

44

Imagined Communities, Divided Realities:

Engaging the Apartheid Past through  
'Healing of Memories' in a post-TRC South Africa

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**It isn't Kafka's axes we need. We also need the fires of love  
To thaw the frozen streams within.**

**We need to look at one another afresh, with new eyes.  
We need to keep doing that.**

**Every day.**

**(Ben Okri)**

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## **Abstract**

### **Imagined Communities, Divided Realities: Engaging the Apartheid Past through 'Healing of Memories' in a post-TRC South Africa**

The dissertation argues that, in the attempt to build a shared democratic culture among ordinary citizens in post-apartheid South Africa, insufficient attention has been paid to transformations of interpersonal domains. The dissertation examines the process and effects of the Healing of Memories (HOM) project in Cape Town. HOM is a civil society initiative established in 1996 to facilitate storytelling workshops between South Africans, previously divided on the basis of race and class. Critiquing reconciliation discourses in South Africa, in particular that generated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the research points the importance of lived, local, ongoing encounters between ordinary people who take cognizance of the apartheid past.

Given the context of apartheid's stark socio-spatial legacies, the dissertation argues that there are few spaces in and processes through which ordinary social actors can explore their respective subject positions under apartheid and grapple with the emerging subjectivities of the post-apartheid sphere. HOM offered face-to-face encounters with the former racial 'Other'. In an immediate and participatory process of witnessing each other's personal memories of apartheid, participants' conventional understandings of self, 'Other' and history were unsettled, leading participants to 'make connections' between past and present, between the personal and the political, and between their own and other's expectations and hopes for change. The dissertation argues that this led to the forging of a temporary 'community of sentiment', based on a core set of 'new' social skills: response-ability, conflict-ability and soci-ability. The fraught experiential-emotional dimension of the encounters revealed some of the underlying 'structures of feeling' and their impact on the 'formations of relationship', which continuously hinder the search for new and meaningful ways of being social. The encounters produced the imaginative ground for new forms of intersubjectivity in the post-apartheid sphere. Those who engaged in the process regularly were able to make substantial changes in their interpersonal relations.

In its discussion of HOM as a healing intervention in a post-authoritarian state, the discussion also draws on the author's experiences of post-Holocaust Germany and extensive library research in this field.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	3
Abstract.....	4
Preface .....	7
<b>Chapter One</b> .....	10
<b>Introduction</b> .....	10
South Africa ten years on – the labour of transformation continues.....	10
Key Questions .....	15
A Different Kind of Encounter?.....	17
Imagined Communities, Divided Realities: a Conceptual Journey .....	18
The Healing of Memories Process .....	23
HOM and the TRC.....	26
On Methodology: Writing around a ‘sacred’ space.....	28
Resonating Pasts: Locating Subjectivity and Voice in the Field.....	31
Structure and Chapter Preview .....	36
Friday Night.....	40
Setting the stage - Creating a Space to Share.....	40
<b>Chapter Two</b> .....	51
<b>Imagined Communities – Divided Realities:</b> .....	51
<b>Space, Memory and Subjectivity in the Post-Apartheid City</b> .....	51
Sharing City Space in the Present .....	55
Healing in the Face of Continuities? .....	58
Healing of Memories - A Space for All?.....	63
The Intimacy of the Ordinary – Subjectivities of Suspicion and Hatred.....	68
Between Curiosity and Resentment – Subjectivities of Fear and Shame.....	75
Negotiating a ‘Timespace’ of Entanglement.....	81
<b>Saturday</b> .....	84
<b>Telling Stories - Sharing Pain - Bearing Witness</b> .....	84
<b>Chapter Three</b> .....	98
<b>Engaged Witnessing - Testimonial Dialogues</b> .....	98
Storytelling at HOM.....	98
What Kind of Telling? .....	99
What Kind of Story? .....	103
Doing it for the Nation – Telling it for Myself: Validating the Ordinary.....	108
Engaged Witnessing: .....	114
Participation, Immediacy, Unsettling and Response-ability .....	114
Immediacy.....	115
Participation .....	116
Unsettling and Response-ability.....	119
<b>Testimonial Dialogues</b> .....	122
Making Connections – the intersubjective dimension of storytelling.....	122
Defeating the Internal Other – the intrasubjective dimension of storytelling .....	128
A Vision of Transforming the Formations of Feeling and Relationship.....	131
<b>Sunday</b> .....	133
<b>From a Dark Past to a Better Future</b> .....	133

<b>Chapter Four</b> .....	141
<b>The Community of Sentiment -</b> .....	141
<b>Unfreezing Historical Intersubjectivities?</b> .....	141
Power, Play, Emotion - The Community of Sentiment.....	145
Power, Play, Emotions I.....	150
A Joint Ritual or Cracks in the Community of Sentiment?.....	156
Power Play II.....	158
Emotions II.....	163
From 'Zombification' to Conflict-ability.....	165
<b>Chapter Five</b> .....	171
<b>'It is as if you've never done a workshop' -</b> .....	171
<b>The Community of Sentiment Put to the Test</b> .....	171
Return to 'Reality' – from Euphoria to Disillusionment?.....	172
A step towards Healing and Wholeness –.....	174
Revisiting the Aims and Claims of HOM.....	174
<b>Intra-personal Responses</b> .....	176
'We wanted more'.....	176
'I started peeling like an onion' .....	179
'It looks as if you've never done a workshop' .....	181
'It was a turning point in my life' .....	183
<b>Responses from Family and Community</b> .....	186
Family .....	186
Community.....	190
<b>Changing Formations of Feeling and Relationship: a new Soci-ability?</b> .....	193
Attempts to maintain the Community of Sentiment.....	194
'So I've got something like a friendship, a white friend'.....	197
'We thought we would get to see each other's homes and how we live'.....	199
'Mommy, the white people have all the nice big houses, can we go there?' .....	202
'To be comfortable with one another[?] It's not coming.' .....	204
Relations built on Anger and Forgiveness? .....	206
'I have found healing' – the HOM facilitator community.....	208
'It made me think in a different tune' –.....	211
of Potentiality and a New Social Map.....	211
<b>Chapter Six</b> .....	217
<b>'Forever is part of the Landscape' –</b> .....	217
<b>Facing Self, Other and History</b> .....	217
Facing Self – Confronting the Internal Other.....	221
Senses of Self – of Victims and Beneficiaries .....	224
Facing (each) Other.....	227
Making Connections through testimonial dialogue .....	227
The Community of Sentiment.....	230
Sustaining the energy of hope.....	232
Facing History .....	234
The Intergenerational Dimension.....	236
Bibliography .....	240

## Preface

The University of Cape Town sits nestled on a hillside of the adjacent Table Mountain range. From my office desk I look out over half of the Cape Peninsula to a mountain range still called the 'Hottentot-Holland' and over the waters of the Indian Ocean that bear the name False Bay. This is the frontal gaze, the immediate, catching the eye and leading to the envious outcries of visitors. This is what I saw when I first made my way up the hill - a retreat among green trees, a space from which to have an overview, to think far and beyond. But learning the geography of the city my gaze was diverted. The realisation dawned that my view from above day after day rests on territory designed as inaccessible to me, a space 'off-limits' to my (middle-class, white, foreign) existence - or defined as 'enter on your own risk'. Shaped by racist urban designers and through decades of state-instituted segregation policies. Could city planning be a criminal offence? I was to have an overview but no access. Others look up the hill, but they, too, have no access. Such is the space I am writing from.

Between the lush overgrown University grounds and the beauty of the far away mountains lies what is called the 'Cape Flats'. It is the vast sandy area beyond the Cooling Towers of Athlone that define the boundary of where the trees and greens of Southern suburbs comfort end and 'the flats' begin; a boundary marked by a railway line that has determined and defined lives on both sides for more than 40 years. To the outsider, the Cape Flats are a space largely defined by media reports as having the highest rate of murder, violent assault and rape in the country; a space of uncontrollable violence, abuse and gangsterism. A space of fear. To the majority of Capetonians the Cape Flats are Home and going towards the Cooling Towers, the mountain at your back, means going home. Learning how to travel the spaces of the city becomes the opposite for me, the mountain has a welcome, and its grey face greets me warmly and suggests coming home from venturing into potentially hostile territories. Yet the welcome I receive in many a shack and home on the Flats teaches lessons in humility; no doubt it is the quality of people's humanity here that saves the country every day from war and destruction. But who is paying the price for this 'peace'? I dare to engage but still, I can hide away, roll up the car window, block out violence, poverty and hunger behind high fences and security

gates. Can't hide behind ignorance maybe, but can take a drive and lose myself in the dazzling beauties of this place. Rest from the challenges of grappling with the intensity of its contradictions. Others cannot. 'Can you by chance buy me a meal before we do the interview? I am too hungry to concentrate.' Such is the space I am writing from.

Cape Town is centred on the meaning of Table Mountain, symbol of the city, recognised the world over. It is easy to follow directions in relation to the mountain - that is, in town and in the formerly white suburbs. Not on the flats where the mountain is but a distant silhouette. For 40 years a place 'off-limits' to the majority of South Africans, for many, a place they cannot afford to go to today. The woman who spend 40 years of her life in the Cape, but has never been to the mountain. Maybe one day I'll go, she says. Capetonians can be read in their relationships to the mountain because it is not only symbol of Cape Town's tourist attractions; it is also a symbol of access and exclusion, of wealth and deprivation, and of power relations in this city. Who wields power, as anywhere, are those who have a view from above. Those who have the overview can now venture out, go down the hill and return. Such is the space I am writing from.

One of the best views of Cape Town is from a place up on the mountainside above my office at UCT. It is held by a man on a horse, a stallion on its hind feet. A young man, strangely reminiscent of the artefacts that my country of origin must have produced some fifty odd years ago. Cecil John's fantasy of manhood. Bizarre remnant of Aryan idealism. Fascist imagery that makes my stomach turn. Bile. High, high above the city. What does the man see? A faraway mountain range, beyond it some imaginary 'hinterland'? Or does he dare, secretly, when no one is watching, to divert his eyes and look about? What does he see? Ordinarily, his stone gaze travels above the Cape Flats, but it does not rest there for a moment. It is as indifferent as this type of memorial tends to be. And it is cold. Placed into the mountainside it exerts its own powers, to some controversial sign of pioneer pride and conquest, to others painful sting of monumental endurance of 300 years of injustice. The fact that he is still here above the city, what does it say? Marking the absence of a revolution that would have sought its liberation in the destruction of the visible signifiers of the former oppressor? Signalling the presence of a legacy, only as un-

erasable as stone shaped by hands, erected by slave labour? Tolerance? Apathy? Bad taste? Rhodes Memorial - I can feel you, 500 metres from where I sit at my desk, your stone-gaze in my back. And I am not comfortable. Such is the space I am writing from.

## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### South Africa ten years on – the labour of transformation continues

In his recent opening address to a symposium on 'Restitution and Reconciliation'<sup>1</sup> in Cape Town, Western Cape Premier Ebrahim Rasool spoke about the need for a 'rebalancing of the compromise between peace and justice' in favour of justice and redistribution in the second decade of South Africa's transition to democracy. This he saw as critical in order to ensure the sustainability of the South African nation after ten years of freedom. Rasool pointed to the complexity of the South African scenario, in which peace has been largely seen as based on compromising justice, while demands for justice have been quickly branded as jeopardizing peace. He argued that the first decade was built on the need for stability, on the notion of '*simunye*' [we are one], on forging a *bona fide* trust between former enemies, on the fashioning of symbolic unity, on 'TV rainbowism' and Madiba spirit. But, Rasool reminded, the first ten years were especially built on the goodwill and patience of those excluded from sharing and participating in the proceeds of the nation, both previously and continuously. This 'glue' of compromise during the past decade, patience and goodwill, is unlikely to hold without genuine social transformation and redistribution, hence the need for a more mechanistic reformulation of the relationship between justice and peace 'underpinned by judicial mechanisms for sustainability', such as black economic empowerment (BEE) and economic charters.

Situated at the juncture of peace and justice are questions of memory, repair and the restoration of the social, questions about the role of the past in understanding current social phenomena. Looking at the South African experience of transformation during the first ten years of democracy, change has been visible especially at the level of *national* political structures. The transformation of state institutions and the building of a

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<sup>1</sup>"Restitution and Reconciliation in Europe and South Africa", 8 September 2004, Opening Address by Premier Ebrahim Rasool at the Western Cape Legislature, Cape Town. The symposium was hosted by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, the University of Stellenbosch and the Austrian Embassy.

legislative framework from the foundation of the new Constitution have been remarkable, yielding, at least on paper, some of the most modern and integrated state institutions in the world. In practice, the challenges of implementation have proved immense and conflictual, bringing with them the first sentiments of disillusionment and antagonism towards the new state. 2004 was a time of taking stock in South Africa, of celebration, but also of careful evaluation and critique. Statistics are used to present the transition to democracy as a success story, but the quantitative measurement of change speaks largely to the material side of transformation. Undoubtedly, the visibility of change in the landscape and access to services as well as economic and educational opportunities, serve as key indicators for people's subjective evaluation of change. However, in the attempt to build a shared democratic culture among ordinary citizens in post-apartheid South Africa insufficient attention has been paid to the transformation of the interpersonal domain, to the forms that lived, local, ongoing encounters between ordinary people have taken, and to the ways in which personal memories of the apartheid past continue to inform and shape current interactions and people's ability to be social with one another. 'The most serious problem facing post-apartheid South Africa is the failure to forge cross-cutting relationships between races', writes Thabisi Hoeane in a recent comment on the SA Reconciliation Barometer Survey by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (Sunday Independent, 7 November 2004, p. 16). At the interpersonal level the South African transition has turned out to be, nominally, a transient state, without a definite cut-off date, measured subjectively in how much and how little has changed in our interactions and relationships with each other.

The dissertation is concerned with the interpersonal domain, in particular the intersection between memory, subjectivity and the 'formations of feeling and relationship' (Williams 1989c: 76, quoted in Eldridge & Eldridge 1994: 11) in the building of a new sociality. With the concepts of 'structures of feeling' and 'formations of relationship', Williams points to a negated, quasi-structural emotional dimension underlying social reality,<sup>2</sup> akin

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<sup>2</sup> Of his concept of 'structures of feeling' William writes: 'It is as firm and definite as 'structure' suggests, yet it is based in the deepest and often least tangible elements of our experience. It is a way of responding to a particular world which in practice is not felt as one way among others – a conscious 'way' – but is, in experience, the only way possible. It means, its elements, are not propositions or techniques; they are

to what Werbner (1998) calls the 'sometimes utterly unwelcome stifling social fabric' (3) that prevents people from effecting and making use of social change in a meaningful way, even if they desire to do so. Eldridge & Eldridge explore Williams' development of a "series of interrelated connections [...] which arise both at thematic and structural level, and which contribute to [a] recognisable 'structure of feeling' " (Eldridge & Eldridge 1994: 140). Some of these 'central connections', relevant to my exploration of the post-apartheid interpersonal domain, are: '[...] between past, present and future; [...] between memories and current experience/feelings; [...] between generations; [...] between the individual and the social; [and] concerning language and communication' (ibid.).

Finding new ways of relating to one another across the particular faultlines of race, class, and gender that apartheid engendered presents a complex task, one that asks for new forms of encounter and engagement. How these faultlines manifest becomes visible in everyday ways of being social, in where and with whom people chose (or are forced) to live, work and play, in realms that remain multiply segregated and infused by established structures, movements and dynamics of power. The transformation of the interpersonal domain remains a hidden challenge, subsumed under the official success stories of 'miracle' and 'rainbow' rhetoric meant to woo foreign investors and soothe the fears of local ones, and under the general focus on the material dimension of systemic change. Hence attention is diverted from the *lived reality* of the negotiated settlement, from how the political compromise has shaped subjectivities, and new and old ways of being social in the new order. Perhaps, this is too obvious a challenge to be talked about, not unlike Taussig's (1999) 'public secret' whose power lies precisely in being 'that which is generally known, but cannot [easily] be articulated [face-to-face]' (2-5). Or perhaps, it is, for many, too painful a challenge in face of the living memories of harm and humiliation, 'too much, too early' as survivors of apartheid violations have framed it (Colvin 2000: 21), too easily imposed and staged in the name of the politics of reconciliation that the central post-apartheid memory process, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), propagated.

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embodied, related feelings. In the same way it is accessible to others [...] by direct experience [...]' (Williams 1973: 10, quoted in Eldridge 1994: 121).

The TRC process formed the main public platform for post-1994 debates about the apartheid years and the role a shared understanding of apartheid history was to have in shaping the new nation's discursive foundations. As the most public of truth commissions to date (Theissen 1999; Hayner 2001) and one of the most accessible of processes of 'dealing with the past', the South African TRC generated wide interest in academic circles and was the subject of much research (Asmal 1997; Bell & Ntsebeza 2001; Boraine, Levy & Scheffer 1995 & 1997; Boraine 2000; Buur 1999, 2000, 2001; Chubb & van Dijk 2001; Cochrane, de Gruchy & Martin 1999; Colvin 2000, 2004; James & de Vijver 2000; Krog 1998; Hamber 1995a, 1995b; Hamber & Wilson 1999; Nuttall & Coetzee 1998; Posel et al. 2002; Ross & Reynolds 1999; Ross 2003; Shea 2000; Van der Merwe 1998; Villa-Vicencio & Verwoerd 2000; Villa-Vicencio & Doxtader 2003; Wilson 1999, 2001; and others). Recognising the extent of gross human rights violations committed during apartheid, the TRC publicly secured an important part of the South African experience from future denial and diminution (Ignatieff 1996); possibly the greatest contribution a truth commission can make at first generation level.<sup>3</sup> The TRC process constituted an important step in the direction of honouring and respecting those who fought, suffered and died under apartheid. It has been pointed out (Colvin 2004; Grunebaum 2002; Kayser 1999; Ross & Reynolds 1999; Ross 2003; Wilson 2001) that as much as the TRC process created a language in which to speak about the past, in particular about apartheid's gross human rights violations, it also served to silence and cast the language of reconciliation and forgiveness over the experiences and emotions of people(s) and communities, veiling both ordinary and extraordinary memories of pain and hurt, feelings about what happened, and local-level counter-strategies of revenge (Hamber & Wilson 1999; Wilson 2001). The national master-narrative of reconciliation did not necessarily enable change in interpersonal practices within and among previously segregated collectives. Meanwhile, the TRC itself has become part of public memory in various forms, mention of which continues to evoke emotional responses among South

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<sup>3</sup> When speaking of generations (first, second, third generation) I borrow the German use of the term in relation to the generations born after World War II. In the South African case the majority of people are still members of the 'first generation', i.e. they have first-hand experience of apartheid, with an increasing second generation, made up of those born post-1994.

Africans regardless of colour or creed. Its ending left few institutionalised spaces for the speaking of apartheid memory. While the TRC had opened up particular ways of speaking about apartheid, what came across as a general imperative to reconcile in order to 'keep the peace' in the Commission's language inevitably foreclosed other forms of conversation about the past, particularly a kind of engagement independent of whether one subscribed to the idea of reconciliation or not.

The symbolism of reconciliation and way the TRC framed the ideas of 'telling stories to the nation' as 'giving a voice, restoring dignity and offering healing' had the effect of containing the harmful potential of memories of violence and violation for fear of unsettlement and conflict, yet also foreclosed further critical debate and the expression of emotions other than sadness and grief. Often the discourse of reconciliation seemed premature in a context where there was in fact no pre-apartheid state of peace and equality to *re-concile* to. There was no official narrative capturing sufficiently people's sense of occupying a disillusioning present shaped by the structural continuities of apartheid and the largely unchanged segregation of social spaces, nor did the idea of reconciliation offer concrete tools to meet the challenges of implementing the desired imaginary of the new non-racial nation in the interpersonal domain. As a normative tool in the process of legitimising the post-apartheid state (Wilson 1996, 2001), the reconciliation discourse of the TRC limited individual attempts at making sense of and having conversations about the legacies of apartheid to the bounds of its conciliatory language. Meanwhile, people's search for healing and coming to terms with the social trauma and violence of apartheid and its repercussions did not and could not have ended with the TRC, but remains part of life-long and trans-generational processes (see also Bar-On 1999).

South Africa's transitional justice processes initially generated much international attention and funding, resulting in a variety of civil society campaigns and activities, which played a role in shaping, affirming, extending and challenging the work of the TRC and the discourses created in its wake, such as healing, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation. Having received less attention from the media and researchers than the

TRC itself, such initiatives allowed deeper insight into the social complexities and structural continuities played out in the realm of the interpersonal, behind the momentous and powerful process of the TRC and in the times after. My dissertation focuses on one such process that sought to translate the TRC's discourse of a new social togetherness into practice. Originating in the Western Cape, the Healing of Memories (HOM) initiated local encounters and conversations about the past through a series of weekend workshops during which personal memories of apartheid were shared among ordinary South Africans using storytelling and creative reflection methods. Through engaging with the immediacy of a single, local intervention, the dissertation sets out to capture in close detail one of the intentional interpersonal processes 'on the ground' during the time of and beyond the TRC, covering the period between 1996 and 2002.

### **Key Questions**

A range of questions accompanied me throughout my observations of the TRC hearings between 1996 and 1998: How can a language be found that does justice to the experiences of those who have been wronged and yet allows constructive forms of engagement between South Africans across the chasms of the past? Given so extreme a history of division, what are the *practical* possibilities for a novel kind of encounter between South Africans, not simply subsumed under the frame of 'reconciliation' and the constitutional propositions of equality and human rights, but enabling a more *tangible* form of equality in substantially transformed interpersonal interactions. Without these, as Soyinka (1999: 28-30) points out, reconciliation could easily become driven by the logic of a conservative project of social maintenance, at best a symbolic signifier of minimal social coherence, at worst a feel-good exercise for the privileged at the expense of the poor (black) majority. Taking into account the echoes of apartheid's endemic violence and injustice inherent in the arising social conflicts in South Africa since 1994 (Jensen 1999, 2001; Centre for Conflict Resolution 2000), the question of how post-apartheid human relations may be thought anew and transformed became a corner-stone of the research process, setting me on a challenging quest for a more *personal and local* dialogue about the multiple meanings people assign to the past in the present. Instead of reconciliation, what I felt was asked for was the creation of a totally new sociality, which

required the building of a consciously different way of being social, a truly alternative 'sociability' (Overring & Passes 2000). Overring and Passes (2000) critique the limitations of the conceptual language of Western nationhood as the primary form of human organisation. They propose 'sociality' and 'sociability' as alternatives to the limiting terminology of 'society' and 'the social'. *Sociability* then is a more process-oriented term, meant to confer all that which makes a human collective into a communal or communitarian body in a productive sense – calling upon all those qualities that allow human beings to co-exist peacefully and 'affectively', to resolve conflicts and deal with 'dangerous anger' in a constructive manner, to 'exist in a spirit of amicability and support for one another, and therefore to constitute a positive and fruitful sociality' (2). I develop and use *soci-ability* to stress the agentive components of the term.

Before even speaking of reconciliation, one would then have to ask: What are the practical possibilities for any form of *equal* encounter between South Africans? Is (antagonistic) memory an obstacle in such encounters or can it form a constructive base for an initial conversation from which a more sustained, honest interpersonal engagement can take place?<sup>4</sup> What forms of dialogue may or may not be possible in such an endeavour, and what could be the benefits and dangers of such conversation?

Towards the end of the TRC process, public debates showed an emerging consciousness that reconciliation was insufficient to sustain peace in the long-term. As soon as relative stability had come to be accepted as given and the potential for open large scale (and in this case inter-racial) conflict appeared diminished, the maintenance of existing power structures seemed to take priority, based on the claim of a more or less successfully 'closed' (TRC) reconciliation process. In this context the questions that led me to engage with HOM over an extended period emerged: Can a constructive engagement with

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<sup>4</sup> Taking another step back, before such encounter could take place I found during my engagement with both the TRC and the HOM process the need to contemplate a space in which to refuse engagement, in which mourning, silence and irreconcilable anger could lead a justified existence because in an almost ironic, paradoxical way the specific *acknowledgement* the TRC was offering to individuals had foreclosed the expression of persisting anger and subsumed the full force unleashed by the hurt and damage inflicted in the past. In this way, the memory politics of the post-apartheid state closely mirrored the tight-rope walk of the political compromise, on which the post-1994 transition rested.

memories and the past take place in a fragile situation of persistent power imbalances without imposing reconciliation and healing as solutions that may maintain inequalities, even preclude mourning? Is reconciliation then, as a political project, by definition aimed at promoting stability, preventing conflict and curbing political anger as a force for change? Beyond a reconciliation concept based on closure and 'leaving behind' that was so central to the first decade of transition, what social (and memory) practices would disenchant the romantic notion of racial harmony and lead to more practical and less mediated, face-to-face modes of engagement with the apartheid past, on which a different set of relations could be built? How can people be enabled to invent and make use of new social practices, in a sense 'activate' the future sociality that has come to be newly imagined? How does one facilitate *imagining* alternative possibilities of seeing and relating to those perceived to be 'Other'?

#### **A Different Kind of Encounter?**

My idea of an encounter not bound by 'reconciliation' rests on the premise that, given the divided realities in which most South Africans live, the living memories of the past need to be brought into one arena in the first place, up close and personal where their narrators can engage them and each other, forced to acknowledge and negotiate the very incompatibility of these life-experiences and stories as yet springing from the same time, place and political context. Such form of engagement suggests the joint participation of those implicating and those implicated by apartheid, and it may very well be a direct encounter between sentiments such as of anger and guilt, which have been subsumed under the politics of reconciliation. Such encounter requires taking a few steps back from the demands of 'being reconciled' to *contemplate a less directional, less demanding form of engagement*, adopting a way of 'nearing' one another much more carefully and cautiously. This idea of encounter does not accept mere presence in the same vicinity as qualification for a democratic form of sociality, nor does it contend with the changed legal political formulations of citizenship as basis for transformed relationships.

We need to pay attention to the subtle ways in which the repercussions of personal memories of apartheid are acted out in the interpersonal realm in order to understand how

South Africans cannot break with or 'transcend' the past in practice as discursive markers such as reconciliation would have it, but find the need for more gradual and personal processes of social reworking, re-membering and repair. Whereas reconciliation advocates or assumes the restoration of relationships, encounter is about enabling a kind of human contact that was not possible between most South Africans prior to 1994. It is not only about being in the same space (country, city, workshop venue), but also about having to define jointly *how* one will be in it in relation to others, how the space may or may not be shared. Encounter then asks for a kind of mutually engaging presence, a coming face-to-face, a willingness to negotiate unexpected contradictions that emerge from an engagement with past experiences rather than presupposing (or primarily aiming for) an outcome of resolution, harmony, agreement and unity. The ability to disagree and the capacity to hold and negotiate tension produced by the engagement with individual living memories of the past, form a basis for dialogue and become signifiers of healing as well. The ability to debate in a mode of 'constructive friction' (Asmal et al. 1997), however, is not a given in a context where disagreement is often seen as negative, destabilizing and jeopardising peace.

### ***Imagined Communities, Divided Realities: a Conceptual Journey***

Archbishop Tutu, Chairperson of the TRC, was one of the strongest advocates of reconciliation. His coinage of reconciliation was rendered inseparable from notions of forgiveness, closure and 'racial' harmony – the rainbow nation - which were forged into preconditions for and measurements of healing, both personal and social. Reconciliation became 'the road' to recovery. Hence, the angry or unforgiving could not be healed. Refusing reconciliation, their legitimacy in partaking in the 'new nation' was in question. If there was 'no hope without forgiveness' (Tutu 1999), any rejection of reconciliation was rendered a form of self-denial of the 'new South African', hence no hope remained for the angry and unforgiving. This perspective, which Wilson (2001: 121) calls 'thick reconciliation',<sup>5</sup> conflated culturally engendered understandings of individuals making amends after conflict with the notion of a secularised collective absolution for systemic

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<sup>5</sup> As 'thick reconciliation' Wilson (2001: 121) describes the religious-redemptive interpersonal framework for reading the concept, while 'thin reconciliation' captures the more abstract and symbolic inherent in 'secular, national reconciliation'.

evil in the political realm. According to some critics, this 'devalues and displaces the experiences of those who have been wronged' (Grunebaum 2002: 3).

At the time of the research, reconciliation had become both symbolic driving force and tangible obstacle to processes of social transformation, to repair and renewal of the interpersonal domain. Opportunities to engage in direct interpersonal dialogue about the past - about the stark social, political and economic disparities apartheid left behind and their emotional, psychological, spiritual and moral repercussions - remained scarce in post-TRC South Africa. Beyond the idea of reconciliation, there remained the need for a different kind of encounter and engagement among South Africans that would take account of apartheid memory not only as something that needed 'to be healed', 'dealt with' and 'left behind', but as a deeply personal and open-ended source for the processes and processing of identity formation and subjectivity.

In post-1994 South Africa, the imaginary of the non-racial nation, for the majority, preceded any tangible experience of alternative interpersonal practices in this regard. Though generating in many the will to test old boundaries, the vision of a newly shared and equal citizenship did not assist in practical ways to positively alter social reality. While the majority of South Africans wished to engage in a process of healing, change and transformation, interpretations of what that meant differed vastly, and individuals often felt overwhelmed and helpless to shift the course of their lives and use newly emerging opportunities. While communities were in the process of redefining the boundaries of their collectivity in response to narratives of new nationhood and citizenship, the TRC had sought to individualise the search for healing and change through the narrative of reconciliation, making it one of the new citizen's core obligations in the project of nation-building.

In 1997, at the height of the TRC's operations, Mahmood Mamdani offered a much-noted critique of what he identified as a lack of engagement with the role that 'beneficiaries' of apartheid had played and continued to play in the South African scenario. He identified this aspect as a crucial shortcoming of the TRC's mandate and subsequent process:

In the South African context, perpetrators are a small group, as are those victimised by perpetrators. In contrast, beneficiaries are a large group, and victims defined in relation to beneficiaries are the vast majority in society. [...] If perpetrators and victims have a past to overcome, do not beneficiaries and victims have a present to come to terms with? If reconciliation is to be durable, would it not need to be aimed at society (beneficiaries and victims) and not simply at the fractured political elite (perpetrators and victims) (Mamdani 1997: 25)?

Criticism of the TRC, citing it a pragmatic mechanism to appease both 'black anger' and 'white liberal fears' in the absence of the feasibility of a real revolution and radical change (Meister 1998a, 1998b), was lodged at a time when public interest in the process was on the decline. The majority of South Africans did not engage with the TRC in any direct way. In particular white South Africans were seen to distance themselves from the process and its moral implications (Theissen & Hamber 1998; Theissen 1999; Verwoerd 2000), much to the anger of those who suffered apartheid's violence and deprivations. One critic commented on the implications of leaving white South Africans out of deliberate intervention processes:

There is, in fact, no conducive public space available for whites in which to admit that they benefited from apartheid and were caught up in a vicious system that in a different way also deprived and traumatised them. This failure makes it almost impossible for whites and others who supported the former regime to take responsibility for the past as a basis for creating a better society (Henri 2000: 171).

The process of the TRC hearings facilitated very few face-to-face encounters between victims and perpetrators of gross human rights violations, let alone engagement between those considered 'victims and beneficiaries'<sup>6</sup> in the broader, more ordinary sense that Mamdani described. HOM offered one of few explicit opportunities for white South

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<sup>6</sup> I use the term 'beneficiaries of apartheid' throughout the dissertation, largely in accordance with Mamdani's broadening of the definition, to signify those rendered superior by colour of skin and subsequently privileged by the apartheid's ideology and political system. Therefore 'beneficiaries' is largely concurrent with 'white' South Africans. Most participants at HOM would fall into Mamdani's (1997) category of 'victims of apartheid' in the broader systemic, political and economic sense even though very few were happy or comfortable to be categorised as 'victims' because of the connotations the term acquired in the course of the TRC process (Colvin 2004; Ross 2001). Hence both terms are used here with consciousness of their limitations and meant to signify the broadest of dimensions shaping post-apartheid subjectivities without subsuming the many subtle and complex senses of self inherent in both groups.

Africans to engage with their own and others' experiences of the apartheid past,<sup>7</sup> and an unusual opportunity, albeit temporary, for the engagement between 'beneficiaries and victims'.

For many South Africans, the challenge of the new order presented itself in the temporal rupture framed by the 'old' and the 'new' South Africa, in measuring personal recollections of apartheid against everyday experiences, and in how expectations of change did or did not manifest in human interactions. The break with the past was firstly symbolic; while in the present not only material legacies but also the entrenched 'structures of feeling' (Williams 1973: 10, quoted in Eldridge & Eldridge 1994: 121) and 'embodied memories' (Scheper-Hughes & Lock 1987; Boyarin 1994; see also Csordas 1994b; Das 1997) of apartheid continued to inform the interpersonal domain and hinder the ability to forge new, alternative relationships and meaningful ways of being social with one another.

For the generations that lived through apartheid, the transition to democracy was, consciously or not, a rethinking of one's subject position in the world, of relations with others, with the state, with the new meanings of citizenship. For the younger, supposed 'rainbow' generation, it is at least partly about making sense of the situation they grow into, inherited but not understood, that yet so fundamentally shapes possibilities for choosing and inhabiting alternative identities to those apartheid permitted. The task of transforming attitudes, perceptions, social behaviours, as well as formations and practices of identity was largely left to civil society structures. All the more did the search for alternative public spheres<sup>8</sup> become relevant, the search for places and times, in which *critical connections* could be made between past and future, between who was considered

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<sup>7</sup> Most other NGO-facilitated processes that were derived prior to and during the period of the TRC concentrated their interventions on 'victims' as in the TRC definition or on 'disadvantaged communities', political activists, ex-combatants, ex-political prisoners and survivors of torture (see also a series of research reports on interventions: Hamber 1995b; Kayser 2000a & 2000b; Schell-Faucon 2001; Colvin 2000; Neumann 2001).

<sup>8</sup> David Chaney's (1994) elaboration of the term is useful to keep in mind: 'What we mean by the public sphere is a series of ways of talking about [...] and responding to the dramatisations of identity' (136). It is this fluid element of describing an arena for the enactment of sociality that I have in mind when placing HOM as a potential 'alternate public sphere' rather than its explicit public nature.

self and 'Other', and where the tensions of the present could come to be articulated, enacted, recognised, challenged and debated.

In this context, I found a need to trace the process of re-imagining and re-imaging of the new South Africa, from the level of the nation as a newly 'imagined community' in Anderson's sense (1991 [1983]: 6) to other smaller units or collectives within, to the micro-level of the interpersonal domain where official discourses, while fuelling the legitimacy of the new national 'community', were met with the infinite facets of individual, local imaginations of how the newly constituted South Africa would translate into visible forms of change. Corresponding with Anderson's idea that 'the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship' (Anderson 1991 [1983]: 7), the imaginary of a new South African-ness became a key driving force for social transformation, yet was multiply hindered by both the material and immaterial legacies of apartheid. Faced with persisting divided realities, I wanted to trace how the 'imagined community' of the new nation was attempted in interpersonal practice and what experiential-emotional forces helped or hindered such attempts. HOM seemed to present an extraordinary, liminal space (Turner 1969) where a different kind of encounter and dialogue about the past with those thought to be 'Other' might be possible.

Producing a temporary, alternative social space, the HOM process fashioned a new kind of community, based on sentiments of belonging and a new social togetherness. Max Weber (1946: 172-176) speaks of a 'community of sentiment'<sup>9</sup> in the context of nations, the coherence of which he sees built, among other things, on the belief in common political destinies and sentiments of solidarity and belonging. I argue that HOM produced a 'community of sentiment' driven by participants' desire to belong to the novel sociality envisioned in the 'new' South Africa and their belief in the necessity of a shared political destiny. This community of sentiment was based on the ability to recognise, respond to and engage in conflict with each 'Other' in the search for new ways of being social, processes I characterise as response-ability, conflict-ability and soci-ability. The

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<sup>9</sup> '[A] nation is a community of sentiment which would adequately manifest itself in a state of its own; hence a nation is a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own' (Weber 1946: 176).

experience of such a community of sentiment, in turn, both generated in participants the motivation to attempt changes in their interpersonal practice and fuelled their imagination and hope, as powerful forces for participation in and commitment to the transition from an 'old' to a 'new' order.

In searching for answers to my questions the HOM process became a lens through which to observe and read a critical facet of South Africa's transition: the engagement of self-motivated, ordinary citizens with their personal memories of apartheid and, importantly, with each other in a face-to-face memory process, which the TRC helped frame (and to an extent motivated) but could not facilitate (see also Hamber & Wilson 1999: 2). The HOM setting brought about an immediate and challenging encounter that inevitably (and at times unintentionally) burst the neat seams of the official reconciliation paradigm, revealing a host of underlying contestations, hopes, desires, conflicts and efforts at their containment that were not always visible in the public sphere, yet that significantly shaped the possibilities of transformation in the interpersonal domain. The dissertation traces some of this underlying subtext through a longitudinal study of HOM as one continuing intervention, focused on 'dealing with the apartheid past', in the after-world of the TRC.

### ***The Healing of Memories Process***

The HOM process was initiated in late 1994, before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's formal beginning, when a loose network of faith community leaders and anti-apartheid activists in Cape Town grouped to devise a process that would 'put the onus on organisations and faith communities to constructively engage in programmes and activities to assist all South Africans to tell their stories' (Newsletter of the Religious Response to the TRC, 11/95). In 1995, the 'Religious Response to the TRC' (RR) was formed in the Western Cape, a civil society campaign aimed at giving an 'interfaith response' to the proposed truth commission. The RR was concerned, among other issues, with the 'accessibility of the [future] TRC to victims and survivors of human rights violations' and the 'danger of the Commission becoming one where all focus and media attention fall on the amnesty issues' (ibid.). Soon after, the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act (No. 35 of 1995) was passed, paving the way for the

implementation of the TRC. Recognising the limitations of the Commission's mandate, the RR campaign set out to offer 'a safe place for all South Africans wishing to wrestle with the apartheid past', as Father Michael Lapsley, initiator of HOM, puts it.

In collaboration with the Chaplaincy at the Cape Town Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture (TC),<sup>10</sup> the RR began to offer 'Healing of Memories' weekend workshops, open to anyone who wished to engage it. Initially, it was particularly members of church-aligned, former anti-apartheid networks and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who participated in the piloting processes (1995-1997), while later the focus was primarily on 'victims and survivors of apartheid violations, both ordinary and extraordinary' (FML<sup>11</sup> 7/99). Workshop participants were asked to come together to speak about their personal memories of the apartheid years and embark on a 'journey of healing' (HOM Facilitator's Guidelines, 1997). Under the auspices of Father Michael Lapsley, an Anglican priest and survivor of a letter bomb sent to him by agents of the apartheid government in 1992 (see also Worsnip 1996), the workshops have been held since 1995, initially run locally in the Western Cape, later also nationally and internationally in countries like Rwanda, Northern Ireland, Zimbabwe and Australia. In 1998, the Institute for Healing of Memories (IHOM)<sup>12</sup> was founded, continuing the workshops with the assistance of volunteer facilitators. The workshop participants in the Western Cape, which became the focal area for my research, were initially found through networks among the TRC, NGOs like the TC, local churches and related community-based organisations. Workshop attendance remains self-selecting, with participants hearing about the workshop by word of mouth and through various church- and NGO-networks.

What was most striking to me when I first encountered the HOM process in 1997 was the openness of the invitation to what seemed an unusual, if not naïve and risky endeavour - the attempt to draw 'all' South Africans together in a memory process, regardless of their

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<sup>10</sup> The name was later changed to 'Cape Town Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture'

<sup>11</sup> FML = Father Michael Lapsley, initiator of HOM

<sup>12</sup> Founded in August 1998, the IHOM took over the task of running the workshops from the Chaplaincy at the TC and the RR.

political subjectivities in the apartheid context and its aftermath. Framing the externalisation of pain as healing, the main objective of the HOM workshop was stated as offering participants 'just one step [...] in the journey towards healing and wholeness' (HOM Facilitator's Guidelines, 1997: 2) by affording them the opportunity to narrate and reflect jointly on their personal experiences of the apartheid years. In addition, the workshop promised to 'create a sense of community across the usual barriers which divide us such as racism, sexism, classisms, age-ism, linguism, able-ism, politics, etc.' (HOM Facilitator's Guidelines, 1997: 7). The weekend activities, described later in the dissertation, were meant to facilitate introspection, time for reflection and interaction among participants. The discursive framework, similar to the TRC's, framed 'healing' as a combination of closure and remembrance:

Healing memories does not mean we forget the past, but rather try to find a way of no longer allowing our memories to paralyse or destroy us. We need to find that which is life-giving and to put all that is destructive behind us (HOM Flyer 1998).

Not unlike the TRC, HOM combined a strong theological flavour with the concern for prevention any re-occurrence of the past in the future and the premise of 'never again':

We need to find ways of preventing our history from being repeated and of breaking the cycles of victims and victimisers that we have lived with for so long (ibid.).

The methodology of the workshop has remained unchanged over the years. Structured as a 'journey' from the past to the present and into the future, the first evening begins with a presentation by the local community theatre group *Mina Nawe* [isiXhosa: You and I] enacting scenes from the apartheid years in an emotionally powerful performance of drama and song. This set the stage for the participants' mode of remembering as one that encourages the expression of emotions and personal memories. The following day is given to remembering and 'storytelling' and takes place in a small group setting using creative means, like drawing, to assist in the facilitation of participants' narration. The workshop culminates in a creative celebration or liturgy on the last day, which the participants develop jointly. Translating the weekend's experience of telling and listening into a programme of songs, sketches, prayers, readings and ritual, the final celebration is

laid out to mark a sense of redemption, meant to end the workshop on a high note and signify the commitment of participants to hope and the future.

### **HOM and the TRC**

Today, the HOM workshops present one of few institutionalised 'post-TRC' spaces, specifically inviting South Africans across the board to *consciously* and *practically* engage with each other around personal memories of the apartheid past. From its inception, HOM planned to continue long after the Commission had ended. Since it did not operate under the same legal constraints as the TRC, HOM could generate a more local and individual conversation about the apartheid past. At the same time, both processes were characterised by the transitory and short-term nature of their intervention models. In order to understand the specific framework that HOM generated, I place the workshop here in relation to the space the TRC set up during its public hearings.

Some of the main commonalities between the two interventions were that:

- both presented the past as an entity that needed to be 'dealt with'. The past 'not dealt with' was seen as dangerous, an unresolved menace bound to pounce upon future generations;
- both laid claim to being part of a symbolic collective process of nation-building through 'dealing with the past';
- both offered a formalised opportunity for a once-off act of speaking memories of apartheid trauma;
- both claimed to provide 'safe space', particularly for the narratives of violation and harm inflicted during the apartheid years;
- both worked on the premise that externalising pain and speaking about past hurts was integral for healing and closure, and that cathartic narrative processes were necessary part of initiating social change and nation-building. Memories of violation needed to be expressed in order to then 'leave behind' the pain of the past and build a new nation;
- both used the terminology of 'telling stories' as a framework for the testimonial practices they instituted;

- both said that South Africans needed to 'hear one another's truth' and assumed that an empathetic listenership conceived a central step towards social healing;
- both laid claim to a 'sacred' space for the acknowledgement of pain and sought to create a symbolic framework and ritual process for this;
- both processes were characterised by strong religious elements and led by charismatic religious personalities (Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Father Michael Lapsley).

However, there were several significant features of difference between the two processes:

- HOM was not constrained in the same way as the TRC by the amnesty provisions of the negotiated settlement, which demanded the search for legally valid evidence in the testimonies given, despite the TRC's emphasis on the validity of memory and personal, subjective truth.<sup>13</sup> HOM could concentrate more giving a place for speaking experiences and memories of apartheid *in whichever form the narrators chose*;
- while the TRC was set up as a public process through which apartheid testimony would enter the public record, HOM workshops were characterised by being a removed, unrecorded, quasi-private and confidential space for speaking about the apartheid past;
- in terms of its mandate, the TRC had a specific target audience, working explicitly with victims/survivors and perpetrators of gross human rights violations. Its focus was on the extraordinary brutalities of apartheid and on narratives of *gross* violation (for a critique, see Ross 2003). HOM invited a wider scope of *ordinary* narratives, including the life-stories of those privileged by apartheid;
- the TRC was limited in time while HOM, dependent on donor funding and local demand, has been an ongoing intervention;

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<sup>13</sup> Wilson points out the ways in which the amnesty provisions presented a driving factor for the work of the Commission, a fact which was increasingly 'disguised' or layered in the course of the process by what he terms 'reconciliation talk' and 'rights talk' (Wilson 2001: 97-122).

- while the TRC framed its testimonial process as an opportunity to speak about the past in order to achieve closure, HOM put emphasis on the workshop as an *initial* reflection opportunity on the past that needed further engagement;
- from 1998 onwards, as more and more survivors critiqued the premise of 'reconciliation', HOM revisited its use of the term and focused more on the idea of relationship-building.

### ***On Methodology: Writing around a 'sacred' space***

The HOM project frames the workshops as offering a 'sacred space', emphasising that it is safe and confidential. The implications of the premise of confidentiality for my fieldwork were decisive. HOM set itself up around this sacred telling space in a way that did not easily admit research and analysis. I had initially encountered the HOM project in 1997 during my observations of the TRC hearings, and, after initial participation in a workshop, I became a HOM facilitator in 1998. It was the organic nature of my involvement with the HOM process upon which the trust was built that made the research on the project possible.<sup>14</sup> However, it meant that none of the stories I witnessed at the workshops could be retold in the dissertation, nor could the individual processes of telling be recounted in ethnographic detail that would reveal individual identities. Following Das and Kleinman's (2001: 5) ethnographic urge to pay attention not only to the content of narratives, but also to the process of their formation, I chose to instead record the *process* of interactions that ensued at the workshops, to test assumptions about the proposed healing value of HOM's storytelling exercise by examining the *dynamics* of giving and bearing witness to one another's life experiences as testimony in a setting considerably different to the TRC hearings. In the process of fieldwork and analysis, therefore, people's *motives* in coming to tell and witness apartheid memories at HOM workshops, *how* they did so and what interactions ensued, became more important than detailing *what* was told.

My work and relationships with survivors in the TRC and HOM context contributed to this choice since they allowed me insight into some of the (then largely unrecorded)

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<sup>14</sup> Initially, my proposal was met with the response: 'We generally say to researchers: Thank you, but no thank you' (FML 1999).

negative repercussions of testifying and the subsequent circulation of testimonies in public arenas and academic forums for individuals (Henri 2000). I also became aware of the negative dynamics surrounding researchers, and particularly young, white, foreign research students like me (see also Colvin 2004: 6). In the research process, I navigated between the testimonial spaces of the TRC and HOM on one hand, and the space for reflection and distance provided by the University of Cape Town (UCT) on the other. Travelling constantly between these two spheres, it proved difficult at times to balance, on one hand, the demands of a research institution and colleagues who were suspicious of what was read as a religious-symbolic process with problematic assumptions and a seemingly small range of impact, with on the other, what was perceived as the negative impact of researchers and a very critical attitude towards academia prevalent at HOM and among many of the workshop participants. At the same time, this field of tension made for an interesting in-between position from which constantly to negotiate between the role of the researcher and observer, and that of the facilitator and practitioner, to plot a course between theory, analysis and implementation, and between two institutions claiming each that the other was 'far removed from reality'. In this sense, the anthropological lens was not taken off easily 'outside the field', nor did participant observation end once leaving HOM. The research field comprised the locations of the workshops and extended beyond into a wide range of homes and institutions, requiring continuous travel into the various realms and life-worlds within the city described in the Preface to the dissertation.

I worked not only in a multi-sited field (Marcus 1995), but with a temporary and highly fluid target 'community', since participants generally attended the workshops only once and did not stay in touch with HOM beyond the intervention<sup>15</sup>. Between 1998 and 2003 there were a total of 1515 workshop participants in the Western Cape.<sup>16</sup> After my initial

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<sup>15</sup> My interviews, at times, facilitated a more ongoing contact between HOM and participants. I had to be mindful of the ways in which the research itself constituted an intervention within the HOM intervention (i.e. led to more reflection and further conversation with and among participants).

<sup>16</sup> HOM participants in the Western Cape: 1997 (no figures available); 1998 (150); 1999 (227); 2000 (125); 2001 (273); 2002 (277); 2003 (463)

participation in 1997 and subsequent facilitator training,<sup>17</sup> I facilitated 20 HOM workshops between 1997 and the present (15 of these workshops took place during the main research period between 1999 and 2001). All but three participants I worked with in the course of the research had attended HOM workshops at which I was present, so I was able to link back their comments to each particular event. Forty-two individual, semi-structured interviews comprised a demographically representative selection of participants<sup>18</sup> from various workshops between 1999 and 2001. Most interviews after the workshops were conducted at participants' homes and took between one and three hours. Interviews were given shortly after the workshop, as well as three weeks, three months, six months and between one and three years later; more informal conversations followed in about half the cases at various points after the initial interview. During the same time period, 10 focus groups were held with participants,<sup>19</sup> usually three, six or eight weeks after the intervention. Each group had attended a workshop together. Four focus groups were conducted with HOM facilitators<sup>20</sup> (about every six months between 1999 and 2001). Some interviews and most focus groups were conducted on the premises of the IHOM, a site not easily accessible by public transport, so that giving lifts to people became an integral part of the research process as many relevant and rich conversations took place informally in the car.

The HOM facilitators comprised the most bounded group discernible in the process. At once steering the workshops and being the only long-term participants to the process, this group (the majority of whom worked in social service professions) was central to more long-ranging observations over time, and, while constituting a group inclined to engage

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<sup>17</sup> The HOM facilitator training is usually a weekend workshop given by senior HOM facilitators, after which new facilitators co-lead storytelling groups until they are comfortable enough to conduct them on their own. Once a year, HOM offers ongoing facilitator training on various subjects such as trauma counselling, conflict management, self-empowerment, etc.

<sup>18</sup> I interviewed 20 men; 22 women; most participants at the time wished not to be categorised according to 'race' but in the old apartheid configuration, that still remains valid in demographics, there would have been: 24 black; 11 coloured, 1 Indian and 5 white participants; economically about 50% of the interviewees were living in low-income households, many earning their livelihoods in the informal sector. 40% described themselves as 'middle class', and ten percent belonged to a higher income group. The interviewees' age ranged between 17 and 69.

<sup>19</sup> Each focus group had between 4-10 people and lasted between 1-3 hours.

<sup>20</sup> In addition to my ongoing participation in HOM planning and debriefing meetings, and other HOM facilitator activities, the focus groups with facilitators were used to feed back some of my research results throughout the process.

in transformation work, served as a specific example of some effects of repeat attendance and ongoing engagement with HOM.

Critics of HOM argued that by focusing attention only on individual memories in a catharsis-oriented exercise of storytelling about the past, HOM diverted attention from the stark socio-economic inequalities of present-day Cape Town (Henri, personal communication, 2000). Worse, HOM was seen as an exercise in de-politicising and thus 'diluting' the significance of these inequities in favour of facilitating a short-lived moment of group harmony that was then called 'reconciliation' (Colvin, personal communication, 2000). My observations of HOM, however, presented me with a more nuanced and complex perspective on how structural and emotional legacies of apartheid informed one another. Clearly, simply bringing people together into one venue, enabling them to spend a weekend together and to 'tell their stories' of the past was neither a recipe for bringing about a fruitful and authentic (in the sense of 'raw', 'unmediated') engagement with the past nor for ensuring new, constructive forms of encounter between participants. However, the interactions that ensued at the workshops made visible how in face-to-face encounters with each other and with the past, the moral and practical dilemmas that HOM was assumed to conceal under a thick layer of 'healing and reconciliation talk' in fact came to the surface and had to be confronted by participants, willingly or unwillingly.

### **Resonating Pasts: Locating Subjectivity and Voice in the Field**

During the first HOM workshop I attended as a participant in 1997, I was drawn by the way in which the workshop method - relating personal memories embedded in a weekend of spending social time together - created its own testimonial energy. The process seemed to offer a form of *interactive* remembering and a dynamic of witnessing that generated an unusual set of encounters across the faultlines left by apartheid in the Cape, and enabled conversations unlike others I had been privy to the context of my previous field research on the TRC. My work with HOM and the RR between 1997 and 2001 included facilitating HOM workshops, facilitator trainings, strategic planning meetings, documentation of activities, the production of a video about a HOM workshop at the

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District Six Museum (Kayser 2000c), an internal evaluation report of the HOM workshops (Kayser 2000a) and the related work of the Centre for Ubuntu (Kayser 2000b), documenting lectures and discussion forums, providing ongoing support for participants after the workshops, involvement in daily activities with staff and volunteers, and several feedback seminars about the research results with HOM and at UCT.

The dissertation is inevitably rooted in the vantage point of my subjectivity as a young white German woman coming to South Africa in the mid-nineties; in my experiences as a member of the third post-war generation in Germany, being one of the 'afterborn'<sup>21</sup> who supposedly bear no guilt for the deeds of the Third Reich and yet felt the effects of this history profoundly when growing up. Built on this are the insights won during eight years of participating and working in various capacities within a range of South African processes, projects, workshops, conferences, hearings, informal engagements with people about the meaning of the past and present in both countries and the intense years of work and research with HOM. I have struggled long how to weave these various streams of ongoing participant observation, analysis and experience together, how to let the German experience and the South African experience speak to each other without conflating, without comparing, yet capturing the resonance, the echoes, that which becomes meaningful if brought into conversation. Such conversation is by default of an ongoing nature, it defers closure and the absoluteness of conclusion by assuming a long-term perspective. It demands a high level of attentiveness, a willingness to risk vulnerability and be implicated by the outcome when treading the complex gulf between continents and cultures, between entwined histories, between theory and practice. It also recognises research as inevitable intervention into people's lives, which demands care and humility of the researcher.

My involvement in parallel processes to the TRC, such as HOM, developed out of the need to engage practically, not only to react to the experience from the distance afforded by academic practice, but also to actively contribute and give back to people in the larger

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<sup>21</sup> The 'afterborn' is a term I coined to describe those born after the events of World War II. In the 1980s, Chancellor Helmut Kohl described the generations living 'outside the immediate spectrum of responsibility for the Third Reich' as those 'graced with late birth' [*die Gnade der spaeten Geburt*].

process. Living and working in South Africa at the time brought with it the need to constantly question and locate my subject position in my immediate context. This I took as a moral imperative not only because I was faced with the conflicting dynamics generated by my power and privilege, but also because in wishing to contribute to the immediate world I operated in, I had to consciously face that my being here still meant, de facto, stepping into the shoes of the beneficiary of apartheid privileges, available to me on account of my colour.

Coming to the South African process of truth and reconciliation as a young German of my generation, the public hearings of the TRC captured me in their intensity. I attended most of these in and around Cape Town between 1996 and 1999, which resulted in an initial research project (Kayser 1998) and included ongoing interviews with a wide variety of people involved in the Commission's day-to-day operations (Kayser 1999), as well as accompanying and supporting survivors who had testified to the TRC when they were going to the amnesty hearings of their cases. Witnessing the immediacy of a first generation testimonial process, the complex encounters between survivors and perpetrators at the amnesty hearings, and engaging in countless conversations with those who came to tell and listen, I found much resonance with my own questions - born from the German context - about constructive ways of working with the complexities of a history of atrocity and authoritarianism without seeking to simply 'master', 'overcome' or 'normalise'<sup>22</sup> the past. I was by far not the only young German researcher attracted to the process, not surprisingly perhaps, as there are a many direct links between the German and South African experiences of fascism, institutionalised racism and prolonged authoritarianism (see also Asmal et al 1997; Bunting 1986; Furlong 1991; Robins 1998) and resonances in how a history of violence informs the future fashioning of subjectivities.

The German experience illustrated how, even fifty years after the actual experiences of brutally and intricately racist governance and genocide, the politics of memory have not

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<sup>22</sup> All three terms are derived from the German discourses about how to best 'deal' with the past, in particular with the history of the Holocaust and the Third Reich.

ceased to impact on identity formation in each subsequent generation. Each post-war decade in Germany has seen debates about the past that were particular to the concerns of that generation (see also Schlink 2003). Platforms for ongoing dialogue and debate about the meanings of the past in the present have proven crucial to the political processes of democratisation after fascism, and have in recent years become central to a more personalised process of making sense of the past as it recedes in time. Not only do such opportunities for interpersonal dialogue serve to enhance a plurality of social possibilities that is central to democratic formations, but over the years in Germany they have also enabled the beginnings of a historically and culturally important conversation among *generations*, in Walter Benjamin's (1968) terms, linking those who died with those yet unborn.

Through my work on Holocaust education and literature as an undergraduate student at the University of Hamburg, I was familiar with the German experience of fifty years of 'dealing with the past' and going through the various cycles of *Vergangenheitsbewaeltigung*.<sup>23</sup> Yet listening to the accounts of the South African experience of recent trauma, atrocity and human cruelty presented me with a different dimension, an encounter with what Achille Mbembe termed 'raw memory' (Lecture at UCT Social Anthropology, August 1997), unmediated by decades of representation and processing. This was a context in which my questions from the German context, around themes such as guilt, culpability and social responsibility, found much resonance.

At the same time the format of field engagement I had chosen and the attempt to write from 'within the field' seemed to only produce forms of writing not suitable for the academic context. The intensity of witnessing and processing first-generation testimony, and the impact of listening and attending to the intensity and immensity of pain generated by apartheid was not something I had anticipated. For a long time it seemed impossible to gain the critical distance necessary to write academically on the subject, as the analytical paradigm did not seem to provide a language for my experiences. I felt quite literally

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<sup>23</sup> literally - 'overcoming/overpowering the past', a term used in the German discourse for many years signifying the attempts to deal with the Holocaust in Germany, to somehow make history manageable.

'dissolved' in the process of witnessing, until several years later, when I had gained enough emotional distance to the 'rawness' of these years and resumed writing the dissertation.

One of my interests, derived from the German experience, lay with the unique dynamics of witnessing that the HOM process brought about at first generation level. The workshops provided a testimonial space that focused not only on the TRC categories of victims and perpetrators, but also gave room to explore the many 'grey zones' of subjectivity that existed under apartheid. Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi coined the term 'grey zones' (Levi 1990 [1986]: 33-70) to illustrate the complexities of human actions and interactions within an inhuman system of oppression, especially the moral dilemmas of the survivors. In my research findings, HOM gave individuals an opportunity to explore the complex roles they had played as 'ordinary' people within the larger political system. The telling and listening, the ensuing interactions and dynamics between participants, as listening narrators and narrating listeners, in many cases seemed to enable a process of 'making connections' (Williams 1989c: 76, quoted in Eldridge & Eldridge 1994: 11; see also further comments by Eldridge & Eldridge 1994: 140) that I explore in more detail in the dissertation. I read Williams' concept in relation to Augusto Boal (1995) who suggests that

[t]he smallest cell of social organization [...] contains all the moral and political values of society, all its structures of domination and power, all its mechanisms of oppression. The great general themes are inscribed in the small personal themes and incidents (40).

In this sense, 'making connections' in the storytelling at HOM facilitated the recognition of larger (political, social, personal and moral) consequences of individual actions and choices, and, on account of such insights, asked for an immediate face-to-face response among those present. HOM opened a window onto some of the complexities in putting the idea of a 'pluralistic' memory space into practice. Producing the temporary experience of an alternative sociability the intervention enabled a rare kind of encounter among South Africans and an often difficult, interpersonal form of engagement with the

past that, nonetheless, opened important perspectives for the transformation of entrenched emotional and interpersonal legacies of the apartheid past.

### ***Structure and Chapter Preview***

The dissertation reflects on the HOM process in relation to the TRC, and vice versa. In this way, the dissertation grapples with several key challenges that persist beyond the TRC's work. Interspersed with and guided by ethnographic vignettes,<sup>24</sup> the next three chapters of the dissertation take the reader on a day-by-day journey through the HOM workshops. At the same time, each chapter discusses one thematic area of analysis emerging from the workshops: transcending the spatial and geographical continuities of apartheid (Chapter Two); using narrative and storytelling in facilitating (inter)active memory processes (Chapter Three); negotiating understandings of change, citizenship and belonging as tangibles facet of nation-building through the performance of a temporary 'community of sentiment' (Chapter Four); and meeting the challenge of transforming in the long-term the perceptions people hold of each other, mediating the impact of apartheid memories on post-apartheid relationships (Chapter Five).

In **Chapter Two** I argue that the socio-spatial effects of apartheid translate into bodily practices, visible in the experimental *encounters* between participants at HOM across the various, material and imagined boundaries marking the city. At the workshop participants shared life experiences derived from the starkly separate realities that apartheid fashioned in Cape Town; they told stories from 'opposite sides of the railway line'.<sup>25</sup> I examine how South Africans' contrasting memories of apartheid times are in effect not only psycho-social legacies but exist as 'embodied memories' (Scheper-Hughes & Lock 1987, Boyarin 1994) impacting on people's everyday interactions, choices and their ability to make use of opportunities. The chapter explores HOM's assumptions about the ways in

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<sup>24</sup> The ethnographic vignettes, detailing one particular HOM workshop in 1999, were written in the evenings of the respective workshop using a mixture of notes taken during some of the sessions and my memory of the day. Direct quotations are therefore subject to my memory/notes.

<sup>25</sup> Apartheid's geography in Cape Town is laid out such that, structurally, formerly 'white' and 'non-white' suburbs remain neatly segregated by railway lines, highways, rivers and other natural and man-made barriers used by apartheid town planners. One significant divide, between Cape Town's formerly white southern suburbs and the so-called Cape Flats, entered popular language simply as 'this or that side of the railway line'.

which apartheid's divisions are reproduced in the current makings of post-apartheid social space and how it seeks to counter them, particularly in its ideas of a 'healing space for all' and a 'safe space' to 'face the past'. I examine the practices this premise generates.

**Chapter Three** assesses how personal storytelling at the workshops generated an experiential form of 'narrative encounter' among HOM participants. The act of narrating and witnessing personal life stories and memories of apartheid, in the particular framework HOM offered, resulted in a form of 'testimonial dialogue' where stories of violation and deprivation were told alongside stories of privilege and ignorance, enabling the 'making of connections' between individual stories and the social, political and moral universe from which they emanated. Chapter Three contrasts the TRC's testimonial forms with those of HOM illustrating the interactive nature of HOM's processes. I found that the moment of intimate narrating and listening to life experiences, in many cases comprised an act of partaking in the creation of a larger narrative framework for assessing experiences of apartheid, a framework in which individual subject positions could be questioned. Resting on the powers of *immediacy, participation and unsettlement* generated in the face-to-face encounters between participants, the 'story-ing' of apartheid memories became a way of personalising history and at the same time depersonalising memory, a creative and testimonial act of re-inventing self and others.

**Chapter Four** examines the creative performance on the final day of the workshop arguing that it consolidated a kind of 'community of sentiment' (Weber 1946) built over the weekend. Here, an imagined community of 'new South Africans' was enacted in temporary practice, tried out, and experimented with. I argue that such experimentation, building on the storytelling processes of the previous day, was able momentarily to unfreeze historical subjectivities assumed as stable, and, using participants' desire to enact the new non-racial nation imaginary, generated an alternative sociability in the moment. At the same time, the existent social faultlines inevitably emerged in the form of conflict and the expression of intense emotions. Efforts at mending such ruptures spoke to the fragile nature of an encounter between those previously advantaged and

disadvantaged by apartheid, as subjectivities were readily 're-frozen' in the subsequent disappointment of expectations. Nonetheless, the process revealed the relevance of building people's ability to respond (response-ability) meaningfully and to engage constructively in conflict (conflict-ability) in order to work towards desired new ways of being social.

In **Chapter Five**, the practices, hopes and expectations generated by the community of sentiment are put to the test upon participants' return back home. Here they found that the momentary intimacy, generated by the process of personal and creative storytelling about the past at the workshop, was not easily sustainable beyond the parameters of the workshop. To the contrary, a 'moral economy of storytelling' (Colvin 2004) emerged in which people assigned different meanings to the exchange of personal memories and had contrasting expectations of the forms that subsequent relationships would take. The chapter argues, however, that taking 'relationships' *per se*, in particular across racial barriers, as an indicator for change in the post-apartheid sphere may be inadequate when applied in this context. HOM participants affirmed that, in practice, the assumptions around the imperative to 'mix' led to increased politeness, but enabled little meaningful social contact or the ability to confront difficult issues of the present. The HOM experience challenged this social superficiality, but it also laid bare in painful ways how apartheid's racialised conceptions of 'self' and 'other' and their manifestations in the interpersonal realm continue to inflict deep personal hurt and lasting damage.

**Chapter Six** examines the insights drawn from the ethnography: looking at formations of subjectivity and intersubjectivity to trace further how (inter)subjectivity is shaped in relation to a time of transition and rapid change, and how living memory continues to inform shifting individual imaginaries of selfhood and 'Otherness' as well as possibilities for realising alternative perspectives and social practices. The final chapter returns to the question of realising new relations between self and others in light of the entrenched 'structures of feeling' and 'formations of relationship' (Williams 1989c: 76, quoted in Eldridge 1994: 11) existent in the post-apartheid sphere. I propose three critical 'conversations' as potential means for realising a meaningful and constructive form of

engagement with a divisive past. Taking cognisance of the complex interrelations in the postcolonial triangle of 'memory, power and subjectivity' (Werbner 2002) these are: a conversation *with and among self/selves*; a conversation *with the Other*; and, adding the temporal dimension to the triangle, a conversation *between generations*, ongoing over time. Proposing a long-term perspective of the notion of 'dealing with the past', the chapter locates these conversations in a kind of memory process that draws on the HOM model, but expands beyond its current frame.

## Friday Night

### Setting the stage - Creating a Space to Share

*As a participant driving across Cape Town on your way to a Healing of Memories (HOM) workshop, the first encounter with the spatial dimension of this endeavour of 'coming together' becomes evident. You may ask yourself: 'Where am I going? Is it going to be safe to go there?' Depending on where you travel from, you may wonder: 'How will I get there without any transport money?' Depending on where the workshop venue is situated, you will be travelling from familiar into unknown territory or vice versa; you will be traversing areas known and unknown, perceived as safe or dangerous. Your sense of going into comfortable or uncomfortable, alien or familiar parts of the city will influence your mode of arrival on the scene. It will also define to a large extent your expectations of the weekend, and your initial perception of the workshop venue. Depending on where in the city you live and what kind of dwelling you call home - a house? a room? a shack? a mansion? - depending on whether you live in an area where violent incidents are frequent or can afford a more secure place, you will perceive the workshop setting as a place of luxury and plenty, of peace and tranquillity or, possibly, as an uncomfortable weekend away from the serenity and comfort of home, sleeping in a room with strangers and eating canteen food.*

*Tonight is Friday, the beginning of the HOM workshop in Constantia, and another night when transport for the participants coming from Gugulethu, Crossroads, Khayelitsha and Mitchell's Plain has been difficult to organise. Z., the organiser who works full-time in the HOM office, could only get a driver late in the day due to cancellations of the usual operator. Usually, participants from the townships are provided with transport from HOM to come to a workshop, while others arrive in their own cars or pool lifts from town and the Cape Flats. I am one of the four facilitators who have come to the venue late in the afternoon to set up and allocate tasks for the weekend. A small group of participants has arrived at about 6pm and been asked to sit down for dinner while waiting for the others to arrive. Food is catered for at workshops so the facilitators are responsible only for the content of the programme. Meanwhile it is our task to put the arrivals at ease. Speaking to the waiting participants about their expectations of the event, a variety of responses emerges.*

*Xolile<sup>26</sup> is coming to the workshop from Philippi where he rents a small shack in somebody's backyard. He is presently unemployed and a former member of one of the liberation struggles' armed movements. He is one of many participants I spoke to who feels abandoned by the new government. He speaks of his plans to form a group where 'the soldiers and comrades, they must come and put [themselves] together to help themselves'. Xolile has come to the workshop to tell of his frustrations with the new South Africa and to 'heal some more, for there are bad things eating inside me from what has happened in the past'. 'For me', he says, 'the workshop is a way of getting out for a weekend, taking a break. Where I stay there is too much shooting, too much of many things, bad things, you do not know. I can't think there, you just cannot. I have been once to such a workshop and it did me good, nice food and nice people. It's quiet there, not much noise.'*

*Etty only heard about the workshop at the last minute from a friend who wanted her to accompany her. She works as a clerk in a local government office. She is not sure what is going to happen now as she has just quickly packed a few things for the night and got her lift from Bonteheuvel. 'But this looks like a nice place', she says, 'did you see we even have such nice rooms. I'm already feeling happy here.' She looks around the room. 'But I'm also scared about what we will do here because I don't think I want to speak about the past much, it's nothing to me, nothing much to say. So I'll just listen, I guess.' She goes on to relate her memories of the day that Ashley Kriel was killed in Cape Town, and how she felt upon hearing the news. 'The community was devastated. We all went to the funeral and there were police everywhere.' She turns silent.*

*Lindiwe has come to the workshop to accompany her husband who was shot by police during violence at a political rally in the 80s. She has brought her eight-year-old son along because she could not leave him at home alone. This causes some debate among the facilitators. Children are not usually accepted at HOM workshops. After some negotiations with the facilitators they decide that both can stay since it is too risky to ensure their safe return to their home in Paarl at this time of the night. 'I'm just tired', L. says, 'there's so much suffering in our lives because of this injury. I hope that here they can help us. I worked in a factory canning fruit but only for 3 months. Every*

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<sup>26</sup> All names are changed

*day my children ask me about their father, and why doesn't he have the money? Why other fathers have the money? And I have to say: It's because he was shot. Sometimes he even is a bit mad, this injury, it confuses his head at times, and we are scared then. In season I sometimes work in the harvesting. I hope that here they can find something for us so we can get on with our lives.'*

*Sitting with her sister is Catherine who has come from Woodstock where she owns a small business. Her sister, who had heard about HOM from a friend, encouraged her to come. 'I'm feeling nervous. But it's okay, I'm sure it'll be an experience.' She notes that, except for two of the facilitators, she and her sister are the only white South Africans present. Much later, two months after the workshop, she tells me that 'at that moment I just felt like running away. I mean, I thought: what was I doing there? I'm not in the right place. Just the way people looked at us I felt like they were thinking - What right do those two have to be here?'*

*Ntombi is sitting quietly at the end of the table. She came because of the TRC, she says, they said it would be a good thing to go to such a workshop. 'Because my son was killed by the security police. Because we need to continue and heal. We do not know when our suffering will end, but we have to try to forgive, we have to forget about what happened. Move on.'*

*Then a phone call comes in. It is Z., the facilitator who accompanied the taxi from the locations, in panic: 'We've been hijacked. Send help!' It is risky to go into some of the participants' living areas in a taxi not marked to be from that area. The taxi hired for the transport of participants this time belonged to a private tour operator from Mitchell's Plain and did not carry a licensed area plate. Khayelitsha taxi operators stopped the vehicle and threatened to shoot the driver; transgression of unwritten territorial boundaries. Routes are 'owned' and monitored by the different taxi associations. It takes a while for facilitator Y., who is on the phone to Z., to understand where exactly the taxi is at present, in an area totally unknown to Y. 'Petrol station, Site C' is what she gathers before the cell phone is cut off. Other facilitators try to call the police and reach an answering machine.*

*Finally, I manage to reach a colleague who works as a mediator and peace-builder in the particular area of Khayelitsha. He agrees to rush to the scene*

*and assist the group. But there are four petrol stations in that area, he says. No one knows which one our group is at. South African realities are seeping into the workshop space before anything has even started. The mood among the remaining participants in the room is subdued. Someone asks if there will indeed be a workshop, and what if something 'bad' has happened? The others hush him up.*

*Eventually, after a tense hour, the group arrives unharmed: the taxi drivers of Khayelitsha Site C have eventually decided to let them go. Z., as facilitator from HOM who had the responsibility to accompany them is completely exhausted and shattered. She relates how she was pushed around violently by the taxi drivers when she tried to explain the situation. They said they would not be spoken to by a woman. She tells how she got so angry that the other passengers had to hold her back so she would not get beaten up, as the taxi drivers threatened. Meanwhile, here we are speaking about the weekend as a 'safe' space for speaking about the violence of the past. It already seems somewhat ironic.*

*After dinner, the complete group, now numbering 24 people, gathers in one room for the beginning session, relieved that we can finally start. The workshop is attended by a fairly heterogeneous group of participants, in terms of apartheid's racial categories, age, gender and, probably, experiences. Previous workshops have been more homogenous; white South Africans especially have been largely absent in the process, to the concern of the organisers who aim for 'diversity'. Some workshops have been held for 'closed' groups that work together or organisations, for example, the victim support group 'Khulumani' and church congregations.*

*As lead facilitator, Father Michael Lapsley introduces the programme for the weekend and asks participants to commit themselves to staying for the entire weekend. By now it is almost ten o'clock. Nonetheless his presence has a calming and focusing effect on the group, and everybody seems eager to begin. L.'s son asks quietly: 'What happened to his hands?' A letter bomb sent to Father Michael by the apartheid government in 1992, exploded in his hands. Sitting next to me L. looks a little embarrassed. 'Later', she whispers to her son. Father Michael introduces the facilitators as support persons for the participants at all times. He describes the HOM weekend as a 'journey' that the group will embark on together, in which each individual can explore*

*his or her personal path, where he or she came from and wishes to go in the future. He uses the analogy of a train that 'picks people up from wherever they are at right now. Imagine we are all on the train. People have come onto the train from very different places but now they are on the train together. And the train is steadily moving through the weekend offering its gifts to anyone who wants to join the journey. But you don't want to get off before we reach our next destination on Sunday.'*

*He suggests that people offer each other 'a helping hand' to get onto the train and emphasises the notion of 'togetherness' and 'sharing' for the weekend. 'This is one step we can take along our journey, one step towards healing and wholeness.' Confidentiality, gentleness and trust are other aspects he mentions: 'The personal stories told at the workshop are not for those outside because we need to make this a safe space for each other. Confidentiality around the stories people share contributes to that.' He also speaks of South Africa as a 'violent country, as has just been demonstrated. We need to learn to be very gentle with each other. We already know very well how to be violent with one another.' Despite the late hour, he captures the attention of the participants at once. The basic philosophy of HOM is interwoven with his persona and credentials. HOM is a concept that can be used by any skilled facilitator. Nonetheless, workshops with Father Michael are different from those without him because of the respect he enjoys, as a political activist and priest and through the interest and reverence for his personal story as a survivor.*

*'We need to acknowledge each other's damage in South Africa', he continues, 'All of us have been messed up by apartheid. All have been damaged in one way or another. That is why we are here - to speak about our own woundedness. There is little room for it every day, to speak about the past, to say: What have I done? What was done to me? What did I fail to do? We need to look at our memories, not to forget what happened, but to say, 'what is it about the past that destroys us? What is it that paralyses me from moving forward?' And then get a bit of the poison out. We need to keep that which is life-giving and leave behind what keeps us prisoners inside.'*

*Father Lapsley then asks the participants to get together in pairs with someone they do not know and spend a few minutes talking to one another about where they come from and what has brought them to the workshop.*

Later they are then asked to introduce the person to the group. Facilitators mix with participants for this exercise. I speak to L. who continues to tell me about her current life, of her suffering related to her husband's injury. 'I didn't go to the TRC and now I'm out of job. We didn't know about the TRC, nobody told us.' The level of her despair is immediate. It is clear that she has also come to the workshop to seek advice and be helped with her urgent material needs. I wonder how much speaking about what happened is going to help her. It is also evident that she is addressing me as a white woman and facilitator who clearly has access to resources, organisations and contacts, and that her hopes in this regard are high. 'Undine promised that the workshop will help', she says when introducing me. I thought I had been careful not to instil such hopes or promise anything.

The introductory session at this workshop resonates with my experiences at other weekends in that many of the participants bring a sense of urgency, and, time and again, great material needs, which are then projected onto the HOM process. Often, already during the introduction in pairs, stories are told which contain intimate details and reference is made to the person's present situation and feelings. This is at least the case where participants speak the same language. In other cases, participants were shy at this initial contact and afterwards spoke about feeling embarrassed at their lack of language skills as well as talking to a stranger. This is evident now as participants are introducing their 'partner' to the larger group. Participants are encouraged to speak in their mother tongue, and translation is frequent but also slows down the process to the extent that many choose to speak in English if they can.

After the introduction there is a brief period in which people write down their expectations of the workshop on small pieces of paper and pin them up on the wall where they remain for the duration of the weekend. Sister Ja. is one of the senior facilitators at HOM. She proceeds to introduce the drama group Mina Nawe and their performance. Themba, the leader of Mina Nawe, explains that the name of the group means 'You and I' and that they have come to share 'a piece of art' called 'That Spirit', which, he says, 'is not just a drama or theatre but part of our own story'.

A drum sounds, there is shouting, people are running through the circle: "All you people the truth is coming' they sing. That spirit' is a twenty-minute

*enactment of scenes from the apartheid years, a powerful and emotionally moving combination of interactive drama and songs. It is meant as a catalyst for participants' memories of apartheid. 'It kick-starts the process', one facilitator explains. The scenes include a mother who has lost her son to a police assassination; a shoot-out between police and activists in a township, setting the background for the story of a young white soldier who fought in the border wars and was then sent into the townships to kill school-children; his mother's despair at his increasing alienation and appeal not to turn his anger against his own family; a husband who witnessed the rape of his wife by security police but does not want to speak about it in front of the TRC. In most scenes there is an implicit appeal that becomes direct towards the end: 'We need to tell our stories and speak of our pain for the sake of our children. Do not bury them, digging holes in the backyard. Our children will fall into these holes!'*

*The drama sets the scene for the workshop as a space for memories and emotions. It presents a range of images from the apartheid years and evokes some of its spectres. At the workshops that I observed, the drama has at all times had a strong, visible emotional impact on participants. It is not only what is depicted that 'touches souls', as one participant put it, but the strength of personal passion and commitment visible in the actors' performance that, as another participant explained, 'allows you to feel their own pain and tears in what they enacted.' If the actors are not available to perform, or during workshops outside of Cape Town, the first evening begins with a reflection on participants' experiences while witnessing the TRC, which however, does not offer the same 'emotional entry' into the process of the weekend as the drama.*

*Tonight, during the first song as actress L. raises her fist and says 'For this peace we were assassinated' and begins to sing, many participants have tears in their eyes. Some of the older women are weeping openly, especially at the scene of S. acting a mother crying over her lost son. A tissue box is passed around. One can see clutched fists and clenched teeth. Angry faces. 'The alteration between songs and scenes and the power of the voices of the actors gives you a chill', says one participant later and those around agree.*

*After the performance there is a moment of silence as the actors take chairs and join the circle of the group. The atmosphere is still very*

*emotional; some people are wiping away tears. 'It took me right back to those years', one participant begins when the group is asked for the emotions and thoughts that the drama has triggered. 'It made me very very angry. I can't believe how all this could happen.' - 'Sad, just so unbelievably sad. There are not enough tears for all the suffering we went through.' - 'It makes me feel helpless, how can we be alright when all this happened?' - 'Will it ever end?' A number of participants sit silently staring at the floor or straight ahead. The facilitators have asked the group to 'concentrate on feelings' when commenting on the performance. 'We're not interested in a political analysis of the situation back then. There's another time and space for that outside the workshop. We want to know how you felt then and how you feel about it today', says Father Lapsley, 'it's about what is in your heart more than the head stuff.'*

*The reactions to the drama bring out a range of memories from participants who describe their experiences with the apartheid police in the locations, teargas in children's eyes, 1976<sup>27</sup> in schools in the Cape, casspirs<sup>28</sup> everywhere, jumping fences and torn school uniforms, funerals and fear when the children did not come home, trying to protect friends, witnessing death, tricking the police. It is as though an initial floodgate has been opened and details of stories and events are pouring out. And anger, a lot of anger seems to be the dominating sentiment coupled with sadness over lost lives and opportunities. The white participants are silent at this moment. This is not unusual and it speaks about the kind of space that is created by the drama performance, the kinds of memories that are approved or sanctioned by the images and inherent message. 'That Spirit' allows for identification with the flow of events mainly for those who feel they have suffered or been affected in a negative way by the apartheid system, black<sup>29</sup> or white. It is designed to give room to their emotions and replay some of their suffering. Only once at a workshop have I experienced a white person uttering anger at the representation of the apartheid years in the*

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<sup>27</sup> 1976 was the time of the Soweto uprising and widespread protest and unrest in South Africa.

<sup>28</sup> Armoured type of vehicle used by the apartheid Police.

<sup>29</sup> The term 'black' in this case is used as a political term and includes all those discriminated against by apartheid on grounds of their skin colour. This is not to undermine the complexities of racial differentiation under the system but to mark one significant and central division (among others) at play during the workshops.

play. 'Not all white people were ignorant', he said, 'you are misrepresenting things.'<sup>30</sup>

*Afterwards, Father Michael comments that Mina Nawe's performance is 'like a mirror which shows us parts of the journey which we have travelled. This weekend is about bringing out some more of the poison that holds us imprisoned. This does not mean to forget what happened. It is about releasing some of the stuff inside that destroys us.'*

*Uncle D., one of the HOM facilitators, eventually stops the session when participants are beginning to tell more and longer narratives filled with details of the apartheid years. 'Tomorrow is the day for telling stories', he says. The last in the group to comment and 'share their feelings' about the drama are the actors themselves. Their presence and commentary creates an important link between the drama itself and the actors as they play characters that represent their own suffering and/or the 'true' story of someone they know. It also forms a connection between the actors and spectators in that they emerge from characters in the play to be a (temporary) part of the group<sup>31</sup> who share their personal sentiments about the past and present situation in South Africa. Finally, this moment defines the metonymic tie between the drama and reality as the stories in the drama become linked via the actors to actual individuals' experiences and come to represent the range of South African realities under apartheid. It is significant that the scenes are enacted by a demographically 'diverse' group of young South Africans, members of a generation that, in the eyes of many participants, represents hope and 'the future'. 'We do this as part of our own healing, but also so we have a future in our country', explains T., the leader of the group. Participants experience the actors' dedication and commitment to the HOM process as very meaningful.*

*Actress L. speaks at length and very movingly about how apartheid created 'cycles of oppression' in which whites oppressed blacks, but blacks also oppressed blacks and whites oppressed other whites. She challenges us to*

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<sup>30</sup> Another drama has been in development by the Mina Nawe actors in connection with HOM's attempt to develop 'Anger Workshops' as a result of anger as a prevalent theme at workshops. This piece presents a view of the present in South Africa and presents some of the cases where people 'refuse to move from the past'.

<sup>31</sup> Some of the actors are also facilitators and may stay on after the performance to facilitate the workshop. They enjoy a high level of respect from participants after the performance and throughout the workshop.

*'break the cycles' and invites the participants: 'Open your heart and let some of this in, let some of the anger and the destructive memories out.'* Actress Y. comments on her role as 'the white mother' in the play. She speaks of wanting to give a voice to 'the other side' and of her need to participate and 'make a contribution to the country' as a young white person. S. is shaken by anger as she speaks. 'Tonight, I couldn't even feel myself as I was performing', she says. 'Because last week my cousin got shot, and everything just stays the same, the cycles never break, we get shot, we shoot each other, all the same. When I perform the mother, I just think of my mother and I become my mother.' She stops herself; tears running silently down her cheeks. L. puts a hand on her shoulder. T. takes over and tells of the creation process of the drama and how he feels the drama represents something of all of the actor's life-stories, past and present. He then suggests to the participants what he calls 'an exercise to express togetherness' that effectively results in the long process of a 'group hug', where each participant is asked to go around the circle and thank everyone for the evening by giving them a hug. It results in a half-embarrassed, half-emotional set of gestures as the members of the circle file past each other, each body held against another for a moment. But the act also lets loose some of the tension of the evening, eyes meet, laughter springs up, some tentative release - the first session is over.

*Before the group breaks up and the actors leave the workshop, the facilitators distribute a sheet with questions. Father Michael explains that the questions are meant as guidelines for the storytelling tomorrow and advises: 'Use them as you please. If not needed, put them under your pillow.'* After the session one of the white participants approaches him to ask if she can leave the workshop to go to a rave party later tonight. He smiles calmly. She senses that her request is at odds with the situation but emphasises that there are 'DJs from America' and that it is very important to her to go. Father Michael explains that the workshop needs her to stay to function as a whole. 'We have tonight only begun to take off the bandages. It is not a good idea to leave the journey now, not for yourself but also not for the others.' She eventually decides to stay.

*Before the evening ends, facilitators meet to allocate the participants to the 'story-telling' groups for the next day and to debrief after the first session. Impressions of the initial evening are used to determine who is*

*placed in which of tomorrow's storytelling groups of about six participants and with which facilitator(s). This time we have enough facilitators to allocate two per group. Often an experienced and a new co-facilitator share the task. The facilitator teams are designed to offer the small groups two different personalities to relate to as well as, preferably, a combination of persons of different age, race and gender. Participants coming from the same area, family or who know each other should not be in the same group so as not to be hindered from 'speaking openly'. The two participant groups that have come from Bonteheuwel and Gugulethu are placed in separate storytelling groups, as is a married couple. Two participants who are seen to have 'a difficult story' (meaning it is known to the facilitators that they have gone through experiences of extreme violence or trauma) are placed with the most experienced facilitators. This careful compilation is important as it initiates the way in which the 'telling space' for the next day is orchestrated. The 'storytelling-groups' are supposed to reflect the diversity of the workshop and each, if possible, consist of members of the different racial categories apartheid created. Language problems also arise at times. Tonight there are more Xhosa speaking participants than facilitators, so some will have to be asked if they are comfortable to speak in English during the storytelling.*

*So ends the first night of the workshop.*

## Chapter Two

### Imagined Communities – Divided Realities:

#### Space, Memory and Subjectivity in the Post-Apartheid City

Intractable traces of the past are felt in people's bodies, known in their landscapes, landmarks and souvenirs, and perceived in the tough moral fabric of their social relations – sometimes the stifling, utterly unwelcome fabric (Werbner 1998: 3).

As sketched in the Preface, post-apartheid Cape Town remains a place of extremes, embedded in starkly divergent discourses of beauty and fear, marked by its abundance of natural splendour and contrasting bleak socio-economic disparities. It is a multiply fragmented and ruptured city, its everyday interactions shaped by the memories of past discrimination and exclusion that remain largely invisible and unspoken in the public sphere. Cape Town is a city shaped by the emotional resonance of such 'embodied memories' of the apartheid years as they remain ingrained in people's feelings, thoughts and actions. To understand the complex interpersonal dynamics acted out during the memory process initiated by HOM, it is important to consider how spatiality, memory and subjectivity intersect and impact on post-apartheid social relations in South Africa.

Cape Town covers a large area stretching from the slopes of Table Mountain across the sandy flat soil to another range of mountains some eighty kilometres away. Not unlike other urban zones around the globe where 'the post modern condition is characterised by polarised cities, atomised ethnic neighbourhoods and racial locations divided 'naturally from each other' (Goldberg 1993: 202), Cape Town hosts its own extreme form of pocketed existence featuring highly localised identities that perpetuate existing patterns of segregation. The implementation of apartheid's racist policies, mainly through the Group Areas Act<sup>32</sup>, the Population Registration Act<sup>33</sup> and influx control, was particularly

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<sup>32</sup> Act No. 36 of 1966: 'To consolidate the law relating to the establishment of group areas, the control of the acquisition of immovable property and the occupation of land and premises, and matters incidental thereto'.

'successful' in shaping in racial terms the ability of the majority of inhabitants to perceive, relate to and know the place they live in. The city's geographic structure operates as a series of rings, like ripples around Table Mountain and the Atlantic seaside. A wealthy, white-owned centre extends to ever poorer and racially defined outer 'black' zones. Access to resources, finances and employment is regulated by the ability to move from the under-resourced and violent margins towards the affluent and secure centres of business,<sup>34</sup> and to the formerly whites-only suburbs. Fear and concerns for safety constrain the capacity and desire of prosperous suburbanites to travel in the opposite direction, from 'downtown' into the 'townships'. In any case, there is little necessity or motivation (save curiosity) to do so.

The nature of space in the Cape has never been casual; it has always been highly significant, whether in a sense of being traumatic or blessed (Western 1981: 31-58; Erasmus 2001; Rassool & Witz 1996; Robins 2001). A history of territorial control marked by colonial violence and the struggles for survival of a slave-based community, and the spatial grid shaped by colonial policy and later apartheid's forced removals, were met with the creative processes of hybridity and a strong sense of spirituality attributed to the physique of the landscape.<sup>35</sup> John Western, in his account of the repercussions of the Groups Areas Act, argues that, in the space of 40 years, Cape Town moved from being one of the country's most integrated cities to one of the most segregated (Western 1981: 3). For the majority of Capetonians, existence within the apartheid city became characterised by the ability to experience only a strategically limited excerpt of the larger metropolitan realities, while being either barred or sheltered from much of the rest. This is not to say that 'atomisation' and the hierarchical separation of urban social space (Goldberg 1993; see also Feld & Basso 1996; Goldberg 1997; Damian-Smith et al. 1996)

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<sup>33</sup> Act No. 30 of 1950: 'To make provisions for the compilation of a Register of the Population of the Union; for the issue of Identity Cards to persons whose names are included in the Register; and for matters incidental thereto.' The Act effectively legislated race-based categorisation.

<sup>34</sup> Under the 'new urban management' Cape Town's CBD is now equipped with a multi-million-Rand CCTV digital surveillance system and a special inner city police force forging new boundaries between 'safe zones' accessible to those able to participate in the production and sale of this 'new Cape Town', and uncontrolled 'off-limits' space occupied by all 'Others'.

<sup>35</sup> For instance, religious activities are linked to the presence of sacred sites in nature, such as for example the holy Muslim burial grounds on Table Mountain.

are unique South African phenomena. Nor is it to ignore or diminish the capacity of people to negotiate, resist and subvert the rigidity of such a frame of governance. Nonetheless, apartheid's racist policies, and the ways they came to be enacted, effectively shaped not only mobility and physical space in Cape Town but the scope of interpersonal experiences possible within the city and, subsequently, the performance of intersubjectivities. Racial segregation, effected and espoused most starkly through the forced removals (Carrim & Soudien 2001), became embedded in the perceptions and day-to-day interactions of the city's inhabitants, 'ensuring that South Africans lived segregated and unequal lives in almost every sense of the term' (Carrim & Soudien, 2001: 155). People classified as 'non-white' and segregated away from the city centre crossed the old racial boundaries of apartheid segregation on a daily basis, but were permitted to do so only to offer their labour.<sup>36</sup> Relationships in turn were characterised foremost by the power dynamics of *baasskap* and 'madamship'.<sup>37</sup>

The intensity of sentiment and level of contestation attached today to diverse areas within Cape Town, such as for example, the seemingly 'empty' grounds of former District Six (Western 1981; Rasool & Witz 1996; Kayser 2000c), displays a haunting legacy of decades of ideologically conceived exclusions. While a restitution process is underway - backed by a land claims court that issues title deeds and compensation - contestations over access and power remain (Jackson 2003). Presently, a secular economic order claims the same places as commodities in the global practices of spatial consumption, auctioning them off as part of the world's premier real estate, and thereby ignoring local valorisations.<sup>38</sup> This scenario is placed against a background of apartheid-inherited political faultlines where local authorities are locked in battle over change and

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<sup>36</sup> This pattern mirrored the migrant labour system that allowed black men into the city space to provide cheap labour while their families were supposedly enjoying 'separate but equal development' in the poor and under-resourced 'black homelands'. In turn, female domestic workers were asked to live and labour in white homes while their families stayed in the townships or rural areas.

<sup>37</sup> Literally: the male and female conception of 'master' (*Baas* and *Madam*).

<sup>38</sup> Current property prices in coastal mountain areas such as Camps Bay, or the controversial Oudekraal development, have soared to millions of Rands, making property ownership in these areas mainly accessible to holders of 'hard currency'. More than 40% of Camps Bay property, for example, is owned by nationals from other (largely European) countries. Questions around land and property and tenure rights have gained currency with the controversial land reform in Zimbabwe since 2000. In February 2002 individual members of the African National Congress government suggested a restriction on the ability of non-citizens to hold property title, a request met with much protest locally and internationally.

consolidation, over (re)distribution of resources and maintenance of privilege, and over future conditions of access and exclusion.<sup>39</sup>

Noyes (2001) asks about sites that may enable alternative constructions of self and other to those apartheid instituted. He reminds that,

[...] apartheid has left no spatial structures in which a culture of pluralism can be enacted. In enacting any alternative ideas of the human it may require, civil society must at the same time invent or borrow models for structuring these absent spaces (Noyes 2001: 53).

This chapter explores the spatial dimensions of HOM workshops as a quasi-utopian site in relation to the limiting social geographies of the post-apartheid city, examining some of the complexities of this particular kind of intervention and outlining its fragile and conflicting nature. The workshops presented a carefully framed experiment of an integrated space, in which post-apartheid identities came to be tested, contested and negotiated through a process of interaction, remembering, telling and witnessing personal stories of the apartheid years. HOM's intervention facilitated the bringing together and speaking of memories derived from physically segregated spaces into one contained arena, focusing on the experiential and emotional dimension of the past and its resonance in the present. The workshops brought about a closed, alternative social space, a kind of 'lab' and a liminal arena (Turner 1969) that imagined an environment temporarily 'freed' from outside influences. At the same time, the workshop site was located and embedded in the context of the post-apartheid city, which, in turn, was situated in a globalised economy where 'the market recycles poverty in the name of the exotic' while proposals of 'a culture of democracy' help sanitise the same process (Nuttall et al. 2001: 405). HOM provided a temporary opportunity to put the new discourses of diversity, non-racialism and reconciliation into practice. However, I found that, inevitably, participants

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<sup>39</sup> The Western Cape was the only province in South Africa governed after 1994 by an alliance (DA) consisting of the successor party to apartheid's National Party (NNP) and the Democratic Party (DP). As one of the wealthiest it has been a highly contested province, more so since the ANC won the majority of votes in the local elections in 1999, but was unable to form a coalition government locally. However, the situation changed in 2003 when a coalition of governance in the Western Cape was formed between the ANC and the NNP. In 2004, the ANC solely took over government in the Province while the NNP dissolved.

acted out the contradictions and encountered the limitations of such discourses. They were forced to consider new possibilities of negotiating established social boundaries.

This chapter considers the specific setting that HOM workshops generated and the concrete interactions that ensued within, against the grain of persisting geographical, political and social structures through which the city's inhabitants reproduce, resist and question (post)apartheid's manifold racialisations of social space. Here the 'politics of emotions' and the 'social and psychic dynamics of subjectivity and power in the production and imagination of urban space [are central to the city as] a site for the formation, maintenance and representation of social and cultural identities' (Nahnsen 2002: 7-8). Such considerations assist in analysing how social relations of power are shaped by *experience, emotion and embodied memory* and hence how they may be challenged and transformed by *processes of experiencing and remembering* (in a specific and temporary setting framed as 'different' and 'safe').

### **Sharing City Space in the Present**

Comments of HOM participants showed how apartheid memories and their emotional legacy continue to be a determining feature of urban existence in post-apartheid South Africa. The emotional spectrum the majority of inhabitants of the city experience every day when crossing the socio-geographical boundaries apartheid instituted does not feature in popular representations of Cape Town as the multicultural 'Mother City'. Neither is there much scope to discuss openly such sentiments in the places that people have crossed these boundaries to travel to in the first place - at work, in city homes and offices, during leisure, and in shopping malls. In addition to the economic factors that prevent mobility, the emotional effects of entering apartheid's former 'whites only' zones still impact significantly on the ways in which black people make use of new opportunities to access public spaces (and may feel anxious or unable to enter). A former District Six resident and HOM participant explained how today, despite being able to go to beaches formerly reserved for 'whites only', she feels resentful and bitter when making use of these spaces:

My granddaughter asked me the other day: Why doesn't my father support the South African rugby team?<sup>40</sup> So I tried to explain that when he was her age, we would drive along to places where there were lovely beaches and parks. And the children wanted to stop and get into the water. So my husband and I had to say: 'No, no, let's go further along'. – 'But it looks so nice', they said. So we sort of tried to cover it up as much as we could. We would just drive past and go to some other place where we were allowed to go. I said to my granddaughter that is the reason why [your father doesn't feel patriotic about the Springbok rugby team].<sup>41</sup> [...] I must tell you, the hurt and the pain is always going to be there [...]. My granddaughter Michelle, she won't have that in her life. I will always have it when we go on holidays to places we could never go to - I still think: They had it all in the past, and look how beautiful [these places are]. And not having been able to share it makes my heart sore and bitter. Bitterness. I pray every day that it doesn't last all my life (R. 6/99).

HOM participants found the workshop a moment to give voice to such sentiments and many described how the underlying presence of antagonistic memories shapes their experiences of being in now commonly used public spaces. One HOM participant spoke about his daily walk to work in the morning:

One day I walk, I will see D. in the street. And he comes up to me and says – 'Hi, how are you these days?' And walks on. A bit awkward maybe. As if nothing much has happened. As if he was not the guy that tortured me, that sent me down the road to my nightmares. I suffered so much because of that guy. And there's nothing there to show it. We pass each other in the street, day by day, going to work, as if nothing ever happened. I just can't believe it. We don't talk. I don't even have the desire to kill him anymore. So I change sides when I see him from afar. Can you believe it? It's still me who has to change sides to avoid the *boer*<sup>42</sup> (X. 6/99).

In its extreme form this account reflects a facet of the reality of the negotiated settlement – what it means for survivors and perpetrators to share the same space in the post-

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<sup>40</sup> The reference to the South African national rugby team manifests the link between space, sentiment, identity and the projection of the new imaginary where all South Africans are invited to share a new national pride and patriotism through the re-valuation of old symbols (such as the national rugby team still seen to represent at the time [1999] a 'white sport').

<sup>41</sup> She alludes to the emotional connection between the anger that many who experienced apartheid's oppressive measures feel at seeing symbols of the previous South African nationalism, such as the Springbok rugby team. Another similar example of such triggers might be the singing of (or refusal to sing) the Afrikaans part of the new South African national anthem, which is derived from the old Afrikaner anthem 'Die Stem'.

<sup>42</sup> *Boer* = Afrikaans for farmer. Term still used with a negative connotation to refer to white Afrikaner males. The/Die *Boere* = term used for apartheid Police

apartheid city. For the vast majority of South Africans, such everyday encounters take place not between torturer and tortured but in the context of more subtle forms of past discrimination, between those privileged and those disadvantaged by apartheid's policies. The accounts told at HOM make tangible the acuteness of experiences of violence, discrimination and humiliation apartheid facilitated and their resonance in the present, illustrating how these experiences have been inscribed into bodies and places in ways invisible to the outside eye. Conscious or not, this emotional subtext continues to be acted out between those on either side of the former ideological divide evoking largely unspoken and unacknowledged emotions such as discomfort, anger, shame and pain. One HOM participant spoke in great detail of a particular sidewalk in the town of Worcester where he used to live:

Even now when I walk on that place I can feel how it used to be. How I felt when I had to make way for the white *baas* coming along. How I wasn't supposed to walk there in the first place. And I can still feel that anger inside me. It is there, still, sometimes burning like fire inside. (G. 9/99).

The deep-rooted damage in the social fabric, its intra- and intersubjective dimension, became visible in the lasting impact of the seemingly ordinary or minor hurts inflicted in such interactions, in the loss of self-respect, self-worth and sense of dignity that they signified. In some cases, participants described how the faces they see in the street evoke fear and the memories of past violation. The view of a casspir, a police uniform, a side glance can bring about instant sentiments of terror, speaking to a different, less visible kind of violence of the past that remains present in everyday interactions. Body languages, however, speak more clearly.

I was in the Gardens Centre [local shopping centre], and I saw this white young lady. I did not know where 'Musica' [a music shop] was there. So I went to her wanting to ask where 'Musica' is. And she just went: Ahh... [raises her hands in a gesture of disgust and defence]. I wanted to *klap*<sup>43</sup> her!! I was so angry! And I told her: 'Your mother taught you that we are baboons, no?' So how can you change? Because these things are still happening (Q. at Focus Group discussion 5/99).

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<sup>43</sup> Afrikaans: *klap* = hit

A gesture can call forth anger and hatred. A derogatory phrase picked up in passing holds feelings of being powerless. Before any visible reaction, memory evokes a physical response in the listener; it is literally 'embodied memory' that informs human interactions.

The extent to which space in the post-apartheid city is emotionally charged influences the degree to which people make use of the possibilities of change in everyday spatial practices in a way that goes beyond the few zones of visible 'racial mixing' that make it onto the high-gloss covers of tourist brochures and sell the city as a tangible extension of 'the new, reconciled nation'. What this newly shared space means to people or how it is defined is little negotiated or debated in everyday interactions. Instead it is left to the 'invisible', supposedly deregulating forces of a free market economy that, it is assumed, will overcome past division without further intervention. Underneath remains a different experience, shaped by an emotional legacy of fear, terror, anger, hurt and bitterness that hinders the ability and desire to generate new social spaces and participate in the restructuring of conditions of access.

### **Healing in the Face of Continuities?**

I think it is hard for people from outside to understand how little contact South Africans have with one another. It is just not that easy to bridge that kind of gap. There was not ever a venue for it. That is what apartheid was about - to stop people from meeting on a normal basis so that they could understand how wrong the whole thing was and that other people were not all monsters. So you learn when you see somebody. Something happens inside you when you see a person that you can actually touch right in front of you. And if you maybe went through that process many, many times you would feel at one with the other people as South African instead of being afraid (C. 7/99).

We did meet white South Africans, every day we did meet them. We know them, but, unfortunately, we did not know them as humans, really, you see. We knew them as *baas* and *madam*. And we still do, we still work for them every day. We leave our homes and travel to Cape Town. And they never come to us, they are too scared, even now, but we would like to change that (P. 10/99).

The quest for 'bridging the gaps' and 'relating differently' between Capetonians was one raised by many HOM participants across the board when commenting on their workshop experience. Yet the two voices above portray how the different subjectivities forged under apartheid engender different conceptions of social repair, complicating popular post-1994 ideas of 'bridging cultural gaps' as visible markers of change. I use the term subjectivity, following Werbner (2002), as a signifier for the complex senses of self that emerge at the intersection of the personal, political and moral conditions of a particular time and place. In this and the following chapters I examine how these conditions come to be played out in spatial, narrative and performative formations of sociality, formations that in turn reveal 'the actual intertwining of subjectivity and intersubjectivity [...] in the ways that people actively negotiate or play off one against the other, from one postcolonial moment to another' (Werbner 2002: 2).

Cape Town's socio-spatial dynamics touch upon the raw nerves of an urban existence shaped by the presence of fear, violence and a constant mode of survival for the majority of citizens (Jensen 2001). These dynamics in turn reproduce many of the familiar strategies of apartheid's socio-economic spatiality in the present, strategies which further entrench established social divides despite discourses of 'non-racialism'. In the words of Robins:

In this contemporary scenario of class warfare and the militarization of everyday life, public space is destroyed in order to insulate, spatially and socially, the middle classes from undesirable Others (Robins 2001: 414).

For many HOM participants from the Cape Flats whose realities were shaped by violence and survival, the aspect of physical safety at the workshop was very significant. The idea of 'a weekend away' in a nice, tranquil, abundant and secure place could be enough motivation to come to *any* workshop that enabled one to leave the zone of high-intensity survival for a while. Safety also meant having the possibility to claim any kind of personal space at all, a single room, shelter and safety from abuse experienced in the home and on the street. In this sense, participants mentioned as 'healing' having 'time out' for reflection and 'a quiet space' against the realities of overcrowded shacks and

RDP homes<sup>44</sup> as ‘healing’. Participants who enjoyed the benefits of a middle-class existence, on the other hand, framed the concern for safety at the workshops foremost as an emotional one. The risk they envisioned for themselves was in the encounter with the past, and a ‘safe place’ meant first of all that facilitators should ensure the ‘emotional safety’ of participants when entering the workshop space. The past in itself appeared as a dangerous entity, leaving the notion of remembering in need of a ‘safe place’ where memories of the past could emerge and be spoken without ‘harming’ the speaker or listeners. Under these circumstances asking about opportunities to ‘meet on a normal basis’ also constitutes a question about what is ‘normal’, and about the ways in which South Africans (re)produce social space in the post-apartheid city in transition, while at the same time asking to focus on how people experience and interpret their everyday interactions, or lack thereof.

The laws of apartheid rendered the act of going into another part of town a transgression of the law. Attempting to traverse the post-apartheid city today, it becomes clear that what might be imagined and desired as normality within the new nation: that the demise of apartheid’s policies of segregation would bring with it the basic ability of citizens to move about and meet where and when they wish to – still requires extraordinary and potentially dangerous acts.<sup>45</sup> The spatial obstacles faced by HOM when convening a volunteer group, sustained by regular working meetings and occasional social functions, made evident the persisting conditions of access and exclusion: Who has the resources to give spare time to volunteer work? Who has the vehicle to provide transport? Who is willing to drive into the townships to pick someone up, who ventures into unsafe territory to drop someone off? Two experiences illustrate the spatial context in which the HOM project operates:

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<sup>44</sup> RDP = Reconstruction and Development Programme. The first economic programme of the South African government had an agenda to ‘build one million houses in five years’, but these houses were to be called ‘matchboxes’, measuring at most between 15 and 20 square metres. The RDP was abandoned in 1996 in favour of a market-oriented alternative, named the GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution) strategy that remains in place until today.

<sup>45</sup> In South African English many still use the word ‘travel’ when simply going into another part of the city: ‘I still have to *travel* home’.

Sometimes at night when I drop off S. after practice or one of our [HOM] meetings I always keep the headlights of my car on so she can run to her house hoping no one is hiding in the bushes next to the path to attack her. And believe me, she runs. I'm relieved every time she reaches the house (Y. 7/99).

The other day I was taking a friend of mine, Z., home to Gugs.<sup>46</sup> Driving to Gugs we stopped the car to put up a couple of [local election] posters. A group of men approached the car and they said to [my friend] in Xhosa: '*Mina ne wena!* [Hey you there!] Can we borrow your car?' And Z. asked what must she do if they borrow the car? So they said: 'No you can wait and we'll bring it back to you.' So then Z. realised that they were not very nice and they wanted to take the car. So she said: 'No, no.' She explained that I was the only person who was ever willing to take her home after meetings and stuff, and how I was really her friend. And if they were going to take away my car then it would make things so difficult for her. - And then they nodded and they said: 'But that's unusual for a white person.' And she just agreed, and she said to them: 'No, I'm not lending you the car today.' And they said: 'No, that's fine'. And they just let us go on. [...] A lot of people say to me: 'Why do you do that? You shouldn't be taking Z. home late at night'. [...] Only the day after she explained to me about the conversation. She said nothing to me on that evening, so I just carried on blissfully driving. I mean I didn't know. I think if she had left me alone in the car, they would have just taken the car and left me to walk to her house. No, I actually don't know which way it would have gone because I couldn't communicate with them. They wouldn't know why I was there. What was I doing driving around in Gugs as late as something to ten at night? I'm sure it's not normal (Y. 6/99).

In a milieu of chronic violence social actors continuously seek to mend what Feldman (1991: 79-80) has defined as the slippage between the symbolic order (in which the world is imagined as predictable and hence manageable) and the realities of material violence (in which that sense of predictability is frequently shattered). The above incidents and the mode in which they are recounted highlight a range of factors that regulate social mobility in Cape Town, and in turn define the success or failure of many an idealistic intervention project such as HOM that relies on volunteers' ability and willingness to take risks such as described above. They also touch upon the uneven distribution of crime in the city and the differing conceptions of spatial zones of violence, according to which Capetonians operate (see also Jensen 1999: 76-78). The extent to which citizens' security, a desired 'normality' in a democratic state, is not provided for in the post-apartheid *polis*

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<sup>46</sup> Gugulethu township in Cape Town

is even more bluntly felt by all who travel daily on public transport - facing defective vehicles, reckless driving, assault and sexual harassment. The degree to which contemporary violence has not ceased to damage the social fabric echoes apartheid's brutalities. It speaks to people's ability to adapt to an exhausting, permanent state of instability and violence in the public sphere, both imagined and real (Jensen 1999: 76). At the same time the frequent re-framing of manifestations of violence as simply 'criminal' (rather than as 'political', as in the past) disguises a much more complex phenomenology of conflict that is played out at local level (Jensen 2001; Wilson 2001). The continuities of violent conflict post-1994 remain among the primary social maladies plaguing the new South Africa, yet their intricate socio-political context is little researched or debated.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the multitude of representations that portray Cape Town as the prime example of 'rainbow nation' tourist imagery (Rassool & Witz 1996; Robins 2001), for the majority of inhabitants' everyday life in the city has not changed drastically since 1994. Robins' (2001) description of 'city sites' illustrates how - despite a prevalent discourse of transformation, change and 'a better life for all' - present political, social and economic forces have not ceased to work *against* the possibility of a more integrated urban existence in Cape Town and prevent people from moving easily across apartheid's entrenched boundaries and from making use of previously exclusive social and economic opportunities. In his study of changes in the use of urban space in Cape Town after 1994, Saff (1998: 208) argues that cities in South Africa are likely to *remain* highly segregated in terms of class and race because of the production of space under the current, market-oriented economic order. According to him the dilemma is perpetuated by the premises that guide current governance and policy-making - resting on the institution of an economic system where access to and control over desirable spaces are predestined to fuel societal conflict and further enhance apartheid's legacies. Saff argues (1998) that 'people will protect their privilege, even if it means maintaining racial and ethnic boundaries' (204), a process which is likely to result in the creation of small non-racial

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<sup>47</sup> One example would be the violent acts within impoverished residential areas against nationals from other African countries. What is framed as 'xenophobic violent conflict' by the authorities disguises rather than reveals a phenomenon that could tell us more about the inability of current 'narrations of nation' to unmask, question and deconstruct apartheid's destructive ways of fashioning difference and identity at local level (Bucwa, Centre for Conflict Resolution, personal communication 2001).

elites to the further exclusion of the urban poor majority. Nahnsen (2002: 194) in her study on space, fear and desire in Cape Town finds two competing discourses governing the city – the ‘rainbow nation’ speaking of integration, re-construction and redistribution, and the other focusing on security, order and practices of exclusion in the name of ‘global competitiveness’:

The discourse and practice of integration seems to be too weak to prevent the dominance of the new urban management and with that to prevent the new segregating forces in the city (Nahnsen 2002: 197).

The spatial legacies of apartheid are not only embedded in the political economy of the new order, in the physical landscape and in present city planning practices (Robins 2001), but also remain invisibly present in the mindscape of inhabitants in ways that exert a strong influence on people’s ability to re-imagine boundaries and collectivity in a context of survival. We need to look at the city, as Nahnsen (2002: 202) suggests, as a space of experience, a space of the imaginary, and a space shaped by the projection of individual and collective desires and fears in addition to its material frame. A deliberate experiment like the HOM process can bring to light the role personal memory plays in relation to how these more subtle forces shape the social fabric of the post-apartheid city.

### ***Healing of Memories - A Space for All?***

Every South African has a story to tell about the apartheid years. It is the story of what we did, of what was done to us, and what we failed to do. *“I know I should have stood up for the truth but I was too scared... What would have happened if I had spoken out?”* (HOM Flyer 1998, emphasis in original)

While keeping the focus on the suffering and pain caused by apartheid HOM cast its narrative spotlight on the more ordinary experiences of the time. Father Lapsley commented further saying that one should not over-pathologise people’s need of healing. On one hand, some people needed ‘expert psychological intervention’ and did not have access to it. On the other hand, for most South Africans being in one way or another

'damaged' by apartheid was the norm rather than the exception (FML 7/99).<sup>48</sup> HOM's definition of 'healing' reflects the urge to cleanse and purge the past. At the same time HOM emphasises the process-oriented and open-ended nature of South Africa's healing 'journey',<sup>49</sup> acknowledging the lifelong impact of (gross and small) violations on survivors.

HOM facilitators often presented the ideal workshop as if it were a sort of 'neutral' ground, where people leave preconceptions and prejudices at the doorstep. The prerogative of the intervention to 'create an empty, friendly space' (HOM Facilitator's Guidelines, 1997) expressed the desire for a kind of 'clean slate' and 'new beginnings' implicit in the discourses that marked and legitimised a 'new' South African-ness in a post-apartheid state (see also Wilson 1996, 2001). The idea was to get away from what was familiar for a weekend in order to enter a protected site in which to engage with the apartheid past and with each other as South Africans in new ways. Engaging the past became an endeavour that required a separate space outside the context of the everyday. At HOM the formalised workshop structure and facilitation were supposed to ensure a certain level of control, to allow the endeavour to be a 'safe' undertaking for 'all'. However, in practice, a much more risky and contested arena emerged. One of the *Mina Nawe* actors described a Friday evening session at a HOM workshop:

*First of all, it was a tense workshop because people were late. People got lost and people were late, so we only got started really late. One participant had arrived drunk or heavily under the influence of alcohol. Basically, during the introduction session before Mina Nawe performed, a member of MK<sup>50</sup> who was drunk had confronted an APLA<sup>51</sup> person and said: 'You are a traitor.' And they had got into conflict. But fortunately, the APLA person had realised he was drunk, so he decided to let it go because the guy is drunk, and he is not going to cause a scene. Fortunately! But that started the tension.*

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<sup>48</sup> He further related that, apart from the logistical problems in reaching counselling services, not all people may find helpful a process of one-on-one intervention that often takes place in an unfamiliar setting and across boundaries between psychologist and patient who in many cases do not share the same cultural, economic and experiential background (FML 7/99).

<sup>49</sup> The concept of 'journeying' features strongly throughout the workshop, and signifies that despite the open-ended view of healing assumed by the HOM, there is the idea of a beginning and a destination, the aim being that of 'leaving the 'poison' [meaning anger, hatred, violent and self-destructive tendencies] behind while being able to remember the past' (FML 7/99).

<sup>50</sup> MK = Umkhonto we Sizwe the former armed wing of the ANC liberations movement

<sup>51</sup> APLA = Azanian People's Liberation Army, the former armed wing of the PAC liberation movement

*Then, Mina Nawe came and performed and that was fine. And then, during the session while [one facilitator] was explaining [...] and giving some of his feelings, [...] another lady began to wail and weep. She really came apart at the seams. [She was] a Xhosa-speaking lady who nobody else really knew, but she had a friend who had come with her on the workshop. When she started to weep and wail and rock, everybody thought she was going to fall because she looked like she was going to fall over. She was saying things at the time in Xhosa, in between crying, that the rest of us could not understand, obviously. Her friend and one of the Mina Nawe actors, L. who obviously understood what she was saying, got up to usher her [out]. [...] While she was out of the room, we agreed as a group that we were going to wait. But it was really late at that stage. There was a really uncomfortable silence. People were just there. Somebody suggested that we all hold hands and we wait. [We did] and that went on for quite a while. She still had not returned. Then [facilitator] B. went out [...] to find out if this lady was going to come back. When he went out this lady was so bad that she was not ready to return to the circle. So when B. came back, facilitator D. suggested that because it was late we should begin, and she would join us when she was ready.*

*After he made that suggestion, participant M., who was, other than me, the only white person there, said that he was really uncomfortable with starting the group without this lady. Because he had introduced her, and she was his friend, and she was obviously in pain, he did not think the group should start without her being there. Then everyone [was confused]. The [facilitators] tried to ask: 'What do other people think – should we or shouldn't we go on?' It was basically all black Xhosa people, except for B. and D. [facilitators] and M. who was the white person and myself. So most of the black people were in agreement that we could go on, and [the lady] could join us when they were ready. And D. and B. were prepared to go with the group's feelings. But M. felt very strongly: 'No.' And he felt that it was a very unsafe space. He said: 'It feels to me that it is an unsafe space, and I am supposed to share really deeply. But I'm afraid that if I share deeply I'm also going to be ushered out of the room. So this is a journey and it's a process of sharing each other's pain, and that lady should have been allowed to stay in the room. And we should have all held her as a group while she cried. And yes, it obviously affects people, such deep emotions, but that's what the purpose of the weekend is.'*

*While he was talking the drunken gentleman turned to him: 'Who are you, anyways?' And then his friends tried to stop him. But he was sitting quite close to M., so he sort of leaned across and he said: 'Who are you anyways?' And M. took offence to that and said to the man: 'Are you asking: What the fuck am I doing here because I am the only white man?' And the man kind of said: 'Yes.' But he was really obviously drunk, so the rest of us were [thinking] that M. shouldn't really take him so personally because he is drunk, for goodness sake, and he has already attacked someone else, so just let him go, because there is no point trying to dialogue with a drunk person. Then M. went off. You could see when he pulled himself up, like: I am now going to justify why I'm here. While he was speaking, somebody had asked him: 'What do you know about pain, and what gives you the right to be here?' So then he went into a whole spiel about how his whole family was wiped out by the Nazis, and how he as a Jewish person from Germany really understands all about persecution, all about suffering, really identifies and relates to black people in South Africa. And he feels that he's there and he's a victim and he has a story to tell because he knows about pain and suffering. And what his family went through in Germany, he has experienced that again in South Africa because he's not a typical white person. But he feels like no one else in the room is prepared to give him that kind of a chance because he's white. They just classified him as white and that means: You haven't suffered, you haven't experienced any pain. You*

*don't know what anybody else was going through. And that makes him quite angry. He really wants to share his story, and he really wants to be made vulnerable, but again he wants to say that he doesn't think this is a safe space because the lady is still not back.*

*At which point L., the friend and the lady came back into the circle. [Then] D. said: This is not the place to tell stories, so we shouldn't be asking [M.] why he is here. We should be waiting to hear why he's here on Saturday because that's what Saturday is for, it's for storytelling. So people seemed to go with that. Then the focus was back on the lady who was no longer weeping. She asked to share, and basically she began to share the whole long story of everything that had happened to her. L. was translating at this point. And then D. interrupted her as well and said: 'No, now is not the time to share stories, it's only for sharing feelings, and we were and should go on sharing feelings.'*

*Basically, after D. had interrupted her, everybody kept quiet. Nobody had anything to say, so it was given over to Mina Nawe, and then we were able to go home, which was really late<sup>52</sup>. By then it was past midnight. We left Hanover Park a quarter to one. Facilitator X. was not a happy puppy driving us home [so late]. X. was very good [during the session]. He kept sort of trying to bypass D., he tried to sort of create safe space. He was very affirming of everybody. He used a lot of body language, sort of drawing people together in a circular movement. If D. would interrupt somebody he would say: 'No, brother, it's okay to share your feelings, and we want to hear your feelings, and that's what this space is for...' and stuff like that. D. was quite harsh with the lady, but you could almost see that she wasn't really understanding what D. was saying. So when X. then translated into Xhosa, according to L., he put it into a lot more gentle words and so she [the lady] didn't actually feel offended because fortunately she did not understand much of the English. And so [X.] did that kind of a thing. And he said to M.: 'Don't worry about him (referring to the drunk man).' And [...] he kept putting his hand on the drunken man's knee, and he sat himself next to the drunk man, and he went like: 'No, brother, now is not the time, no brother.' And just tried to calm him. Because the drunken man kept interrupting people and was making really inappropriate comments. And X. would keep trying to draw him in and calm him down. So he was really good. I take my hat off to X.*

*Then afterwards, during tea, M. came up to me. It quite upset me what he had said because I was wondering: 'Why can't he just sit with it? Yes, he is white. Yes, he is male. Yes, he is the only white person here. Why can't he sit with it? Why does he immediately have to explain his presence?' So afterwards he came up to me while we were having tea, and he said: 'Hey whitey<sup>53</sup>, we must talk.' Which I didn't appreciate because I don't think I want to be classed with him. I am not quite sure where I want to be classed, but I was sure I didn't want to be classed with him. So I said: 'Yeah' and smiled weakly. And then Mina Nawe went home anyway, so there wasn't really the opportunity to talk (Y. 2001).*

The story indicates how different perceptions, expectations, fears and desires were brought and projected onto the opening scene, how HOM's space was indeed not an

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<sup>52</sup> When (some of) the *Mina Nawe* actors are not facilitating the workshop, they leave after the performance and sharing in the circle.

<sup>53</sup> 'whitey' here = half derogatory, half playful expression for a white South African, now also frequently used by white South Africans in reference to their own awareness of issues to do with 'colour'

'empty friendly space' but a highly permeable one, at once mirroring outside social and economic realities and, by evoking the memories of such a diverse audience, creating an unusual and conflicting blend of emotions and interactions. Here, the formality of the workshop frame was broken apart by the open expression of pain. The drama performance often brought about the expression of anger or sadness in varying degrees of intensity. In a highly emotional atmosphere, one participant's breakdown might tap into another's fears, anxieties and anger, and rupture the smooth flow of events. The same rupture was a miniature reflection of the contradictions woven into the fabric of the new nation, contradictions participants lived and experienced daily. HOM facilitators and groups faced the challenge of 'holding' the space and keeping it 'safe' in the moment, while at the same time negotiating emerging tensions and managing the potential for conflict.

The scale of openly conflicting dynamics presented above and the efforts of both facilitators and participants in containing events did not represent a 'usual' occurrence at the HOM workshops. Many first evening sessions I was part of went smoothly, to plan. However, the example exposes the multiple faultlines emerging when people entered, laid claim to and contested what they saw as their (healing) space. Who should be given access and on what grounds, participants asked. What seemed 'safe' for one was not necessarily considered 'safe' for another. Participants brought their outside realities into the workshop, aggression based on frustration with economic decline, poverty, alcoholism, unemployment, experiences of depression and a sense of despair. White participants often sat with a fear of having no 'place' in the workshop and wondered what justified their presence. The emerging conflict here exposed the raw emotional layers inherent in creating a joint memory space – it powerfully brought to the surface old hurts, fears and inherent misperceptions and its potential to harm. The incident and the mode of description that the narrator chose also laid bare some of the intricacies of re-negotiating post-apartheid subjectivity ['I am not quite sure where I want to be classed, but I was sure I didn't want to be classed with him']. HOM's healing space was already subject to contestation among the facilitators who took the lead in creating it. 'Sharing a space' meant generating a conflict potential that always also ran the danger of tapping into and

perpetuating fears rather than providing a platform for addressing emerging needs, of creating grounds for misunderstanding and further damage and humiliation rather than a basis for substantive engagement. Yet in this case the setting did not allow for the pretence of a superficial harmony; in fact it produced more discomfort than comfort, forcing a degree of acknowledgement of the underlying dynamics, of outside reality seeping into the supposedly 'safe place'. HOM's joint memory space then produced an encounter that revealed the correspondence between old and new expressions of (inter)subjectivity. Such an encounter in turn produced a profoundly unsettling social space. The following two sections explore this social space and how it was viewed by participants, firstly from the perspective of those deprived and discriminated against, and secondly from the perspective of those who enjoyed the benefits of apartheid.

### *The Intimacy of the Ordinary – Subjectivities of Suspicion and Hatred*

The individual body should be seen as the most immediate, the proximate terrain where social truths and social contradictions are played out, as well as the locus of personal and social resistance, creativity, and struggle (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987: 31).

Proposing a 'Critical Antiracism' for South Africa, Carrim & Soudien (2001) state that '[t]he discursive reach of racial ideology cut deep into the fabric of everyday society and did not exist only as a textual entry in the Population Registration Act' (154-155). In South Africa, as elsewhere on the continent, colonial space was essentially produced by the practices of white command over black bodies (Mbembe 1992a, 2001; Butchart 1998). Colonial and later apartheid authorities' major investments in controlling movement and mobility, in administering physical well-being and abuse, resulted not least of all in the attempt to define intimately the space between white and black bodies through a catalogue of social inventories.<sup>54</sup> Mbembe's project of rewriting the African subject from within the continent suggests the need for paying closer attention to the experiential and bodily processes through which subjectivity (and particular forms of intersubjectivity) are 'concretely lived' in the 'postcolony':

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<sup>54</sup> Most is infamous the Immorality Act, No. 5 of 1927, amended as No. 23 of 1957, forbidding any kind of intimate relations between people whom apartheid classified as being of different 'race groups'.

In Africa today, the subject who *accomplishes the age* [...] is a subject of experience and a validating subject, not only in the sense that he/she is a conscious existence or has a perceptive consciousness of things, but to the extent that his/her "living in the concrete world" involves, and is evaluated by his/her eyes, ears, mouth - in short, his/her flesh, his/her body (Mbembe 2001: 17, emphasis in original).

What does this physical dimension of subjectivity mean for the ways in which apartheid experiences come to be 'embodied' in post-apartheid intersubjectivities? Apartheid memories and their emotional resonance were literally embedded in the gestures among participants, in turn shaping how they made use of the workshop space. Scheper-Hughes & Lock speak of 'mindful bodies' (1987: 30) and the 'embodiment' of emotions, which are central to understanding the socio-spatial dimensionality of human interactions at HOM:

Insofar as emotions entail both feelings and cognitive orientations, public morality and cultural ideology, we suggest that they provide an important "missing link" capable of bridging mind and body, individual, society, and body politic (Scheper-Hughes & Lock, 1987: 28-29).

Apartheid memories and their emotional resonances impacted not only on giving and gaining access to what were previously 'forbidden' spaces, but also on what were considered 'normal' ways of being and behaving in one another's presence. HOM facilitator R. described how many personal interactions she experienced at the workshops reminded her of the past, emphasising the ambivalence she felt:

Actually, the fact that I'm sitting here with a white woman and talking like this is an issue for me. I mean the fact that people have moved from not talking at all - from actually *knowing* that I am not supposed to talk, and if I do a policeman will come through the door just now - until now. It is very difficult for me sometimes to actually think: 'This is okay. No policeman will come bashing through the door.' It happens to me many, many times (R. 7/99).

She explained that the HOM workshop experience allowed her to share an intimate moment with a young white woman like myself, but not without a sudden sense of discomfort. The same unease remained present in any attempt at what she said should now be 'normal forms of communicating': 'Things should be different, I know, but they are not that different from what they were back then' (R. 7/99). Post-1994 dealings with

each other are supposedly 'okay now' in that interactions across apartheid's categories of race have become 'normal', whereas in practice it was obvious that this was not the case:

[The HOM] is a new kind or level of experience, of a human experience for me. I mean, obviously, I had never been in touch [with white people]. The fact that you sleep next door to a white person still is a bit deep for me; it is a bit deep for me. Sometimes my brain tells me: Is it okay? Are we going to be in trouble? And I have to grip myself, militantly, and say: 'No! No! [I have to assure myself that] it's fine (R. 7/99).

In face of the memories of oppression, black HOM participants outlined the novelty value of sharing something of the ordinary and everyday with those considered 'Others' - to eat, drink, dance, and socialise together; to sleep next to each other, to brush their teeth in the same bathroom, to share sad and funny times, to take breaks and chat. Within the formalised workshop programme at HOM there were many informal moments when such 'ordinary' social acts were performed among participants, during breaks, at mealtimes and in the evenings. Seemingly banal, these acts took place against the context of a history that sought to segregate people (and, notably, their bodies) in intimate detail, and where the everyday was shaped intrinsically by the ideological parameters of racial differencing. The internalisation of these supremacist parameters affected a whole range of daily decisions regarding social interactions, generating an intimacy that perverted, appropriated and violated the dignity of the majority of South Africans.

Many participants described their initial anxieties when entering the workshop space and commented on the uneasiness they experienced when trying to understand the rules and parameters for social contact within. This usually began with the question of greeting the 'Others':

I would not want to shake the hand of a white person. I would stand with my hands behind my back. The person would say to me: 'This is U.' - 'This is D.' And I would say: 'How do you do?' But I would not extend [my hand]. I would say 'Hallo.' But my hands would be behind my back. And this would tell that person immediately: 'This chap is not prepared to extend the hand of friendship at all' (D. 7/99).

D.'s recounting of 'the handshake' exposes another spatial facet inherent in interactions at HOM, which can only be grasped in relation to the physical, mental and emotional geographies that shaped everyday human interaction outside the workshop. Here, not

only did previously isolated 'bodies' come into the same space, but into proximity and relation to one another, generating an unfamiliar intimacy. It was clear from body language, greetings and during the first hours at the workshops that entering the workshop space was, at the outset, not a comfortable experience. Shaking the hand of the white 'Other' represented a significant choice, often bringing up painful and emotional memories for those who suffered from apartheid's attempts at ingraining a sense of inferiority in them. The meaningfulness and complexity of such gestures can only be understood in relation to the forms of expression that apartheid's racial ideology of contamination and purity found in interpersonal relations.

Asked what happened during such moments, participants who had suffered apartheid's many forms of discrimination, emphasised the experience of spending time in the same space and commented on the impact of proximity, of contact, of literally *getting in touch* with 'Other' participants:

Elements of healing? Two things, I think have helped or seem to help. First of all is the element of being able to listen. The other one is touch. [...] What tenderness does is so significant to the human side of it all. It is fantastic. Because for the first time two people are going to hug each other that have never ever touched each other before. And, you know, to do that, to suddenly do that! When you come into the workshop with these feelings of apprehension, feelings of fear, all kinds of feelings, [fear] of the unknown, what will take place - all of a sudden you've got to take this person by the hand. [...] But it took me a long time to do that. Because of suspicion. Because of hatred (D. 7/99).

A handshake thus made conscious, the touching of palms, the sensation of skin, and the pressure of fingers became an entry to producing an altered social space. A handshake, at the same time, has to be seen against the ways in which apartheid's powerful discourses of difference were enacted, preventing exchange and physical touch under the premise that interaction with the 'native Other' was primarily dangerous and polluting (see Coetzee 1997; Mbembe 2001). It has to take into account that in the majority of cases what any 'touch' according to apartheid parameters meant and felt like on the skins of those rendered inferior and 'Other' cannot easily be articulated. Within the experience of those whose humanity was thus constantly put into question resides not only fear of

punishment [‘are we going to be in trouble?’], but also deeply felt antagonism [‘because of suspicion, because of hatred’] that marks the very idea of ‘touching’ as a sign of betrayal, of submission, of allowing intrusion. Against this emotional spectrum, the simple gesture of ‘extending the hand of friendship’, which D. described, became not only a physical bridge of contact between two bodies but the literal act of crossing a segregated space. But who issues the permission to break the spatial body politic of apartheid in this way? ‘It took me a long time to do that’, D. responded, ‘because of hatred. But also because of a question prevalent on my mind: On whose terms am I supposed to reach out, to extend my arm and give my hand? It had to be me determining when I was ready to do that and no one else’ (D. 7/99).

Contrary to HOM’s proposal that ‘[h]ealing means, first of all, the creation of an empty but friendly space [...] (HOM Facilitator’s Guidelines, 1997: 4) the body languages and gestures of participants made apparent how the space between bodies in post-apartheid human interactions, the stretch of room between two persons ‘holding their hands behind their back’ was anything but an empty or undefined space. It was always already filled with multiple meanings because of the particular social relations the same space had actualised within the apartheid body politic. Hence, the HOM workshop space, necessarily, embodied the imbalances, the power-play of one over the other and the techniques of avoidance as means of resistance. While a gesture of ‘reaching out’ (or refusing to do so on someone else’s terms) could become a powerful experience of taking ownership of the apartheid-defined spatial relations between bodies - in D.’s case an empowering sign of taking control and yet risking vulnerability - the positive power of such gestures was a phenomenon HOM could not guarantee. D.’s handshake presumed a degree of trust in the ‘safety’ of the HOM setting, which he as a facilitator could develop after going through the workshop experience several times. Most participants did not have that opportunity, but experienced the workshop only once.

Prevalent emotions evoked by the interactions with others at the workshop were suspicion, fear, anger and hatred. HOM facilitator B. commented critically on the tension between the HOM’s idealistic discourse of togetherness and equality and participants’ experiential reality of the workshops:

First of all you bring these people from all different perspectives into one group and think that this is the rainbow South Africa for a weekend you know, and off they go again [...] I for one know that a lot of people do not feel comfortable with all the other people [during the weekend]. And there are lots of complexes, you know, inferiority complexes, mainly from black people, about lots of issues. And they sit with it all through the time mostly during that weekend. And everybody is being so nice to them. It is almost overwhelming. All of a sudden you have a white person offering to bring you tea or go to your table to make you toast and all that stuff, and it really outdates what was happening. And lots of people find it difficult to actually to deal with that one first of all. [...] Though it is needed to put everybody else on equal footing, it can be unbearable at times (B. 11/99).

He points to the *fragility and emotionality* of the interpersonal moment in which such gestures were performed. Participants' responses at times echoed a similar sense of the interactions at workshops being 'too much, too early' (see also Colvin 2000: 21). The frailties of such a shared space extended into the realm of the non-verbal and presented participants with the Sisyphean task of developing new bodily languages.<sup>55</sup>

One has to bear in mind that participants may at times have not felt secure enough to utter their discomfort about interactions at the workshop, not only because they constituted a self-motivated sample in search of such interactions in any case, but also because it did not appear to them appropriate in this context to express negative sentiments about the workshop experience. Many participants viewed the workshop as 'a gift' and foreground their appreciation of 'the opportunity to just be here and tell and listen to other because there are so few of these opportunities like this' (X. 8/99). The notion of a 'gift' in turn placed the participants in the position of receiver, which made it more difficult to articulate critique (see also Derrida 1998). The novelties of being in the same space also made some participants feel 'too close', or enclosed. What was perceived as 'reaching out' by one was viewed as an intrusion by another. A handshake was experienced by

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<sup>55</sup> See Krog's (1998) account of witnessing the TRC. She describes how she cannot read the body languages of black South Africans. It is important to note that because of the nature of labour relations under apartheid, black South Africans often have a more intimate knowledge of 'white' bodily practices than vice versa. I am thinking, for example, of incidents I witnessed where domestic workers washed their 'Madam's panties'. Meanwhile, many white South Africans would not even know that it is not appropriate in practices of black South African communal living to let someone else touch, let alone wash your undergarments.

some as 'an important step towards my personal healing' (D.), and by others as a mere moment of discomfort. One may ask how gestures can bridge divisions when they are not only interpreted according to the entrenched codes of separation, but are so imbued with power that, held against the 'outside' reality to which participants return after the workshop, their sincerity is bound to seem momentary if not empty, or worse, in retrospect a mockery.

Yet the moments of bodily contact at HOM and the ways in which they were rendered meaningful (in both positive and negative ways) were not simply arbitrary in the post-apartheid context. The mutual readings and re-readings of participants' interactions that generated the specific group dynamic of each HOM workshop were fraught with historical and cultural complexities that needed to be recognised rather than resolved. The act of fetching someone toast may have been well-intentioned and yet constituted a demonstration of power to another. A hug given very genuinely came to be seen only as a momentary 'feel-good exercise' or, worse, a transgression and an intrusion into 'personal space'. While some felt that 'reaching out' had to happen on the terms of those disadvantaged and violated by apartheid, leaving room for rejection and deferral of such intimacies, others felt that 'taking the first step' would mean it was again those who suffered who extended their hands to those privileged by apartheid who 'were just taking a back seat in the change process' (all quotes from Focus Group 9/99). The search for a shared space, as HOM experiences showed, remained ambiguous and in danger of perpetuating some of apartheid's subtle patterns of violation even in the attempt at providing safe ground for exploration to all those within it.

For the 'victims' of apartheid the short stretch of a HOM weekend was often only enough to begin experimenting with such mutual gestures, rather than finding in them the 'genuine step towards healing' that D. experienced. Within the currents of the reconciliation discourse, the idea of bringing people from the fragmented apartheid geography of the city into the same arena and making them 'relate to each other' was

tempting as it seemed to portray such a visible sign of social repair.<sup>56</sup> At the same time the initial tendency of the HOM facilitators to read such gestures simply as reconciliatory<sup>57</sup> ran the danger of feeding into a conservative discourse of unity and closure about the past that neither paid attention to the depth of the social gap and the lack of actual interpersonal transformation, nor to the tremendous complexities of building genuine and sustainable relations in recognition of (and not in spite of) the divisions, violence and injustices of the past. What was at stake here turned out to be much more delicate, and needed much more time. Still, the HOM weekend intervention could fulfil an important initiatory function for a process of experimentation individuals could then pursue, but the complexity of this necessarily asked for a longer-term perspective on the idea of finding alternative forms of engagement with one another.

#### **Between Curiosity and Resentment – Subjectivities of Fear and Shame**

During the TRC, the majority of public responses from white South Africans to the apartheid past displayed a blend of amnesia, denial and rejection of responsibility (Theissen & Hamber 1998; Verwoerd 2000; Colvin 2000: 15-24). It was not surprising then that white participants were a minority at HOM workshops. When speaking of beneficiaries of apartheid in the context of HOM, I refer to both past and present forms of benefit and, by definition, include myself in the equation. I allude to all those who enjoyed and, at large, continue to enjoy more access, mobility, security, opportunities and resources than others in this country, simply on account of inhabiting what colonialism and apartheid instituted as the superior colour of skin. While the differentiated accounts given at HOM workshops made obvious that there were various layers of privilege and

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<sup>56</sup> At the opening of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) in Cape Town, initiator Charles Villa-Vicencio (former Director of Research at the TRC) proclaimed a similarly simplistic conception of social repair when he said that one contribution of his organisation towards reconciliation would involve the 'bringing together of people' from different vicinities of the city. He said in this respect 'We will bring people from Camps Bay to Khayelitsha, from Rondebosch to Mitchell's Plain, from Bishops Court to Bishop Lavis' (10 May 2000).

<sup>57</sup> In the process of the field work there was a marked difference between the ways of facilitating at the HOM in 1997 (when many facilitators emphasised and encouraged such gestures as part of the 'reconciliation' process) and 2000 (when most had become much more careful in suggesting the same and would leave it to participants).

ways of benefiting not bound by colour, it was a white skin that bestowed the most extensive and obvious privilege from systematic past discrimination (Verwoerd 2000).<sup>58</sup>

I encountered a complex set of motivations, desires and fears when engaging white HOM participants. At workshops, the uncomfortable question of acknowledging what was done 'in their name' was often posed to white HOM participants by participants who had suffered from apartheid's injustices. Many white participants commented that it was the first time they were faced with the question of their status of privilege in such a direct and open way in a personal conversation with other participants who had experienced discrimination and deprivation. Several related their difficulties when being confronted with the idea of having been a 'bystander':

I did not know [about the extent of atrocities perpetrated by apartheid]. Or now that I have thought about it, I did not want to know. I made myself blind to all the signs. I covered my ears when I heard the rumblings. There was not really a way not to know, but there were many ways to avoid further knowledge (H. 4/99).

Similar comments emphasised the challenging thought process that the workshop had set in motion for other white participants. The interactive manner of the engagement with the others at the workshop did not easily allow for keeping the level of distance necessary to maintain the stance that 'apartheid never really had anything to do with me' (H. 4/99). Participants spoke of the workshop experience as generating an insight into the synchronicities of the personal and the political. Some commented on a new awareness of how the past and present political economies of race and class in South Africa are intertwined:

Really - [the workshop] was getting me back in touch with the reality of things: that apartheid is over, but the consequences are not over. And [I asked myself] where I stand, being white and South African, not being involved in apartheid, but my parents being involved in apartheid. Where

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<sup>58</sup> The notion of beneficiaries comprises a range of active and passive ways of sustaining discrimination and its legacies in the past and present. Politically, white South African beneficiaries are retrospectively constructed as 'supporters' (who voted in favour of the government of the day), 'bystanders' (who remained passive but enjoyed benefits), and 'perpetrators' (who actively participated in sustaining the system of governance) (Verwoerd 2000), but more complex forms of implication in apartheid's discriminatory practices were also present in numerous other, less obvious social roles, in addition to varying degrees of political consciousness and stances of opposition among white South Africans.

am I at? What does this mean to me? I can just say: 'Well but I had nothing to do with it. So what? Apartheid is over.' But I do not think that is true. [...] That weekend showed me that there is more, that I've still got a responsibility to South Africa because I am still sitting in a position where I got a lot more opportunities, a lot more going for myself, as do my parents, because of apartheid (L. 7/99).

At the same time, less positive comments on the workshop experience spoke to how the intervention also tapped into 'white fears' and laid bare some of the latent emotional complexities at the base of what may come across on the outside as simply denial and ignorance of the past. HOM was framed by some participants in retrospect as an exercise in 'bashing whites on their guilt feelings' (L. 7/99).<sup>59</sup> After the workshop described in the ethnographic narrative preceding this chapter, I engaged in several intensive and highly emotional conversations with C. who was one of the small number of white participants at HOM without a background of anti-apartheid activism or some form of involvement in organisations that supported the liberation struggle against apartheid in the 1980s. Her response spoke to some of the complexities of putting into practice the proposed 'victim-beneficiary' engagement, of engaging 'disadvantaged and advantaged' on the terms of a memory and healing process:

I am feeling resentful. I often think a thought like - a black South African is allowed a licence to be anti-intellectual, unreasoning and to have these global generalisations about white people because they are poor victims. Whereas I'm supposed to be so reasonable and so understanding. We are supposed to have fought for getting rid of apartheid. I wonder how many of the people that point their fingers at us, how many of them would have fought for someone of another colour, who was on the other side? It is like fighting for someone else's problem. How many of them would have done that? So I feel resentful that there are different expectations of me [...] But, I also feel that I do owe other South Africans, I owe them something because of apartheid and its cause (C. 7/99).

Most white participants at HOM workshops reported a similar sense of culpability ['I owe them something'] coupled with feelings of resentment [It's like fighting for someone else's problem'] when faced with questions of social responsibility for apartheid's legacies at the workshop. While C. grappled with her present social position and role as a

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<sup>59</sup> Participants commented on having difficulty with 'the obvious anger of some other participants and, in particular, some of the HOM *facilitators* towards white participants' (J. 9/99).

white South African, she felt that apartheid as such was 'not her problem' because she was never 'political':

[Apartheid] was far more central in [black South Africans'] consciousness, whereas mine was like outside of the core of myself. It was not infusional. It did not affect me. What it did affect was my mind 'cause (lowers her voice) the problem is (whispers) to become a racist (C. 7/99).

C. was not the only participant who spoke of black South Africans' pain as an (always) political phenomenon, while portraying white South Africans' pain as (always) personal. In her perception the two 'kinds of pain' were and continued to remain completely separate, the one an abstract, systemic and collective phenomenon (black pain), the other experiential, personal and known to her (white pain):

My little field of hurts has to do with family and personal things, where a lot of black people when they look back on their past it was all political stuff (C. 7/99).

The construction of separate typologies of pain here demonstrates how the differing conceptions of repair and healing among participants were linked to the reformation of subjectivities in the post-apartheid order, redefining which desires, fears and needs were considered legitimate and for whom. Thus expressing the ambivalence in her sense of 'social duty' towards those disadvantaged by apartheid, C. explained that feelings of empathy generated at the workshop 'put her under pressure'. She responded to her uneasiness in material terms: 'I wanted to give money', she said later:

I felt the process [of the workshop] was so productive and everything. I wanted to give money [to some of the disadvantaged participants who spoke to her about their struggle for survival], but I managed to save it (she laughs uneasily). I am sorry. I thought it would be nicer to sponsor somebody to go to a workshop [in the future] (C. 7/99).

Affluent (mainly, but not always white) participants were often confronted with the urgent material needs of many HOM participants who lived in great poverty and encountered requests for money, jobs, opportunities and contacts from black participants after the workshop. Their responses in this respect often revealed an emotional blend of

guilt and resentment, which led them to refrain from engaging in further relations with other workshop participants.<sup>60</sup>

Racism, about which C. could only speak in a whisper, became one of the main negative points of reference that white participants used to convey the implications of having been socialised into white apartheid society, a key marker of an identifiable kind of 'white damage'. One of the participants described racism as 'a different way of having been damaged, a damage in the mind, a damage to my humanity' (B. 9/99). C.'s and other participants' reflections revealed how white South Africans were more aware of having to negotiate the outcomes of apartheid's divides than was often asserted by statistical surveys or in public representations of the time (Theissen 1999; Gibson & Gouws 1999). Responses from the majority of white HOM participants affirmed a desire to break out of their sense of isolation, to 'get in touch with the larger realities of the country' (B. 11/99). This sense of a hidden mindfulness provides the backdrop to understanding the interactions in the course of the workshop when the intimacy of the workshop undid the emotional detachment that the spatial setting of the post-apartheid city imparted, producing an encounter that placed participants not just alongside one another but face-to-face. The confrontation with the novelty, uneasiness and discomfort of the interaction became a mirror to participants of themselves, reflecting their own behaviour, stereotypes and attitudes. C.'s account of an incident at the workshop give a taste of this ambivalence in the inability to grasp each other's life contexts, the entrenched nature of the 'us and them' frame of mind, and the attempt to reconsider her own reactions after the workshop:

Some of the black attendants of the workshop had a funny attitude, or what I have seen to be a funny attitude. At some point they just wanted to finish off all the cool-drink that was in the fridge. Somehow that raised up my feelings of racism. Like, why have they always got to feel that we owe it to them and that they have to finish all the stuff? Can they not think: maybe the next group will also want to have some cool-drink or something? Why do they feel like that? Why do they want to take it all for themselves and now type-of-thing? It wakened up my racist feelings, and I felt really angry. I realised there is just something I just do not understand. The dynamic behind that. [...] But it also it shows me that there is so much I got to learn to be able to understand why someone

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<sup>60</sup> I return to this point in more detail in Chapter Five.

might be able to do that, and why it is such a general phenomenon. I just see it as a general phenomenon. But sometimes as a white South African you see black people come close to you and you are always like: 'Hands off' (she gestures as if frantically fighting off invisible hands intruding upon her - 'Like this, you know?') And it's my own racism. [...] I feel scared after that incident (whispers) because there was anger behind that action, you know. I noticed it when the people in the kitchen said: 'No, but the cool-drinks are locked up in the fridge.' There was like this 'rhrhrhrhrh', like this 'rhum', going round like they were really angry. They perceived it as some kind of slight treatment. It might not be a conscious thing. When you are entertaining someone as your guest, do not be stingy, something like that. And if you are stingy, it means that you really do not consider your guest worthy like a normal person. It's a complete misunderstanding in terms of values (C. 7/99).

Inevitably, the HOM setting was informed by the modalities of power reigning outside the workshop arena. Goldberg (1993) suggests that '[t]he rationalities of social space – its modes of definition, maintenance, distribution, experience, reproduction, and transformation – are at once fundamental influences upon social relations of power' (185). The particular moment above was produced within the tension inherent in HOM's discursive framework (we are here because we need to heal and change, and we are all equal) and the ensuing practical reality at the workshops (in which it turns out we are, in fact, *not* all equal and do not all have the means to change our lives). In a face-to-face encounter under these conditions, there was neither a simple reproduction of the existing power relations (as participants visibly tried to behave differently, to be friendly and 'politically correct', to be more open and question their own stances), nor a fundamental and sustainable undoing of structures of power (as participants also found themselves replaying external divisions and power relations). For beneficiaries of apartheid HOM's space was definitely not simply a comfort zone of 'playing reconciliation and harmony' in the face of the emotional repercussions of past atrocity and persisting social injustice. While the HOM discourse (we all need to heal, we were all damaged) and the ensuing interactions both challenged and re-produced existing and persisting power imbalances, something tangible happened within the dialectic of the 'production of [social] space' (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]) at the workshops: a zone of discomfort and vulnerability was created that made visible and challenged taken-for-granted modes of interaction.

### *Negotiating a 'Timespace' of Entanglement*

Not surprisingly, the HOM workshops both implicate and are implicated in the multiple interactive and divisive dynamics between people and places, and among people in places. They make explicit the complex social space produced between the imagined community and the divided reality of the new nation. Mbembe (1992a) speaks about the postcolonial 'plurality of "spheres" and arenas, each having its own separate logic yet [...] entangled with other logics' (5) (see also Mbembe 2000: 266). Thinking of 'entanglement' as a marker of post-apartheid space proves useful, too when adding the temporal dimension of transition in South Africa. Perceptions of change have come to be shaped after 1994 by how some aspects of people's lives have been transformed rapidly while for others the situation seems painfully unaltered. Transitional periods such as the late 1990s in South Africa reveal the limitations of a chronological conception of time rendering visible what Mbembe calls 'emerging time' or 'a time of entanglement':

This 'time of entanglement [...] is not a series but an *interlocking* of presents, pasts and futures that retain their depth of other presents, pasts and futures, each age bearing, altering, and maintaining the previous ones (Mbembe 2001: 16, emphasis in original).

The pace of change has been neither stable nor linear, but borrows shamelessly and according to need from future imaginings and past references. Within the 'timespace' (Boyarin 1994) of transition in South Africa where, for some, apartheid is 'over' and foremost 'a matter of memory' (HOM participant G. 4/00), others experience it as 'alive and well in the present' (HOM participant H. 6/99). Some are overwhelmed by the speed of change, and others agonised by its slow motion, both of which contributes to a general sense of paralysis.

The HOM arena revealed how a similar tension is at work when events of the past are recounted in the present. Some participants were dramatically 'touched' by apartheid, while others felt they had not been affected at all. Yet one of the most important insights HOM participants reported came with the realisation of each other's *contemporaneity across the borders of Otherness*, in the recognition of 'having shared an age' despite the 'separate' experiences generated by life under apartheid. This insight I will explore in detail in the next chapter. The ways in which apartheid's socially engineered 'separate'

spaces and the experiences and memories produced within, continue to be intertwined, 'entangled', implicating one another, can serve as important link in re-conceiving alternative social formations in the post-apartheid city. If we believe that such a re-conception is indeed 'thinkable', the artificial distinction between 'the structural' and 'the emotional' legacies of apartheid will be productively complicated. In turn, the proposal of a project such as HOM to address the 'soft issues' and work with a more emotional and experiential notion of 'damage of the apartheid years' in response to the need for structural change, will seem less presumptuous.

In the light of the various post-apartheid subjectivities emerging into the HOM space the question of whether admitting 'all' into a shared memory space can indeed be 'healing' depends on a definition of healing that differs decidedly from the notion of a mere social harmony or mending of social ruptures, or purging of all anger and hate in favour of surface amity. Healing, as it came to be understood in the South Africa of the TRC, may hardly be the term that best describes the effects of the HOM experience. Yet the premise of a 'space for all' enabled many participants to experiment for the first time with an alternative form of encounter across apartheid divisions of race and class. They discovered that in seeking to partake in the experience of sharing the contested terrain of the new nation, they had to enter a zone of discomfort, a zone in which some of the social relations of power existing 'outside' the workshop were exposed and, in turn, some general, automated responses to those perceived as 'Other' needed to be rethought.

HOM tapped into what still cannot easily be articulated in present-day South Africa – a social subtext of emotions and embodied memories of apartheid that inform interactions in the here and now. Revealing the physicality of the experience of closeness, of intimacy, participants emphasised the invisible barriers that continue to exist. The fragility of the exercise brought to the surface tensions and conflicts that could not be acted out in public because they endangered the discourse and imaginary of the new nation during the early years after the 1994 elections. Hence, in a multiply-divided city like Cape Town, HOM presented an unusual and challenging (memory) 'space for all', revealing some of what Werbner's (1998) quote at the beginning of the chapter referred

to as the 'intractable traces of the past felt in people's bodies' and their impact on 'the tough moral fabric of their social relations' (3). Seen in relation to the persisting socio-spatial continuities in Cape Town described throughout the first part of the chapter, the encounters produced within the HOM workshop space pointed to the need for a definition of social repair and healing that takes account of *the sensuous nature of social experience* in correspondence with the complex and 'entangled' social, political, economic, spatial and moral interdependencies that impact on the realisation of desired forms of change in the post-apartheid interpersonal domain.

## **Saturday**

### **Telling Stories - Sharing Pain - Bearing Witness**

*Saturday morning presents us with brilliantly clear skies. One participant tells me she has to fight the urge to just run away from this day, 'to go up the mountain and be by myself. I am quite frightened by this day'. During breakfast the atmosphere is quiet. Afterwards participants gather in the plenary room to start the programme for the day. 'This is your day' facilitator Y. begins the session, 'this is the day for your stories and experiences.' She explains the first exercise, which asks the participants to create a visual image of 'their story'. Some drawing materials and A3 newsprint have been placed in the middle of the circle.*

*'We are asking you to take some crayons and a sheet of paper and to draw your story. It does not play a role how you do it, and this is not meant to prove whether you are an artist or not. This is not about performing well or drawing nicely. This is for you to explore your stories in another creative form, to bring them onto paper. You can use symbols or little pictures, anything; you can use the colours to express your feelings about what happened. Try to use the whole page and not just one little corner, use the whole space. It will help us later when we tell the stories. You can also use the questions from last night as a guide for the drawing. Remember that this is about how apartheid has affected you. We want to know your story, not your brother's story or what happened to your uncle back then, but how it has affected you, in whatever way. Every story is important. We ask you not to talk to one another during this exercise but to find a quiet spot somewhere in the room or outside. When you have finished your picture, please do not disturb others'.*

*I take a look around. Some faces show anxiety, a woman participant leans over to her friend 'Are we back in school now?' she sighs and looks doubtfully at her empty sheet. Others have already moved to take the paper outside and are sitting in the shade of a tree on the sunny lawn. The convent provides a scenic setting next to a small lake. Facilitators have put on some quiet gospel music in the main room where the majority of participants choose to remain. For many participants the drawing exercise is difficult,*

*some say they have not drawn anything since leaving school decades ago. However, rarely do participants refuse to draw or leave their sheet empty. The stories begin to take shape visually. Some people are drawing a series of small sketches, while many are working with colours and shapes. Most pictures correspond in some way with the questions facilitators have distributed as guidelines for the storytelling the previous night - many contain images of turmoil, black clouds and lines across the page (What effects did the apartheid years have on you? What were the most painful experiences for you?); at the same time the majority of drawings also portray a brighter side (What were the most wonderful experiences? What enabled you to survive?), using lighter colours, and imagery like the rainbow or the sun (What are your feelings about South Africa now?).*

*The drawing exercise is a moment of focusing inward, of self-reflection, also for me. Since all facilitators participate actively in the storytelling session, they also draw a picture every time. In addition to the facilitation tasks each workshop also asks for the personal element of engaging with one's own life experiences in relation to the participants' narratives. The facilitator-role at HOM is different from that of a counsellor or therapist who seeks to remain at a distance or in the role of the 'objective helper'. It is vital to the philosophy of the HOM workshop that the stories of the facilitators are told as part of the whole process. This is a double challenge for facilitators who are expected to express their own memories and emotions in addition to 'holding' and 'managing' those of other participants. 'We need to give a piece of ourselves', as one facilitator put it, 'in order to invite participants to share as deeply, to show them we are together in this and we all need to heal. In that sense we are all wounded healers.' Since the facilitators participate in the HOM intervention repeatedly over a period of time, the workshops have become part of a long-term process for them rather than a once-off event. They share a strong sense of community.*

*Meanwhile, most participants have completed their drawings, folded them up and are standing in the kitchen or outside talking over a cup of tea. Several facilitators are preparing the rooms for the 'storytelling session'. After the break participants meet with their respective facilitators in the rooms allocated to the small groups. Our group of six meets in a small chapel, which is part of the convent this workshop uses for a venue. We sit down in the circle of six chairs, the altar in the background. Some peppermints, a water*

jug and a box of tissues are placed on a table next to the circle. Our group is made up of N., a young black woman in her early twenties from Gugulethu; C., a white woman in her forties from Bellville; J., a coloured man in his late thirties from Bonteheuwel; and V. a coloured woman in her forties, from Elsie's River. I am co-facilitating with Sister Ja. today; so we are two white women facilitators, which is unusual. Most times the facilitator team will be mixed according to race and gender, but this is not a rigid rule. I realise that one of our participants is missing. R. from Crossroads had originally been allocated to be in our group. I walk outside to find him leaning on the wall smoking a cigarette. 'What's up?' I ask. 'Are you coming?' He looks at me 'You know what, Undine? I'm not so sure anymore that this is a good idea. You know I'm gonna have to go home tomorrow. I'm not sure I need all that shit inside my head right now; it's enough to keep it down. What's the point of putting it in other people's heads? F\*#^%, I am sure I don't need this. Maybe I should just go.' We stand silent for a while. 'It's your choice', I say after a while, 'you're welcome inside any time.' And I leave him to his thoughts.

'We're all on the same journey', Ja. begins, 'so each of us is going to have 45 minutes to tell our story. As facilitators we're here to share this part of the journey with you, to assist everyone to participate, because we would like to take this process and the country forward, not because we're the ones who have all the answers.' Her voice, face and body convey the seriousness of her words. She leans forward and looks around the circle. 'As a group we share responsibility for listening very carefully to each story, to encourage each other. It's very important that everyone understands what is meant when we say 'the stories are confidential' - It means I can tell my story to whomever I want to tell it, even to the radio or TV. But I can't tell J.'s or C.'s story, or any of the stories I will hear here today, to anyone else or anywhere else without their permission. We're trying to make this into a sacred space - imagine that whenever someone shares their memories of the apartheid years with you, they're inviting you onto their 'holy ground'; they're allowing you to hear what is inside and see their pain. That is very close to them and we must protect it. It's about trust. Can we all agree on confidentiality?' Heads nod around the circle. 'We can take a break in between stories, if someone needs a smoke break, but please don't just walk out whenever. You need to let me know when you need a break since I might not realise when you're tired. We have the whole day for your stories, so we can see how far

*we get up to lunch, and then continue in the afternoon. Do not feel you have to rush your story. Everybody will have their time. As facilitators we'll also share our stories with you. Another important thing - whatever someone chooses to share, that's what they have chosen to share and we have the responsibility to listen. You may want to comment on someone's story. It might seem strange to you. Please remember that it's very hard to share our hurts and we need to have respect for what people want to reveal within the group.'* She looks around the circle: *'Who would like to tell their story first? You can put the picture you have drawn in the middle on the floor and use it to explain, if you want you can also use the questions.'*

*There is a moment of silence; everybody stares to the ground. Then N., the young woman, who has chosen to sit on the floor instead of a chair, sighs deeply and unfolds her picture in front of her. Among a whirl of colours there is a series of small sketches, groups of stick people are marching over the page in protest. A police van. 'When I was a young girl ...', she begins. As we sit and listen to her narration, some of apartheid's many scenarios unfolds in front of our eyes - a struggling single mother; a burnt down shack; accusations of being an informer in the community; the loss of education; the wisdom of a grandmother holding the family together in turmoil; a young woman looking after siblings instead of completing school; violent men; no job; doubts about the future. Then silence, the flow of words breaks, ends in a flood of tears. As she cries N. sits on the ground in the middle of us. She is folded in a crouched position, head down, words uttered in small bursts between sobs: 'I'm not even crying for myself so much', she says, 'but thinking of my grandmother who suffered so much, I can't stop crying.' The attention of the group is tangible; despite some participants having closed their eyes, visibly holding back their own emotions, it feels like all energies concentrate on the young woman in the middle. Her tears drop one after the other into the carpet below her for more than half an hour. A stack of tissues is handed to her, one after the other, by participants. Silence reigns as the flood subsides slowly.*

*With each story told within our small circle today the elements of apartheid's intrinsic injustice and systemic violence unfold in the detail of the everyday in each personal narrative. They emerge slowly, sometimes incomprehensibly, like pieces of a puzzle to which instructions have gone missing. N.'s story left us with a description of her present situation, in*

which little has changed about the circumstances and conditions of her own and her family's lives since the official ending of apartheid. 'I don't know how we are supposed to heal living in such poverty', N. asks, 'I'm ashamed of it every day.' A conversation ensues among the rest of the group about the difficulties of life after 1994. After each story there is usually a period of processing, in which either the facilitators or other group members ask the narrator questions. Sometimes narrators speak for the full 45 minutes. Often though, facilitators come in after the first continuous narrative has ended and ask further questions. Common questions include facilitators asking about 'feelings' the memories of particular events evoke in people, enquiring about resources available for survival and healing in the present, and asking about the role of faith in the life of the narrator. In some cases participants take on this facilitation role for other members of the small group. After the narrator has ended she herself may open up a conversation about the issues the story has raised or participants may be asking her to clarify or expand on particular incidents. At times facilitators invite the group to comment on the story and on its relevance to them.

J. gets up and says that he would like to be next telling his story. But instead of unfolding his paper he undoes his belt, unbuttons his pants and exposes his underbelly, or what would have been his underbelly where instead he bears a deep cavity of scarred skin retreating far behind the hipbones. Where you would expect his gut, there is - nothing. I can hear V. draw a sharp breath next to me. 'I have had thirteen operations' J. begins, 'after I was shot.' He walks over to me, takes my hand and places it on his skin. I resist the impulse to pull back. For me, this moment of feeling his scars stands out in its extremity and immediacy among my memories of witnessing apartheid stories at the HOM workshops. As he intends to do the same with other participants, Ja. stops him. 'It's okay', she says, 'we would like to hear your story now'. He looks around the circle, almost challenging, then he pulls up his pants and sits down on a chair. I can see that his exposure has come as a shock to some participants in our group. I had observed J. yesterday evening performing the same gesture when someone asked him about his story. It is part of the way in which he relates the narrative of his suffering that is so deeply inscribed into his body.

J. has come to the workshop accompanied by his mother who assists him with his injuries. Initially, he wanted her to speak for him, to tell his story, but on

*the insistence of the HOM facilitators they are now in separate groups, each telling their own story. J. turns out to be very vocal in his narration of the events that inflicted such visible and lifelong damage onto him. The group is showing empathy, but I get a sense of some being overwhelmed and uneasy with this story. When J. speaks about his present life, he mentions his current struggle to feed his four children, one of the other participants seems irritated at this: 'Why do you have so many children?' he asks. It is again Ja. who intervenes by asking J. a range of concrete questions about his current situation. After a short discussion among the participants about the technicalities of welfare and the support systems available to J., a bell rings for lunch outside.*

*It is a visible challenge for facilitators to guide each individual story towards a sense of closure after the 45 minutes. Different facilitators have varying degrees of rigidity when it comes to keeping this time limit, the challenge of following the movements of the story remains, through an initial 'opening', via a period of telling, questioning, discussion and conversation towards the 'handing over' of the stage to another narrator. For some it seems a lot of time, for others very little. Stories follow their own sense of time, rhythm and flow. The lunch break is carried by a different mood at each table but most people are silent.*

*As we return to the circle after the lunch break, R. is in the room. He is leaning onto the windowsill quietly. We sit down. 'I will tell you my story', he says, 'but I won't sit in the circle. I'll sit here.' I can see he has been fighting with himself the whole morning. He was nowhere to be seen during lunch. We thought he had left the workshop. He looks out of the window into the blazing hot afternoon. All we see is his back, his strong neck and hear his breathing. Someone turns a chair, opens the circle to include the far away man at the window. General shuffling of chairs. Silence. When Ja. and I are looking at each other to decide whether we should begin, he speaks: 'After you hear this you may not think I'm a person anymore, but I need to tell you because people died for a reason...' His story is met with a mixture of empathy and apprehension in the group. It is the story of someone who fought for freedom and killed for it. It speaks of a war waged against civilians, of guns killing women and children; it speaks of desire for revenge. Bombs killing women and children in return. It speaks of loss and grief beyond comprehension. Questions arise. To what extent have perpetrators*

*been victimised, and victims been made into perpetrators? The haunting nature of memories of perpetration, the spectre of having violated another human being is not bound by colour, neither can it simply be subsumed under a 'just cause' when it torments the conscience of an individual.*

*R.'s voice is monotonous, his narration factual. In the other participants' faces I read fear, in some disgust, in others despair and sadness. And anger. I can see C. is on the brink of jumping up and leaving the room. Her knuckles are white from clutching the seat of her chair. J. looks like he has switched off, he is looking into the distance, his eyes cloudy. How do you facilitate a story that sucks you in and turns the world upside down? Ja.'s way of facilitating hints at her years of experience as a pastoral counsellor. She has time for silences and patience for detail. Her focus is tireless as she asks R. if he wants to express his feelings. He says that he has been trying but he is not sure he feels anything. Slowly, she tries to steer him, as she did earlier with N., away from the painful detail of his narration to speaking about the resources that enabled his survival, the things that sustained him, and his hopes for the future. Unlike with the other stories, participants show very little reaction at the end of R.'s telling. Everyone seems to feel slightly numb. Much is unsaid when we have to leave R.'s story and move on to the next narrator. We take a short break for some fresh air.*

*R.'s narrative seems to have made it difficult for the next person unfolding her drawing. 'My story is really small', V. says, 'actually it is not even really a story, just my life but nothing really bad happening. 'Cause I was not involved.' V. asks if she can speak in Afrikaans. J. offers to do some translations for the group. Translations require patience; working across linguistic barriers adds another layer of transmission that needs to be mediated when speaking about past experiences and emotions. V.'s story speaks of the larger impact of apartheid's social injustices. She says she feels caught: 'I feel guilty at times for the good life I had compared to others. But I also know I have my own pain. It makes me angry also at times. Then I don't know how am I supposed to feel?' Ja. responds: 'All our stories reflect the scope of the violent system we lived under and that took many shapes and forms', she says, 'we're not here to judge each other, but to listen. Your experience is important to us.' Still, V. refuses to make use of the full 45 minutes allocated to her and says that she is happy with what she has told and there is not much more to say. J. asks a question about an*

*incident in her community in the mid-eighties, but most of the group is disengaged. Participants look tired.*

*The next story testifies to life in white South Africa. C.'s accounts of a happy childhood seem to be met with a certain sense of impatience in the group at first. I can see some heads turning away and lowering of eyes. But as her story unfolds, the dimension of having experienced apartheid 'on the other side of the fence' emerges not as a simple claim to innocence and ignorance but as a pained reflection on what she calls 'a life-time of fighting my own racism'. Despite the afternoon hour the other group members are sitting up and listening attentively. After she has ended, a conversation ensues. J. asks C. about her feelings when listening to all the other stories. Some of the other group members take on a facilitation role for her story. J. and V. ask questions about her life in the present, about her community: 'What responsibility are you who benefited prepared to take for change?' - 'Why are white people not participating in the 'new' South Africa but just wanting to have apartheid back?' Anger surfaces in some voices. Ja. comes in to lift the discussion onto a more general level asking about each person's ability to effect change.*

*Finally, all participants have told their stories and it is up to us facilitators to speak about our lives. The stories of the facilitators are also the ones we hear more than once among ourselves. As a facilitator community, we become witnesses to each other's process not only of telling, but also of working with our personal stories in this particular setting. We listen repeatedly to one another and can trace change and growth, setbacks and doubts within each 'journey'. Ja.'s story links with my own in that she was not born in South Africa but has deeply interwoven her life with this country. The reactions of participants to my personal story were varied, but most times people pointed to commonalities in the two countries' histories. 'The questions you raise are so similar to our own', J. says to me later. My observation is that my 'foreign' story at HOM has many times served to focus the process on a global or more generic dimension: How to engage constructively with a past of atrocity and inequality is a question of relevance in many societies today. The South African situation has generated much international interest in this respect. For many participants at HOM who have spent their lives in the isolation from the global community that apartheid produced, this dimension, conveyed through my 'German story', holds some important realisations:*

*Apartheid was not limited to South Africa. - Other histories of racial discrimination and fascism have left societies with difficult legacies resonating with some similar concerns. - Three generations down the line, the German past has not ceased to be relevant in the ways it shaped people's identities and the question: 'What and how do we tell our children?' remains.*

*It is five o'clock; Ja. begins to close the session, a challenging moment for facilitators who have to find closure after the intensity of exchange and emotion. Despite the sense of tiredness, there is also a feeling of being 'opened' and much is left to say. As facilitators, we speak briefly about possibilities for further counselling and how participants can access such services. The whole group looks completely exhausted. Bodies ache. Some of us decide to go for a short walk. J. says to me as we are crossing to the nearby woods: 'You know, it makes you think about what you have seen in another person when you saw them for the first time from the outside. And it tells you that is not the same what is inside. But still you made your judgement just because you saw the outside.'*

*After the break the participants gather again in the plenary room. Father Michael introduces the next session by commenting on the intensity of the day and the fact that all groups are exhausted: 'We have spent the day doing something that we rarely do at such length and intensity in our everyday lives, and that is dealing with human emotions. It is one of the most exhausting things to experience. We know that you have walked far today. We have heard of the human capacity to do good, and we have heard of the human ability to do evil. We would like to collect some of your impressions from the small groups about the day and go around in the circle and ask each person to give one word that reflects some of what you experienced and heard today.' After each participant has spoken, more of keywords for the day are collected as they come up. 'You can also ask questions that have come up in your small group and that you would like to put to the large group.' he says. Finally, the list of themes derived from the stories reads (in no intentional order):*

*Themes:*

• <i>Courage to Crying</i>	• <i>Journey</i>
• <i>Acceptance of Feelings</i>	• <i>Alive Alive!</i>
• <i>Struggle</i>	• <i>Our faith in God</i>
• <i>Forgetting</i>	• <i>Courage</i>
• <i>Hatred</i>	• <i>Productive anger</i>
• <i>Destructive Anger</i>	• <i>Grandmothers</i>
• <i>Hopeful</i>	• <i>Personal transformation</i>
• <i>Humanity</i>	• <i>Inhuman</i>
• <i>Negative vs. Positive attitude</i>	• <i>Triumph of the human spirit</i>
• <i>Betrayal and Mistrust</i>	• <i>Innocence</i>
• <i>Support group</i>	• <i>Invisible obstacles</i>
• <i>Children and Single mothers</i>	• <i>Darkness</i>
• <i>Guilt</i>	• <i>Initiative</i>
• <i>Apartheid</i>	• <i>Genocide</i>

*Questions:*

- *Is SA the way we want it to be?*
- *Should we forget?*
- *How can we forgive? Do we have to forgive?*
- *What do we do from here?*
- *Where was God?*
- *What do we learn from our suffering?*
- *Where are white South Africans?*

*As Father Michael speaks on it becomes clear that this is his session. Here, his personal theology comes to the fore, part of the master narrative driving the HOM process. When he is not present at a workshop this part of the Saturday rarely generates the same depth of discussion that his credibility as a survivor of apartheid atrocity seems to evoke.*

*'I've recently been on a workshop in Rwanda', he begins, 'and what strikes me again and again is that wherever I take HOM in the world and we have a workshop, the themes that emerge from the days' storytelling are always*

*similar. This list here could have been drawn up by a group in Rwanda, in Northern Ireland, in the United States or here in South Africa, in the Western Cape, in Durban, in P.E. Why is that? Because through our emotions and in our suffering our common humanity is revealed. Because for all of us it's about laying to rest that of the past which will destroy us and keeping that which is life-giving. I spoke to my group today about a woman in Rwanda who impressed me greatly. She lost her family in the genocide and became a widow. But she has not given up. Together with other women she has formed an organisation for widows in her hometown where they help each other to work towards healing and survival. She said to me: "When you have experienced such death around you, death of all you love, you can choose - you can either be dead too while you are still living, and you will be 'dead alive', or you can be 'alive, alive'. I chose to be alive, alive." That is what she said, and she is now a role model in her community. I found her spirit today in my small group - we have people here who have gone through terrible times, but who are choosing to be 'alive, alive'.*

*It is J. who raises the question of forgiveness: 'But what must we do, must we forgive now? What if I'm still angry? What I heard today, it makes me angry. When I look around in my community, I'm angry. When I see the poverty and people have no bread, I'm angry.' The question of forgiveness is central to HOM's process; the topic is discussed at nearly every workshop. If participants do not bring it up, facilitators often initiate a discussion on the subject. Father Michael walks over to J.: 'Let's say you and I have known each other for a long time. And I've stolen your bicycle.'<sup>61</sup> So now after a while I come to you and I say: "J., I'm sorry, but I'm the one who stole your bicycle. Will you forgive me?" He goes down on his knees in front of the surprised J. in a theatrical gesture. J. looks around the room. 'I guess,' he says. 'Thank you.' Michael gets up and walks away. 'Here I go with your forgiveness, but I keep the bicycle.' Murmurs and some laughter from the group. 'Do you want your bicycle back?' J. replies: 'Yes.' M. explains: 'That example is what I would call cheap forgiveness, it's 'bicycle theology'. If we speak about forgiveness do not propose bicycle theology to me, that would mean forgiveness without any restitution. But it is important that people in South Africa realise that forgiveness is neither cheap nor easy. It is a long process. And restitution should be a part of it'.*

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<sup>61</sup> This story has circulated during the TRC's operation on several occasions (see also Ndebele 2000).

*Somebody asks him if he feels he could forgive those who send him the letter bomb that destroyed his hands. 'Forgiveness is not on the table for me', he replies, 'because nobody has come forward to say that they sent me the bomb. Nobody has offered an apology for the deed or asked for forgiveness.' A participant asks: 'But does that mean we should forget what happened?' - 'No,' he replies, 'Your memories are important. They're part of you. But you need to ask yourself - what am I gaining if I'm keeping bitterness and hatred inside my heart, if I build my life around my anger at what was done to me? I'll end up acting it out on those around me and harm those who are close to me, whom I love. No, I need to get some of that poison out because it's going to destroy me while the perpetrators walk free. So for myself, I don't need the perpetrators to come to me in order to forgive. Forgiveness is a process I can choose. It's a journey, you don't all of a sudden walk free because you have forgiven; there are many steps. But I know I can move from being a victim to becoming a survivor and finally, a victor over evil, hatred and death. It's a journey. Forgiveness is part of it. Dealing with anger is part of it.'*

*After the discussion on forgiveness someone says, 'I am stuck by the baggage people carry without anyone even knowing, the invisible scars we all carry. How each person is so hurt. How are we going to heal carrying all that inside? And most times we do not talk about it even among ourselves.' Again it is Father Michael who leads the reply: 'We need to learn that being damaged is part of being human. One of the most important things I learned in my life was taught to me by my experience of disability, when I suddenly needed other people to perform the simplest tasks. It's the realisation that we need each other in order to be fully human. We need each other because we all carry our loads, whether the damage is visible like mine or whether it's inside a person; we need to accept that we can only take a step towards healing and wholeness together with others.'*

*'But where are the white people of South Africa in this?' a participant asks angrily. 'I don't see them in such processes. They don't care.' Facilitator Y. who steps in to answer. She speaks about her role as a young white South African. 'I think there are quite a lot of white South Africans who try to make a difference', she says, 'but they are helpless in a way. What's their role? Where do they fit in? They don't know how to go about it or where find the space for themselves.'*

*The discussion meanders from personal to more general and back. Some participants are reflecting on the personal experiences they had in the small group sessions. Others are more interested in political and philosophical debates. One participant speaks of the South Africa she would like her children to live in: 'Can we all be part? What does it take to contribute? What responsibilities do we have?' Then the conversation suddenly takes a religious turn: 'If you trust in God, you'll be helped,' one participant says. Another one comments on the desperate situation he and his family find themselves in: 'I ask myself why am I in this situation? I'm sometimes not sure what God is doing. It makes no sense what he is doing. I thought our suffering was for the struggle and for freedom, but we're no better off than we were.' In the end the group is left with a wide range of questions 'How can we begin to look forward?' - 'Where do we take our memories?' - 'Will South Africa survive?' - 'How can we ever be reconciled?' It is M. who raises her hand at last to speak. 'I've learned today that there are many reasons why my son died. And there are many reasons why I must live. For now I can say - I feel at peace with that. I can thank my group today.' Facilitators use her statement to close the session on a positive note.*

*By now participants are eager to retire. Before the group splits up facilitator D. introduces the idea of a celebration for the next day and asks the group to elect a committee that will be tasked with arranging a programme to present to the group tomorrow morning. 'The celebration can include anything from songs, to prayers, to small sketches, to poetry, to bible verses. It will be to signify our workshop journey in relation to our life's journeys, as a path from suffering and pain to hope and healing. Each of today's small groups has to make a contribution. So you can start thinking about what your group will do and you will have some time tomorrow morning to practice. The committee will create the framework and tomorrow we fill it in together,' he says. Amid cheering and clapping, four participants are chosen for the task. Father Michael says 'After supper we're inviting people for a small party. We'll have some music and drinks and snacks. This is for us to relax and just be together after this day. You don't have to come if you are too tired or want to be by yourself, but we hope that you will at least join in for a little while.'*

*The party tonight begins on a quieter note. Some of the participants are dancing, especially the younger participants of the group. Most have come to*

*sit for a while and chat. R. is sitting on the side with a drink, observing the scene. 'How was your day?' I ask him. 'Tiring', he says, 'but actually I'm glad I did stay. I don't know what will come of it, but for now I like what I've seen. I think what we're doing here, it's starting somewhere. Look.' He points to some of the young women from Gugulethu teaching C. the 'bus stop' dance, a line-dance performed in a group. Missing another turn, she throws her hands up in mock despair earning laughter from the others. As a result of the day's engagement the group is interacting differently, participants seem to have developed a sense of ease with each other. J. comments during the party on this: 'I would've thought it impossible that today we can be like this together, where yesterday it was all so tense and all'.*

*The party is the one 'planned' social occasion at workshops. It facilitates a different and less formal kind of encounter to the other workshop sessions by creating a moment of cross-boundary socialising, a communal occasion among a diverse group. For many, such socialising is still a rare occasion outside the workshop space. Facilitators are present, but they mingle with participants and do not intervene or steer the party. The atmosphere and mood are as varied as the participants. Some parties develop a mode of celebration, while others turn out as more quiet conversational rounds. Tonight, most participants are attending the party. It is an opportunity to be in the same room with other participants without necessarily having to engage. I can see V. and some other participants using the evening to follow up on some of the day's stories they have heard and engage in one-on-one conversations. For others it is an opportunity to release the emotional intensity of the day through dancing, jokes and laughter. On other occasions HOM has also offered alcoholic drinks at these parties until several participants used the opportunity to get drunk, and in one case, violent. Alcohol has been a problem at some of the workshops. On one occasion several participants informed the facilitators that 'a man has the right to get pissed on the weekend' and left the workshop. It is at such moments of conflict that outside realities intrude upon the seclusion and safety of the workshop space. Participants are now told early on in the process that the workshop is set as a 'dry' space and the party will not serve alcohol.*

*Tonight's party is a harmonious event but participants' exhaustion is visible. Most retire early for sleep.*

## Chapter Three

### Engaged Witnessing - Testimonial Dialogues

#### *Storytelling at HOM*

Storytelling is always, quietly, subversive. It is a double-headed axe. You think it faces only one way, but it also faces you. You think it cuts only in one direction but it also cuts you. You think it applies to others only, when it applies mainly to you. When you think it is harmless, that is when it springs its hidden truths, its uncomfortable truths, on you. It startles your complacency. And when you no longer listen, it lies silently in your brain, waiting (Ben Okri 1997: 43).

Without exception, HOM participants described the storytelling as the most significant element of their workshop experience. Even when asked years later about the HOM weekend, participants remembered the Saturday session and some of the stories they heard. The storytelling was also the element of HOM that the facilitators, who engaged with the process over a long period of time, mentioned as having had the most profoundly transforming impact on their thinking and actions. The chapter explores the narrative side of the memory process at HOM. I argue that the personal storytelling among ordinary citizens at HOM, aiming for particularly non-cognitive narrative encounter [‘We are here to explore the heart stuff, not the head stuff’ FML<sup>62</sup>], generated a modus of *engaged witnessing* based on the premises of *immediacy, participation, and unsettlement*. What people experienced as powerful and lasting impacts of the storytelling at the HOM workshops went beyond the advocated quasi-therapeutic process of putting personal and traumatic memories into a coherent narrative form in ways that facilitated momentary emotional release. Through participation, immediacy and unsettlement the storytelling initiated what I call a *testimonial dialogue*, which developed from the process of recounting memories, sharing emotions and making sense of the emerging contradictions and implications – within oneself, with others considered part of one’s social group, and with those thought to be ‘Other’.

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<sup>62</sup> Generally said by Father Michael Lapsley or the HOM lead facilitator at each workshop when explaining the modus operandi of the workshop to participants.

The chapter explores further how such a testimonial dialogue was brought about by an intricate process of *making connections* between and among previously divided individuals and collectives, linking the personal, political, moral and experiential dimensions of individual memories to the present in a way that enabled an unusual set of reflections and a form of interpersonal engagement in the post-apartheid context that held the potential of both a meaningful response to individual memories of the past and the temporary experience of an alternative way of being together across historical social barriers.

### **What Kind of Telling?**

Storytelling has a pragmatic efficacy. In pretending to recount the real, it manufactures it. It is performative. It renders believable what it says, and it generates appropriate action. *In making believers, it produces an active body of practitioners* (de Certeau 1986: 200, my emphasis).

What is ‘storytelling’ at HOM? Before going into detail, I make three brief preliminary notes for the course of the chapter. Firstly, I view the act of performing apartheid memories within the framework of storytelling at HOM as *testimonial*; not necessarily in that it fit the conventional legal or religious framings of testimony, but in that it validated memories as personal but nonetheless historical truths, embedding each story within the enlarged, complexified and interpersonal framework created by the joint recollections of the small-group members. Secondly, the nature of this testimonial terrain not only generated an audience of willing, caring listeners, but also a form of *witnessing* that was interactive and participative by not permitting the witness the distance of observation or the mediation of representation other than through a face-to-face encounter. Thirdly, I suggest the notion of ‘storying’ rather than *storytelling* to describe the testimonial action at HOM, not only to differentiate HOM’s memory process from that of the TRC, but also in order to emphasise the processual nature of the narrations and the performative agency of the narrators when selecting the particular blend of characters, events, emotions, choices and actions that each personal story portrayed as it was chosen and conveyed to one particular audience at one particular moment.

My reading of the narrative process goes beyond the stated intentions of HOM when I argue that, rather than the simply effecting a therapeutic release of harmful memory and emotion and bringing about 'real understanding' through realising the universality of emotions and a 'common humanity', as HOM claims, the unique effect of the interpersonal process of storying memories was essentially in participants *making connections*, between the experiential-emotional and the political-moral, and between the inter- and intrasubjective dimensions of past and present realities. Making connections meant placing experiences, events and people in relation to one another in ways that apartheid sought to prevent in order to enable new, truly alternative forms of engagement in the here and now. Storying enabled a kind of engaged witnessing through which participants articulated the search for and urgent appeal to the listening ear of the 'Other' in a way that set out to challenge the continuing isolation and alienation of South Africans of different backgrounds from one another. This plea for listening, acknowledgement and search for a meaningful response found expression in the *collective, participatory* and *immediate* practice of making witness at HOM, in a face-to-face process of joint remembering.

I employ the TRC as a matrix for comparison here, for it was through the continuous referencing and discursive interplay between the two processes that they were often thought of as affecting a similar memory process when in practice they did not. Meanwhile, it was in response to the TRC's testimonial arena that the HOM storytelling process was conceived as 'something different and beyond the Commission' (C.T. 6/99). Narrating memories of life under apartheid here was not done to preserve 'stories' in an archive for posterity, neither to produce any kind of lasting representation beyond the moment, but instead HOM aimed to produce an intimate interpersonal moment, the memory of which was hoped to have a lasting impact on the witness.

At the TRC, 'storytelling' was conceived as a specifically 'African' concept, portrayed as a galvanising force for the complex endeavour of containing the fragile structures of the spoken memory of individual pain into a larger national meta-narrative of suffering,

redemption and reconciliation. South African author and traditional storyteller Ellen Kuzwayo was quoted repeatedly during the TRC hearings:

Africa is a place of storytelling. [...] We need more stories, never mind how painful the exercise might be. This is how we will learn to love one another. Stories help us to understand, to forgive and to see things through someone else's eyes (Ellen Kuzwayo, quoted in Villa-Vicencio & Niehaus 1995: 115; see also Tutu in Botman 1996: 7 and 138; TRC Report 1998; Ross 2003: 78-79)

In addition to the universality accredited to the concept of storytelling as being 'of all cultures' (Tutu 1996 at TRC hearing), the way in which it was employed throughout the TRC hearings was an attempt to connect its testimonial model for the recounting of apartheid memories to the oral traditions of Africa, making a convenient link between the endeavours of the new nation and less tainted pre-apartheid, even pre-colonial, times. Assuming a link between pre- and post-apartheid unity enforced the ability to speak of *re*-conciliation and forgiveness, rather than of a first encounter or an evaluation of what it could mean to take up the challenge of negotiating a *novel* interpersonal practice between South Africans, taking cognisance of the traumatic past and its implications. Often resting on a romanticising discourse of a 'specifically African' capacity for forgiveness and restoration of social and moral order, 'victim's stories' were regarded as the social glue through which a common memory would be forged out of fragments of individual experiences of suffering:

The measure of our unity is the extent of our common memory. South Africa still awaits a unifying memory, which incorporates provincial memories and partial pasts. This struggle, for symbols that unite and stories that bind, has only just begun (Villa-Vicencio 1995: 106).

Assuming that a 'common memory' indeed unifies, the above statement supposes that the experiences of the individual under apartheid remain partial or provincial; that they have to be *bound* by a larger narrative of nationhood to have validity in the new order (for further critique see also Wilson 2001; Ross 2003). Their contesting potential thus contained, individual stories of suffering were then recast as the binding elements within this new master-narrative. HOM's conceptions of storytelling, as outlined in the

guidelines for facilitators, placed similar emphasis on the idea of unity and togetherness as key elements of building a post-apartheid society, but defined storytelling firstly as a means for a novel kind of interpersonal contact rather than symbolic gesture:

As a nation we are called upon to engage in a process of story telling [sic]. The conflicts of the past led to a deeply divided society [...] There is a saying that justice cannot be founded on lies and the same is true for human society which requires mutual trust and understanding. [...] There can be no real understanding between South Africans from different backgrounds so long as neither has a clear picture of the other, what each really thinks and believes in, hopes and feels. Friendship cannot be built on prejudice (HOM Facilitator's Guidelines 1997).

Instead of a 'struggle' for binding narratives and symbols, here emphasis was placed on the interpersonal domain and its practices, which required the proximity of direct contact, of sharing a space, in which such newly imagined ways of being social could be contemplated and tried out. In an idealistic liberal vision, building 'real understanding' and 'getting a clearer picture of one another' was hoped to result in 'friendship' and 'trusting relationships'. Yet to explore thoughts, beliefs, feelings and hopes in relation to a violent and unjust past, as Mamdani points out, has not necessarily resulted in unity and social harmony in other contexts:

Neither recovery nor revelation (of truth) have led to a healing of past wounds. Either may just as well lead to rage on the part of the victims, triggering revenge, or fear on part of former perpetrators, leading to demands for separation (Mamdani 1997: 23).

Indeed, the storying at HOM revealed some of the emotional frictions that individuals experienced in response to the official way South Africa chose in dealing with its past. Allowing a wider range of experiences to be told within a more immediate and intimate setting, and emphasising the validity of the *ordinary* apartheid story, the HOM process enabled a distinctly different narrative practice to the TRC, one that (at times unintentionally) facilitated a dialogical process, in which conflicting views of the world and of the past *had* to be negotiated, and most evidently could not be resolved by the rhetoric and promise of reconciliation.

## What Kind of Story?

The moral genius of storytelling is that each, teller and listener, enters the space of the story *for* the other. Telling stories in postmodern times, and perhaps in all times, attempts to change one's own life by affecting the lives of others. Thus all stories have an element of *testimony* [...] (Frank 1995: 18, emphasis in original)

One may only enter the confidential arena of HOM storying on condition of one's own contribution as a witness, neither out of curiosity, nor primarily in the name of scholarly observation. Of the stories told at HOM I cannot reveal details that might violate the 'sacred' commitment to confidentiality at the centre of the HOM telling space. Recording HOM participants' stories later, equipped with the tools of the ethnographer, would have altered the process of storying without revealing what took place in the moment of narration. Writing also cannot convey the personal momentum of making witness, something which cannot be experienced in the place of another who hears the stories from another vantage point, even if exposed to the same event. The reading witness cannot experience like the one who listens, who sees a face instead of a page, who observes the body's narrative speaking beyond the words. At the centre of the HOM storying experience were the intimacy and immediacy of the setting, as well as the risk of partaking and being unsettled by what one heard. From the vantage point of my own subject position and based on years of listening, observing, and engaging with HOM stories, here I explore the broad depth and scope of narrations in order to frame my analysis of the *process* of storying.

Through each story told at HOM, the elements of apartheid's intrinsic injustice and systemic violence unfolded in the detail of the everyday, emerging slowly, sometimes incomprehensibly. Of the many personal accounts of the apartheid years that I witnessed at the HOM workshops, each was unique and different. Yet each also bore common threads that linked it to other experiences and made it resonate within a range of overarching themes generated by the modus operandi of the apartheid system and the traces of its colonial rooting, which provides the common backdrop to all South African stories. One can differentiate stories of gross violation from the many shades of grey within the practices of oppression, spawning infinite variations of both collaboration and

resistance at local level. One can distinguish accounts of heroism and trickster masquerades outwitting state powers from expressions of excruciating pain and the visible traces of destruction left behind on people's bodies, minds and souls. One can speak endlessly of the naked despair and depression of those who were subjects to apartheid's oppression, of human cruelty causing human suffering. One can attempt to separate victim testimony from bystander and beneficiary reminiscences, or explore stories according to the scope of experiences generated within the confines of each of apartheid's racial 'groupings'. One can explore the multiple motives why people did or did not 'get involved' in the struggle against apartheid and discover that the boundaries between bystander and participant, between beneficiary and deprived, between hero and informer were neither fixed nor stable, but replicated frequently within individuals and collectives, whether defined by race, ethnicity, community of place, religious or political affiliation. One could widen the scope to the stories of genocide, dislocation and war recounted at HOM workshops by the many refugees from other African countries living in Cape Town. One could represent participants' stories at HOM as topography of terror, a collection of narratives of resistance, tales of courage, miracle accounts of survival or narrations of ignorance and conscientisation. Some stories had a religious coinage; others were derived from the language of political conviction and activism. Many spoke of exile from self and home, and most conveyed a burning desire to belong to a new time in a truly changed place. Narrators they frequently positioned themselves and their stories in relation to other themes beyond pain and violation. Many chose to narrate their lives spanning over a longer period of time, in which recollections of hurt and suffering featured among joy and happiness, where, amid apartheid's intrusive realities, 'ordinary' human desires (to have a child, to find love, to build a life) met both disappointment and fulfilment, and apartheid surfaced and receded as a conscious framework behind the detail of the everyday. Common to all stories told at HOM was that the narratives forged a link between the past as the *apartheid* past, exploring to what extent, subjectively, the present is or is not a *post*-apartheid present. All gave an outlook into an imagined future, whether desired or dreaded.

When recounting memories of pain and suffering, individual narrators often focused first on incidents of crisis and catastrophe, personal and in their respective communities, and then returned to childhood experiences and more domestic memories. Some participants structured their stories in strictly chronological order; others concentrated on the memory of one overwhelmingly painful event only.<sup>63</sup> Some told stories that went into the depth of very traumatic events. Others presented themselves in terms of honour and sacrifice, of victory and a collective base of camaraderie, omitting the details of violation they experienced. Many recounted seemingly small incidents and interactions experienced in everyday life and the prevention of developmental opportunities as ‘denying one’s humanity’ and as some of the most painful manifestation of apartheid’s powers. Sometimes early encounters, in which apartheid revealed its ugly traits in a familiar face or through a loved person, were described as more powerful and piercing even than later physical violations: ‘That’s when the world stopped making sense’, a participant said when recounting such an incident, ‘you don’t know who is on which side, when evil can come in the disguise of the good. That broke something in me - that the enemy can be inside our circles.’

Many stories testified to the pervasive nature of apartheid ideology in diluting the margins between friend and foe, inside and outside, good and evil, succeeding in imposing some of its morality onto the minds of its subjects. It was this legacy that HOM stories showed as being among the most disempowering facets of life under apartheid. One participant said ‘I’ll never forgive them for the ways in which they’ve carved this into my soul, my being - that I’m worth nothing, that I’m not a person, that it is me, I have to prove my humanity, not them, they just took it for themselves.’ Many such statements of participants remind of the accounts of Nazi concentration camp survivors who testified to the impossibility of escaping the moral universe of the camps, the

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<sup>63</sup> Participants who had testified to the TRC were most likely to recount their story at HOM in the mode of ‘traumatic storytelling’ (Colvin 2004; see also Ross 2004 for a wider accounting of the power of this form), event-focused and with emphasis on the dramatic scope of violation. The model of ‘traumatic storytelling’ was more often repeated at the HOM during the time of the TRC and up to 1999, after which it faded and participants increasingly told their life-stories beginning with childhood, focusing more on family and the immediate community context than on the state forces. They also shifted in their focus to the present, often speaking for longer about their current circumstances than about the past, revealing the traumatic nature of the everyday for many people and the continuities of violence and deprivation in the present.

*'l'univers concentrationnaire'* (Rousset 1946), long after the events. In relation to the 'universe' of apartheid, all stories spoke of the system's damage to human relationships, not least impacting violently on one's relation with oneself. Most stories testified at the same time to immense human creativity in developing coping strategies for survival in a world shaped by constant arbitrary violence and systemic oppression. Some meandered, as did their narrator's lives, between closeness to and distance from the brutal powers of the state, between trying to protect and daring to resist, carefully weighing what could be revealed of what was often previously secret knowledge, pondering what loyalties might be violated by the act of narration despite the proclaimed 'safety' of the telling space, what damage might be caused by the release of memories of harm to others, even within a testimonial arena bound by confidentiality. What was told could only hint at the many untold facets within each narrative, emerging as a sudden silence, a change in tone and rhythm, a broken off sentence, speech repairs begun but not carried through, the rephrasing of 'how it really was...', the uneasy look over the shoulder towards an imaginary foe.

All narratives were culturally engendered, resonating with the mother tongue of the orator, even if told in another language, which was most often English. The group demography also defined the modes of telling and choice of words. The range of political subject positions - race, class, gender, age and political conviction - generated a particular frame for each small group. In the 'open' workshops, the intended diversity of the group shaped the mutual representation of stories in a potentially conflicting dynamic. A lot depended on the facilitator's ability to establish a balance of trust and openness that enabled a level of honesty about such emotions while at the same time 'holding the space' in a way that allowed participants to feel safe enough to speak their minds. Facilitators were challenged with adhering to the sensitive and contesting nature of the stories, balancing the tension within the storytelling space between the HOM premise of 'opening up', 'speaking about feelings' and releasing emotions freely (which potentially created conflict and was experienced as violation by other participants) and that of 'finding common ground' and reconciling differences (which in turn limited the stories, censoring potentially harmful parts and contradicting the unconstrained release of

emotions). In balancing the tensions between the individual need to feel safe, the honesty to emotions evoked by memories and the capacity for confrontation, the initial HOM conception of ‘healing and reconciliation’ had to be re-cast in a different light: as a complex, contested, risky and potentially painful long-term project.<sup>64</sup>

On the side of those whom apartheid oppressed on the basis of their colour of skin, two major themes wove their way through the many facets of pain that found expression during the storytelling sessions. One described the features of intrusion and acute violation, the other spoke of deprivation and subtle, at times invisible and self-perpetuating forms of humiliation. HOM participants expressed their sadness and anger at an overwhelming sense of loss that resides in their post-apartheid existences: loss of opportunities; loss of self-respect, loss of relationships; loss of lives; and loss of a sense of dignity and humanity. Against this stood the struggle to adapt to the new democracy and survive within its novel set of rules, which left little time and space to mourn such losses.

Beneficiaries’ stories spoke of privilege and isolation, of ignorance, denial and the ever-presence of religious ideology, of socialisation into privileged South Africa, of the pressure to conform, of the influence of church and community, of conscription and war fought in other countries in the region, and of the encounter with the violence of state powers through internal communal and familial control mechanisms. Most shared in the present elements of loneliness, loss of purpose, feelings of estrangement and of anger, fear, guilt, and shame. Most also expressed happiness, excitement and hope in light of the promises of transition. Initially, the narrations of beneficiaries often jarred when placed within the same space with stories of brutality and deprivation. Yet, in the detail of personal experience, what appeared to be oppositional stories – ‘white privilege’ versus ‘black deprivation’ - transpired not always to be as simple as this. This did not dilute the facts of political and socio-economic discrimination and privilege based on colour and their clear resonance in people’s narratives, but pointed to the range of choices people

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<sup>64</sup> Hence in later workshops, from 2000 onwards, facilitators placed more and more emphasis on the complexity of the ‘healing and reconciliation’ project that HOM envisioned than before.

made in their everyday (inter)actions within the system that challenged the rigidity of the very boundaries apartheid sought to entrench.<sup>65</sup>

The attempt to force HOM participants' stories into the confines of a typology of narratives would constrain their complexity without doing justice to the unique nature of each Saturday session and the experiences participants brought. The range of 'stories' placed next to each other within the same telling space created the particular dynamic within each session, enabling a kind of witnessing across existing, historically-derived boundaries that prevent the acknowledgement of others as human. As one formation of colonialism, the apartheid system denied the humanity of those on whom pain was inflicted. The idea of a mutual 'recovery' of humanity through the acknowledgment of pain among participants remained central to HOM's storying process. To those who were able to listen repeatedly to the stories told at HOM, such as the facilitators, a patchwork image emerged, a larger picture made up of hundreds of individual life-stories, of the society apartheid created and left behind, a society made of contradictions and connections, dependencies and interdependencies, simultaneously damaged and creative, bound and divided, despairing and hopeful, and a society attempting to forge a nation on the grounds of a highly antagonistic history.

### ***Doing it for the Nation – Telling it for Myself: Validating the Ordinary***

Many participants described the storytelling session at HOM as an opportunity to 'reclaim my story and pain' (Q. 5/99) in a daily environment that did not give much space for reflection on the past. One young woman from Crossroads commented:

Just the fact that here is an opportunity to take time out and reflect. It is important, where do you find that in South Africa? I never do that in the hustles of my life, there is never the time. I am very busy, all the time busy. But to sit back and think – what is my life all about? That is what I mean. Just think that our lives are not easy, most of the time there are many, many things to do (Q. 5/99).

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<sup>65</sup> For example, such complexities became visible in the narratives of white activists who spoke of their opposition to the apartheid system and the sacrifices they made, while commenting on the privileges they enjoyed despite being opponents to the state (better education; safety, stability and wealth when growing up; better treatment in detention, etc.). Some black participants spoke about their choice to remain in school and focus on their education while their peers dropped out, and fought and died for the struggle, a choice that ensured these participants a privileged status today, yet left a complex residue of guilt and shame as well.

Initially, there were many participants at HOM who had also testified to the TRC, or who testified to the TRC after a HOM workshop. Most viewed the two testimonial spaces as complementary in their engagement with the past. Participant A., former member of one of the armed divisions of the liberation forces, described how the experience at a HOM workshop contributed to his motivation to apply for amnesty to the TRC for killing two white men during the struggle against apartheid, and also to ask the families of the deceased for forgiveness:

I went to the TRC without being pushed by anyone. I went there for my own purpose. [...] I once had a [HOM] workshop in 1997 with Father Lapsley, and that workshop motivated me further. It gave me a power to challenge and go to the TRC. In fact I had not yet told at the TRC, but [the workshop] gave me the power to meet the families [of the men I killed], no matter what would have been the consequences because I saw at the workshop and I believe a human being is a human being – no one wants to lose his or her beloved ones. [...] I am the happiest man, now I am free. I know now there is nothing that is a burden on my shoulders, particularly because the families [...] I could see that they give me forgiveness genuinely and honestly. It was a very emotional thing we had together [...] So I am saying thank you to [Father] Michael for what he did because if he did not do it in this manner, I would not have been able to approach the TRC. I would have just sat down and said: No. I have served my sentence; it is finished. So his contribution was a very important contribution to me (A. 5/99).

In many descriptions of the TRC's testimonial process the terminology of nationhood and the notion of telling stories for the nation featured repeatedly:

The TRC really did give me the space for expressing myself openly and honestly, this was thing I had been looking for, for very a long time. You do not only have to be open when I talk to you, but you also have to be open when you are building a nation. You have to start there and build a nation. [...] The cry that I made in the TRC, it was a cry that I myself, I was the perpetrator. I myself was being looked on as redundant, as a killer, as a murderer, a murderer who might have been perceived by many people as a criminal, particularly in white circles. It was a cry of hope and a cry of honesty. That is why I said that the cry was different from that one of crying for a brother. Now here, this was a cry of the nation. I was crying for this nation, for the South African nation to become a better nation amongst nations (A. 5/99).

The testimonial arena of the TRC set the individual and his experiences of suffering in a symbolic relation to the new nation, forging an abstract link between individual sacrifice,

forsaking of revenge, asking for forgiveness, the speaking of pain and the quest for personal healing as necessary conditions for becoming part of the new society, a metonymic blend that victims who came to testify, at least initially, often adopted. A.'s description shows the complexity of the delineations the TRC process forged between 'victims' and 'perpetrators' of gross human rights violations. A., seeing himself as a victim of apartheid who took up arms to fight injustice, refers directly the sacrifice he made by allowing himself to be cast as a perpetrator, according to the TRC definition, in need of amnesty, instead of framing himself through more heroic political narratives that dominated his own circles of activists at the time who accused him of 'selling out the cause' by applying for amnesty for what they considered a 'legitimate act in the context of struggle'.<sup>66</sup>

Although HOM also frequently employed a blend of terminology that linked personal stories to the nation-building exercise in ways similar to the TRC, participants described HOM as a process where stories were told foremost for the sake of the narrator herself. A young woman participant from Gugulethu stated:

All of a sudden my experiences and memories mattered and people were there to listen, to me. And here I was *doing it for myself*, you know telling the story for myself and to myself as well (R. 8/99).

The premise that all HOM participants became storytellers in their own right and that, subsequently, *all* South African life experiences were conceived worthy of 'being storied' in this manner, that all were assigned testimonial significance in the interpersonal engagement with the past, meant that HOM could provide one alternative space for the exploration of otherwise unacknowledged experiences, an aspect that many HOM participants found deeply rewarding and meaningful. Many described the experience of telling their life stories at HOM as an empowering event, a moment of discovery and realisation of *having a story*:

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<sup>66</sup> During the time of the TRC there were various continuations of the 'just war' debate, which discussed the legitimacy of the use and scope of violence used in the struggle against the injustices of apartheid (for records of these see CD-ROM of TRC Website [1998]; TRC Report 1998).

When I first went to Healing of Memories I was almost certain that I did not have a story or that I was not part of what happened. [...] Now it is different, there were many experiences that happened to me, now I tell a different story every time I go (Z. HOM facilitator, 6/99).

This comment was made by the daughter of a freedom fighter and member of the liberation forces, whose life was frequently and directly affected by her father's political involvement. Her accounts of her childhood bore an early consciousness of the presence of apartheid violence, which subjected her to several dramatic moves all over the country at a very young age. But because she herself 'was no activist and was never tortured' she did not consider herself having been 'part of events' (6/99). Ordinary HOM participants often felt that their suffering remained largely unacknowledged in the public sphere. Especially women frequently began their story at HOM by presenting their life experiences as insignificant, saying: 'I did not suffer as much as others' and: 'I am not a *real* victim', pointing to the gendered patterns of telling of experiences during and in the early years after the TRC. They expressed the valorisation of the spectacular at the expense of the ordinary (see also Ross 2003), which was rooted in the legal definitions of harm in the TRC's work that legitimised and foregrounded some aspects of suffering – caused by gross human rights violations – and focused attention on harm inflicted on the body (see Ross 2003: 11-13, 16-17, 103-161).

As coined by the TRC discourse, 'storytelling' had thus become primarily the political currency of victimhood, and being able to partake in the speaking of memories represented an exclusive act of sharing in the value of that currency, of claiming a right to acknowledgement, response and reparation, while at the same time emplacing experiences within the restricted confines of 'TRC victimhood' (see also Colvin 2004; Ross 2003; Wilson 2001). Other HOM participants also believed that 'telling stories' in itself meant claiming victimhood. When asked whether they considered themselves 'victims of apartheid', most participants explained that they would not dare lay claim to the term because they did not experience gross violations or did not lose anyone close to them to apartheid violence. Others like Z. and some of the younger anti-apartheid activists at HOM also turned this premise around, rejecting the idea of victimhood as disempowering and interrogating its relationship with 'storytelling': 'We do not wish to

be seen as victims. So at first I thought, why should we go around and tell our stories?' (H. 5/99). While many participants did not want to be 'victims' in the sense propagated by the TRC, its language was a powerful influence on HOM storying in that listeners often implicitly established hierarchies of suffering, which they revealed in their later comments and questions after the storying. Stories of traumatic events were deemed more 'heavy', and received more acknowledgement, as did stories of sacrifice, courage and struggle for the anti-apartheid cause, which received special recognition among participants.

As HOM facilitator, Z. had the opportunity to repeat the workshop, finding that she told 'a different story every time' she went. Similar to the experiences of other HOM facilitators, attending repeatedly enabled her to make use of the process in a way that one-time participants could not. Engaging in storying over a longer period of time, HOM facilitators were able to 'work with their story' and experience how the narration changed and got re-shaped over time and in response to different small groups, and how emotions changed:

I found that my story changed all the time, some things I had found very painful, they had triggered a lot of emotion initially, they seemed to become less painful, they even got less and less room in the story as I started telling other things first. So, in working with my story, I truly found that some healing was taking place and my anger got less and less, too, I was less bitter in myself and that changed my life (D. 7/99).

Most facilitators described a lasting therapeutic effect, placing particular value on the storying process in this respect. Yet the discovery of *having a story* that was given room and acknowledgement in the HOM process was also emphasised as positive by participants who attended the workshops only once. Assigning significance to personal experiences of suffering as part of a broadened picture of historical action generated a sense of inclusivity that put the individual at the centre of the thus complexified narrative of apartheid. Through the stories, different facets emerged of how apartheid's ideologies of division were played out at many other levels besides the obvious dimension of race – social strife was replicated between different political groupings, between different factions of the liberation movements, between different racial groupings considering

themselves oppressed (in the Western Cape especially, tensions between those apartheid categorised into 'black' and 'coloured' 'population groups'), towards those viewed as informers and collaborators, and among ordinary people within local communities. Here is M., a participant in 1999, recalling the effects:

I felt good, I mean after talking a little about what I went through. And also it was interesting to find myself among the people who come from different backgrounds, totally different backgrounds and who were playing different roles at the time. I don't remember one moment when they did not look eye to eye, so to me that was quite interesting. I thought it was an achievement. We had someone whose father was burnt to death by so-called comrades, and another group who belonged to another scam, involving someone who was a policeman. So sharing all those kinds of stories together and people were actually listening to one another, and at the end of the day and they accept the others! It's a small thing, but I think it was an achievement. [...] I used to know exactly what the people thought, what the people feared at a given point, those who belonged to particular groups in the community. [...] But I did not really imagine bringing those people together over the weekend for two days and they end up smiling with each other and they did not feel that they were cheating each other, where before there was all this mistrust. Wholeheartedly, they were feeling good. So to me it was really an achievement. (M. 11/99)

The ordinary stories described the traumatic nature of everyday life under apartheid for the majority of Capetonians and testified to the extent to which apartheid succeeded in damaging the social fabric of communities far beyond divisions of race, putting into question the focus on inter-racial reconciliation that dominated the TRC's process. HOM stories also portrayed the continuities of violence and other destructive consequences of the past, exemplifying the ways in which past and present were interconnected in a way that often remained unrecognised in the paradigm of the new nation, and eliciting areas of tension between personal and collective meanings assigned to particular versions of the past at local level.

## ***Engaged Witnessing:***

### ***Participation, Immediacy, Unsettling and Response-ability***

In other words ... it is the ear of the other that signs. [...] When much later, the other will have perceived with a keen-enough ear what I will have addressed to him, or her, then my signature will have taken place (Nietzsche, quoted in Derrida 1985 [1982]: viii)

In contrast to the TRC hearings, which were widely broadcast but in which the testifier was spatially removed from the audience, HOM participants were not a symbolic collective of citizens somewhere ‘out there’, representing an abstract ‘ear of the nation’, but they became what I call *participant* or *engaged* witnesses. They were bound by a social contract that obliged them to stay and, later, by their engagement in the process of the weekend. Nobody who entered the circle of witnesses at HOM could remain an observer; condition of access was the willingness to embark on a specific kind of making witness that asked one to leave the safety of distance and observation, to partake, to reveal and to take risks. This form of engagement meant taking up not only the position of historical witness – verifying the truth and validity of the individual memory in relation to the makings of history – but that of the witness who accepts that he or she is personally implicated and questioned by the storying of others. Engaged witnessing meant setting the truth one heard in relation to one’s own truth, to ‘experience it affecting one’s own life’ (Frank 1995: 23). The testimonial act at HOM did not end with the moment of telling and the reception of the story by the audience, but led to a direct engagement with the story and narrator in the ensuing conversations over the weekend, and often also shaping the format of the stories that followed in the same session. Central to producing this process of engaged witnessing were the elements of immediacy, participation, unsettling and response-ability. Immediacy and participation, though not named as such, were elements advocated by HOM, whereas unsettling and response-ability are concepts springing from my observations of HOM, not directly stated as desired consequences by the intervention itself.

### **Immediacy**

Some of the key differentiations between HOM's telling space and the testimonial arena of the TRC were already evident in their spatial lay-out. The TRC constructed the space of its hearings in theatrical fashion (Bozolli 1998, Marlien-Curiel 2001, Ross 2003) according to three audiences: one, the Commissioners, facing the witness from their elevation behind a red clothed table; two, those who were termed 'the public', a local and international audience sitting in most cases behind the narrators facing their back; and three, the media witnessing through the lens of a camera and simultaneously offering a mediated version of the 'stories' to the imaginary witnessing nation 'out there' (see also Ross 2003: 34-38). HOM participants told stories within a small circle in close proximity to the narrator and to an audience of ordinary listeners who were sitting on the same height, face-to-face. At the same time – like the TRC – HOM removed the act of storytelling as oral performance out of the communal and domestic sphere<sup>67</sup> into a specifically constructed, separate quasi-public domain, and out of the gaze of the public eye into the realms of confidentiality.

The testimonial arena at HOM was laid out so as to encourage a dialogical form of witnessing. The process of storying was not defined by the gaze of a camera lens transmitting an image to the outside nor mediated through ink signs on paper, but manifested in the directness of eye contact, in the breathing of the same air, in the moisture felt when picking up a tissue into which tears had been shed. The story was acknowledged through bodily as well as verbal responses within the circle. Within this performance of apartheid memory, all those present assumed the role of primary witness (to their own experiences of apartheid) and secondary witness (to each other's *life-experiences* under apartheid). HOM privileged this experiential form of witnessing for its immediacy and non-cognitive nature. Take the stark example of J. beginning to tell his story at the workshop by exposing and placing the hand of the witness on the wound itself (p. 84). Here, within the physical presence of an audience made not only of listeners and spectators, but of fellow witnesses in time, J.'s attempt to enable those present to

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<sup>67</sup> Oral performances of story in rural settings may happen in a public place in the village and in the privacy of people's homes respectively. They are emplaced within 'community as witness', whereas HOM adopts some of the setting but concentrates on the 'individual as witness' (see also Scheub 1996 and 1998).

enter the story of his violation meant, literally, to demand the engagement with the violated body through touch, in the attempt to *make the pain* of the violation *felt* to another. Witnessing here literally became an *embodied* process.

Allen Feldman speaks of '[t]he oral history of domination and violence [a]s an atopic narrative. As a discourse without place, it emerged in symbiosis with the primordial scene of displacement - the body' (Feldman 1991: 15). Engaged witnessing then is the attempt to emplace this 'discourse without place', without resolving the ruptures and fragmentations that violence and domination have inscribed into the being of the narrator and continue to engrave into the attempt at bearing witness. It is a process that necessarily needs the physical presence and proximity of the narrator and witnesses to grasp the symbiosis between the spoken narrative and the bodily subtext that further mediated versions of the testimonial act can hardly convey.

### **Participation**

Witnessing at HOM was an interactive process. While the audience helped create a space in which the narrator could become witness to her own story, it also constituted more than a passive listening force geared for reception in the moment – the others became the 'responsive ear' of the engaged witness who, through the act of attending to the narrator's storying of self, made a commitment to 'carrying' the story that had been conceived, to accept and risk the personal repercussions of listening for the witness. Many accounts of research and therapy with survivors of trauma and atrocity speak of a similar need for the 'witness as carrier' of the traumatic story. Dori Laub speaks of his experiences with Holocaust concentration camp survivors:

My function in this setting is that of a companion on the eerie journey of the testimony. As an interviewer, I am present as someone who actually participates in the reliving and reexperiencing of the event. I also become part of the struggle to go beyond the event and not be submerged and lost in it (Felman & Laub 1992: 76).

The person most implicated for this position of taking responsibility for listening as a means of repair is absent at HOM; it would be the perpetrator, the 'Other' within the

specific reality of the violation, without whose acknowledgement the traumatic event itself may seem unreal and void of credibility, thus hindering the survivor's possibility of bearing witness to the events (see also Levi 1990 [1986], Felman & Laub 1992, Caruth 1995, 1996).

Antjie Krog (1998) in her account of the TRC process demands a 'counter narrative' from the perpetrators applying for amnesty, a mirror-side story to the events described by TRC victims. This, she finds, would at best be delivered in the spirit of apology, featuring confession, repentance and desire for restoration:

For six months the Truth Commission has listened to the voices of the victims. Focused and clear the first narrative cut into the country. It cut through class, language, persuasion – penetrating even the most frigid earhole of stone. And it continues. [...] Yet something is amiss. We prick up our ears. Waiting for the Other. The Counter. The Perpetrator. More and more we want the second narrative. And it had better be good. It had better display integrity. *And it had better bring acute personal detail, grief, bewilderment.* There can be no story without the balance of the antagonist (Krog 1998: 56, my emphasis).

At the same time Krog's counter-narrative is a story tasked with the impossible – to justify the unjust, to restore the sense of order in the world that the violation has undone. The TRC promised its victims that they would be 'heard by the nation', offering a large but abstract 'ear'. Krog here asks the 'Other' for a direct response and engagement, which was also expected by many victims during the process of the TRC. In most cases, however, during the amnesty hearings, victims did not find in the perpetrators narratives this willingness, or perhaps ability, to respond meaningfully to their expectations and wishes, something that many experienced as a further violation impairing on their process of healing and rendering impossible any notion of reconciliation. While few perpetrators, in the TRC-sense attended HOM<sup>68</sup>, a more indirect 'Other' was present and often addressed in the stories of trauma, violation and deprivation: those seen to have benefited from apartheid.

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<sup>68</sup> To my knowledge the only amnesty applicants who came to HOM were black members of the liberation forces, but nobody of the apartheid security forces attended.

In follow-up processes with victim and survivor groups,<sup>69</sup> the 'need to be understood' by the apartheid 'Other' and descriptions of the absent (ideal) white South African, not necessarily only the perpetrators but the beneficiaries of apartheid who would show concern and be willing to engage with the pain of victims, featured significantly in discussions on the practical possibilities for healing and reconciliation (see also Colvin 2000: 17-30; Kayser 2001). Similarly, during the HOM workshops many participants, who had experienced apartheid in its various forms, whether in its 'ordinary' or extreme guises, spoke positively of encountering in white participants a concerned, caring 'Other':

It is important because they never listen, the whites, they don't care, that is part of why things are bad. They don't even care. And here we are trying to heal ourselves, and where are they? That was important for me here [at the workshop] that there was someone [white] here who came to listen, someone who did that. And even for me to listen to what it was like for them, it was something new. It made me think that maybe things can be different for us (X. 7/99).

The receiving 'ear', in this case the ordinary beneficiary of apartheid, at the same time did not remain recipient only, but was included in the circle of mutual witnessing and heard herself:

I think I felt mainly profoundly affected by the sense of inclusion that happened, like after we told our stories and people went out, and there was a kind of a naturalness that everything inside you had been heard and had been expected. And I found that most incredible because even though I have been trying a lot in therapy to come to terms with the things affecting myself inside me, there has never been an external group in my life that wants to do that. And here was a group of black people who did that for me (L. 6/99).

The willingness to risk participation made possible the intimacy of such encounter. Yet without the mediation of abstraction and symbolic gesture (offered by the TRC) that shelters beneficiaries from confrontation with their political subject position (see also Meister 1998a & 1998b), there was not always the sense of 'inclusion' described in the above case. For victims encountering a 'responsive ear' in the Other meant not only

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<sup>69</sup> I refer to, for example, self-help groups and storytelling sessions initiated by researchers, psychotherapists or other non-governmental organisations.

acknowledging pain or showing empathy, but demonstrating the willingness to be fundamentally unsettled by the reframing the stories would offer to prior dominant (apartheid) narratives; it meant unsettlement at personal and moral level as well as at the level of political conscientisation. The HOM promise of ‘real understanding’ translated into concrete expectations for action for some victims, which could seldom be met, a point to which I will return in more detail in Chapter Five.

### **Unsettlement and Response-ability**

[T]he boundary-lines that define any social order are drawn both intrapsychically and intersubjectively. Just as we ask those with whom we do not identify to keep their distance, we simultaneously expect them to keep their thoughts and feelings to themselves. Considerable anxiety tends to arise in situations where these forms of censorship fail (Jackson 2002: 278).

At HOM, participants could put into practice what the TRC had wished to do with its human rights violation hearings – to give primary status to the ‘truth of memory’, which often generated a highly emotional moment. As described in Chapter Two (p. 66-71), the proximity of the narrators already created an initial discomfort zone for most HOM participants. In face of the revelation of the thoughts and feelings of the ‘Other’, as Jackson suggests above, considerable anxiety is produced; storying often produced a state of unsettlement for participants. Taussig (1999: 75) refers to an inability to hide the self in face of the ‘Other’. A similar dynamic emerged from the workshop experiences of beneficiaries:

The most important thing at the workshop was actually seeing someone in front of you telling you how her husband was shot. It is like – something in my understanding just opened up. I could understand why black people hate me because I am white, whereas before I always saw it as an unreasonable emotion to think I was racist. Now I came a little bit closer to understanding just how angry it [apartheid] really was (C. 7/99).

Unsettlement is generated in the experience of listening to stories that implicate the participating listener in ways that he or she may find unexpected and threatening:

[T]he listeners [...] whose own listening in fact *enables* the unfolding of the testimonial life accounts [...] cannot fulfil their task without, in turn, passing through the crisis of experiencing their boundaries, their separateness, their functionality, and indeed their sanity, at risk (Felman & Laub 1992: xvii, emphasis in original).

Thus unsettlement, produced by the risk of immediacy and participation in witnessing, has the potential to destabilise the taken-for-granted, the known and familiar in conventional social interaction. Risking the subversion of ‘intrapsychic and intersubjective boundaries’ (Jackson 2002: 278), risking a ‘crisis’ as Laub calls it here, the engaged witness becomes both *enabler* of the storying and *seriously challenged* to respond to both the narrator and the story.

During the HOM process of engaged witnessing, immediacy, participation and unsettlement produced the urgency for response, not only to what was told but especially to the person telling, inhabiting the story, and to her pain. It was the acknowledgement inherent in the immediate response among the circle of witnesses that remained central to what participants described as most notable ‘healing’ effect of the HOM storying – whether the response of the listeners then manifested verbally, through questions, signs of empathy, stunned silence, shared tears or concerned bodily gestures. Through expressions of pain in a small intimate closed space, a sense of loss could often be *felt*, beyond language. Participants did not usually share the same mother-tongue, in which the expression of pain was acquired during childhood; already, the levels of translation were multiple. However, in this setting the question whether or not pain can be communicated – Das et al. (1997) call it ‘a major preoccupation in Western Tradition’<sup>70</sup> – was relevant only insofar as it related to the ability to generate acknowledgement and response. Das’ idea of pain as embodied phenomenon that can be shared relates to what took place among witnesses at HOM:

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<sup>70</sup> ‘From the perspectives of theories of *social* suffering, such a preoccupation with individual certainty and doubt simply seems a less interesting, less important question to ask than how such suffering is produced and how acknowledgment of pain, as a cultural process, is given or withheld. After all, to be ignorant or incapable of imagining another person’s pain does not signal blindness in moral sensibility in the same way in which the incapacity to *acknowledge* that pain does. Yet this latter failure is at the bottom of the cultural process of political abuse’ (Das et al. 1997: xiii, emphases in original).

Pain, in this rendering, is not that inexpressible something that destroys communication or marks an exit from one's existence in language. Instead, it makes a claim asking for acknowledgment, which may be given or denied. [...] The experience of pain cries out for this response of the possibility that my pain could reside in your body and that the philosophical grammar of pain is an answer to that call (Das 1997: 70).

While the recounting of experiences of suffering and the expression of pain dominated the discursive framing of the Saturday [Facilitators often said: 'We are here to hear you pain'] in the attempt to domesticate the negative consequences of such 'injurious memory' for the individual, participants rarely took the verbal expression of pain as the sole goalpost of the telling exercise. In the stories pain was re-lived in many forms - in a tone of voice, through breath, inside the hardness of an ironic laugh, in clenched fists, gritted teeth, in a silent glance. Recalling the small group I described earlier (p. 83-87), the experience itself generated the momentum of sharing beyond what could be said and heard, it had a physical and emotional presence - watching R.'s back as he related his story while looking out of the window, facing away from us; seeing N. sit at our feet and handing her tissues while she wept; feeling J.'s scars as initiation into the narration of his violation. Within the circle at HOM there was little doubt that pain could be communicated in multiple ways and through infinite verbal and bodily facets and languages, that storying could give (no matter how limited) access to an *experiential* kind of knowledge of another's past, which unsettled and demanded a response in the here and now.

Suggesting HOM produced a form of engaged witnessing is not to claim that the stories told at the workshops necessarily constituted a more 'pure' form of memory, closer to an 'original' experience than if provoked through another, less direct encounter in another space and time or that this format would necessarily suggest a 'more true' form of witnessing. Yet, there was a sense of authenticity produced in the face-to-face engagement of the storying session, and a less mediated, 'raw' response was facilitated in an encounter cast outside ordinary, familiar modes of interaction, where known, conventional ways of being social did not prove adequate to the immediacy (and risky, painful nature) of the experience of witnessing the memories of others. The storying-

encounter at HOM therefore generated a distinctly different form and level of witnessing than, for example, listening to TRC testimony at hearings, on TV or radio, or reading a story later; an element HOM participants gave emphasis through the repeated expression of feeling ‘touched’ by the stories of their small group. The aspect of ‘touching’ each other or of ‘depth’ of encounter in a process of engaged witnessing was more than the mere sentimentality of a fleeting emotional moment. It was about a the ability to respond, literally the *response-ability*<sup>71</sup> towards the other in the here and now, creating the capacity for bearing witness as a point of departure for changing dominant ways of communicating about the past, and as a foundation upon which future relations could be imagined as new and different (even if they were not yet real as such in the everyday). The storying offered one unique testimonial moment in time during the Saturday upon which other new possibilities of interaction during the weekend were built. By granting each other access to personal memories in a manner that assigned each the status of witnesses, participants gave value and acknowledgement not only to traumatic and painful experiences, but *to each other’s lives* under apartheid in all their complexity. This acknowledgement, rather than any discursive imperative of healing or reconciliation, seemed to be the common ground upon which further meaningful engagement developed among participants at the workshops.

### ***Testimonial Dialogues***

#### **Making Connections – the intersubjective dimension of storying**

The slippage between immediate and non-immediate subjectivities is particularly striking in storytelling. Every story is Janus-faced: while one aspect is turned outward toward a world that is shared, another is turned inward, answering more immediate individual needs. Indeed, stories reconcile [...] the multiple and frequently discrepant truths that every society, as well as every individual, contains within it. (Jackson 2002: 294)

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<sup>71</sup> I use the term *response-ability* to signify the individual’s capacity and will to give a response that is meaningful to the other (and the need to nurture this ability), conscious that it implies at the same time a responsibility to attempt responding in such a way.

While the narrations at HOM were bound to an extent by the psychological-religious language of healing and redemption that framed the process, at the same time they stretched the limits of such intentionality. Cast in personal life stories, the HOM intervention purposefully situated the narrations of multiple and antagonistic counter-discourses within the same narrative space. The process of storying the personal memories of a violent and violating system, in a setting that questioned the respective choices and actions of the narrators, could not but challenge what appeared as fixed subject positions and was bound to create a contested arena, whether implicitly or explicitly. In turn, what might initially have appeared as mere personal reminiscence in an isolated setting, adopting features of a private occasion to claim a 'safe space', was placed in relation to the political context of the present, as both public and private. The next two sections examine the inter- and intrasubjective dimension of the storying respectively.

Located at the interface of the intra- and intersubjective, and of the personal, interpersonal and public domains, HOM storytelling derived its productive mode from the interdependencies and tensions between these spheres, from the challenges that arose when previously isolated social realities met and were revealed through perspectives and preconceptions rooted in the same contentious source - the individual narrator's experience of having lived under the apartheid system. Yet as part of effecting an element of 'reconciling' the intra- and interpersonal dimensions of the stories, as Jackson proposes, HOM storying not only valorised experience, but also revealed the gaps, ruptures and damages implicit in the emerging 'discrepant truths', some times prompting the imagination and projection of possible remedies, at other times remaining unable to dissolve the painful unease caused by revelation.

Three key leading questions posed by HOM to facilitate the storying were: 'What did I do? What was done to me? What did I fail to do?' Enacting personal memories as stories in response forged a link between past and present that asked implicitly about the future: 'Where did I stand - then? And where do I wish to stand - now and tomorrow'? Carr (1986, quoted in Scheub 1996: xix) suggests a multiplicity of 'enabling' negotiations in

the process of storytelling - with oneself, with the past in relation to the present, and with others in relation to sharing the now – that was reflected in what took place at HOM Saturday sessions and in participants' commentary on the experience afterwards. Some small groups found themselves narrating direct flipsides of what seemed the 'same' story, as was the case when one participant related how the police beat and arrested her brother. She was employed as a domestic worker in Cape Town at the time. When she turned to her white employers to lend money for bail, she was met with shrugging of shoulders and walls of silence. In the same group, a middle-aged white woman commented how the story made her think of an incident in the eighties when her 'maid' came to ask for help in a similar situation. She recounted her feelings of helplessness, fear and guilt when she did not help her in her need, and a conversation ensued between the two participants. Another recurrent example was given in Chapter Two (p. 53) when participants remembered how they had to 'get off the sidewalk' when a white person came walking, while in the same group a white participant recalled the experience of staying on the sidewalk without even consciously noticing how the 'Other' made way. It was in the realisation of many such small and *direct* connections in everyday interactions that stories implicated one another and revealed how post-apartheid relations were not built on a 'clean slate', but asked for a painfully conscious transformation of the hierarchies and unequal relations apartheid had left behind.

When narrating one personal story of apartheid within the same space as another personal story of apartheid, the narratives inevitably began to contextualise one another, not necessarily always through direct factual links as in the above examples, but through certain intersections in time, in space and in their emotionality, irrespective of their conception from the different and dividing realities that co-existed during apartheid. Such intersections were moments when witnessing the story triggered an internal dialogue within the listener. As narrator, I may speak about what happened to me on the 5th of March 1986 – while each implicated witness in the circle is asked at the same time: 'What did you do on that day? What was the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 1986 like for you?' Other intersections are located in spatial vicinities: 'Where were you? During that time we were living barely around the corner'. In another example, a white woman participant from

Pinelands and a black man from Maitland realised that they had been living within the range of a few kilometres of one another during the apartheid years. Yet they commented on how they could not even begin to imagine what the experience of apartheid might have been like 'on the other side of the highway' that separated their two areas of residence before hearing each other's stories at the workshop. Facilitator J.R. recounted a similar example from her first HOM workshop experience:

We had somebody from MK<sup>72</sup> on the one end, right through the whole spectrum to somebody who had spent her whole life in apartheid and knew nothing at all and deliberately didn't hear and didn't see and didn't feel, and who had lived a completely protected life. [...] When the MK person and the totally protected person who knew nothing told their stories it was like - he couldn't believe that a person like that was real, and she couldn't believe that a person like that lived. And the irony of it was that as the crow flies they spent their entire lives about 5km apart. And she would hear gunshots at night, and she would just fob it off and say: 'Ooh, the township people are shooting at each other again, the violent horrors that they are...' The two stereotypes - her fear was of the violent black person and his hatred was of the privileged white person who has just had it good and nothing to fear. In the end they wept together at each other's stories (J. 7/99).

The stories feed new information into the imagination of what life could have been like on 'the other side', they reveal what apartheid sought to conceal, - they seem to ask for an emotional connection: 'Do you realise how it *felt* to be in my place?' Scheub (1996) commented in this regard on a similarly complex process in the enactment of oral histories where no story of human experience stands by itself; understanding and meaning are only derived when one story is put in relation to something else - to another story, another experience, another person, another memory, or the feelings of others. The act of storying here weaves its threads back and forth between ideas and emotions producing a sense of collectivity between time, space, event and emotionality that both generates and reflects the relations between narrators and witnesses. He writes:

Storytellers fuse idea and emotion into story, and in that interchange audience members are wedded to the past, as a significant exchange occurs: the past influences and shapes the experience of the present, at the same time that the experience of the present determines what of the past is useful and meaningful today. Because it is the storyteller who

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<sup>72</sup> Umkhonto we Sizwe – [spear of the nation] –armed wing of the ANC's liberation struggle.

makes the choices, it is the storyteller who most persuasively provides the insights and the contexts that give the lives of the audience members meaning (Scheub 1996: xv).

While the storying often facilitated recognition and empathy, participants also sought justification from witnesses, leading them to question the context of the story: 'How could this happen? Who was responsible? Why did you (re)act in this particular way'? They invited to ponder: 'Why did you make this particular choice'? The storying did not allow the distance of observation that could respond with empathy alone.

The fact that we often need to tell such a story *even to ourselves* in order to become clear on what we are about brings to light [...] that such narrative activity, even apart from its social role, is *a constitutive part of action*, not just an embellishment, commentary or other incidental accompaniment (Carr 1986; quoted in Scheub 1996: xix, my emphasis).

Viewing storying as 'a constitutive part of action', as Carr suggests, refers to a performative agency which rests on the internal dialogical relations between narrator, narration and audience through which the personal stories of the apartheid years, seemed to echo in a way, even before their narrators could question one another in the sudden comprehension that, seen through this frame, life under apartheid could not be conceived as apolitical or 'uninvolved'. Every story bore traits and traces of the system, and each individual narrative as it stood was connected to others and implicated in its actions, choices and omissions. I agree with Jackson's stance that

to argue that storytelling is crucial to [a] process of reempowerment [of those affected by violence] does not mean [...] that stories themselves have power; rather, it implies that by enabling dialogues that encompass different points of view the act of sharing stories helps us create a world that is more than the sum of its individual parts (Jackson 2002: 40).

The ways in which HOM stories then resonated with one another, firstly initiated an implicit conversation that I read as a form of *testimonial dialogue*, brought about by the realisation of an *interpersonal* version of historical truth in the small group, a flash of understanding of the ways in which apartheid affected *people*, and of how it manifested intersubjectively in its varieties of (in)human interactions. The effect is a kind of *enlivenment* for all sides in the moment of things deemed separate, inaccessible or dead, a

sense of a new connection to the Other that renders him or her 'real', 'alive' and 'human', as these two statements portray:

In a way through the stories things actually come alive, they are real, they are there. What those people were saying was profoundly real even though there was that separation between us. The people there, their humanity was like evidence that there is that life in me that wants to relate to other people, but it has been cut off (L. 6/99).

[At the workshop] I found out that white people actually have a heart. It never seemed possible to me in those dark days. We always thought white people have no hearts, they cannot have (J. 10/98).

Raymond Williams speaks of a process of 'making connections' that enables seeing the linkages between realms usually thought to have distinctly separating boundaries, in particular the realm of 'feelings and relationship':

We have to *learn and to teach each other the connections* between a political and economic formation, a cultural and educational formation, and, perhaps hardest of all, *the formations of feeling and relationship* which are our immediate resources in any struggle (Williams 1989c: 76, quoted in Eldridge & Eldridge 1994: 11, my emphases).

With the idea of 'formations of feeling and relationship' Williams points out a negated, emotional dimension to social transformation, akin to Werbner's (1998: 3) 'sometimes utterly unwelcome, stifling social fabric' that prevents people (in Werbner's cases in the postcolonial sphere) from effecting and making use of social change in a meaningful way, even when they desire to do so.

The process of *making connections* during HOM storying was central to effecting the testimonial dialogues at HOM. It consisted of many small movements, its narrative modes swinging at times like a pendulum between the 'larger universe'- which held within it the revelation of previously unknown or unrecognised contexts - and the 'small world', the detail of the personal and the everyday, especially conveying experiences from previously inaccessible experiential contexts. In one direction, the storying took the individual from the immediacy of the personal experience into the larger socio-political context of a particular time – asking each witness to make connections from their own

subject position in the past, to the present and to the others in the room. In the other direction it was a counter-movement, leading from the general knowledge of that larger context to how its forces were translated into individual human experiences and their immediate, tangible impact on the present formations of feeling and relationship.

### **Defeating the Internal Other – the intrasubjective dimension of storytelling**

At the level of the intra-personal, the moment of recognising these connections challenges current perceptions of the ‘larger universe’, in turn questioning beliefs and behaviours in the ‘small world’, at the base of individual actions. It is precisely at that moment of recognition that what is ‘Othered’ on the outside may reveal an unpopular, unfamiliar or even enemy ‘Other’ residing on the inside. Williams speaks of the recognition of an internal ‘alien formation’:

Can I put it this way? I learned the experiences of incorporation, I learned the reality of hegemony. I learned the saturating power of the structures of feelings in a given society, as much from my own mind and my own experiences as from observing the lives of others. All through our lives, if we make the effort, we uncover layers of this kind of *alien formation* in ourselves, and deep in ourselves. So then the recognition of it is a recognition of large elements in our own experiences, which have to be – shall we say it? – defeated. But to defeat something like that in yourself, in your families, in your neighbours, in your friends, to defeat it involves something very different, it seems to me from most traditional politics (Williams 1989c: 75, quoted in Eldridge 1994: 10, my emphasis).

His idea corresponds with the sense of the ‘pervasive nature’ of apartheid ideology that HOM participants spoke about as one of the key realisations emerging from the workshop experience. Their descriptions suggested a kind of *intangible* intra-subjective legacy of apartheid, expressed in terms of an ongoing internal battle with facets of internalised oppression and feelings of inferiority on one side, and the spectres of internalised racism and sentiments of superiority on the other that correspond with Williams own interpretation of hegemony:

That is to say, it is not limited to matters of direct political control but seeks to describe a more general predominance which includes, as one of its key features, a particular way of seeing the world and human nature and relationships (Williams 1983 [1976]: 145).

Intrasubjectively, such a 'particular way of seeing the world' is not least informed by the kind of embodied memory that echoes in present thought and (inter)action. Consider the following two statements by HOM participants in this respect:

The past is so intricate; it's like a tightly woven bundle of things. It's like an overloaded plane, you know, it doesn't want to let you take off, it just lurks there, and it's going to go down. [...] In the past it was fine because then you were coping with it [apartheid], you were just coping. Now you are in the future, it's *the* time now. So you want to shut it away, you can't live that way anymore, you can't have the same grudges, you can't cope with apartheid anymore because it's not there anymore. Supposedly, that is, supposedly. [...] You see what the [undoing of the] physical aspect of apartheid does; it can only take you a certain part of the journey. In other words, going to toilets or going to white beaches now and stuff like that, that only takes you so far. But there's a world that exists that you can't touch, an intangible world that still surpresses and sits above you (O. 5/99).

I'm most terrified of my own racism and I hate people that I have to deal with who bring it out in me. I want all people, black or coloured, they must act a certain way that I can post my idea of my world on this whole kind of thing because then they do not bring that out in me. It's always there. [She sobs.] If a black person steals from me, I feel just like bashing into the ground, fuck, and I really end up hating that thing so much because of what they did to us inside, more than like the fact that they threw stones. And I'm so afraid of it because it just will not go away, that is the thing, you know. I mean it takes a hell of a lot of work to change. I pursue this long path trying to un-racist myself [laughs ironically] I really do. I think maybe religion is a way out. Some kind of philosophy of life that really sets you free and gets you back into another frame of mind. That means that forever, until the end of your life you will be chasing it, like hopping between these different things, you know, manipulating yourself in order not to be like that. It's kind of weird. I don't want to be like that anymore (C. 7/99. Participant was crying throughout this part of the interview).

Such sentiments exist like a sub-current against the discourse of South Africa as the 'miracle nation' of racial reconciliation. They point to the necessity of emplacing ideas of healing and social transformation in the context of a colonial history that has entrenched the denial of the violation and pain of the Other, a denial not only of the extent of violation to other's humanity, but also of parts of the self (Biko 1987 [1978]). Meanwhile, the post-apartheid dispensation exerts tremendous pressure on the individual to cope in public, to display hope. One HOM participant commented in this respect:

'Everybody pretends they are coping, while in the meantime, you know nobody is really coping well' (J. 5/00). It is in other more private and removed settings that the emotions and consequences of 'not coping' emerge in form of, for instance, domestic violence. In the post-apartheid public sphere, sentiments of racism in whites or struggles with feelings of inferiority in a young black person are not welcome phenomena and therefore may not find expression. They reveal a threatening side within the transition process that has been forced underground, but that is no less real in shaping post-apartheid social practices. The revelation of such feelings in the presence of the 'Other' creates an anxious and volatile, but potentially transforming moment, in which this kind of public censorship is momentarily undone and underlying sentiments, often negative and not 'politically correct' are revealed. As part of HOM storying, this element of self-recognition and internal confrontation began at the moment when the narrator had to reflect on how to structure her story, when she has to ask herself – 'who am I in relation to apartheid? What made up my experience of this period in time'? It continues in the subsequent process of witnessing the recollections of others, asking – 'Who am I in relation to these experiences? Who am I in relation to these 'other' witnesses? What was my past and what is my present subject position in this post-apartheid society? How do others see me'? It incites the imaginary – 'What role do I wish to play'? And it invites conjuring of a collective utopia among the witnesses – 'How would we like it to be'? Through this echo matrix of implicit questions, the process of making intrasubjective connections was enabled and became a means for HOM participants to recognise and grapple with the internal incongruence they experienced in response to the changes around them.

One key connection then was in the moment of recognition that rendered certain prior perceptions and beliefs '*alien* formations' inside oneself, which in turn reflected back onto the personal, moral and political responses toward the other. Within the attempt to, as C. put it earlier, 'come a little bit closer to understanding' lay the acknowledgement of the current scenario as both changed and unchanged, and a need for changed moral and interpersonal frameworks and practices. The base of this ability to make connections was necessarily experiential – it rested on 'actually seeing someone in front of you', on the direct encounter with the carrier of the experience. Williams pointed earlier to another

necessary facet of the exercise of making connections – the requirement to ‘make the effort’. Yet, in a society shaped by isolation and segregation, those who would be motivated to participate in breaking down barriers often do not know how to begin or partake. Making connections and affecting a testimonial dialogue were not effects the HOM intervention would be able to produce on demand, but were phenomena that emerged in a more subtle way. The capacity to ‘make connections’ and recognise ‘internal alien formations’ was not something internal, a tapping into an unconscious thought waiting to be ‘uncovered’ – it was something *active* that could be acquired in the process of engaged witnessing.

### **A Vision of Transforming the Formations of Feeling and Relationship**

It would appear that no glib appeal to “our common humanity” can restore the confidence to inhabit each other’s lives again. Instead it is by *first reformulating notions of “normality” as a changing norm, [...]* that communities can respond to the destruction of trust in their everyday lives (Das & Kleinman 2001: 23, my emphasis).

Testimonial dialogues at HOM rested on the idea of raising awareness through an interactive experiential exchange of memories, enabling the individual witness to herself make such connections and recognise their relevance and complexity in the context of present-day South Africa as situated in transition, a country that is *in-between* its apartheid past and an as yet to be realised, post-apartheid future. This does not assume that HOM participants were necessarily able to take immediate actions upon such realisation and against the odds of persisting antagonistic social and political forces. Yet, I want to argue, they became ‘carriers’ of alternatives, even if in the moment these alternatives remained imaginary, seedlings of a different ability to be social that the present generation may never realise. While HOM assumed that hearing other’s experiences, thoughts and feeling would build ‘understanding’ and facilitate ‘trust and friendship’ in current circumstances, the experiences of storying showed the complex process of interchange that was in fact produced. In the short-term, storying could achieve a unique moment of experimentation, risk, revelation and testing of boundaries. It could lead participants to ask new questions and challenge old mindsets. At the same

time, storying revealed the immensity and limitations of the task of engaging the past at first-generation level. Participants showed how new imaginations of nation and sociality and the desire to act on them were met by the embodiment of past memories, demonstrating how fear, anxiety and other emotions prevent action and practical change, in addition to economic and structural factors. Hence, subjectively, storying was, for some, a moment of unprecedented connection across social boundaries, for others a means of re-enforcing difference because of the revelation of underlying gaps and ruptures in the new imaginary. Storying made apparent that there can be no simple chronology or progression from imagination to experimentation to realising change in action, but that all three processes coexist and demand constant attempts, ongoing motivation, practice and commitment. In order to transform the entrenched structures of feeling and formations of relationship apartheid produced, to really shift the 'stifling utterly unwelcome social fabric' of the post-apartheid dispensation, a longer-term vision of social change, repair and restoration is needed.

## Sunday

### From a Dark Past to a Better Future

The morning begins with searching for a 'lost' participant upon the request of her worried friend who woke finding her gone. She is found walking in the nearby forest. 'I just got up early to take some time out,' she says, 'I am finding the weekend pretty intense.' After breakfast, participants meet in the plenary room where pieces of clay with paper plates have been laid out on a table. The atmosphere in the room is cheerful today. Someone teases C. about her dancing at the party last night and asks how she slept.

D. begins the session by saying: 'Today we will complete our journey of the workshop, but that does not mean our journey ends here. For some of you, it may only be the start of a further journey. Today we want to celebrate with you that we are together here this weekend, and we want to celebrate all that made us resist, survive and overcome the pain and darkness of the apartheid years. Later on this morning, we will have a ceremony or a celebration, or some of you might call it a liturgy. This is to symbolise the journey into the past that we have taken together during this weekend and it is also to give us hope for the future and for building our country. What we would like to do now is to ask you to join in another creative exercise. You see behind me we have laid out pieces of clay, one for each of you. Take this clay and form it into a symbol, something that for you expresses the experience of this weekend. It's meant to be a peace symbol or a symbol of your hopes for the future as well. Again, this is not about being artistic but about giving expression to your feelings. You can take the clay anywhere, outside, inside, and we have some water and soap ready to wash your hands afterwards. You might want to take off your jewellery and wedding rings because the clay can spoil them. Keep your symbol when you have completed it because later, at the ceremony, we'll present these symbols to one another in a gesture of remembrance and hope. You can also use other materials for your symbol, like flowers or stones from outside. And we've put a candle on each plate that you can make part of your symbol. You have half an hour for this exercise. Please keep in mind that it's another individual exercise. Take some time on your own to make the symbol'.

Participants are excited about working with the clay. I do not see the same doubtful faces or hear the same sighs, as during the drawing exercise. Participants get to work immediately and many put a lot of energy and care into their symbols. Kneading and pounding the clay, under busy hands different shapes evolve - a three-legged pot; the shape of Africa; a wheel; an open hand; a spear; a figure standing on top of a coffin raising a fist; a bowl of flowers; a pregnant woman. The variety is large. Among symbols that feature repeatedly are different shapes of a cross and of the African continent, pots like those used for food and beverages in the rural areas, and a South African flag. Participants are visibly enjoying themselves. Only J. is a bit distressed and has lumped together his piece of clay for the third time: 'This stuff is simply not doing what I want it to do,' he conveys his frustrations to me. Then he stops in his tracks: 'But hey, wait a minute, I can see now - it's the earth, of course, the earth!' Off he goes with a smile.

After thirty minutes most participants have completed their clay symbol and gone to tea. After tea, participants are asked to gather separately in yesterday's small groups to discuss their contributions to the celebration. This preparation happens without the facilitators who in the meantime lay out the arrangements for the celebration. I can see some groups practising songs and small dramatic sketches; while Y. and I hang up the draft programme for the celebration that the committee drew up last night.

After finishing their practice sessions in the small groups, participants gather again in the plenary room where the committee members introduce their suggestions. The discussion first revolves around the motto of the occasion. The committee has suggested: 'Alive, alive!' as a slogan. The group eventually agrees on:

From Hate-Hate to Alive-Alive !

The theme is derived from yesterday's discussion about the survivors of the Rwandan genocide. It also reflects the redemptive mode that facilitators have given as a frame for this final exercise. The committee has chosen several songs and bible verses for the programme. Facilitator B. suggests hanging up the drawings of the stories on the wall of the celebration venue. Agreed. She also asks each small group what their presentation's 'mood' is, so that the motion of the celebration could be one from 'sadness, darkness,

suffering and heaviness' towards 'light, overcoming, hope and healing'. Small group presentations are ordered according to their themes, leaving the more positive and hopeful ones towards the ending.

Eventually, the programme stands as a variety of songs, poems, and dramatic sketches, including a Christian and a Jewish prayer and a Bible reading. Last on the agenda are the presentation of the clay symbols and a kind of alternative Communion, the joint breaking of bread in a format that the group called a 'Love Feast'. The facilitators have taken an active role in shaping the planning. The celebration is clearly important to the participants today, and they have taken a lively part in shaping the event.

Father Michael has suggested two further elements for the event that the group has agreed on. One is starting the celebration with a procession from the outside to the venue, which will be the same small chapel in which our group yesterday told their stories. 'This,' he says, 'can be to symbolise the journey of the weekend as one of a joint movement towards healing.' His other suggestion is to hold a symbolic 'burning of negatives', a fire ceremony where participants will have the opportunity to burn in flames what of the past they wish to leave behind (written on small pieces of paper).

The next twenty minutes are taken up by somewhat frantic activity. Participants are carrying their clay symbols to the venue. Some of the songs suggested for the celebration are unfamiliar to others, so the whole group takes some time to practise the songs. Someone writes the lyrics onto a piece of newsprint. In the meantime, the facilitators set up the chapel with a large circle of chairs, hang up the 'programme', and prepare a small fire in a drum outside. Other participants are busy writing down their 'negatives'. Finally, everything is ready.

The celebration begins outside the gates of the venue. Father Michael is carrying several artefacts he has brought from his travels to peoples concerned with healing all around the world: Over his priestly robe he is wearing a patchwork stole with colourful symbolic scenes of South American life and of the women's suffering, made for him by the 'Mothers of the Disappeared' in Argentina, a group of mothers whose children never returned after resisting the regime. Meanwhile one of the facilitators is beating a sacred drum that was given to Lapsley by a Native North American chief.

The group starts singing a sad slow lament, *Sen'zenina* [What have we done? Our only sin is the colour of our skin], as the procession starts to walk down the pathway. It is a slow walk, step by step, to the sounds of the drum and the song. In front of the door stands a barrel in which the fire is ready. One participant has requested to recite a poem of his before people begin the burning of their 'negatives'. The singing subsides for a moment. While he speaks about the role that we as 'spiritual beings' can play in healing the wounds of the past, participants, one by one, file past and throw into the flames 'that which they wish to leave behind'. It is an intense moment of inward reflection that is reflected in the faces of the participants.

Afterwards all gather in a circle of chairs inside the chapel. The drawings of the stories are hanging all around as visible reminders of the last two days. Father Michael and D. lead the celebration. S. has asked to give a prayer at the beginning of the ceremony. Everyone is standing up. Afterwards the group sings another well-known song from the liberation struggle. Next Z. has asked to tell parts of his story from yesterday to the large group. His narration about the death of his child at the hands of the apartheid Security Police is followed by a period of silence. Heads are bowed and I can see some participants are wiping tears from the corners of an eye. It is an emotional atmosphere. One of the mothers in the group starts a song; it is a lament about hate and sorrow in communities, the others follow her in the tune as she leads the chorus of voices. After the singing has ebbed away, there is another moment of silence.

Then, one of the small groups takes the stage. They present short scenes of everyday interactions and misunderstandings between of different colour in Cape Town. Some of the characters are obvious 'representatives' of certain stereotypes and dish out prejudices, leading to much laughter and snide commentary in the circle. There is chuckling and shaking of heads when the white 'Madam', to her surprise, is told off by her coloured 'Maid' for the first time. Clicking of tongues in disapproval when she threatens in return to fire her and tells her to 'go talk to Mandela if you have a problem.'

The next group has written a reflective piece on reconciliation in South Africa that they read to us pondering the hopes and challenges they foresee in the future of their country. They leave us with questions: 'How do we

reach across our deep divisions? How can we find one another? How can we continue the healing process?'

L., a young white participant, reads a poem she wrote about the theme of being outsider and about belonging. More food for thought. One person has brought a guitar, so participant O. who is an actor, and I decide to sing a song together. We sing 'Sorry' by Tracy Chapman, slightly off-key but to a good-willed audience. Then O. gets up and walks to the window where he does a stand-up sketch. He leans looking out of the windowpane, his back toward us, and comments on what he sees outside - the (imaginary) life-in-the-street of the new South Africa: Here is the old guy who is stuck in the past complaining and lamenting about bygone times. Here is the daughter, self-confident young woman challenging him to 'move on' and 'pull yourself out of the muck since no-one else will do it for you.' Here is the racism that still lurks under the surface in the person of the big boss bullying his workers but sucking up to the local government representative. Here is the old lady who is still a domestic worker in the house of the same people she has worked for during apartheid, yet dreaming of sending her children to university, of starting a different life. Here is the young black lad showing off his new riches, forgetting about the community he came from. Here is the white UCT student dreaming of London and Toronto.

His spontaneous performance presents us with a kaleidoscope of the realities of post-apartheid everyday lives, with some of the hurts and pains, with the old and new faultlines, with the overgrown and yet piercing remnants of the past, and the dreams and visions people hold for the future. O.'s presentation is a special moment in this workshop. He shares his sharp observation skills as well as the talent to convey his insights in a humorous roundabout way. The enactment makes everyone laugh and yet leaves the group in a thoughtful mood. It has laid bare some of the paradox facets of transition as an *imagined* state - one where things are all different while nothing has changed.

Someone starts to sing *N'kosi Sikilele Afrika* - the hymn that is, not the national anthem. There is a split second of hesitation at the part where the new anthem would have featured parts of the old Afrikaner national hymn '*Die Stem*'. I see some subtle glances towards the two white participants in

the group. Then participants continue unabashed with the hymnal version of *N'kosi Sikilele*.

Lastly, it is time for the peace symbols. Facilitator D. steps into the circle holding on his plate a hand made of clay, its fingers open and pointing upwards. He says 'For me this hand is a symbol of healing because for me, before, this hand was not open, the fingers used to be clenched in anger. Before, my hand was always a fist. Now it is open, and it is stretched out towards you.' He lifts out the candle he has placed in the middle of the palm. 'You know, there is another reason why I also chose to make a hand. Because once I take out the candle it leaves a hole in the middle.' He holds up his symbol for the others to see, a hand with a hole in the palm. 'So for me this hand is also the hand of Christ on the cross who died for our sins.' He puts the candle back in the middle and proceeds to light it. 'I would like to dedicate my symbol to those children who never got a chance to complete their education because they fought for this country. They did not hesitate to fight for what they saw as right and they made a sacrifice for all of us. We need to remember them.' He places the plate with the hand lit by the candle flame down in the middle of the circle and sits back down.

The dedicating of the symbols to commemorate a person or persons is an element that has been brought into the workshop by participants and was found so meaningful that it was integrated into the process by the facilitators. Participant N. from our small group who is sitting next to D. gets up and holds out her symbol. It is the form of a dwelling, four walls and a flat roof, like the shacks found in the informal settlements on the fringes of Cape Town, decorated with flowers. 'This is our house', she begins, 'like the one we used to stay at during the Eighties before it was burnt in those days. But I put the flowers to say that this is no more a house of such sadness, it is also a house of happiness. And I left the door open to show we do not have to lock anymore for the police at night...' She thinks to herself for a moment and continues '... even though now we are afraid of the criminals, so I should probably close it.' She smiles: 'Anyways, I want to dedicate my symbol to my grandmother who passed away last year. She kept me going during those dark times.' She lights the candle and places the house next to D.'s outstretched clay-hand on the floor.

Z. steps into the middle: 'I have made a pot like the ones we use to keep beer. It is a sign of celebration for me and good times, peace to all of you.' Another candlelight joins the middle of the circle. R. says: 'I have made a spear because for many of us, the struggle continues. We are not yet free and we are still suffering. It is for me a symbol that we have not given up, that we will fight those in the government who think they can just forget about us. I dedicate this symbol to my comrades, X. and M. who died as heroes in front of my eyes in 1986.' He places the spear in what is now becoming a circle of clay symbols inside the circle of participants.

'I have made a dove with an olive branch', explains L., 'it is for me the strongest symbol of hope and also that we all need to be part if we want to make this country work. I have made this symbol for all of us here. And I want to thank all of you for sharing your stories with me.' Next V. has made a cross. 'My cross is very strong', she comments, 'because I believe for me Jesus Christ was a way to survive through all the hardship. He was there and we did not lose hope. And I want to dedicate this cross to Father Michael here because of what he did for us and the example he is to all of us.' Next to enter the middle is C. who looks around until she sees J. in the circle and her eyes catch his. 'I have made this symbol for all those who suffered the violence of apartheid.' On her plate are some old leaves mixed with flowers and several smaller clay pieces. 'I have mixed the brown leaves with the fresh flowers, to show that the old and new go hand in hand. And I have made many smaller symbols because I tried to cover all the things we need to make this country work.' She holds them up one by one. 'Here I have a heart because of the love we need for each other, and a key to unlock each other's hearts. I have a moneybag that is open to show we need to learn to share the riches of our country among all of us. And I have a cross to symbolise the faith needed when things are not going well. Lastly, this is supposed to be a scale to represent justice and the need for the law to be supported by all. My symbol is for a friend of mine whom I know I hurt very much. She knows who she is. Thanks you.' She sits down as Y. rises holding a vase with flowers.

One by one the participants enter the circle, each holding a short speech before lighting the candle and placing their symbol among the others. Their words speak of much heartfelt passion and sincerity, mourning for many losses and longing for a better future. They speak of the need to remember

the dead, and they convey a deeply rooted love and commitment to the country. The very personal combination of words, the handmade symbols and the act of lighting candles in memory of others leads a sense of calm concentration and participants' emotions reflect in their faces.

Last is M., one of the oldest participants in the group and mother of six. She presents her sculpture saying: 'My symbol is that of a woman and a child. It is not that good because I am not an artist, but what I mean to say is that life goes on, children are born - we carry much but we are the survivors. *Amanda!*' The group responds to her call. Someone starts singing and those who cannot follow hum the tune. As the song ends Father Michael gets up to speak. 'I have not made a peace symbol.' Participants' eyes wander to his missing hands. 'But I have learned many lessons through my disability. One of the most important lessons is that we need each other to be fully human. We need each other to be fully human', he repeats, 'because we all carry damage in one-way or another. For some, like me, the damage is very visible, for others it is not so visible, but it is inside,' he points to his chest, 'in their hearts. As we are here we represent all that is good and all that is challenging about human beings. We represent the human family. So you, all of you can be my peace symbol today'.

For the 'Love Feast' Father Lapsley passes around a loaf of bread that he has blessed of which everyone takes a piece while participants sing a hymn, 'Bind us together, Lord, bind us together with love.' Afterwards, we keep a moment of silence and Father Michael invites anyone who wishes to say a prayer to do so. Thus the ceremony ends with a Jewish prayer by one of the facilitators and the song "God bless Africa".

Lunch is ready. As we walk out I can see several people giving each other a hug. M. has taken L.'s hand and holds it as she listens to her and they walk out talking. Others are silent as in deep thought. J. shakes his limbs 'Shew', he mumbles, 'shew ... I am tired.'

## Chapter Four

### The Community of Sentiment -

#### Unfreezing Historical Intersubjectivities?

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These *'in-between spaces'* provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular and communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and *innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation*, in the act of defining the idea of society itself (Homi Bhabha 1994: 1, my emphasis).

If we take Homi Bhabha's words literally and search for those 'moments' and 'in-between' spaces through which the new South Africa negotiates itself, or more precisely, through which individual social actors may explore 'new strategies of selfhood', we need to ask where they are located in South Africa today, those key 'sites of collaboration and contestation'? In the public sphere? The workplace? The domestic arena? The reformulations of identities in the post-apartheid nation emerge in their most pronounced forms at the faultlines where new social conceptions of 'commonality' and 'national unity' contradict the basic divisions that continue to mould much of post-apartheid social interaction. New identity strategies appear at precisely those moments when social actors try to translate their ideas of the newly-imagined nation into practices, both extraordinary and everyday. However, such a project cannot be confined to 'theoretical innovation', limited to those in power – be it politically and/or intellectually. Recognition of innovative sites and subjectivities needs to be extended to the more ordinary struggles of individual moral agents. These are struggles to re-articulate and re-negotiate what are conceived of as cultural, racial and other differences, and in doing so, ordinary people partake in '(re)defining the idea of society itself', often in more humble and less visible - but perhaps equally far-reaching – ways than those with more authoritative powers of representation.

This chapter looks at the HOM celebration as one such innovative social, and yet intimate, site for ‘elaborating singular and communal strategies of selfhood’, an extraordinary, experimental time-space for exploring the implications of new nationhood for post-apartheid constructions of intersubjectivity, experiences of self-hood and possible individual and collective strategies for change. The ‘celebration’ or ‘liturgy’<sup>73</sup> during the final day of the HOM workshop is the event at which participants most visibly act out and grapple with the current weavings of ‘old’ and ‘new’ in the identity politics of ‘the new South Africa’.

Werbner asks for scholars to consider

postcolonial efforts to reach beyond past limits of subjection, in some cases even to receive from outsiders new ways of turning oneself into the Other, intimately, publicly, *or perhaps for a passing moment in play or ritual* (Werbner 2002: 2, my emphasis).

Sunday mornings at HOM workshops provoke questions as to what immediate effects such efforts at re-invention through play or ritual produce for the individual and for the production of a temporary ‘community of sentiment’ (Weber 1946) at the workshops that I will explore in this chapter. It is not society as a structural concept that is of concern here but rather the search for alternative, less formal ways of being social, for a new *sociability* (Overring & Passes 2000) so to speak that is central to the subjective and intersubjective understanding of social reality. The HOM intervention was certainly a fragile, marginal endeavour, conducted by a limited, self-selecting and self-motivated sample of social actors who might have, in any case, sought to actively engage with their ‘new’ South African identity and citizenship in some form or another, with or without the help of HOM. Nonetheless, the Sunday celebration in particular, often turned out to be a central ‘in-between’ moment of revealing old and new ‘senses of self’, testing identities and toying with various dimensions of power and imagination. The event became a collective and - within its own confines – a negotiated and creative socio-political performance through which individuals and groups enacted some of their imaginaries of a novel or altered socio-civic identity. This chapter explores such in-between moments as

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<sup>73</sup> Facilitators and group members use both terms interchangeably indicating the tension between a formal event and a more convivial, informal happening.

ones where historic intersubjectivities were temporarily 'unfrozen' through the use of ritual elements and creative performance. The enactment of discourses of nation-building and unity on one hand, and the desire for a different soci-ability among participants on the other, assisted in shaping the 'community of sentiment' in the moment and producing a shared sense of social togetherness and connectedness. At the same time, the interplay of emotions, physical expression and symbolic means that characterised the Sunday performances illustrated the *ambivalence* within this new 'community'.

Two discourses prevalent in the original HOM concept seemed to have the most currency in the format of the performances. One invoked a 'new South African-ness' - a sense of fellowship and belonging to the new rainbow nation - while the other rested on the paradigm of a 'common humanity' and working towards 'humanising' social relations understood to have been 'dehumanised by apartheid' (Focus Group 8/99).<sup>74</sup> A shared sentiment among participants was that the final event at HOM left a sense of partaking actively in the process of 'becoming a new South African' (Focus Groups 5/99 and 8/99). Participants' ideas of what this process of 'becoming' would entail, however, were by no means unanimous. Rather, they were shaped by diverging cultural understandings of personhood and collectivity derived from their respective historical subject positions. While the celebration marked one moment in which HOM was most explicitly cast by the implementers as a 'healing' and 'reconciliation' model, and while the performative generics of the Sunday event at first seemed to be framed mainly in terms of resolution and redemption, the setting inevitably turned out to be fragile and more complex in practice. As became apparent at different times over the weekend, the final scene was also no mere enactment or representation of official paradigms of reconciliation or 'rainbow-nation' unity, but was often a genuinely creative moment, not only of imagining new forms of being social but of actually trying them out. Whenever workshops revealed the faultlines of such a bounded micro-social performance - whether through conflict or intense emotions or more subtly delivered critique disguised by humour - that was often exactly when HOM generated powerful moments of 'in-between', moments that left lasting impressions on participants.

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<sup>74</sup> In particular, the notion of a 'common humanity' was employed to counter the divisions of apartheid conceptions of 'race'.

The negotiation of *intersubjectivities* in this context emerged as a subtle dynamic of eliciting breaches and mending them again, showing some of the strategies participants developed to deal with the harm such expositions may engender by seeking to acknowledge, hide or subvert them in various ways. What could or could not be articulated and enacted in the process of the Sunday event at HOM foregrounded the fact that difference remained primarily conceived by participants along the lines of racialised identities. These differences were then perceived as a main signifier for post-apartheid intersubjectivity in the majority of workshops. The singing of *Nkosi Sikelele Afrika* during the event (p. 134) was only one revealing instance in this regard. The ever so slight hesitation in the group, the split-second of breath held at the moment where the one paragraph of the old apartheid Afrikaner anthem '*Die Stem*' would have been slotted into the new national anthem, the quick glance to the white participants in the group ('how will they react?') and the unabated singing of the Zulu hymn<sup>75</sup> gave a sense of how the shifting politics of race and language interplayed with claims staked around subjectivity and belonging. Which commentary was delivered in which language was equally revealing – when, for example, English was used and when subtle hints or critique were delivered using isiXhosa (knowing that other participants were unlikely to understand). Subtle dynamics of this nature, seemingly on the sidelines, were the markers of contestation and expressions of difference in what might otherwise have appeared a smoothly staged performance of unity, togetherness and overcoming of past divisions.

Yet it was the immediate *emotional* dimension of the event that stayed most vividly beyond the workshop with participants, a dimension they characterised as 'feelings of belonging' and 'a sense of possibility' for alternative formations of collectivity and being social. The emotional dimension came from ritualising the performance of a togetherness that intentionally did not match reality 'outside' the circle, but that nonetheless put to effective use participants' shared desire for an imaginary non-racial, egalitarian future sociality. It was in the *interplay* between the planned and ritualised expression of such coherence and the 'articulations of difference' in the process of negotiating the invention

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<sup>75</sup> The hymn of which parts are also sung in the national anthem.

of the same ritual that historical subjectivities were temporarily ‘unfrozen’ at some of the workshops and a new ‘community of sentiment’ was fashioned.

### ***Power, Play, Emotion - The Community of Sentiment***

It’s the liturgy at the end, which has the potential to integrate everything that’s happened at the workshop. It has the potential to be a rite of passage [...] giv[ing] you the space and the permission to move from one state in one’s life to another. [...] Particularly where people have perceived themselves as victims - locked in victimhood - to move towards increasingly becoming human beings can be a rite of passage. Celebration, liturgy can help them stand up, appropriate themselves and change, to begin to walk in a new direction. It can be a development that may have begun to happen already on the Saturday, whereas on the Sunday you enact it into a matter where you can use it, you plan and dramatise it (FML 7/99).

The final celebration was intended by HOM to be a moment of closure, a marker between an undesirable past and a desirable future that elicited a shared commitment to the latter, practically to each other and symbolically to the new nation. At the same time, HOM saw the Sunday morning celebration as engendering a potential personal shift (or ‘rite of passage’ [FML 7/99]) – moving from being ‘locked in victimhood’ to liberation from destructive ‘shackles of the past’, or from ignorance to conscientisation and inclusion. In the process of creating the community of sentiment individuals’ imaginations and emotions were blended with the HOM’s symbolic and practical concepts in a way that, at times implicitly and at times explicitly, examined the ‘now’. Though the emotional power of the last day rested in particular on participants’ buying into the idea of a ‘common humanity’ and ‘shared (new) South African-ness’, usually the celebration did not allow simply a utopian projection of a desirable future and had to acknowledge the difficulty, scope and effort required to realise the desired imaginary in the current context of division and disparity.

The fact that participants at different stages perceived the framework of the workshop as either rigid and formal or as flexible and informal pointed to the inherent tension between negotiating a planned process and allowing a creative shaping of the progression of events. Sunday mornings often brought these inherent tensions to the fore. On one hand, the celebration was the most ritualised and formal moment of the weekend, while on the

other, it constituted a moment where participants were invited to take charge and into which they invested considerable creative energy and emotion, risking vulnerability and critique. The event wove together religious and secular processes and linked diverse individual, political and spiritual understandings of the changes in South Africa. Catherine Bell describes contemporary ritual as a means for both mediating and appropriating social change from within a socio-cultural system in a way that forges communal identities (Bell 1997: 251). Most HOM 'celebrations' borrowed some of the repetitive formality of ritual (largely led by the facilitators, through the procession to the chapel, the beating of the drum, the burning of negatives, the presentation of clay symbols, Father Lapsley blessing the group, etc.) while at the same time constituting an *inventive* performance (led by the participants, through the spontaneous group performances, drama, dialogue, small invented ritual acts, body sculpting, etc.). Since most participants attended the workshop only once, the repetitive staged format of several elements in the event did not necessarily appear as such to them. Hence, while the Sunday events used a routine set of elements across different weekends, individual celebrations constituted a spontaneous performance rather than a ritual.

Individual and group processes of the previous two workshop days necessarily shaped the format of the Sunday morning. The sentiments and narratives presented during the celebration built on the themes raised and connections forged among participants during the storytelling on Saturday, the discussions at the ensuing plenary on Saturday afternoon (see p. 88-92) and the individual conversations of the previous evening. With the Sunday event, the focus shifted from personal narrations of past and present pain and division towards imaginations of a future collectivity, with the facilitators promoting a kind of redemptive mode of overcoming pain and division that forged a symbolic link between the individual narratives of the storytelling session, the new soci-ability among the workshop participants and the imaginary picture of the new nation 'out there'. The symbolism of nationhood (and 'African-ness' as a new desirable identity for all) came into play visibly in, for example, the clay symbols when participants formed a flag or the shape of South Africa or Africa to express their hopes for the betterment of the present situation. More often though, participants would outline desirable future forms of social

togetherness, similar to those experienced at the workshop, while declaring these 'still unusual' or extraordinary in their normal lives. Such thoughts were often expressed in relation to 'what the individual can do to make the nation work' (A. at workshop 3/99) drawing a correlation between the success of the national project and the individual's ability to transform towards a new soci-ability. The achievement of personal change and the capacity to make a positive contribution towards one's social sphere were portrayed by participants as essential steps in an interconnected personal and social healing process, which enhanced the metonymic link between the personal, social, moral and political elements brought about by the storying. Yet, the ways in which this interconnection translated into a quest for many participants, and a demand for concrete social and political action, was not always explicit in the performances.

Drawing on decades of anthropological thinking about ritual and performance, different scholars have put seemingly contradictory emphases on the efficacies of ritual and performance as a social practice, depicting it as serving primarily to either stabilise or destabilise social coherence. Roy Rappaport (1999) describes ritual as being about invariance, formality and 'the establishment of convention, the sealing of social contract and the construction of integrated conventional orders' (27). As in Victor Turner's (1969) earlier descriptions, ritual is conceived here as mainly facilitating the consent of social actors to an existing status quo, a social maintenance mechanism rather than challenge to existing societal parameters. While the liminality of ritual events grants a temporary freedom from societal constraints, the ritual itself cannot subvert conventional 'modalities of social intercourse' (Alexander 1991: 34), but rather becomes a temporary release valve for existing social frustrations, anxieties and potential challenges to the existing order. In contrast, other proponents of ritual place more emphasis on the informal, generative, creative and imaginative side of ritual as performance (Csordas 1996, Devish 1993, Krondorfer 1995, Schechner & Appel 1990), viewed as being about breaking with norms and challenging the existing status quo of society in both overt and covert ways. In fact, it was the very tension between 'schism and continuity' (Turner 1957) that produced the constructive dialectic of the performative process at the

workshops. To create the community of sentiment, both formal and anti-formal efficacies of ritual and performance had to come into play.

At HOM, a ritualised event was often used to mark an incision in time that was laid out to render *current* socio-political changes meaningful and morally sane. A correlation was crafted between the passage of 'old' time into 'new' time and the individual's commitment to 'break' with the past and partake actively in the imagined future. Looking at HOM's philosophy, the normative side of the Sunday ritual can be seen in its effort to legitimise the recently established, post-1994 order and establish the paradigm of nation building. This aspect became visible in the currency that the official discourses of new nationhood and unity enjoyed at the final event on Sunday morning. The character of the event as an intentional separation from the apartheid past and de-legitimation of that past, was illustrated by the pronounced desire to 'leave the past behind' (symbolised in the burning of the negatives) and the common commitment to a peaceful future of remembrance (but not vengeance) that was embodied in the clay peace symbols as they were lit in a commemorative gesture and presented to the collective in a conciliatory mode. The ritual incision here was not only about the construction of time but also about marking the transition to a new social and moral order (Rappaport 1999: 27). Hence the ritual served to both deconstruct past and construct current normative social formations in that it declared the past extraordinary, immoral and inhuman in terms of a desirable new social normality embedded in the subsequent understandings of moral accountability.

At the beginning of the celebration the slow-paced walking of the group and the singing of the lament *Sen'zenina*, from the outside via the door where the negatives of the past were burned, to the inside, physically enacted the image of crossing a threshold. In this way a 'bad' and 'evil' past was placed against a 'good' future, in which everybody present was shown to have a stake and responsibility. The Sunday celebration suggested that the individual and the small group wield a metonymic power: if the individual and a cross-section of the formerly antagonistic society could overcome 'the evils of the past' – and thus realise a peaceful soci-ability, even temporarily at a weekend workshop - then there was hope for the nation as such. While, not unlike the TRC discourse, this premise

placed pressure on the individual to 'cope' and 'heal the self', it was coupled with the acknowledgement of the difficulty, complexity and long-term nature of such endeavours. Facilitators and participants alike recognized that the imaginary 'break' with the past could never be 'clean cut' but had to admit emotional resonance and other prominent legacies of the past in the now. The presentation of the clay symbols at the end of the event, for instance, often marked a bridging moment of commemorating both the deceased and the experiences of pain of the living while stating dedication, hope and commitment to a changed future and to one another in the circle. The circle was seen by many participants to represent a microcosm of the new nation 'outside' to which the commitment was symbolically extended. During the presentation of the clay symbols, participants frequently spoke a few sentences to the group in which they expressed hope but also fear and doubt for the project of healing and restoration, on the personal and national level. The concept of transcending the pains of the past came across as a difficult and highly personal transition that needed to be paced foremost by the individual. It was also represented as ultimately making or breaking the success of the new South African sociality. A workshop participant framed it as the

[...] need to change for myself, so that I can become empowered and take charge of my life. It is very very painful for me and it will be for a long while still. But also each of us needs to make this change, each individual here so that we can make this country work. All of us have responsibility to make it work. I put this as a challenge to you. That is what my spear stands for. The challenge is now! (X. while presenting his clay symbol [a spear] at a workshop, 4/99).

The HOM 'celebration' could thus be read as staging a political moment aimed primarily at performing sentiments of unity and coherence, meant to reproduce the imaginary of the new non-racial nation as a tangible possibility at an interpersonal level and as the most plausible identity grounding for the individual. This feature certainly remained a critical part of the HOM's agenda. But if only read in this one dimension, the celebration at HOM would merely serve to signify and symbolically enact the legitimacy of the official process of transition, the validity of the political compromise of the negotiated settlement, and the subsequent social reality of a changeover without substantial redistribution of economic and social powers. The HOM intervention would have remained a mere limb to

the official TRC body's function in 'legitimizing the post-apartheid state' (Wilson 1996; 2001) rather than constituting a genuinely creative interpersonal process in which that very legitimacy may also be doubted, commented on and challenged, and in which power, play and emotions were juxtaposed rather than simply contained. The symbol of the 'spear', after all, is not only a symbol of the nation but also a symbol of force, asserting power even if here it was used in a challenge delivered gently.

### **Power, Play, Emotions I**

The symbolic link between the personal story - one's own and those of others - individual agency and a sentiment of possibility forged at the event also carried force not only because it accommodated the formal, informal and anti-formal elements of ritualised performance, but also because it was embedded at once in a spiritual-religious and socio-political framework. Building on the idea of a 'sacred space' introduced for the storytelling, the celebration invoked the sacred in the format of liturgy, hymn, ritual, prayer and, not least, through the persona of Father Lapsley<sup>76</sup> (if present) while at the same time displaying conviviality, challenge and play during the group performances and the individual contributions. In a short space of time, participants' performances often touched upon a range of emotive imagery, from lament and mourning to humour and mockery, from joy and cheerfulness to contemplation and concern. Humour and the ability to joke and jest frequently played a crucial role in representing and challenging present circumstances where social criticism was often implicit rather than voiced directly.

The interactions during the Sunday celebrations enabled the audience to enter a space, in which mourning and lament as expressions of remembrance could be performed jointly and reside next to the sharing of laughter as a manifestation of forgetting. Seemingly a celebration of unity, the performance itself provided a ground upon which social concerns were voiced and differences were identified and commented. Such performances could never be just about forging a comfort zone – laughter could carry as

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<sup>76</sup> During the event Father Lapsley, who throughout the workshop appears in civilian clothing, usually changes into the robe of priesthood. However, elements of ritual are part of the workshop process regardless of whether he is present or not.

much the sting of mockery as it displayed goodwill, and, at times, it stopped halfway and got stuck in throats. Often via the non-verbal and physical expressions, the actors and spectators entered emotionally unsettling territory, in which sentiments and expressions of commitment, caring and the convivial effort to make one another 'feel good' established a basis for potential further challenge and critique rather than mere sentimentality. The possibility to express ambivalence and criticism during the performance was based for many participants on 'a sense of respect and trust among the workshop participants' (Focus Groups 6/99, 8/99), on a feeling that the weekend had built enough substance to negotiate varying degrees of risk and vulnerability in offering the presentations.<sup>77</sup>

The community of sentiment came into being through the blend of contrasting emotions, via the display of ambiguities and reflection on past and present personal memories and public events through speech, embodiment and performance rather than through mere liturgical recital or a formal expression of unity. The 'funny' sketches participants developed showed that people were often well aware of the power imbalances and inequities they were negating in favour of the temporary coherence of the workshop community, particularly in relation to issues of race and class. Fabian (1998) describes the practice of 'encounter' within the Jamaa movement in Zaire where 'the utopian idea of power-free encounter confirmed concern with power by its (temporary) negation' (47-48). In his example the 'genre of encounter' among the Jamaa signified 'an emotionally charged exchange of deep thoughts and aspirations' (ibid.) among initiates and initiating agents.

The Sunday performance at HOM inevitably played with and put on display exactly what it seemed to overtly negate - the persisting power imbalances of outside its liminal arena. Concerned with 'overcoming' social division, it simultaneously enabled a careful degree

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<sup>77</sup> Krondorfer (1995) describes similar processes in his work with the German-Jewish Dance Theatre where the embodied expression of experiences and sentiments regarding the Holocaust shared among mixed groups of young Germans and Jewish-Americans led to a negotiating of differences, questioning of stereotypes and prejudices, and enabled new forms of contact among members of the third post-war generation in both countries.

of acknowledgement thereof. This aspect often seemed a side-effect more than an intended outcome. In many cases, issues represented mockingly in the performances were seldom far removed from the participants' reality and manifested in what I referred to in earlier chapters as the 'embodiments' of apartheid memory. At the same time in most small-group presentations power as such (of the apartheid state, of the white *baas*, of the father in the house, etc.) was rarely represented as absolute. In the performances, playing with stereotypes did not necessarily mean that particular roles were always shown only as one-dimensional (the victim, the perpetrator, the criminal, the racist). Though in some cases stereotypes inevitably remained 'flat', at others times they were questioned by other witty characters, or shown to be placed in doubt and questioning by themselves. Participants illustrated various South African subjectivities and inner struggles as complex and ambiguous human experiences that demand a variety of voices and critiques, both humorous and serious. Mbembe's thoughts are relevant in this respect when he says that,

[p]recisely because the postcolonial mode of domination is a regime that involves not just control but conviviality, even connivance – as shown by the constant compromises, the small tokens of fealty, people's cautiousness – the analyst must watch out for the myriad of ways in which ordinary people guide, deceive and actually toy with power instead of confronting it directly (Mbembe 1992a: 24-25).

Mbembe's suggestion delineates modalities for critique of the contemporary distributions of power (whether political, economical, racial, gendered, generational, global, local, etc.) where one might otherwise focus only on the overarching narrative of cohesion that seems to drive the HOM celebration. In some instances, the dramatic enactments of participants depicted the possibility of agency by showing firstly an undesirable past and present chosen from situations they themselves had experienced (how it was/is) and secondly, repeating the same scene of interaction in the format of a desirable future (how it should be). At other times, they experimented with reversing roles where for instance the 'Madam' would slip into the shoes of the 'Maid' and vice versa. Which of the participants was chosen to play which social role could be a statement in itself in some cases. In this way groups put forward not only subtle forms of social critique but alternative, non-institutional and informal possibilities of social repair for existing

interpersonal relations through deliberately altered gesture, through room for trial and error, attention to detail and not least a *humorous* take on social divisions. Performance here accommodated the seemingly paradoxical - placing emotions of dividedness/separation and unity/cohesion in the same arena, performing both critique and coherence, showing the sacred and the profane next to each other and acting out the simultaneous negation and negotiation of power imbalances. A dialectic of ritual emerged here which affirms the later Turner's understanding of the liminal mode as 'creative, yet ambiguous, marginal yet essential, protected yet dangerous, revitalising yet transgressive' (Turner 1982: 24, quoted in Krondorfer 1995: 89). Participants did not hesitate to place next to one another both their experiences of the problematic 'real' consequences of the political compromise on which the new nation is built and their goodwill and desire to nevertheless make it work, 'if only for a passing moment in play or ritual' (Werbner 2002: 2).

What was distinct in many final celebrations was the evident *sensation* of togetherness that carried the emotional momentum of the event. The community of sentiment could act out the temporary bridging of social divisions because its members imagined and enacted a collectivity that *'felt real'*. The ability of ritual practice to unite people emotionally has been described in both religious and secular contexts (Driver 1991: 152; Krondorfer 1995; Turner 1982; Turner & Turner 1982; Csordas 1994a, 1996), but what was created here was not simply a state of equilibrium and balance. Some might frame the Sunday event as a moment of '*communitas*', yet the term seems to imply a shared set of communitarian values (Alexander 1991: 46, Krondorfer 1995: 71-91) that did not necessarily exist among the workshop participants. Rather, the community of sentiment at HOM was based on *experimenting* with the experience of collectivity as something *newly shared*.

There was more to the community of sentiment than a display of harmony, coherence and agreement, especially so since the process that led to the event was often shaped by negotiation and contest. Even while the events were usually characterised by enthusiasm and excitement, participants frequently showed frustration with the *process of creating*

the event. For some the facilitators 'intervened too strongly' and 'pushed' for particular elements such as when the facilitators insisted on the burning of negatives even though the celebration committee had already decided on a different entry ceremony (S. 5/2000). For others, negotiating the conflicting wishes of the group members about how the event should proceed and what would be represented proved difficult. Tensions, for instance, found expression in discussions about the degree of 'religiosity' during the event. One participant commented:

I got angry about that. For some people you can see, religion is their lives, but that was quite imposing, especially one of the facilitators. There is such a mixed group of people there; there must be a way of working around that, of allowing religion to be included without offending other people (L. 7/99).

Meanwhile, debate and disagreement among the participants also led to some of the most innovative contributions to the final celebration, as when participants added physical elements to the event such as body sculpting and pantomime because they could not decide on which language to use for their presentation. In another workshop, a small group invited all participants to use their bodies to symbolise experiences of the past. Under the heading 'From Heaviness to Lightness', each participant expressed an emotion through mime and passed it on by touching another until the circle of 'statues' was changed from expressions of past pain to bodily projections of a more hopeful future. Participants also worked with improvised dance. Starting with the slow beating of a drum, individuals expressed heaviness, which led to the singing of *Sen'zenina* and eventually changed to a different song culminating in a dance of joy (S. 5/2000). The elements of *variety* and *embodiment* evident in the process were relevant for reading the performances at HOM as both constitutive and creative. Devish (1993: 252), in a critique of Turner's earlier work, draws attention to the experiencing, sensing subject in healing rituals.<sup>78</sup> While the Sunday event presented, in part, a performance pre-scripted and controlled by the facilitators, the enactment of the participants constituted a 'generative act that reache[d] beyond or beneath the [HOM] "story" ' (Devish 1993: 253).<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> 'Turner overlooks the genuine and creative significance of the human body' (Devish 1993: 37).

<sup>79</sup> Devish (1993) suggests that '[b]ody and group are interwoven with the life-world, that is, the lived, partially shared and encompassing worlds of images, meanings, values, and strategies in which participants are immersed' (37).

At a workshop in March 2002, participants used the idea of the written negatives in a different way. Each negative, noted on a square piece of paper, constituted a brick that together made up a divisive road from past to present between participants of different skin colour. The road was laid out on the floor. A second set of 'bricks' was drawn on which participants noted positives and elements they felt could change the sense of division present among them. These bricks were then used to build a bridge across the road of negatives. The bridge was emphasised by people reading aloud the positives and reaching for one another's hands across the chasm. The creative enactment of imagery that engaged current social (and in particular racial) divisions led to different innovations at each workshop and revealed a range of participants' future visions, which themselves were neither fixed nor necessarily bound by official HOM and other discourses but performed as various 'stages of becoming' in which 'separateness and interdependence, autonomy and mutuality exist[ed] simultaneously between persons, groups and life-worlds' (Devish 1993: 254). Turner's later work (1982, 1990) revised his argument by placing increased emphasis on possibility, potentiality and the experimental character of ritual, portraying it as an element of social change (Alexander 1991: 46) and as an opportunity alternate 'social conditions in which participants are encouraged to probe, transgress, invert, condense, and transform cultural values' (Krondorfer 1995: 89). Such an experience, Turner proposed, may in fact alter rather than recreate normative social conditions post-ritual:

Actuality takes the sacrificial plunge into possibility and emerges as a different kind of actuality. [...] [A]ny actualization is only one among a myriad of possibilities of being, some of which may be actualised in space-time somewhere or somewhen else (Turner 1982b: 83-84, quoted in Alexander 1991: 40).

The notion of a 'plunge into possibility' corresponds with many of the descriptions HOM participants gave of the Sunday celebration. The sense of feeling empowered by the practical experience of what participants often framed as an emotional and spiritual form of 'sharing' (space, time, ideas, feelings, experiences, hopes, fears, desires) was reiterated many times immediately after the event in a way that suggested a momentary 'unfreezing' of subjectivities assumed as stable or given: 'I did not think it would be

possible to be together like that' – 'I felt good that it was possible to end the weekend with joining hands' – 'It left me with a sense of hope that we can indeed make this country happen'. Most immediate statements afterwards indicated the interface of the symbolic framework and embodied performance that culminated in the emotional experience of excitement and exhilaration at the end of the workshop. Yet the production of a community of sentiment was not something that the workshop could guarantee, and though often remembered positively, the celebration was not always a constructive experience for participants, as the following example illustrates.

### ***A Joint Ritual or Cracks in the Community of Sentiment?***

In 1999, a HOM workshop was held with a group of Church Ministers in a small Boland town in the peri-urban areas beyond Cape Town's metropolitan range. They belonged to a church that like many others was left with a 'formerly white' branch and a 'formerly black and coloured' branch under the umbrella of the same synod. Both branches had shown an interest in uniting and forming one 'diverse' church in the context of national transition and 'reconciliation'. The group of ministers had scheduled the HOM workshop as part of their annual retreat so as to make it an element in the process towards uniting the two churches. In this case the group of participants knew each other, and, to a certain extent, shared personal 'histories' with each other. Participants had to deal with existing relational and institutional (inter)dependencies and were faced with the prospect of engaging one another in the future, which made for a different set of dynamics to the semi-anonymous nature of the open workshops. The following example then also points to some of the challenges the HOM model encountered when applied in a more continuous and tightly-knit institutional setting.

In conversations during the HOM workshop, however, it emerged that the desire to constitute one body of religious practitioners, as stated from some of the leaders of the formerly white branch, did not rest on a mutually shared understanding of what the new relations between the ministers, let alone the members of the two churches would entail. The leaders of the formerly white branch located the need for negotiating a joint religious

body in an imagined *re*-connection with a history backdating to ‘when we were not separate’. One said: ‘Only a hundred years ago, black people were allowed to worship in our church. We actually worshipped together then. We must go back to worshipping together’ (J. 8/99 field notes). In this vision, pre-apartheid times served as a point of reference for a kind of ‘*multi-racial*’ social togetherness that post-apartheid times, stripped of the weight of colonial legacy and the inherent fictionality of race, could strive for. One of the less diplomatic members of the ‘formerly non-white’ branch openly voiced his frustration with this perspective on the churches’ transformation process:

They [the white section of the church] are still on top of us. We are not equal, whether or not we unite. But we are supposed to join and give up what little independence we have. That is called transition. I am not convinced. I’d rather be separate. But, as always, it is also a question of the funds (L. 8/99, field notes).

The conflict broke open during the negotiations about appropriate symbolisms for the Sunday ceremony. Not surprisingly, it played itself out to a large extent along perceptions of ‘racial lines’. Participants had laid out a strictly liturgical ‘service’ made up of Bible readings, prayers and a sermon, when Father Michael suggested the ritual ‘burning of negatives’ that constituted an element, which participants at the open workshops had usually welcomed enthusiastically. However, it turned out that the ministers of the formerly white church branch were opposed to ‘doing something with fire’. They explained that they found it unfitting for their Christian tradition and associated with pagan rituals. One suggested instead having a ‘stone ceremony’ whereby each participant would lay down a stone from the *veld* in commemoration and prayer. The stones would then one-by-one be laid out to form a cross in memory of Christ. This caused one of the ministers from the formerly black branch of the church to blow up in anger:

See what they are doing? They have been imposing their rituals on us for centuries! Now here we are in what is supposed to be a new country and they are still doing it just the same. Why can’t we have a fire? A fire is much more African, it is something I would relate to much more. Why not burn, what is negative about the past? We are in Africa, I don’t see why we can’t have what would be more our tradition, why we can’t have a fire. But no, you want stones, stones are dead, stones mean nothing to me! (M. 8/99, field notes)

The rest of the group was visibly upset and shocked by this outburst of emotion. In the ensuing discussion about what symbolism and gestures may or may not lay claim to being 'African' and to being 'Christian', the fellow members of the angry minister's branch of the church (except for one who agreed with him) largely kept quiet or displayed indifference. In turn he was singled out by some of the more vocal other participants as 'unreasonably angry', 'unnecessarily polarising the group', 'taking things out of proper context' and 'being difficult'. Father Lapsley intervened by affirming the right to be angry while attempting to mediate the situation. Eventually, the group 'agreed' by vote and carried out the stone ceremony nonetheless, to the dismay of the angered minister.

## Power Play II

It is only through such a shift in perspective that we can come to understand that the postcolonial relationship is not primarily a relationship of resistance or of collaboration but can best be characterised as illicit cohabitation, a relationship made fraught by the very fact of the *commandement*<sup>80</sup> and its 'subjects' having to share the same living space. It is precisely this logic – *the necessary familiarity and domesticity in the relationship* – that [...] has resulted in the mutual zombification of both the dominant and whom they apparently dominate. This zombification meant that each robbed the other of their vitality and has left them both impotent (*impouvoir*) (Mbembe 1992a: 4, my emphasis).

The process of negotiating a joint ritual here was one that brusquely laid bare some of the cracks and fissures in the new 'common ground' assumed and proclaimed earlier by some of the white ministers. A new 'reconciled' nationhood, built on visions of social harmony and 'unity in diversity', or, in this particular case, also on the expectation of a unison of faith through religious framework and institutional background, did not necessarily deliver the ability to negotiate meaning and engage constructively in interpersonal conflict. Rather, it enhanced the frustrations with perceived and real power imbalances. This incident also revealed the present South African institutional landscape as a highly contested and uneven historical terrain. This particular workshop example exposed a

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<sup>80</sup> 'I use the term *commandement* in the way it was used to denote colonial authority, that is, insofar as it embraces the images and structures of power and coercion, the instruments and agents of their enactment, and a degree of rapport between those who give orders and those who are supposed to obey them, without, of course, discussing them' (Mbembe 1992a: 30).

facet that reminds of Mbembe's (1992a) sense of a 'mutual zombification' characterising relations in the postcolony: 'Zombification' here refers to a kind of interpersonal paralysis that leaves both 'the dominant and [those] whom they apparently dominate [...] 'robbed of their vitality' and 'impotent' (4). It is important to note that Mbembe's idea deconstructs the absoluteness of power in that his 'zombification' leaves *both sides* of the encounter *impouvoir*, with a sense of being powerless. *Impouvoirité* suggests a meaning that not only renders post-apartheid sociality 'impotent' in a metaphoric sense, but that also pictured participants as visibly helpless and fearful in the face of anger erupting.

HOM participants from all social backgrounds reported on a sense of being powerlessness in their daily interactions with those perceived as 'Other'. At the same time, both sides, those deprived and those privileged by apartheid, had the impression that in the new order the 'Other' had gained in power while leaving the self in an inferior and disadvantaged position. Black participants would refer to the continuities of apartheid and the fact that considerable economic power remained in 'white hands' in this respect, while white participants mentioned affirmative action policies and other redistribution efforts of the new black government as factors that left them now disempowered and disadvantaged. Both sides revealed that these perceptions strongly impacted on their sense of opportunity for themselves and, more importantly, their children, and on the feeling of 'having a future' in the new nation.

'Zombification' leave social actors not only with a sense of being powerless, but also depleted of energy in their interactions, energy they would need to attempt changing their forms of contact to more a desired soci-ability. Moments of conflict at HOM revealed the effects of 'zombification', yet they also set free energy by giving space to emotion and confrontation. Though this energy was firstly experienced as negative, it still broke through the inherent paralysis implied in 'zombification'. During the course of the conflict at the workshop, it became evident once more that 'liminality' as such is neither cast into a 'blank' social space nor static in time. Similar to some of the examples given in Chapter Two and Three, such a fragile moment yet again spoke to the volatility of assuming a 'safe', 'protected' or for that matter liminal space, in which interaction could

take place in isolation from other influences, kept at bay or constructed to be 'outside' the workshop. Individual agency and contextual forces were in constant negotiation, provocation and play during the confrontation here. 'Inside' and 'outside', past and present necessarily implicated one another, not only along a two-dimensional space-time line, but through mutual relational and emotional continuities sprung from the same 'entangled' historical intersubjectivity. In the resulting interplay, it was evident that, despite sentiments of isolation and alienation, concrete relational knots exist among people living in the same polity and that these are both explicit and concealed, in ways determined by unequal power relations and perceptions about the power of the 'Other'. While confrontations at HOM were rarely as overt as in the example illustrated here, when they did emerge, they served to reveal some of the dynamic sub-currents that might not have emerged at other workshops because participants were not as familiar with one another and did not have to enter into continuous relationships in an institutional setting beyond the workshop.

The emotional clash between several participants therefore marked a moment of 'unfreezing' the present terms of intersubjectivity by putting a finger on the sore question of continuity between apartheid and its 'post'-state. However, rather than making the emotional response subject to discussion in a fragile group moment, the process (pressured by the evident discomfort, lack of time and Father Lapsley's intervention) was smoothed and closed – refrozen in a sense - leaving at best a recognition of the difficulties of negotiating a joint ritual for some, and at worst, a bitter aftertaste for others. The conflict observed here was in part derived from what is essentially a paradox in the narrative of the new South African nation (and for that matter in many social processes aimed at creating a 'post-something' dispensation). While the impossibility of a 'clean slate' seems evident, the transition from apartheid to post-apartheid implies a new beginning and produces expectations that cannot be met. At the interpersonal level, the break with the unwanted past then asks for a particular re-narration to accommodate the mutually unwelcome *negative* 'familiarity and domesticity of the relationship' (Mbembe 1992a: 4) that seems to result in the kind of negative symbiosis observed between the priests here. On offer from those evidently more powerful in the existing relationship

were either pleas for complete ignorance ('we never had a chance to know one another as people because of apartheid'), which might be broken on the surface through altered forms of interaction and visible measures of integration - or the correlation to a mythical past ('when we still worshipped together') to which a reconnection could be forged (hence attending to *re*-conciliation, which implied different actions to conciliation and did not demand the creation of new, creative social forms). However, neither version could deliver social actors from the 'zombification' of their 'frozen' racial identities without a degree of acknowledgement of the very uneasiness caused by the 'familiarity of relations' and the sense of imbalance and interdependency it evoked. The moment at which the conflict erupted at the workshop offered one window through which this uncomfortable 'familiarity' was accessed and old hierarchies were exposed and questioned.

These observations place emphasis on and at the same time complicates the significance of facilitation for such encounters, as the HOM facilitators displayed the tendency during such moments of contestation to resolve conflict and contradiction into the emphasis of shared responsibility and commitment to a changed future, mending emerging social faultlines with demands for effort and sacrifice from *all*. They promoted the agency of the individual to effect change in this respect. Though not always in an essentialist way, emerging contested subjectivities were thus immediately 'refrozen' into visions of a shared commitment between the (ideal) empowered victim overcoming anger and hatred and forsaking revenge, and the (ideal) concerned beneficiary who supports the victim and is willing to partake in measures of social repair (see also Meister 1998a & 1998b). While this discourse of containment provided a framework, a common set of boundary conditions that set the ground for agreement on the necessity of 'making the future and the country work', and the need for individual contribution and sacrifice, participants did not necessarily share the same ideas of what could be reasonably expected from that future, or what effort and commitment they saw themselves making. Many saw the 'common ground' of a shared future as one of negotiation, not because this was the ideal or desired process but because it was a pragmatic necessity in face of the political compromise that enabled the present peace in the country.

The challenge here was one of not simply assuming that there could be a joint ritual, in which meaning was equally assigned to the act by all, but to embark on the difficult negotiations and confrontations that making the act collectively meaningful might have entailed. A process less fearful of conflict and quick to contain it, might have offered participants, possibly, the opportunity for intervention, voicing discontent, disagreement and more negotiation space. However, in practice participants (and also individual facilitators) often had diverging ideas about the level of compromise and accommodation they were willing to offer to fellow group members. Facilitators were pressured by time-constraints and their responsibility to keep participants 'safe' from attacks perceived as personal. Interpersonal strategies for managing conflict, conflict-*ability* so to speak, was limited where past social conflicts had been experienced as violent and personally costly and the future of the relationship with the other(s) remained unclear. Conflict-ability refers to the capacity for engaging emerging tensions and expressions of anger and frustration in a social setting without suppressing them or attempting immediate resolution and restoration of a superficial harmony. It speaks to the ability to face that which is unresolved, hurtful, and contradictory in current interactions while facilitating a space in which participants still feel safe enough to risk revealing the same.

The time for negotiating the Sunday process was often very short and led to a sense of rushing through the preliminaries for the 'real thing', the celebration itself. Therefore facilitators frequently intervened to direct the process into a certain framework and to divert or suppress rather than mediate emerging conflicts. Participants, too, often shied away from direct confrontation since the costs of open confrontation in such a one-off encounter seemed high and the workshop process did not envision ongoing follow-up processes. From the point of view of most facilitators it was largely the absence of conflict and confrontation that marked a 'good workshop' (Focus Group 5/00). Yet, inevitably, much was said in the moments when issues were avoided and not voiced at that moment, as commented on later in interviews and personal conversations. In the case described here, some participants experienced the outcome (conducting the stone ceremony) as a violation and said so. Others said that they felt sad and upset that 'it

wasn't possible to reach a better compromise' or at least acknowledge what one termed 'the deeper roots of the problem' (C., field notes 8/99). The case also illustrated the extent to which, by Sunday morning, participants had developed an emotional attachment to the process that led them to bare and act out some of their more controversial thoughts and feelings about emerging issues. This in turn led in some cases to the kind of conflicts as that described among the church group, while in others it made possible some of the most painfully direct and honest encounters at the workshops. The experiences at HOM showed that any deliberate attempt at 'unfreezing' of historical intersubjectivities remained an endeavour as ambivalent and painful as it may be necessary to work towards a genuinely altered and lasting new soci-ability.

## **Emotions II**

The example of the group of priests showed that although the community of sentiment appeared to forge a *common* emotional process conveying sentiments of togetherness and possibility, the experience of the moment was inevitably shaped by individual historical subjectivities and subsequently the particular structures of feeling at the root of present experience. In HOM's case, the question of finding common ground was often emphasised in terms of discovering a commonality of 'feelings' and experiences of suffering, as Father Lapsley explains:

[A universal element of HOM] is in the experience of pain and suffering, that there are broad human emotions and human feelings. How the experience of people is similar, particularly in the face of oppression and injustice; that is one of the deepest commonalities. And [there is] the commonality of people seeking to come to terms with what has happened to them [...]. It is about dealing with a particular set of experiences, and I think there is a common set of questions that people struggle with. About: how should we deal with past? There are questions people struggle with around remembering and forgiveness, around forgetting. [These are relevant no matter] what happened to people wherever, whatever faith background they have or lack of it (FML 7/99).

However, assuming that there could be a universal ground of 'common feelings' could also mask the ways in which historically entrenched imbalances of power continued to be manifest in *intersubjective* human experiences, in each and every interaction at the workshops. I recall several instances where participants tried to show empathy by saying

things like: 'I understand how you feel' or 'I know exactly what you went through' and were met with the anger of the concerned person who responded: 'How can you know what I felt?' or 'You have no idea what it was like, don't tell me you know'. Participants in fact *did not feel the same* during the celebration, nor did they experience the community of sentiment in the same way. Subjectivities are not universal (Werbner 2002: 2). Fanon warned against the assumption that experiences inside a black and a white skin, especially experiences of suffering, could ever be the same or comparable (Fanon 1963). He pointed to the dangers of idealising empathy and identification with the 'Other'. Crying together does not mean shedding the same tears, and laughing together does not give that laughter the same meaning. Poet Sandile Dikeni remarked at the launch of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in May 2000:

I have heard it so many times - that black and white suffering is the same thing. [...] No ways! It is insensitive not to recognise and dwell a while on what makes a particular form of suffering particular (Dikeni, quoted in Villa-Vicencio 2000: 42-43).

He was responding to a juxtaposition that had become rather frequent at South African conferences of the time (1996-2000) thematically 'dealing with the past(s)', where questions of commemorating white and black South African war experiences, in particular the Anglo-Boer war and the Liberation Struggle against apartheid, were placed next to one another more or less without critical comment. In this context asking for the empathy of the 'Other' could also become a ground for appropriating 'white' pain alongside 'black' pain, as Dikeni commented further:

In fact what is now happening is that the people who were in power before are saying to the people who were not in power before - now that you are in power, it is time to feel for the victims of the Anglo-Boer war. Only in this space called South Africa, can this happen. [...] How many black South Africans can actually get up and say actually they do feel a universal pain when they look at Boer suffering in the concentration camps? How many can really say so? You will find many of us saying we do, but we do not really feel. You can't make us feel (Dikeni, quoted in Villa-Vicencio 2000: 42-43).

He continues on a softer note:

But you can facilitate the process for us to do so [to feel]. We must explore ways to do this together. But you can't just change the flag and then say, "now you must feel". You can't tell me for 50 years that the Boer is my enemy and then expect me to go to this [*Vroue*] monument and begin to feel. I think there is a process that needs to happen for us to achieve that. We need to re-interpret the power position in a more holistic way. When that happens we will understand more. We may even begin to feel and we will be in a better position to explore what it means to remember what is dear to those who no longer have political power (ibid).

At HOM, a similar problematic encompassed all interactions of participants, in particular across racial boundaries. This was especially difficult when facilitators seemed to base the possibility for dialogue on universal interpretations of a 'common' emotional scope among participants, one of whom said: 'Sharing my feelings does not mean I feel the same as you' (Z. 7/99). What participants did experience as meaningful, however, rested on the endeavour of communicating (and 'sharing' only in that sense) one another's experiences and emotions in ways that recognised and valued each in its unique history and human quality. Any common ground here needed to be recognised as a multiply 'antagonistic common ground' (Diner 1986). Empathy was rendered meaningful in so far as it entailed a *recognition of suffering* as well as the *acknowledgement, respect and willingness to personally bear witness*, not in the expectation that the 'Other' may (have) be(en) affected in the same way. The search for an alternative to the prominent discourse that universalises suffering and another common one that individualises pain, has to be grounded in nurturing the ability to *respond* meaningfully and genuinely to the pain of another (Das 1997: 70) and to respect his or her concerns.

### **From 'Zombification' to Conflict-ability**

In the face of the complexities of post-apartheid intersubjectivities, it was only a responsive and dialogical engagement with the very *incompatibility* of the experiences apartheid generated, and with the subsequently emerging subject positions, interests and agendas for the future that could time and again, in a fleeting moment, 'unfreeze' the persisting sense of 'zombification'. Experimenting with the imaginary, the workshop celebration was a moment of declaring the apartheid past 'Other' and performing a new

'desirable ordinariness' (Ross 2003: 140ff.) with each other, revealing once more the emotionality of the tension between the desired/imagined and the 'real'. How people interacted seemed determined by their experiences, perceptions and prejudices through which they saw, judged and responded to the motions of the 'Other'. The community of sentiment set free positive energy where post-apartheid relations remain characterised by sentiments of powerlessness, enabling imagination, hope and the experience of a different soci-ability. At the same time, a short-lived experience such as the HOM workshop could only provide a temporary window to desired new ways of being social. The community of sentiment provided a glimpse of 'how it could be' (Focus Group 5/99) and also a test in 'how very difficult it is to make [this desired new soci-ability] real' (Focus Group 8/99) against established current social practices. HOM participants' experiences demonstrated the need for two other concrete 'abilities' in the process of finding new ways of being social, namely the ability to respond meaningfully (response-ability) that I explored in Chapter Three (p. 111, 116-119), and the ability to engage the contradictions and conflicts emerging in more intimate encounters in constructive ways (conflict-ability).

While the storying-process had politicised the encounter between participants by putting the focus on the apartheid years and the moral and practical implications of different subjectivities, the HOM celebration, seemingly, de-politicised the encounter, once again 'refreezing' subjectivities into 'ideals', such as the 'empowered victim' overcoming anger and hatred supported by the 'concerned beneficiary', all willing to partake and commit to the non-racial nation in the name of a 'common humanity'. In 'making connections' during the storying, antagonistic versions of the past had been placed next to each other, contradictions emerged, and challenges were formulated. Through immediacy, participation and unsettlement the storying had challenged participants to respond to one another (fostering response-ability). Feelings of recognition and respect – generated by a meaningful response - set the foundation for the community of sentiment. The discourses of nation-building and of a 'common humanity', coupled with participants' desire to partake in the new sociality in practical ways, shaped the community of sentiment, fuelled imagination and hope and elicited a commitment to

personal change. The community of sentiment, in turn, set free some of the energy bound by the ‘zombification’ of post-apartheid relations. It enabled participants to put the new nation imaginary and their desire for new ways of being social into practice, if only for a passing moment through play or ritual.

Yet, inevitably, the faultlines of such an artificially bounded microcosm emerged – conflict and the expression of intense emotions ensued – and its limitations were revealed. How these were mended spoke to the reality of fashioning an unusual interpersonal moment, yet one that also reflected the challenges in participants’ usual interpersonal domain. The need to manage these emerging tensions and conflicts (conflict-ability) produced the search for engaging in ways that neither gloss over differences nor solely rely on the symbolism of ‘nation’ and ‘common humanity’, yet that recognise the potential of imagination and the desire to nurture sentiments such as belonging, legitimacy and hope.

## The End

*After lunch participants gather for the final plenary round. Facilitators hand out evaluation forms. 'You can have a look, too, at your expectations, which are still hanging on the wall' Y. says. Z. is assisted with filling out his evaluation form by another participant because he cannot read or write. Facilitators have put up a sheet of newsprint written "The Way Forward" in the front. 'We want to take a moment to also hear your ideas and thoughts about the workshop, so that we can later reflect on how we can continue the healing journey we have begun here', Father Michael introduces the session. 'Please, feel free to give your comments. It would be good if everyone could say something, so maybe you want to go around in the circle?' Participants' comments that follow are coherent with the general mood of excitement and a sense of optimism that prevailed after the celebration:*

*'I'm united with myself, I feel, there's a sense of calm and security.'*

*'I'm so happy. You know I sacrificed a weekend of work for this. I normally sell sausages in the place I stay, every weekend. And there I make money that we really need because I don't have the job. But now I'm not sad I came here. It's hard to explain.'*

*'I had the feeling that I was the only one who was suffering. But now I met many other people who are also suffering, and I learned from them. I'm feeling much better with the workshop, it was a process where we just kept changing and changing towards loving one another. It was good.'*

*'I learned to deal with my own feelings better. I know myself better now.'*

*'I feel now I can just forgive and forget. The sharing helped me.'*

*'I know now that it is better to share the pain that is inside your heart with other people, not to hold it within.'*

*'I'm very happy because I learned to love myself and accept myself as I am. I feel peace in my heart.'*

*'For me it was the first time an opportunity to say 'sorry' to someone for Group Areas, to actually see that problem personified. It's now personal, it's not politics anymore. It's gone from my head to an emotional understanding. That's a huge step. I'm feeling restless now, ready to do something.'*

*'It has helped me address the grudges I hold. Encountering so many people, many different personalities here. I'm feeling incredibly happy. I'm so busy thinking, thinking.'*

*'I can see now it's about building myself, building others. We're building and we have to keep building this nation, so things can be much, much better.'*

*After the round of comments is complete, facilitators ask the group if they wish to meet again for a follow-up meeting. Times and possible dates are discussed. Transport is always a problem, so the challenge is to find a central venue. Lately, follow-up meetings have mainly been held at the IHOM offices. After some negotiations, we schedule a follow-up meeting for one month after the workshop. Next Ja. speaks about other networks and services participants may be able to access: 'We also have written down some phone numbers of people who do counselling (two of which are facilitators from the weekend). So if you feel the need to talk further, you can call and also go to the Trauma Centre, we have written down their number also.' Father Lapsley comes in and says: 'Also, the Centre for Ubuntu holds a forum meeting every month where we discuss current issues like reparations or restorative justice. Everybody is welcome there; it's also a chance to see more people involved in the process.'*

*As the session ends participants begin to leave. Good-byes are lengthy. Phone numbers are exchanged; promises to keep in touch and visit each other are made. The minibus takes the majority of people back to their homes in Gugulethu, Crossroads, Philippi, Khayelitsha and Nyanga. Others leave in their own cars giving some people they have met a lift home.*

*Facilitators are left to hand over the venue and check out. We sit down for a cup of tea and discuss the workshop, do some processing and digesting. Debriefing is very important for the facilitators since the workshops tend to leave behind a substantial 'emotional residue'. At times, the debriefing has been held several days after the workshop at Father Michael's house, which*

*can serve to 'digest' some aspects of the workshop that 'come up' only a few days later. Sometimes facilitators go for a one-on-one debriefing for particular experiences they had or stories they have heard. It is also a process for them to work with their own 'journeys' and stories. Today we decided to debrief straight after the workshop since it is often difficult to find time to bring the whole group back together in the week. 'It has been one of the most intense and smooth workshops we have had this year', comments B. All agree. Some comment on the stories they have heard this weekend and on their feelings. Others mention current issues relevant in their lives at the moment. It is a time of joint processing and bonding before everyone goes home into different areas of Cape Town. We stay talking for about an hour until packing up the last few things and embarking on our journeys home. Everyone is exhausted. 'Don't forget to do some nurturing for yourselves' is the advice lead-facilitator Ja. gives us as a good-bye for the road.*

*On the drive home, a discussion develops around the role of white South Africans, a persisting controversial topic among us. Finally, after I have dropped everyone off, it is a slow unwinding as I drive towards town. So many things from the workshop continue to spin in my head; it takes time to switch off.*

## Chapter Five

### 'It is as if you've never done a workshop' -

#### The Community of Sentiment Put to the Test

The [workshop] experience is a mind opener. I felt it was like a surge of energy that came through me. Because I have done this there will always be a place for it. It doesn't just go away (participant J. - immediately after a workshop in May 1999).

You kind of quickly forget the weekend that was so good because you need to survive. You need to move around your head. You need to do things; you need to make things happen for yourself. And most of our environments are really, really depressing. You quickly forget the good of just one insignificant weekend (participant M. - three months after a workshop in June 1999).

You go away from there having touched upon certain things, having some kind of relief and so on. But it is more like shifting into first gear. You still have to shift into all the other gears (participant O. - three years after a workshop in March 2002).

The contrasting voices above indicate the range of experiences HOM participants had upon returning to their homes. They also demonstrate how quickly the intensity of the workshop experience faded. Tracing the impacts of a one-off intervention with a fluid target audience like HOM needs particular care, sensitivity and effort to capture some of their subtle, complex and highly contextual nature. Here, I explore some of the after-effects of the HOM intervention. It is an initial and by no means conclusive journey into the various contexts from which participants came to the workshops and to which they returned, showing how personal and emotional experience came to be engaged with local and official discourses and the existing material contexts in ways that re-informed participants ideas of HOM and its ability to effect certain changes in (some) visible and (mostly) invisible ways. This chapter explores how some of participants' seemingly so separate contexts intersected within the post-1994 discourses of change and opportunity, healing and reconciliation, transition and the betterment of lives. It is an exploration of what individuals who experienced HOM thought, felt and did about emerging possibilities in this regard.

Taking into account the various co-existing contexts and life-worlds into which HOM participants returned, the focus of the chapter is, firstly, on three aspects of the post-workshop experience that participants reported – the **intra-personal** dimension, in which individuals grappled with the question of personal healing and change and were met with the detrimental material reality they lived in; the **familial and communal** dimension, in which participants attempted to convey parts of the experience to their immediate environment and encountered various responses; and the dimension of **sustaining the encounter** and engaging in cross-boundary engagement across persisting social, economic and geographical divides. At all three levels the community of sentiment and its values were put to the test.

**HOM facilitators**, finally, presented a unique group since they were the only individuals who participated in the intervention on a long-term basis. For them the community of sentiment took on some of the characteristics of a longer-term bond producing more visible changes. It became a working community of colleagues and friends united by a common aim and set of values, while having to negotiate difference and disagreement at deeper levels. The chapter examines some of the dynamics and conflicts that resulted from the facilitators' attempts at putting HOM's ideals and assumptions into sustained practice among themselves.

### **Return to 'Reality' – from Euphoria to Disillusionment?**

At the end of the HOM workshop on Sunday afternoon, there often resided a spirit of optimism, even euphoria, among the participants. Many described leaving the venue with feelings of excitement about having explored their story, and about having gained new insights into South Africa's past and present and into the experiences and lives of other participants. The atmosphere was often highly emotional and there was a sense of relief: 'I am leaving something behind of my sadness.' - 'I am feeling better because I could speak my anger.' – 'I have made a step for myself towards getting healed.' – 'I have hope for South Africa now.' These were some of the enthusiastic statements made repeatedly by participants at the end of the weekend. The majority also commented on the aspect of

new contacts they forged with other participants, which they hoped to maintain beyond the workshop.

During the final plenary session that followed after the celebration, plans were made for a re-union meeting. Yet in most cases, participants did not attend such follow-up activities. During interviews conducted between 6-8 weeks after the workshop, participants often commented on a sense of disillusionment that set in upon returning home to an unchanged environment in everyday life. Participants usually hoped to make personal changes in their lives to continue contacts made at the workshop, forging them into ongoing relationships. Often, I encountered initial attempts at implementing immediate changes where people visibly tried to alter their lives, to behave differently and to translate the insights from the workshop into a change in their personal and social practices. But in the largely unaltered circumstances of the 'socio-scape' of the post-apartheid city, such visible efforts often proved tiresome and faded away.

The disparity between the participants' emotional realities of the moment (that could change and shift relatively quickly during an intervention where conditions and context were in a sense 'controllable') and the material contexts they lived in (that remained largely beyond reach and untouched by the event) was evident. This gap is a point of contention featuring in many discussions about ways of measuring and evaluating social interventions aimed at intra- and inter-relational change, such as 'transformation', 'reconciliation' and 'healing' workshops (see also Lederach 1997, 1999; CDRA Annual Report 1999/2000). Debates conducted over whether structural change forms the basis for transforming human relationships or vice versa, neglect the dialectic nature of the relation between the emotional and the material world through which both materialise in day-to-day social practices and come to bear on intersubjective relations in the post-apartheid city. Such debates, however, inevitably form the backdrop to the political-economy of donor funding and project survival, part of the language of 'impact assessment' and evaluation, to which an NGO like the IHOM was also subject. From the perspective of those pleading for emphasis on empirically measurable interventions aimed at socio-structural changes then, the HOM intervention may seem an exercise through which the

discourses of new nationhood and reconciliation were enacted and enforced, effectively serving a conservative political agenda that sought to prevent ‘real’ change. From the angle of those pleading for recognition of the immediate effects of psychosocial interventions, HOM might be idealised as a ‘life-changing’ event, overestimated in the long-term impacts it could have on participants’ lives, while using a language of ‘healing’ that may disguise forces pushing for a premature closure on the emotional legacies of the past.

The resulting task for me is not simply one of integrating the two approaches that invariably spring from different theories of change, but to see how they may engage and inform one another without evading the question I raised at the beginning of the dissertation: where a ‘soft’ intervention such as a HOM workshop can make any difference to the tremendous disparities apartheid left behind and where it runs the danger of masking the continuities of inequality and blanket over the ways in which, at large, ‘racial’ difference has not ceased to appear in material terms. But rather than arguing for one or the other effect (and I believe the intervention can indeed have both effects at different times), the task for me is to portray the *potentiality* of an intervention such as HOM within the South African context of transition, where structural change is taking place, yet opportunities for change are blocked without fundamental shifts in how the interpersonal domain is experienced, (re)produced and re-negotiated. When speaking of ‘integration’ or ‘effect’ of the experience, the prospect of *visibility* of impact as a sole goalpost for measuring (or making tangible) change has to be challenged in an effort to trace both intended and unintended effects of the intervention.

### **A step towards Healing and Wholeness –**

#### **Revisiting the Aims and Claims of HOM**

I listed the benefits HOM laid claim to beyond the workshop in the introduction to the dissertation. The HOM promise of enabling participants to take ‘a step towards healing and wholeness’ remained quite loosely defined and broad throughout the process. The HOM flyer, however, using the enthusiastic statements of previous participants, outlined

another set of expectations that emphasised the intra-subjective dimension of healing and change. Among these were the implicit claims that the workshop could provide the experience of a 'safe space', in which to engage in 'storytelling', can provide a kind of 'healing medicine', the opportunity to 'let go of the past', to 'be touched' by the experiences of others, to 'face one's hurts and guilt' and to 'become wounded healers' for others beyond the intervention (HOM Flyer 1998). The language used to describe the HOM healing model implied continuity by making use of the terminology of 'journeying' to describe a 'process of no longer allowing memories to paralyse and destroy us', the 'need to prevent history from being repeated' (HOM Flyer 1998) and the wish to 'become a victor and champion of one's own healing' (FML 7/99).

The discourse among the HOM facilitators also revealed a clearer outline of the two central understandings of 'healing' that the intervention expected to facilitate. On one hand, there were expectations around personal healing where the workshops were seen to encourage participants to 'recognise their own damaged-ness' and to 'take responsibility for their own healing' (Focus Group Facilitators, 5/00). This was expressed in terms of establishing certain temporal chronologies that demarcated a distinctly different 'future' from the damaging past. Healing meant largely the ability to 'move on', to cope with everyday life better, and to 'leave behind' the hurtful memories and traumas of that past in order to make use of new opportunities, and in that sense, become a 'victor'. The expectations around personal healing as portrayed here were mainly aimed at participants who were hurt, violated, disadvantaged and deprived by apartheid.

On the other hand, the implementers formulated expectations to do with a more collective or social conception of healing that included those privileged by apartheid:

We have tried to encourage diversity within the workshops of different racial, cultural communities coming to this kind of workshop. [...] We are seeking to [...] encourage people on a journey towards reconciliation. And in a sense a workshop gives people a little bit of a vision of the possibility of being together with mutual respect and reverence. So a taste which will encourage people *to go out and make it real in other ways in their lives, in their relationships* (FML 7/99, my emphasis).

HOM facilitators repeatedly expressed the hope that participants would carry the intervention back to their families and communities and encourage others to participate and 'join the journey towards healing and reconciliation' (Focus Group, 8/99). Expectations around maintaining some of the workshop modes of being sociable were expressed in terms of individuals contributing to 'the undoing of the ways in which apartheid divided South Africans' and 'questioning the ways in which we see each other firstly as White, Black, Coloured and Indian' (Focus Group, 8/99). Some facilitators framed this as 'making a contribution towards reconciliation', while others rejected the term. But this did not really affect the range of social actions that facilitators envisioned as 'the right thing to do' for participants after the workshop, actively to attempt changing their social relationships. In addition, there were expectations that participants, particular those who were privileged, should be encouraged to contribute towards social restoration in the sense of 'partaking in building a new society' (Focus Group, 8/99). The extent, to which the official and unofficial claims and expectations of the HOM project and its implementers found reflection and response in the post-workshop reality of participants, is discussed in the following sections, focusing on the internal, material, domestic and communal domains.

### ***Intra-personal Responses***

The closure there at the workshop, it is quite rapid. Quick quick it goes during the Sunday. It's because of time. You burn your negatives one minute and then it's all over, and things are supposed to be fine now. But, you go home, and then you feel cold (B. 5/99).

#### **'We wanted more'**

The scope of experiences participants reported upon returning to their homes was necessarily wide and shaped by ambivalence. If one were to draw a post-workshop emotional curve, the high note on which the workshop had ended was usually followed by a deep 'dip' characterised by sentiments of loneliness, fear and disillusionment, upon which followed a period of gradual 'recovery' and varying degrees of integration of the experience into everyday life. However in most cases, this sense of 'integration' implied more of a gradual shift in thinking than in practice. Several participants who were trying to deal with the trauma of violations experienced during the apartheid years were so

convinced of the HOM method that they cancelled the one-on-one therapy they had been involved in. They put emphasis on the value of the collective nature of the workshop process in a setting where most survivors experience feelings of isolation and alienation:

This issue of workshopping simply works better for me than the counselling. That is because we were in a group. With many it's easier to talk than just one to one. You find you are not alone (R. 6/99).

However, since HOM did not offer ongoing therapeutic intervention, the same participants were disappointed in their hopes for a longer-term programme. Some were later able to attend a second HOM workshop<sup>81</sup> or one of the new workshops on 'Anger and Forgiveness', which the IHOM offered occasionally from 2001, but most eventually returned to therapy (upon recommendation of HOM facilitators) or joined survivor support groups in the vicinity.

Immediately upon return to the everyday, the HOM intervention was experienced by most participants as by and large unsettling. The experience threatened some of the common coping strategies, particularly in situations where participants' main concern was economic survival. One of the facilitators commented:

I think we need to build up a sustainable follow-up programme. Issues might vary for people. Some people might *not* want to meet again and see that they need to move on. But there is always a fragile individual who would want to. Because there is a lot of dignity that we need to pick up for them or that they need to pick up. There are a lot of kind of 'feel goods' about themselves that need to happen (B. 12/99).

He reported how participants would phone him up after the workshop in the hope of seeing him 'one on one' for further counselling. The workshop in these cases seemed to have fulfilled the function of a gateway to speaking about certain traumatic memories that participants wished to engage with further in an ongoing process. Initially, there was some contestation among the facilitators as to the possibility of working with a particular participant group on a longer-term basis instead of a once-off intervention. One of several

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<sup>81</sup> The facilitators generally allow for a second attendance, but discourage participants from coming a third time. Rather than participants are referred back to individual counselling at the local Trauma Centre, the Churches and other institutions.

examples in this regard was a group of young activists from Bonteheuwel and Langa who had come to a HOM workshop in 1996:

I felt that actually this was a group that needed much more. It was a broken group. These guys were very young when all this happened to them. We had to gain their trust and put them at a certain level before we realised that we also needed to engage their family members. A lot of them had gotten married and were still dealing with the problems from back then, with what had happened to them [during apartheid]. We found out that they had not spoken before. Actually, a lot of them said that they had never told their lovers or their spouses or families about what happened to them. Everybody knows that quite brutal things had happened to them. But nobody was talking. They were all like closed books. And they were still a very close-knit group in a sense. A lot of them had fallen by the wayside, given in to drugs and drinking. [...] Obviously, you need to give much more space to such a group. And they were willing to work with us. I thought this was a good opportunity to actually take it from step one and see the development of the group. [...] There were many developmental processes that we could see that were positive. You know, all of a sudden there was open communication between spouses and between parents and with one another. And that came on gradually. I felt that even if you needed to do ten workshops with them, you should [do it] because we could see the progress. But we actually terminated. [...] Actually that was a very worrying point for me because I wanted to know at some point: How much are we prepared to do follow-up for the people? And what do we mean by follow-up? Does it just mean getting the people together for half a day and asking: 'how was the process for you since? How has it been for you since?' And leave it at that? I felt that was not enough (B. 12/99).

The idea of offering a more comprehensive programme than the one workshop remained under discussion and contestation over the years within the facilitator group. The decision to keep the initial HOM a short-term intervention for a wide range of people rather than a long-term process with survivors was made on the grounds that the project did not aim to substitute for what Father Lapsley called 'expert [psychological] intervention':

When I was chaplain at the Trauma Centre I saw [...] that in a sense everybody needed a space to be able to tell their stories and to move towards healing, but not everybody needed expert intervention. It is important not to over-pathologise people or to over-expertise the needs people have. There are people whose situation is pathological, but it's not the majority (FML 7/99).

However, the desire for a more extensive follow-up programme (that would include an economic empowerment as well as ‘healing’ component) remained unanimous and constant among participants despite agreement that the majority would not want to be seen as ‘victims in need of help’ or as ‘traumatised people’ who needed counselling, something which was often seen to imply mental disorder and therefore not considered a viable option.

### **‘I started peeling like an onion’**

Mostly, people found the post-workshop experience difficult because of the emotional intensity and the degree of vulnerability and openness people risked during the weekend. Participants frequently reported how they struggled with a sense of emotional fragmentation after the workshop: ‘I had to piece myself back together.’ - ‘The wounds that had been opened at the workshop could not be layered again so quickly.’ - ‘I was just raw emotionally, you understand?’ - ‘I got home and then, things started coming’ were some of the common comments. The workshop continued to evoke painful memories beyond the weekend, particularly during the first month. With remembering certain incidents and events that shaped participants’ lives, the workshop experience also ‘brought back’ the related scope of emotions of the past making it difficult to ‘go on as before because these things have a way of coming back if you let them, and then what are you supposed to do? You can’t sit there and cry like in the workshop’ (M. 11/99).

Some participants laid out in detail how the ‘raw emotionality’ they felt after the workshop followed them into their everyday lives, when walking the streets and even into their dreams. Many also said that they experienced the impact of such fragmentation so strongly because this was

the first time I ever told my story like that, to anyone. And you don’t know what to do with that feeling, the feeling that you simply let go, you finally opened up. It’s like a floodgate. You feel good, in a way, but you also feel so sore and so confused. And once you started talking, there’s more coming. I wanted to talk more, but who should I talk with? (J. at Focus Group 5/99)

The question of post-workshop support was central in most critical comments on the costs and benefits of the HOM experience, particularly in the light of an environment that was often not immediately favourable to the after-effects of the intervention and lacked formal support infrastructure:

Because [the workshop] is so intense, you simply need something afterwards. It was good what they [the HOM facilitators] did there, but it wasn't enough for me. I needed more. I wanted to talk with the people there; we had only just started (X. 8/99).

Not only was the impact of one's own experience of remembering and storytelling described as powerful, but also the resonance of hearing the stories of others. Participants echoed Ben Okri's words on the resurfacing power of stories heard: 'and when you no longer listen, it lies silently in your brain waiting...' (Okri 1997: 43):

Things would happen at work, or somebody would say something, like K., our service officer here. She would tell me what used to happen to the coloured people who worked here before 1994. They were treated really badly. And immediately I would connect that with a similar story someone told. Ja, [the stories told at HOM] come back, they are triggered by small things (J. 2/00).

One of the HOM facilitators described the emotional aftermath of the workshops as having a kind of 'peeling effect, like an onion', even for the facilitators for whom listening was not a first time experience:

The weekend is quite packed. You're always in the presence of other people, and you always have something to do. And as a facilitator you have to give others more of a chance. As a result you just pack up your own feelings, one on top of the other. And as I move away, especially as time goes on, I peel off bit by bit, bit by bit, like an onion (R. 7/99).

I don't get the chance to deal with what is happening to me at the weekend, or immediately after. Something would trigger it off in me. One thing that happened was that I saw a man who looked like one of the participants in one of the workshops. At that moment I went back immediately. I went back to him [in my mind], to this particular man. He happened to have gone through terrible, terrible incidents where he lived. And from there through the next three four five days I would start peeling again... (R. 9/99).

The comments of both participants and facilitators further complicated notions of storytelling as a form of cathartic relief and healing and pointed to the fact that a process

of externalising memories and emotions through narrative cannot simply assume to have a healing value in and of itself. As Hamber and Wilson (1999) remark on the TRC process: 'Revealing is not simply healing' and 'remembering is not necessarily a directly redemptive and liberating practice' (2). They quote Hayes on the significance of context in narrative memory exercises: '*Just* revealing is not *just* healing. It depends how we reveal, the context of the revealing, and what it is that we are revealing' (Hayes 1998: 43, quoted in Hamber & Wilson 1999: 2, emphasis in original). Participants' main criticism of the healing model of HOM went at all times beyond the actual event, touching upon questions of coping strategies, follow-up, economic empowerment, finding closure and assistance in integrating and making *active* use of the experience.

### **'It looks as if you've never done a workshop'**

I think sometimes we take on people who are not ready, in a sense, at that level. People need economic survival. They need this and this and this, and there we are, you know? Feeding them this healing process (Facilitator B. 11/99).

The weekend away, you know of food and laughter, quite nice you know? It's nice, it's very cosy and a lot of people just need that kind of time out. Healing or not, they want the good weekends. It's legitimate, don't you think (Y. 6/99)?

Participants who experienced economic hardship in the present stressed that the struggle for survival in their lives soon submerged the positive spin-offs of the intervention after returning home. They envisioned a different kind of follow-up as necessary, one that alleviated the impact of unemployment and focused on measures of what they described as 'empowerment', material assistance and job creation. Facing chronic poverty and violence as a constant context of communal and domestic life, the task of coping with the everyday did not allow room for the level of concern with oneself and individual healing that was emphasised at the workshop:

AH: When I left the workshop I was the most happiest man in the world. But now that happiness becomes temporary because you go back to the very same situation of unemployment. So now it looks as if you have never done a workshop.

UK: So it is erased, the whole experience?

AH: Ja, it is erased because you go back to the very same suffering, and it reminds you of the things [from the past] now again. My advice to all NGOs is this: when they workshop these people, they must have an alternative for them [afterwards]. Where does this person want to go? [They should] try to contact companies and even government structures, so that a particular person can find employment. Or if he wants to go back to school then that person must go back to school (A. 11/99).

The ongoing reality of poverty and lack of opportunity was emphasised by many survivors of apartheid violations who are unable to support themselves and their families today due to disability or the loss of a breadwinner. Several HOM participants who had testified at the TRC hearings prior to coming on a workshop later joined survivor support groups such as Khulumani or Khumbula. They explained that they found themselves in search of a more advocacy- and problem-oriented approach to assisting survivors than HOM could offer (see also Colvin 2000: 16):

The HOM was good for me, but now we need to be standing on our own feet. We need to fight this cause for the victims. We cannot just sit back and say: now let's just all heal and reconcile. It is not going to happen as long as we are suffering like this (M. 8/99).

Father Lapsley commented on HOM's awareness of this aspect:

There is a time and place when HOM is right for people. The workshop may not be the best thing if people's main concern is bread on the table because we cannot provide that (FML 7/99).

Nonetheless, at least in the earlier years of HOM, participants coming from a context of severe poverty constituted the majority at the workshops. Due to numerous comments on the issue from participants, HOM began a partnership with 'Ndabikum', a programme that offered job-creation and empowerment programmes to ex-combatants and to which some participants were referred.<sup>82</sup>

The ways in which the capacity to make use of the workshop experience in tangible ways and participants' socio-economic situation were intertwined became most evident when

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<sup>82</sup> The Ndabikum programme came to an end due to shortage of funds in 2004.

participants spoke at length about the relationships they saw in their everyday lives as compared to the different soci-ability they had experienced at the workshop, which had sometimes raised hopes that could not be realised beyond the workshop. In particular, they spoke about those professional and domestic labour relations that remained largely racialised and little changed from apartheid days:

Where we come from, Undine, most of the people know that we are the maids, that we are the houseboys, that we are whatever. And [black] people cannot comprehend where [white] people come from who create this equality [at the workshop] and who are actually being so nice and doing things for me. They hold my hand, hug me, be my friends, stuff like that. And I think it is actually a bit much. I mean we go back into our own communities, and Monday you just go out and be the housemaid again. And maybe get your Madam at a different level, in a different mood on Monday morning. And you cannot comprehend: I mean, I have just been with white people on the weekend, and they have been so nice to me. And there I come to work and this devil of a Madam is already making me feel uncomfortable (B. 12/99).

Returning from the workshop, many participants described that they

had become hopeful that there could be change, that South Africans can change, that we can grow this friendship, until some situations [occurred], closed situations between black and white, that actually squash that [hope] and that show you that things are just the same as they were before (L. 6/99).

The workshop process generated in many a *sense of possibility* for a novel kind of soci-ability and some *intentions* to find new ways of communicating and relating across apartheid's social barriers drawn from the workshop experience, yet social reality proved disillusioning for most.

### **'It was a turning point in my life'**

Despite the difficult emotional repercussions and disappointed material expectations, many participants described the workshop as a 'turning point' in their lives, an incision in time and a significant marker for personal change. Most references in this regard were made to a new or heightened sense of awareness participants felt, a change in perspective of oneself and others:

After the workshop I was able to see myself differently, and especially how I relate to other people. I saw that I am playing out a victim-mentality all the time, and I needed to change that in order to take control of my life (M. 3/00).

Participants also spoke of ‘moments of realisation through hearing the stories’ about various social issues, or ‘seeing with different eyes’ upon return to their everyday lives, as initial motivators for attempting certain changes in their personal and social lives, i.e. to go for therapy, to engage in community work, to try relating to colleagues, employers or employees differently. The following interview excerpt, from a conversation held three years after the workshop, shows some of the complexities encountered when searching for tangible impacts shortly after the workshop aspects of which echo a variety of similar comments made by participants a year or more after the event:

I always tried to make sense of the survival thing that I experienced as a child. I am only making the connections now. I always used to say – the way coloured people cope is they laugh about their stuff; they laugh about everything. They make fun of everything, of one another. Then there are episodes where people are violent. So there is not an in-between. It is that or the other thing, laughter and violence. So people don’t really get to that serious stage where they get talking about the things they joke about. They don’t engage. Or at least I didn’t. What HOM did - it made me go there. ‘Cause these weren’t politicians. These weren’t the hectic people where you feel you have to sit and listen. These were ordinary people, as in you sit and you listen and then you make the connection about simple little things. It’s about everybody. It’s not just politicians or some great oke that did something in politics and so on [...]

[The workshop] was the beginning – I started to question absolutely everything about what I do in my own life; where negative elements are lodged, and not just pass it by and go defensive. That is the one thing the HOM also did for me – to stop the defensiveness. Because in your defensiveness you start getting only one response, and then you hurt people. Intimate relationships that is where all these things come out, all these behaviours. So it was a start – you don’t have to behave like this. You can sit and think about it. Give yourself the time. If somebody says to me that I am an abuser, or I swear without thinking or something like that – then I give myself the time and think about it – why do I do that? [...] When Father Michael would say things like: ‘you don’t have to be in a dark place all the time. The way you cope with your life doesn’t have to be like that’ - you don’t have a clue as to how you are supposed to do that. You say to yourself – it sounds right but how? [...]

You start observing and see people and their problems. You don't judge anymore. You start connecting with them and their problems differently. Now I think about crime differently, I think about why people break into cars. I don't judge anymore. I understand more how all the stuff has a place, and how I was also there at the time [of apartheid]. It affects the work you start doing – you don't want to stand on a stage anymore and say: Fuck the white people! Or fuck the those, or fuck the that. Although there are still realities [of racism], you can't just *gooi* [throw] out at the whole white race. At HOM is where I started understanding what it is we went through as a society. Lots of people don't know. At the workshops you had the opportunity to speak *and* see the bigger picture. [...]

The big one is this – I'm not saying that HOM did all of that, but it started it. It was a starting place. It made me connect with other people. [...] Of course I couldn't stop there for me. I had to go into therapy again and do some other stuff. Then it started affecting me because that is where the big results came. The big thing, where you can see it coming, is in your relationship, with the person you are closest to.

So it is very important that I continued with the therapy [after the workshop]. I cannot imagine what happened to people who don't have that opportunity. I am 34 years old. I have been shaped over that long period of time. I mean all that shaping cannot be undone in a weekend, a short period. HOM only just started the awareness about problems. It's only two days there, but it puts things into perspective in terms of the whole country and the people here, and your community and whatever. But you need to be consistent. You need to stay with it and remind yourself all the time about how you need to change all of that because you were shaped in a certain way. There are certain behavioural structures that are so deep in you because of how you have been shaped over the years. So if you want to change the way you see, the way you feel about the world, you need to consistently remind yourself – or you fall back into the old patterns of thinking. [...] It is a pattern and you can slip into it if you don't work consciously all the time. You slip back - oh my God I've done it again - and then you start over again. You feel guilty all over again. Let me start from the top... (O. 3/02).

There are several elements in this long reflection that participants have mentioned frequently. One aspect was the feeling after the workshop of 'having gained permission to sit and think things through' and to take 'time out' to 'deal with my own personal issues'. Also, value was frequently accredited to 'the ordinariness' of the workshop setting and the people attending, which motivated participants towards seeing personal change as a tangible possibility 'because I wasn't told by some big-shot psychologist how I must change' (O. 3/02). Yet another common emphasis was on HOM as having a kind of 'starter function' for a whole new set of reflections and considerations about the South

African scenario, and in particular one's personal relationships. The account reflects the intricate interweaving between the intra-subjective, domestic and social spheres, linking self-destructive legacies with the impact on intimate relationships while connecting both to the interpersonal and social effects of apartheid in community and society.

A merging point for many participants seemed to be the grappling with old and new identities in relation to one's personal past and present: 'I was beginning to see myself as a different person...' was a phrase often used by participants to describe this sense of shifting perspective and changing awareness according to 'the bigger picture' they had accessed through listening to the stories. The idea of a 'change in awareness' due to the possibility of hearing the personal experiences of 'Others' also played a central role in participants' reflections. Ultimately however, the question remained what made possible the consistency necessary in working with the 'entrenched patterns' that O. described above, suggesting a critical link between the individual 'implementability' of certain intervention benefits and having *access* to the means and resources that allow continuation with a process of sorts (or of choice) afterwards that was inevitably most shaped by the disparate contexts into which participants returned.

### ***Responses from Family and Community***

#### **Family**

I mean, what's a weekend away going to do to my soul? I still have to come back and do the whole process to my kids and to my family members. And it's even much more harder because then I have to relate the whole story: "What did you say and how come you said all this", you know? So I have to come and re-workshop everybody else at home and then it is much more harder because people expect things ...are you going to get some money out of this process? Because the person who is gone was the breadwinner (I. 8/99).

Participants' experiences upon returning to their families and communities varied considerably according to the localities to which they returned. Report-back from the workshop was met with ideas and responses shaped by complex and contesting local

narratives and discourses. In the context of family life, two aspects can be crystallised that were significant to participants – the possibility of opening up a conversation about the past in the domestic sphere, and the possibility of precisely not doing so in order to protect one's family from harm by having narrated the experiences of pain 'somewhere else'.

Of course, when you come back people want to know. What did you do there? Why did you go there? What did you tell? You know, there are many things in our communities that are not right, things that happened in the past, things that everybody knows. But nobody talks. There is fear, still, there are secrets, dark secrets. So when you come back people are worried – my family they asked: what did you tell? And I said – it's confidential (Y. 8/99).

The idea of speaking out about personal experiences of the past was met with the politics of setting memories free in the public sphere where personal meaning changes and is over-layered with other (potentially destructive) dimensions of meaning. Participants spoke at length about the importance of confidentiality at the workshop, which most maintained - also with regards to their own story - beyond the end of the weekend. However, some said that the workshop did open a moment on the Sunday night when they spoke to their families about their personal past:

We don't spend much time thinking about these things nowadays. I think it's better that way. But that night, it was also good just to sit and to say – really this is how it was. Just to remember where we come from, [it's] such a long way' (R. 7/99).

People will ask curiously on the Sunday evening: what is this all about? And I was in the mood to share why I went there. And it brought out quite a few new aspects about my story and how other people saw the whole thing and what was the situation back then (X. 7/99).

Such moments seemed to reflect some of the emotional intensity of the workshop, bringing it back into the domestic sphere in a way that could open a momentary channel for a conversation about the past that was experienced positively. At the same time, there were also participants who put more emphasis on the emotional 'peeling effect' described earlier, and who found it difficult to meet the curious questions of family members and

friends on the Sunday evening: 'I was just so exhausted and sore. I did not know what to say when my kids asked me. After the workshop you just want to be alone' (J. 10/99).

Several participants also mentioned the significance of a conversation across generations that either took place after the workshop or was something they considered. They spoke about the complexities of attempting an inter-generational dialogue about the apartheid years:

Of course we need to tell our children about what happened. But where to begin? [...] But it is *so* important that they know. [...] I am not sure I want to tell my children about what happened *to me*. I don't want them to be affected the way I am still affected (participant B. 5/99).

The ambivalence between 'wanting the children to know' and fearing for the harm that might be caused by the detailed knowledge of actual violations that the parents experienced, was expressed in a number of post-workshop accounts of participants who had experienced physical violations. Again, it suggests that the idea that merely 'revealing' or freely speaking out about the past would necessarily bring about benefits (to self and others) is simplistic, here especially in the context of intimate relationships. 'Memories of harm may be wounding in their recall' (Ross 2003: check quote p.56?), not only to the one telling a story of pain, but also to those around. Using case studies from Mozambique and Angola Alcinda Honwana (1997, 1999) details the extent to which cultural conceptions of the benefits and dangers of speaking about experiences of harm inform which memories and experiences can be uttered and which cannot, not only publicly but also in the domestic and private sphere.<sup>83</sup> Externalising experiences of violation in this context can mean 'bringing back' the spiritually and emotionally polluting powers of the event of the violation, which may in turn contaminate the listener

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<sup>83</sup> In the cases Honwana observed, returning child soldiers were subjected to traditional cleansing rituals upon which the community accepted the young man back and saw the harmful potential of traumatic experiences as contained. She writes: 'Dominant psychological approaches in Western tradition predicate that psychological trauma is resolved by helping the individual 'come to terms' with the traumatic experience. Healing is held in private individual or small group sessions talking about feelings and externalising the afflictions. [...] However, in other contexts such as the African, particularly those which are close to more ancient forms of religious and healing practices, other forms of [...] understanding and healing psychological trauma may exist. [...] People would rather *not* talk about the past, *not* look back and start afresh after certain ritual procedures which do not necessarily involve verbal expression of the affliction have been performed' (Honwana 1997).

(Honwana 1997). This idea found resonance in some HOM participants' accounts who spoke of a fear 'that I would somehow give this emotional damage I carry to my children, that they will be affected by what I carry inside me (B. 9/99). Ross (2003) speaks of telling personal stories of the past as at all times a risky endeavour: 'Stories of harm are intricate, oddly delicate. Their complexity emerges slowly over time, the product of a careful and sustained mindfulness' (3). In this sense, several participants, and in particular woman participants, explained that they found the aspects of confidentiality and (semi)anonymity at the HOM workshop valuable because

here was a place where I could speak freely. I really began to tell of some of the hurt and even the hatred. And I think I managed to leave some of it behind. Because the anger is terrible, bad, it affects everybody in the family. I try and keep it in, but still it comes out. I am scared for my children, that it affects them, too. [...] The workshop, there you can tell the way you cannot tell anywhere else. And the people [at HOM]? You don't see them tomorrow in the house or when you go in the street (Q. 5/99).

Part of HOM's value was seen precisely in that one did not have to act on the soci-ability the workshop enjoined. Many women who related experiences of violation at the workshop said that they would not want to tell their families about what had happened to them. One woman described feeling guilty about the dangers that her involvement in the liberation struggle brought to her husband and children:

Maybe one day I will tell. I think my daughter suspects something. She is now in her twenties. They were so little back then, but she picked something up. She remembers. She asked me the other day. So maybe she needs to know. But what will she think of me if she knows about my involvement? Won't she think: this is my mother and she put us all at risk. She put us, her children, at risk (G. 4/99).

Due to this, she said, she had so far not allowed herself to go and seek help to engage with the repercussions of her experiences of violation during police detention in the 1980s.

The ambivalence participants described around what can or cannot be spoken in different spaces suggests that - just as official processes aimed at social restoration often infringe on individual needs that could aid personal healing (Hamber & Wilson 1999; Reynolds &

Ross 1999) - personal healing and familial or more collective repair are often contesting processes as well. Separate healing spaces may fulfil an important function in a context where, on one hand, past and present experiences of violence and violation are layered (and it is unsafe to risk emotional vulnerability), and, on the other, people have to negotiate different cultural influences on conceptions of healing (and the various contradicting forms of guidance and intervention they generate, which change over time, too). This does not mean that the linkages between an individualised intervention 'out of context', such as HOM, and the communal contexts from which participants come and to which they return can be neglected. Nor does it change the fact that while some participants appreciate the one-off anonymity of the workshop, the majority would have wished for more continuity in the intervention. Rather, it means that we need to understand individual evaluations of a healing intervention such as HOM as located at a critical intersection between the personal and the domestic, the local and the official, the symbolic and the practical, in a highly complex and contesting system of fast-paced social, cultural and historical influences. Each of these facets impacted on what participants and outsiders considered the successes or failures of the HOM experience. Participants' comments suggested that the road of intra-familial conversation about the past, and in particular speaking about personal experiences of trauma, guilt and violation, was as hard and risky to tread as the route of public testimony described by many of the TRC victims. Most participants wished to convey past experiences in some way or another to those they stood in close relations with, but the need for secrets and silences had a place alongside the need to speak, educate and convey a vivid account of the past to the younger generations.

### **Community**

In most instances reported, it seemed that friends and community members who had not been to a workshop found it difficult to relate to the accounts of returning workshop participants. A young man from Gugulethu said:

To my friends, it just didn't make sense. They found it a strange thing to do. Or worse, some said: why would you want to tell your story to those people? What are you getting from them? (X. 6/99).

Such comments referred most often to the aspect of engagement across racial boundaries at the workshops. Especially during the earlier years of HOM, around the time of the TRC's hearings (1996-1998), participants from former anti-apartheid activist circles often spoke of a reception 'back home' that was sceptical or even outright rejecting the idea of HOM. Some were accused afterwards of being 'sell-outs' for what was seen to be socialising with the former (white) enemy:

They were saying: What is happening, why are white people picking you up? What's happening? Some read it like that. You are a traitor or something in their eyes. You always live with that. You always have to explain, and I think those issues sometimes make you doubtful about the whole situation (F. 2/99).

Initially, HOM was perceived as directly linked to the TRC,<sup>84</sup> which led people to project expectations they had of the Commission onto HOM.<sup>85</sup> From 1999 onwards, as the first critiques of the TRC's politics around reparations gained momentum (see also Hamber & Wilson 1999; Colvin 2000, 2003), there seemed to be several contesting streams of local discourse about the Commission that also informed the responses participants received to their reports about HOM as well. In some areas, the TRC's lack of a reparations policy became a dominant issue, and HOM was seen as 'yet another intervention that talks about healing but does not address reparations' (X. 8/99). There were formations of critical activist circles who read HOM as a sort of 'extension of the TRC's mission of primarily promoting reconciliation between the different races, but at the cost of the victims, just [saying] forgive and forget' (Focus Group 8/99). In other areas, powerful earlier narratives of resistance to the apartheid state changed and translated into formulations of an ongoing political struggle protesting against present-day government policies and measures. People residing in these areas saw HOM and the TRC as one set of measures, affected by the government to divert attention from the downsides of the political

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<sup>84</sup> This impression was due to several factors. For one, the close involvement of civil society organisations in the development of the TRC process played a role. In particular the name of the campaign that co-authored the HOM workshops, the 'Religious Response to the TRC', led people to believe that they were attending a TRC intervention. Also, the HOM sent out letters of invitation for the workshops to every survivor who testified during the TRC's human rights violations hearings. In addition, the TRC as well as individual psychologists referred survivors to the HOM as one kind of post-testimony interventions.

<sup>85</sup> In some instances, participants had expectations that they would be paid money upon attending the workshop, which caused a variety of conflicts.

compromise post-1994. Concerned with critiquing the larger politics around the TRC, they were left with the impression that HOM was primarily ‘a church thing’ (Focus Group 8/99) diverting focus from the political agenda of redistribution and ‘a better life for all’.<sup>86</sup>

In instances where the immediate community context was oppositional to the report-backs of the returnees, participants found it more difficult to maintain motivations for personal change that they felt the workshop had generated. This does not seem any more extraordinary than the experiences reported for other short-term interventions or workshops where an intense emotional experience was followed by a post-intervention ‘dip’ (Neumann 2001, Schell-Faucon 2001). The community of sentiment was bound to be temporary, characterised by the workshop as an event out of the ordinary, a ‘liminal space’ (Turner 1969, van Gennep 1960) whose dynamic rested on the attempt to generate an alternate set of social rules that was not known and did not apply in the communities to which participants returned. Experience gained in a liminal context cannot simply be integrated meaningfully ‘on the outside’ without some kind of social agreement about what and how it may be ‘maintained’ (Turner 1969). In this sense, an individual experience was generated that was not necessarily acknowledged or welcomed within the broader context in which participants lived. Survivors who testified to the TRC hearings also commented on the difficulties after returning home and finding little support to handle the emotional consequences in the aftermath of the process of testifying (Hamber & Wilson 1999, Henri 2000, Ross 2003: 93-94, 100-102). Schell-Faucon (2001) reports on incidents of what she calls ‘post-trail depression’, experienced by ex-combatants and militarised youth after the wilderness therapy trails of the National Peace Accord Trust. The question of follow-up assistance and post-intervention support in order to sustain some of the positive effects of a weekend workshop remains prevalent for projects such as HOM that seek to set a powerful one-off impulse in participants’ lives.

Yet, different to the examples of post-ritual community-integration that Honwana (1997, 1999) describes, or also the reports of participants returning from the Wilderness Therapy

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<sup>86</sup> ANC national election slogan since 1999

Trails that Schell-Faucon (2001) traces,<sup>87</sup> HOM neither had the follow-up apparatus that would have enabled such sustained engagement at community level, nor was its audience narrow enough to bring about the coherence that might have kept workshop groups in contact. Also, although the aim of HOM was to assist in processes of individual and social repair of apartheid's damages, the objective of the intervention was not the re-integration of specific community members alienated by the trauma of violence and violations, or the effects of violence on a particular community. Rather, HOM took society as such and all its individual members and internal social collectives as 'damaged' and 'alienated' from one another. The fact that the moment of return was often not one of smooth transition back into the communal context for participants and that the experience jarred with everyday understandings and practices, speaks to the notion that conventional social norms (and in this case alienation had become the social norm) were challenged and, however subtly, unsettled. For many participants this created a (painful) awareness of the divergence between the desired imaginary and their day-to-day realities.

### ***Changing Formations of Feeling and Relationship: a new Soci-ability?***

The first part of this section talks about participants' attempts at sustaining the contacts they made at the workshop across social boundaries, their efforts to form and maintain relations in the hope of building friendships with other participants, and the motivations, fears and desires that drove or restrained such attempts. In general, the microcosmic social drama of a potential 'new' South African-ness enacted at the workshop did not prove to be immediately translatable into people's everyday realities or bear upon direct formations of sustainable association in most cases. However, this did not mean that the

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<sup>87</sup> In the case of the Wilderness Trails, youths could be successfully re-integrated into communal life and were accepted, at least by large parts of the community, as having 'changed' upon the healing intervention. The factors that enabled this were, for one, the *knowledge of the community of the intervention or ritual and acknowledgement that it could indeed affect the desired change*; hence the individual was accepted back into the community as 'changed'. Furthermore, in the case of the trails, the sustained focus on working within one location (the Kathorus) and with a limited range of individuals from a particular target group (age-wise, through political orientation and the focus on traumatic past experiences) assisted in the sustainability of effects. The longer-term engagement that could be offered via ongoing therapeutic intervention and support groups formed at a local community centre was equally critical, as were local understandings of 'going to the bush' as part of a life-cycle and initiation ritual for young men.

experience did not have an impact on the participants' formations and conduct of relationships at all. Instead the workshop seemed to be for many a moment in which they began to recognise possibilities of relating differently and the value of a different sociability. The second part of the section discusses a more abstract notion of 'saving the experience' by talking about the need for a kind of *new social map*, based on the transformation of apartheid-generated structures of feeling and formations of relationship, through which to re-read and re-evaluate the post-apartheid interpersonal domain. In this sense, the experience of trying out the utopian HOM workshop experience, the momentary 'levelling of the playing-ground' upon which social interaction took place, led to a sense of 'knowing how it could be different', despite the fact that the ideal could not be maintained in the everyday.

### **Attempts to maintain the Community of Sentiment**

The mixed environment - that is also very healing. Because most of the time you do not get that opportunity. Lots of people never have that opportunity. So it is a kind of different situation. We are there on the Saturday evening, laughing together, partying together, and spending the whole weekend together, which is wonderful. You wish you could keep it that way (Q. 9/99).

But I think some other people might even become embittered by the whole process. Like they say - "We just got together for this one weekend and nothing came of it you know? I felt so fucking good! You know, and I opened up so well, you know? And now I'm back where I belong or I'm back where I came from, you know? I'm back in my environment. Nothing has come out of it, you know?" (B 12/99).

A wide range of participants from all different backgrounds and locations within the city spoke of their desire to 'keep in touch' with other people they had met at the workshop, in particular to sustain some of the contacts across the persisting apartheid barriers of racial segregation and alienation. Though it was often unspoken or only indirectly uttered, questions of 'race' seemed at all times a key focus around which participants processed the workshop and constructed further engagement with HOM experience, whether emotionally, in thought or practice. Many hoped they would 'see more of particular individuals of another shade' (L.4/99) whom they had met at HOM in the hope

of building a longer-term connection. Yet in the majority of cases participants' expectations of the yields of such relations were not met. It became clear that - in addition to the obvious prisms of race, class and gender – issues of temporality and spatiality as well as embodied memories and emotional processes, some of which I described in Chapter One and Two, impacted considerably upon the ways in which post-workshop relations could (or failed to) be constructed and put into practice. While the discourse of reconciliation remained visible in participants' ideas of how post-apartheid relations came to be enacted in the early years after the TRC, reconciliation's limitations in assisting the in-depth transformation of post-apartheid human relations were evident. Reconciliation seemed to neglect an aspect that was apparent at all times for HOM participants – that any attempt at building what they considered genuine, honest and meaningful forms of relating to one another across apartheid's boundaries constituted a difficult and usually emotionally very painful experience. One white participant spoke in angry words about expectations to do with reconciliation:

It's supposed to be easy, right? We're all one now, *Simunye*... Ha! In South Africa, people constantly pretend that they are coping really well, while they are actually not coping at all. It's not comfortable, it's dangerous to speak about the past. [...] After all, we want to be all rid of all these racial identities. So everybody rather goes 'la la la' as if nothing happened and hopes nobody will notice how afraid you actually are. I am not saying there's no reason to be afraid. It's not easy (S. 4/00).

Zimitri Erasmus (2002) speaks of the challenges of undoing what she calls the 'yoke of race' and the need to work *with* rather than deny one's 'racialised inner models of reality' (2). This idea corresponds with the reports of participants on their post-workshop engagements across 'the colour lines that still exist even though we all go about as if they don't matter anymore' (G. 4/00). The *lived and felt* realities of racialised existence in post-apartheid South Africa seemed often either submerged below the surface of the politically correct language of reconciliation (see also Colvin 2004) or wielded as weapons in a new struggle for identity:

In South Africa racism is seen as pathological. This often leads to unproductive and sterile debates in which white people are generally the

accused pleading innocence while Black people are victims pleading justice (Erasmus 2002: 2).

Erasmus also speaks of 'wearing 'race' as armour' (2002: 3-4), which did not easily enable the kind of conversations that would have allowed one to approach the effects of apartheid on the interpersonal domain in new ways. While in some instances 'race' was foregrounded in ways that masked newly emerging dimensions of socio-economic disparity across colour-barriers, at other times 'race' seemed to be avoided precisely because of a painful awareness about its role as a key signifier in relation to the 'bad' past. Caught in this ambivalence, the deep-rooted transformation of human relations in the post-apartheid sphere remained elusive. The ways in which South Africans remained locked into the positionalities of their racialised identities led to a general discourse of political correctness that neither served to acknowledge the psycho-emotional depth of the 'wounds of race' in individual and collective consciousness nor assisted in engaging constructively at an intra-personal level with 'the internal racist in all of us' (Davids 2001: 5, quoted in Erasmus 2002: 2). Precisely because of the ambivalence and discomfort of more intimate moments in which these barriers were temporarily lowered and tensions became visible, HOM intervention often seemed to provide an instant in which the presence of 'race' as a determining factor in post-apartheid relations could be acknowledged and the persisting degree of separation and 'not knowing one another' was emphasised.

In the course of HOM's operations, it was evident that the imperative of '*building relationships across apartheid's racial barriers*', linked to the dominant discourse of reconciliation, had become a popular paradigm, as if such relations could function as a visible yardstick of the success or failure of the rainbow-nation's social renewal. Meanwhile, HOM participants' attempts to forge meaningful post-workshop relations, and what seemed to them to be failures in meeting expectations around maintaining contact, revealed the shallowness of such an assumption.

### **‘So I’ve got something like a friendship, a white friend’**

In those cases where participants did indeed find the energy to pursue a workshop contact afterwards, they reported on particular personal links (that usually had emerged during the storytelling) that motivated them to seek further contact. These might have been generated by a more intellectual connection, through intersections in personal histories or present interests, via ‘a sense that the person would be willing to take the risk and grow with me’ (Be. 02/00) or ‘a shared vision of the future’ (Y. 6/99) or also gender-based commonalities of experience.

Speaking to S.? It just touched some strings in me. I am not even sure why, but I knew I wanted to see her again. It started when we were telling the stories. I thought here was someone so different; will I even be able to understand this person? And then we just connected, hearing what she has been through and hearing also what I had been through - we just made this connection (Be. 02/00).

It was often women who made the effort to meet other participants afterwards. However, the elements through which participants managed to ‘touch some strings in one another’ were at all times multi-faceted and could never be reduced to simple explanations of ‘common ground’ of one kind or another.

J. and G. met at a workshop in April 1999:

When I met G., for instance, she said she thought: ‘What on earth could I have in common with this English person?’ But we share quite a similar background, personally, family-wise, both having been orphaned etc. Our human experiences are similar. We connected through specific parts, like being displaced from home, losing family, trying to make sense of the world (J. 5/00).

After the workshop the two met up regularly and invited each other to social occasions. After about a year, the regularity of contact faded away. Still, both described their relation as ‘the kind of connection where if you meet again it is instantly there. You can connect again at a deeper level because of what you have shared at the workshop’ (J. 5/00). One participant commented on meeting ‘old workshop connection’ a year later:

With other participants from the workshop, it brings a closeness where you can speak about emotions. Because they know about where I am coming from. We speak about the present now, share about problems in our relationships (P. 7/00).

The sense of a particular intimacy made possible by the workshop experience that can result in the ability to share emotions and personal thoughts with other participants emerged more often. In some instances participants even spoke of meeting other people with whom the depth of conversation changed instantly upon finding out both had attended (separate) HOM workshops:

I met one or two people who had also been there. And what surprised me was especially one person who I'd never thought would have been there. We were sitting there and talking about how men respond to women. Then we talked about abuse and some other stuff, and I tried to explain something. And I asked him: 'Do you know the Healing of Memories? I went there.' And he said: 'Me too'. [...] It opened the conversation. For instance, we sat in a public space and we were able to talk about certain things. Especially with men I find, with the one guy I met, I felt he was capable to talk about things and to be relaxed with it. That is not usual (O. 3/02).

While the workshop motivated the majority of participants to reconsider the forms of contact they experience with 'Other' South Africans, it became clear that the desire alone to 'make friends' across apartheid's racialised socialities, as often stated by participants immediately after the workshop, did not give enough substance to actually pursue a continuation of contacts against the persisting material, geographical and psycho-emotional odds:

When you left the workshop it was like we know each other for a long time. I came back and in my company I was talking about the person I met there, like E. [a white participant], so I've got something like a friendship, a white friend, I said (N. 5/99).

But hey, [looking back] I must say we never managed really to keep in touch. There were one or two attempts [where] we tried to meet up and just talk. I mean I had a sense we both wanted this ... friendship or what it was ... but we just didn't know how to make it happen from there. And it was always difficult to get together after work and you are rushing. You need to get the taxi; she has to fetch the kids from school. You know, after the workshop you go back to your life, and so nothing

has changed. You keep on hoping for this friendship to happen, but it just didn't. It was sad to me (N. 3/02).

**'We thought we would get to see each other's homes and how we live'**

Rare efforts were made by participants to go beyond 'meeting up' and invite each other into their homes. The large number of participants who said they had never set foot into the house of a person of another colour spoke to the extent to which the multiple social barriers apartheid instituted, particularly geographical and linguistic, remained intact (see also Colvin 2000: 18). P. and L. were two woman participants in 1999 whose example showed some of the complexities of the endeavour of accessing one another's domestic sphere. P. described herself as an 'emancipated Afrikaner grown in up in a very conservative family with a father in the SADF' (P. 11/99). She lived with her husband in Parow where she was raising her three children. L. grew up in Mitchell's Plain in what she called 'a normal coloured Cape Flats family, my parents very Christian, not really interested in the struggle at all, but us children, that was a different matter altogether. We joined the frontlines though many in our community did not' (L. 10/99). At the time of the workshop L. lived with her family in Wynberg and worked as a human resources manager. She was the single mother of two children. The two women struck up a connection at a HOM workshop in May 1999 and planned to communicate regularly. When I met them again separately several months later, they reported:

We had decided at the Sunday that we would meet up again. After the workshop I felt a sense of ... ja, I just wanted to see her again. Because I found she had a lot of wisdom and just a totally, totally different experience of things. We talked a lot during the weekend after the stories. [...] There at the workshop I realised how much we had been living in isolation from our fellow South Africans, that apartheid took that away, the possibility to meet one another like ... as people. So I really wanted to continue the relation we made there, to change. Also because my children, they don't seem to mix that much. They should have a different life. They go to a mixed school. But what if they don't see their parents changing? [...] So we met once and talked. It was good. And then we had wanted to organise that one time I would come and sleep over and the next time she could come and stay with us for the weekend. Just for the experience. I didn't know how my family would

react. I thought they would enjoy it as well. But *eina*<sup>88</sup>, my husband got angry. He said he would go away for the weekend if I do that (P. 10/99).

I wasn't sure about this. I mean the idea was nice and all that we would get to see each other's homes and how we live. I mean why not, it's an opportunity that might not come along so easily, like an experiment. Here is L. trying herself in the new South Africa. Ha ha... but seriously, I thought why not? But my sister was all against it: 'Why do you want to invite a white person into your house', she asked me. 'What's that gonna do? You are making a fool out of yourself!' I didn't realise how uncomfortable the family was with the idea (L. 12/99).

Again it emerged that the surroundings of participants were often not favourable to some of the ideas derived from the workshop when back in the domestic and communal sphere. When I asked P. and L. for reasons for the reactions of their families both used the explanation that their sleepover was apparently threatening the coherence of racial identities experienced as a kind of comfort zone by the other family members. They also detected a sense of helplessness and confusion.

I think it was more of a fear that he could not even explain. I mean it just came out like that. We spoke about it later and he was maybe embarrassed at his own reaction. But I could see he was not comfortable (P 10/99).

Ag, it's all a matter of attitudes, you see. We grew up hating the white[s]. We were all Black. Now in the late 1980s lots of us would have white friends, like political circles that would be mixed. But this was different, times are different. Now there is not much reason to meet. We are more isolated now, it seems. More locked into whatever that means – being coloured. Even people at work, they don't visit each other's homes. Everyone goes their own way. People concentrate on their own communities (L. 12/99).

The experience suggests that enabling the formation of *genuinely different* post-apartheid relations needs to go beyond the mere concept of 'changing attitudes' or 'raising awareness'. We should not underestimate the extent to which racial identities in South Africa materialise as embodied and emotional experiences. P. mentioned in passing that 'driving out there to visit, all by myself, I must admit, my heart was flying. I was *so*

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<sup>88</sup> Expression for pain in Afrikaans, similar to 'ouch' in English.

nervous'. Meanwhile, L. explained later that 'eventually I decided I was not feeling well, it was too much, so in the end I cancelled the whole thing' (informal conversation 4/00). Breaking with the conventional patterns, particularly in the private sphere, created indeed a *discomfort* zone beyond the workshop, a tension that few would voluntarily endure. Yet it may be a necessary tension to experience in order to bring about moments in which, as Erasmus (2002: 2) suggests, race is not simply denied or avoided but 'can be inhabited differently'. Inhabiting race differently poses a challenge to the ways in which racial constructions of identity constitute 'comfort' zones. I am not suggesting here that all South Africans could derive comfort from their racialised constructions of identity; rather I am trying to point out the extent to which these identities have been familiar and become the norm. Therefore they constitute a certain safety zone. If challenged there are no immediate models to replace them (except for emphasising national identity which happens frequently but does not meet the complexities of people's racialised realities either). Erasmus suggests that

[c]linging to oppositional identities can be understood as a reaction to the imagined possibility of losing one's identity. The imaginary produces the need to police identities and to enforce homogeneity (Erasmus 2002: 3).<sup>89</sup>

All HOM examples revealed how challenging and emotionally complex the attempt was to shift established ways of relating to the former 'Other', let alone to form novel kinds of relationships, which would actively counter, challenge and undo entrenched manifestations of 'race'. Brushing over these subtle experiential realities by proclaiming relationships and friendships in the name of reconciliation hardly brought the desired results for HOM participants. The emotional fragility of the above attempts, the fears of doing something wrong, or of not being politically correct and of having to meet family and other's expectations at the same time, revealed some of the ongoing ability of

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<sup>89</sup> Current community conflicts in South Africa, characterised by xenophobic sentiments, where foreign African nationals are violently expelled from local areas by township residents, such as in Du Noon in Cape Town, Uitenhage in Port Elizabeth and Zaandspruit in Gauteng, seem to support this argument as well (Bucwa, personal communication, Centre for Conflict Resolution 2001; see also Comaroff & Comaroff 2001).

wounding and being wounded by the embodied ways in which one's racial identity was played upon by or played out on others. While 'race' continued to be central to post-apartheid formations of sociality, it also remained Pandora's Box.

**'Mommy, the white people have all the nice big houses, can we go there?'**

Not surprisingly, the persisting socio-economic divides impacted greatly upon efforts at maintaining contact after the workshop. In most of the above examples, the respective participants who kept in touch had access to similar economic means. In most instances, however, the different circumstances into which participants returned remained literally poles apart in their social, cultural, and material realities with no easy roads and bridges in between. Travelling across racial divides within the city meant, above all, crossing the barriers of economic disparity that I described in Chapter Two. The logistics of participants' coming-together, even for a follow-up meeting but especially on a continued basis, remained very time- and energy-consuming in the current socio-spatial layout of the city, where whether one had access to private transport or not, determined how safely one could travel and how much energy it took to get from place A to B, which still depended to a large extent on previous (racially defined) privilege.<sup>90</sup>

The limitations around human security and economics were recognised by participants. On one hand these limitations led to most post-workshop meetings between individuals taking place at what was conceived as 'safe' public spaces such as the V&A Waterfront or a coffee shop in downtown Cape Town. On the other hand this meant there was at times 'an embarrassed moment when the bill for the cake had to be settled and clearly [X.] did not have enough money or expected me to invite her' (H. 2/00). Meetings arranged in participants' homes were also complicated by perceptions around one another's social status. In one case two participants from the wealthy formerly white southern suburb Newlands and the township of Langa who had also made plans to visit

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<sup>90</sup> This situation is particularly stark in the Western Cape where – while there exists a substantial 'coloured' middle class - the emerging black middle class is yet very small due to the specific history of exclusion. Black Capetonians were forcefully removed to the so-called 'Homelands' in the Eastern Cape. Today some argue that the current politics around developing Cape Town as a 'safe' destination for overseas tourists feeds into entrenching the existing racism in the current socio-economic disparities (see Robins 2000; Nahnsen 2002).

each other's homes, described their discomfort with the apparent socio-economic disparity:

I was thinking: What is she going to think if she sees my wealth? I mean, how could I invite someone from the township and then... would they not think that I am showing off my privilege. So eventually we didn't meet here. And I was just not comfortable to go there. I have a fear. I am sorry to say' (E. 8/99).

In more informal conversations it emerged that feelings of discomfort and ambivalence were often mutual:

My baby daughter says: Mommy, the white people have all the nice big houses, can we go there? I felt so bad. It made me feel so conscious of our poverty. And angry. And sad (B. at Focus Group 8/99)

Often the temporary negation of power relations at the workshop, the 'sense of equality' participants emphasised as so positive immediately after the workshop was exposed for the momentary utopia it had been, enforcing an acute and often painful sense of awareness of the faultlines that apartheid etched into the socio-scape of the city. Participants' expectations and reactions to one another were informed by this context.

The most difficult thing today I think is people tiptoe around each other. It's like walking on eggs because of the race issue. We are a long way off sitting down and thrashing things out as though we were all one colour. It just ... will never happen, there is always the racial undercurrent. After the workshop that I went on, a relationship developed between a coloured woman and a black woman who was on the workshop. I remember once overhearing the coloured woman saying to the black woman: 'I really want to be your friend, but we've got to get something straight right at the beginning. I am not your passport to a transport system. If we arrange to meet and socially, I want to meet you because I want to see you, and not because before we meet I'm going to transport you here, there and everywhere to fetch this child, collect that, or do the other.' I admired her. Honestly. I thought that is a wonderful thing for her to say. I could never do that. I would never managed to say that because I would have tiptoed around her. I would have fetched her. I would have carried her and I would have done all the chores she wanted and deep down I would have burned with resentment for abusing this relationship. And I would have withdrawn (P. 11/99).

Expectations and disappointment when disadvantaged participants had hoped for access to resources through ‘having a white friend’ were frequently reported. Some white participants received phone calls for money, potential jobs and lifts after the workshop mentioning how they felt overwhelmed and uneasy about the requests and ‘shut off’ (C. 7/99). Meanwhile, participants who had made the requests said they were struggling with survival and exploring every avenue to improve their lives. The caring and catered-for atmosphere of the workshop, in which oftentimes white participants had spoken about their personal sense of social responsibility, was also seen to have contributed to the impression that material requests were legitimate in the context of the relations forged at the workshop:

We are really desperate. And the people there at the workshop said they wanted to help. But then they did not help us (L., informal conversation, 6/00).

**‘To be comfortable with one another[?] It’s not coming.’**

Many white participants’ hopes of ‘taking something away from the workshop’ (P. 10/99) centred on the possibility of *socialising* across perceived racial barriers. The desire for *access* here was not material but referred to the newly celebrated (black) social and cultural domain. It was clear that one should not underestimate the powers of the discourses of reconciliation on instilling in some white South Africans the need to demonstrate their ability of social togetherness.

For me it was very much a turning point because before that, I felt very much like an outsider in the community, in the larger South African or Cape Town community. So I always say about the Healing of Memories that it gave me my passport. At that point it was kind of stamped, and I was a South African then. [...] At some point more people have to get initiated into their South African-ness, as opposed to their *white* South African-ness (B.M. 7/99, speaker’s emphasis).

But most often this desire to belong was articulated around the ability to socialise ‘more easily’ with the racial ‘Other’, resulting in the sense of political correctness more than the beginnings of a conversation that could touch upon the sensitive issues of race and economics. A sense of helplessness prevailed, particularly tied to the sentiments of

responsibility and the apparent gap between wishing to contribute and actually acting on the motivation derived from the workshop. Maintaining previous social boundaries with other participants often proved difficult for a moment after having 'undone' them over the duration of the HOM weekend. Upon meeting material expectations from other participants, there was most often immediate retreat from pursuing further relations. In a few cases white participants attempted to assist destitute participants with their material needs (Focus Group 4/00). But neither the discourse of social togetherness nor the momentary new soci-ability at the workshop ultimately assisted in bringing about the kinds of relationships white participants had envisioned as satisfying:

It's to find somebody that I would relate to on an equal footing and I'm not talking about a material footing because I'm not sure if that can happen. I'm thinking more in terms of having a common base, an intellectual platform or even just having family and the same concerns for one's children. That more than anything else maybe. To be comfortable with one another. It's not coming, I mean I haven't met anybody who fits into that category (P. 11/99).

Most reported that they were hoping for a kind of 'comfortable socialising', a facet on which one black participant commented cynically:

I think we really need to make that step and reach out to one another. But the whites seem to think it should always be easy for them. Everything should be nice nice all the time. Well, surprise, it won't be that way. They will have to listen to us (X. 8/99).

Shared class interests seemed to enhance the basis for continued contact among participants considerably. But as a sole commonality 'owning a car and a cell phone' (C. 7/99) did not necessarily provide what participants had hoped for - 'a sense of connection that is meaningful and seems worthwhile investing the extra effort that is needed to grow' (E. 8/99). Post-workshop contacts remained mostly temporary and emotionally challenging. White participants often found themselves confronted with some of the core legacies of apartheid in the city, with the emotional residues, the discomfort, their own guilt, the anger and deeply submerged bitterness of others. The emotional risk and the hard work that is needed in order to step out of 'the dance of race' (Erasmus 2002: 6),

especially in the face of the social and economic implications, was not something many felt safe to attempt after the workshop.

### **Relations built on Anger and Forgiveness?**

I'm just struck by the generosity of the people of Africa and that they don't want to get out and kill us. I think if I was black I would have gone over the top, even in the struggle years. Although I am a committed pacifist, I don't know if I could have taken on behalf of my children what black people had to experience in this country. I do not know if I could forgive in the same way (J. 6/99).

Forgiveness? Forgiveness. This is not about forgiveness. This is about us needing to live together in the future. We have a lot to learn about that. We don't know each other. Or actually, we know each other only too well. We need to discover what is behind the skin. We need to build our country. But forgiveness is something totally different (K. 3/99).

At the base of what came to be represented as the victims' almost puzzling capacity to 'forsake revenge' seemed an almost superhuman ability of black South Africans to forgive, to absolve perpetrators and to reach out in a gesture of reconciliation to the former oppressor at large, seemingly without further conditions. Mainly the conclusion seemed to be drawn from the absence of visible *broad-scale* revenge and the many representations of the TRC showing black victims as suffering but forgiving (Wilson 2001). Yet what was perceived and romanticised by parts of the white South African minority and other, largely church-bound sections of South African society - and for that matter by much of the rest of the Western media - as signs of a specifically 'African generosity' and a 'miraculous spirit of forgiveness' rests on a basic fallacy in its underlying assumptions to do with forgiveness. Instead of a miraculous quality, at the base of social behaviour presented as 'forgiveness' seemed different cultural and historical understandings of what was imagined as a 'socially functional' future for the new nation and the attitudes and actions this engenders. The practice of deferring (not discarding) revenge (see also Wilson 2001: 185-187) for the sake of the collective then speaks of a value system that assigns core worth not to forgiveness as such, but to an essentially restorative form of being social.

HOM participants mainly took up the idea of reconciliation not as a kind of ‘absolution’ of past wrongs, but as a potential form of *re*-socialisation among South Africans that emphasised the link between altering present social interactions and material redistribution. In this respect, the question of making amends for past injustices featured large. The offer of joining in the creation of a new sociality from the side of the oppressed was not seen as open-ended but dependant on visible participation and response from those considered privileged. At the same time, HOM participants conveyed an understanding of the desirable imaginary that held at the core a more fluid and immediate picture of social repair, where healing took place among individuals negotiating their day-to-day interactions in the here and now in a spirit of reciprocity. Healing in this context was closely linked to the restoration or achievement of a quality of life that fuelled the individual’s motivation, happiness, soci-ability and productivity.

The ability to envision a society *shared* (and not merely co-existent) with the former oppressor in this view did not simply signify powerlessness or indifference, extensive amnesia or some superhuman ability to forgive and forget, and to self-heal the atrocities and injustices of apartheid. Rather such an understanding of the social rested on a more inclusive sociality that welcomed those willing to participate, to risk, to engage in dialogue, and that found self-evident that those included would seek to not only engage and listen but to contribute directly to the betterment of the lives of those they encountered. Noyes (2001) suggests that ‘social damage is measured as a discrepancy between what might be called the non-racial imaginary and the practice of everyday-life’ (53). In the discussions with HOM participants, the unity and coherence of the imaginary ideal social body were defined not so much through a common memory or shared history as through a common *social sense* that evaluated day-to-day social behaviour with a certain sense of pragmatism. Rather than an expression of mere social cohesion or shared sentiment, creating and partaking in the commemoration of apartheid experiences demanded some visible expression of commitment from beneficiaries. This was seen to create the base for a productive social reciprocity in an ongoing process.

### ***'I have found healing' – the HOM facilitator community***

HOM facilitators, in contrast, were indeed able to implement certain aspects of the HOM experience that participants described as desirable but were unable to put into practice. The community of sentiment here grew into a community of colleagues, fellow volunteers and friends, working together and sharing a common (though not uncontested) vision over an extended period of time. Engaging with the intervention over several years, HOM facilitators conveyed a sense of what it meant to 'work with one's personal story and emotions' in a sustained way in relation to their individual experience of transition, giving some indication of the potential of the HOM model as means for personal transformation and processing change if applied in a sustained way.

For me it was the first time really in the process of Healing of the Memory that I could talk freely about what makes me tick. What makes me think. What has hurt me. What has happened. The greatest thing for me in the HOM was the realisation that we fail to recognise the areas in our lives that have been affected. Those angry spots in our lives really affected me in many ways. It affected my health, it affected my relationships. It affected my relationship with my own immediate family. It was difficult for me to come to terms with the fact that I needed to be able to get up and do something and wasn't able to do it. But over time and with the HOM I have found healing (D. 7/99).

For most facilitators, HOM became an important part of their social identity. However, the utopia of creating equality and social repair in the short-term was also tested more substantially as the group of the facilitators formed, re-formed, and got to know and trust each other. I remember one instance in 1998 where the facilitators had met at Father Michael's house for a strategic 'think-tank' meeting. A debate escalated into a shouting match between two facilitators. Tempers ran so high that more and more members of the group joined in with loud comments and gestures until there was a total cacophony of voices that suddenly ended in silence and a sense of surprised embarrassment. One of the new facilitators, for whom this was the first HOM meeting after her facilitator training, was completely shocked and commented that she would never again come to a meeting or join HOM if people were so (verbally) violent with each other here.<sup>91</sup> The other facilitators, however, commented later to her that, though they had been surprised

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<sup>91</sup> She withdrew from the HOM initially, but later rejoined the process remaining an active member.

themselves by the outburst of emotion and conflict, they felt this was a unique group 'precisely because we are free enough to actually fight with each other, and disagree and get angry and make up afterwards (Y. 5/98). In a later instance, during one of the annual facilitator trainings, a discussion about the validity of the HOM model, its strengths and shortcomings also led to a heated debate that ended in tears for some of the facilitators.

These incidents were part of a process of realization among facilitators that conflict and rupture formed an important part of building and maintaining authentic and lasting relationships. The initial assumption that facilitators 'needed to be reconciled' (with themselves, their past and their feelings towards 'Others') before being able to engage in healing work was soon identified as an illusion by the group. Rather the idea of 'wounded healers' (Frank 1995) gained prominence, or 'people on a long journey to wrestle with their past' (FML 7/99), while facilitators increasingly acknowledged that it was the ability to have honest, conflicting and painful debates with each other over current issues that allowed them to eventually achieve a sense of community and coherence. At the same time, some of the emerging conflicts between individual facilitators proved so painful an experience that they withdrew from the process. Others found that, though the experience of being a HOM facilitator marked an important period in their experience of the transition after 1994, at some point they felt the need to 'move on' and not engage with the pain of the past over and over through the same storying process. They emphasised the benefits of engaging with the intervention over a longer period of time and not only once-off, but also described the need for a kind of closure that could not take place while being a HOM facilitator.

Undoubtedly, the leadership of a charismatic personality, such as Father Michael Lapsley, provided the institutional and intellectual coherence for the HOM process over time, constituting a largely uncontested core to the process. Another critical role was played by the local HOM coordinator who facilitated contact with and access to potential workshop audiences, and generally communicated with both volunteers and the interested public. Over the years that I participated in HOM the sustainability of the facilitator community in the Western Cape depended to a large extent on the individual

commitment of a small group of volunteers who gave large amounts of time and energy to the process, a core of people around which a smaller number of new facilitators came in and went again. For this core HOM represented a kind of ‘family’, as they called it, a group of confidantes who shared similar values and could be trusted. For many facilitators, the component of ‘mixing’ and working closely with facilitators of another colour and cultural background featured as a strong element in their ‘healing journey’. They also emphasised that at the root of their ongoing commitment to HOM was the desire to ‘contribute to reconciliation, to get the people together, to help them listen to each other because that is what we need’ (J. 6/99). While many facilitators reported on the importance of the relationships with other facilitators for their ‘personal healing and growth’, some were also doubtful, questioning the idea of a ‘HOM family’ as too ideal or idyllic an image:

The family? [...] If you are outside that family, if you are a stranger to that family, looking at us you would say: ‘Wow, what a nice group.’ And then the minute you get inside, there are lots of stomach aches and gripes, and we definitely have to work on those if you want to say that we are diverse and reconciled. [...] I found I do not feel comfortable in this community [...] For instance, just because I am black, any comment made by a white person, I take that personally, but if it was made by a black person it is okay. [...] I still think that, though we are saying that we are diverse, we are not: we are still white, black and coloured. [...] The conflict is not that visible. I won’t come to you and say it, but you’ll see from the person’s face that there’s something wrong [...] or they would use sarcasm (Z. 6/99).

Apart from the ‘family’-reality described here, questions of economic disparity also became more prominent for the facilitator group as increasingly, unemployed volunteers were recruited. A few years into the process a volunteer stipend for the workshops was introduced, easing the financial contribution<sup>92</sup> facilitators had been making. One example that illustrated the repercussions of the socio-economic reality most clearly were the challenges faced by the theatre group *Mina Nawe* in their attempt to form an ongoing functional working group with very little resources and across the city’s divides.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Before facilitators had no compensation for their time at the HOM, and many also gave other resources such as transport and, at times, workshop material.

<sup>93</sup> Meeting points, time frames, transport costs and the energy to sustain the group while many members were living below the breadline proved a difficult task. Conflicts arose around access to the scarce

Most long-term facilitators described how they gained the ability *over time* to implement parts of the HOM experience in a variety of contexts, both domestic and public, particularly in situations where soci-ability, response-ability and conflict-ability across apartheid-informed social boundaries was required, such as in the workplace. They mentioned in particular the ability to *relate* meaningfully to the experience of others as an important skill they had acquired at HOM. Having had the opportunity to listen to hundreds of personal stories of the apartheid years, the workshops had given facilitators an ongoing window into the past and present realities of other Capetonians; something which they found valuable in their lives and work as teachers, community facilitators, social workers, conflict mediators, church ministers, counsellors, projects managers and in other professions. In the course of the first few years of the IHOM (1998-2001) the facilitators' conceptions of 'damage' inflicted by apartheid was complexified, and the frameworks seen necessary for healing became broadened. 'Healing the wounds of apartheid' came to be seen as an ongoing, step-by-step, life-long endeavour of engaging with one's (and others) prejudices and hurts. Though as volunteers (and in majority working in social service professions) the facilitators also represented a likely group to internalise the HOM philosophy and transfer the model to everyday life, they largely attributed new-won insights and capacity in this respect to their engagement with HOM.

***'It made me think in a different tune' –***

***of Potentiality and a New Social Map***

When you come away from the workshop you feel connected to everybody. But it does not stay. Still, you remember that feeling of how it was and it counteracts the negative feelings of the present of separation and divisiveness. I can place myself back there and know that it can be different (J. 5/00).

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resources and difficulties to meet agreements, especially after the all-black group was joined by a white actress. Nonetheless, the exceptional commitment of the group members to the HOM process allowed the group to continue and perform at HOM workshops until today. Two of the theatre group's members were later employed, either by or with direct assistance from HOM. Several *Mina Nawe* members were also HOM facilitators, and one later joined the HOM as full-time staff member.

Even though the majority of participants were not able to use the HOM experience the way the facilitators could, it is notable that the intervention did in fact feed enough the motivation of those participants who were inclined to ‘make it happen’ against great odds. In the end, they were rarely able to accomplish or sustain their efforts,<sup>94</sup> but despite the evident disappointments, those participants who tried did not discard the workshop experience. Instead many said they found the workshop a first step towards recognising the complex scope of the task of changing relations shaped by apartheid social reality. The HOM experience, they reported, had at least given them a sense of possibility and hope:

I mean it doesn’t really make an impact beyond meeting of the people who I met at the workshops. That made the biggest impact! For the *first time ever in my life* I mixed with people of colour, and I heard where they were coming from. It never ever occurred in my life before, not at university, never ever. So that made a very big impact. It made it possible to *think differently* for me (P. 12/99, speaker’s emphases).

More often than envisioning and attempting concrete relations with other individuals from the workshop, participants voiced the desire to ‘save something of the experience’ (G. 8/99), to keep the sense of possibility instilled in them by the HOM experience. This was in particular about the possibility of transforming interactions. They emphasised the physicality of the experience, the notion of ‘actually going there and meeting others and simply spending a totally different weekend together’ (F. 6/99).

I took away the way we were with one another at the weekend, just making the effort to connect with others. It doesn’t happen like that anywhere else. When I get fed up here at work I think back to that time. It’s somehow a comfort (G. 8/99).

The interactions at the workshop which participants later described as ‘healing’ in one way or another were also often the ones they found most challenging and difficult. Having lived through and grappled with both the storying and subsequent interactions,

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<sup>94</sup> While it seemed easier for participants living above the breadline to try and form relationships, participants who made these efforts came from a wide spectrum of backgrounds, and cannot be easily categorised either by race, age, denomination or gender. The majority cited as reasons for attempting to maintain contacts the desire to change their social reality and to ‘make real’ the desired imaginary of the new non-racial nation.

many participants framed as 'healing' the sentiments of connection and community celebrated on the Sunday morning of the workshop. Such feelings were experienced as genuine and rewarding, 'real in the moment', as one participant put it. The positive sense of connection that helped forge the community of sentiment and the frustrating realisation of its temporality and the tremendous obstacles to making the workshop utopia part of everyday reality were equally important elements through which the intervention achieved some lasting impression on participants. The fact that the sense of excitement and exhilaration of the moment faded did not deter the majority from retaining a sense of possibility in retrospection.

It is important to note, however, that survivors of gross human rights violations under apartheid and of South Africans living in severe poverty, violence and deprivation identified different priorities and needs to those of participants living above the breadline. Returning to a desperate material situation after the workshop at times made the hope and enthusiasm at the end seem like a farce. Since HOM was neither an ongoing therapeutic intervention focused on trauma care, nor could provide the exposure needed for people in search of a livelihood, it seemed that HOM had the most value for participants who came with the less immediate, less material and less urgent needs, whose main motivation was to explore, search for personal healing and change and who returned to a setting where the resources exist for self-motivated formal or informal follow-up processes. However, when I suggested to the participants who had fore-grounded concerns with survival whether it would have been better to not attend the workshop, or postpone it to another more stable time, I was met with anger and resentment:

That's what you would think, huh? That it should be something nice for the people who are scooping the cream already? We are the ones who return to an environment with no food, no safe space, not knowing what's in it tomorrow. We are the ones who know how to appreciate a weekend like that! (Focus Group 8/99).

What do you mean? That because I am poor all I want is food and nothing for the soul? How do you think we survive all along? How can we uplift ourselves when our spirits are down? No my dear, the

workshop is all right for us. The healing is important even if you need bread (M., informal conversation, 7/99).

In the course of HOM's operations the value and risk of attempting a heterogeneous space to engage with the apartheid past in South Africa became apparent. Such a space did not offer the same sense of safety that a more homogeneous set-up facilitated, such as for instance a survivor support group where the subjective experience of violation was constructed as shared and could generate more easily the formulation of a common (for example black victim) agenda (Colvin 2000, 2003). Another example of a primarily homogeneous (white) space that conceived itself as contributing towards the healing of South Africa were the meetings of the 'Home for All'-campaign whose language revealed that dialogue about the past conceived at all-white gatherings differed considerably from conversations across apartheid's racial divides at the HOM workshops. This is not to say that there is not a need for homogeneous sites in which the experiences of 'being South African from within a particular skin' (J. 5/99) can be discussed more freely and subject positions can be formulated without the pressures of political correctness and suppression of emotions. Rather it should lead us to appreciate the vulnerability and personal risk taken by HOM participants when engaging with their own and other's pain in a joint memory process.

What worked on participants in subtle ways beyond the intervention was, on one hand, the feeling of having been in a space safe enough to 'let down our guard' and reveal personal anxieties and emotions and, on the other hand, a sense of feeding on the synergy and positive feeling generated by experiencing the community of sentiment and the possibility of a new soci-ability. Doubt, frustration and discomfort seemed as much part of the experience as moments of 'feeling good'. One participant commented:

If HOM was a feel-good exercise? But I think that we need that. We need to feel good together, we need to learn that, no? Most of the time we don't feel so good about each other. Whenever can we feel good together like at the workshop, like the Saturday night?' (J., at Focus Group 5/99).

The ways in which all participants were emotionally touched by this experience and more often than not unsettled by it, brought for many the ability to ask new questions about their lives and their relations to others. However, while the utopian social performance was enacted over the weekend, participants at all times brought their divided realities into the workshop space. This often created crucial disharmonies through which the links between the personal and the political, and the gaps between the desired imaginary and individual experience, seemed emphasised rather than disguised. Because it was a unique and rare moment of intersection between the personal and the political, outside the ordinary for most, the experience primarily affected a sense of potentiality, of having experimented with the imaginary togetherness and desired equality in very real ways rather than the ability to take action upon it. Therefore, taking the immediate ability to act upon the experience upon return from the workshop as focal measurement for the success or failure of the intervention was bound to fall short. Neither would it do justice to assume that the experience could be equally favourable to all or that participants' assessment would remain fixed over time. Tracing the intangibles of a space in which to imagine things differently requires sustained time and attention. It was often in the long-term that participants found HOM one moment they remembered vividly in relation to their personal change process as citizens of the 'new' South Africa'. Participants held onto the experience of the community of sentiment as a sacred space in memory, even if they were unable to effect actual transformations in their everyday life. The value assigned to 'knowing that it can be different' (Focus Group 7/00), despite the immanent material realities and the deeply embedded emotional legacies, was significant because it seemed to resurface at crucial points in time in participants' lives:

For instance, having taught abroad for a year, I had to make a decision whether I wanted to live in South Africa or just leave and go overseas and spend my life there, I think those moments [the HOM experience] came back. It just made me realise my commitment and also my responsibility to this country. The tremendous work ahead, the fact that I cannot run away from role here (L. 4/02).

You speak your anger and it just loosens some of the knots inside your heart that you have carried for so long. For me that is healing, is to feel my heart is not so tied anymore, it's got a different beat now (X. 7/99).

The possibility of a momentary intimacy across apartheid-devised social barriers may neither have translated into immediate changes in participants' close relations nor led immediately to changed structures of feeling or new formations of relationship. But it allowed HOM participants to envision their lives differently in a context where political and structural changes demanded of the individual to reinvent the self and find new ways of being social alongside the re-invention of community, society and nation, yet did not necessarily offer constructive models for personal transformation. Transforming not only attitudes but also embodied emotional patterns, in which identity formations and, ultimately, one's sense of self is rooted, remains a life-long process. For many participants HOM seemed to have set one small but important impulse into this direction.

## Chapter Six

### 'Forever is part of the Landscape' –

### Facing Self, Other and History ...

In time we shall be in a position to bestow upon South Africa the greatest gift possible – a more human face (Biko 1987 [1978]: 98)

For the face itself is a contingency, at the magical crossroads of mask and window to the soul, one of the better-kept public secrets essential to everyday life. (Taussig 1999: 3)

At the beginning of the dissertation I posed three questions central to my exploration of HOM as a civil society response to South Africa's transition process: How can the ground be sculpted upon which new social possibilities can emerge and become visible to the individual as tangible, practical opportunities? How can people be enabled to invent and make use of new social practices, in a sense 'activate' the future sociality that has come to be newly imagined? How does one facilitate *imagining* alternative possibilities of seeing and relating to those perceived to be 'Other'? In response, the concluding chapter substantiates the need for sustained attention on the interpersonal domain, on the 'formations of feeling and relationship', and the need for negotiating a new social map in a transitional context.

HOM was a product of a particular moment in time in South Africa. Deriving its initial legitimacy through the TRC's context, it shaped and sustained some of its momentum beyond the debates and visibility of the TRC process in the public sphere, and until today, is keeping open a liminal but significant space for interpersonal exchange about the apartheid past. Building on my previous discussions, the final chapter examines the insights the ethnography of HOM offered by looking at formations of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in relation to Self, Other and History to trace further how (inter)subjectivity is shaped in relation to a time of transition and rapid change. In doing so, it explores how HOM continues to inform shifting individual imaginaries of selfhood and Otherness as well as tracing practical possibilities for gaining an alternate perspective

of Self, Other and History with a view to realising alternate social practices and relations. Colvin (2004) described how ‘memory-making [in South Africa] enabled those telling stories – and those listening to them – to see themselves in new ways, to imagine new relationships to each other, and to place themselves and others within emerging post-apartheid political and moral frameworks’ (142). As the dissertation has shown, at HOM these emerging frameworks were at once made visible, tested and challenged. Despite the risks of creating a joint memory space such as HOM, it remains critical to bring these ordinary, contrasting voices into one arena. In the face of the many layers of continuity of the past that participants experienced, building future interactions on mere political correctness, politeness, pretence and denial of substantial underlying tensions will prevent the genuine transformation of the interpersonal sphere. In light of people’s divided realities, ‘embodied’ in their everyday encounters ten years after the end of apartheid, spaces to experiment with alternative forms of being social and to test the desired imaginary of a new soci-ability continue to be needed to counter the systemic and immediate violence and. Close attention is not being paid to how the experiential and emotional reverberations of apartheid memory shape concrete socio-spatial practices, and hence how possibilities for change, in particular the transformation of the interpersonal domain based on the ability to negotiate contradictions, manage conflict and debate emerging issues, are prevented.

The notion of ‘facing’, literally and metaphorically, serves to frame the discussion. ‘Facing’ here constitutes an act that is at once courageous and ambivalent. It may parade as innocent, but it is fraught with the paradoxes inherent in acts of reflecting and representing memory and experience. ‘Facing’ asks about the complexities and dangers of making visible and granting access. HOM’s vision states the need for individuals to ‘face history and face oneself’, key concepts that are rarely elaborated on and that omit what seems to me the most critical element of the process, the notion of ‘facing (each) Other’ that I began to explore in Chapter Three (page 111). As Taussig (1999: 3) points out, the face at once exposes and conceals, so ‘facing’, in the way I seek to employ it, is not a one-way action, but a means for looking inward and outward, allowing the momentary gaze into self and into the other, testing the ability to offer and receive attention,

empathy, recognition and response. If facing always means at once confronting, rendering some aspects of the self visible, and concealing, censoring other aspects of the self, it becomes a device for an altered, in a sense, a stretched frame that brings about the possibility of reflection and conversation different to those offered in everyday interactions. Facing (the past, oneself, each other, the 'Other', the emotions inherent in the memory process, and one's memory in relation to history) can momentarily lay bare the interface of subjectivity and intersubjectivity, in a moment of 'making connections'. That moment may be enough to unsettle established, cherished 'senses of self', for better or for worse. In the context, of HOM the process of 'facing' reveals reconciliation's virtues as a common discursive denominator and its impracticability as a foundation for the transformation of interpersonal relations in post-apartheid, post-TRC South Africa. I have argued that the potential for transformation lies in recognition and the ability to respond to another's subjective *human* experience. Response-ability, conflict-ability and soci-ability emerge as key components in this process, and may reveal and temporarily 'unfreeze' some of the 'zombification' depleting and disabling post-apartheid relations. We need to explore further how the experience of a community of sentiment can enable the actualisation of a shared vision that sustains hope and commitment in the face of seemingly immensurable social and economic challenges.

The previous chapters examined in detail several angles of the interpersonal memory process at HOM - the spatial, the narrative, the performative and the contextual, socio-economic dimension – each of which touched upon aspects that shaped the interactions at workshops and explored the possibilities and limitations offered by narrating personal memories within such a frame. Sharing memories in a setting aimed at producing honesty, intimacy and vulnerability among a group of 'ordinary', *participant* witnesses, largely of the first generation who had experienced apartheid first-hand made visible how inherent structures of feeling and relationship both remained and shifted, and how emerging senses of self were shaped in relation to the new identity politic. HOM generated a fleeting moment which revealed some of the inherent dynamics around memory, power and subjectivity (Werbner 2002) that shape people's actions and choices in their everyday lives, but that are not necessarily socially acceptable in the new

dispensation. Overarching the attempt to employ such a memory process in the work of repair and transformation is the question of how to work with the possibilities of witnessing in a way that is meaningful for the members of a first post-authoritarian generation, especially in a context where systemic, structural violence continues to determine the majority of people's lives.

The question is not merely one of linking the 'new constitutional order or culture of rights and accountability [...] *in meaningful ways to the living memories* of victims and perpetrators' (Du Toit 2004: 67, emphasis in original), but about how to bring the antagonistic 'living memories' of the first (and following) generations of beneficiaries and sufferers of past injustices into conversation. The approach of HOM produces a mode of witnessing framed by immediacy, participation, and the unsettlement of the witnesses. It focuses on the significance of seemingly ordinary and everyday acts and experiences of violation rather than on atrocity. Through a process of listening, questioning, grappling, and making sense *jointly* in the here and now, it creates a consciousness of the manifestations of the past in social and interpersonal practices of the present and their moral and practical implications for the future.

In this sense, I widen the meaning of 'healing memories' from seeing the intervention in a psychotherapeutic sense only, as it was often understood during the TRC process, to asking what role the exchange of 'living memory' may play in identity transformation and social change processes. How can a society hold open spaces in which alternative conversations to the usual can take place, conversations that take cognisance of the contradictions and complexities of antagonistic living memories? How can the intimate sharing of personal experiences of the past allow room for otherwise censored thoughts and emotions, balancing individuals' need to be 'safe', respected and able to trust with an opportunity to voice 'true' feelings, such as anger, hatred, guilt and shame? I have already demonstrated the importance of response-ability, conflict-ability and soci-ability in this regard. Now I broaden the discussion to argue that three specific conversations need to be developed and nurtured in such a context. These neither seek closure nor simply perpetuate talking about the past, but foster staying awake to possibilities in a

highly complex and explosive structural context and grappling with the questions and sense-making efforts that emerge in each 'post'-generation.

Firstly, there is the need for **conversations with and among 'self' (facing self)**, which include both intra-personal reflection (based on individual introspection) and intra-communal conversation (with those considered part of one's social group or sphere). At HOM, this conversation depended on a liminal but collective space for self-reflection about the past. HOM also enabled a **conversation between victims and beneficiaries of apartheid (facing each 'Other')** that had to take cognizance of past and present contexts and that placed the spotlight not only on the soldiers and activists in battle, or on victims and perpetrators of gross violations but on the perceptions held of one another by 'ordinary' sufferers and beneficiaries of apartheid's systemic, less visible but no less violent, social, political, economic and psychological practices. Thirdly, there is the need for a **conversation between generations (facing history)** that is of an ongoing nature and seeks to bridge the widening span between generations and their 'living memories' (Du Toit 2004: 66) in a time of rapid change. In the South African context of slow structural transformation and persisting stark social and economic division the need to factor in conversation about the past at all three levels may fashion a critical possibility for a healthy, caring sociality, needed to hold and facilitate a people-centred implementation of structural transformation measures. The value of seeking such exchanges, of listening, recognising and validating the Other's experience as well as the ability to experience conviviality without surrendering the need to disagree, debate, challenge and manage tensions are key elements for a living practice of pluralism, not contrary but in addition to the framework of a symbolic common history.

### ***Facing Self – Confronting the Internal Other***

To individuals, the promise of HOM responded to a number of needs in time of rapid transition. Participants came searching for a reflection space, for 'time out', for healing and solace, for something they themselves often struggled to put into words – for new possibilities, new relationships, for claiming or re(dis)covering their humanity, for hope, for a better future and also for concrete assistance and material help. Their questions and

quests often reflected the challenges that a re-formation of identity politics brings in a time of social change, asking personal questions such as:

- ✚ Who am I in this context, time and age, how do I fit into this society and what is my role?
- ✚ What is the meaning of my past in relation to my experiences in the present and to those of others?
- ✚ What is the meaning of my past experiences in relation to my children's/parent's experiences and what I tell them about myself?
- ✚ How can I find closure and make use of new opportunities?
- ✚ How do I engage difficult feelings of anger, hatred, shame and guilt?
- ✚ What is the next step on my life-journey and what is my personal vision for my contribution to the new sociality?

'Facing Self' in the process of the weekend is about an encounter with oneself in the light of the moral and political reframing that has taken place post-1994. It is the encounter with one's own internal 'alien formations' that I explored in Chapter Three (p. 127-129). Telling a story of oneself and one's actions during the apartheid years, and having 'Others' listen to the story, raised for many participants questions of how their subjectivity had or had not shifted in response to this reframing. Many expressed this through the language of 'transformation'. Transformation here engenders a shift in thought and practice brought about by exploring the personal in the light of the socio-political context and vice versa, seeing both past and present in the light of a future worth working towards and taking risks for. Such encounters, as Colvin (2004) states, are embedded in multiple intersecting domains, in which storytelling and listening, the act of witnessing, are 'always already political, social, psychological, moral, and economic processes' (160). Considered less often, but critical in looking at the HOM process, such storytelling encounters are also spiritual acts, a significant element in the process of 'facing self' in this context, not only as a process of individual reflection but of consideration and exploration of new social practices. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela reflects in this regard:

Moving from reflection to engagement requires a new way of seeing the old – the kind of shift in perspective that information rarely yields but spiritual conviction sometimes brings (Gobodo-Madikizela 2003: 72).

It is important to note that 'spiritual conviction' is not to be equated with religious belief or practice, though that may be tempting given that HOM is influenced by religious personae and principles. The shift to a 'new way of seeing' is largely a personal and moral shift, enabled through a specific encounter in the storying and afterwards, through the vehicle of shared memory, and in a conversation that holds a spiritual quality, an element of reverence toward and respect for another human being as worthy.

In this context, 'facing self' is about shifting the focus to the question of transformation from within of that which is destructive in the inner formations the past has engrained and in the emotional outflow they engender. Central themes raised by HOM participants in this regard have been hatred and guilt, shame and anger. After World War II Karl Jaspers was one of few Germans who possessed the insight to raise the issue of guilt:

That the victors condemn us is a political fact which has the greatest consequences for our life, but it does not help us in the decisive point, in our inner regeneration. Here we are to deal with ourselves alone (Jaspers 1947: 28).

In the South African context, the focus has been strongly on the external modes of transformation, on structural and material dimension of change during the first decade post-liberation. Recall the speech by Ebrahim Rasool, Premier of the Western Cape, with which I opened the discussion. He spoke about the need to venture from the material focus of restoration in the first decade – on houses, water, services, access to wealth – to the social, psychological and spiritual dimension of restitution and reconciliation. Material restoration, he said, was not enough because it leaves behind a hollow confidence that can become arrogant. However, at HOM it became clear why the question of internal regeneration is such a difficult one for the first generation - because it is fraught with contradiction and paradox in the constant negotiation of embodied memory, desired imaginary and lived reality. As Njabulo Ndebele frames it, the challenge of the first generation is a particular internal struggle:

Suddenly, I experience the erstwhile target out there as something intimately inside of me. Opposed positionalities, which in the past were elements of an external drama, I now experience as located within me. This, you will admit, constitutes a terrain of immense confusion. [...] I submit that this is a confusion we all need to embrace (Ndebele 2004: 14).

### **Senses of Self – of Victims and Beneficiaries**

Colvin (2004: 143) argues that in South Africa, identity has come to be strongly fashioned around the notions of (apartheid/political) ‘victimhood’ that emerged during the TRC process. While some of the ‘shifts in subjectivity’ he describes for the Khulumani Survivor Support group are similar to those played out at the HOM workshops, the encounter at HOM between those who suffered the consequences and those who benefited from apartheid’s policies and practices engendered a different set of sanctioned and censored subjectivities. While the subjectivities participants would emphasise at the workshops were rooted in the new social imaginary of an empowered and responsible citizenry, committed to the process of nation-building and proudly laying claim to a history of ‘overcoming the past’, the complex relationships and gaps between the old and the new, between discourse and practice, between desire, imaginary and practice became visible. The binary framework of victims and beneficiaries of apartheid was not one participants adopted readily, and does little justice to the many facets of subjectivity captured in the ethnography and in the chapters. It was in the specific encounter at HOM that a third possibility emerged – that of a conscious engagement with the meaning and the practical implications of one’s sense of self in and, possibly, beyond the moment.

Through its explicit invitation as a ‘space for all’ HOM attracted a particular audience. In many cases the memory process at HOM, especially at demographically diverse workshops, produced an encounter between ‘the responsible victim’ (who has largely forgone revenge, controlled her anger and is seeking to heal the self) and ‘the concerned beneficiary’ (who seeks contact on grounds of a sense of social and moral responsibility and desire for participation). This desirable, idealistic picture was compounded by HOM facilitators’ strong advocacy of forgiveness as a healing measure victims can employ in

absence of apology or reparation, and the pressure on beneficiaries to express responsibility, if not regret. However, inevitably, the nature of the conversation and process at HOM also brought to the surface some of the more censored, or less praised, 'senses of self' – the angry victim refusing to 'heal and move on' and recounting the spectrum of hurt and range of interactions experienced as violating encountered in the past and present; the unconcerned beneficiary resenting the apparent loss of privilege, the demands for material (and moral) contributions and the confrontation with shame and guilt. The public discourses that shaped the time of the TRC were strongly reflected in HOM participants' sense of needing to re-frame and re-invent the self in response, as exemplified in these comments from participants: 'I mustn't be a victim anymore.' - 'I have to fight the internal racist inside myself.' – 'I need to overcome my sense of inferiority when speaking to a white person.' – 'I am grappling with my own sense of superiority, when even from an early age I was in command of black people'.

The contestations between the sanctioned and the censored 'senses of self' in the moment brought to the surface some of the underlying unease, especially when HOM facilitators emphasized the concepts of a 'joint journey' and the 'shared dream of a new nation', and in the debates around forgiveness. Rather what became clear was that the first generation at large travels along the lines of race and economics, a 'black journey' and a 'white journey', or, in new-South-Africa-speak, the journey of the 'previously disadvantaged' and the 'previously advantaged', the juncture of which sits uneasily with the proclaimed common loyalty to the new nation and subsequent openness to former adversaries that both HOM's and TRC's framework promoted. Thus framed, the differing needs and agendas for self-realisation emerged, sometimes distinctly, sometimes in intractable ways, into a setting where class and race, culture and colour remain historically bound in extreme ways, pointing to the limitations of dialogue at first generation level in South Africa. The class dimension, it often seemed, was the least comfortable for HOM participants to engage with. Neither the declared 'common ground' of new nationhood nor the community of sentiment generated at the workshops could veil or counter the challenge posed by the socio-economic reality of the present and the multiple ways socio-

economics translated, historically interwoven, into people's structures of feeling and the relationships they produced.

The responsible victim seeks recognition of the validity of her anger without surrendering a deep sense of caring for a joint future and shared sociality. The quest for personal healing and change is framed by issues such as inclusion and access to opportunities; genuine participation in social processes and decision-making; finding a listening, caring, morally responsible Other; and engaging feelings of inferiority that prevent the fruition of new opportunities. The responsible victim holds moral authority; the angry victim is quickly accused of undermining a fragile peace, hence denied the right to wield that moral authority and dismissed as unconstructive. Though most times 'the angry victim' would refuse to come to HOM in the first place, many participants voiced their anger in the face of the continuities they observed around them and stated the desire for more radical political action such as, in one case, 'a Zimbabwean solution for South Africa'.

The 'concerned beneficiary', on the other hand, frames her sense of self through the desire for legitimacy, the wish to partake, to contribute, to acknowledge complicity and recognize a sense of being enmeshed in the crimes and guilt of apartheid, often as a result of silence. Exploring the role of shame and guilt, and at times apology, the promise for the beneficiary is access to a set of experiences (of the Other), unrecognized before, that have now become desirable and a sense that recognition by the Other can lead to the possibility of inclusion and a much-yearned-for sense of belonging. At HOM the concerned beneficiary usually received acknowledgement and a desired sense of social belonging and legitimacy, in return for demonstrating a sense of responsibility for the past. Yet beneficiaries were also confronted with their own fear of change and need to maintain the status quo. Some reversed proclamations of responsibility, quickly withdrew and demanded protection from facilitators when faced with the anger of victims.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> The 'unconcerned' beneficiary rarely featured at HOM, for one because he would have been reluctant to enter such a contested and threatening space, but also because of an unspoken agreement about his lack of moral authority unless he owned credentials of pre-1994 activism against apartheid, in which case the beneficiary identity receded into the background and the activist identity prevailed.

*The responsible victim and the concerned beneficiary can be in conversation, the angry victim and the unconcerned beneficiary cannot.* The latter threaten the stability of HOM's conceptual frame and usually faced strong intervention from the side of facilitators. Yet, subjectively, these contradicting senses of self often co-existed in facets within the same individual and within groups. Even the responsible victim and the concerned beneficiary had to engage the with contradictions between the desire for change and the fear of change, with feelings of exclusion and anger, with emerging moral and practical dilemmas and their implications for how they imagine self and Other.

### ***Facing (each) Other***

#### **Making Connections through testimonial dialogue**

In South Africa, unlike post-war Germany, the presence of the (supposedly former) 'Other' is constant and immediate. In the aftermath of a negotiated settlement, of political compromise, a more varied league of winners and losers of the new order has emerged, yet the ways in which freshly budding subjectivities are embedded in perceptions about what constitutes success and failure in the now, a primarily material focus, cloud the ways in which social interactions remain defined by the 'antagonistic common ground' (Diner 1986) engrained in 'embodied memories' and their impact on the fashioning of new subjectivities. It is in 'making connections' between political, social, psychological, moral, and economic dimension of living memory, as they are experienced and realised in present interpersonal practices, that a uniquely immediate process of 'facing (each) other' may take place at first generation level. This conversation needs to happen without compromise *on the terms of those who have been wronged* while recognizing the complexity inscribed into the more obvious historical divisions apartheid left behind. At HOM, the focus on the interpersonal dimension of apartheid revealed the deeply embedded structures of feeling that feed off and inform existing power dynamics and continue to be played out in the ways people know how to be social with one another. The focus on the seemingly more 'ordinary' dimensions of the apartheid experience made visible the impact of many 'small behaviours and attitudes' that mirror entrenched structures of power and provide an emotional subtext to everyday interactions in the

present. This conversation recognizes unpopular emotions such as anger, hatred, shame and guilt as legitimate, even necessary parts of any conversation about the past.

As I explored in more detail in Chapter Three (page 119-124) it was often through the resonance emerging between individual stories that a kind of *testimonial dialogue* evolved, even before participants would explicitly engage with the ways in which their stories were linked and seemed to ‘speak to one another’. The willingness to risk intimacy and reveal emotions, which the storytellers dared in this environment, was critical to enabling such a ‘testimonial dialogue’. The immediacy and participatory nature of the storytelling were crucial to the momentary fluidity of social barriers, offering a glimpse of a vulnerable, doubtful, questioning self. Each individual remembrance of the past surfaced as inevitably and intricately linked to other individual experiences, which – though some seemed ‘worlds apart’ – could be recognised as generated by the same context and age. Hence the realisation of how one’s own subjectivity was forged through past experiences emerged hand in hand with a concrete sense of intersubjectivity, of concrete and subtle linkages with the other life-stories, making visible the interdependencies in the complex moral and practical consequences of the legislated segregation of the past.

Placing your story in relation to mine, my story in relation to yours, and the past in relation to the present leads inevitably to the existential question of how we *share* this space and time in the here and now. ‘We’ is not limited by nationality or geography, but includes all who are by default or choice in the city, state, country and region at this point in time, without collapsing the many gradations of subjectivity, belonging and contested legitimacy that this entails. The encounters at HOM showed the extent to which memories of pain are physical, spatial, and *embodied* experiences inscribing an emotional subtext that continues to define, drive, enhance and limit peoples’ responses, actions and choices. Contradiction and paradox form part of this picture as do substantial moral, even existential, questioning and challenges to one another. The intersubjective nature of the storying process can best be understood through the notion of the ‘participant witness’ who was challenged to go beyond listening and observation, to relate the story to herself,

and to respond either directly, or, more subtly in a way, telling her own story as a response to the other.

Through such testimonial dialogue some existential links are forged – between witness and story, among witnesses, among specific narrations, memories or elements thereof, between the small group of witnesses and the larger workshop group, between narrators and the larger contextual picture of the present that emerges. This process of ‘making connections’ not only reflects, but implicates, questions, and challenges individual attitudes, perceptions choices, and actions. In making connections there is an imperative for recognition of the other’s experience and response to another’s pain and suffering (see also Das et al. 1997). *Recognition and response* validate the (inter)subjective experiences of the past as a historical contribution to the here and now; they render the story testimony, shaping the storytelling into a ‘making of witness’ rather than a mere exchange of ideas or knowledge of the past or a kind of ‘history lesson’. This validates the experiences of *ordinary survivors* of apartheid, while focusing on the future and on the resourcefulness and resilience of the narrators rather than ending in tearful gravitas or a mode of therapeutic counselling.

The resonance of narrating diverse personal experiences into the same space also allowed the storytellers to forge critical links between the broader picture of apartheid History (as it emerges from other official sources), the interpersonal dimension (placing my story in relation to your story) and the intra-personal dimension (my story and what it means to me personally in the context of the other stories and the historical context). Making sense of the emerging interdependency and resonance remained a complex task. While the individual’s lived experience was not doubted but validated, seeing the bigger picture revealed the underlying sense of disappointment and anger in the lived reality of the political compromise on which the new nation is built that seemed to exist regardless of the material quality of participants’ lives. The questions that surfaced in the sessions after the storytelling posed not only personal, but particular moral and political challenges, some of which HOM facilitators were ill-equipped to engage with.

The moral dimension of the encounter was foregrounded when the individual's story was referenced in the socio-political context of both past and present. The stories were told into the framework of the previous state and its social practices as fashioned on despicable racist, supremacist ideology, and in the light of the laudable new political project of nation-building post-1994. Without this explicit feature, the weekend might have been no different from other spiritual retreats or religious and charismatic rituals focusing on initiating individual transformation and 'healing of memories' (see Csordas 1994a; Laderman & Roseman 1996). The context of political transition and the language of the TRC have continued to be vital to the shape of the stories and conversations at HOM, though by now, ten years post-apartheid, participants speak as much about the present as the past when they tell their stories. Even though personal problems in the present are often in the foreground, they always reflect the structural legacies of apartheid violence and violation as well their continued effects in the personal realm, in family, community and workplace. The questions posed by the HOM facilitators guiding the storytelling framed the exercise as decidedly political, and at the same time often promoted a non-political approach to the problems posed in the attempt to reconcile a significant discursive legacy, in which black participants were more likely to frame their stories and experiences of suffering in political terms, while white participants nearly always coined their pain in personal terms (p. 74). HOM had to recognise the complications incurred when the (explicitly) politicized victim met the (explicitly) apolitical beneficiary, which, inevitably, revealed very different ideas about potential means for healing and repair. Not surprising then that the process of the weekend rarely generated or harnessed a collective energy that could be channelled into concrete, visible political action.<sup>96</sup> Yet what it did generate was the possibility of experiencing, often for the first time for participants, a community of sentiment across historical faultlines.

### **The Community of Sentiment**

The community of sentiment at HOM rested on the temporary negation of structural reality in favour of the experience of social connectedness and as a means to expose and

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<sup>96</sup> However, the workshop encounters did lead to some participants' and the HOM's engagement in forming the Western Cape Reparations Forum, which constituted a body of NGOs and survivor/victim associations with an explicit agenda to lobby the government on the issue of reparations (for a more detailed account, also of the internal contestations of this forum, see Colvin 2004: 130-132).

de-construct power relations.<sup>97</sup> It created a shared utopian moment in time, a moment of pause, reflection, intense listening, and a new intimacy. It was through the prior moment of revelation and vulnerability during the storytelling that a different conversation could emerge, one that not only enabled participants to imagine self and other differently, but also to develop ideas about the future, to try out some of the desired soci-ability. It was also at this moment that a surfacing of existing social faultlines and moral dilemmas was inevitable, and arenas of contestation become more visible than they might have presently been in the public sphere. The community of sentiment allowed for experimentation with translating the new nation imaginary into concrete social practices while confronting participants with the complexity of the task. Its challenge was to allow question and challenge to common ways of seeing and relating to one another as 'Other', without dissolving difference and adverse emotions into a superficial feel-good exercise. The limitations of the community of sentiment manifested in its short-lived nature, in the willingness to risk it demanded, and in that it did not strive to undo or at times sufficiently recognise power relations, even if it revealed them.

At best, what was brought about by the community of sentiment was a genuine experience of momentary conviviality and sharing rooted in the equally momentary glimpse of one's subjectivity as intersubjectivity, of the interdependencies and responsibilities defining any workable new soci-ability. Taking the risk of exploring the challenges in overcoming the reality of physical and material separation, the embodied memories of division and de-humanisation, and the superficial unity of materialism and patriotic symbolism meant engaging the conflicting subtexts of South Africa's everyday social realities. Harnessing the desire for social togetherness can foster awareness of the need for social repair, at personal and interpersonal level, of the need to actively 'unlearn' the fear of the 'Other', the need to begin a consciously interdependent process of 'imagining, projecting and working towards an alternative future' (Colvin 2004: 162) and the need to follow Ben Okri's suggestion in the quote preceding the dissertation: to adopt a non-habitual way of seeing each other anew, every day.

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<sup>97</sup> Boal (1985 [1979], 1995) proposes similar techniques in his *Theatre of the Oppressed*. See also Fabian (1990).

At worst, the potential of the community of sentiment was defeated by the desire for glib resolutions, for a cheap gesture of reconciliation, predictable outcomes and definite closures. The brevity of the moment that could not be sustained seemed like an unfulfilled promise producing hopes and expectations in the knowledge that they would be crushed soon after. Resisting the unsettlement that genuine exchange could bring about meant that comfort zones were left unchallenged or participants succumbed quickly to take new comfort in the approved discourses of reconciliation, national unity and individual responsibility for healing and repair. This led to frustration and disappointment, which resulted in (re)polarisation and bitterness. We need to be mindful of the *rawness* of the experience for the first post-conflict generation that may warrant refusal of engagement and insistence on established coping strategies, pointing to the risk of engaging in a community of sentiment and the fragility, ethical volatility, perhaps even naiveté of the exercise at first generation level.

### **Sustaining the energy of hope**

Beyond the workshop, the community of sentiment and the moral and practical frameworks it placed on the momentary encounters at the workshops were put to the test. Facing (each) Other also meant that the moral economy of storytelling became visible through the differing, and largely unfulfilled, expectations of what the moment of the workshop and the potential relationships emerging from that moment meant to participants. While for one set of participants, the main desire was to explore the possibility of forming friendships without addressing economic disparity, the other felt that now that a base for relations had been forged and common commitment to HOM's framework of joint responsibility had been stated, redress of economic inequality in form of personal assistance and access to opportunities and resources would be forthcoming. The conception that those enjoying the fruits of past (and present) privilege are obliged to help was formulated not necessarily on a mentality of dependency or the often-quoted 'sense of entitlement', but was issued in a spirit of practising interdependency and based on the ethics of a caring soci-ability and the value that the distribution of the fruits of success is what makes wealth meaningful and justifies privilege (see also Nyamnjoh

2002). Yet in the post-workshop encounters that was not how participants from either side of the spectrum saw the response of the 'Other' to the requests (for money, employment, assistance with burials, etc.) and offers (to come to one's home; to meet and talk in coffee shops, restaurants, etc.) that followed. Making meaning of friendship across racial barriers and its practical implications, as projected by participants, often resulted in disappointment and frustration, and, at times, retreat into prejudice and polarisation. Even so, there were relations that persisted against great odds, many of them among the participants who came repeatedly and went on to join the facilitator's group.

Taking 'relationships' per se as indicator for change in the post-apartheid sphere seems to me an over-used concept that needs urgent unpacking when applied in this context. The visibility of cross-racial interaction in the public sphere cannot assume the ability to communicate effectively or relate deeply, and quantitative attempts at measuring of race-relations (Gibson & Gouws 1999; Gibson & MacDonald 2001; Institute for Justice and Reconciliation 2003, 2004) remain limited to such categories as 'having had a meal with someone of another race'. More often than not, HOM participants affirmed that, in practice, the assumptions around this imperative have led to increased politeness, but enabled little meaningful human contact or ability to confront difficult issues of the present. The intimacy generated by HOM the workshop process managed to challenge this social superficiality and yet had to balance the risk of depth with needs for safety. Such moments laid bare in painful ways how apartheid's racialised conceptions of 'self' and 'other' continue to inflict deep personal hurt and lasting damage to various layers of the social fabric. It remains noteworthy though that a significant number of HOM participants at the time *attempted* somehow to sustain the HOM experience and translate some of it into their everyday lives. Their desire to do so, and the ways in which they held on to the experience as a sacred space in memory, revealed not only the power of the discourse of change and renewal, but also the need for a new social map through which to navigate the interpersonal domain in post-apartheid SA, the practicality of which is not easily measured by immediate behavioural change or explicit political action. Yet the attempts to relate differently may form one way of translating into practice Williams 'requirement of something very different from traditional politics' needed to engage

internal (and systemic) 'alien formations'. We need a theory of change that pays respect to what makes people at first-generation level try something as challenging and difficult as an intimate encounter with the former 'Other' and that recognises subtle shifts in mindsets, in persistent structures of feeling and formations of relationship, shifts that enable new questions and actions to be imagined even if they are not yet enacted in the current generation.

### ***Facing History***

[O]ur ethnographies can only take us to resting points that are not endings but openings to new issues that require continuous working through, so characteristic of everyday life (Das & Kleinman 2001: 26)

Through the immediacy, participation and unsettlement generated by the HOM setting, coupled with the participants' struggle to face the personal, moral and political challenges emerging in relation to each one's own unique position in and contribution to history, a critical link was forged between history and biography, one that in other contexts, such as the German example, was largely made only a generation or two later. The willingness to risk and experiment in this way was encouraged by the new nation discourse, and the symbolic frame of reconciliation. Yet there is also the assumption in South Africa that because such a process did happen at first generation level, it can have a preventative, pre-emptive or even redemptive effect (see Ross & Reynolds 1999). The past is now done, and a kind of closure has been achieved that will contain not only radical agendas for change, but also form enough of a common ground to sustain peace in the face of disparity, and, possibly, and to provide a quickened 'normalisation of history' (Du Toit 2004).

Yet 'constructive engagement' with a traumatic and divisive past might be an impossibility in terms for members of the first generation for whom interaction in face of personal memories of the past, can never be a matter of intellectual engagement alone, but forms an unsettling emotional experience. Trauma, the memories of physical harm, but also more subtle or ordinary forms of violence and violation embedded in people's memories and bodies cannot be grasped fully (or understood) by *thinking* about them.

Neither can they be ‘un-thought’ or ‘un-known’ (Davis 1997) in a way that would achieve an active kind of what Schlink (2003) terms ‘de-traumatisation’ of society. One has to learn to read the ‘silence at the edges of speech’, as Das (2000: 67) suggests.

The first generation is most immediately confronted with the challenge of looking forward and backward at once, acknowledging that which cannot be undone, giving recognition to the dead and the indelible scars left behind on human bodies, minds and spirits, yet heeding the human ability to cope, integrate and re-invent the future. As Father Lapsley put it, ‘forever is part of the landscape’ (FML 05/00) for the first generation, especially for the survivors of both ordinary and extraordinary violations. In South Africa the critique of premature closure (Grunebaum 2002, Reynolds and Ross 1999, Ross 2003, Wilson 2001) is still valid – much is not commemorated and the powerful symbols of state memory, such as Robben Island, have drawn attention and resources from smaller, innovative attempts at commemoration and the multitude of unrecognised sites of memory in communities around the country. At HOM there was a recurrent debate among participants about the debts emanating from the past, not only among the living, but also to the dead and the yet-to-be-born. Participants pondered how to right the wrongs of the past and present for the next generations in a way that places people at the centre of such efforts, that pays respect to the variety of options and practices participants brought for mourning the dead and for preparing the ground for the coming generation.

If the first generation retains a sense of doubt in their efforts at sculpting the ground for new social possibilities in the present, the desire to lay the foundations for a different future for the children was widely shared. The conversation between generations, when attempted at HOM, turned out to be a difficult one where the first generation was faced with the desire to protect the next from potentially ‘harmful memories’ and narrations, while the next generation had to engage at once with the parents’ pain and the expectations that for them, the ‘born free’s of South Africa, not unlike the ‘afterborn’ in Germany, things are all different and they are not subject to the same limitations as the parents. Yet the German example shows that the next generation cannot be ‘saved’, either

by silence or the prerogative of talking and remembrance, from the ways in which parents' experience and memories will inform their possibilities and choices of subjectivity and identity.

### **The Intergenerational Dimension**

After a couple of years, there seems to come a period of exhaustion in which people just don't want to deal with the past anymore; they prefer to turn to the future. It takes perhaps 15 to 20 or 25 years, often into the next generation, before a society begins to deal with its past again. [...] [In Germany a]fter the first generation, when victims and perpetrators were reluctant to speak about the past, my generation, a generation for whom talking is now normal, sets the tone (Schlink 2003: 2-4).

Critical to a conversation between generations is that it is conducted in a *meaningful way* for each generation, that neither dramatises nor renders banal, neither gives 'foregone conclusions' (Bernstein ) nor surrenders the idea that generations and individuals ceaselessly draw their own lessons from experiences, memories and representations of the past and put these into action. A meaningful intergenerational exchange advocates neither remembering nor forgetting, but recognises both as needed and connected in a fluid interchange. If the conversation becomes 'preaching' a particular approach or view or rests on a moral high ground it is bound to fail, as Schlink (2003) concludes in the German case. Moral pathos that is not manifest in existent moral engagement begins to jar and the next generation has a keen sense for such incongruence.

Looking more widely at the relevance of some these insights beyond HOM and South Africa, the German perspective sharpens focus on the (inter)generational dimension of any project of 'dealing' with a past of atrocity and authoritarianism, be it a national, communal or (inter)personal process. Each generation needs to find its own debates and challenges, grapple with its own central issues, ask it own questions, fight its own battles and seek its own closures. Each generation can lay to rest some of the questions and emotional legacies accompanying the presence of the past - pain and sorrow, guilt and shame, anger and hatred - and will carry some over to the next. The pace may change but

the labour of making meaning of the past for and with each other continues and influences significantly the choices people make for the future. It is the meaningful engagement with living memory that forms the counter-force to the limitations of official history (see Werbner 1998) and opens up alternative practices of commemoration, debate and resistance. Yet as time passes and with it the first-generation witnesses, history, seemingly, takes over centre-stage in conveying the meaning of the past to the younger age groups as living memory recedes into the background of other representations. In South Africa, the TRC was framed as the primary means for generating a new official apartheid history using the TRC testimonies, individual memories narrated into the framework of 'gross human rights violations', as credentials. Du Toit argues that,

[s]trictly speaking, the TRC as contemporary history comes at the cost of living memory of individual and collective trauma. The transitional politics of memory and history [...] involves both the battle of memory against history and the substitution of a newly documented history for that living memory (du Toit 2004: 68-69).

The dissertation has shown, however, that while history does emerge inevitably limited in the main, officially-taught version of written memory, memory lives on in more ways than fragments of narration transferred to other generations; it lives on even in silences and denial, and it lives on in the daily interactions of people. A one-sided view of living memory, subsumed under or, as du Toit (ibid.) argues, consumed by history negates the ways in which memory significantly informs, shapes and defines subjectivity - the choices, actions and interactions of the eye witnesses - and even subsequent generations. The written version of the TRC's report has generated little interest among the current generation while the spoken and televised testimonies sparked emotional debates. The newly-documented history is not a substitution for living memory, but a framing for how, where and with whom living memory is to be shared, how processes of remembering and forgetting are forged and public representations and silences legitimised. That does not mean though that history can fully dis-empower or frame the ways in which living memory informs the interpersonal domain in a time of transition.

The conversation between generations is an ongoing challenge, in which 'facing' (self, other, history) is not about either remembering or forgetting but about the *inevitability* of engagement with the presence of the past in the living memory of each generation at subjective level, whether through denial or openness, silence or speaking, banishment or request, violence or peace. The driving force for this conversation is again the attempt at 'making connections', consequentially, not only to deal with 'skeletons in the cupboard' of the nation (as the TRC attempted), but to encounter the more subtle 'ghosts in the attic' of one's own home (Reichel 1989). While the first generation may only be able to approach its painful memories 'tracing the edge sideways like the crab scuttling' (Taussig 1999: 2),<sup>98</sup> the following may not be able to summon the interest and patience needed to see, experience and make sense of the links emerging to their own stories and experiences. Yet the oncoming generations will not be able to understand the makings of their own senses of self, of how they experience subjectivity and intersubjectivity, without making connections (and seeing the disconnections) between the memories of parents', their own memories and emotional responses, whom they perceive as 'Selves' and 'Others', as well as the teachings of history they encounter.

The immensity of the task in South Africa remains - building a stable, positive peace and healthy sociality in face of what feels, to many, like a fragile equilibrium beneath which reigns fundamental anger at perpetual injustice, unmet expectations of change and new forms of exclusion experienced. The process of encountering the 'hard lessons of disenchantment with the new state' (Werbner on Nyamnjoh 2002: 11) continues, accompanied by the testing of assumptions about sanctioned and censored social practices/changed rules of engagement in the new order. But, so far, the will to negotiate existing possibilities and be met with complex answers remains visible, too. It also becomes clear that the expectations of the 'Other' are by no means simply merged with or substituted by those posed to the state, but rather remain distinct interpersonal requests seeking concrete possibilities for social repair in exchange for a shared sociality, for legitimacy and belonging to the new social imaginary through concrete practices and

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<sup>98</sup> 'The shortest way between two points, between violence and its analysis, is the long way round, tracing the edge sideways like the crab scuttling' (Taussig 1999: 2).

relationships. We need to explore further how the ground can be sculpted upon which new social possibilities can emerge and become visible to the individual as tangible, practical opportunities. The final picture the dissertation revealed of a first-generation response to the South African transition at HOM remains ambivalent and uncertain, shaped by both a sense of despair and a sense of hope.

Learning from the experiences of the ‘afterborn’ in Germany it is safe to say that the following generations in a post-authoritarian society with a history of atrocity inherit not only versions of History and, to a limited extent, individual stories of the past, but a more elusive subtext, a kind of emotional, ‘embodied’ matrix to parents’ and relatives’, teachers’, neighbours’ and other community members’ spoken and unspoken memories.<sup>99</sup> While the need for inter- and intra-generational conversation remains, the distance in time allows for different commentary and different questions to emerge as each generation seeks different forms of closure and opens up different ways of grappling with the meaning of the past in the present. In a context like South Africa, where the ordinary has so long been abnormal (Ndebele 1991), the aim of dealing with a past of atrocity and de-humanisation cannot be hastened ‘normalisation’, nor ‘mastery’ and ‘mainstreaming’ as a kind of ‘redemption’ from the past, but conscious efforts at making it ‘inheritable’ (Das & Kleinman 2001: 13) for others in the future, at finding new, creative, sensitive and meaningful forms and spheres of engagement with the *human* dimensions of living memory, with the moral implications, the meanings of healing and repair, and, foremost, with each other in the everyday.

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<sup>99</sup> See also Mitscherlich & Mitscherlich (1967) about the German ‘inability to mourn’ as a cultural pathology emanating from the experiences of the Third Reich and the Shoah.

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