of experience characteristic among women who were involved in anti-Apartheid and community organisations. In fact, Neliswa had been detained three times during the 1980s and brutally treated each time. The first time she was detained was in connection with the killing on 13th October 1985 of Mpazamo Bethwell Mbani (also known as Mistake Yiko), who was accused of being a sell-out and of protecting someone believed to be an *impimpi*. Neliswa was detained with thirty-one young men and they were charged with attempted murder. The charges against most of the youths were dropped, but Neliswa and seven young men, including her son, Mbuyiselo, were tried in a court case that ran for three years. Charges against them were eventually dropped.

Neliswa was detained a second time after she was released from prison on bail. She had returned to work at the Advice Office in Worcester and continued with her work for the UDF-affiliated organisation, UWO. Shortly after midnight on the 12th June 1986, when the renewed State of Emergency came into effect, a loud banging at the door woke her. Still half-asleep, she opened the door and Lukas van Loggerenberg, a policeman, told her that he was there to detain her. He did not say why. She was loaded into a van with four other activists and taken to the Worcester Police Station. The police then took her to the Advice Office where she worked. They searched the premises for banned materials but did not find any. Despite their failure to find incriminating evidence, Neliswa was not released but taken to the Women's Prison in Worcester and separated from the others with whom she had been detained. She was held in solitary confinement for the night. Later, a number of women from the Boland were put into the cell with her: they had been detained while shopping. The

following day, the group of women was taken to Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town and held for almost three months. In September 1986, Neliswa was released. She had not been charged.

On her return, she continued to work at the Advice Office and to recruit members to the UWO. She was detained for a third time in connection with fierce conflict that had resulted in an arson attack on the home of a family that owned a bar in Zwelethemba. Some residents believed that the family members were vigilantes and that they were supported by the police. The family that was attacked sought Neliswa's son, Mbuyiselo, who was a student activist and whom people claimed had been instrumental in the attack. He could not be found: he had fled Zwelethemba. Her daughter, returning from Worcester, was captured by an angry mob and badly beaten. The people involved told her that they believed her mother to have instigated the arson attack. An angry crowd cornered Neliswa in a neighbour's house. Quick-witted, her mother called the police, hoping that if her daughter were detained she would not be killed by the mob. The police arrived and detained Neliswa. She was held for a month with a group of young people and charged with public violence in connection with the attack. The youths detained with her said she had not been present at the incident and, lacking concrete evidence against her, the prosecutor dropped the charges and she was released. Neliswa was not detained again.

She continues her work in the ANC Women's League. She supports her extended family. She ends her written life story (1997: 77) with the words,

Ek het koue dae in die tronk geslaap. Ek het koue aande sonder my kinders geslaap. En ek het gesê dit sal my kinders se kinders se rykdom wees, wat ek voor struggle. Nou, soos 'n ouma, ek het geloof met al die dinge uitgestaan. Ek het als gevoel en gesien. Ja, en deesdae in, ons sal darem die liggie sien. Nou, daar is nog hoop. Ek het nog altyd hoop. As ons nog 'n bietjie stywer kan staan, en ons sokkies net a bietjie stywer optrek, sal ons darem die liggie sien vorentoe. ... As die moeders ... (ek praat nie van die boeties en die tatas nie), ek dink die moeders sal alles sorteer as hulle net 'n bietjie sterk kan staan op hulle twee voete ... En so ons kan nou ook 'n bietjie hard praat en onse stemmetjie word ook nou gehoor.

Ek is nog nie klaar nie. Ons moet nog baie dinge regmaak.

[I slept cold days in jail. I slept cold nights without my children. And I said that my children's children would inherit what I struggled for. Now, as a grandmother, I've left all those things aside. I've felt and seen everything. One of these days, we'll see the small light. Now there is still hope. I still have hope. If we can stand a little straighter, and pull our socks up a little higher, we'll soon see that small light As mothers (I am not talking about boys and fathers), I think the mothers will sort everything out if they can just stand a little stronger on their own two feet And so we can also speak out and our voices will be heard.

I am not yet finished. We must still rectify many things.]

Her declaration indicates an acute awareness of fracture and responsibility, of the fault-lines of society and the measures necessary to render them harmless. As she points out, the work of social recuperation continues in accord with a vision — ‘a small light’.

Regard for social institutions

Veena Das and Arthur Kleinman (forthcoming: 4) propose that ‘the recovery of the everyday, resuming the task of living (and not only surviving), asks for a renewed capability to address the future.’ They suggest that, ‘While everyday life may be seen as the site of the ordinary, this ordinariness is itself recovered in the face of the most recalcitrant of tragedies: it is the site of many buried memories and experiences’ (*ibid.*).

In Zwelethemba, the women most instrumental in establishing anti-Apartheid organisations have remained active in political organisations and CBOs or in implementing social programmes in accordance with a vision of recovering and directing the ordinary in the aftermath of violence. Their activities have to do with a concern for social institutions. There is a direct continuity with women’s mobilisation in the past: they acted in defence of community¹⁸, imagined variously and changeably as the family, the neighbourhood, women, workers, ‘the oppressed’, Africans, blacks. In less dramatic ways, women activists continue to strive towards community recovery. For example, Mirriam Moleleki helped establish the Masikhule Centre in 1987 and a crèche in 1998. She is now trying to raise funds to build a bakery that will provide both food and employment. In 1979 and 1988, while working full time, Nothemba Ngcwece returned to night school. She completed her final year of education in 1993: that year she also attended a Delta Training Course at the University of the Western Cape and held down a full-time job. She has put her dream of women’s empowerment into place through providing adult literacy classes and women’s leadership programmes. Thandiwe Silere established a branch of *Ilitha laBantu* (a counselling and legal advice centre for abused women and children). In 1994, she became the first woman chairperson of the Boland branch of the ANC. Nongeteni Mfengu runs a crèche from her small shack. Neliswa Mroxisa and Yvonne Khutwane are members of the Women’s League. Women activists are members of the Community Policing Forum and of the Community Peace Initiative. They are members of the committee to oversee land redistribution, and of the ANC and its Women’s League.

¹⁸ In Zwelethemba, kin and the immediate social community are intimately connected. Many residents are linked to one another through ties of kinship, clanship, neighbourhood and place of origin.

The women who now describe themselves as 'community activists' all report feeling tired and discouraged by the small inroads they have made. Their efforts are not always appreciated, their methods not always considered appropriate, but their vision is one that aims both to restore the family and community and to invigorate trust in social conventions. It is easy to overlook their work or to discount it when faced with the enormity of the damage caused to social institutions by Apartheid. To do so is to ignore the fact that they provide a ground — a recuperative space — from which new institutions can emerge¹⁹.

The process of recuperation is gradual. It involves recognising the full extent of harm, envisaging forms of healing and enacting them by holding to and building on the moments when agency is possible. A re-creation of the everyday involves granting full rein to imagination: re-imagining is future-oriented. It is an on-going act of envisaging potentials that lie outside the scope of current possibilities and of striving to achieve them. It requires broad sight and a close attention to detail. It is a work that takes what Das (1995b) describes as 'the patient repair of relationships' and furthers it by reconsidering the shape of that which is repaired even as it is carefully mended.

Perhaps recovery from Apartheid draws on what one might characterise as a passion for the future. Those who, in their many capacities, opposed Apartheid undertook such work, actively dreaming of the possibilities for a different kind of future to that figured in State policy and practice. The pursuit of a vision of an ideal everyday required daring and extraordinary commitment. The outlines of the ideal were drawn from tradition and custom, the possibilities of revolutionary change, individual experience of harm and collective outrage. It was a work that drew many, especially during the turbulence of the 1980s: a painstaking effort that proceeded through conviction, convention and innovation; that was debated, contested, constantly re-evaluated. Among women, it frequently had to do with the reformulation of the conditions of the domestic that Apartheid had made a public domain²⁰. In the aftermath of Apartheid, the work of establishing an ordinary is less clear. It may be that scripts devised through struggle against the State and within communities offer fresh possibilities (though not guarantees) in the face of uncertainty.

¹⁹ It is not easy work. For example, after the first democratic elections in April 1994, much of the aid that had been channelled to NGOs and CBOs during the Apartheid years was redirected to assist the new government implement change. NGOs were severely hampered by funding difficulties and many closed. Some of the bodies that channelled aid money to NGOs and CBOs suffered financial maladministration, as did some of the receiving agencies.

²⁰ The impact of Apartheid policies on the domestic sphere, particularly the migrant labour system, homelands creation, forced removals and the pass laws, on the domestic sphere have been well documented (see reviews in Wilson and Ramphela 1989 and Platzky and Walker 1987).

Epilogue

How, in whose voice, or rather, in which of many voices, ought an anthropologist to tell such stories? And what does he tell when the most poignant parts of their voices are their silences? (Daniel. 1996: 121).

University of Cape Town

Return to voice and silence

David Morris argues that 'Silence stands in opposition to every voice, weak or strong, ordinary or unique, prosaic or poetic. The basic opposition between voice and silence matters here because suffering, like pain ... exists in part beyond language' (Morris 1996: 27). He quotes Joyce Carol Oates who once argued that language is 'all we have to pit against death and silence', and he points out that she did not guarantee that 'the opposite of silence is truth' (*ibid.*: 31). In a Commission that aimed to elicit and document spoken and written commentary on human rights violations committed during the Apartheid era, the relationships between words, silences, truth and meaning hold special pertinence.

My research focus on women was a product of the history of the category 'women' within the Commission's work; the category itself having emerged as a consequence of silences and absences in conventional witnessing practices. In part this had to do with the subject positions from which women testified before the Commission: often as 'witnesses' rather than 'primary victims'. The Commission's focus permitted the expression of pain of a particular kind but emphasised bodily violation at the expense of a broader understanding of Apartheid and its consequences. Certain forms of violence were emphasised in the public record, rendering more visible some kinds of pain while displacing other forms of experience. Yet, as I have shown in Chapters Two and Three, women's testimonies, when carefully read, demonstrated the intrusion of Apartheid at all levels of life, including at the level of individual identity and in the composition of the personal and the voice in which it is uttered.

The Commission's work was predicated on the assumption that people would talk about violence and violation if space in which to do so were provided. The relative absence of women who made statements about their own violation in the early period of the Commission's work intimates that talking about certain kinds of pain may require more than a short-lived social intervention. The problem is partly methodological, and therefore, as feminists have long argued, a matter of both theory and politics. My research demonstrates the complexities in capturing women's experiences of activism and harm. The dissertation's purview, too, is partial: it considered the testimonies of some women who appeared before the Commission and the lives of women who were influential in struggle activities in a small town but whose political influence, while important, was, and remains, limited. It does not reflect systematically on the experiences of women who were instrumental in organising resistance from exile or who were members of underground cells. Some women who took on more powerful roles are suspicious or reluctant to discuss the past; in discussions, one described herself and women like her as 'ex-activist housewives'. Brave, defiant and courageous, such women have received

scant acknowledgement. The roles of women in clandestine activities, combat¹, political decision-making and in shaping political and social agenda are under-explored and in danger of slipping from the historical record.

Women's silences in and absences from the Commission's accounting of harm, it seems, had different origins and causes. Sometimes silence was the result of processes that discounted particular kinds of experience or constrained the social spaces within which to speak. In other instances, silence was a consequence of reticence, and in still others, a product of determined efforts not to speak. However, the rubric of harm utilised in the Commission's work has had the effect of both homogenising women's experiences and of restricting the range of expressions to give voice to experience. The restlessness and mutability of narratives of harm that I have described in Chapter Four stands in ironic contrast with the effects of bureaucratic processes that fix individuals within narrow subject positions, such as 'victim', imbued with negative social and cultural values. That process has constrained both the ranges of expressions of suffering and the institutions to which people may have recourse in seeking its amelioration. For example, in order to make claims against the State in relation to the Commission's proposed 'Urgent Interim Relief Grant' and 'Individual Reparations Grant' (see Chapter One), a person has both to occupy and to claim the subject position of 'victim' (by filling in and submitting the relevant application forms to the authorities). From the data presented in Chapters Three, Five and Six it is evident that a large number of women who may have been eligible to make statements to the Commission did not do so. One effect is that they are not recorded as victims and, in terms of the current configuration of recommendations for reparation, are not eligible for individual reparation – even where their suffering was great. That limitation has important implications. Data collected in the national census of 1996 (Census96) locates African women at the nexus of social fragility. They represent the most unskilled members of the potential workforce and suffer the highest rates of unemployment. The poorest households in South Africa are likely to be woman-headed and are frequently reliant on State assistance in the form of pensions and welfare grants. A narrow focus on 'gross violations of human rights' does not allow for the recognition of Apartheid's differential impacts at the level of everyday life.

¹ Jacklyn Cock's (1992) book, *Women and War in South Africa*, is an important account of women's roles in military structures in South Africa. She found that gender ideologies informed the position of women in both the liberation armies and the SADF. In both cases, women were engaged in military activities, but women in the liberation armies were more likely to be involved in conflict than were women employed in the SADF.

In the absence of a careful accounting of harm and a sensitive register of the measures of social success against which to weigh damage, the extent and duration of harmful consequences may be underestimated. Assumptions of damage that are abstracted from social and cultural contexts may fail to recognise the scale of harm or the different impacts it may have on young and old, men and women. As I have demonstrated in Chapters Five and Six, the Commission's register of damage does not admit the breadth of harm inflicted on residents in a small town or the depth of violence's reach into peoples' sense of the future and past. Young women and older women have dealt differently with the violence that has shaped both the quotidian world and the register of social opportunities available. The failure to attain socially sanctioned goals weighs heavily on young women who were involved in protest activities, and women's efforts to reconstitute the social fabric may be easily undermined if not acknowledged and supported.

The dissertation has worked against too easy an acceptance of voice and silence by focusing the attention on the points of intersection between them and suggesting that both are the products of social processes that give different weight to particular forms of experience. The process of identifying silence and absence is not without risk: Veena Das (1996: 88) reminds scholars that,

It is often considered the task of historiography to break the silences that announce the zones of taboo. There is even something heroic in the image of empowering women to speak and to give voice to the voiceless ... [But] even the idea that we should recover the narratives of violence becomes problematic when we realize that such narratives cannot be told unless we see the relation between pain and language that a culture has evolved.

The relationship between pain and language that has arisen through the Commission's work has had the effects of eliding some forms of harm and foreclosing some forms of expression. Those findings suggest the need for a new language of social suffering, one that permits the expression of the full range of experience, admits the integrity of silence, and does not presume closure.

There is a Xhosa phrase that, unlike the English phrase, 'The End', when used at the end of a story or discussion, does not indicate that a story is complete but rather that, for the moment, the teller has finished her part in its saying. It is a phrase used by storytellers, by testifiers before the Commission and by many of the women with whom I worked:

'Ndiqibile' – 'I have finished'.

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Appendix A

Data on the detention of women, 1960-1994.

In the archival and literature sources I have consulted, data on detentions is difficult to trace and cannot be considered reliable. Detention data was seldom disaggregated by age or gender. The data presented in the Tables below are drawn from a variety of sources. In the following Tables, I describe the number of people detained in terms of various Acts and, where data is available, the number of women and children detained. Table A-One describes data given in to questions posed in the House of Assembly between 1960 and 1994. The data are by no means exhaustive: the State did not report detention figures unless requested in Parliament to do so¹, and it responded only in terms of detainees held under specific legislation. The Table should therefore be read as a summary of available materials and not as an accurate rendition of the scale of detention. During the late 1960s and the 1985 and 1986-90 States of Emergency, the Ministers of Police and/or Justice frequently refused to provide data about detainees, saying that it was not in the interests of national security to do so. I have highlighted in red the data that the State refused to divulge. Detainees were held in terms of different Sections of Acts but for ease of reference I have reported data by Act rather than by Section. Detention data were not always provided by year: often the figures given in Parliament represent shorter or longer periods. For ease of reference, I have used only the annual figures where these were available. The data reported below do not include detentions in 'homelands', which had their own legislation.

It should be noted that under Apartheid laws, children of different 'population groups' were considered to attain majority at different ages. African children attained majority at 16 and whites at 18. In reporting detention data, the State made use of variable definitions of childhood, so children might be those under 14 or those under 18.

The State consistently refused to reveal the numbers of people detained in terms of the Terrorism Act, and from the mid-1980s, refused to reveal numbers detained in terms of the Internal Security Act and other 'emergency regulations'.

Very little about the detention of women can be gleaned from the data presented in Table A-One. Data was seldom disaggregated by gender. The State explicitly refused to reveal the numbers of children detained in 1977 and 1986. It is not clear whether, in reporting detention figures, the State counted detainees who were held for short periods of time.

¹ Most questions were put by Helen Suzman, lone Member of Parliament for the Progressive Party from 1961 until she was joined by others in 1974. She retired in 1989.

Table A-One: State Detention Data, 1960-1994

Year	Act	Total no. detainees	No. women	No. under 18
1960	No data	No data	No data	No data
1961	No data	No data	No data	No data
1962	No data	No data	No data	No data
1963	No data	No data	No data	No data
1964	No data	No data	No data	No data
1965	SC. UO. CPA	500	No data	No data
1966	CPA	247	No data	No data
1967	CPA	282	26	No data
1968	TA	Refused to divulge	No data	No data
1969	TA	Refused to divulge	No data	No data
1970	TA	Refused to divulge	No data	No data
1971	TA	Refused to divulge	No data	No data
1972	TA RA	Refused to divulge 296	No data 38	No data 117
1973	TA SC	Refused to divulge 67	No data No data	No data No data
1974	SC TA	12 1	No data No data	No data No data
1975	TA	Refused to divulge	No data	No data
1976	RA Other	Refused to divulge Referred to Cillie Commission	No data No data	No data No data
1977	TA ISA 'security laws'	Refused to divulge 369 259	No data 21 No data	Refused to divulge No data 259
1978	ISA TA	No data No data	No data No data	227 25
1979	'Security laws'	No data	No data	48
1980	TA ISA 'Security laws'	49 15 Refused to divulge	No data No data No data	No data No data No data
1981	Curfew regulations 'security laws' ISA	10 835 No data 78	No data 0 No data	No data No data No data
1982	TA ISA	73 91	No data No data	No data No data
1983	ISA 'crimes against state'	48 364	No data No data	No data 0
1984	ISA	524	No data	No data
1985	'emergency regulations' 'emergency regulations' 'Unrest'	2 387 No data 18 966	No data No data No data	482 2 016 7 443
1986	ISA s.29 ISA 'emergency regulations'	Refused to divulge 463 Refused to divulge	No data 67 No data	Refused to divulge 114 No data
1987	ISA 'emergency regulations'	519 1 338	22 No data	279 290
1988	ISA	315	No data	234
1989	'emergency regulations'	Refused to divulge	No data	No data
1990	ISA	237	No data	No data
1991	ISA	171	No data	No data
1992	ISA	No data	No data	0
1993	ISA	No data	No data	0
1994	ISA	No data	No data	0

Source: Hansard, 1960-1994. House of Assembly Questions and Answers. Cape Town: Government Printers.

Table A-Two describes detention figures collected by a number of extra-governmental organisations and academics. The sources of the data that they quote were government figures, the media, the South African Council of Churches, the South African Institute of Race Relations, and the Detainees Parents' Support Committee (DPSC). For the period 1960 to 1976, the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) relied mostly on data provided by the State. Its later reports drew from the analyses offered by other organisations.

Although the data in Table A-Two indicate substantially higher rates of detention than those cited in Table A-One, it still remains difficult to identify how many women were detained each year. Other sources provide information for selected periods only. Coleman (in Russell 1990: 15; see also Coleman 1998) indicates that in 1985, fourteen percent of detainees under the age of eighteen were girls. The DPSC (1988) estimated that women comprised twelve per cent of detainees held by the State in 1986-87 under the State of Emergency. The Lawyers Commission for Human Rights (LCHR) estimated that some 25 000 people were held in terms of security legislation in 1985, in which case, if the DPSC estimate is accurate, some 3 000 women were held in detention.

Table A-Two: Detention Data, 1960-1994, according to extra-governmental sources

Year	Act	Total no. detainees	No. women	No. under 18	Source
1960	PSA	11 000	35		IDAF 1991: 67
	State of Emergency	11 727			McKendrick et al. 1990: 412
	'dangerous'/'statutory' offences	18 011			SAIRR 1960: 79
1961	No data				
1962	No data				
1963	Security legislation (Poqo) ¹	3 246	45	102	SAIRR 1963: 52
	GLAA	2 618			SAIRR 1965: 61
1964	GLAA	987	81	4	SAIRR 1965: 61
1965	GLAA	1 095	76	17	SAIRR 1965: 49
1966	SC	24	49		SAIRR 1966: 68
	UO	130			SAIRR 1968: 68
	PSA	477			SAIRR 1968: 68
	GLAA	1 310			SAIRR 1968: 68
	CPA	State refused to divulge			SAIRR 1968: 77
1967	TA	State refused to divulge			SAIRR 1968: 58
1968	TA	State refused to divulge			SAIRR 1969: 62
1969	TA	35			SAIRR 1969: 70
1970	TA	State refused to divulge			SAIRR 1970: 54
1971	No data				
1972	TA	State refused to divulge			SAIRR 1972: 98
1973	TA	State refused to divulge			SAIRR 1974: 90

¹ Poqo was a rurally based political organisation that drew its support mainly from Xhosa speakers. In 1963, it initiated a wave of attacks and was banned.

Year	Act	Total no. detainees	No. women	No. under 18	Source
1974	'security laws'	State refused to divulge			SAIRR 1975: 57
1975	'Security laws'	23			SAIRR 1976: 110
1976	TA ISA CPA	State refused to divulge 453 21	21		SAIRR 1977: 143 SAIRR 1977: 143 SAIRR 1977: 143
1977	'security laws'	2 430		286	SAIRR 1978: 106
1978	'security laws'	261		64	SAIRR 1978: 107
1979	TA and GLAA	No data		48	SAIRR 1980: 264
1980	Security laws GLAA TA ISA CPA	768 762 222 255 4		458	SAIRR 1980: 264 SAIRR 1982: 224 SAIRR 1982: 224 SAIRR 1982: 224 SAIRR 1982: 224
1981	GLAA TA ISA CPA	579 320 68 7			SAIRR 1982: 224 SAIRR 1982: 224 SAIRR 1982: 224 SAIRR 1982: 224
1982	'security laws'	210			SAIRR 1983: 548
1983	TA	State refused to divulge			SAIRR 1983: 548
1984	ISA	530			SAIRR 1984: 758
1985	ISA CPA State of Emergency	4 794 25 000 8 000		2 016	LCHR 1986: 78 LCHR 1986: 83 Thomas 1990 439-41
1986	State of Emergency State of Emergency State of Emergency ISA	8 800 10 000 25 000 3 989		3 000	UNICEF 1989: 87 Straker 1992: 6 SAIRR 1986: 824 SAIRR 1986: 822
1987	State of Emergency State of Emergency	No data No data		230 1 338	DPSC 31/1/88 SAIRR 1987-8: 538
1988	State of Emergency State of Emergency	No data No data		250 2 000	Thomas 1990: 441 SAIRR 1985: 442
1989	ISA	316			SAIRR 1989-90: 175
1990	ISA	86			SAIRR 1993-4: 307
1991	ISA	93			SAIRR 1993-4: 307
1992	ISA	86			
1993	No data				
1994	No data				

Key:

SC = Suppression of Communism Act No. 44 of 1950, as amended

PSA = Public Safety Act No.3 of 1953

RA = Riotous Assemblies Act. No. 17 of 1956

UO = Unlawful Organisations Act. No. 34 of 1960

GLAA = General Law Amendment Act No. 76 of 1962 and No. 37 of 1963

TA = Terrorism Act No. 8 of 1967

CPA = Criminal Procedures Act. No. 96 of 1965

ISA = Internal Security Act No. 74 of 1982

Emergency regulations = undefined regulations under the State of Emergency

Security legislation = undefined legislation pertaining to matters of national security

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Appendix B.

Assessment of the Report of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Consequences of Gross Violations of Human Rights, 1998.

Volume Five (pp. 125-169) of the Commission Report describes the consequences of gross violations of human rights. The discussion begins with a general description of the consequences of Apartheid and of human rights violations. These include poverty, lack of opportunity, and physical damage and psychological effects of violation that ramify outwards from the individual to society.

The discussion of individual consequences of gross violations of human rights draws from interpretation of a sample of two thousand statements, weighted by region. The sample represents approximately nine percent of statements received by the Commission. The discussion is heavily reliant on findings about the effects of violence reported in international literature, particularly the literature on post-traumatic stress. Indeed, the Commission's assessment of consequences appears to be based largely on inferences drawn from the literature and placed into conjunction with qualitative data from the weighted sample. Readers of the Report are warned that 'it was not possible to diagnose actual disorders or problems based on the statements and testimony at hearings' (p. 130). No reasons for the failure are given. When making statements to the Commission, some deponents requested medical or counselling services but no psychological or physical assessments of deponents was undertaken otherwise.

The Commission required those whom it identified as victims to provide considerable detail in a specified format about consequences of gross violations of human rights when they made application for reparation. For many people, completing the applications was extremely difficult, not least because the forms were complex, in English – not the first language of the majority – and an authorised Commissioner of Oaths had to certify them on completion. For many people, the latter requirement meant visiting a police station, which, given the widespread distrust of police as a consequence of their role in Apartheid, was problematic. The problems in completing the forms were compounded when the violation had occurred many years previously and/or where there was no physical damage or medical records to substantiate claims. As a result of the difficulties described above, the process of eliciting data from the reparation forms cannot be considered reliable.

No quantitative data is provided in the discussion on the consequences of gross violation. The discussion does not differentiate victims by age or gender, organisational

affiliation, context of violation, date of violation, specific cause of violation, etc. It is therefore not possible to correlate activities or demographic characteristics with the consequences that are described.

Psychological consequences

The Report asserts that the psychological consequences of gross violations of human rights range from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to anxiety and psychotic conditions. Exposure to violence is considered to lead to 'sleep disorders, sexual dysfunction, chronic irritability, physical illness and a disruption of interpersonal relations and occupational, family and social functioning' (Volume Five: 129). Although the Report begins by differentiating between PTSD and other psychological conditions, its focus is mainly on PTSD. There is, however, no indication of the pervasiveness of PTSD.

The Report states that 'Political activists were less prone to post-traumatic stress disorder'¹ and that 'international studies have shown that non-activists, even if subjected to lower levels of torture, display significantly more severe symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder' (Volume Five: 133). The author of the Report adds, 'The Commission's statistics provide evidence of this phenomenon', but no statistics are given. The author points out (p. 136) that it is difficult to distinguish between the trauma that is a response to a particular stressor (in this instance gross violations of human rights) and other stressful contexts such as 'dire social circumstances'. The Report states that 'many' victims were going about daily business when caught in the crossfire (p. 125) but does not say how many or describe the contexts within which people were harmed. From the data presented, it is not possible to assess how many victims had been involved in anti-Apartheid activities at the time of violation, how many were activists with some form of psychological readiness for harm or how many were bystanders. It is therefore not possible to identify the extent to which activists were better able to deal with violation or to ascertain the efficacy of measures to cope with violence or to determine the differences in the ways that activists and non-activists attempted to manage the consequences of violence. In addition, the Report does not differentiate between those who were tortured and those who suffered other kinds of experience (such as beating or arson attacks), but groups them together under the category victims. It is therefore

¹ The claims do not emerge from the Commission's data but from other sources, notably a comment by political activist Mike Basupo (quoted in Jacklyn Cock's contribution entitled, 'Political Violence' in a volume on violence edited by Brian McKendrick and Wilma Hoffman, People and Violence in South Africa, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), and J. Saporta and B. van der Kolk's literature review (Psychobiological Consequences of Severe Trauma: Current Approaches, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). See Report, Volume Five: 133.

not possible to ascertain patterns in the consequences of violation depending on the form of harm inflicted.

Volume Three contains some demographic data that may contribute towards understanding the consequences of torture. Nationally, and in descending order, most victims of:

- Killings: ANC, IFP, UDF members. 47 percent of affiliations were not known;
- Torture: ANC, UDF, PAC members. 40 percent of affiliations unknown;
- severe ill-treatment: ANC, UDF, IFP members. 46 percent of affiliations unknown (Volume Three: 7-8).

Members of the Police committed three in five instances of torture reported to the Commission. Representatives of the Apartheid State or homelands officials committed all but approximately 500 of some ten thousand instances of torture. Peaks were registered during the States of Emergency. Approximately 500 cases of torture were committed by an organisation that the Report identifies as the ANC. In the latter case, neither sites where violence was perpetrated nor the dates of the events are given. The effect is that it is not clear whether the violations were committed by the ANC in exile, or in South Africa after its unbanning, or whether they were violations committed by the UDF (Volume 3:11).

In the Western Cape, in cases where affiliations were known, the majority of victims were members or supporters of the ANC followed by UDF members² and the PAC (Volume Three: 395). However, the discussion of Consequences of Human Rights Violations does not describe the different organisations to which victims belonged.

Volume Five (p.135) reports, 'Surprisingly, few respondents referred to alcohol or substance abuse as an outcome'. International literature on the consequences of exposure to violence indicates substance abuse as an outcome. The Commission report states that the absence of substance abuse may be due to 'high levels of acceptability of the use and abuse of alcohol in South African society or a lack of probing by the Commission's statement-takers' (*ibid.*). While both are plausible explanations, they are not necessarily convincing. In the absence of further data, the finding that surprised the Commission may equally be due to a refusal to acknowledge publicly a reliance on substances or the weight of harm and the fragility of defence mechanisms; and/or to a propensity not to 'self-medicate'; and/or an absence of damage; and/or the presence of support mechanisms.

² Note that in hearings the terms UDF and ANC were used interchangeably.

The Report asserts that speaking about pain heals and that recovery is marked by the re-establishment and normalising of relationships with others (p. 137). Yet it does not provide evidence of this anywhere in the Report save for a brief section in Volume Five (p. 352) where the Commission asserts that telling 'stories' of gross violations of human rights was healing for testifiers (see Chapter Four). The Commission paid scant attention to the nature of efforts to recuperate social relationships and was not in a position to ascertain the extent to which individuals' relationships were 'normal' (either before or after the event). The conclusion to the discussion on consequences of gross violations of human rights contained in Volume Five states,

People came to the Commission to tell their stories in an attempt to facilitate not only their own individual healing processes, but also a healing process for the entire nation. Many of those who chose not to come to the Commission heard versions of their stories in the experiences of others. In this way, the Commission was able to reach a broader community (p. 169).

Here, verbalising pain is given a value that is assumed to outweigh its effects. Evidence from elsewhere provides alternative perspectives to that offered by the Commission. For example, Veena Das (1996) convincingly shows that after the Partition of India and Pakistan, it was women's active resistance to expressing pain in words that allowed them to rebuild social relationships.

The Report contains only one mention of strength and resilience and its effects on individual recovery and in maintaining families and communities (p. 138). This is a surprising feature: one would expect that any measurement of harm would include also a measurement of coping.

The Report states (Volume Five: 136) that because it is suspected that activists were labelled as mentally ill in order to silence them, people were and continue to be resistant to seeking formal psychological treatment. There is no assessment of the mechanisms that people did utilise to facilitate healing or renewal, and no questioning of the appropriateness of the 'formal psychological treatment' model for the kinds of harms inflicted.

Physical Consequences

No numeric or statistical data describing physical damage is provided.

Families

The section on family life describes disruptions to family life, invasions of homes, arrest of family members, separation of families, sowing distrust in the community, inter-

familial conflicts, family killings, the burden of death, economic consequences and family violence. Several sections contain unexamined assumptions about the nature of family life and traumatic consequences in South Africa:

- Domestic violence is blamed on war experiences, detention, social strain and disintegration, and weakening of 'traditional norms governing behaviour in families' (p. 156). There is no description of 'traditional norms' and no mention is made of the effects of Apartheid on family structures, nor of patriarchal systems, masculinity or the material circumstances within which households attempt to maintain bonds.
- The report claims that it became typical to respond to violence with violence (p. 143). It does not provide evidence to support the assertion nor does it offer an analysis of the particular contexts within which violence may have taken place or of pre-existing historical relations that may have shaped either the violence or responses to it. As a consequence, it is not possible to know, from the Commission's data, whether violence begets violence, nor is it possible to investigate whether and/or why traditional methods of revenge and reconciliation may have failed nor why intergroup conflict took particular forms.
- The Report asserts that detainees and activists found it difficult to revert to their roles in the home because of their newly found independence. It states that parents did not know of their children's activities. The statements imply that children should have reverted to their conventional roles and that parents should have known about their children's activities. However, Reynolds (1995a) has shown that young people tried to keep their parents from knowing about their political activities, partly to protect them, and parents tried not to know in order to protect their children should they be detained. In other words, one needs carefully to consider the consequences of knowing about a person's activities before judging as inadequate relationships where 'not-knowing' was prioritised.
- The Report asserts that elders lost control and children challenged their authority (p. 149). My data provide evidence that elders guided children and youths in protest, supported them and assisted them – that is, that adults had visions for the future and they assisted children and youths to see and attain them.
- The Report concludes that '[I]n many families, even where activism did not generate outright conflict, a shroud of secrecy often affected intergenerational relationships. In some families, political activism was seen as operating in a sphere outside of family life' (p. 150). The authors presume that secrets between

generations are uncommon and not a usual part of socialisation. They presume that there were in fact such secrets around political activities (that is, parents did not guess what their children were doing or that parents were oblivious to the contexts within which they lived). The authors presume that sound intergenerational relations depend on transparency (an assumption that runs directly counter to many traditional beliefs about the relationship between young people and adults in South Africa; see Henderson 1999). A further assumption is that parents were able to be present in households to manage intergenerational relations.

Communities

The Report comments that the Commission allowed a particular focus on rural areas. It states that rural communities mirrored urban ones (Volume Five: 163) save in one important respect: that people in rural areas were less likely to resist oppression (p. 164). This it attributes to the rigid enforcement of apartheid legislation, to vastly unequal social and economic relations entrenched through racism and conservatism and to the cost of losing work. It argues that 'political activity generated divisions within families, as some attempted to maintain their fragile existence through acquiescence in the oppressive situation and others continued to resist' (p. 164). It suggests that resistance was limited and cites only two examples— Bongoletu in Outdshoorn, and Ashton – to illustrate its claim. Yet the image that emerged from the public hearing in Worcester (see Appendix D) was one of sustained resistance over a long period.

Conclusion

It may be misleading to draw on material that describes violence and its consequences elsewhere without a clear description of the extent to which the conditions in South Africa parallel those described in the literature from which the data is derived. The image of the consequences of gross violations of human rights that is presented in the Report is one of a society in collapse; a society in which individuals, families, intergenerational relations, communities are all badly damaged. That there is damage to social institutions is not in doubt but on the basis of the limited evidence presented in the Report, patterns in the effects of gross violations of human rights cannot be correlated with individual personalities, social arrangements or the socio-demographic features of those most affected. Drawing from the Commission's findings, one can say that it may be likely that young men suffered the worst consequences of gross violations of human rights. However, there is insufficient data about their ideological stances, their activities and their networks to make conclusive comments on

the nature of damage suffered or of its duration. One can draw even fewer conclusions regarding women.

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Appendix C

Demographic data for members of the research sample of young women in Zwelethemba

Nowi Khomba, Nomeite Mfengu, Noluntu Zawukana, Nokwanda Tani, Noluthando Qaba, Gertrude Siwangaza, Ntsoake Phelane, Nokuzola Mtamo and Vuyelwa Xusa were identified using a snowball technique to participate in focus group discussions. Xoliswa Tyawana was not a member of the focus group: as she was attending university at the time, I interviewed her separately. In the 1980s, the women alternately attended and boycotted school together and protested together. Some worked together in banned organisations or assisted one another in UDF-aligned youth and women's organisations such as the Zwelethemba Youth Organisation, ZWEYO, or the United Women's Organisation, UWO (later the United Women's Congress, UWCO). Others of the nine women are not as closely knit or familiar with one another. They are a few years younger – the age sets established at school have rigid boundaries. The involvement of the latter group in protest and political activity was not as sustained and their roles in organisations less central in the 1980s. They became involved in mass mobilisation and political struggle in the latter part of the 1980s. Nowi and Nomeite had worked together in the executive committees of a number of organisations. Noluntu, Ntsoake and Xoliswa were detained together. Ntsoake and Xoliswa are relatives.

Five of the women were under eighteen when the State of Emergency was imposed in 1985: Noluntu and Ntsoake were seventeen, Xoliswa and Noluthando were fifteen years old and Nokuzola was twelve. In the same year, the other five women ranged between eighteen and twenty-five years of age. By the middle of the decade, three of the women were already mothers. Vuyelwa was twenty-five and her daughter was seven; Nomeite, whose first child, Bandile, was born in 1981 and whose second was still a toddler, was twenty years old. Gertrude was twenty-three when her daughter was born at the height of student protest in Zwelethemba. Vuyelwa was the only woman in the group to have married after 1985 but at the time of my research she was living alone and divorced. A relative in Zwelethemba cared for two of her three children and the oldest child lived with her father in Johannesburg. The fact that none of the women is married is significant. When I began research I sought 'young women' activists, expecting to find women under the age of 35 years. I was consistently given the names of young *unmarried* women. Xhosa women are conventionally defined as having attained full adulthood when they marry. Women who had been involved in student politics in the 1980s and had subsequently married were not considered to fall into the category of 'young woman activist'.

Two of the women, Vuyelwa and Noluntu, had full-time employment for the duration of the research. Nowi, Noluthando, and Nokuzola had 'piece-work' for a period of the research. The remaining women were reliant on kin for support. Six of the women had received training beyond school. In 1988, Ntsoeke began her teacher training; Vuyelwa took a course in 'Girl Friday' skills, Noluntu had secretarial skills and in 1998 began taking a part-time computer course; Xoliswa was completing a Bachelor's degree; Gertrude and Nowi had both registered as students at Worcester College in 1995 but abandoned their studies owing to financial difficulties.

All of the women consider themselves to have been politically involved during the 1980s although the duration, intensity and consequences of their involvement differed. All had been affected by the violence in

Zwelethemba in the mid-1980s. Two of the nine women gave statements about gross violations of human rights to the Commission: early in 1996, Noluntu Zawukana made a statement about detention and torture. She was sixteen years old at the time of her detention. Her statement described Xoliswa Tyawana and Ntsoake Phelane as victims and the Commission found Xoliswa to be a victim. Nowi Khomba described being detained in 1985 when police captured her trying to leave South Africa to go into exile. She was twenty-three years old at the time. She made a statement late in the Commission's process, after her peers exerted considerable pressure on her.

None of the other women made statements, although four — Nokwanda, Nokuzola, Ntsoake and Nolunthando — had experienced the kinds of harms that the Commission identified as gross violations of human rights.

The tables provide demographic data pertaining to the young women. They draw on data collected in 1998.

Table C-One. Education and occupational data

Name	Date of birth	Highest level of education completed	Year education completed	Age on completion	Additional qualificat'n	Current occupation	Approx. monthly income in Rands
Nowi Khomba	1963	Std. 10	1990	27	Secretarial	Unemployed	-
Nomeite Mfengu	1965	Std. 10	1993	28		Unemployed	-
Noluntu Zawukana	1967	Std. 10	1994	27	Secretarial Computing	Clerk	1500
Ntsoaki Phelane	1967	Std. 10			Teachers' Training	Student	-
Nokwanda Tani	1964	Std. 10	1990	26		Unemployed	-
Nuyelwa Xuza	1960	Std. 9	1990	30	Girl Friday	Labourer	660
Nolunthando Qaba	1970	Std. 10	1992	22		Counsellor	500
Gertrude Siwangaza	1962	Std. 10	1993	31		Unemployed	-
Nokuzola Mtamo	1970	Std. 9	1996	26		Labourer	600

The table illustrates that all of the women were able to complete their education only after 1990. Successful matriculation from South African schools can occur after 12 years of schooling if students progress through the educational system without delays. Students are therefore able to Matriculate (complete and pass Standard Ten) by the age of seventeen or eighteen. The range of ages (22 to 31) at which students in the sample completed their education suggests severely interrupted schooling. Inadequate teaching facilities, books and staff, boycotts, and the closure of schools in the 1980s caused interruptions. All of the women bore children while completing their education.

Table B.2 describes the organisational affiliations of the women, from 1980 to the present.

Table C-Two. Organisational affiliations 1980-present

Name	Organisational affiliation, 1980-1990	Organisational Affiliation 1990-1994	Current organisational affiliation
Nowi Khomba	COSAS (1985) ZWEYO (1985-7) WOYCO (1987-90) BOYCO (1987-90) Civic (1985) Unemployed Workers Union (1987) UWO (1986-90)	ANC WL	ANC WL
Nomeite Mfengu	UWO (1983-90) COSAS (1985) ZWEYO (1985-7) WOYCO (1987) Civic (1985)	ANC YL ANC WL	ANC WL
Noluntu Zawukana	ZWEYO (1986) COSAS (1989)	WOYCO (1990) ANC YL (1991)	
Ntsoaki Phelane	COSAS (1986-7) ZWEYO (1986-7)	ANC YL	ANC YL
Nokwanda Tani	COSAS (1985-8) ZWEYO (1985-7)	ANC YL (1992-3)	
Vuyelwa Xuza	UWO (1983-9) COSAS (1989)	ANC WL	ANC WL
Noluthando Qaba	COSAS (1989)	WOYCO (1990) ANC YL (1991)	SANCO (1998)
Gertrude Siwangaza	COSAS (1984) Nyanga Residents' Association (1985) Mphetha Square Committee (1986) ZWEYO (1986-7)		ANC (1998)
Nokuzola Mtamo	COSAS (cannot recall dates) ZWEYO		ANC YL

Table C-Three. Current marital status, number of children and household composition

Name	No. in household	Marital status	No. children borne to respondent	Current residence
Nowi Khomba	8	Never married	One	Parental household
Nomeite Mfengu	20	Never married	Three	Parental household
Noluntu Zawukana	3	Never married	One	Own household
Ntsoaki Phelane	7	Engaged	One	Parental household
Nokwanda Tani	9	Never married	One	Parental household
Vuyelwa Xuza	1	Divorced	Three	Own household
Noluthando Qaba	7	Never married	Three	Parental household
Gertrude Siwangaza	14	Never married	Three	Parental household
Nokuzola Mtamo	17	Never married	One	Parental household

Only one respondent has ever married. All have borne children. Two respondents, Vuyelwa and Noluntu, live independently of their parents: Vuyelwa rents a room in a shared house but considers herself to live in a single person household as the house-mates do not have commensal relations. Her aunt cares for her children. All other respondents live in their parental homes, all of which house three generations and extended kin. The average household density is 9.5, ranging between one and twenty people.

Table C-Four. Household income

Name	No. in household	Respondent's childcare support per month	Sources of household income	Total income in Rands
Nowi Khomba	8	-	1x pension 1x clerk	1 760
Nomeite Mfengu	20	-	1 x domestic worker	480
Noluntu Zawukana	3	-	1 x clerk 1 x labourer	1 890
Ntsoaki Phelane	7	-	1 x pension 1 x clerk	660
Nokwanda Tani	9	R480	2xpensioners	1 420
Vuyelwa Xuza	1	R420	1 x labourer	1 080
Noluthando Qaba	7	R390	1 x counsellor	890
Gertrude Siwangaza	14	R420	1 x pensioner	880
Nokuzola Mtamo	17	R420	1 x pensioner 1 x disability grant 2 x labourers	2340

The average household income in the sample is approximately R1 200 per month (approximately USD 200 in 2000). In 1997, a household survey conducted as part of the research indicated an average household income of R1 244 per month. The 1996 census indicates that seventy-one percent of households in Zwelethemba subsisted on less than R1 500 per month. In five instances in my sample of nine, householders are heavily reliant on State assistance through pensions or disability grants.