

**In the Shadows of the Archive:
Investigating the Paarl march of November 22nd 1962**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Artium in the
Department of History, University of the Western Cape.

Plagiarism declaration

I, Bianca van Laun, hereby certify that this thesis is my own work. I understand what plagiarism is and I have used quotations and references to fully acknowledge the words and ideas of others.

Bianca van Laun

May 2012

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of several people whose various contributions deserve special mention.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Ms Nicky Rousseau, whose invaluable assistance, knowledge, supervision and guidance from the preliminary to the final phases of this thesis has enabled me to develop it from a mere question to a coherent argument. I am tremendously thankful for her patience, time and diligence in helping me work through several versions of this thesis.

I am grateful to God, and to my family for their understanding and endless love through the duration of my studies. My parents and grandparents deserve special mention for their inseparable love and prayers. To Daniel Nicholson, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation for his help with archival research but mostly for his love, support and persistent confidence in me.

I am indebted to the History Department and Centre for Humanities Research of the University of the Western Cape which, combined, have become my intellectual home. Special thanks go to the teaching staff of the History Department and especially to Patricia Hayes, Leslie Witz, Ciraj Rassool and Andrew Bank. I am eternally grateful for seven years of unfailing support, encouragement and assistance. It is also a pleasure to express my gratitude to the administrative staff of the History Department, Janine Brandt and Jane Smit for their friendliness and caring administrative support.

It is an honour to thank Professor Premesh Lalu for his invaluable advice, intellectual influence, guidance and motivation which have been of enormous benefit to me throughout my academic career at UWC. I am further very grateful to Lameez Lalkhen, administrator of the CHR, for going above and beyond providing administrative assistance to becoming a friend. I feel very fortunate to have been a fellow in the Postgraduate Study of Humanities in Africa (PSHA) and am very grateful for the important intellectual space which the CHR provides. The numerous reading group sessions, seminars, conferences and colloquia have been extremely beneficial and the opportunity to engage stimulating discussions and debates has enabled my thinking and writing to grow in leaps and bounds. I am grateful for the privilege of being part of this academically engaged and supportive environment. I am heartily thankful

to the Mellon and Ford Foundations for their generous financial support which has enabled me to focus on my research.

I wish to express further appreciation to my PSHA colleagues, including Bridgett Sass, Okechukwu Nwafor, Maurits van Bever Donker, Christian Williams, Noëleen Murray, Stanley Baluku, Sara Ferrari, Charles Mulinda Kabwete and Jeremiah Arowosegby among others, for their encouragement, interest and insightful advice. I thank Professor Brian Raftopolous, Suren Pillay and Heidi Grunebaum for their interesting and helpful insight into, at times difficult, readings and for their inspiring devotion to the creation of knowledge in the Humanities.

I wish to convey special thanks to my UWC post graduate friends and colleagues, especially Riedwaan Moosage and Noorun-Nisaa Delate for their keen interest, shared literature, guidance, unfailing support and for granting me time in the midst of all of their own activities, even to answer some of my most unintelligent questions. In particular I want to thank Riedwaan Moosage for reading this thesis and for his advice and constructive comments.

I am further grateful to the countless others who have shown their interest and willingness to discuss the Paarl march and who have shared sources. In particular I am appreciative to Loyiso Felix Sibelegwana for several interesting and productive discussions.

Lastly I would like to show my gratitude for the incredible opportunity to be part of an exchange programme at the Centre for African Studies of the University of Basel, Switzerland for one semester. I wish to express my appreciation to Veit Arlt and Dag Henrichsen, and particularly to Giorgio Miescher, Lorena Rizzo, Nada Rizzo and family for their incredible hospitality and keen interest in me and my work. It was a great privilege to spend time at the *Basler Afrika Bibliographien*, as was the opportunity to present my proposal research in a seminar organised by the History Department of the University of Basel. I am also grateful for the new networks of friends and colleagues that this semester enabled. In particular I am thankful to Sarah Godsell for her friendship, interest in my work and for proof reading parts of this thesis.

Writing this thesis has been a challenging and rewarding experience and I am extremely grateful to each person who has been part of its successful realisation.

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Introduction

“...history may well show that there were many other factors which were not brought to light[by the Snyman Commission]...Perhaps in the future a fuller story of the Paarl riot will be known, revealing some of the undercurrents of factionalism, intimidation and frustration that were barely hinted at in the evidence.”¹

This thesis is concerned with an uprising which occurred during the early morning hours of the 22nd of November 1962 in Paarl- a small agricultural town some 60 kilometres northeast of Cape Town. On this occasion a group of about 250 men,² armed with axes, pangas and other home-made weapons, marched from the nearby Mbekweni township to the police station in the town’s centre. An event, which lasted no more than three hours, left seven dead and several wounded in its wake.³

This uprising was a comparatively small event, with comparatively few casualties but it took place against the backdrop of the turn to armed struggle which followed the banning of the African National Congress (hereafter the ANC) and the Pan African Congress (hereafter the PAC).⁴ However in the sense that it seemed to directly threaten white civilians, this was an event constructed as most closely resembling the anti-colonialist Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya between 1952 and 1960 during which time press reports focused most often on the brutal killings of white women and children by groups represented as violent “terrorist

¹ Anna Pearce, *A Permit to Live*, Unpublished Manuscript (1965), National Library of South Africa, 292.

² The seeming accuracy of this figure is but one of the uncertainties that this thesis seeks to explore.

³ Tom Lodge, “The Paarl Insurrection: A South African Uprising,” *African Studies Review*, Vol. 25 (1982). Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (Braamfontein: Longman Group Ltd, 1983).

⁴ Madeleine Fullard, “State repression in the 1960’s,” in *The road to democracy in South Africa*, South African Democracy Education Trust, Volume 1 [1970-1980] (South Africa: Unisa Press, 2006). I will expand on these activities later in this introduction, but these included for example rioting and violence in Durban’s Cato Manor township (February 1960), Sharpeville and Langa marches (March 1960), Pondo revolts in the Transkei (from February 1960.) See Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*. Gail Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978). Thomas Karis, Gwendolyn Carter and Gail Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge: A documentary history of African politics in South Africa 1882-1964, Volume 3* (USA: Hoover Institution Publication, 1978). Philip Kgosana, *Lest we forget* (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1988). Ace Mgxashe, *Are you with us? The story of a PAC activist* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2006). Tom Lodge, “The Cape Town Troubles, March-April 1960,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 4 (1978). Govan Mbeki, *South Africa: The peasants revolt* (London: International Defence and Aid for Southern Africa, 1984).

gangs.”⁵ Informed by this kind of over-simplified propaganda of the war in Kenya, the events in Paarl, particularly the killing of 17 year old Rentia Vermeulen and 21 year old Frans Richard, as well as the attack on an elderly couple in their bed, by men with “primitive weapons,” incited massive latent white anxieties throughout South Africa and intensive repressive measures.

For the quiet agricultural town to have been the site of such violence seemed to have shocked the apartheid state and white South Africa. Paarl was a place normally considered to be “quiet and conservative...a helplessly progressive town reluctant to lose its village character, where life moves not much faster than the growing vine and white and coloured have for generations gone amicably about their business.”⁶ In this fictional idyllic context the violence of the march was magnified. As the *Cape Argus* put it, “In this placid setting the blood lust and killing of Wednesday night assumes a horror and tragedy beyond normal proportion, like murder in a monastery.”⁷

This relatively small event received inflated press coverage and became the stage for a state-appointed commission of inquiry (“The Commission appointed to inquire into the events on the 20th to 22nd November, 1962, at Paarl, and the causes that gave rise thereto”) as well as some five years of ongoing judicial trials leading to the imprisonment of scores and the execution of 21 men.⁸ Thereafter the apartheid state was satisfied that it had eliminated Poqo, and the matter of the Paarl “riot” was put to bed.⁹

Over the next twenty years the events in Paarl seemed to have been largely forgotten in the ‘shadows of the archive,’ other than to be used as an example of an ineffective liberation

⁵ Marshall Clough, *Mau Mau Memories: History, memory and politics* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 155. David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The dirty war in Kenya and the end of empire* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005).

⁶ “Quiet, Conservative Paarl is shaken by Riot Horror,” *Cape Argus* (23 November 1962).

⁷ “Quiet, Conservative Paarl is shaken by Riot Horror,” *Cape Argus* (23 November 1962).

⁸ Fullard, “State repression in the 1960’s,” 387.

⁹ “Poqo uitgewis in Paarl” *Die Burger* (4 December 1962).

attempt, by both the ANC's perspective as well as in much of the academic literature.¹⁰ In 1982 Tom Lodge was the first to understand this event as an important act of resistance in the history of South African liberation movements. However, primarily concerned as he was with the sociology of liberation, Lodge's work seemed unable to recover the Paarl march or to ensure for it the position he thought it deserved in South African liberation historiography.¹¹

Perhaps it is here that my modest effort to understand this event is located. The thesis is concerned with the ways in which the Paarl march had been constructed and written at multiple levels, and asks whether we can move beyond this representation. At a historiographical level it raises the question of how one thinks through a fragment of history and explores such a small event which erupts at one moment and then seems to disappear, without consigning it to the margins of a resistance framework dominated by the history of the ANC.¹²

Locating the Paarl March

In locating Poqo and the Paarl march and relying largely on the Commission's interpretation, most scholars begin with the PAC's separation from the ANC in 1959.¹³ While such a progressive chain-like discussion seems to me to largely reproduce the Commission's analysis of the emergence of Poqo, it does seem necessary to consider Paarl's uprising in relation to the political situation in South Africa during the 1950's and early 1960's.

¹⁰ "The ANC spearheads Revolution: Leaflet issued by the ANC" (May 1963), accessed at www.anc.org.za on 23 September 2011. Edward Feit, *Urban Revolt in South Africa 1960-1964* (USA: North Western University Press, 1971). Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*. Richard Gibson, *African Liberation Movements: Contemporary struggles against white minority rule* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972). Karis et al, *From Protest to Challenge*. Dirk Kotze, *African politics in South Africa, 1964-1974* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1975).

¹¹ Lodge, "The Paarl Insurrection." Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*.

¹² I refer here to the ways in which resistance to apartheid has been conceptualised.

¹³ Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 231. Maaba, "The PAC's war against the state, 1960-1963," in *The Road to Democracy in South Africa*, South African Democracy Education Trust, Volume 1 [1970-1980] (South Africa: Unisa Press, 2006), 257. Muriel Horrell, *Action, reaction and counter-action* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1971). Karis et al, *From Protest to Challenge*. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*.

The PAC emerged in 1959 as a breakaway from the ANC. In 1960 both the ANC and PAC launched anti-pass campaigns and called for people to leave their passes at home and present themselves at police stations for arrest.¹⁴

The PAC sought to forestall the ANC's anti-pass campaign by launching its own at an earlier date. However, the PAC-led anti-pass demonstrations at the police station in the Transvaal township of Sharpeville on 21 March 1960 resulted in 69 men, women and children being killed.¹⁵ This event was followed by massive demonstrations at the police station in Langa township, Cape Town, which were met with tear gas and police batons.¹⁶ On 30 March the young PAC leader, Philip Kgosana, led a group of 30,000 people into Cape Town's city centre in protest against the pass laws.¹⁷ The march prompted the announcement of a State of Emergency and the arrests of hundreds of ANC and PAC activists and leaders. Under the Unlawful Organisations Act, passed on 8 April 1960, the ANC and PAC were banned. Several trials followed as the state introduced various other new laws, including the Suppression of Communism Act, the Riotous Assemblies Act and the Public Safety Act.¹⁸

As unrest spread, state organisations responded with increasing repression and violence, the 1960's was a decade in which the state rapidly reorganised its security structures.¹⁹ Political undercurrents throughout South Africa became increasingly militant at this time.²⁰ The first part of the decade saw increasingly violent resistance in the Transkei to the Bantu Authorities

¹⁴ See Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*. See also Gwendolyn Carter, "African Nationalist Movements in South Africa," *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol.5, No.1 (1963).

¹⁵ Lodge, "The Cape Town Troubles," 216.

¹⁶ Philip Kgosana, *Lest we forget*. Lodge, "The Cape Town Troubles."

¹⁷ Lodge, "The Cape Town Troubles," 216.

¹⁸ Maaba, "The PAC's war against the state," 252. Fullard, "State repression in the 1960's," 343-344.

¹⁹ Fullard, "State repression in the 1960's," 349.

²⁰ At this time violent uprisings took place in Durban's Cato Manor (February 1960) in response to forced removals, and political sentiment in Cape Town's townships, particularly, Langa, became increasingly militant. Mgxashe, *Are you with us?* Kgosana, *Lest we forget*. Ace Mgxashe, *Are you with us? The story of a PAC activist* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2006), 38. "Riots erupt in Cato Manor," accessed at www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/riots-erupt-cato-manor.htm on 30 April 2012.

system, the extension of passes to women and the reallocation of land.²¹ Peasant uprisings broke out in Pondoland in the Transkei and in the Transvaal resulting in violent responses by the state police and the declaration of a State of Emergency in November 1960.²²

Under the Urban Areas Act, Paarl's coloured and black populations had been forcibly removed and relocated to separate areas.²³ People defined as 'coloured' were relocated to the 'other side' of the Berg River which became a racial dividing line, and much of the Valley's black population was 'endorsed out' while the remaining 'productive' individuals, particularly migrant workers, were housed in the two municipal locations, Mbekweni and Langabuya.²⁴ Resettlement meant that many were denied urban residence, and from 1955 women whose husbands had not lived and worked in Paarl regularly for fifteen years were 'endorsed out' and sent to reserves, mainly in the Transkei.²⁵ An additional threat to continued black residence in Paarl came in the form of the Urban Labour Preference Policy a prospect first raised by H.F. Verwoerd, then Minister of Native Affairs, in Parliament in 1952, according to which the state meant to replace black unskilled labour in the Western Cape with coloured workers. In 1955 the secretary for Native Affairs, Dr. W.W. Eiselen announced the state's policy to ultimately remove all black people from the Western Cape altogether.²⁶ With increasing political turbulence in the country this matter seemed to become

²¹ See Govan Mbeki, *South Africa: The peasants revolt* (London: International Defence and Aid for Southern Africa, 1984), 111- 121.

²² Mbeki, *South Africa: The peasants revolt*, 124.

²³ See article "Forced removals from Paarl, Rondebosch," *The Torch* (13 February 1962). This report notes that 15 families who had lived in cottages in the Klein Drakenstein area for over 30 years had received eviction notices and were relocated to Langabuya.

²⁴ Candy Malherbe, *Paarl: The Hidden Story* (Mowbray: Esquire Press, 1987), 59.

²⁵ Perhaps the most well-publicised of these cases, both in South Africa and internationally, was that of Mrs Matsokolo Mapheele. The pregnant Mrs Mapheele was arrested and convicted under the Urban Areas Act in the Paarl Magistrates Court in 1962 for having been in the area for longer than 72 hours and living in the area illegally with her husband. She appealed but lost on the grounds that she had no legal right to be in Paarl. See "No Right to be Anywhere: Mapheele Case Highlights one of Thousands," *The Torch* (21 November 1962). "Not to go means risking jail," *Drum* (September 1962).

²⁶ Eiselen had argued that it was necessary to remove all black people from the Western Cape as, "the Western Province was the natural home of the Coloured people, and they had the right to be protected against the competition of Natives in the labour market".... "In order to protect the Coloured people socially, culturally and

more pressing as the growing numbers of black and coloured people living and working together provoked fears of a united black working class, and even more so after the Paarl march, of ‘native rebellion.’²⁷

Such fears were seemingly also stoked by violent independence struggles in other African countries during the 1960’s where nationalist sentiment had become increasingly radical and demanded the removal of white minority rule.²⁸

In South Africa, it was the ANC that took centre stage in the narrative of resistance to apartheid oppression at the time. The turn to an armed struggle and formation of the ANC’s armed wing, Umkhonto we Sizwe, in the 1960’s are represented as a last resort following the failure of non-violent means. Umkhonto is remembered as implementing a carefully organised campaign that targeted state installations rather than people and that, at least initially, aimed to avoid bloodshed. Poqo is most often juxtaposed with this depiction of Umkhonto’s more strategic resistance struggle and is directly related to extreme violence.²⁹ Notwithstanding this, the state met ANC activities with ever greater repression. In this narrative then, Poqo and the Paarl march seem to fit uncomfortably and find little space.

Where the Paarl march has been discussed it seems to continually be in terms of a particular enduring narrative- a narrative constructed largely through the institutionally-bounded discourses of the Snyman Commission and judicial trials. By this I refer to the way in which the Paarl march was assigned to Poqo, described variously as either the PAC reincarnated or

economically, it was therefore necessary to remove the Natives and "restore the traditional demographic order in the Western Province." See F. Snitcher, "The Eiselen Scheme," *Africa South*, Vol. 1, No.3 (1957), 40.

²⁷ Deborah Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 88. "W.P Mass Removals Campaign," *The Torch* (1 August 1962).

²⁸ During this time Zimbabwe’s guerrilla war was taking off, the Congo was marked by revolutionary protests between 1963 and 1968, and Kenya faced its own guerrilla war. See Joseph Mtisi, Munyaradzi Nyakundya, Teresa Barnes, "War in Rhodesia, 1965-1980," in Brian Raftopoulos and Alois Mlambo, *Becoming Zimbabwe: A history from the pre-colonial period to 2008* (Harare and Johannesburg: African Books Collective, 2009). Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*.

²⁹ Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa*, 231, 241. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*. Maaba, "The PAC’s war against the state," 258.

its armed wing. In this version local Poqo members, agitating around local grievances resulting from poor administration and corrupt officials in the Mbekweni Township, attempted to implement a PAC plan to overthrow the white state by 1963.³⁰ In this narration the march is placed within a framework of formal political organisation and defiance, and provided with a pre-history of grievance and resistance.³¹

“Here is the grim story of riot-struck Paarl...”³²

In the weeks following the march a narrative began to emerge which attempted to set out the dimensions of the “riot,” the extent of damages, and stressed the tragedy of the killing of two white youths. Named as the “Paarl riot,”³³ the event was placed firmly within Paarl rather than Mbekweni. This spoke to the mindset that it was white Paarl that was affected by the uprising, in a sense already erasing the Mbekweni marchers’ capacity to speak.

According to this narrative the marchers walked the six kilometres to the town where they divided into two groups, one designated to march on the local jail and the other, the police station in an attempt to demand the release of several men arrested on the morning of 21 November.³⁴ Allegedly Poqo cells in Langa, in Cape Town would carry out disturbances at

³⁰ Reports of a PAC plan to take over the South African government by 1963 emerged through the Snyman Commission hearings and was heavily played on by the press. See Transcripts of Snyman Commission hearings (University of Cape Town Manuscripts and Archives) (hereafter referred to as Snyman Commission), 228-229. “Poqo se leiers sou witmense uitwis, land oorneem,” in *Die Burger* (1 March 1963). “Hooded man at Inquiry,” *Cape Times* (14 December 1962). Potlako Leballo (the PAC’s acting president after the organisation’s banning and Robert Sobukwe’s arrest) boasted at a press conference in March 1963 that the PAC had been planning a revolution to take place in April 1963 throughout the country. A general uprising was to be carried out on 8 April when members were to “rise up and set about slaughtering as many whites as possible...” Benjamin Pogrand, *Sobukwe and Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 1990), 180.

³¹ *Report of the Paarl Commission of Enquiry, consisting of the Honourable Mr Justice Snyman, Judge of the Transvaal Provincial Division of the Supreme Court of South Africa, upon the events on the 20th to the 22nd November, 1962, at Paarl in the province of the Cape of Good Hope, and the causes which gave rise thereto*, (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1963) (hereafter Report).

³² “Grim Story of Riot-Struck Paarl,” *Cape Times* (23 November 1962).

³³ Hereafter referred to as the Paarl march. Official discourse named this as a ‘riot.’ I am aware of the term’s negative connotation as produced by state discourse to attach a particular racial and negative associations or subtext to the event.

³⁴ “Police see attack as reprisal for arrests,” *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962). See Snyman Commission, 237-249.

the same time thus preventing police re-inforcements from arriving from Cape Town.³⁵ As the marchers moved up Paarl's main shopping street they damaged cars, shop windows and burnt petrol pumps. On reaching the police station, the police, who had been alerted by a bus driver, fired into the crowd and the insurgents scattered. A group of men ran down Loop Street, a residential street behind the police station where they attempted to enter private houses, killing two people and injuring another five.³⁶ Although black victims received significantly little mention in contrast to the publicity around the two white victims, several of the marchers were wounded and four were killed that morning.³⁷

While the official accounts put the number of black casualties at five and most scholars have tended to repeat this figure unproblematically, none of the accounts of the march engage with the fact that the fifth black victim, Matthews Mayezana Mali, was shot by police on the following day, 23 November 1962, while leading a group of demonstrators to the Police Station to hand over a list of grievances.³⁸

The South African Police (hereafter the SAP), through their massive arrests and interrogations of Mbekweni residents, introduced Poqo as an underground extension of the PAC operating in Mbekweni and Langa and presented it as the movement responsible for the march as well as several prior murders and instances of violence in the area.³⁹

³⁵ Report, 20. Lodge, "The Paarl Insurrection," 112. "Attack on Cape Town also," *Paarl Post* (14 December 1962).

³⁶ "Seven killed in Paarl rioting," *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962). "Paarl is Calm," *Cape Times* (23 November 1962). "Grim Story of Riot-Struck Paarl," *Cape Times* (23 November 1962). "Shooting and fighting in Paarl street," *Cape Times* (12 December 1962). "Drie Aanvalle op Polisiestatie," *Paarl Post* (11 December 1962). "Stories of Horror at Paarl," *Cape Times* (12 December 1962).

³⁷ *Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Vol. 3 (Cape Town: Juta, 1998), 403. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (hereafter TRC) names these victims as Godfrey Yekiso, Madodana Camagu, John Magigo, Ngenisile Sigwebo and Matthews Mayezana Mali.

³⁸ See TRC Report, Vol. 3, 403.

³⁹ "Background of killings, Stabbings to Paarl outburst," *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962). "Mob attack on Police Station described," *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962). "Lieutenant Tells of Battle with Screaming Panga Attackers," *Cape Times* (11 December 1962). "Poqo responsible for killings, says witness," *Cape Argus* (10 December 1962). "Quiet, Conservative Paarl is shaken by riot horror," *Cape Argus* (23 November 1962). "Counsel blames 'Poqo' for 8 murders," *Cape Argus* (3 December 1962).

In attempts to control the discourse around the march, almost immediately thereafter, the state appointed the Snyman Commission of Inquiry and selected a judge of the Transkei Provincial Court, Justice J.H. Snyman to don the commissioner's hat.⁴⁰ The Commission was motivated as "vitaly important to know why a situation such as that existing at Paarl could exist so long without being cleared up," and so as to "prevent repetition of what happened in Paarl, to punish the culprits and to remove the element of violence."⁴¹

As part of an intensified security establishment built up after the march, hundreds of men alleged to be Poqo members were arrested leading to at least six trials dealing with the Paarl march and the prior murders which played out between 1963 and 1966.⁴² As I will argue, these trials continued much the same logic of representation as that set out by the Snyman Commission, and to a large extent were meant to demonstrate the nature and extent of the Poqo threat.

While Poqo and the Paarl uprising have in many ways been dismissed as irrational, spontaneous and ineffective, I want to suggest that there is something about this event, at this moment and location, that is significant. Three of the Paarl accused were the first men to be executed for sabotage in South Africa.⁴³ What is it about this moment and this uprising that was different? And how then does this event, which had incited such a massive response and counter-insurgency measures, ultimately get placed in the shadows of the archive and of a dominant resistance struggle narrative?

⁴⁰"Judge to Inquire into Paarl's Night of Terror," *Cape Times* (23 November 1962). "Riots Inquiry and many murder charges," the *Paarl Post* (11 December 1962).

⁴¹"Background of killings, Stabbings to Paarl outburst," *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962). "Mob attack on Police Station described," *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962).

⁴²Fullard, "State repression in the 1960's," 386. "C.I.D Progress at Paarl," *Cape Times* (24 November 1962). "Police swoop in Paarl," *Cape Times* (24 November 1962).

⁴³ Lennox Madikane, Fezile Felix Jaxa and Mxolisi Damane, were given death sentences for their alleged leading roles in the uprising. They were hanged in Pretoria on 1 November 1963. Supreme Court case, *State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others*, March 1963. National archive, Box1/1/1/544. See Brown Maaba, "The PAC's war against the state," 273.

The majority of the work around the march, and Poqo's life and activities seems to have relied directly on evidence presented to the Snyman Commission and courts.⁴⁴ As such my thesis is directly concerned with a reading of the origins, limits and nature of these archives rather than engaging in oral interviews. In this sense oral interviews are beyond the scope of my thesis for both practical and intellectual reasons. The Paarl population of the 1960's was largely migrant and, in addition, hundreds were endorsed out after the march, thus making people who participated in the march difficult to trace.⁴⁵ Beyond the logistical constraints, it is questionable whether oral histories produced half a century later would have provided an alternative interpretation. Rather, as I will show, it seems that through a merging of textual sources and memory, the written histories of PAC members in many ways simply reproduce the same popular narrative of the march as largely defined by PAC, ANC and state discourses. As it has emerged from autobiographies of 'Poqo members' and PAC activists, as well as informal discussions with a grandson of one of the Paarl marchers, a narrative of the march implicitly turns into a narrative of the PAC and its life and activities in South Africa and in exile, which I find unconvincing and which in many ways also reproduces the Snyman Commission's formulation.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*. Maaba, "The PAC's war against the state." Gerhardt, *Black Power in South Africa*, 204, 225-226. Horrell, *Action, reaction, counteraction*, 53-55, 59, 61.

⁴⁵ For example, a researcher for the South African democracy Education Trust (SADET) who paid considerable attention to this incident only located two people to interview, one of whom was African Food and Canning Workers' Union member, Lydia Kasi, who did not participate in the march but gave evidence to the Snyman Commission. I was not able to access this interview.

⁴⁶ Informal discussions with Loyiso Felix Sibelegwana (grandson of one of the participants in the Paarl march, among those hanged in connection with the event), Mbekweni (2010, 2011). Such autobiographies include: Letlapa Mphahlele, *Child of this soil: My life as a freedom fighter* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2002). Mgxashe, *Are you with us?* Elias Ntloedibe, *Here is a tree: Political biography of Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe* (Botswana: Century-Turn Publishers, 1995). Tsholoba, M.E. 2010. *In and Out of Robben Island Prison: an autobiography of M. E. Tsholoba* (Cape Town: Mr. Menziwe Esau Tsholoba). As Noel Solani demonstrates, in his article on the myth that exists around Nelson Mandela, oral histories of those involved in resistance struggles often may come to directly reflect and repeat dominant historical narratives as produced through propaganda, the making of myths and heroes. It becomes difficult then, even in the case of oral histories, to tear away the individual activist's perspective or 'experience.' See Noel Solani, "The Saint of the Struggle: Deconstructing the Mandela Myth," *Kronos*, No.26 (2000). See also Terrence Ranger, "Nationalist Historiography, Patriotic History and the History of the Nation: The struggle over the past in Zimbabwe," *Journal of Southern African studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2004). Ciraj Rassool, "The biographic order: further notes on biography in South African public culture after apartheid," paper presented at the Institutions of Public Culture Workshop, Cape Town (2005). In the

I do not attempt to write an alternative narrative of the march or to recover it by forcing it into a resistance history mould. Rather this thesis is interested in troubling the official interpretation of the march by arguing that we need to read these archives primarily as the products of the apartheid state's counter-insurgency measures. I am concerned with problematising the relationships between violence, history and the archives through an examination of the media coverage, the Snyman Commission and the judicial trials that followed. In this regard the Commission and the trials need to be understood as enacting state power and as complicit in the production of a particular history which inherently involved silencing aspects of this past. According to Michel-Rolph Trouillot the very practice of history involves processes of silencing sections of the past.⁴⁷ At the same time, I propose that the solution to such a 'silencing of the past' is not 'to give voice' through a contrary reading. Rather, an attempt to disentangle the march or Poqo from the discourses of power may be better served through engaging with the modes of representation and procedures of knowing involved in the production and archiving of sources.⁴⁸ Such an exercise may open different possibilities for understanding the march.

Chapter Outline

Chapter One, '*A Spectacle of 'truth': Producing the Paarl march*' engages in a critical reading of the initial media coverage of the uprising, the Snyman Commission and the court cases, in attempt to trace the origins of the dominant narrative. It is interested in the creation, limitations and nature of the historical knowledge produced around the uprising. Here I

autobiographies which I have consulted, people seem to express a collective history or memory reflecting the voices of the PAC leadership, the state or the ANC.

⁴⁷ See Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

⁴⁸ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*. This argument is further informed by the work of Premesh Lalu. See Premesh Lalu and Brent Harris, "Journeys from the horizon of history: Text, trial and tales in the construction in narratives of pain," *Current Writing*, Vol. 8, No.2 (1996). Premesh Lalu, "The Grammar of Domination and the Subjection of Agency: Colonial texts and modes of evidence," *History and Theory*, 39 (2000). Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa: Postapartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Pasts* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2009).

consider the internal dynamic of information within and between the Commission and judicial trials. The chapter will investigate the different arguments that are staged at the Commission, and is interested in how these might enable more complex, fuller understandings of the march.

In Chapter Two, *'Who speaks for Paarl's pasts? : The Paarl march and history,'* I trace the ways in which Poqo and the Paarl march have been understood and written at multiple levels. With Lodge's work as the forerunner in this respect, it is concerned with the histories that exist around this event. It is interested in the emergence of Poqo and endeavours to investigate the ways in which Poqo and the Paarl march get located within a specific space in terms of the wider resistance narrative in South Africa.

Chapter Three, *'A different angle: Reading photographs of the Paarl march,'* delves into an archive of photographs of men accused of participation in the march as a potential route to enabling a more complex and nuanced view of the uprising than that provided by the Commission and court cases. This chapter is interested in the visual representation of the Paarl march and the place of images as employed by the media, Snyman Commission and trials in the making of this event and in the making of subjects. It is particularly concerned with a file of photographs of the men accused of participating in the march. This is perhaps the space which allows for a move out of the shadows of Snyman and his Commission of Inquiry as it becomes interested in the ways in which these photographs were used and why, while seemingly meant to give a face to Poqo, they never take on a more public life. The photographs present photographic occasions which are not as rigidly controlled as one would expect from police photographs and reference a multiplicity of genres.

Through a deconstructive reading, specifically of the two key archives constructed around the Paarl March, the Commission and trials- and by extension also the small photographic

archive-Chapter four, *Reading the Archives,* is interested in troubling the dominant representation of the uprising which seems to remain largely intact throughout. The chapter intends to reveal the power relations and discourses of meaning involved both in these sources 'production and their archiving as well as how these may expose the apartheid state's internal mechanisms and the effects of power. It shows then how these records are marked only by silence and denials on the part of those who had participated in the march and as such comes to argue that we cannot recover the subaltern marcher or fully understand the Paarl march through these archives that seem to have swallowed up the march as an event which "failed to make the cut of history."⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*, 9.

Chapter 1: A Spectacle of ‘truth’: Producing the Paarl march

“It is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that transverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge.” ¹

This chapter outlines the archive which initially provided the meaning of the Paarl march and which scholars have continually revisited in an effort to write the event. It traces the major components of this archive, which includes extensive national and local press coverage of the march, the extensive transcripts and reports of the Snyman Commission and the numerous court cases that followed in the Supreme Court and Paarl Circuit Court between 1963 and 1966 which dealt with the men accused of participation in the uprising and other alleged Poqo-related offences.

The chapter is interested in how a seemingly small event in a small agricultural town invoked the production of such a massive archive at the time, yet subsequently seems to fall into the shadows. As I map out these archives it becomes clear that a singular and enduring narrative emerges. This narrative gets crafted around the Paarl march and Poqo initially through media coverage, expanded and given weight by the Snyman Commission and reproduced through the court cases. By a singular narrative I refer to the interpretation that the march was essentially the work of Poqo, represented as an extension of the PAC and a formal political organisation. As a secondary factor the march was related to localised grievances which were supposedly manipulated by Poqo leaders for their own purposes.

“Stories of Horror at Paarl”: Reporting on the Paarl ‘Riot’²

The Paarl march received massive publicity throughout the South African media. The press’ depiction of the march in its immediate aftermath was bleak, bluntly emphasising the

¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison* (New York: Random House, 1979), 27-28.

² I use this term as this is most often the term used to describe the Paarl March particularly in the media. “Stories of Horror at Paarl,” *Cape Times* (12 December 1962).

“bloodlust,” horror and tragedy of the event.³ These initial reports formulated a clear distinction between the white victims Rentia Vermeulen (who was about to write her final matric exams) and Frans Richard (who was engaged to be married) to whom the readers sympathies were immediately directed; and the “blood-thirsty gang” of “screaming Panga attackers.”⁴ The very positioned language employed, even in the English liberal press, immediately fostered an image of the marchers as a “crazed mob” or “gang of natives” who “stormed” into town “chanting and brandishing their pangas” and “shouting war cries,” and who “besieged” homes and engaged in “vicious” and “coldblooded killings.”⁵ Such descriptions emphasised the savagery and violence of the event in the usually “picturesque Boland town.”⁶ Within these early accounts, the march was most often described as entirely unexpected and irrational- a “sudden outburst of savagery,” a notion later compounded through attempts to trace the event’s causes and give it a pre-history.⁷

In the following days a story was pieced together as details of the event were gleaned through interviews almost entirely with white Paarl residents. These included owners and managers of property and businesses that had been damaged, many of whom had not personally witnessed the events but whose properties come to speak to the wanton destructiveness of the insurgents.⁸ Other interviewees included individuals woken by the noise of the crowd in the early hours of the morning, who thus provided details such as estimated numbers of marchers

³ “Quiet, Conservative Paarl is shaken by Riot Horror,” *Cape Argus* (23 November 1962).

⁴ Richard’s relationship status is noted in “Roerende verhale uit die Paarl,” *Die Burger* (23 November 1962). See also “Seun en dogter wreed vermoer,” *Paarl Post* (22 November 1962). “Lieutenant tells of battle with screaming panga attackers,” *Cape Times* (11 December 1962).

⁵ “Quiet, Conservative Paarl is shaken by Riot Horror,” *Cape Argus* (23 November 1962). “Burger’ stresses role of Paarl riot Inquiry,” *Cape Argus* (23 November 1962). “Grim Story of Riot-Struck Paarl,” *Cape Times* (23 November 1962).

⁶ Paarl is Calm,” *Cape Times* (23 November 1962).

⁷ “C.I.D. in progress at Paarl,” *Cape Times* (24 November 1962). “Quiet, Conservative Paarl is shaken by Riot Horror,” *Cape Argus* (23 November 1962).

⁸ “Seven killed in Paarl Rioting,” *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962). “Grim Story of Riot-Struck Paarl,” *Cape Times* (23 November 1962).

and opinions on their mental and emotional state.⁹ Most central to many of these reports were the statements of Loop Street residents whose houses or persons had been attacked, or who had witnessed the killing of Vermeulen or Richard.¹⁰ In this sense the media coverage of the march produced the initial dimensions of the narrative of the event in terms of costly damages and brutal murders, with specific attention to the two white victims. Some reports noted that five marchers had been killed, yet the focus was essentially on these two white victims.¹¹

Newspaper reports further relied heavily on statements by Paarl police officers regarding the unfolding of events at the police station and jail. In attempting to explain the march and in some ways quiet the anxiety it had triggered, the newspapers turned not to the marchers or Mbekweni residents, but to the Department of Defence and the South African Police (SAP). A statement by the SAP commissioner in Pretoria, Lieutenant General Keevy, expressed the argument that the intention of the uprising was to free seven 'Poqo members' alleged to have been involved in a wave of murders in the area during the previous 10 months. These included the murders of two alleged informers, George Tshisa (29 April 1962) and Klaas Hoza (27 January 1962), the killing of three women, Magriet Samuels, Sarah Kamos and Susie Noriet (16 June 1962) and the murder of white shop-keeper, Maurice Berger, in September 1962.

At the time when they were committed these murders received very little mention. Klaas Hoza's murder is mentioned in the *Paarl Post* and *Die Burger* on Monday 29 January as one of several deaths over the weekend. While the other deaths were the results of accidents,

⁹ One witness is quoted as having said that the marchers were not drunk as far as he could tell. Another witness suggests the marchers were "like men gone mad." "Grim Story of Riot-Struck Paarl," *Cape Times* (23 November 1962).

¹⁰ "What Paarl People Think," *Cape Times* (24 November 1962).

¹¹ Seven Killed in Paarl Rioting," *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962).

there is no real attempt to differentiate the way in which Hoza had been killed and it is disturbingly naturalised. *Die Burger* simply reported that, "A Native, Klaas Hoza (28) was stabbed to death in Huguenot."¹² The *Paarl Post* simply added that no suspects had been taken into custody yet and that the police were still investigating. In relation to the three young women killed in Mbekweni on 16 June 1962, the *Cape Times* reported on 20 June 1962 that three female bodies had been found in the bush near Mbekweni, "one black and two coloured," for which the police had not yet determined cause of death.¹³ The *Paarl Post* added on 22 June that the three had been stabbed to death, and interestingly that the police had arrested a man in Cofimvaba in connection with the murders (although this man is not named).¹⁴ With that any mention of these murders seems to have disappeared, at least from public view.

It was only after the march that Poqo appeared as a focus of attention and was linked to these murders in the Paarl area and by extension then, to the march.¹⁵ Somewhat contradictory however was the simultaneous suggestion by the SAP that the march was a criminal rather than politically instigated affair, which the police had well in hand.¹⁶ As a result it seems that already in this moment of naming Poqo and linking it to the PAC, understandings of the movement were murky. Nonetheless the anxiety expressed by state officials with regard to Paarl suggests in some ways that Paarl became the site where larger questions of race relations and the survival of white South Africa bubbled to the surface.¹⁷

After the initial wave of stark press coverage, the media tried to construct the march and develop its causes more carefully. Debates over the causes of the march started to emerge and

¹² See *Die Burger* (29 January 1962).

¹³ See "Three Women found Dead in Bush" *Cape Times* (20 June 1962).

¹⁴ See "Murdered Women Arrest" *Paarl Post* (22 June 1962).

¹⁵ "Police see attack as reprisal for arrests," *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962).

¹⁶ "C.I.D. in Progress at Paarl," *Cape Times* (24 November 1962)

¹⁷ Poqo and Paarl began to speak to white fears of "swart gevaar," "the black menace," and by extension to the problem facing the apartheid state on how to deal with and control black populations, in other words the 'Native Question.'

in some ways the arguments around the event started being rehearsed. Some of these remained in line with a view that this was the kind of “periodic violence” that was to “be expected” from “culturally backward people” and stressed the urgent need to “move natives out” of the Western Cape maintaining that “as long as Poqo exists, not only Paarl but all other Western Cape centres where there are concentrations of natives, cannot sleep peacefully.”¹⁸ Put very clearly by one “Paarlite” in a published letter to the *Paarl Post*, “that location, Mbekweni, which is nothing more than a breeding ground for unrighteousness, must be cleared immediately, and all the residents sent back to the places from which they had come. That location is a cancer in our peaceful Boland that will never be cured.”¹⁹

However at the same time other liberal opinions emerged which began to link the march to the effects of state policies and poor social conditions of black townships. Some connected the events in Paarl to the effects of the migrant labour system and influx control regulations, as one *Paarl Post* reader’s letter published in the newspaper suggested, “the municipality must understand for once and for all that if they want to run a Native location, they must allow the Natives to live with their womenfolk.”²⁰

Another letter published in the *Paarl Post* by an individual named only as “Bantu,” allowed the space for a resident of Mbekweni’s opinion on the march.²¹ This individual appeals to Paarl’s white residents not to “hate or be angry with all of us Bantu people” arguing that the majority of black people in Paarl’s townships had not been involved.²² Instead, this letter

¹⁸ “Quiet Conservative Paarl is shaken by Riot Horror,” *Cape Argus* (23 November 1962).

¹⁹ Letters to editor, *Paarl Post* (30 November 1962).

²⁰ Letters to editor, “Womenfolk of natives,” *Paarl Post* (30 November 1962). See also, *Evening Post*, a liberal publication in P.E., which suggested that the trouble in Paarl may have resonated from the policy of endorsing Africans out of the Western Cape, quoted in “‘Burger’ stresses role of Paarl Riots Inquiry,” *Cape Argus* (23 November 1962).

²¹ Letters to editor, *Paarl Post* (30 November 1962).

²² Letters to editor, *Paarl Post* (30 November 1962).

blamed a specific group of men (not named here as Poqo) that had also killed and threatened black residents in the townships.²³ In many ways then this perspective resonated with the police argument that the march was the work of a “certain troublesome element” in Mbekweni rather than the majority of “law-abiding Bantu.”²⁴

While I argue that Poqo was rapidly picked up and given elevated status by the state and through the press in the aftermath of the Paarl march, this was not the first time the word had cropped up in South African media. An article by journalist Ken Owen a month earlier had attempted to trace the emergence of the word by relying on records of court cases held in Cape Town and Stellenbosch earlier in 1962.²⁵ His argument was particularly informed by a Cape Town magistrate’s finding that the PAC and Poqo was essentially the same thing. These trials seem to have already unearthed dimensions of the Poqo movement and formulated understandings around it. Owen adopted the same deeply positioned language of the apartheid state in describing the PAC as “a violent body pledged to ‘drive the whites into the sea’” and described Poqo groups as “gangs of hooligans” and “political thugs.”²⁶ This understanding of Poqo, Owen suggested was reliable as it derived from evidence produced under oath and “sifted by legal minds” as opposed to rumour on which he suggests one had to depend for further details of activities in the townships.²⁷ What Owen failed to note however was the complicity of this evidence presented in courts and of these “legal minds?”

Much of this formulation with regards to Poqo was almost identical to that presented by Minister of Justice and Defence, Mr B.J. Vorster, and SAP officials in the press after the

²³ Letters to editor, *Paarl Post* (30 November 1962).

²⁴ “Seven killed in Paarl rioting,” *Cape Argus* (23 November 1962).

²⁵ 21 men were brought to trial in Stellenbosch in June 1962 on charges of sabotage as Poqo members and for planning to kill the farm manager. See Lodge, “The Paarl Insurrection,” 108. Ken Owen, “Poqo,” *Cape Times* (5 October 1962).

²⁶ Ken Owen, “Poqo,” *Cape Times* (5 October 1962).

²⁷ Ken Owen, “Poqo,” *Cape Times* (5 October 1962).

Paarl march who picked up on already existing, yet up until then largely silenced, notions of a reincarnated PAC organisation functioning in the Western Cape.²⁸ However it seems that it was only really after the Paarl march that Poqo took on a public life as it “burned its way into the newspaper headlines and into the minds of the people”²⁹ and came to be seen as a formidable threat. Wellington resident and Black Sash member, Anne Pearce recalled that it was only the morning after the march that the word ‘Poqo’ was first used to refer to “a secret organisation that is responsible for the murders that had taken place in Paarl. It terrorises people into joining and they sometimes have grisly initiation ceremonies something like Mau-Mau.”³⁰

Often referred to in this way as in the league of the violent Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya between 1952 and 1960, Poqo was written into a larger grand narrative of black organisations which attempted to overthrow their white colonial governments. Without really understanding the events in Kenya, parallels were immediately drawn with Mau Mau’s secret oath-taking ceremonies, its aims to overthrow the white British government and its extreme violence against white settlers. Like Mau Mau, Poqo was viewed as a “savage, violent, and depraved tribal cult, an expression of unrestrained emotion rather than reason.”³¹ However, even this discourse seems to speak more to white fears about decolonisation than really being about Poqo. Reports on Poqo continued and expressed even more urgency after the “Poqo attack” on a road worker’s camp near the Mbashe/ Bashee River Bridge in the Transkei and killing of two white road workers as well as the wife and two daughters of one of the men on

²⁸ “Background to Paarl outburst of killing, stabbings,” *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962). “Quiet Conservative Paarl is shaken by riot horror,” *Cape Argus* (23 November 1962).

²⁹ “Inside Poqo,” *Drum Magazine* (February 1963).

³⁰ The Black Sash was a liberal white women’s organisation. Anne Pearce, *A permit to Live*, Unpublished manuscript, (1965), National Library of South Africa, 240. See “Crazed Africans,” *Paarl Post* (27 November 1962). “Sudden outburst of savagery,” *Cape Times* (24 November 1962). “Primitive rebellion,” *Cape Times* (23 November 1962). “Chanting crowd of murder-bent rioters,” *Paarl Post* (27 November 1962).

³¹ See Bruce Berman, “Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Modernity: The paradox of Mau Mau,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 25 (2) (1991), 181–206.

the night of 4-5 February 1963.³² However nowhere did the opinions or accounts of the men who marched to Paarl feature.

With the start of the Snyman Commission hearings, the media reported extensively on its findings and arguments, rendering these overt and public through reports in the everyday press and quoting large sections of the hearings verbatim. It paid specific attention to the features and activities of Poqo and the word appeared repeatedly in newspapers almost daily as they reported on the Commission's findings of "Poqo plans to eliminate whites," thus increasing white fear.³³ A document issued by the ANC in May 1963 noted that: "The newspapers have been full of Poqo...A horrific image of bloodthirsty savage hordes intent on the blood of a white man has sent shivers down the spines of a reading public conditioned by propaganda to accepting everything without questioning."³⁴

Surprisingly *Drum* magazine, thought of as a means of expression and voice for black people under apartheid, published an article on Poqo in February 1963 which, while in some ways attempting a broader understanding of Poqo, simultaneously reproduced sections of this same formulation of the movement.³⁵ While the article sympathetically pointed to frustrations and grievances of black people in the Western Cape, including the endorsing out of people and separation of husbands and wives, as leading people to join the movement, it simultaneously reproduced a state view by citing sections of the Snyman Commission which presented Poqo as a racially exclusive, gender biased and extremely violent organisation which had

³²In what Brown Maaba describes as "the most widely publicised Poqo attack" five white people were hacked to death on the night of 4-5 February 1963 near the Bashee/Mbashe River bridge in the Transkei. See Brown Maaba, "The PAC's war against the state, 1960-1963," in *The road to democracy in South Africa*, South African Democracy Education Trust, Volume 1 [1970-1980], (South Africa: Unisa Press, 2006), 282. See "Transkei-Gruwel: Polisie op spoor," *Die Burger* (6 February 1963)

³³"Poqo aims to rule the world," *Cape Times* (11 December 1962). "Poqo plans to eliminate whites by 1963," *Cape Times* (14 December 1962). "Inquiry told of Poqo rituals," *Cape Times* (11 December 1962). "Poqo se leiers sou witmense uitwis, land oorneem," *Die Burger* (1 March 1963).

³⁴ See "Amandla Ngawethu," ANC editorial issued May 1963 reproduced in Thomas Karis, Gwendolyn Carter, and Gail Gerhart, (hereafter Karis et al.) *From Protest to Challenge: A documentary history of African politics in South Africa 1882-1964* (USA: Hoover Institution Publication, 1978), 758.

³⁵"Inside Poqo," *Drum Magazine* (February 1963).

essentially forced people to join. The article drew a clear distinction between Poqo groups and black populations (in much the same way as the state's division of Poqo from "law-abiding Bantus"), in some sense disapprovingly setting Poqo apart and presenting it as a "terrorist movement" rather than a legitimate resistance movement.

Drum's depiction of Poqo was not so far removed as one would have expected from the discussion of Poqo in *Die Huisgenoot* in April 1963, a historically white Afrikaans magazine.³⁶ This article repeated the argument that the PAC and Poqo were the same organisation and proceeded to describe a history of the PAC and its activities. It portrayed Poqo as a violent "terrorist movement," like Kenya's Mau Mau, which presented a significant threat to the apartheid state, yet it proceeded to argue that police measures since the Paarl march had effectively crippled the organisation. In attempting to trace Poqo's origins, this article like Owen's, began its discussion with the August 1962 trial in Stellenbosch and another in Wynberg in which the accused were defined as Poqo members. However, as is pertinent to my argument, the article suggested that it was only really at the moment of the Paarl march that Poqo was widely reported on and became a matter of national concern. It suggested that: "It was only at the moment of the attack on the Paarl police station and the cruel murders of two young whites last year in the evening hours of 21 November that South Africa was given a wakeup call."³⁷

In contrast, the militant left wing newspaper, *The Torch*, was perhaps most strongly opposed to the state, Snyman Commission and media's portrayal of Poqo, arguing that its representation as a violent, terrorist organisation aimed at the "elimination of the Whites" by

³⁶ "Poqo: Polisie blus 'n Volkaan," *Die Huisgenoot* (26 April 1963).

³⁷ Translated from Afrikaans: "Dit was eers die aanval op die Paarlse polisiekantoor en die wreed moord op twee jong blankes verlede jaar in die nagure van 21 November wat Suid Afrika wakker geskud het." "Poqo: Polisie blus 'n Volkaan," *Die Huisgenoot* (26 April 1963).

1963 provided the “Herrenvolk propagandists and the press, in particular, abundant propaganda material.”³⁸ It argued then that the state had used Poqo as legitimation for the mass removals of Africans from the Western Cape.³⁹ While the report critically laid out the dimensions of the official representation of Poqo it did not provide any alternative interpretation for the movement.

A scheme of legitimation: On the Snyman Commission⁴⁰

As becomes clear in these news reports, the apartheid state moved incredibly swiftly in its attempts to deal with the ‘crisis’ posed by the Paarl events. A one-man judicial commission was already appointed by Justice Minister Vorster by 23 November 1962 and Mr Justice J. H. Snyman, a judge of the Transvaal Provincial Division, was flown in just six days after the march.⁴¹ The Commission was given powers under the Commissions Act of 1947. This act determined the powers, protection and the procedure by which the Commission of Inquiry would be regulated providing it with, “the power of a provincial division of the supreme court of South Africa...in respect to summoning of witnesses, the administration of oaths, and the examination of books, documents and objects.”⁴²

According to its mandate the Snyman Commission was appointed with the specific terms “to inquire into and report upon the events at Paarl on 20–22 November 1962, and the causes which gave rise thereto.”⁴³ Very quickly the Commission became the only legitimate forum

³⁸ “Paarl Inquiry,” *The Torch* (12 December 1962).

³⁹ “Paarl Inquiry,” *The Torch* (12 December 1962).

⁴⁰ I borrow this framing from Adam Ashforth. *The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990). Adam Ashforth, “Reckoning Schemes of Legitimation: On commissions of inquiry as power/knowledge forms,” *Journal of Historical Sociology*, Vol. 3, Issue 1 (1990).

⁴¹ “Judge to Inquire into Paarl’s Night of Terror,” *Cape Times* (23 November 1962).

⁴² Snyman Commission, 449.

⁴³ *Report of the Paarl Commission of Enquiry, consisting of the Honourable Mr Justice Snyman, Judge of the Transvaal Provincial Division of the Supreme Court of South Africa, upon the events on the 20th to the 22nd November, 1962, at Paarl in the province of the Cape of Good Hope, and the causes which gave rise thereto*, (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1963) (hereafter Report). Report, 1. These terms of reference were supposedly

for discussion of the ‘facts’ of the march. Consequently a meeting called by Paarl’s tax payers which was to take place on 10 December 1962 was cancelled by Snyman who argued that such a meeting was “undesirable” and might have come into conflict with the findings of the Commission, suggesting rather that the Paarl residents give testimony before him.⁴⁴

The Commissions Act required that the Commission’s sittings be held in public though Snyman would have the discretion to hear certain evidence *in camera*. Snyman had the authority to subpoena witnesses to appear. Counsel was allowed to appear on behalf of different interests or individuals.⁴⁵ People could send in a statement to be put before Snyman who would then, like a casting director, choose who would have the opportunity to appear in public before the Commission. In his work, Snyman relied specifically on the help of the Attorney General of the Cape, Mr van den Berg, who led the evidence, and a senior SAP officer, Major Coetzee, who was in charge of the inquiry.⁴⁶

Snyman further relied on the work of advocates representing various interests concerned, including the SAP and Bantu Administration offices, the Paarl Municipality, the South African Institute of Race Relations (hereafter SAIRR) and a ‘Bantu Advisory Board,’ and Paarl taxpayers.⁴⁷ As I will develop further later in this chapter, these advocates in many

“the widest possible,” according to Snyman quoted in “Riot hearings will be in public,” *Cape Times* (29 November 1962).

⁴⁴ “Paarl riot inquiry opens: warning by the judge,” *Cape Argus* (6 December 1962). “Riot Inquiry resumed,” *Paarl Post* (11 December 1962).

⁴⁵ Report, 1. “Riot hearing will be in public,” *Cape Times* (29 November 1962).

⁴⁶ “Paarl riot inquiry opens,” *Cape Argus* (6 December 1962).

⁴⁷ The Bantu Advisory Committee was meant to advise the white urban local authorities on issues relating to the location’s population but which was in fact essentially connected to the state- although largely ignored by the Paarl municipality, had little legitimate power and was largely distrusted in Mbekweni. The Group Areas Act of 1950 had provided for an advisory board in each location, to contain at least three elected or appointed African members, with a white chairperson but these bodies never acquired administrative, legislative, or financial power, and were phased out from 1968. See Rodney Davenport, “Historical background of the Apartheid city to 1948,” in Swilling, M., Humphries, R., Shubane, K. (eds), *Apartheid City in Transition* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991), 7, 8. Dirk Kotze, *African politics in South Africa, 1964-1974* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1975), 34.

ways used the Commission and the Paarl march as a site to stage their larger arguments, often conveying their positions clearly through the questions they posed to witnesses.

Just two weeks after the march, on 6 December 1962, the Commission began its sittings in Paarl. While in Paarl, it assembled in the *Ontspanningsklubsaal*, a recreation hall used for wedding receptions and recreational activities of Paarl's white population, and which could accommodate 1,000 people.⁴⁸ For the purposes of the Commission, the hall was transformed into a 'court' with special offices for the judge, attorney-general, security officer, typist and attorneys. In line with apartheid policy, black people were to enter through a separate entrance and were seated on the gallery, while white people sat below in the hall (closest to the judge and proceedings).⁴⁹ The Commission later moved to Cape Town, holding hearings in the Supreme Court. Removed from the heavy tensions and drama in Paarl, Cape Town supposedly constituted "a calmer atmosphere."⁵⁰

The majority of the Commission's proceedings were held in Afrikaans. Advocate Burger (appearing for the Paarl Municipality) argued that Paarl was "an Afrikaans area and **everyone** was able to speak it. But if anyone wants to present to the Commission he/she can do so in a language that suits him/her."⁵¹ The Commission did remain true to its word and some black witnesses present made their statements in their own language.⁵²

⁴⁸ "Baie Vrae is Voorgestel," *Paarl Post* (4 December 1962).

⁴⁹ "Saal word in 'n hof omskep" *Paarl Post* (11 December 1962). "Inquiry into Paarl Events," *The Torch* (12 December 1962).

⁵⁰ If there were any other reasons why the hearings move to Cape Town, Snyman does not say. See Report, 1. Pearce, *A Permit to Live*, 254.

⁵¹ Snyman Commission, 10.

⁵² It is not clear which language these witnesses use. Yet translation becomes evident in a few cases where a translator is addressed as an aside. See hearings of George Skoen, X1-4, Matinyose Zenani. Snyman Commission, 36, 1017.

In total the Commission had 46 sitting days during which time, according to Snyman, 76 witnesses had given oral evidence before him in one way or another.⁵³ A further 24 people gave evidence by way of affidavits.⁵⁴ Several people were interviewed and their statements taken without being placed under oath. The police produced several people before the Commission and the Security Branch of the SAP was also allowed to put ‘confidential information’ before the Commission in private when Snyman was satisfied that “it was in public interest to do so.”⁵⁵

Spreading invitations through press and radio, Snyman appealed to a public of “all races” to come forward with information pertaining to the events in Paarl so as to get to the “truth.”⁵⁶ However under the conditions of a state-sponsored commission of inquiry it was essentially a white public that responded.⁵⁷ Despite Snyman’s claim to providing witnesses with protection he was not of much help beyond the court, and witnesses who attended hearings or gave evidence were often threatened and intimidated.⁵⁸ It was often suggested then that black people did not openly attend the hearings out of fear of Poqo, or so Snyman claimed. As noted in the *Paarl Post* for instance on 10 December 1962, of 54 people in attendance at the hearings that day, 40 were white.⁵⁹ The number of black witnesses was significantly less than

⁵³ I am not sure how Snyman arrived at this number and who he counted as witnesses as my count has totalled 85 witnesses excluding 2 volumes of the transcripts which are missing.

⁵⁴ Report, 1. Some of these statements are attached to the Commission as exhibits although they don’t seem to be referred to at any point during the hearings. These include among others statements by an “unknown Bantu,” Hester Vermeulen (mother of Rentia Vermeulen), Susanna van Dyk (victim), Francina Perold (Loop Street resident, victim), Johannes Heraldene, Jacobus Baatjie, Col. Theunis Carstens, Capt. Roussouw, Detective-Adjutant Gert van der Merwe.

⁵⁵ Report, 1. Pearce, *A Permit to Live*, 254.

⁵⁶ Mouthed by Snyman, as a representative of a racially exclusive state, this appeal requires consideration. While a call for the participation of “all races” could have been simply lip service as part of the enactment of a democracy which did not exist. See “Riot hearings will be in public: judge appeals for information,” *Cape Times* (29 November 1962)

⁵⁷“Riots Inquiry and many murder charges,” *Paarl Post* (11 December 1962).

⁵⁸ See Pearce, *A Permit to Live*, 259.

⁵⁹“Riots Inquiry and many murder charges,” *Paarl Post* (11 December 1962).

white witnesses appearing before the Commission. Of the 85 witnesses that I have identified as having appeared before Snyman, only 23 were black and only two were women.⁶⁰

Initially the Commission attempted to lay out the dimensions of the event, and was interested specifically in the sequence of events, the marcher's route to town, damage to properties, their interaction with the police and the attacks on houses in Loop Street. The first witnesses to be called included the manager of a garage that was damaged as well as a black petrol attendant, George Skoen, who had been on duty at the time of the march; and among other police statements, that of Lieutenant Jansen van Rensburg of the Paarl Police Department. Lieutenant Jansen van Rensburg's testimony was to provide specific details of the march and more particularly spoke to the way in which events unfolded at the police station that morning.⁶¹ Thereafter the Commission heard the evidence of several Loop Street residents who had witnessed, heard or were in some way involved in the events in the Street and who began to combine these testimonies with broader interpretations.⁶² Particular emphasis here was on the killing of the two white victims- evidence further corroborated by the testimony of Dr. C. J. Stals, District Surgeon at Paarl who had done post mortem examinations on the bodies of these two youths as well as that of black victims who had been shot dead.⁶³

As the Commission turned its attention to the marchers, it began to expand the narrative to extend beyond the Paarl march; police operatives were brought in to discuss Poqo as a broader network and organisation to which the marchers belonged. Further, the march began to acquire a pre-history as other violent activities were attached and as such, began to shape a narrative of the uprising which centred largely around Poqo (here conflated with the P.A.C

⁶⁰ These include five Mbekweni residents questioned only on photographs shown to them, George Skoen, the petrol attendant, the four X witnesses, Lydia Kasi (for FCWU), Matiyose Zenani and Kleinbooi Sokweba and 11 of the headmen with whom Snyman met in Cofimvaba.

⁶¹ Snyman Commission, 23-81.

⁶² Snyman Commission, 82-112.

⁶³ Snyman Commission, 113-116, 143-156.

and given a firm organisational status). Detective Sergeant Pool of Paarl provided evidence about activities in the Paarl area during 1962-killings which the Police had subsequently linked to Poqo. These murders were specifically employed to speak to the nature of the Poqo movement. The murders of George Tshisa and Klaas Hoza as suspected informers, were explained as owing to the organisation's intolerance of people who would disclose its secrets. The murder of the three women were seen as resulting from the view that women distracted Poqo members, kept them away from meetings and were also potentially spies. Finally the killing of Maurice Burger, according to the police was an attempt to show that the organisation was ready and willing to eliminate white people.⁶⁴

The hearings began to express a particular interest in Poqo's political background and black witnesses were asked about Poqo's aims and characteristics, its meetings and activities, as well as connections to other political groups both inside and outside the country.⁶⁵ Lieutenant Sauerman, of the SAP Security Section was brought in to describe the P.A.C's constitution, motto, aims and objectives.⁶⁶ Specific emphasis was put on the fact that 'P.A.C/Poqo' was racially exclusive and aimed to eliminate white people and obtain freedom for black people and "political rule" of the whole country by 1963.⁶⁷ Sauerman's data was then used by the Commission as the standard for understanding Poqo in Paarl. In this sense, and importantly, a particular Poqo organisation, as a threat to white security, had been constructed by state officials before the Commission began to hear the specific evidence relating to Mbekweni, the marchers and their purported links to an organisation called Poqo.

On 13 -19 December 1962 the Commission heard the evidence of three black men held in police custody who had participated in the march and were allegedly Poqo members. Their

⁶⁴ Snyman Commission, 237-249.

⁶⁵ See hearings with witnesses X1, X2 and X3, 251-350; X4, 1378; Lydia Kasi, 532-536; Matiyose Zenani; Anna Pearce, 643-645; George Skoen; Maloda Gilaji (a Mbekweni resident); and Reverend Malukazi, 468-509.

⁶⁶ Snyman Commission, 226.

⁶⁷ Snyman Commission, 228.

identities were kept strictly secret, supposedly to avoid them being victimised by ‘their own people.’ This was insured by clearing the court of all spectators, their appearance, as if in costume, in balaclava masks and by referring to them by the pseudonyms X1 to 3.⁶⁸

Journalists were allowed to stay for these proceedings on condition that they referred to these men by these aliases and reported nothing that might reveal their identities. A fourth X witness was also produced before the Commission by the police in February 1963.⁶⁹

Although interested in Poqo, these hearings exposed a deafening silence with regard to the alleged Poqo members’ own narratives of the march. Instead they seem to have been meant to corroborate arguments already being put into place by the different interests involved. The advocates tended to pose leading questions which already proposed the expected answers, and witnesses were meant simply to provide confirmation, or alternatively rephrased the witness’ answers to suit their own arguments.⁷⁰

Advocate General van den Berg led the evidence during the hearings of the four X witnesses with such a central concern around Poqo as it existed in Paarl and more generally, questioning them on the movement’s connection to the PAC, its part in the murders and violence during 1962 and the march as related to its desire to take over the country and murder white people.⁷¹ Here the repetitive emphasis of Poqo’s use of, and inclination towards, violence is explicit in the questions asked.⁷² As already informed by Sauerman’s ‘facts’ about Poqo, X1 for example was presented by Attorney General van den Berg with the questions:

Van den Berg: Did he [the speaker at one of the meetings which X1 had attended] say anything about the country?

⁶⁸ Snyman Commission, 251- 350.

⁶⁹ This fourth X witnesses appears on 8 February 1963. Snyman Commission, 1376.

⁷⁰ Snyman Commission, 487.

⁷¹ Snyman Commission, 45, 76, 251- 255,269-271, 282, 290, 297, 301, 303, 329-336.

⁷² Snyman Commission, 45.

X1: He did.

Van den Berg: What did he say about the country?

X1: We must assault the whites so that we can take our country.

Van den Berg: So am I correct in saying that you were told at that meeting that you must assault and kill white people so that you can take the country.

X1: Yes, that is correct.⁷³

In the very formulation of their questions around meetings and the accumulation of weapons by Poqo members, advocates representing state offices including, the SAP and Bantu Administration, as well as the Paarl Municipality suggested that the march was carefully planned and preconceived.⁷⁴ The explicit emphasis on Poqo's use of force, intimidation and violence, as expressed through their questions was meant to dislodge any suggestion that the residents of Mbekweni had any other reason to participate in an attack on Paarl. The suggestion was therefore put forward by the state's advocates that the problem most plaguing people in Mbekweni were the Poqo murders and violence which had marked Paarl's recent past.⁷⁵

There was a continual attempt then, by among others Advocate Steyn, representing the SAP and Bantu Administration, to justify police action against the insurgents by showing that these men were aggressive and intent on violence.⁷⁶ This is clear as Advocate Steyn questioned Sergeant Johannes Hough of Paarl SAP:

Steyn: What would have happened if you [the policemen] hadn't fired on the Bantus?

Hough: They would have killed us all and would have taken all the weapons in the police station.⁷⁷

⁷³ Snyman Commission, 254.

⁷⁴ The questions posed by these advocates go as far as to suggest that the white victims in the march had been specifically targeted. Snyman Commission, 281.

⁷⁵ Snyman Commission, 290.

⁷⁶ Snyman Commission, 57, 202-203.

⁷⁷ Snyman Commission, 204.

The fact that all of the marchers were armed was also repeatedly prompted throughout the questions and evidence of the Commission.⁷⁸ Through a very careful use of language, in almost poetic narrative fashion, they were portrayed as the enemy. “They were armed with kieres, sharpened iron and shiny objects that shone like swords in the evening.”⁷⁹ In the evidence given by doctors who had treated black men shot during the march, or had done autopsies on the dead bodies, the questions expressed particular interest in whether they had been shot from the front in an attempt to prove that they were shot while attacking or running towards the policemen rather than running away. Even the dead body was the villain here.⁸⁰

Besides such positions put in place by representatives of the state, other arguments were staged by non-government organisations including the SAIRR, the Black Sash, and the Food and Canning Workers Union (hereafter FCWU).⁸¹ In representing the SAIRR, Advocates Broeksma, and later King, similarly posed loaded and very clearly positioned questions to, among others, the four X witnesses as they attempted to stage a very specific argument for the circumstances that gave rise to the Paarl march. These advocates’ questions were concerned with Mbekweni resident’s feelings about influx control and labour preference policies, pass laws, job reservation, and women being endorsed out of the Western Cape.⁸² While admitting that people were dissatisfied by pass laws and the treatment they received from Mbekweni’s municipal police, none of the X witnesses seemed to be as centrally concerned with the issues which Broeksma/the SAIRR considered the fundamental grievances.⁸³ This may relate to the fact that, produced by the police, these were state witnesses, yet it is significant here that the different interests each attempted to speak for Poqo or the accused. Through the clear propositions within the questions posed by Broeksma,

⁷⁸ Snyman Commission, 127.

⁷⁹ Snyman Commission, 204.

⁸⁰ Snyman Commission, 1423.

⁸¹ The Food and Canning Worker’s Union was a trade union attached to the Congress Alliance.

⁸² Snyman Commission, 265, 271-277, 304-311.

⁸³ Snyman Commission, 37, 265, 273, 276, 309-311.

and his later replacement Advocate King, there was an attempt to tie the march to these dissatisfactions, as well as to the poor social conditions and a lack of facilities in Mbekweni and legal avenues for expression for black people. It was argued that these basic causes of insecurity, further aggravated by particularly harsh local administration, meant that the majority of Poqo members did not have to be forced into membership but joined voluntarily, driven by lack and frustration. This is particularly clear as Broeksma suggested to witness X2 that certain long-term grievances provided the grounds for Poqo's emergence:

Broeksma: Could you feel that Mbekweni residents were dissatisfied with life in general?

X2: I saw that they were dissatisfied.

Broeksma: To tell the truth have they been unhappy for a long time already?

X2: I don't know how long.

Broeksma: Would you agree with me that when people are dissatisfied organisation such as Poqo arise? To put the question differently, you won't get organisations like Poqo among content people?

X2: I don't know.⁸⁴

Other witnesses led the Commission further into different directions. In December 1963 Reverend Joseph Mnyamezeli Malukazi, a minister of religion who worked among the people of Mbekweni and Langabuya, appeared to plead the case of the majority of "innocent and law-abiding" black people who had by no means supported the march and to apologise for "the silliness of children" to which he attributed the uprising. In this sense while Malukazi attempted to use the forum to discuss issues of race and apartheid injustice he simultaneously made an argument very close to the state's own in which "law-abiding bantu" were corrupted by Poqo.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Snyman Commission, 305.

⁸⁵ Snyman Commission, 370.

When the Commission resumed in January 1963, two women took the stage in different capacities. Lydia Kasi, secretary of the FCWU, was the first to appear. Kasi was introduced by Advocate King (for SAIRR) who led the evidence. King's questioning again revealed an intention to extract evidence in support of the SAIRR's critique of state policy. Kasi's evidence was more concerned with the localised grievances of workers in Mbekweni, including the poor quality facilities such as transport and the harsh treatment which they encountered at the hands of municipal police.⁸⁶ As a representative of the Black Sash organisation, Anna Pearce's explanation for the march related to dissatisfaction with oppressive state policy, specifically the pass laws. Yet Pearce's further emphasis on the corruption of municipal officials, especially Mbekweni's director of Bantu Administration Johannes Le Roux, presented the Commission with a different strand of argument, as she suggested that there was no political trouble in Mbekweni but rather that the corruption of local officials created tensions. As she put it "they were either Le Roux men or they were not, and those who were le Roux men, were the ones who were doing well...and those who were not, were the ones who were having pass troubles."⁸⁷ However in both of these cases cross examination by Advocate Burger (representative of the Paarl Municipality) meant to dislodge much of their arguments.⁸⁸ However the arguments made by Malukazi, Kasi and Pearce seem to have opened up 'a can of worms' which the state had not anticipated.

It becomes clear that in prescribing a mandate that included a concern with the causes of the Paarl march, the state had not foreseen the difficulty of controlling the kind of debates which were raised before the Commission. As the political positions of the different bodies began to reveal themselves in the ways in which they used the forum, dramatic tension mounted between the state and Municipality representatives and the SAIRR, which spoke

⁸⁶ Snyman Commission, 524-525.

⁸⁷ Snyman Commission, 644.

⁸⁸ Snyman Commission, 541-566, 666-684.

unequivocally against apartheid policies. This is evident as Advocate Steyn, who appears for the SAP and the Department of Bantu Administration; suggested that Broeksma (SAIRR) led and directed witnesses, and accused him of “using this opportunity to create a political sensation” as he argued that the Commission “is not a platform for propagating political grievances.”⁸⁹ As I have shown, advocate Steyn and other state representatives were themselves guilty of directing witnesses’ statements in particular ways yet somehow a distinction was made here between the state’s production of ‘evidence’ and the SAIRR/Broeksma’s engagement in ‘politics.’

In the move of the Commission to the Eastern Cape immediately after the Mbashe Bridge murders in February 1963, Snyman himself in some ways disrupted the notion of the impartial judicial enquiry. Snyman held private meetings with 11 headmen and councillors from the Cofimvaba district, in the office of the Bantu Affairs Commissioner of Cofimvaba, Mr D.J.M. Jordaan.⁹⁰ Rather than open the forum to evidence from the people of these areas more generally, it is significant that Snyman chose to meet with specific headmen who themselves were state endorsed political appointees, including Chief Kaiser Daliwonga Matanzima, a supporter of the homelands policy in the Transkei.⁹¹

These hearings redirected the Commission to a broader concern with the Poqo movement and the threat it posed to the country more generally. These hearings were primarily concerned with Poqo’s political connections, specifically its link to the PAC and relationship with white liberals and communists, which these headmen confirmed, the extent of the movement’s

⁸⁹ Snyman Commission, 414, 361, 366. As a result of this conflict Broeksma withdraws from the Commission. See Snyman Commission, 510. “Regter Snyman uiters ontevrede met senior advokaat,” *Die Burger* (19 January 1963). However advocate King, who replaces Broeksma, also soon found himself in a similar situation as he takes exception when accused of presenting matters to the Commission “for no better reason than to seek some sort of newspaper publicity.” See Snyman Commission, 976.

⁹⁰ The space in which these meetings were held should also be carefully noted- These hearings are held in the office of the Bantu Affairs Commissioner to whom the appointed chiefs in the area had to report. See “Hoofmanne vra uitwissing van Poqo” *Die Burger* (26 February 1963).

⁹¹ Snyman Commission, 1944 (a) – 1964.

membership and the roots of its activities as it spread throughout the country.⁹² The headmen expressed their desire to talk about their dislike and disapproval of Poqo and all seemed to agree that “Poqo must be wiped out.”⁹³ Also unusually, immediately after these hearings Snyman produced an Interim Report released on 6 March 1963. This three-page report was essentially a plea for the state to “act without delay to bring this state of affairs [Poqo’s growth and activities across the country] to an end in order to regain the Bantus’ confidence in the ability of the State to protect him,” again creating a sense of crisis that required urgent action.⁹⁴

Besides this focus on Poqo, the suggestion of corrupt officials and poor administration in Mbekweni directed the Commission to a more localised understanding of the march. This seemed to suit the state representatives as it took attention away from the SAP and let state policies off the hook, thus allowing the preservation of the grand scheme of apartheid rule. In this respect the Commission called on the mayor of Paarl, Daniel Herholdt and the director of Bantu Administration, J.H. le Roux who they had not thought to include originally.⁹⁵ Here Snyman expressed his astonishment as he questioned Herholdt on the fact that the Paarl Town Council had been aware of the conditions and frustrations in Mbekweni already from December 1960 but had not done anything to relieve the problems. Instead the Committee had left all matters pertaining to the location in Le Roux’s hands.⁹⁶

With the completion of the hearings in April 1963 Snyman produced an official report, of some 31 pages only. As Snyman attempted to deal with the different arguments which had

⁹² Snyman Commission, 1950-1964.

⁹³ Snyman Commission, 1944j.

⁹⁴ Interim Report of the Snyman Commission (hereafter Interim report) See *Report of the Paarl Commission of Enquiry, consisting of the Honourable Mr Justice Snyman, Judge of the Transvaal Provincial Division of the Supreme Court of South Africa, upon the events on the 20th to the 22nd November, 1962, at Paarl in the province of the Cape of Good Hope, and the causes which gave rise thereto*, (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1963). Interim Report, 25.

⁹⁵ Hearings with Daniel Herholdt, Snyman Commission, 1761-1943. Hearings with J.H. le Roux, Snyman Commission, 1458-1743.

⁹⁶ Snyman Commission, 1841.

collided and overlapped in the hearings, the interpretation of the Paarl march as presented in this report was ultimately not a purely state narrative although the arguments were made to bind together in a way that essentially ensured state dominance. Snyman concluded that there were two basic factors involved in facilitating the unrest. Firstly he pointed to the problems arising from the inadequate municipal administration in Mbekweni.⁹⁷ Rather than seeing the grievances of Mbekweni residents as based on oppressive government legislation, Snyman interpreted the problems and hostility in the location as the result of poor relationships between residents and authorities, unsympathetic location officials, and the mistreatment of Mbekweni's inhabitants by the aggressive municipal police.⁹⁸ This estrangement, according to Snyman, played into Poqo's hands, enabling it to conceal its activities from the location authorities and the SAP. In an almost paternalistic voice then, Snyman appealed for improved inter-racial relationships and more sympathetic treatment of Black people.⁹⁹

As a second factor and main cause of the activities in Paarl, Snyman made a direct connection between the PAC and Poqo, effectively arguing that these were simply two names for the same organisation.¹⁰⁰ In attempting to describe Poqo, Snyman engaged in a discussion of the PAC's politics and mapped out Poqo's development from the birth of the ANC to its formation out of the banned PAC in 1960. He emphasised the traditional, coercive and irrational nature of the organisation. Snyman therefore depicted Poqo as a complex conspiracy which exploited local conditions to further the aims of both individuals who felt their ambitions were not being promoted by the "tribal system," and a national political

⁹⁷ Report, 12-14, 18.

⁹⁸ Report, 16.

⁹⁹ Report, 14.

¹⁰⁰ Report, 6.

strategy, developed by the PAC leadership in Maseru (Lesotho) and their allies, the white liberals and communists.¹⁰¹

In this sense Snyman posited that the actions directed against “bantú people (and their chiefs)” formed a more significant part of Poqo’s activities than “crimes against the state or whites.”¹⁰² He suggested that in Paarl most of the popular resentment was towards municipal rather than state forces. In an attempt to illustrate this argument, based on police reports of violent crimes in Paarl as well as State and police records of activities attributed to Poqo in the country more generally, Snyman produced a list of 24 murders and violent crimes against black people by Poqo across the country between December 1961 and March 1963 as compared to a list of 10 instances of violence against the state or white people during the same period.¹⁰³

Trying ‘Poqo’: Reflecting on the Paarl March Court Cases

The police onslaught after the Paarl march was widespread. At 4am on the day after the march some 400 SAP officers launched a massive raid on Mbekweni, arresting over 300 residents.¹⁰⁴ Over the following days a total of nearly 400 black Paarl residents were arrested and detained.¹⁰⁵ Such police activity only intensified as the Commission began its hearings and began to formulate notions of Poqo as an organisation. Widespread police measures

¹⁰¹ Report, 6-7. Interim Report, 25. It is significant to note here that PAC broke away from the ANC in part because of its connection with whites and communists yet here is linked to both.

¹⁰² These included the previously mentioned murders in Paarl, but also murders and violence in Langa, murders or attempted murders of several chiefs and advisors in the Transkei who were read as collaborators with the apartheid state, attacks on police stations at Langa, East London and King Williams Town, and the Bashee Bridge killings. Report, 7-8. Snyman noted in his initial discussion of the Commission’s procedures that he had accessed court records from all over the country and it could be assumed that he had gained such information through such reports. Report, 1. The TRC report later noted that Poqo had been involved in violent activities in Paarl, Mbashe (Bashee Bridge), Ntlonze Hill, Queenstown, Cofimvaba, Krugersdorp, Pretoria, Umtata, Langa and various other areas. See *Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Volume 2* (Cape Town: Juta, 1998), 169.

¹⁰³ Report, 7-8.

¹⁰⁴ “Hundreds arrested as 300 Police raid Mbekweni,” *Cape Argus* (23 November 1962).

¹⁰⁵ Maaba, “The PAC’s war against the state, 1960-1963,” 273.

continued to intensify as they conducted raids on townships, train searches and interrogations across the country aimed at the Poqo movement.¹⁰⁶

These activities generated hundreds of arrests and trials. Already on 31 November 1962, just nine days after the Paarl march some 345 black people appeared in court in Paarl, Worcester and Cape Town.¹⁰⁷ Based on the events in Paarl alone at least six separate trials involving 75 people played out between 1962 and 1967.¹⁰⁸ Ultimately 21 people were given death sentences and executed in connection with the events in Paarl, and many other alleged Poqo members were imprisoned.¹⁰⁹

Most of these trials were held at the Supreme Court in Cape Town and the Paarl Circuit Local Division of Supreme Court. As enabled by the General Law Amendment (Sabotage) Act (hurried into place in June 1963 after Snyman submitted his report) the trials dealing with the Paarl march case could try whole groups of people accused of sabotage together.

In a sense it seems that the Snyman Commission becomes a proxy for evidence in the course of these trials. In many ways then, these trials seemed to extend and largely reproduce the discourse and narrative around the Paarl march and Poqo as set out by the Commission.

Much of the evidence given before the court was almost identical. Key questions in these trials were concerned with Mbekweni's development and local administration, and especially people's reasons for joining Poqo to which the answer of force was reminiscent of the official

¹⁰⁶ According to *The Torch* of 17 April 1963, SAP raids in Basutoland and train searches at Queenstown station yielded some 150 arrests of people charged with involvement in activities of the banned PAC organisation which the government at this stage directly associated with Poqo. This article suggests that men appeared in courts in Johannesburg and Durban. See "Police Raids and Train Searches," *The Torch* (26 December 1962). "Poqo' arrests total 150," *The Torch* (17 April 1963). *Contact* newspaper on 6 September 1963 further suggested that by August 1963 171 black men in the Western Cape alone had been given prison sentences ranging between one and 15 years. See "Cape Mass Trials send 171 men to jail," *Contact* (6 September 1963). Madeleine Fullard, "State repression in the 1960's," in *The road to democracy in South Africa*, South African Democracy Education Trust, Volume 1 [1970-1980] (South Africa: Unisa Press, 2006), 358.

¹⁰⁷ "Paarl-Onluste: 345 Naturelle in die hof," *Die Burger* (1 December 1962).

¹⁰⁸ Maaba, "The PAC's war against the state," 273. "C.I.D Progress at Paarl," *Cape Times* (24 November 1962). "Police swoop in Paarl," *Cape Times* (24 November 1962).

¹⁰⁹ "Poqo uitgewis in Paarl" *Die Burger* (4 December 1962). Fullard, "State repression in the 1960's," 387.

narrative staged at the Commission.¹¹⁰ The advocates involved here picked up on the key causes of the march as Snyman had identified them, interested essentially in localised grievances and more especially, Poqo. While these were portrayed as criminal cases, a strong political element certainly existed as the trials were very clearly concerned with Poqo as the banned organisation that “gathered riotously and unlawfully” in Paarl.¹¹¹ Unlike the Commission, however, there was perhaps even less space here for an argument which would relate the uprising to structural violence and unjust apartheid policies.

Especially telling are the highlighted sections of the textual versions of statements collected at police stations prior to trials and then presented before the court as ‘evidence.’¹¹² Sections of the statements underlined in red pen emphasised similar points to those that were key to much of the Snyman Commission’s narrative around Poqo, including particularly the notions that Poqo was intent on killing white people and capturing the state.¹¹³ The kind of language used was similar to that of the Snyman Commission and similarly words like “mob” and “attack” were sprinkled liberally throughout the indictments. As such the trials seem to reproduce and further shape a narrative of Poqo as a direct threat to white security.

As in the case of the Snyman Commission, the courts seem to have been intent on using this forum to examine Poqo which was, based on the Commission’s finding, equated with the PAC. In several of the cases related to the Paarl march, the courts were concerned with Poqo’s degree of organisation and interested in their drilling routines and their aim to overthrow the white government.¹¹⁴ As such a copy of the PAC code and constitution as well

¹¹⁰Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box1/1/1/544.
Supreme Court case, State vs Titus Nyovu, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561.

¹¹¹ Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542.

¹¹² Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box1/1/1/544.
Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542.

¹¹³Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542.
Supreme Court case, State vs Shadrack Mbekile and 20 others, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556

¹¹⁴ Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box1/1/1/544.
Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542.

as a PAC newsletter were (at least in one sabotage case) attached as exhibits.¹¹⁵ The questions often expressed an attempt to characterise Poqo members as racist and violent. This was clearly expressed as an Advocate in the case of 20 men charged of sabotage questioned an accused, Mr Baatjie (probably Batyi):

Generally speaking are you a very angry, wild man, who wants to beat people and knock them around?-No.

You are not the sort of man who likes to knock policemen over the head?-No.

Do you dislike people just because they are a different colour from you? - No, I have never done that.

Why did you join Poqo then? It says its objectives, amongst other things, are to attack white people? - I was told to join.¹¹⁶

Also in the same way as laid out at Commission, the sequence of events was outlined as the prosecution made its argument that the accused “acting in concert with one another and with divers other persons, did commit the wrongful and wilful act of public violence, or the wrongful and wilful acts of malicious injury to property and assault with intent to commit murder or assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm, whereby they injured, damaged or endangered the maintenance of law and order and whereby they damaged or destroyed buildings and other property of members of public and state, in that they did wrongfully and unlawfully and riotously assemble and gather together a crowd of persons with intent by violent and forcible means to disturb and endanger the public peace and security...” The prosecutions argument after all relied on manifestations of hostile intent and more specifically, the attempt to overthrow the state by violence.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542.

¹¹⁶ Supreme Court case, State vs Shadrack Mbekile and 20 others, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556.
“Poqo drilled like soldiers, Native says at trial of 21,” *Cape Argus* (22 April 1963).

¹¹⁷ Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544.
Supreme Court case, State vs Shadrack Mbekile and 20 others, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556.
Supreme Court case, State vs Johannes Notyawe and Vanele Matikinca, June 1963. National archives, Box

Much of the Commission's narrative seems to have remained consistent partly as a result of the reappearance of many of the Commission's witnesses at these trials, particularly as prosecution witnesses. In all I have managed to identify 45 such common witnesses out of the Commission's 85 public witnesses. These include George Skoen, several Loop Street residents, Paarl firemen and police officers (both from Paarl and Cape Town) who had been on call or at the police station during the march, as well as those officers involved in arrests and questioning of suspects.¹¹⁸ The statements of doctors involved in treating the wounded or examining the dead were also included, including that of Dr. Stals, who had also given evidence before the Commission. The official photographer and detective of the SAP in Cape Town, Philip Greeff, who had taken photos the day after the march, was also recalled. In another case several Paarl businessmen, many of whom had also appeared before the Commission, were called on to describe the extent of the damages to their businesses, buildings, shops and property.¹¹⁹

Under the new General Law Amendment Act the Paarl march accused were among the first to be charged with sabotage and belonging to an illegal organisation (since Poqo was equated with the PAC). Some were further charged with murder as in the case of Titus Nyovu, found to have participated in the killing of Rentia Vermeulen.¹²⁰ In what was perhaps the chief trial held on 11 March 1963 before the Paarl Circuit Division Court three of the 21 accused, Lennox Madikane, Fezile Felix Jaxa and Mxolisi Damane, were given death sentences for their alleged leading roles in the uprising, making them the first people sentenced to death for

1/1/1/560. Supreme Court case, State vs Nkosencinci Rosebury Maseti, April 1967. National archives, Box 1/1/1/904. Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542.

¹¹⁸ Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542.

¹¹⁹ Statements of Paarl policemen, Detective Greeff (photographer, SAP), Mr Burger (owner of Alpha motors), Mr Anderson (whose car was damaged), Sergeant Bloem (police officer in Paarl), Mr Duxbury (Paarl resident whose car was damaged), Mr Jordaan (manager Westelike Graanboer Kooperatiewe Vereeniging Paarl, testifies about damages), Pieter Le Roux (foreman of Douglas Green, speaks to damages), Sergeant Hough (Paarl policeman), Lieutenant Jansen van Rensburg (SAP Paarl). See Supreme Court case State vs Shadrack Mbekile and 20 others, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556.

¹²⁰ Supreme Court case, State vs Titus Nyovu, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561.

the crime of sabotage in South Africa.¹²¹ Two other trials followed involving groups of 20 and 21 accused each, while another 12 were tried separately.¹²² Several were acquitted, but most were given prison sentences ranging from eight to 18 years. In another trial the sole accused was found to have brain damage as a result of injuries sustained on the morning of the uprising and the outcome seems to be unknown.¹²³

As previously mentioned, the Paarl uprising was not the first instance of violence in the area. There had been at least seven murders identified by the police in the area during 1962 alone.¹²⁴ While seemingly little public attention had been given to these murders at their time, after the Commission's naming of Poqo as an organised political movement, such violent offences were attached to the march through a connection to 'Poqo.' Trials surrounding these murders were consequently run almost concurrently with the trials dealing with the uprising. I want to suggest then that Poqo was further shaped into a formal organisation through these trials.

Cases related to the aforementioned murders of three young women, Magriet Samuels, Sarah Kamos and Susie Noriet, in Mbekweni on 16 June 1962, similarly played out before the Supreme Court after the uprising.¹²⁵ Three men accused of participating in these murders, Joseph Bazele Mqitsane, Wellington Zilindile Makele and Aaron Kinki Njokwana, were arrested two days before the march and were therefore most likely among those arrested prior to the march and on whose arrests the police had based their argument that the uprising was

¹²¹ Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544.

¹²² Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542. See Supreme Court case, State vs Shadrack Mbekile and 20 others, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556.

¹²³ Maaba, "The PAC's war against the state, 1960-1963," 273.

¹²⁴ Killing of Klaas Hoza (January 1962), George Tshisa (April 1962), Magriet Samuels, Sarah Kamos and Susie Noriet (June 1962), Maurice Berger (September 1962), Milton Matshiki (October 1962).

¹²⁵ Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538. Supreme Court case, State vs Stoffel Maxegwana and Henry Njokwana, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538.

an attempt at revenge.¹²⁶ They appeared before the Cape Town Criminal Sessions on 3 December 1962, three days before the Commission began its sittings.¹²⁷ Here according to an article in the *Cape Argus*, they were already connected to the Poqo movement yet this trial seems to have been delayed until the following February.¹²⁸ This central concern with Poqo continued as during their trials on 6, 7, and 12 February 1963, witnesses were questioned about Poqo and specifically about its exclusion of women. As the prosecution's key witness in this case, Lucky Ndibaza, suggested: "Poqo men said that if they (the hostel dwellers) bring women there again they (the 'Poqo men') will hit them (the women), assault them and chase them away."¹²⁹ As a result while Makele was acquitted, Mqitsane and Njokwana were given death sentences and hanged in Pretoria on 11 December 1963.

Another two men, Henry Njokwana and Stoffel Maxegwana, who seem to have been arrested almost immediately after the killing of these two women and their statements taken by a police officer, a Mr Stoeffberg, two days after these killings on 18 June 1963, also seem to have been detained by the police from this time until they too appear in court in March 1963 on charges of killing these women.¹³⁰

In another case two accused, Johannes Notyawe and Vanele Matikinca were both brought to trial on 3 June 1963 and found guilty and charged with the murders of alleged informers, Klaas Hoza and George Tshisa.¹³¹ Much emphasis during these trials was paid to the fact that Notyawe and Matikinca were active members of the Poqo organisation."¹³² Black

¹²⁶ These three men were arrested on 20 November 1962. Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538.

¹²⁷ "Counsel blames 'Poqo' for 8 murders," *Cape Argus* (3 December 1962).

¹²⁸ "Counsel blames 'Poqo' for 8 murders," *Cape Argus* (3 December 1962).

¹²⁹ Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538.

¹³⁰ Supreme Court case, State vs Stoffel Maxegwana and Henry Njokwana, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538.

¹³¹ "Death sentence for Two Poqo men," *Cape Argus* (18 Jun 1963). Supreme Court case, State vs Johannes Notyawe and Vanele Matikinca, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/560.

¹³² Supreme Court case, State vs Johannes Notyawe and Vanele Matikinca, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/560.

prosecution witnesses were questioned on Poqo's objectives and procedures with specific interest in the consequences of betraying Poqo's secrets as this was believed to have been the motivation for these murders.

In a separate trial held during June of 1963, another accused Jonathan Sogwagwa was also convicted of killing George Tshisa.¹³³ Sogwagwa seems to have been arrested shortly after the march as he made a statement to the Paarl magistrate, Mr van der Merwe in December 1962. As with the trials of Notyawwe and Matikinca, witnesses appearing in this case were questioned with regard to Poqo practices and activities. It was determined that these murders were directly related to Poqo's attempts to remain "a secret organisation amongst the bantu people aimed at the white inhabitants of the country. One of its precepts is that any person divulging information to the police or other authorities about its activities must be killed."¹³⁴

All three men were consequently hanged- Notyawwe and Matikinca on 14 October 1963 and Sogwagwa on 27 September 1963.¹³⁵ Some four years later, another three men were convicted of being Poqo members and participating in the murder of Klaas Hoza:

Nkosencinci Rosebury Maseti was hanged on 26 September 1967, and Leonard Zambodla and Mteteleli Advocate Ntuli were hanged on 30 May 1968.¹³⁶

A set of trials in 1966 dealt with the murder of white shopkeeper Maurice Berger on 22 September 1962.¹³⁷ While it seems that some of the accused had been arrested shortly after this incident, this case only appeared before the Supreme Court four years later, in

¹³³ Supreme Court case, State vs Jonathan Sogwagwa, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561.

¹³⁴ "Counsel blames 'Poqo' for 8 Murders," *Cape Argus* (3 December 1962).

¹³⁵ Supreme Court case, State vs Jonathan Sogwagwa, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561. "Killer not permitted to appeal" *Cape Argus* (19 June 1963).

¹³⁶ Supreme Court case, State vs Nkosencinci Rosebury Maseti, April 1967. National archives, Box 1/1/1/904. Supreme Court case, State vs Amteteleli Ntuli and Leonard Zambodla, May 1968. National archives, Box 1/1/1/986.

¹³⁷ Supreme Court case, State vs Baden Koboka and ten others, 1966. National archives, Boxes 1/1/1/820, 1/1/1/821, 1/1/1/822, 1/1/1/823.

November- December 1966.¹³⁸ Some of these men had already been serving sentences for other ‘Poqo-related’ activities and were taken from Robben Island for trial. Once again the emphasis during these trials was on Poqo as an organisation which aimed at toppling the white state. It was therefore stressed that Burger’s murder was part of such a “campaign of terrorism in order to show that the organisation was operating.”¹³⁹ In some sense then these cases and the sentence of death was part of the state’s attempt to display its power against anyone who threatened the lives of white South Africans.

As the construction of Poqo was formed up through these trials, it is interesting to juxtapose trials dealing with the murders of black victims prior to the march with those relating to the killing of the white victims of the march. In a trial held at the Paarl Circuit Court in June 1963 a single accused, Titus Nyovu, was charged with the murder of Rentia Vermeulen and his sentence of death was carried out in Pretoria on 14 October 1963.¹⁴⁰ Vermeulen, as a 17 year-old white high school girl, was depicted as the pure and innocent victim brutally murdered by a black man. Played against this background of her innocence the violence was racialised, invoking and affirming imageries of the danger presented by black people. Yet there is little focus on the fact that two of the coloured women killed prior to the march, and whose bodies had been found in the Blue gum plantation near to Mbekweni, were the same age as Vermeulen.¹⁴¹

While Poqo seems to have been a central focus for the prosecution, almost all of the accused across all of the above mentioned trials expressed a common rejection of any Poqo

¹³⁸ Accused Baden Koboka’s statement was taken on 24 September 1962. Supreme Court case, State vs Baden Koboka and ten others, 1966. National archives, Boxes 1/1/1/820, 1/1/1/821, 1/1/1/822, 1/1/1/823.

¹³⁹ Supreme Court case, State vs Baden Koboka and ten others, 1966. National archives, Boxes 1/1/1/820, 1/1/1/821, 1/1/1/822, 1/1/1/823.

¹⁴⁰ Supreme Court case, State vs Titus Nyovu, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561.

¹⁴¹ Magriet Samuels(17), Sarah Kamos (21) and Susie Noriet(17).

connection, and in some cases, even having heard about Poqo.¹⁴² The accused never gave any sense of how people had made a decision to challenge the power of the state. Rather, several men, including one of the alleged leaders in the Paarl march, Lennox Madikane, maintained that they were not Poqo members, had not heard of gatherings in the location but had first heard the name the morning after the uprising when Police began their arrests. The statements made by the accused began to make a similar argument of “I am no Poqo.”¹⁴³ Others, such as Wycliffe Nyalela, admitted to having been among the men that marched on Paarl but argued that this involvement was solely out of fear. He was able to describe the events and what others were doing, while he maintained that “I did nothing, I just carried my axe.”¹⁴⁴ For the prosecution and judges involved, such denials were simply lies and were largely rejected preferring rather the statements of prosecution witnesses.¹⁴⁵

These men were poorly defended if at all, and although physically present their voices do not come across in these transcripts. This does not mean that they did not wish to speak - this could also have been an intentional silence which would in fact imply agency and power. As Wendy Woodward, Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley suggest, silence does not necessarily mean disempowerment, but posit that the “subject who is not mute” may purposefully choose “silence over speaking.”¹⁴⁶ Through these court transcripts and accompanying documents

¹⁴² Lennox Madikane, Hilton Ndeto, Alfred Mbolombo, Norman Siyeke, Ndabazandile Nongemani all argue that they were not Poqo members. Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. State archive, Box 1/1/1/544. See also Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538. Supreme Court case, State vs Johannes Notyawe and Vanele Matikinca, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/560. Supreme Court case, State vs Amteteleli Ntuli and Leonard Zambodla, May 1968. National archives, Box 1/1/1/986. Enoch Fokwana denies ever attending Poqo meetings or knowing anything about Poqo. Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542.

¹⁴³ Translated from Afrikaans. See for example the statements by accused Lennox Madikane, Mxolisi Damane, Norman Siyeke, Ndabazandile, Alfred Mbolombo, Enoch Fokwana. Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544. Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542.

¹⁴⁴ Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544.

¹⁴⁵ Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538.

¹⁴⁶ Wendy Woodward, Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley, *Deep Histories: Gender and colonialism in Southern Africa* (New York: Rodopi, 2002), xxi, xxiii.

what we encounter then is always the discourse of others. The courts were largely dependent on accomplice testimony. In the Paarl court cases the prosecution presented several black witnesses to give evidence, particularly relating to the leadership positions of certain accused and as confirmation of the presence and participation of others.¹⁴⁷ Often the prosecution relied on the single testimony of a “competent” witness without considering the dangers of accepting a single witness’ evidence.¹⁴⁸ In the case of ‘Poqo member’ turned state witness Goduka Gelem, Gelem was to provide evidence against a group of 18 men accused of sabotage for their participation in the Paarl march but was subsequently denied any deal which he had expected and was executed three years later on charges of killing Maurice Berger.¹⁴⁹

As a result the only new elements to these narratives to emerge through these court cases really were the names of alleged marchers and leaders as provided through the courtroom statements of black prosecution witnesses. The courts relied quite heavily on such information in their essential interest in establishing culpability and applying ‘just punishment.’

The accused themselves seem to only be called forward right towards the end of the trials as if their evidence was not key. As in the case of the Snyman Commission, rather than being

¹⁴⁷ A number of men from Mbekweni township were called as witnesses and their statements, taken by police prior to the trial, were used as evidence especially concerning the leading roles of Madikane, Jaxa and Damane. It is on statements like that of witness Tululu Jackson Ndala, who argued that it was on Madikane’s orders that they went into the residential area and that Madikane and others participated in the attack and murder of Rentia Vermeulen, that the prosecution relied. (Exhibit K.) Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544. In the case of State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, the court relied primarily on the statements of three men from Mbekweni, Johnson Mase, Zola Dyalo, and Lucky Ndibaza, who had been present at a party and had allegedly seen Mqitsane bring the three women along. These statements were given first and provide the basis for the prosecution’s case and the evidence with which the accused are presented. The statements of the district surgeon, warrant officer, mortuary attendant and family members of the victims follow in order to discuss the state in which the women were found and corroborate the prosecution’s argument. Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538.

¹⁴⁸ It is unclear what exactly constituted a “competent witness.” I refer here to witness Lucky Ndibaza whose testimony was central to the prosecution’s case in the Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538.

¹⁴⁹ Enoch Fokwana. Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542.

allowed to speak freely they were most often presented with leading questions based on the evidence of another witness or the contents of statements which they had made to police or magistrates at the time of their arrests.¹⁵⁰ The resulting written statements, attached to the case files on these criminal trials, were presented to the courts as evidence and often as formal confessions. As such they seem to have been relied heavily upon without much consideration of the circumstances under which statements had been collected.¹⁵¹ Without considering the affects of police force or translation, discrepancies that emerged between these statements and that expressed before the court were taken as a question of the accused's credibility.¹⁵²

A close reading of these three archives around the march begins to reveal the ways in which the institutions of the media, Snyman Commission and judicial trials had moulded a Poqo organisation and produced a specific narrative of the Paarl march. It becomes necessary then to take note of the ways in which the sources and evidence they presented and the sequencing they employed was meant to lead the narrative in specific directions, enabling some arguments while disabling others. One needs to examine the procedures through which witnesses and evidence were obtained, particularly that produced by the police, and how the

¹⁵⁰ See for example Supreme Court case, State vs Shadrack Mbekile and 20 others, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556.

¹⁵¹ It is significant to note that these written statements submitted to the court as evidence were received at the Paarl police station by a Sergeant Vermeulen and are all either typed or written in the same handwriting, presumably that of the officer charged with this responsibility, with each man only asked to sign his name at the end. Yet these are written as first person accounts. In several of these cases by considering these signatures, or in some cases, marks, it becomes clear that many of these men were probably illiterate, with some having only basic education as they are able to write their names but only just. As a result the police officer collecting these statements is clearly in a position of power and this has to be taken into consideration when reading these statements which were presented to the courts as evidence and which are used as formal confessions. In some cases where the statements are typed even the names of the men are typed in rather than signed. These then lead me to question the extent to which these are actually personal statements and to what extent they could be considered reliable evidence in court. In terms of the use of torture and force to extract these "confessions," as well as the fact that these statements had been translated/interpreted, I want to suggest that these documents need to be read against the grain and that one needs to be conscious of their production. Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544. Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542. Supreme Court case, State vs Jonathan Sogwagwa, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561. Supreme Court case, State vs Titus Nyovu, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561.

¹⁵² Supreme Court case, State vs Titus Nyovu, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561.

voices of the marchers seem to constantly evade consultation. It becomes important to consider the settings, audiences and languages of the Commission and court hearings and the ways in which these evoked and enacted the state's power. Such a reading reveals an absence of the voice of the marchers themselves- an absence so deep that even people like Malukasi, Kasi and Pearce, who were resident in the area and sympathetic towards the people of Mbekweni, did not really speak for the marchers but rather further engaged in the subjection of agency. This is an aspect I will expand on in Chapter four.

In this chapter I have attempted to trace the origins and production of the dominant narrative of the Paarl March. Partially put into place initially by the media, I have argued that this narrative grew out of the proceedings and report of the Snyman Commission. The Commission's report in essence presented Snyman's interpretation of the 'facts.' This interpretation wove together discordant evidence, especially in relation to the causes, into a singular and coherent narrative that located causes as local and particular, rather than arising from national state policy. This narrative was then continued and reproduced as it was taken up as evidence in the criminal court cases meant as the last of a series of procedures to deal with the march. The following chapter is interested then in the ways in which scholars have engaged with these archives and how the Paarl march has been written into South African history in attempts to understand the continuity of much of this initial narrative.

Chapter 2: Who speaks for Paarl's pasts? : The Paarl march and history

*"Revolts belong to history. But, in a certain way, they escape it."*¹

Following the previous chapter's reading of the Paarl archive, this chapter is interested in how these institutionally bounded discourses came to be used as key resources in writing the history of the event. This chapter begins to examine the ways in which the uprising has been written and represented by both scholars as well as in activists' 'struggle histories.' The chapter then turns to a closer examination of Poqo and the ways in which it is given form, before turning to its marginalisation in terms of the wider South African resistance historiography. As it is political scientist, Tom Lodge's work that is often considered the "cannon" for writing Poqo and the Paarl march, much of the chapter will be devoted to a close examination of his arguments. Here, I argue that ultimately his work, and that of those who follow, struggles to escape the archive of the Paarl march, especially in relation to its understanding of Poqo.

Writing the Paarl March

Since the early 1970's the Paarl march had cropped up occasionally in scholarly work, although often only through brief references in relation to discussions of Poqo and (used interchangeably) the PAC. In such early work as that by Muriel Horrell, Richard Gibson, Edward Feit, Gail Gerhart, and Dirk Kotze, Poqo and the uprising in Paarl were often discussed along the same lines as set out by the Snyman Commission, to which each of these authors had looked.² The focus in much of this early work was essentially on Poqo as an organisation and its violent activities, of which the Paarl march was merely one expression.

¹ Michel Foucault, *Power, Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Vol. 3*, edited by James Faubion (New York: The New Press, 2001).

² See Edward Feit, *Urban Revolt in South Africa 1960-1964* (USA: North Western University Press, 1971); Muriel Horrell, *Action, reaction and counter-action* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1971); Gail Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa: The Evolution of an Ideology* (Los Angeles: University of

Based on the Commission's findings, in his book *Urban Revolt in South Africa 1960-1964*, Feit interpreted Poqo in relation to the ANC's armed wing Umkhonto We Sizwe.³ Here Poqo is portrayed as Umkhonto's rival organisation- a much larger movement yet one that lacked Umkhonto's level of organisation and strategy. It is largely in this context then that Feit interprets the events in Paarl as an example of the movement's inefficient and "premature" liberation attempts.⁴ For Gerhardt, the attack on Paarl was a violent performance of the kind of decolonialist revolution that Franz Fanon had anticipated in 1961 (writing during and regarding the Algerian struggle for independence from colonialism).⁵ However for Gerhart, Poqo remained a "short-lived terrorist movement of the early 1960's" and the events in Paarl received only cursory attention. Thomas Karis, Gail Gerhart and Gwendolyn Carter (hereafter Karis et al) noted that the Paarl march and Bashee Bridge killings had stirred up white anxieties of a Mau Mau type movement in South Africa. In this sense Karis et al represent Paarl as: "an example of impetuous and open action by a large group having no carefully worked-out plan."⁶

Although not the first to make mention of the Paarl march then, Tom Lodge's 1982 journal article, "The Paarl Insurrection" and 1983 book, *Black Politics in South Africa* constituted the first substantial work on the uprising.⁷ Lodge made the first real attempt to read the Snyman Commission against the grain and to deal with the Paarl march as more than just a

California Press, 1978). 224-226; Richard Gibson, *African Liberation Movements: Contemporary struggles against white minority rule* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 93; Dirk Kotze, *African politics in South Africa, 1964-1974* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1975), 20-21.

³ Feit, *Urban Revolt in South Africa*, 4-5.

⁴ I will expand on this kind of juxtaposing of Umkhonto and Poqo later in this chapter. I only mention it here in relation to the way in which Feit (following the ANC's interpretation) formulated Poqo and the Paarl march. See Feit, *Urban Revolt in South Africa*, 4-5.

⁵ Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*. Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 1968)

⁶ Thomas Karis, Gwendolyn Carter, and Gail Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge: A documentary history of African politics in South Africa 1882-1964*, Volume 3 (hereafter Karis et al) (USA: Hoover Institution Publication, 1978), 669-670.

⁷ Tom Lodge, "The Paarl Insurrection: A South African Uprising," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 25 (1982). Tom Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa since 1945* (Braamfontein: Longman Group Ltd, 1983).

spontaneous and unorganised attack by a “terrorist” movement. However in some ways Lodge’s work remained constrained by the limited archive available to him conducting research from abroad. Despite the existence of the massive archive around the march, Lodge seems to have relied on a limited number of newspaper articles and the notes of then young advocate Albie Sachs- and SAIRR reports- on some of the Paarl march trials. Lodge’s most important source was the report of the Snyman Commission. He does seem to have consulted some of the transcripts of the Commissions proceedings in microfilm form yet his reading of these seems limited.⁸ As I will show, this had a significant impact on his interpretation of the event.

Attempting to reintroduce the march into the historiography on black South African liberation movements, Lodge set out to provide an analysis of the causes of the Paarl march. In some ways Lodge attempted to use the evidence of the Snyman Commission to write his own narrative of the march. By paying close attention to the argument which the SAIRR had presented before the Commission but which Snyman had largely disregarded, Lodge stressed the impact of the inadequacies and injustices of the migrant labour system and the many other apartheid policies which affected black people living in the Western Cape and in Paarl more specifically.⁹

While Lodge suggested then that a detailed study of such factors which formed the background to the march had the potential for offering an “alternative interpretation to that of a tendentious government document (the Snyman Commission report),” this was not his primary focus.¹⁰ Rather he was essentially concerned with a debate on the sociology of

⁸ In both “The Paarl Insurrection” and *Black Politics in South Africa*, Lodge’s references to the Snyman Commission transcripts only go as far as Volume 4 or page 644 of the more than 2000 page transcripts. See Lodge, “The Paarl Insurrection,” and Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 231-260.

⁹ Lodge, “The Paarl Insurrection,” 98. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 248-249.

¹⁰ Lodge, “The Paarl Insurrection,” 98.

liberation and with recovering the Paarl march, as an important act of resistance, for South African liberation historiography.¹¹ While attempting to alter the Commission's narrative of the uprising, he seemed unable to steer away from it. He closely followed the Commission report's description of the sequence of events leading up to the march.¹²

Rather than engage with the ways in which the Commission or trials had produced the march, Lodge attributed the marginal place assigned to the Paarl march in the early resistance narratives to the fact that scholars such as Gerhart, and Karis et al had considered its participants politically inarticulate, and their actions spontaneous rather than rational, and had therefore allowed them no place in a narrative of a sophisticated and intellectual struggle against the apartheid state.¹³ The tendency of such scholars, he argued, was more often to focus on the thoughts, responses and actions of a modernist elite group while ignoring the significant popular dimension of protest.¹⁴ Lodge advocated instead for an understanding of the ways in which political ideas had been interpreted at the social base of a political movement. In relation to the Paarl march then, he stressed the need to understand the social and economic factors which influenced the political consciousness of the men who marched on Paarl. Lodge goes to great lengths to sketch the social, economic and political conditions in which Paarl's black population lived during the early 1960's in his attempt to attribute a sense of rationality to the march.¹⁵ According to Lodge's formulation this context all too easily then comes to form the pretext for his discussion of the inevitability of the development of a Poqo movement in the area.

¹¹ Lodge, "The Paarl Insurrection," 98.

¹² These details outlined by Lodge correlate directly with evidence presented in Report of Snyman Commission, see especially page 20 paragraph 277, page 21 paragraphs 292, 293, 295. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 259.

¹³ Lodge, "The Paarl Insurrection," 95. Karis et al, *From Protest to Challenge*. Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*.

¹⁴ Lodge, "The Paarl Insurrection," 95.

¹⁵ Lodge, "The Paarl insurrection," 98-105. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 248-250.

According to Lodge the Western Cape, particularly the Cape Peninsula, had been one of the areas of strongest support for the PAC.¹⁶ This he relates to the particularly harsh effects of influx control in the Cape Peninsula, the ‘repatriation’ of women and children to the Transkei, poor housing, and the sharply deteriorating living conditions in ‘Native locations.’¹⁷ The PAC’s militancy which drew on traditions of primary resistance, and the immediacy of its aims, Lodge argues, made it especially attractive to Cape Town’s migrant worker population, specifically that of Langa’s ‘bachelor hostels.’¹⁸

Despite the PAC’s criticism of the ANC’s collaboration with members of the multiracial Liberal Party, according to Lodge, PAC leaders in Cape Town had accepted help from Liberals during the 1960 pass campaign.¹⁹ While this relationship might have been advantageous to PAC leaders, Lodge suggests that it significantly widened the gap between them and the rank-and-file members and led to the formation of “extremist” factions within the organisation.²⁰ It is in this context, coupled with the massive arrests of the organisation’s leaders during 1960, that Lodge relates the emergence of a violent and racist extremist faction known as Poqo in the Transvaal, to some extent in the Eastern Cape and in Cape Town. From Langa in Cape Town where it set up its major base, Lodge suggests that Poqo influence spread to smaller towns and farms further north, including Stellenbosch and Paarl.²¹

Black people in these towns formed part of small, mostly migrant populations who provided seasonal labour for the farms and factories. As I suggested in the introductory chapter, state policies during the 1950’s especially the Native (Urban) Areas Act and the Group Areas Act

¹⁶ Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa*, 241.

¹⁷ Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa*, 248-250.

¹⁸ Lodge, “The Paarl insurrection,” 105.

¹⁹ Lodge, “The Paarl insurrection,” 106.

²⁰ Lodge, “The Paarl insurrection,” 105-106.

²¹ Stellenbosch’s Poqo activities receive even less attention than that of Paarl. Lodge notes that a Poqo cell had been set up on a Stellenbosch farm in 1961. See Lodge, “The Paarl Insurrection,” 107.

had significantly restructured Paarl's black population.²² After hundreds had been endorsed out of Paarl, the remaining 'productive' individuals were re-accommodated in two municipal locations, about six kilometres from town, Mbekweni and Langabuya. Mbekweni, the major accommodator of Paarl's 2000 migrant workers, consisted of four blocks of single workers' hostels, each barracks divided into rooms for six men.²³ In addition there were houses for thirty families. Langabuya remained a so-called 'emergency camp' which accommodated Paarl's remaining black families forcibly removed from other areas in the Valley.²⁴ Lodge suggests that Paarl's remaining black population were by no means secured of continued residence, as state attempts to restructure black populations in the Western Cape turned into a debate about removing them altogether.²⁵

Lodge attempts to examine Paarl in relation to the political instability which marked the rest of South Africa during the early 1960's, particularly the PAC's involvement in the Sharpeville uprising and the Langa march in March 1960.²⁶ He suggests that Paarl was not exempt from such disturbances and experienced its own share of turbulence and resistance by various groups, specifically in relation to people's attempts to defend their interests through affiliation with a variety of formal organisations. According to Lodge, the ANC, which had existed in Paarl since the 1920's, gained significant support during the 1950's period of removals. The PAC had also existed in Paarl at the time. FCWU was, according to Lodge, the

²² Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 248-249. Malherbe, *Paarl: The hidden Story* (Mowbray: Esquire Press, 1987), 59. Deborah Posel, *The Making of Apartheid, 1948-1961: Conflict and Compromise* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

²³ Lodge gets this figure from Lydia Kasi's evidence before the Snyman Commission. He references the Commission proceedings taking it as 'fact.' See Snyman Commission, 600. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 248.

²⁴ Lodge, "The Paarl Insurrection," 99.

²⁵ This related to the Urban Labour Preference Policy and the much publicised 1962 debate around its intentions to remove all Africans from the Western Cape, replacing them with local coloured labour. The Urban Labour Preference Policy (ULPP) was first announced by President Verwoerd in Parliament in 1952. It was intended that wherever possible local coloured people would satisfy the labour demands thus the number of black people entering the Western Cape was more rigidly restricted than elsewhere in the country. Deborah Posel, "Curbing African urbanisation in the 1950s and 1960s," in M. Swilling et al. *Apartheid City in transition* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1991), 21. Posel, *The Making of Apartheid*, 88.

²⁶ See Lodge, "The Cape Town troubles, March – April 1960," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 4, No.2 (1978), 216-239. Philip Kgosana, *Lest We Forget*, (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1988).

most significant political influence among Paarl's coloured and black communities during this period.²⁷

Despite the tendency to suggest that Paarl was isolated from the unrest that marked the rest of the country, "a peaceful place remote from the high racial emotion of the Transvaal," Paarl was in no way exempt from such political activities.²⁸ In mid-1959 local FCWU member and women's leader, Elizabeth Mafeking, led demonstrations in Paarl against the extension of pass laws to women.²⁹ Further demonstrations broke out after Mafeking was endorsed out in November 1959.³⁰ Municipal police carrying out raids on the location were assaulted on several occasions and the District Commandant of Police at Paarl, Lieutenant Carstens, was shot along with three other policemen when a patrol van was targeted in April 1962. In March 1960, black Paarl residents too heeded the calls of the anti-pass campaign as several people destroyed their passes and arson attempts were made on the local school and administration offices- seen as symbols of state rule.³¹

During the post-Sharpeville period, with the ANC and PAC underground, Lodge suggests that Poqo first took a hold in Paarl.³² According to Lodge, against this backdrop, Poqo and its ideology became especially popular among the migrant workers of Mbekweni who felt the effects of government policies most severely and to whom the traditional and heroic character of Poqo's "simple" and accessible slogans appealed.³³ By suggesting that these slogans were

²⁷ Lodge, "The Paarl Insurrection, 99, 104. Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa*, 248.

²⁸ "Quiet, Conservative Paarl is shaken by Riot Horror," *Cape Argus* (23 November 1962).

²⁹ Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 248.

³⁰ According to a report in the *Cape Argus* (appearing only after the march) these demonstrations resulted in one death and 16 people wounded. "History of rioting at Paarl," *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962).

³¹ "History of rioting at Paarl," *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962). Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 248.

³² Lodge, "the Paarl Insurrection," 105.

³³ Lodge argues that the PAC's heroic, traditional orientation may have had a particular attraction for Xhosa labourers from the culturally conservative Transkei. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 107, 214. Gerhart also suggests that the PAC introduced a cultural reorientation into African politics as an attempt to revive and popularise a nationalist rallying point in the memory of 18th and 19th century African heroes. See Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 202.

“simple” Lodge seems to undercut his own critique of the scholarship that had represented Poqo dismissively as simple and traditional.

According to Lodge, Poqo offered men “freedom” at a fee of 25 cents.³⁴ Lodge suggests, “Farm workers were told that Poqo intended to take the land away from whites and give it to Africans. Men in Wellington were told that one day they must throw away their passes and take over the houses of the whites...Men in Paarl were told there was no need for whites; the factories and industries would carry on as usual for was it not the black people who worked in them?”³⁵ As a result by 1962, Lodge posits that about 300 people belonged to the Poqo branch in Mbekweni³⁶ which consequently came to be seen by the state as the “breeding ground for Poqo” and “the hottest spot in the Western Cape.”³⁷

Coupled with the political and economic insecurity threatening Paarl’s black population, Lodge suggests that their tension was heightened by the corruption of the local administration. Mbekweni’s director of Bantu Administration, Johannes Le Roux together with his senior clerk, Wilson Ngcukana, manipulated the system for their private profit. They sold passes, put pass offenders to work on Le Roux’s personal farms and imposed heavy fines on anyone who did not comply with the regulations.³⁸ In the context of such grievances about state policies and local corruption, rather than adopt the Snyman Commission’s notion that the majority of people were forced to join the organisation, Lodge attributes greater agency in following the SAIRR’s argument that most people joined Poqo voluntarily.

³⁴ This membership fee was paid per month. Lodge gains this information directly from evidence presented in the questioning of witness X1 before the Snyman Commission. Lodge, “The Paarl Insurrection, 109. See Snyman Commission, 251.

³⁵ Lodge takes this information from the evidence given by Witness X3 as he was being questioned by Advocate Viviers (for the Paarl tax payers) and further from reports in the *Cape Times* in June 1962 and March 1963. See Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 244. See Snyman Commission, 348.

³⁶ Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa*, 250.

³⁷ “Inside Poqo,” *Drum Magazine* (February 1963).

³⁸ Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 249.

Lodge suggests that the township itself was a site of unrest, and that municipal police raids and arrests were a frequent occurrence.³⁹ According to Lodge, the Paarl Poqo movement thus came to despise the municipal officials and their police force which reported their activities to the SAP. These tensions, he argues, reached boiling point when on 21 November 1962 all suspected Poqo members in the township were forcibly confined to a single hostel which was meant to allow the police greater control over the organisation. With the men confined in this single hostel, 'Block D,' the municipal forces were able to discover, and hand over to the South African Police, three men who had allegedly participated in murders which had taken place during the preceding months. In terms of Lodge's argument, this added to the insecurity of the organisation and "set the stage for the Paarl uprising."⁴⁰

This narrativisation and teleological outline is meant to form the pretext for Lodge's argument for the uprising's implicit rationality in terms of Poqo 'members' perspectives. He suggests that, "The terrible events of the night of November 21st grew out of an insurrectionary characteristic of the Poqo movement. For its members the reversal of the present social order was the only alternative to its perpetuation on increasingly intolerable terms."⁴¹ It is against this background then that Lodge suggested that on the evening of the 21 November 1962, Poqo members were called to a meeting where they were informed of the plan to march on the police station and the jail where they would free their detained members.⁴² Lodge's brief description of the event in these terms directly followed the outline of the uprising as it exists in the Commission's Report.⁴³

Lodge attempted to depict the men who marched on Paarl as conscious agents in the making of their own history and to attribute the march with some significance rather than continue its

³⁹ Lodge, "The Paarl Insurrection, 99. Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 248.

⁴⁰ Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa*, 253.

⁴¹ Lodge, "The Paarl Insurrection," 114.

⁴² Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 248.

⁴³ See Report, 19-22.

previous interpretation as a premature, disorganised and mindless failed attempt at revolution. For Lodge, the decision by these men to enter private homes contradicted a depiction of the march as simply a defensive response by panicked ‘rioters.’ Rather he suggested that Paarl’s Poqo members had been discussing the PAC’s plans for a general uprising for months, and that it was at the moment of this decision that the march, which had been first and foremost a defensive action, became a revolt which followed some kind of preconceived model.⁴⁴

In this way Lodge critiqued previous representations of the march.⁴⁵ Subaltern Studies scholar Ranajit Guha in discussing the 1855 Santal rebellion in India, argued that by putting emphasis on spontaneity and instinctuality, major historical schools tended to separate peasant actions from peasant consciousness- a shortcoming which, he suggested, reflected colonial discourse and archives. Guha instead argued that rebellion should be understood as “motivated and conscious.”⁴⁶ In this sense Lodge had similarly attempted to change the way in which the Paarl march and Poqo had been represented by the Snyman Commission, the media, rival political organisations and the subsequent literature through his argument that the march had been reasoned and consciously planned, even if this was only at the last minute.

However in looking to causality as a means to recover the Paarl Poqo cell’s agency and rationality in carrying out the Paarl march, Lodge may have undermined his own intention. Guha argued that an argument based on causes further deprived the peasant rioter of consciousness by attributing the agency to certain external push factors that triggered an almost mindless response. Without such pressures then such an argument might suggest, the peasant rioter might never have decided to revolt.⁴⁷ In this sense, if it were not for the state

⁴⁴ Lodge, “The Paarl Insurrection,” 113.

⁴⁵ These include that by Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*. And Karis et al., *From Protest to Challenge*.

⁴⁶ Ranajit Guha, ‘The Prose of Counter Insurgency’ in *Subaltern Studies Volume 11* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 45.

⁴⁷ Ranajit Guha, “The Prose of Counter-Insurgency,” 47.

policies and local corruption, which according to Lodge had motivated the march, would men in Paarl have even joined Poqo?

Another subaltern studies scholar, Gyanendra Pandey, makes a similar argument about the focus on causes to explain violent events. In writing of the violence surrounding Indian independence, Pandey pointed to the role that causality plays in making violence narratable but showed how this move turns the history of the event into a history of its causes which he suggests “thus, themselves become the event.”⁴⁸ As I have shown, Lodge went into great detail to explain the origins of Poqo and the march in order to make it “narratable,” yet in comparison the actual march itself received very little attention and essentially was almost directly taken from the Commission report’s brief summary of the event.⁴⁹

Both Guha and Pandey’s in some ways argue for the need to account for the procedures through which specific narratives of violent events were produced.⁵⁰ While Lodge argued for the recovery and understanding of the Paarl Poqo marcher’s consciousness, this voice was in some ways already lost in the records of the Commission and trials. Without engaging in a discussion of the power that produced the Snyman Commission and trials, Lodge largely reproduces their same logic of representation. To a large extent this also seems to be the case for subsequent histories of Poqo and the march which, rather than challenging Lodge’s formulation seem to have extended or expanded on his argument.

Following Lodge’s work on Paarl there seems to have been a significant lull with regard to any mention of these events, that is until the South African Democracy Education Trust’s *The*

⁴⁸Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), 45-46.

⁴⁹ See Lodge’s outline of the event in Lodge, “The Paarl Insurrection,” 95, as compared to Report, 19-22.

⁵⁰As I will argue more closely in Chapter 4, Guha stresses the need to understand the textual details of colonial state documents in order to understand the power that underlies them. See Guha, “The Prose of Counter-Insurgency.” Pandey is also attempting to examine the ways in which power relations at work select and exclude events in the production of an official history of the theme of Partition by eliding the violence. See Pandey, *Remembering Partition*.

road to democracy between 1960 and 1990 in which several emerging scholars on the PAC have published their work. In his chapter, Brown Maaba made perhaps the first productive move away from Lodge and the Commission by examining some of the Paarl trial records which allowed him to build on the Commission's narrative of the march and to provide details lacking in Lodge's account, specifically in relation to the events of the murders in the Paarl area that had preceded the uprising.⁵¹ However at the same time Maaba does not seem to have recognised the ways in which the Commission's narrative was so deeply implicated in the proceedings and discourse of the trials. As such it seems to me that Maaba, although unintentionally, still remains trapped within the staged narrative of the Snyman Commission whose report he used alongside the court records. However, as I have suggested, these highly mediated records offer little if any hope of recovering the subaltern marcher.

Maaba's work on the PAC⁵² also made use of oral interviews as a way of perhaps getting beyond the official version of the march by including the memories and perspectives of men who were in some way part of the PAC or Poqo during this period. However, with regard to the Paarl events, Maaba's only oral evidence came from Menziwe Tsholoba.

Tsholoba himself later produced his own memoir.⁵³ According to Tsholoba, as an active Poqo member and later leader in Paarl, he too would have been arrested with countless others in the days after the Paarl march had he not been working the night shift the evening of 21st

⁵¹Brown Maaba, "The PAC's war against the state, 1960-1963," in *The road to democracy in South Africa*, South African Democracy Education Trust, Volume 1 [1970-1980] (South Africa: Unisa Press, 2006). Maaba looks to the Paarl Court cases including: Supreme Court case, State vs Baden Koboka and ten others, 1966. National archives, Boxes 1/1/1/820, 1/1/1/821, 1/1/1/822, 1/1/1/823 Supreme Court case, State vs Johannes Notyawe and Vanele Matikinca, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/560. Supreme Court case, State vs Amteteleli Ntuli and Leonard Zambodla, May 1968. National archives, Box 1/1/1/986 Supreme Court case, State vs Titus Nyovu, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561. Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544. Supreme Court case, State vs Shadrack Mbekile and 20 others, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556. He also looks at the records of trials held in the Transkei. See Maaba, "The PAC's war against the state," 257-298.

⁵²Maaba, "The PAC's war against the state," 266-272.

⁵³ Menziwe Esau Tsholoba, *In and Out of Robben Island Prison: an autobiography of M. E. Tsholoba* (Cape Town: Mr. Menziwe Esau Tsholoba, 2010).

November 1962. He provides no sense of commitment to a ‘Poqo’ cause and seems to remain distant from the march and its intentions as he apologetically recalls that “Many Africans and some whites were killed. It was a sad story. Six people were buried at Mbekweni in Paarl on one day. Children were left fatherless and wives widowed.”⁵⁴

Similarly, other biographies and autobiographies of PAC members and activists, which make mention of the events in Paarl, and which could have provided the space for a different argument, also fall into the same frames of representation.⁵⁵ Indeed they draw on Lodge’s work when commenting on the Paarl march and as a result seem to discuss the uprising on the same terms as the sources which Lodge used problematically. Without referencing, Elias Ntloedibe, the author of a biography of Robert Sobukwe, quotes directly from the Snyman Commission and the *Sunday Express*, the *Johannesburg Star* and *Die Landstem*.⁵⁶ Again without any referencing, Ace Mgxashe also introduces the Paarl march by quoting a description of the events taken directly from the *Cape Argus* of 22 November 1962 which described the marchers as “chanting freedom songs and brandishing pangas as they marched towards the police station” and emphasised the damages caused.⁵⁷

As a result these books become more of a documentary rendition of the events (not unlike what Lodge does) and seem to portray more of the apartheid state or ANC’s view of the march rather than exhibit any real pride in, or even ownership of, Poqo or what it had achieved at Paarl. This points to the blurring of memory and the use of documents, which in some ways suggests that memory would not provide a pure source untainted by the dominant

⁵⁴Tsholoba, *In and Out of Robben Island Prison*, 33.

⁵⁵ Ace Mgxashe, *Are you with us? The story of a PAC activist*, (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2006). Tsholoba, *In and Out of Robben Island Prison*. Elias Ntloedibe, *Here is a tree: Political biography of Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe* (Botswana: Century-Turn Publishers, 1995). Letlapa Mphahlele, *Child of this soil: My life as a freedom fighter* (Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2002). M. Pheko, *The hidden side of South African politics* (Johannesburg: Tokoloho Development Association, 2009).

⁵⁶ Ntloedibe, *Here is a tree*, 127-130.

⁵⁷ See Mgxashe, *Are you with us?*, 172.

understanding of the event.⁵⁸ Western Cape PAC member, Ace Mgxashe outlines the causes of the march as provided by the Snyman Commission as well as the SAP's theory, but never provides his own understanding of the uprising as a PAC activist or the view of the PAC more generally.⁵⁹ If not quoting directly from the Snyman Commission or newspaper reports there is a tendency to shy away from any substantial engagement with the march. Perhaps this limit is related to the fact that, with the exception of Menziwe Tsholoba, these authors were PAC members, and did not identify with Poqo, which would again point to a differentiation between the two or the possibility that Poqo may never really have existed outside of the events at Langa, Stellenbosch, Paarl and the Mbashe/Bashee Bridge, an argument which I will elaborate on later in this chapter.⁶⁰

Aside from the fact that only Tsholoba appears to be in a position of intimate knowledge about Poqo in Paarl, these autobiographies seem to fit with the dominant narrative of the march. This speaks to the seepage of the textual into memory. These autobiographies are written from the present where a claim to past political involvement is valorised.

Contradictions emerge then as these accounts simultaneously celebrate the spirit of PAC and Poqo initiatives, while distancing themselves from a violent past that would disrupt or sully the narrative of struggle. In many ways then, these autobiographies seem to continue along the same lines as the dominant historical representation of Poqo and the march.

Making 'Poqo'?

If the contours of the march so closely followed that of the Snyman Commission in both scholarly and activist accounts, what then of the depiction of Poqo itself? As Chapter 1 has

⁵⁸ Popular Memory Group, 'Popular Memory: Theory, Politics, Method' in R. Johnson et al (eds), *Making Histories: studies in history-writing and politics* (London: Random House, 1982).

⁵⁹ He refers here to the police's theory that the march had been an act of revenge for prior arrests. Mgxashe, *Are you with us?* 126.

⁶¹ Submission by APLA to the TRC (Cape Town, 1997).

demonstrated, the Snyman Commission and the trials seem to have moulded Poqo carefully into a formal political organisation, folding it unproblematically into the PAC.

Notwithstanding this, there seems to be a continued instability and semantic ambiguity around Poqo itself.

Poqo has most often been discussed as an extension of the PAC, as the PAC's armed wing, or as the PAC reincarnated after its banning in 1960, and as the forerunner of the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA).⁶¹ Gerhardt argues that Poqo was simply a reconstruction of the PAC after Sharpeville and that the word represented a shortened version of the Xhosa name for the PAC, *UmAfrika Poqo* or "Africans alone." Varying translations have also suggested that it meant "pure" or independent" all of which referred to the movement's racially exclusive nature.⁶² Lodge discussed Poqo as an "insurgent offshoot" of the PAC and "for the sake of simplicity" continued the use of state's joined formulation of "PAC/Poqo."⁶³ Later scholars, such as Brown Maaba and Sello Mathabatha, also continue to discuss Poqo along the same lines.⁶⁴

This interpretation of the PAC and Poqo as synonymous relied on an official state interpretation as first suggested in April 1962 by a magistrate in Cape Town who had

⁶¹ Submission by APLA to the TRC (Cape Town, 1997).

⁶² The word 'Poqo' is a Xhosa expression meaning 'alone' or 'pure.' It had been used at times in the Western Cape in 1960 by PAC spokesmen to describe the racially exclusive character of their organisation in contrast to the ANC's multiracial spirit. Karis et al, *From Protest to Challenge*, 669. See Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 225. Ka Plaatjie suggests that the word 'Poqo' emerged when Robert Sobukwe, president of the PAC, asked some of his colleagues to translate Pan Africanist Congress into Xhosa. See ka Plaatjie, "The PAC's internal underground activities," in *The road to democracy in South Africa*, South African Democracy Education Trust, Volume 2 [1970-1980] (South Africa: Unisa Press, 2006).678. See also Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 241.

⁶³ Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 231, 241.

⁶⁴ Besides extracting this information from oral interviews, Maaba relies on the report of the Snyman Commission and court cases as well as on Lodge's work. It is significant that it is by means of state court records that Maaba makes much of his argument around Poqo in Paarl and also that he relies on the records of the confession of PAC member James Apleni given before Magistrate D.J.M Jordaan of Cofimvaba on 19 February 1963. This was also the time when Snyman was in the Transkei holding hearings for the Commission as well as the same Magistrate whose offices Snyman had used for these meetings although Snyman does not seem to have spoken with this man. See Maaba, "The PAC's war against the state," 263.

conducted the trials of two men charged with furthering the aims of the PAC, and later more formally by the Snyman Commission.⁶⁵ This argument was then further ingrained after the PAC's acting president, Potlako Leballo, argued at a press conference in Maseru, Lesotho on 24 March 1963 that Snyman's finding was correct and that Poqo and the PAC were indeed the same organisation, and boasted that the PAC/Poqo had 155,000 and planned a revolution throughout the country in 1963. *The Star* reported on 25 March 1963 that Leballo had in this sense suggested that "there had never been an organisation called Poqo," maintaining instead that the word had been part of an Africanist slogan since the 1950's which had been shortened and had become the byword of the underground P.A.C. since 1961.⁶⁶ It seems that this lack of any clear distinction between the ways in which the state and the PAC itself had defined Poqo, came to legitimate such a representation.

In this sense Poqo was most often represented as the excessively violent "terrorist" faction that Snyman had depicted in his report and was discussed in terms of its violent campaigns at Langa township, Paarl, and the Bashee River.⁶⁷ Based on Snyman's Report which tied several murders and instances of violence throughout the country to Poqo, scholars have tended to discuss Poqo in relation to cases of assault and murder of black and coloured people in the Western Cape and pro-government chiefs and headmen in the Transkei during 1962-1963.⁶⁸ In Kotze's book, even the Snyman Commission comes to stand for an understanding of Poqo as an organisation and is in no way related to Paarl- it is simply "an enquiry that found that the organisation [Poqo] was the PAC gone underground."⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Ken Owen, "Poqo" *Cape Times* (5 October 1962).

⁶⁶ Pogrud, *Sobukwe and Apartheid*, 180. "Dramatic Claims by P.A.C leader," in *The Star* (25 March 1963). Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 252. Gibson, *African Liberation Movements*, 93. Karis et al, *From Protest to Challenge*, 671.

⁶⁷ Feit, *Urban Revolt in South Africa*, 5. Gibson, *African Liberation Movements*, 62. Kotze, *African politics in South Africa*, 21. Karis et al., *From Protest to Challenge*.

⁶⁸ See for example Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 225. Karis et al, *From Protest to Challenge*, 669-670.

⁶⁹ Kotze, *African politics in South Africa*, 21.

Despite Leballo's claim, which some have read as political posturing, scholars have continued a debate about the precise genealogy of Poqo. While most set out with a description of Poqo as directly related to the PAC, several have argued that Poqo was what Karis et al call a "spontaneous grass-roots movement," lacking direction and organisation in this sense, Poqo was in some ways separate from the PAC. As Karis et al suggest, it had neither a hierarchical structure nor a clearly defined statement of aims or ideological principles.⁷⁰ Rather as Gerhart suggests it "spoke the language of action" drawing on millenarianism and violent sentiments in its determination to eliminate all white people and rule the country.⁷¹ In this sense Feit also suggests that Poqo cells often acted somewhat irrationally like "a body without a head."⁷²

Writing several decades later, Kwandiwe Kondlo similarly portrays the movement as a generation of militants for whom "action preceded political theory and operation replaced strategy."⁷³ Kondlo argues that Poqo's message was simple and appealing, yet simultaneously reflected a skewed and outdated national liberation purpose. He suggests that different generations of PAC members' varying beliefs and views on the nature of war were important sources in the formation of Poqo's military strategy. However, these "war" strategies had little connection with political ideology. Rather Kondlo suggests that Poqo's simple slogans had more meaning for historical actors in the sense that they made the abstract theory of Pan Africanism tangible. Poqo's basic ideology and the military strategy associated with it, reflected the ordinary person's struggle against the conditions of apartheid oppression. Its slogans articulated the anger of impoverished black people through catchphrases like: "we shall drive them [white people] to the sea," "they must go back to Europe." Lodge makes a similar argument yet he suggests that this was the kind of language most effective for

⁷⁰ Karis et al, *From Protest to Challenge*, 669.

⁷¹ Gerhart, *Black Power in South Africa*, 226.

⁷² Feit, *Urban Revolt in South Africa*, 5.

⁷³ Kwandiwe Kondlo, *In the Twilight of the Revolution: The Pan Africanist Congress of South Africa 1959-1994* (Basel: Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2009), 233, 235, 237.

mobilising the kind of recruits needed for the Poqo uprising.⁷⁴ A new quality was the extent of its member's desperation, their targeting and killing of African collaborators and informers, and their willingness to kill whites at random.⁷⁵

One may note that, had the Snyman Commission or the trials provided Poqo with different slogans or a clear ideology, perhaps these scholars conclusions may have been different as their account of Poqo relies so heavily on these sources.

There has also been some debate regarding the membership of Poqo. Karis et al, drawing on sources independent from the Snyman Commission and trials argued that Poqo members in the Western Cape were not primarily migrants from the Transkei, although they do admit that the conditions of a migrant worker's life in the Cape could have led to tensions and protest. Rather they argue that most members were drawn from a more urbanised youth who had some formal education.⁷⁶ According to this formulation, Poqo activists were townsmen and often the unemployed sons of working class or middle class families that had lived in the Western Cape since the mid 1920s. There was further a smaller, semi-urbanised group of "flashy young men" who lived in flats and lodgings and were called *tsotsis* or gangsters by migrants.⁷⁷ Kondlo makes a similar argument for Poqo members in the Eastern Cape as he suggests that in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape membership of the Poqo cells was not only limited to migrant labourers but also included farm workers, teachers and students.⁷⁸ Rather than presenting a stark counter-argument to Lodge's claim for the role of migrant workers, such arguments, I want to propose, again suggest that Poqo was not a homogenous entity.

⁷⁴Kondlo, *In the Twilight of Revolution*, 234- 235. See Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 244.

⁷⁵ Karis et al., *From Protest to Challenge*, 670.

⁷⁶ Karis et al. argue that these were people in their late teens to early 20's. They base this argument on conversations with the late social scientist, Archie Mafeje, as well as Monica Wilson and Archie Mafeje, *Langa: A Study of Social Groups in an African Township* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1963). See Karis and Carter, *From Protest to Challenge*, 694.

⁷⁷ Karis et al., *From Protest to Challenge*, 264, 281-282.

⁷⁸ Kondlo, *In the Twilight of the Revolution*, 235.

While I do not think they had meant this argument as an attempt to diminish the role of migrant workers, Lodge interpreted Karis et al's argument as representing migrant workers in a stereotyped form as people largely unconcerned with political matters and who remained a conservative force. Rather his argument for the rationality of the events in Langa and Paarl relied on the notion that migrant workers in these areas had been very conscious of their political situations. Here his argument relies especially on records of 32 men who had been charged with planning an uprising while working at the Jewish Old Age Home in Cape Town in 1963, where it had been noted that these were middle aged men whose ages ranged between 21 and 63 years, and that almost half of them were married and had left behind dependants in the Transkei. He further looks to another 1963 trial of 20 migrant workers from Langa township who had allegedly participated in an attempt in December 1962 to assassinate the Transkeian Paramount Chief, Kaiser Matanzima, which had noted that these men had families in the Transkei.⁷⁹ Again Lodge's use of these trials transcripts is purely documentary, mining them for 'facts,' and does not note that these trials, happening at the same time as the Paarl trials, were deeply mediated by processes of power in the production of these sources.

Through the multiplicity of Poqo trials after 1962 and the state and media's exhaustive use of the word 'Poqo' (which had initially been a localised term for the Cape Town cells) to refer to all PAC-inspired violence and activities throughout the country, Poqo is examined largely through an organisational lens.⁸⁰ While Leballo had argued that there had never been a Poqo organisation as such, only the PAC, as I have showed in the previous chapter this word seems to have been taken up in the much publicised aftermath of the Paarl march and the Bashee

⁷⁹ Lodge bases this argument on a trial in Cape Town (1963) of 32 men who had allegedly been planning an uprising. He further relies on this trial in which 20 men from the Langa 'bachelor' hostels were tried in Cape Town in 1963. See Lodge, "The Paarl Insurrection," 98.

⁸⁰ Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 241. Maaba, "The PAC's war against the state," 262.

River killings, and Poqo suddenly appeared as a formidable threat to white South Africa. Via the previous murders and violent activities in the Paarl area (formally linked in the aftermath of the march), it was given a pre-history by the Snyman Commission and trials, and following these sources, by scholars as well; violent activities in other areas and regions were attributed to Poqo, giving it a wider reach.⁸¹

In the same way as the Commission had, Lodge employs these murders to make the argument that the uprising was not the first instance of violence in Paarl but that Poqo had been active for several months.⁸² The media and Commission employed the murders in Paarl as well as the killings at the Bashee River to add to the fear built up around this 'Poqo' organisation. However it seems to be only after the march that these incidents were really appropriated for a very specific public construction of Poqo by the media, the Snyman Commission and court trials.

Finding its place in liberation historiography

What most scholars fail to note is that even within the PAC itself those activities attributed to Poqo received significant criticism and at different times Poqo was claimed and disowned. There was an immediate effort to stress that these actions were by no means sanctioned by the PAC's national structure.⁸³ PAC leader, Charles Lakaje expressed disapproval at the 'heroic' acts of Poqo and argued that, "The PAC (at the time of the Poqo attacks) was a loose uncoordinated organisation that seemed to be moving forward purely on the impetus of emotions, enthusiasm and largely confusion...There was no carefully planned out programme

⁸¹ Besides the previously mentioned murders in Paarl during the course of 1962, Poqo was at this stage further connected to murders and violence in Langa, murders or attempted murders of several chiefs and advisors in the Transkei who were read as collaborators with the apartheid state, attacks on police stations at Langa, East London and King Williams Town, and the Bashee Bridge killings. See Report, 7-8. See also Maaba, "The PAC's war against the state," 268.

⁸² Lodge, *Black politics in South Africa*, 252.

⁸³ Maaba, "The PAC's war against the state," 285.

and everyone seemed to have engaged in rash action, if such actions would crown the participants as brave, staunch and daring members in the eyes of the Party.”⁸⁴ Sobukwe also criticised Poqo and distanced himself and the PAC from its acts of violence.⁸⁵ Leballo himself at one time described Paarl and the Bashee River killings as premature actions by groups that had “jumped the gun” but at the same time he expressed the PAC’s motto as “kill” or be “killed.”⁸⁶ PAC leaders in exile seem to have alternated between claiming Poqo as their own and denying responsibility for its acts. Perhaps part of the difficulty of assigning Poqo and the Paarl march a place within black liberation historiography relates to its murky status even within the PAC.

In the PAC’s written submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission it took up Snyman’s interpretation that the Paarl march was the result of localised grievances with Mbekweni’s director, Mr Le Roux who had “claimed to be their protector. This was confirmed by the justice Snyman Commission of Inquiry.” However even here they cannot help but run up against the contradiction that it was not Le Roux that was the target of the march but the Paarl police station “when the Africans were finally aroused..”⁸⁷

Even within the PAC then there seems to have been a production of a resistance struggle narrative in which some events were celebrated while others did not seem to fit. Beyond the events in Paarl, Poqo features in the literature only in connection with violence in Langa, Stellenbosch, the murder of five whites at the Bashee River Bridge in the Transkei, and a failed attempt to assassinate Kaiser Matanzima.⁸⁸ While the anti-pass campaign, the resulting

⁸⁴ ka Plaatjie, “The PAC’s internal underground activities,” 680.

⁸⁵ Kondlo, *In the Twilight of the Revolution*, 235.

⁸⁶ ka Plaatjie, “The PAC’s internal underground activities,” 670.

⁸⁷ “The Armed Struggle,” Submission by the P.A.C. (1996), 3.

⁸⁸ H. Giliomee and B. Mbenga, *New History of South Africa* (Cape Town: Tafelberg Publishers, 2007), 341. C.J Driver, *Patrick Duncan: South African and Pan-African*, (Claremont: David Phillips Publishers, 1980). Maaba, “The PAC’s war against the state,” 257-297. Snyman seems to have been the first to relate all of these incidents

massacre at Sharpeville, and the Langa march on parliament in Cape Town are remembered as the key activities of the PAC, the events at Paarl, the Bashee River Bridge and the attempted assassination of Kaiser Matanzima are attributed to Poqo.⁸⁹ Therefore the Paarl uprising, dismissed to some extent as one of Poqo's impulsive and futile 'heroic' acts, finds only limited space if any in comparison to the memory of Sharpeville and Langa. This would again suggest that there was some instability between the PAC and Poqo although the trend has been to conflate the two.

In this sense, at the time of the Paarl march both in its representation by the PAC and rival liberation movements, the uprising was designated to the margins of an African nationalist narrative of struggle in South Africa in much the same way as subaltern scholar Shahid Amin describes the violence of the Chauri Chaura riot in India as being deemed to hold no place in a "proper nationalist history."⁹⁰

In his work on Chauri Chaura, Amin suggests that the nationalist master narrative produced a "selective national amnesia in relation to specified events which would fit awkwardly, even seriously inconveniencing, the neatly woven pattern."⁹¹ The exclusion and marginalisation of events such as Chauri Chaura (and by extension Paarl) Amin suggests are meant to distinguish between what is viewed as authentic popular protest and 'crime.' Defined therefore as a "spontaneous and mindless riot," Chauri Chaura, Amin argues, gets quarantined within a consequentialist past that is meant to explain why a specific phase or type of struggle was unsuccessful. As such Chauri Chaura gets "written out as it was recounted."⁹²

as featured in his report under a discussion of Poqo- against black and white people respectively. Report of the Snyman Commission, 7-8.

⁸⁹ Ka Plaatjie, "The PAC's internal underground Activities," 669.

⁹⁰ Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura, 1922-1992* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 9

⁹¹ Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory*, 3.

⁹² Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory*, 9.

According to political scholar Andre du Toit the turn to political violence in South Africa has been understood through a particular master narrative which linked political violence to a general modernisation project. However similarly to Amin's argument, Du Toit suggests that there are peripheral incidents or events- and Paarl is cited as one such- which do not fit neatly into the modernising framework of mainstream resistance to apartheid.⁹³ According to Du Toit the "Africanist" inspiration and attack on the white residents of Paarl suggests a strong symbolism which challenges the modernising character of the more typical understanding of the move towards violent resistance.⁹⁴ In this way the Paarl march seemingly interrupts the flow of the dominant narrative and is consequently largely silenced.

The ANC and its armed wing, *Umkhonto We Sizwe* carefully distinguished themselves and their methods from that of the PAC and Poqo. The ANC spoke with contempt of Poqo and its activities especially in terms of the attacks launched on the Bashee River Bridge, Langa and Paarl as it argued that "there are more effective ways of busting the White supremacy state."⁹⁵ The ANC and Umkhonto therefore argued that not only was Poqo acting against the wrong target but that it was unable to conduct the kind of conflict which was necessary under the conditions in South Africa:

"A crowd of unarmed men on a midnight march to town cannot break the police, the army and all the oppression of Verwoerd. That was Paarl- a heroic effort born out of oppression, but badly conceived. It is no good to think of *Impis*⁹⁶ [the traditional African battle units] not to modern guerrilla war... War is not a gesture of defiance. For a sum total of nine Whites killed-only one of them a policeman, and he killed by accident-hundreds of *Poqos* are in jail serving thousands of years imprisonment. For a wild boast Leballo has caused the round-up of unknown numbers of young

⁹³ André Du Toit, "Understanding South African Political Violence: A New Problematic?" UNRISD Discussion Paper 43 (April 1993), 30.

⁹⁴ Du Toit, "Understanding South African Political Violence," 28.

⁹⁵ Feit, *Urban Revolt in South Africa*, 6.

⁹⁶ The isiZulu word for an armed body of men which carries with it the connotations of Zulu battles and violent resistance against colonialists. Although this representation contradicts the notion of Poqo as undisciplined and disorganised fighters as Zulu armies were celebrated for their military formations and strategies. Yet here for the ANC this metaphor comes to represent a form of resistance which was not viable in the context of apartheid state repression.

fighters...The freedom forces of South Africa must be coordinated-cell with cell, branch with branch, region with region- in revolution. There must be strong discipline- no actions going off halfcock...Freedom fighters must be trained. Ten men, well trained and organised, can often without fuss, do a job that 200 heroic but badly led, would bungle.”⁹⁷

In some ways then the Paarl march was used by the ANC and later historiography as a metaphor of what not to do, as opposed to a notion of how resistance should happen. Paarl was considered to be an example of disorganised violence as opposed to the ANC’s argument that only “organised violence will smash apartheid.”⁹⁸ In this context Poqo was placed within a framework of archaic and ineffective traditions of resistance which was seen to have no place in the image the ANC had created for itself of sophisticated, modern and intellectual strategy of resistance.⁹⁹ Poqo’s fighters are deemed to be undisciplined and disorganised, unlike the ANC’s “freedom fighters.” Poqo activists were considered “young men, brave and impatient for freedom” and although the ANC was striving for the same freedom it insisted that “impatience alone leads to recklessness, and recklessness can lose us the battle. The Leballo way is useless.”¹⁰⁰ The ANC considered Poqo’s slogans to be “a panicky cry of blind leaders... We distrust despair, for it does not make good soldiers. Despair sent the men of Paarl, armed with nothing but their bravery, unorganised, untrained, and badly led, to meet the bullets of Verwoerd’s police.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ “The ANC spearheads Revolution: Leballo? No! Leaflet issued by the ANC,” May 1963 accessed at www.anc.org.za on 23 September 2011. Also reproduced in Karis et al, *From Protest to Challenge*, 754.

⁹⁸ “The ANC spearheads Revolution: Leballo? No! Leaflet issued by the ANC,” May 1963 accessed at www.anc.org.za on 23 September 2011. Also contained in Karis et al, *From Protest to Challenge*, 754.

⁹⁹ Although the ANC portrayed an image of itself as a modern and intellectual movement as opposed to Poqo “impis,” the ANC was to some extent also implicated in this realm of traditional warriors. The ANC’s logo depicts a spear, the kind used by Zulu warriors, and manifesto and Umkhonto’s manifesto of 16 December 1961 is accompanied by a caricatured warrior wielding a spear and 19th Century Zulu chief Bambatha’s memory is called on, representing a fearless black armed resistance against colonial oppression. See ANC official website, “Manifesto of Umkhonto We Sizwe,” accessed at www.anc.org.za on 25 February 2012. However the difference between the ANC and Poqo here is that while the ANC claims such a connection they do not replicate it.

¹⁰⁰ “The ANC spearheads Revolution: Leballo? No! Leaflet issued by the ANC,” May 1963 accessed at www.anc.org.za on 23 September 2011. Also contained in Karis et al, *From Protest to Challenge*, 754.

¹⁰¹ “The ANC spearheads Revolution: Leaflet issued by the ANC,” May 1963, accessed at www.anc.org.za on 23 September 2011. Also contained in Karis et al, *From Protest to Challenge*, 754. Another document issued by

Certainly a grand narrative of black resistance in South Africa did develop largely around the ANC both in South Africa and abroad. This was a narrative of a heroic and noble anti-apartheid struggle led by the ANC against the apartheid regime. It is largely an ANC-centred narrative that has informed and structured our understanding of periods of repression and resistance in South Africa. Even though it played out in 1963 alongside the Poqo trials and invoked the same anti-sabotage legislation, it is more often the Rivonia Trial (which tried ten ANC leaders, including Nelson Mandela) and not the Poqo trials that had made the official history books in post-apartheid South Africa.¹⁰²

In the production of such a grand narrative, processes of inclusions and exclusions were enacted and specific versions of events were adapted to conform to the contemporary narrative of liberation offered by the ANC as the new ruling party.¹⁰³ Events had been fashioned in order to create a new national identity in post-apartheid South Africa.¹⁰⁴ The organization determined which events would be accorded recognition in the grand narrative of the liberation struggle and how they would be remembered. In his attempt to examine the way in which the Soweto uprising has been remembered and institutionalized, historian Gary Baines suggests that the foundational narrative of the liberation struggle in South Africa has been produced through a multilayered process involving iconisation, theatrical storytelling, memorialisation and ritualisation.¹⁰⁵ As a result of what Baines calls “the exclusivity of the

the ANC on 6 April 1963 argued that the Paarl march was a “misguided political action” and “futile act of terrorism.” Copied in Karis et al, *From Protest to Challenge*, 749-750.

¹⁰² The Rivonia Trial (1963-1964) tried 20 ANC leaders including Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Govan Mbeki on the charges of sabotage. See Karis et al, *From Protest to Challenge*, 673-678.

¹⁰³ Scott Couper, “An Embarrassment to the Congress? The Silencing of Chief Albert Luthuli and the production of ANC history,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol35, no2 (2009). Reading Couper’s analysis of the way in which the prominent ANC leader Albert Luthuli’s disapproval of the turn to armed violence was silenced because it represented an “embarrassment” to the ANC grand narrative.

¹⁰⁴ Gary Baines, “The Master Narrative of South Africa’s Liberation Struggle: Remembering and forgetting June 16, 1976,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (2007), 301.

¹⁰⁵ Baines, “The Master Narrative of South Africa’s Liberation Struggle,” 302.

ANC's unilinear tale of heroism," the PAC has been afforded little space in this narrative, Poqo even less.¹⁰⁶

It seems that Lodge was partly correct then in his suggestion that it is due to Poqo's representation at the time that it was marginalised in what has remained largely ANC-dominant literature. And in some ways Lodge had tried to do what Amin is suggesting by attempting to elevate the status of the Paarl march in terms of the South African black liberation history in which it had been deemed to fit uncomfortably.¹⁰⁷ However, at the same time, Lodge starts his discussion of Poqo by juxtaposing it with- and distinguishing it from- the ANC armed wing. This move in itself allows for the continuation of the view of the ANC's 'noble,' modern and intellectual approach to armed struggle as opposed to Poqo's approach. Such a view is central to the hegemony of an ANC narrative of struggle. While he speaks of Umkhonto's "carefully controlled campaign of violence," Poqo's activities are referred to as a "spontaneous popular uprising."¹⁰⁸

In trying to rescue the Paarl march and Poqo itself from the margins of South African historiography, and its representation as irrational, Lodge and those who have followed him have mined the documentary sources and attempted to construct a different Poqo. But the cost of summoning it into the formal history of liberation organisations, ironically confirms its marginal status. By casting Poqo in the history of liberation organisations, Lodge and others exclude alternative ways of thinking resistance. In attempting to restore Poqo by narrating it

¹⁰⁶ Baines, "The Master Narrative of South Africa's Liberation Struggle, 301. For a similar argument in relation to heritage see Sabine Marshall, "Pointing to the dead: Victims, Martyrs and Public Memory in South Africa," *South African Historical Journal*, 60 (2008). Marshall suggests that, "the under-representation of the PAC story...echoes to some extent the unequal power relations but more significantly seems to be propelled by a need to protect the inspiring, moral narrative of the liberation struggle from being sullied or compromised by the PAC's radicalism and more especially Poqo's violent terrorist activities." Hilary Saphire makes a similar argument that it is because it was the ANC and not the PAC that emerged as the major liberation movement in South Africa, in terms of both its international credibility and its legitimacy in South Africa itself, which historians have tended to concentrate their attention on the ANC rather than the PAC. Hilary Saphire, "Liberation Movements, Exile, and International Solidarity: An Introduction," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol.35, no. 2 (June 2009), 275.

¹⁰⁷ See Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory*, 9.

¹⁰⁸ Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*, 231.

along the lines of an organisational history, Lodge undercuts his own critique. By relying directly on the Commission's interpretation, Lodge largely reproduces the state's representation of Poqo and continues the subjection of the participants' agency.

It becomes clear that different histories around the Paarl march continue to convey much the same narrative- a narrative put in place largely by the Snyman Commission and trials. This seems to relate to the ways in which much of this scholarship had relied to varying degrees on the archives which I have laid out in the previous chapter, particularly the Snyman Commission. While in some cases attempting to read these sources against the grain, most accounts seem to have continued to use these archives in a documentary sense. Much of this literature around the march has given little, if any, attention to the procedures through which much of this 'evidence' was produced and attained or the contexts in which witnesses and accused spoke, or did not.

In this chapter I have examined the histories that exist around the Paarl March and Poqo. It is clear that the Snyman Commission's narrative is persistent in the accounts of the march by academic histories as well as the so called "struggle histories," which seem to add little that was new, except sources. Poqo does not seem to be understood other than as an appendage of the PAC, or essentially as the PAC, and in this way is written into an organisational frame. Lodge suggests that the Paarl march's place in the shadows of history results from the marginal place that had been assigned to it and Poqo within the larger framework of liberation historiography in South Africa which favours an intellectual and progressive ANC-centred narrative. However by also narrating Poqo in terms of an organisational history, Lodge in fact undercuts the power of the march and the strength of his own critique regarding the importance of marginal histories. Where these accounts differ it is in relation to the causes for the march, but here it seems that what Lodge effects is not a new explanation but one that

recomposes and reverses the evidence before Snyman. Whereas Snyman had rejected structural violence and government policy as a significant cause in favour of local grievances, Lodge places great emphasis on the former. The failure of scholars seems to me may extend from the limits of the archive itself. As such, rather than embarking on a recovery mission as Lodge does, it seems to me that it is useful to think about the ways in which knowledge gets produced and ordered. The following chapter is interested in the ways in which photographs produced around the Paarl march may allow us to read one such procedure of knowing through means of the uprising's visual depiction. Perhaps a reading of this photographic archive might then enable us to complicate the seemingly enduring narrative of the march.

Chapter 3: A different angle?: Reading photographs of the Paarl march

“The positioned subjectivities in looking at photographs leaves a space to articulate other histories outside dominant historical methods.”¹

In writing of a project to digitise liberation archives in Southern Africa, historians Allan Isaacman and Premesh Lalu suggest that careful and critical reading can enable an expansion of the angle of view and in so doing can deepen and complicate the nationalist metanarrative.² They aim to problematise the dominant national narratives and to raise a range of questions linked to the production of knowledge.³ As they suggest, “it is important to shift emphasis from a narrow formulation of victors’ narratives to more nuanced and inclusive histories of struggle- histories that do not simply reproduce the dominant narratives...”⁴

Perhaps if we expand our field of view in relation to the Paarl march and carefully read these archives it might reveal numerous threads that could be followed and thereby enable multiple roads for thinking the march outside of the repression/resistance framework. This at least was my thought when I decided to take a small photographic archive around the Paarl march that, although forming part of the Commission and subsequent trials, has not been used by scholars. A careful reading of the visual representation of the march and its aftermath, I hoped, may have allowed me to escape the shadows of Snyman and the trial transcripts, potentially enabling a more nuanced reading of the uprising. This effort, initially intended as my final chapter, proved harder than I had thought, but is offered here as a stage in clearing the ground.

¹ Elizabeth Edwards, “Photography and the performance of history,” *Kronos* (Special Issue Visual History), No.27 (2001).

² Premesh Lalu and Allen Isaacman, “Digitisation, history, and the making of a postcolonial archive of Southern African liberation struggles,” *The Aluka project, Africa Today*, vol. 52, No.2 (2005), 62.

³ Lalu and Isaacman, “Digitisation, history, and the making of a postcolonial archive of Southern African liberation struggles,” 62.

⁴ Lalu and Isaacman, “Digitisation, history, and the making of a postcolonial archive of Southern African liberation struggles, 60.

From the outset, images featured prominently in the making of this event, through the media, the Snyman Commission and the court cases that followed. The chapter is particularly concerned with a file containing photographs of men arrested for participation in the march. These images then are products of state surveillance and were meant as means of identifying individuals. As such these photographs became ‘evidence’ of Poqo and of the uprising. I ask in this chapter whether they give a face to an otherwise hidden organisation, Poqo. However at the same time these photographs seem to destabilise the kind of Poqo image that the state was attempting to construct, which is perhaps why they were never released to the Press for publication, in the same way that pictures of the accused are often published at the completion of a trial. Forty-three years later, in 2006, Ace Mgxashe was the only one of the scholars to have included one of these images in his book, although only in an illustrative capacity.⁵ With regard to these particular photographs (or ‘mugshots’), this chapter is interested in the part of visibility in the making of a Poqo subject as it grapples with the difficulty, perhaps impossibility, of writing the history of the Paarl march differently.

Picturing the Paarl march

From the outset photographs played an important part in the representation of the Paarl march and its accused. The uprising produced a media spectacle and appeared in newspapers and other publications throughout South Africa. These incorporated crime scene-like photographs of Loop Street with captions indicating “girl murdered here” and of the “blood-stained bedding” in another house (Image 1, 7).⁶ Other photographs depicted the damage to property, shops and petrol stations (Image 3, 5, 6).⁷ These were often accompanied by portraits of the two white victims, Rentia Vermeulen and Frans Richard (Image 2). Often the same

⁵ Ace Mgxashe uses one of the group images of the accused without much contextualisation other than to say that these were some of the “**PAC members**” who were hanged for the part in the Paarl march. Ace Mgxashe, *Are you with us? The story of a PAC activist* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2006).

⁶ *The Cape Times* (23 November 1962). *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962). *Paarl Post*, (23 November 1962).

⁷ *The Paarl Post* (23 November 1962). *Paarl Post* (27 November 1962). *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962).

photographs were reused in different newspapers, creating a consistent visual image.⁸ These images served to provoke an awareness of violence. In this way from the beginning, a specific public visual image was created of the march that accompanied and illustrated the written narrative of a violent and destructive event. These images in some ways were tropes that drew on and manipulated the representations of violence of the Sharpeville massacre, Langa march and Kenya's Mau Mau rebellion which were still fresh in people's minds. In a sense the photographs of bloodied bedding, blood on street pavements, damages to properties and of the "rioter's weapons" (Image 3), heightened white fears and played into the state's propaganda machinery, legitimating its massive security measures being undertaken during the post-Sharpeville period.⁹

⁸ *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962). *Cape Argus* (23 November 1962). *Paarl Post* (23 November 1962). *Paarl Post* (27 November 1962). *Cape Times* (23 November 1962).

⁹ *Paarl Post* (27 November 1962).



Image 1: *Cape Times*, 23 November 1962.

This page of photographs under the heading “Grim aftermath of Paarl’s hours of terror” appears in the *Cape Times* the day after the march.



Image 2: *The Paarl Post*, 23 November 1962. Several newspapers included these photographs of Reneta Vermeulen and Frans Richard.¹⁰

¹⁰ See also *The Cape Times* (23 November 1962) where portraits of Vermeulen and Richard appeared below a caption naming them as “The Victims.”



Image 3: The *Paarl Post*, Tuesday 27 November 1962. Images depict damage to shops and petrol pumps along Lady Grey Street, and the manager Cuthbert's shoe store holding an axe and stick found in the store after the march as well as one of the victims, Francina Perold, photographed in the Paarl hospital.

While photographs of the crime-scenes, damages and white victims formed the public image of the Paarl march, a very different set of photographs were produced of the men arrested in the aftermath of the uprising (See Images 9-19). These photographs were taken soon after arrests were made or, in the case of those wounded during the uprising, while recovering in hospital. These arrestees needed to be made identifiable yet the large numbers seem to have posed a problem. As a result, while some of the images are single portraits, many of the accused were photographed in groups. Consequently with the exception of a few, these photographs do not appear as the typical police mug-shot. Yet they were meant for the same purpose, to serve the police as an instrument of identification. My main interest lies here,

with these images of the accused, which remained part of a private world- used by the police during interrogations, as well as by advocates during the Commission hearings and the later trials, but which never appeared in the public domain.¹¹

Identification and subjectification through police photographs

The photographs form part of a long history of the use of photography by police forces as a means of identification. Initially in Europe since the early 1840's, recording and identifying people through means of the "infallible" camera seemed to be a solution to the problem of recognising delinquents.¹² In his essay "The Body and the Archive," Allan Sekula discusses how photography came to establish and define the territory of the "other" in mid-19th century society. In this instance photography moved away from the traditional honorific portrait and took on the authority of medical and anatomical illustration.¹³ Influenced by the studies of physiognomy and phrenology at the time, photography became part of efforts to control and regulate individuals seen as deviant and menacing to social order.¹⁴ The idea of "the criminal" and the photographic representation of the criminal body became an important object of socio-political interest and scientific study.¹⁵

¹¹ Snyman Commission proceedings (hereafter Snyman Commission), 140-143. Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538. Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542. Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544. Supreme Court case, State vs Shadrack Mbekile and 20 others, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556. Supreme Court case, State vs Johannes Notyawe and Vanele Matikinca, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/560. Supreme Court case, State vs Jonathan Sogwagwa, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561. Supreme Court case, State vs Titus Nyovu, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561. Supreme Court case, State vs Baden Koboka and ten others, 1966. National archives, Boxes 1/1/1/820, 1/1/1/821, 1/1/1/822, 1/1/1/823. Supreme Court Case, State vs Brandford Nkukwane and 11 others. National archives, Box 1/1/1/568.

¹² Jens Jäger, "Photography: a means of surveillance? Judicial Photography, 1850 to 1900" in *Crime, History and Societies*, Vol.5, No.1 (2001).

¹³ Alan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive" in Bolton (ed), *The contest of meaning* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 346.

¹⁴ Physiognomy is the study of the human face and depended on the notion that one could assess an individual's character or personality based on their outer appearance, particularly the face. Phrenology was a very popular pseudoscience during the 19th century which focused on measurements of the human skull.

¹⁵ Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 347.

For the police, courts and associated legal institutions, photography offered what was believed to be an objective reproduction of reality and could therefore potentially be used as evidence. Criminal identification photographs were designed then to assist in making arrests and police forces started to use photographs systematically in the 1870's. In attempt to deal with the growing numbers of photographs taken by the police, in 1879-1880 a Parisian police official Alphonse Bertillion developed the first successful modern system of criminal identification. Bertillion's system combined photographic portraiture, anthropometric description and abbreviated written notes on a single 'fiche,' or card. Bertillion also introduced a specialised "judicial style" of photography to the police.¹⁶

Due to their supposed accuracy photographs were, and are, often not reviewed with the same scepticism as written documents.¹⁷ In writing of the use of photographs in contemporary United States Supreme Court decisions, attorney Hampton Dellinger suggests that such uncritical reliance on photographs is problematic as photos include inherent distortions and are easily manipulated. He therefore goes as far as to suggest that courts should stop using visual attachments altogether. Dellinger's argument is important here in terms of his assertion that while photographs are believed to be replicas of actual objects which are self explanatory, in reality "photographs, like documents, don't speak for themselves."¹⁸ Rather, a photograph presents a very specific perspective. Therefore in the same way as the written documents to which it is attached, a photograph needs to be seen first and foremost as an opinion.

How then do we begin to read the photographs of the Paarl accused (Image 9-19)? These images were certainly produced by the police yet at the same time the photographs of the Paarl accused do not entirely fit with this genre. They do not really present as police

¹⁶ Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 354.

¹⁷H. Dellinger, "Words are Enough: The troublesome use of photographs, maps, and other images in Supreme Court opinions," *Harvard Law Review*, 110 (1997).

¹⁸ Dellinger, "Words are Enough," 1707.

photographs. Instead these images destabilise the genres and reference several different aspects.¹⁹ No single compositional regime prevails among these photographs. Whether this is due to the fact that there was more than one person photographing or due to the problem of the large number of subjects that needed to be photographed is uncertain. Yet the lack of uniformity in and between these photographs unsettles the kind of image one would expect from police photography. Perhaps the large numbers of arrests in Paarl after the march had overwhelmed and disturbed the normal bureaucratic regime. As a result it is almost as if these images did not yet have the visual language to perform as police photographs. The framing of several of these images gives us some idea of a context, which is in many ways the direct opposite of the Bertillon criminal photograph. Rather this reminds me of the collection of police photographs taken in Sydney, Australia in the early 20th century presented by media scholar Peter Doyle in his book *Crooks like us*, in which these images appear more like portraits than mug-shots.²⁰

The discursive creation of the subject as a deviant, criminal or mad man, and the role of photography in the attempts to classify and discipline the individual is reminiscent of the power/knowledge paradigm identified by Michel Foucault. The use of photography by the police in enabling state surveillance and a specific subject/object of knowledge production resonates with Foucault's argument about controlling the deviant through hierarchical observation whereby disciplinary power is achieved through visibility.²¹ "Continuous power" is achieved through the establishment of "a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a centre towards which all gazes would be turned."²² Through Foucault's discussion of the panopticon individuals who are permanently visible become objects of writing, observation and power.²³

¹⁹ For the purposes of this chapter, I have made a selection of the photographs of the accused so as to display the range of genres referenced.

²⁰ Peter Doyle, *Crooks Like Us* (New South Wales: Historic Houses Trust, 2009).

²¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison* (Vintage Books, 1995), 170-171.

²² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 173.

²³ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 195.

As Foucault notes then, “the exposed intimate is the object of information, never a subject in communication.”²⁴ This is certainly true in terms of the images of the Paarl accused, in the sense that these photographs were about observation and never about enabling the subjects to speak. However at the same time the fact that these images are not consistent with the police photography genre and that the police have not entirely been able to visually command the body of the accused, suggests the limits of this Foucauldian notion of power through vision.

Many of these photographs do not support the image of Poqo members as “murderous” and “blood-thirsty” “rioters” as portrayed through the media, Commission and trials. Several of these might even be read as referencing dimensions of team photographs or casual group portraits. These photographs draw attention then in the sense that they contradict the stark silence of the marchers in the media, Commission and trials. In these images these men are powerfully present, even if it is a coerced presence. Perhaps it was because these photographs seem to destabilise the image of Poqo which the state had attempted to create that, besides being used in court, these photographs never appeared before public gaze. Perhaps it is precisely in this sense that these images may lead to more nuanced understandings of the march.

Yet at the same time we cannot ignore the fact that very specific agendas of visibility were at work in their production.²⁵ These images were meant as visual evidence used to classify and locate the individuals pictured here and to produce political subjects.²⁶ As South African photographer, Santu Mofokeng, suggests, such photographs made up authoritative knowledge

²⁴ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 200.

²⁵ Patricia Hayes, Jeremy Silvester and Wolfram Hartman, (hereafter Hayes et al) “Picturing the Past in Namibia: The visual archive and its energies,” in Carolyn Hamilton et al. (eds), *Refiguring the Archive* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 114.

²⁶ In this sense these photographs are not unlike the photographic portrait which appeared in passbooks carried by black people which identified, segregated and controlled the subject. Allen Feldman, “Violence and Vision: The prosthetics and aesthetics of terror,” in Vena Das, *Violence and Subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 49.

which played no small part in the subjection of those populations to imperial (or in this case, apartheid) power.²⁷

The production of these images and their use and archiving as part of criminal court cases has a significant impact then on the way in which they should be interpreted. Photographic images never appear alone, they are almost always accompanied by captions, headings, or reports which shape the way in which viewers read these images. Photographs should also be read in terms of the archives in which they appear. John Taylor therefore argues that photographs are not a coherent medium in themselves, “by themselves they have no identity.”²⁸ John Tagg, a historian of the uses of photography, also similarly suggests that photographs are meaningless beyond the power relations and institutional practices which provide for it. Tagg argues, “To serve as evidence and record, the image had to be said to speak for itself, though only qualified experts could read its lips.”²⁹ As Katherine Biber put it then, “Though mute the photograph is always engaged in a discourse outside of itself.”³⁰ Who is it then that is speaking for these men pictured?³¹

It is important then to explore the constitutive processes that have gone into the making of such images. Although nothing is noted about the photographic occasions, it is important to note that there were power relations involved in these occasions. These photographs have been taken by policemen, or under their supervision, and in the presence of the police. The

²⁷ Santu Mofokeng, “The black photo album/ look at me: 1890-1900,” *Journal of Contemporary African Art* (1996), 56.

²⁸ John Taylor, *Body Horror: photojournalism, catastrophe and war* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 52.

²⁹ John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on photographs and histories* (USA: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 17.

³⁰ Katherine Biber, *Captive Images: Race, class and photography* (New York: Routledge- Cavendish, 2007), 11.

³¹ Abigail Solomon-Godeau, “Who is speaking thus? Some questions about documentary photography,” in Solomon-Godeau, *Photography at the dock: Essays on photographic history, institutions, and practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 169- 183.

detainees are perhaps also interpellated by the camera pointed at their bodies. The camera's lens is often considered equivalent to the pointed rifle.³²

The photographs of these detainees enter the archive as visual attachments to Supreme Court case files on the Paarl trials. They have been arranged in a small ring-binder file placed within an archival box.³³ As a result they need to be read in this context. These are not treasured family photographs placed caringly into an album but rather are treated as evidence, holes punched into each image and added to the file in seemingly no specific sequence or order. In the ordering of some of the trial documents, photographs have been separated from whatever caption or text had originally accompanied the image, thereby dehistoricising and decontextualising them to some extent.³⁴

There does not seem to be any accompanying documentation which might explain the operating procedures of these police photographs. Most of these images have no case numbers or any traceable cross-reference to police briefs. I have only been able to trace one list which appears in a box of another of the Paarl court cases, but which seems to correspond with some of the images. However this list provides no sense of context but rather is only concerned with supplying the names of the respective photographic subjects. The photographs of the accused are further not attributed to a photographer. As a result most of the information about these photographs comes from the images themselves and must therefore be in part speculative.

As attachments to judicial files, these photographs have their meaning in captions added mostly by policemen and through dialogue with witnesses. This is important for understanding the photographs' histories as well as the ways in which they are interpreted. As

³² Feldman, "Violence and Vision, 46.

³³ The photos of the accused appear in criminal court file in the South African National archives, Cape Town. See Supreme Court Case, State vs Brandford Nkukwane and 11 others. National archives, Box 1/1/1/568.

³⁴ Hayes et al, "Picturing the Past in Namibia," 116.

a result these photographs do not tell us much about the men pictured here. Rather our reading of the images is always influenced by what can be gathered about the context of the photographic occasion and the discourses involved in their making and archiving. As Nigerian scholar and curator, Okwui Enwezor, suggests, “the criminal or racial inferior exist in the netherworld of the photographic archive.”³⁵ When they do take on a more prominent place in the archive, Enwezor argues, it is only to dissociate them and expose their difference from ‘normal society.’³⁶

“Do you know this man?”: Photographs as evidence

Held as evidence in the sense described above, photography and other forms of visual documentation played a key part in the Commission hearings and even more so in the court cases that dealt with the Paarl march and other prior crimes attributed to Poqo. Always supposedly neutral and accurate, photographs were used in the trials specifically as ‘evidence.’ These included photographs of the ‘crime-scenes’ and of damage to shops and other property similar to those used by the press. (See images 4,5,6,7). Aerial photographs of Mbekweni as well as maps and diagrams of the route taken by the marchers from the location into Paarl similarly came to function as evidence. Many of these diagrams and photographs were made by Detective Sergeant Greeff of the South African Police in Cape Town who was an official photographer and diagram/mapmaker. Specific points are marked on such diagrams and maps such as those indicating the point at which the men had first gathered in Mbekweni and the points en route where victims were found or men were found hiding-

³⁵ Okwui Enwezor, “Archive Fever: Photography between history and the monument,” in *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art*, exh. cat. (New York: Steidl/ICP, 2008) accessed at www.nbrokaw.files.wordpress.com/2010/05/enwezor-archive-fever.doc on 26 December 2011.

³⁶ Enwezor, “Archive Fever,” 13.

information which Greeff suggests he had gotten from black informers, witnesses, policemen and detainees who had participated in the march.³⁷

Meant to function as real or true representations of a scene, these photographs and maps seem to have served as interviewing tools to help witnesses relate locations involved in the incident, or to test a witness or accused's reaction to certain locations at a crime scene.³⁸ It was also through means of such visual evidence that Snyman and the respective court judges were acquainted with the scenes involved. 'Good' photography and 'good' diagramming or mapping was meant to be the best way to reconstruct the scene of a crime. For example, as in the case of the murder of shopkeeper Maurice Berger, the court was presented with an aerial photograph to indicate the location of the shop, the house of Vanele Matikinca, and other points of significance (See Image 8).³⁹ In the case of another accused, Jonathan Sogwagwa, a photograph showing a policeman with his back to the camera was used as evidence to indicate the position where George Tshisa's body had been found.⁴⁰ Clearly photographs were employed in constructing a narrative of the march and assigning culpability.

³⁷ Supreme Court case, State vs Titus Nyovu, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561. Supreme Court case, State vs Shadrack Mbekile and 20 others, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556. Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542. Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544. Supreme Court case, State vs Baden Koboka and ten others, 1966. National archives, Boxes 1/1/1/820, 1/1/1/821, 1/1/1/822, 1/1/1/823. Supreme Court Case, State vs Brandford Nkukwane and 11 others. National archives, Box 1/1/1/568. Greeff testifies before the court in one of the Paarl trials that he had been called out to Paarl to photograph on, among other occasions, the 23rd and 26th of November on which occasions he had taken several photographs and had been referred to certain points to mark out on the diagrams that he would produce.

³⁸ Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544. Supreme Court case, State vs Kulekile Qutsu, September 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556.

³⁹ Vanele Matikinca, an accused in another case from 1963. It was supposedly his house from which these accused had walked to Berger's shop. Supreme Court case, State vs Johannes Notyawo and Vanele Matikinca, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/560. Supreme Court case, State vs Baden Koboka and ten others, 1966. National archives, Boxes 1/1/1/820, 1/1/1/821, 1/1/1/822, 1/1/1/823 an accused in another case footnote from which the men supposedly marched on the shop.

⁴⁰ Supreme Court case, State vs Shadrack Mbekile and 20 others, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556. Supreme Court case, State vs Jonathan Sogwagwa, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561.



Image 4



Image 5



Image 6



Image 7

Some of the photographs used during the trials as evidence of damage to property as well as to illustrate the area where bodies were found. Image 4 depicts Loop Street, where Frans Richard and Francina Perold were found lying. Image 5 portrays the burnt out petrol pumps and image 6 shows the damage to Truworths store. Photographer: Philip Dickson Greeff. November 1962. Image 7 shows the room of Mr and Mrs van Dyk who were assaulted during the march. Image 7, taken by Detective Sergeant Greeff, was incorporated in news reports of the march.⁴¹

⁴¹ These photos are contained in a criminal court case box in the South African National Archive Cape Town. Supreme Court case, State vs Shadrack Mbekile and 20 others, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556. *The Cape Times* (23 November 1962). *Cape Argus* (22 November 1962). *Paarl Post*, (23 November 1962).



Image 8: Aerial photograph of section of Mbekweni location used in the case of Berger's killing. Date unknown. Photographer unknown.⁴²

During the Commission and trials, photographs were used in a very specific way to support or illustrate the arguments made. For the Commission and later courts information, post mortem photographs of the bodies were also included in the files of cases dealing with the previously mentioned murders of Berger, Tshisa, Hoza, Magriet Samuels, Sarah Kamos and Susie Noriet, Vermeulen and Richard.⁴³ Such images were shown to the doctors and coroners who had examined the bodies post mortem.⁴⁴ To give but one example of this kind of use of photographs as visual evidence to illustrate an argument, at the Commission, Doctor Stals, the District Surgeon at Paarl, was presented with photographs of a body of a man who had participated in the march on which he had performed an autopsy.⁴⁵ Here the fact that the body bore only a single bullet wound was used to attest to the argument that the police had not massacred people but had shown restraint and had only acted in defence of themselves and

⁴² This aerial image appears as exhibit M in a criminal court case (South African National Archives, Cape Town) Supreme Court case, State vs Baden Koboka and ten others, 1966. National archives, Boxes 1/1/1/820, 1/1/1/821, 1/1/1/822, 1/1/1/823.

⁴³ The bodies of several of these victims were burnt and mutilated. For ethical reasons I have not included these photographs here.

⁴⁴ Supreme Court case, State vs Titus Nyovu, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561. Supreme Court case, State vs Johannes Notyawo and Vanele Matikinca, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/560. Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538.

Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542. Snyman Commission, 112, 114, 143-157.

⁴⁵ Snyman Commission, 143-157.

the police station. On the other hand images of the mutilated bodies of the victims, both black and white, were meant to illustrate the view of Poqo as “savage,” excessively violent and cruel.⁴⁶

Aside from these images of crime scenes, damages and bodies, a key interviewing tool used by the Commission but more significantly by the courts, were the photographs of the accused. During the Commission’s hearings five Mbekweni residents appeared before Snyman seemingly solely for the purposes of identifying men in photographs with which they were presented, including an image of a black man who had been shot during the march and was found dead along the banks of the Berg River.⁴⁷ At first glance their brief encounters with the Commission seem insignificant in the larger scheme of the Commission’s argument- they are not asked about Poqo or corruption or even about the march. Yet in questioning them specifically about these photographs and by then naming the men pictured they are part of the identification and subjectification of the accused.

During the trials that followed such photographs of men accused of participation in the march seem to have been even more significant as part of the court’s attempt to prove culpability. They were presented to witnesses, and sometimes also to the accused, who were asked to identify the men depicted and often to confirm that these were Poqo members and had participated in the march.⁴⁸ As one of the accused in the case of Berger’s murder, Edward

⁴⁶ Snyman Commission, 112-114. Interestingly the post mortem images of the mutilated bodies of George Tshisa and Milton Matshiki, who was similarly murdered at Paarl on the 28th October 1962, are the only photographs attached to the Snyman Commission report. See Report, 31-32. Supreme Court case, State vs Baden Koboka and ten others, 1966. National archives, Boxes 1/1/1/820, 1/1/1/821, 1/1/1/822, 1/1/1/823. Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544. Supreme Court case, State vs Stoffel Maxegwana and Henry Njokwana, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538. Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538. Supreme Court case, State vs Johannes Notyawe and Vanele Matikinca, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/560. Supreme Court case, State vs Jonathan Sogwagwa, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561. Supreme Court case, State vs Titus Nyovu, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561.

⁴⁷ Snyman Commission, 140-143.

⁴⁸ Supreme Court Case, State vs Shadrack Mbekile and 20 others, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556.

Sikundla, says “They wanted me to say that they were members of Poqo under me.”⁴⁹

Sikundla maintains that the police had shown him several photographs of the accused, himself included, and that he was supposed to give evidence under threat of torture and intimidation.

This was in some ways an unusual moment in the sense that Sikundla was one of the few witnesses to have pointed to the police’s use of force to extract information, which in a sense alludes to the limits of power in forcing the subject’s compliance.⁵⁰ While the police/ courts needed to identify individual names in order to arrest and charge people they were largely interested in being able to link these men to Poqo. In this sense the individuals photographed were often reduced to Poqo members rather than being represented as individual subjects.

These images therefore function in some sense as a spectacle of this organisation which had functioned in secret and was usually invisible, a recuperation of the “hidden” so to say. In giving Poqo a face, or faces, and picturing these men as criminals and more particularly members of a “terrorist” mob, it was as if to justify racist attitudes and the state’s security measures. At the same time the accused are being produced as visual subjects. Together with fingerprint identification, such photographs then extended the states gaze of surveillance.

Capturing Poqo: Reading photographs of the Paarl accused

Bearing in mind their materiality and context as well as the power and discourses ingrained in these images as I have discussed let me attempt a reading of some of the images of the Paarl accused.

⁴⁹ Supreme Court case, *State vs Baden Koboka and ten others*, 1966. National archives, Boxes 1/1/1/820, 1/1/1/821, 1/1/1/822, 1/1/1/823.

⁵⁰ Supreme Court case, *State vs Baden Koboka and ten others*, 1966. National archives, Boxes 1/1/1/820, 1/1/1/821, 1/1/1/822, 1/1/1/823. On a few occasions accused had suggested that they had been tortured yet Sikundla seems to be the first state witness to allude to such force in extracting evidence. I will take up this issue in the following chapter.

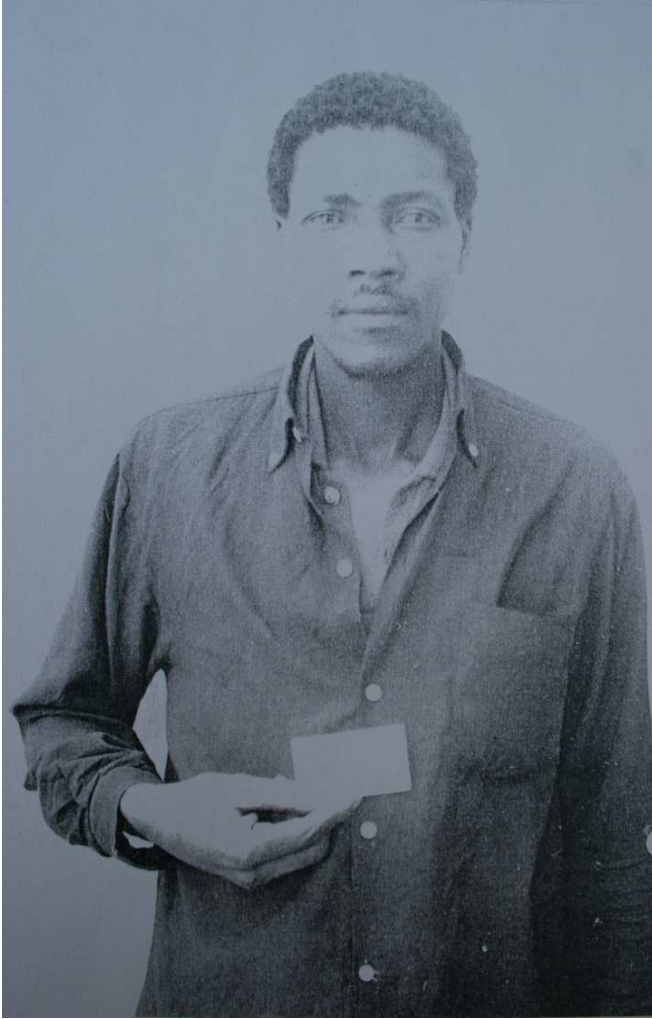


Image 9: November 1962. Photographer unknown.

Let me begin with this photograph (Image 9) as this is one of only three such images in the file in which the subject was photographed alone, in a rigid full frontal position and holding a numbered card. In this sense these three photographs are perhaps the closest to Bertillon's kind of individual criminal mug-shot to be used for identification purposes. This photographic portrait, taken after this man was arrested, was meant to provide the police with a photographic record of the individual so as to enable identification by witnesses and investigators. As a form of identification, this subject was made to stand in front of the lens in a rigid frontal position with the face being the focus of the photograph. A further focus is on the small card he holds, which although not visible here, bears an identification number. Again the weak frame which puts the subjects head off centre attests to the fact that this was not taken by a professional photographer. He is positioned in front of a wall or white

backdrop which is meant not to distract attention from the subject. His facial expression is neutral although his body posture appears tense. As a result, and especially in the context in which it appears, this photograph does not tell us anything about this man but is solely for the purpose of police investigation and identification. He is numbered, recorded and inserted into a system of criminal identification; the individual becomes an object of control. In this sense this image presents a stark contrast to the majority of group photographs which fill the file.



Image 10: "Poqo members arrested after the Paarl riot," November 1962. Photographer unknown.



Image 11: “Poqo members arrested after the Paarl riot,” November 1962. Photographer unknown.

I discuss images 10 and 11 together as they form part of a set of at least four such photographs seemingly taken at the same time - all with men dressed in blankets and seated in this way before a neutral white background. These men are described as “Poqo members” who were arrested after the Paarl march. As noted in chapter 1, during the early hours of the day after the march, 23 November 1962, nearly 400 policemen from various areas of the Western Cape carried out a raid on Mbekweni and had arrested more than 300 people by 15:10 p.m. for questioning.⁵¹ This leads me to think that these were perhaps some of the men arrested in the early hours of the morning. These men are draped in blankets as if they had been taken directly from their beds and had not been given the opportunity to first get dressed. It could also be that these men had been strip searched and then provided with these blankets. They all seem to have the same standard kind of cheap generic blanket, possibly the blanket allocated to each of the migrant labourers living in Mbekweni’s bachelor’s hostels. As such

⁵¹ “C.I.D Progress at Paarl,” *Cape Times* (24 November 1962). “Police swoop in Paarl,” *Cape Times* (24 November 1962).

these photographs could also be seen as a kind of social inventory.⁵² In a strange way these men are somehow traditionally institutionalised by the blankets, which in some sense links with the description of Poqo by the ANC and in terms of its place in liberation historiography, as traditional and backward. However at the same time the way in which several of these men have wrapped the blankets seemingly very consciously over one shoulder, particularly in image 11, gives an impression of self styling. In this sense these photographs hint at histories of rural life and the way that Xhosa and Sotho men styled their woollen blankets.

A close look at these images also reveals that some of these are relatively young men. The subjects are seated on chairs or perhaps a bench, squashed tightly against each other and filling the frame. Each of these men's facial expressions is complex and nuanced. In image 10, the man in the middle looks distressed, his gaze wondering to the left. This young man also pulls his knees tight together as if uncomfortable and humiliated by being photographed in this way; as if violated by the camera. As Susan Sontag suggests, "to photograph people is to violate them" and this is certainly even more the case when the subjects are unwillingly photographed naked.⁵³ The act of photographing presents a kind of visual bodily invasion. The two men on either side of him, however, stare angrily directly into the lens from below heavy brows. They have not willingly presented themselves for this photograph. As a result there is no real sense of communication between the photographer and the subjects.

These photographs were not taken by a professional photographer, they appear more like snapshots, as is clear from the weak framing and lack of compositional structure within the images. Image 10 is a closer crop than that of image 11 in which the photographer seems to have stood further back allowing the image to include five men and for the viewer to see that they are also barefoot, while in image 10 the sitter on the right of the frame is cut out. At the

⁵² Peter Hamilton and Roger Hargreaves, *The Beautiful and the Damned: The creation of identity in nineteenth century photography* (Great Britain: National Portrait Gallery, 2001), 57.

⁵³ Sontag, *On photography* (USA: Penguin New Edition, 1979), 14.

same time these group images reveal a lack of uniformity in posture and the positioning of hands and feet which the typical mug shot would obscure. There are a series of this kind of photograph which creates a sense of continuation linking the images which in some sense transcends the limits of the frame.

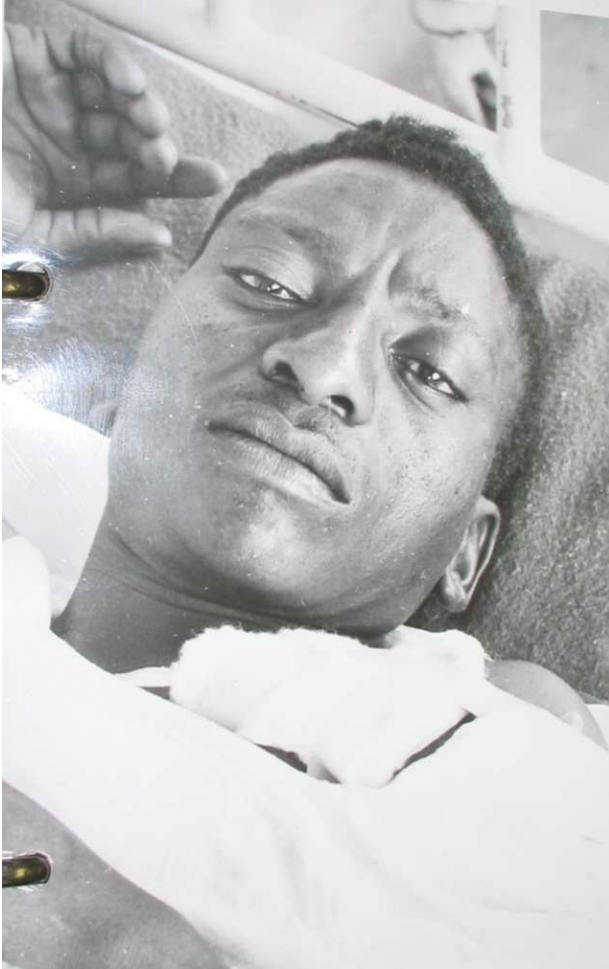


Image 12: An accused (Titus Nyovu) pictured in

hospital. November 1962. Photographer unknown.

According to the list of names corresponding to some of these images, this image (Image 12) portrays Titus Nyovu who was tried and charged with sabotage and killing Rentia Vermeulen.⁵⁴ This photograph is particularly unsettling. One can see that he is in hospital and has a bandaged (bullet) wound on his chest, yet at the same time one is aware that the subject is under arrest and is considered a perpetrator. Yet in this photograph he does not portray such

⁵⁴ Supreme Court case, State vs Titus Nyovu, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561.

This (Image 13) is one example of the kind of group portraits of the men accused of participation in the march that fills the file. In the tighter crop of this image four men are photographed standing while only the head of another man seated on the floor is pictured in the foreground. This leads me to wonder how many other men were lined up against this wall and what is happening beyond the frame. The cutting off of limbs again attests to the fact that this was not a professional photographer. This photograph was clearly taken outdoors as is visible by the harsh tones on the men's faces and dark shadows around their eyes. The men are depicted in a formalised way in a full frontal position. They are packed tightly against each other and made to stand in front of a wall which offers a neutral backdrop so as not to distract the viewer's attention from the people photographed. One notes that these men represent a range of ages from perhaps mid-thirties to a young boy seated in the foreground. These men are dressed in overalls and jackets which gives the impression that they had been arrested at their work places or perhaps on their way to work. The individuality of their clothing again disrupts the state's image of Poqo as a united organisation. These clothes also present a contrast to the blankets worn by the men pictured in images 10 and 11. The men in Images 10 and 11 had certainly also been in Paarl to work yet based on the differences in attire at these respective photographic occasions these images in some ways point to a blurring between what are at one moment 'rural people' and at another 'working classes,' suggesting that these are not binaries, and perhaps destabilising the state's intention to construct them as discrete categories.

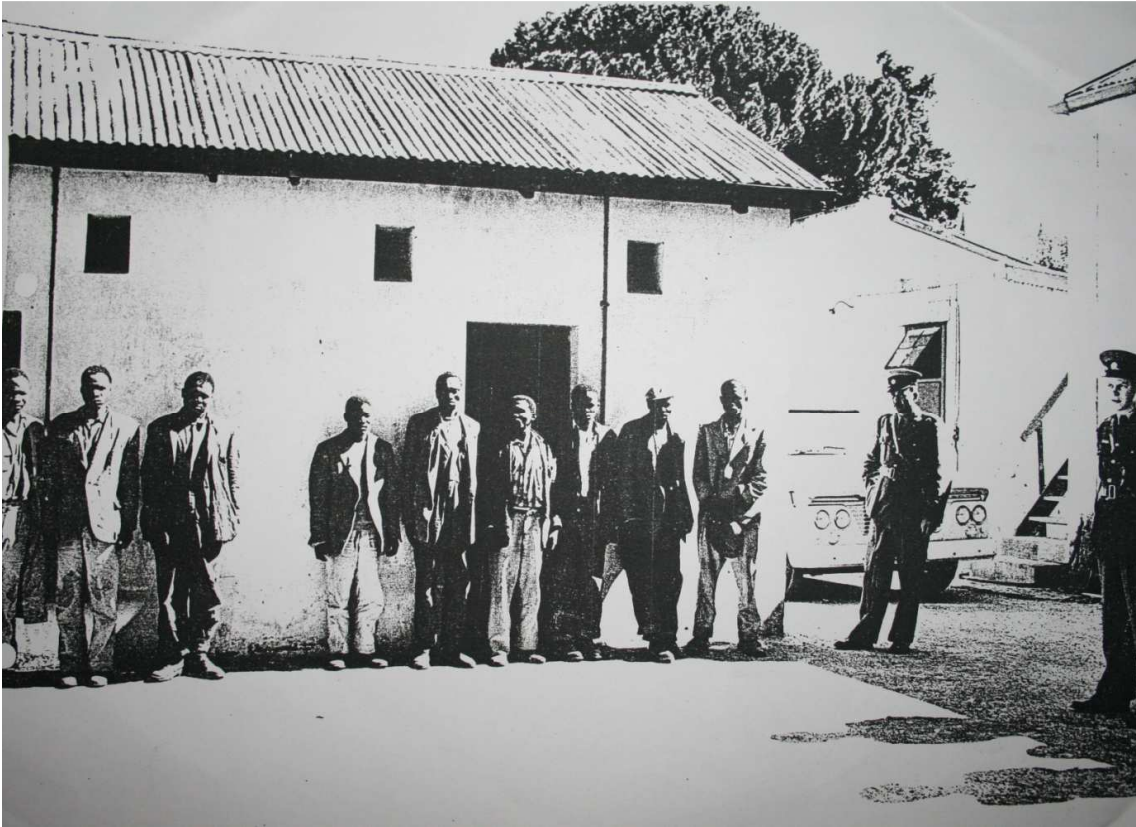


Image 14: "Poqo members arrested after the Paarl attack." November 1962. Photographer unknown.

This image clearly depicts the way in which the men were lined up against a wall of a building in a frontal position. It also attests to the presence and power of the police who were no doubt armed and kept the subjects in check. This photograph depicts the act of observation. By taking a step back, aiming the camera at an angle and including more of the scene the photographer seems to document the scene and gives us a better idea of the context of the photographic occasion. This pulls the eye, taking the viewers attention away from the men lined up against the wall. The different postures and lack of arrangement of men of different heights demonstrates the photographer's inability to really control and direct the group. As a result the group looks disintegrated. These men also seem to be dressed in overalls and jackets which leads me to think this was perhaps taken on the same occasion as the previous image.



Image 15: November 1962. Photographer unknown.

In this image (Image 15) three accused are again lined up against a wall outdoors, which is clear from the direct and harsh lighting. What is interesting about this image is that here two policeman posed for the photograph along with these men. Their presence on either side of the frame seems to contain and control the three accused. These men also in some sense represent the different forces of control, a white police officer and a black constable. The white police officer looks towards the three accused making sure they remain in formation while the black officer seems to be looking off towards the right, perhaps at something happening beyond the frame. He too seems a bit uneasy with being photographed. The photographic subjects are stiff and regimented with their arms tight against their sides. Unfortunately I have been able to find out little about this image. All that seems to have been recorded were the names of the three accused which are significant for the police and legal purposes. They were named as Standard Cugani, Farington Mpakla, and Mandandane Siga.

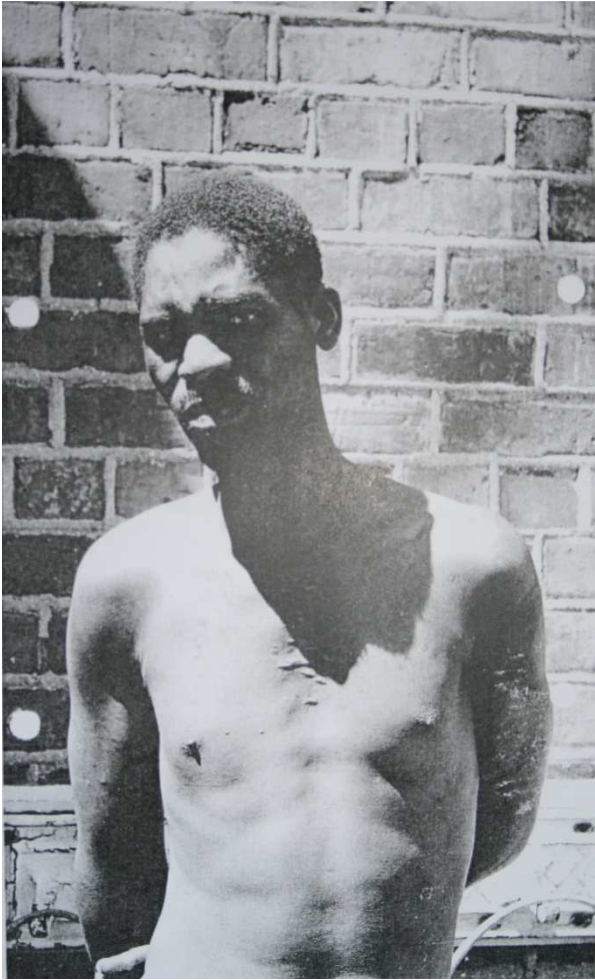


Image 16: November 1962. Photographer unknown.

This image (Image 16) depicts an unnamed black man posed in front of a brick wall. The photograph includes only his upper body. What makes this image interesting, however, is the fact that this man was posed naked so as to show bullet wounds on his body, no doubt obtained during the march. In this photograph one bullet wound is visible on his right side (left side of the photograph). The album also contains another, full length image of this man in side profile so as to illustrate a further two bullet wounds on his thigh and buttocks. In this image he holds his arm awkwardly behind his back no doubt uncomfortable being photographed naked. Although his head is turned slightly, his eyes look directly into the lens. Unlike the other photographs, the focus of this image seems to have been less about identifying this individual than about displaying his wounds sustained during the march. The bullet wounds are meant to attest to his participation in the march and hence identify him as a Poqo member- the kind of evidence which was absent for most of the men arrested.



Image 17: “Poqo members detained in Paarl.” November 1962. Photographer unknown.

This photograph (Image 17) suggests a formalised and controlled photographic occasion in which the 15 men have been arranged in front of a corrugated iron wall, perhaps a shed. Already our interpretation of this image is influenced by their representation in the caption as “Poqo members.” They are arranged in three rows of five men each, with the back row standing, the middle made to kneel and the front row seated on the ground and probably told to hold their legs in this way. This arrangement is more reminiscent of a formal team or school class photograph although even this category does not entirely fit due to the disjuncture of expressions and posture. Each man is supposed to be visible. There is an attempt to make each of the subjects clear individually, for identification purposes, and at the same time as part of a group. These 15 men are named as Robert Siga, Edward Jewabe, Michael Caqavu, Ngotsi Gaxa, Webb Roliwe, Goodman Madane, Twoboy Mtwetwe, Jackson Lubumba, David Jali, Christiaan Zuba, Jackson Biyongo, Livingston Fatela, Herbert Mdlongeni, Enoch Fokwana.

The fact that this image is poorly- or for our purposes generously- framed, allows a greater sense of context. A man standing in the left hand corner of the image appears to be looking in another direction with his hands stiff against his sides, which leads me to wonder if there was more than one person photographing men in such groups. A black officer stands in the background observing the photographic occasion, his presence keeping these men in line. He seems to be wearing the same uniform as the black constable, depicted in Image 15.



Image 18: “Poqo members detained in Paarl.” November 1962. Photographer unknown.

In the closer crop of this image (Image 18) seven men are arranged against a neutral white background, probably also a wall. This photograph has also been taken outdoors as is clear from the harsh shadows on their faces. As in several of the other images, these men are dressed in overalls and jackets which would suggest that they were at work. Four men are arranged against the wall and another three are made to kneel in the foreground so as to make each one’s face clearly visible. All of these men seem to hold their arms behind their backs as if handcuffed or as if they were told to pose in this way. This composition seems to draw

more on a genre of group portraits such as team or class photographs, than on Bertillion's criminal photograph. The photographer has instructed the subjects in such a way that it heightens the sense of unity and collaboration. This allows for a uniformity which is largely absent from the other photographs. Visual scholar, Allen Feldman argues that within this kind of disciplining of the body is a "politics of the pose." By this he refers to the "pose" as both marked by ideological codes and as a state of representation in which social fictions are made tangible and literal.⁵⁶ As photographic jargon would suggest these subjects are "captured" in these photographs. Photographing, classifying and keeping a picture of the 'criminal' represented an act that could reiterate the capture and place it within awareness.⁵⁷ These men were doubly captured, physically and visually. Each of these men looks directly into the camera lens, their facial expressions conveying a complex range of emotions.



Image 19: November 1962. Photographer unknown.

⁵⁶Feldman, "Violence and Vision," 61.

⁵⁷ Giacomo Papi, *Under Arrest: A History of the Twentieth Century in Mugshots* (London: Granta Books, 2006), 164.

Unlike the majority of the images which seem to have been taken in the same general space, this photograph (Image 19) seems to have been taken indoors, perhaps at the police station or at the Bantu Administration offices or pass offenders office in Mbekweni. The three men photographed here have been seated on a wooden bench perhaps at the police station prior to being interrogated and/or making a statement. Although the camera's flash has destroyed much of the detail, it looks as if this is a tiled floor. They are dressed in collared shirts and pants but are barefoot. One wonders what has happened to their shoes and what has been done to these bodies to create these images, to enforce their legitimacy and to substantiate their typicality.

These men have seemingly been told to put their hands together in their laps, which creates some consistency between the three subjects. The generous crop and fact that there are only three photographic subjects here allows for a feeling of more space in this image as compared to the other visually overcrowded photographs of large groups of subjected bodies. Two of the men look directly at the camera while the man on the right gazes off to the left. Again the subjects facial expressions are nuanced and complex expressions communicating feelings of tension, anxiety and anger. Through the power over the camera and representation in this way it is the police who monopolise seeing, yet these men are also seeing. One senses in these photographs an unwillingness to "communicate" with the photographic apparatus at all, a refusal by the subjects to let anything show. Perhaps, as suggested in terms of the accused's statements before the Commission and trials, this silence could well indicate an intended silence, which in fact permits the maintenance of some agency or power.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Wendy Woodward, Patricia Hayes, and Gary Minkley, *Deep Histories: Gender and colonialism in Southern Africa* (New York: Rodopi, 2002).

Expanding the lens

How then do we go about interpreting these images? Can we understand them in the context of surveillance, discipline and criminalisation? What happens if we take them out of this context? Do they lose all meaning as Tagg suggests? In their chapter on the visual archives in Namibia, Patricia Hayes et al suggest that when a photograph is taken out of its stored archive space an “energy is released” and those new meanings are added to such images when they are recirculated in different spaces and at different moments.⁵⁹ In this sense although these images of the Paarl accused will always be influenced by the administrative and discursive context in which they were produced, they might take on additional meanings by being moved into different spaces. As Elizabeth Edwards suggests, when not read simply as evidentiary tools but rather as means through which to think the nature of the historical experience, photographs have the potential to perform different histories beyond the dominant historical narrative.⁶⁰

Ace Mgxashe’s use of one of these group images of the Paarl accused presents an interesting example of the way in which moving a photograph out of its archive and presenting it in a different context can lead to different readings.⁶¹ Without much sense of specific contextualisation, besides noting that the men pictured in this photograph were among those hanged in connection with the Paarl march, Mgxashe essentially uses this image in an illustrative sense. Interestingly Mgxashe calls these men “PAC members” rather than “Poqo” members as they had been identified by the police captions to this file. Perhaps this again speaks to the way in which the state shaped and presented a ‘Poqo’ organisation, and thus also to the ambiguity around this word. By naming these men as “PAC members;” choosing a photograph from the file that excluded any reference of police presence; and most

⁵⁹ Hayes et al, “Picturing the Past in Namibia,” 104.

⁶⁰ Edwards, “Photography and the performance of history,” 29.

⁶¹ Ace Mgxashe, *Are you with us? The story of a PAC activist* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2006).

significantly, positioning this image alongside a portrait of smiling, cheerful PAC “die-hards” and a studio portrait of another important PAC couple, Mgxashe enables a very different reading of this photograph. Here these are simply “PAC” members or activists (no different from the people in the other images) who had ultimately been executed for their part in the liberation struggle- a very different reading from that facilitated by the archive in which it exists. While Mgxashe’s use of this image is then problematic as it does not take into account the power relations and police (and state) discourses to which I have referred, it does make an interesting example of the ways in which photographs can take on different lives in different contexts. In a sense it then also shows the power of the author (not unlike myself, here) in making a very specific selection of this photograph rather than others.

This chapter argues that while largely produced and defined by the obvious mechanisms of surveillance and control, the archive of images opens up a space for far more nuanced and complex histories. Ironically while the intention of these photographs was to be about Poqo as an organisation or collective, replicating notions of the mob, by photographing people together in groups these images interrupt the notion of uniformity and instead allow for a sense of individuality. Although constituted by and constitutive of the grand narrative of the Paarl march as produced by the Snyman Commission and court cases, the photographs of the accused differ significantly from the rest of the court records. They index other intersecting and entangled histories even though to a large extent these remain as inaccessible to us as the history of the march and Poqo. As Edwards suggests, staged pictures such as this most often reveal specific intentions rather than exposing any former meanings lodged in configurations of the past.⁶² As a result she maintains that even well-intended engagements with such images remain unbalanced.

⁶² Edwards, “Photography and the performance of history,” 20.

In conclusion this chapter has examined the visual image constructed around the Paarl march. Crime scene-like photographs depicting damages and a landscape of violence, which complemented the narrative produced by the media and later the Commission and trials, were deemed newsworthy. However photographs of the men accused of participation and violence remained part of the police's private artillery, later taken up specifically by the courts as visual evidence meant to reproduce a particular narrative and establish culpability. These photographs became a means through which knowledge around the march was produced and people were made subjects. This chapter has examined these photographs in the hope of enabling a route out of the dominant narrative of the march. I have argued that in small ways these images can direct us towards deeper histories which may enable a more complex reading of the uprising. The photographs present photographic occasions which are not as rigidly controlled as one would expect from police photographs but rather come to reference a multiplicity of genres. However at the same time there is no escaping from the fact that they remain part of a system of surveillance and are marked by the power relations and discourses involved in their production and archiving. Mediated by such power in this sense, while indexing other kinds of histories, they still mark the limits of interpretation. At best they are only able to suggest other pasts and make hints at alternative angles for viewing the uprising. This, I want to suggest, points to the limits of the archive which, even in its most enticing moments remains liable rather than reliable. The following chapter is interested then in a deconstructive reading of this archive, as well as the major archives discussed in Chapter 1, which will pay attention to the ways in which these complicit and mediated archives seem to keep the march and the subaltern marcher just beyond our reach.

Chapter 4: Reading the Archives

*"You must read in the report more than just words."*¹

The previous chapters have clearly demonstrated the ways in which the history of the Paarl march that we encounter through academic work, in many ways directly reflects the initial interpretation of the march, shaped through the early media coverage, the Snyman Commission and the later court cases. Where I have suggested that a reading of photographs of the accused might have given way to more nuanced understandings of the march by indexing other histories, one still seems to reach an impasse. In many ways deeply mediated by the state's power, discourse and 'modes of evidence,' it is very difficult, if not impossible, to untangle the knots of the many threads that seem to interweave around this one event.² Rather than attempt a recovery project as Lodge does, this chapter intends to reveal the power relations and discourses involved both in these sources' production and their archiving. It is interested in how these might expose the effects of power, and how such power had made, unmade and remade the march and the marcher in particular ways.

In writing of the history of the Haitian revolution, anthropologist Michel Rolph Trouillot suggests that it is precisely at the moments when histories are produced that sections of the past are silenced. Trouillot identifies four crucial moments at which he argues silences enter. Here he includes the procedures that produce sources ("the moment of fact creation"), the production of archives ("the moment of fact assembly), the use of these sources and archives to shape narratives ("the moment of fact retrieval), and lastly the making of history ("the moment of retrospective significance").³ Following this formulation, through a deconstructive reading of the sources and archives that have shaped the history of the Paarl

¹ Nicholas Wiehahn (Commissioner of the Wiehahn Commission of inquiry), quoted in Adam Ashforth, *The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

² I borrow this phrasing- "modes of evidence" from the work of Premesh Lalu which I will engage with later in this chapter. See Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa: Postapartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Pasts* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2009).

³ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995)26.

march, particularly the Snyman Commission and trials, this chapter is interested in the processes that produced the history of the march and the silences which have entered at the respective moments.

One encounters the Snyman Commission archive in the form of 12 chapters making up some 2086 pages of official transcripts of the hearings, now mostly converted to microfilm form, and a report(which also includes the Interim Report) produced by Snyman at the completion of the hearings. The trial transcripts and accompanying documentation are held in a collection of Supreme Court cases at the National Archives in Cape Town. Stored in at least 14 separate archive boxes, these trials have been archived according to the year and court in which they appeared.⁴ As a result one often finds the file of a case on the Paarl march along with other criminal cases that dealt with seemingly unrelated crimes, murders or rapes in other parts of the Western Cape. It is necessary then to think about the impression such filing creates in conceptualising an event which at its time seemed of vital import yet subsequently faded into the shadows of unexceptional cases. This filing system seems in some ways to reflect the state's earlier portrayal of the uprising as criminal rather than politically motivated.⁵

⁴ Supreme Court case, State vs Stoffel Maxegwana and Henry Njokwana, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538. Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538. Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542. Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544. Supreme Court case, State vs Kulekile Qutsu, September 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556. Supreme Court case, State vs Shadrack Mbekile and 20 others, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556. Supreme Court case, State vs Johannes Notyawe and Vanele Matikinca, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/560. Supreme Court case, State vs Jonathan Sogwagwa, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561. Supreme Court case, State vs Titus Nyovu, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561. Supreme Court case, State vs Baden Koboka and ten others, 1966. National archives, Boxes 1/1/1/820, 1/1/1/821, 1/1/1/822, 1/1/1/823. Supreme Court case, State vs Nkosencinci Rosebury Maseti, April 1967. National archives, Box 1/1/1/904. Supreme Court case, State vs Amteteleli Ntuli and Leonard Zambodla, May 1968. National archives, Box 1/1/1/986. Supreme Court Case, State vs Brandford Nkukwane and 11 others. National archives, Box 1/1/1/568.

⁵ A general van den Bergh was quoted two days after the march as having reported to the *Cape Times* that, "there is definitely no political background to the matter as far as we can see. It is purely a criminal matter." See "C.I.D. in Progress at Paarl," *Cape Times* (24 November 1962). A general van den Bergh is quoted as having reported to the *Cape Times* that, "there is definitely no political background to the matter as far as we can see. It is purely a criminal matter."

In a similar sense, archived as a part of the criminal court cases, the photographs of the Paarl accused need to be read in this context, as deeply engaged in the state's discourse around the Paarl march. As the previous chapter noted, the public visual image of the march remained in some ways separate from the photographs of the accused that were used as evidence, particularly by the courts. Even though photography was considered a medium of truth and unquestionable accuracy, these photographs, just like the documents to which they are attached, cannot be assumed to be innocent or used uncritically.⁶ There were power relations, administrative contexts and discourses involved both in the occasions when the photographs were made and at their archiving which need to be noted when interpreting and reinterpreting these images.⁷

While the historian making use of these sources may honestly endeavour to relate a story as accurately as possible, their work is always influenced by the fact that much of the past as contained in these records has already been selectively silenced- a silence which is in some ways reproduced and continued as researchers engage in further processes of selection.⁸

While I am not suggesting that scholars like Lodge and Maaba were ignorant of the fact that the Snyman Commission and the court cases represented state produced and controlled discourses, this is almost taken for granted and they do not explicitly engage with the ways in which these archives produced a very specific, complicit narrative of the Paarl march, nor what strategies they have used to deal with this fact.

As I suggested in Chapter 2, through an often problematic use of the archives around the march, scholars attempting to write the event, even those who have endeavoured to change its

⁶ Patricia Hayes, Jeremy Silvester and Wolfram Hartman (hereafter Hayes et al), "Picturing the Past in Namibia: The visual archive and its energies," in Carolyn Hamilton et al. (eds), *Refiguring the Archive* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 118.

⁷ Hayes et al, "Picturing the Past in Namibia," 104. Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the interpretation of visual materials*, (London: Sage Publications, 2006).

⁸ Trouillot suggests that the third stage at which silences enter occurs when researchers use the archives to write histories, themselves engaging in processes of exclusion and inclusion. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 26.

dominant representation, have in some ways continued the silences. Lodge, among others, failed to note the extent to which descriptions of the events as provided in the Commission report already constituted interpretations of their nature.⁹ By failing to investigate the effects of power at work in, and between, the Commission and courts' archives, much of the scholarship seems to have largely reproduced the same logic of representation of both the march and its participants.

According to Ranajit Guha's formulation, in his previously cited essay, documents produced by the colonial state manipulated and controlled the interpretation of the event in ways that removed or erased the colonised subject.¹⁰ According to Guha these records "speak of a total complicity."¹¹ Guha thereby reveals the limits of the discourse around historical events such as the Santal rebellion (or in this case the Paarl march). According to Guha peasant rioters were denied agency by accounts of the event which tended to separate their action from any element of conscious choice.¹² Guha shows how the different modes of historiography either served counter-insurgent discourses, or failed to address the ways in which subaltern agency has been occluded in official accounts and how these official accounts themselves represented forms of counter-insurgency. Guha therefore stresses the need for the historian to develop a conscious strategy for reading the archives which will go beyond simply identifying and rearranging the dominant interpretations, to examine the actual textual properties of these documents so as to understand the history of power that produced them.¹³

⁹ As Brent Harris reminds us in writing of the TRC, the archive is itself an interpretation which influences future interpretations. Brent Harris, "'Unearthing' the 'essential' past: The making of a public 'national' memory through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission," MA Thesis, University of the Western Cape (1998), 2.

¹⁰ Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter Insurgency" in *Subaltern Studies Volume 11* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

¹¹ Guha, "The Prose of Counter Insurgency," 59.

¹² Guha, "The Prose of Counter Insurgency," 47.

¹³ Guha, "The Prose of Counter Insurgency," 61.

Premesh Lalu, in his book on the killing of Xhosa chief Hintsa in 1835, similarly argues for such a strategy for reading the documents and archives built up around a violent event- in this case the killing and mutilation of Hintsa. Lalu enables us to think of the Paarl march, as narrated through the Commission and trials, as essentially a product of interpretation produced through official systems of knowledge. According to Lalu, the (colonial) archives organised knowledge to “keep the subject in its place.”¹⁴ In this sense, that which we encounter in the archival record in fact speaks to the effects of power, rather than the representation of subaltern consciousness. Lalu therefore argues that to assume that we can ever retrieve subaltern consciousness or agency is to ignore the ways in which the archives worked to organise and represent the subject.¹⁵ Rather, Lalu suggests, we need to read archives for the ways in which they might enable an understanding of the state’s internal mechanisms and “modes of evidence.”¹⁶

Following Guha and Lalu’s prompting for such a careful reading of texts produced by counter-insurgency measures, as the Commission and trials were, this chapter is interested in the procedures and power relations through which the Paarl march had been produced and archived, and the ways in which these work to organise our understanding of the march. As Carlo Ginzburg has argued, the archive can neither be approached as an “open window” or “transparent medium” through which to read reality, nor a wall that completely closes off any view of reality, but rather it is more opaque as we view the event through the lens of the state’s formulation of knowledge around the march. In order to understand the march then, we need to understand the apartheid state’s frameworks of operation and power. As Ginzburg suggests of history in general, “Without a thorough analysis of its inherent distortions (the

¹⁴ Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*, 32, 38.

¹⁵ Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*, 62-63.

¹⁶ Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*, 32.

codes according to which it has been constructed and/or it must be perceived), a sound historical reconstruction is impossible.”¹⁷

Production of knowledge and subjection of agency

The Commission needs to be understood firstly in relation to a genealogy of commissions of inquiry, a favourite response by colonial authorities and a key strategy to which the South African state resorted often during the 20th Century. Adam Ashforth looks in detail at the constructions of power which were embedded in a series of official South African Commissions of Inquiry, including the Fagan Commission(1946), the Tomlinson Commission(1954) and (taken together) the Riekert and Wiehahn Commissions(1979).¹⁸ Ashforth demonstrates the ways in which each of these Commission’s had been centrally concerned with resolving issues of power and knowledge constituting the “Native Question.”¹⁹ Commissions of inquiry held a significant place in the formation of so-called ‘Native Policy’ in attempts by the South African state at different moments to deal with African populations.

According to Ashforth, commissions of inquiry were put into place in response to crises of ruling that had caused great anxiety, and were meant to produce reports which would produce “expert knowledge,” and define resolutions that justified state intervention.”²⁰ The search was

¹⁷ Carlo Ginzburg, “Checking the Evidence: The judge and the historian,” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No. 1(1991), 6-7.

¹⁸ Adam Ashforth, *The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

¹⁹ The ‘Native Question’ had been a central theme of South African official debate since the early 20th century as the state troubled over managing and controlling African populations, specifically in terms of the need for African labour in fast industrialising cities. Ashforth shows how each of the commissions of inquiry which he discusses was concerned with the “Native Question” and thus were explicitly about creating and controlling a “homogenised Other.” Adam Ashforth, “On the ‘Native Question’: A Reading of the Grand Tradition of Commissions of Inquiry into the ‘Native Question’ in Twentieth century South Africa,” PhD Thesis, University of Oxford (1987). Ashforth, *The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth-Century South Africa*. Jonathan Boyarin, “An Inquiry into Inquiries and a Representation of Representations,” *Sociological Forum*, Vo. 6, No. 2 (1991). Premesh Lalu, “Restless Natives, Native Questions,” *Mail and Guardian* (26 August 2011).

²⁰ Ann Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance: On the content in the form,” in Carolyn Hamilton et al (eds), *Refiguring the Archive*, (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 95-97.

for a set of principles which could explain the social, economic or political problems facing the state, and explanations meant to justify its actions.²¹

However Ashforth argues that while commissions were charged with “truth-seeking” and were supposed to be based on an impartial, independent and objective consideration of the “facts” gathered or presented to them, they were always influenced by both the positionalities of their members and the state, and at the same time, by the dominant assumptions about valid forms of knowledge and procedures of knowing.²² Commissions therefore need to be seen as highly mediated institutions and in essence, as Ann Stoler argues in writing of the colonial ordering of archival productions, as features of statecraft, illustrating the “warped reality of official knowledge and the enduring consequences of such political distortions.”²³

Ashforth posits that through a commission’s processes of gathering ‘accurate information’ and organising knowledge around the perceived ‘problem’ at hand, it produced a way of speaking for and about the state’s ‘Native’ subjects which would allow questions of subjection and subjectivity as posed by the terms of reference to be answered in a coherent way.²⁴ The framework of the ‘Native Question’ attempted to understand the black subject, producing a subject of disciplinary reason and thereby of disciplinary power.

Ashforth is helpful in understanding the procedures of power and work that a commission of inquiry does. However Ashforth himself only really focuses on the reports of the commissions with which he is concerned.²⁵ I want to suggest that it is pertinent to read a commission’s report together with the transcripts of its hearings in order to be able to compare the evidence presented before the commission with the interpretations and recommendations presented in

²¹ Ashforth, “On the Native Question, 15.

²² Ashforth, “On the ‘Native Question,” 28.

²³ Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” 91. Ann Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic anxieties and colonial commonsense* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 141-160.

²⁴ Ashforth, “On the Native Question,” 29-30.

²⁵ I want to thank Riedwaan Moosage for helpful debates about this and for bringing this aspect to my attention. Ashforth, *The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth-Century South Africa*, 11.

the report. It is only through such a reading that one gets an idea of the work of the different actors, the power of the state actors and where one might be able to read significant discrepancies and contradictions in the official discourse.

I want to argue that the Snyman Commission needs to be read as an attempt by the apartheid state to respond to the crisis presented by the Paarl march and Poqo. The Commission had been rapidly put into place after the march. Snyman as a judge of the Transkei Court was made the chairman of the Commission and was to be aided in his work by the Attorney General of the Cape and a senior SAP official- all three men with significant positions in the structures of the apartheid state.²⁶ The state had chosen its members, set its deadlines and directed it, through the terms of reference, to a focus on very specific issues. The Commission was to focus specifically on the events at Paarl on the day of the march and two days prior to it, and was to explain its causes.²⁷ It was meant then to organise knowledge around the event. In this sense, while the media around the march was in some ways the first instance of its production, it was the Snyman Commission that became the leading force in discursively defining the Paarl march.

Charged with formulating an official interpretation of the Paarl march, the Snyman Commission needs to be understood as moulding particular evidence into a very specific historical understanding of the uprising. In this sense I want to suggest that we might think of both the Snyman Commission and the later court cases in terms of productions of history.²⁸ As

²⁶ Advocate General of the Cape, Mr van den Berg was to lead the evidence and Major Coetzee, a senior police officer of the SAP was in charge of the inquiry. "Paarl riot inquiry opens," *Cape Argus* (6 December 1962).

²⁷ *Report of the Paarl Commission of Enquiry, consisting of the Honourable Mr Justice Snyman, Judge of the Transvaal Provincial Division of the Supreme Court of South Africa, upon the events on the 20th to the 22nd November, 1962, at Paarl in the province of the Cape of Good Hope, and the causes which gave rise thereto*, (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1963) (hereafter Report). Report, 1. These terms of reference were supposedly "the widest possible," according to Snyman quoted in "Riot hearings will be in public," *Cape Times* (29 November 1962).

²⁸ I am informed here by work by David William. Cohen's formulation for thinking about the conventions and paradigms involved in the formation of historical knowledge and sources is helpful in thinking about the Snyman Commission as a production of history. See David William Cohen, *The combing of history*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994). Also see David Cohen and Atieno Odhiambo, *The Risks of Knowledge*, (Athens: Ohio

such we might understand both of these institutions as very specific practices, as particular representations of the past, and as highly mediated means for the production and dissemination of knowledge.

In much the same way as the other commissions of inquiry that Ashforth describes, I want to suggest that the Snyman Commission can be seen as yet another attempt by the apartheid state to deal with black people, specifically the Poqo ‘organisation’ which it had perceived as the central problem at hand, and by extension all instances of resistance throughout the country.²⁹

As previously noted, it is significant that the Paarl march, Snyman Commission and judicial trials played out against a background of developing resistance and repression structures in South Africa. The state had responded to the anti-pass campaigns, the Sharpeville uprising and the Langa march by declaring a State of Emergency, temporarily suspending the pass laws, banning the ANC and PAC and conducting massive arrests and trials.³⁰ However, among all these security measures there was never a commission of inquiry into the events at Sharpeville and the killings of 69 people in front of this Transvaal police station.³¹ Yet a comparatively small event in Paarl, which lasted no more than three hours and in which only seven people had been killed, led to the almost immediate appointment of the Snyman Commission. The march had invoked underlying white fears of a Mau Mau-like black revolt in South Africa and in some sense then the Commission came to stage the entire ‘Native Question.’³²

University Press, 2004). Cohen, “Memories of Things Forward: Future Effects in ‘The Production of History,’” paper presented at colloquium, Cape Town, 4 March 2010.

²⁹ Report, 18-19, 22. Snyman Commission Interim Report, 24-26.

³⁰ See Madeleine Fullard, “State repression in the 1960’s,” in *The road to democracy in South Africa*, South African Democracy Education Trust, Volume 1 [1970-1980] (South Africa: Unisa Press, 2006).

³¹ Tom Lodge, “The Cape Town Troubles, March-April 1960,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 4 (1978), 216.

³² “Crazed Africans,” *Paarl Post* (27 November 1962). “Sudden outburst of savagery,” *Cape Times* (24 November 1962). “Primitive rebellion,” *Cape Times* (23 November 1962). “Chanting crowd of murder-bent rioters,” *Paarl Post* (27 November 1962). “Inquiry told of Poqo rituals,” *Cape Times* (11 December 1962).

While staged through the events in Paarl, the march in some ways became a moment for the state to significantly rethink and restructure its ‘Native policies.’ Paarl came to stand for the entire question of the survival of white South Africa.³³ The march had almost immediately incited demands for black people to be removed from Paarl and the Western Cape more generally.³⁴ *Die Burger* reported a member of parliament, J.W. van Staaden, as having stated: “Look at the map. The white man is almost eliminated. Therefore we need to face some facts. We are living in new circumstances. We need to begin immediately with removing the Bantus from the Western Cape...The time is past that we need to lean on the black shoulder.”³⁵ As an article in *The Torch* argued in December 1962, “the campaign being waged in the press is assisting the nationalist agitators in securing strongly emotional support for the mass removal of Africans from the Western Cape and it’s certainly helping to condition the electorate into enthusiastic support for the methods of open dictatorship.”³⁶ In this way, as *The Torch* had argued, Poqo violence in Paarl and more generally, was employed by the state as propaganda for removals.

An element of dealing with the ‘Native’ problem presented by Poqo and the Paarl march, as well as a more general anxiety about ‘native rebellion,’ can be read through the Commissions hearings in the Transkei. While these privately-held hearings have been considered somewhat disconnected from the rest of the inquiry, it seems to me that these hearings were a further attempt at addressing the “Native Question” posed through the guise of dealing with Poqo

“Poqo se leiers sou witmense uitwis, land oorneem,” *Die Burger* (1 March 1963). “Inside Poqo,” *Drum Magazine* (February 1963).

³³ “L.V. oor Onluste,” *Die Burger* (26 November 1962). “Attack on Cape Town also,” *Paarl Post* (14 December 1962). “Poqo se leiers sou witmense uitwis, land oorneem,” *Die Burger* (1 March 1963).

³⁴ “Paarl residents complain about town’s security,” *Cape Times* (29 November 1962). “Combating Barbarism in Locations,” *Paarl Post* (4 December 1962). “Removal of the Bantu,” *Paarl Post* (21 December 1962).

³⁵ “L.V. oor Onluste,” *Die Burger* (26 November 1962).

³⁶ *The Torch* was a relatively militant publication of the Non-European Unity Movement founded in February 1946. See Les Switzer and Donna Switzer, *The Black Press in South Africa and Lesotho: descriptive bibliographic guide to African, Coloured and Indian newspapers, newsletters and magazines 1836-1976* (Boston: G.K. Hall and Co., 1979), 11. “The Press and the Paarl Inquiry,” *The Torch* (19 December 1962). “Planne vir Bantoe se trek uit Wes-Kaapland,” *Die Burger* 1962.

insurgencies.³⁷ This visit seems to have authorised the Bantustans as the ‘home’ and place where government appropriate to ‘Bantu’ could be enacted. Thus Snyman sought the knowledge of Bantustan ‘chiefs’ about a body of ‘their people.’ These chiefs were in effect government officials, owing their privileged positions to the state. Addressing them as the authorised spokespersons of Xhosa migrants, then, was to put the subject in his place discursively.³⁸ Yet it was based on their evidence that through the Interim Report released on 6 March 1963, Snyman stressed the extent of the Poqo ‘problem’ and urged the state to act against the Poqo movement in South Africa.³⁹

In many ways the Snyman Commission then came to speak for and about the Paarl marcher and Poqo in very particular ways. As suggested in previous chapters, through its hearings the Commission had defined Poqo and the participant of the march, and discursively controlled them.⁴⁰ The Commission formulated a narrative about the Paarl march in which the majority

³⁷ Anna Pearce describes the Transkei hearings as having “little direct bearing on the Paarl riot. Compared with the inquiry as it was held in Cape Town and Paarl, this week was somewhat shrouded in mystery and secret.” See Anna Pearce, *A Permit to Live*, Unpublished Manuscript (1965), National Library of South Africa, 281.

³⁸ While Snyman argued that the Poqo leaders were men who had little status under the “tribal system” and were therefore frustrated with a “tribal system that cannot satisfy their ambitions” it is necessary to note that the system at work in the homelands was a state-controlled system of Bantu Authorities whereby subservient and well-rewarded chiefs were put into place by the apartheid state. It was with this system that Poqo members disagreed rather than any kind of longstanding traditional system which Snyman tries to suggest. While Snyman attempts to paint a picture in which “law-abiding Bantu” who lived “peacefully under the tribal organisations” were coerced by “false and unfounded accusations against tribal chiefs and the Government,” there had in fact been several peasant risings in several parts of the country between 1946- 1962 in opposition to Bantu Authorities flared into open resistance. Govan Mbeki, in his book *South Africa: The peasants revolt*, suggests that struggles against Bantu Authorities resulted in open resistance provoked in Witziesshoek, Marico, Sekhukhuneland, Zululand, and throughout the Transkei, especially in Pondoland. Mbeki however describes a clear relationship between these peasant insurgents and the ANC, rather than mentioning any PAC or Poqo connection. See Govan Mbeki, *South Africa: The peasants revolt* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1984), 40.

³⁹ Snyman argues in this Interim Report that “As far as I am able to ascertain, the membership of the movement over the country as whole...runs into many thousands”.....“The intimidation of law-abiding Bantu, and in the Transkei of Whites, has reached a dangerous point. I have found that both Bantu and Whites are so terrorised by the Poqo acts of violence that they are afraid to furnish information to the authorities. Many of them were afraid to give evidence before me, or even to be seen with me in conversation. A tribal chief and his advisers were also unwilling to give evidence in public”..... “I regard it as my duty to bring this state of affairs urgently to your attention. It is my opinion that the State will have to act without delay to bring this state of affairs to an end in order to regain the Bantu’s confidence in the ability of the State to protect him.” See Interim Report, 25

⁴⁰ I am informed here by Michel Foucault’s arguments around the ways in which power is constructed through the control of knowledge and subjects. In producing knowledge around the Paarl march the Commission and trials were also producing the individual insurgents as subjects. See Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.8, No.4 (1982), 777-795.

of the marchers were considered “law-abiding citizens” manipulated and coerced by Poqo members and men who were dissatisfied because they had “little or no status under the tribal system.”⁴¹ Such an interpretation was to deprive the majority of the men who marched on Paarl of conscious agency.⁴²

This interpretation allowed little space for the discourse or agency of the participants themselves. Such a framing through multiple levels of discourse, denied the insurgent the capacity to act on their own, As Chapter 1 noted, even the *Drum* magazine had framed Poqo as “A terrorist movement...of angry young men who were embittered and frustrated and became desperate and lawless.”⁴³ The ANC continued this kind of representation of the Paarl marchers by essentially blaming the uprising on Leballo’s poor leadership and suggested that “oppressed people” who were “hungry for freedom” and “desperately miserable” were influenced by Leballo’s “misguided calls” for a revolution.⁴⁴ Even those arguments before the Commission (such as those of Reverend Malukazi, Pearce and Kasi respectively) which had attempted to narrate the uprising differently, were themselves complicit in the subjection of agency by speaking for and in the place of the marchers. Malukazi framed the march as an act initiated by “the silliness of children,” thus infantilising the uprising’s actors, denying them any agency in strategy and planning.⁴⁵ Kasi essentially spoke to workers’ structural grievances, localising the events to Mbekweni, and failed to really permit the participants any conscious agency.⁴⁶ Pearce further spoke to grievances felt by Paarl’s black inhabitants, but

⁴¹ Report, 6.

⁴² This depiction is similar to that often used to describe the Santal rebellion in India as according to Guha, where he argues that colonial records of the event denied any agency for most of the rebels, representing them rather as “instruments of some other will...If any consciousness is attributed at all to the rebels, it is only to a few of their leaders.” See Guha, “The Prose of Counter-Insurgency,” 81-82.

⁴³ “Inside Poqo,” *Drum Magazine* (February 1963)

⁴⁴ Document issued by the ANC, 6 April 1963 reproduced in Thomas Karis, Gwendolyn Carter, and Gail Gerhart, *From Protest to Challenge: A documentary history of African politics in South Africa 1882-1964* (USA: Hoover Institution Publication, 1978), 749-750, 757.

⁴⁵ Snyman Commission, 370.

⁴⁶ Snyman Commission, 510-618.

did not stand for Poqo.⁴⁷ At the same time however, it is significant that these arguments indexed other histories and other routes for understanding the march.

The courts in many ways continued with the same logic of representation and deepened the subjection of agency. As noted in Chapter 1, the accused who appear before the courts on charges of participation in the march, rarely gave evidence and when they did, often seemingly reluctantly, this was cursory and most often only rejected the allegations against them. In this way, at this moment, the voice of the subaltern marcher was already silenced and lost to the records which we engage.⁴⁸

If one is to understand the Snyman Commission and trials as having engaged in the production of history and the subjection of agency, it goes without saying that these institutions were simultaneously implicitly involved in processes of “silencing” sections of this past.⁴⁹ It is necessary then to consider the highly mediated procedures through which the Commission and trials played out and reached their conclusions.

Scripted and Enacted: The Commission and Trials as performance of power

Following the tradition of commissions of inquiry which Ashforth lays out, the format of the Snyman Commission was highly ritualised and followed very specific conventions. As Ashforth suggests commissions of inquiry can therefore in some ways be seen “less as instruments of ‘policy’ and ‘intelligence’ and more as symbolic rituals aiding in establishing and reproducing the power of modern states.” The ritualised proceedings of commissions, according to Ashforth, were not just modes of scientific investigation but also performances

⁴⁷ Snyman Commission, 668.

⁴⁸ I return to this aspect later in the chapter in terms of a discussion of how the voices of the marchers seem to elude these documents.

⁴⁹ See Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.

which in fact created a social discourse. “It is a theatre in which a central ‘truth’ of state power is ritually played out before a public audience.”⁵⁰

Beyond just functioning as a government policy-making instrument, I want to suggest that the Snyman Commission adopted a specific political form which, in an almost theatrical sense, enacted the domination of the state but also relations of power between Snyman (and his functionaries) and the witnesses. All of the evidence had gone through Snyman first in the form of reports, court records, photographs, and questions submitted by interested persons.⁵¹ Snyman then acted as the stage-manager and casting director, organising the forms of communication and choosing who would have the opportunity to appear in public before the Commission depending on the kind of evidence they wished to present.⁵²

This argument might similarly apply to the court cases around the Paarl march. It was through the mass arrests, massive court performances and the sentencing of some 21 people to death and hundreds to long prison terms, that the apartheid state displayed and reinforced its power.⁵³ As Madeleine Fullard suggests, the legal system was the main apparatus through which the state could simultaneously destroy opposition and portray banned organisations as violent, communist and menacing to white safety.⁵⁴ Trials and convictions were to provide proof of the scale and nature of the Poqo threat. In this sense, I want to suggest that the trials may further be seen to have constructed, implicated and condemned Poqo as a formal organisation.

⁵⁰ Ashforth, *The Politics of Official Discourse in Twentieth-Century South Africa*, 7.

⁵¹ See Report, 1.

⁵² Report, 1-2.

⁵³ “Paarl is calm,” *Cape Times* (23 November 1962). “More Sabotage Sentences,” *The Torch* (12 June 1963). “8 Facing Murder Charges,” *Paarl Post* (30 November 1962). “Five Africans in Murder Charges at Paarl,” *Cape Times* (29 November 1962). “Death sentence for two Poqo men,” *Cape Argus* (18 June 1963). “National Mobilisation against Poqo,” *The Torch* (17 April 1963). “Poqo killer’s appeal turned down,” *Cape Argus* (21 February 1963). “Arrest of P.A.C natives,” *Cape Argus* (12 June 1965). “Paarl Trials,” *The Torch* (30 May 1963). “Court Sequels to Paarl riots,” *Cape Argus* (24 August 1963).

⁵⁴ Fullard, “State repression in the 1960’s,” 342.

Similarly to the Commission then, Kenneth Nunn, in speaking of criminal court trials in a general sense, suggests that trials are highly ritualised formal narratives.⁵⁵ The set up of the courtroom, he argues, has much in common with a theatre, complete with props, a stage and various characters. Like Snyman, the judges involved in these trials, as representatives of the state's judicial power, governed the conduct of the trial much like theatre directors. In this sense, I want to suggest that both the Snyman Commission and the later court cases might be read in terms of performances of the state's political power as enacted through specific actors, settings and conventions. They staged specific constructions of knowledge and with it forms of subjectification.

Jacques Ranciere's notion of theatrical politics is perhaps helpful here. In terms of Ranciere's argument, the Snyman Commission and the later trials might be viewed as carefully choreographed enactments, political performance or spectacle. Ranciere describes politics as a matter of "performing or playing" in the theatrical sense, which means first setting up the stage as theatre and formulating the argument. Politics, Ranciere argues, is therefore a matter of building a stage and sustaining a spectacle of show. Ranciere might argue that the Paarl march itself was first and foremost "a staging of reasons and ways of speaking."⁵⁶ In other words the march in itself was a statement, a way of speaking which did not really get addressed during either the Commission or the trials other than to attribute external causes for the marchers' action.

Making silences

If one is to understand the Commission and trials as performances of power in this sense, then it seems necessary to examine the ways in which the settings, 'script' and particular actors all

⁵⁵ Kenneth Nunn, "The Trial as Text: Allegory, myth and symbol in the adversarial criminal process- A Critique of the role of the public defender and a proposal for reform," *American Criminal Law Review*, 32 (1994), 780.

⁵⁶ Jacques Ranciere and Gabriel Rockhill, *The politics of aesthetics: the distribution of the sensible* (UK: MPG Books, 2006), 142.

played specific parts in formulating a particular narrative of the march as well as how these factors came to play in the production of silences or the denial of agency.

The settings in which the Commission and trials played out, themselves performed a certain power. As Nunn argues of courthouses, these were formal, stately and ceremonial spaces with imposing architecture meant to invoke the power of previous colonial governments and the current state. In the context of apartheid, these were further spaces of white power and authority.⁵⁷

In this sense one might consider the power enacted by the very spaces in which the Snyman Commission's hearings and the court cases had been held. As already mentioned in Chapter 1, the Snyman Commission's public hearings were mostly held in the Paarl Recreation Hall and Cape Town's Supreme Court. The trials too were held in this same Supreme Court, and at times in the Paarl Local Circuit Division Court. Particularly in the case of Paarl's town recreation hall, these were spaces in which black people had not always been freely allowed. As previously noted black people were to enter through separate entrances and were seated separately. This was compounded by a kind of symbolic and racialised distance between the audience and the proceedings. In the case of the Commission's hearings in the Paarl Recreation Hall, black people were seated on the gallery, while white people sat below in the

⁵⁷ There have been similar arguments around the spaces in which the TRC played out. Spaces like the East London Town Hall, in which some of the TRC hearings were held, were spaces which, in terms of architecture, invoked colonial power. Yet by welcoming people of all races into this space for the hearings in 1996 In investigating the spaces in which TRC hearings were held, Gary Minkley, Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz argue that it is significant that it was within colonial buildings that people of all races were welcomed in 1996 to share their testimonies symbolically enabled what Antjie Krog has called "a rupture with the institutional frameworks of the past. However, at the same time, their pasts meant that such spaces could in some ways still exert a certain kind of power. See Gary Minkley, Ciraj Rassool and Leslie Witz, "Thresholds, Gateways and Spectacles: Journeying through South African hidden pasts and histories in the last decade of the twentieth century," Unpublished paper presented at the 'Future of the Past' Conference, University of the Western Cape (10 July 1996). Antjie Krog, *Country of my Skull* (Cape Town: Random House Struik, 2002), 39. To add to this argument, Belinda Bozzoli suggests that the arrangement of spaces in which the TRC hearings were held in some ways enabled a kind of symbolic distancing between the commissioners and the audience, thereby attributing the commissioners with a certain authority. It is apparent in Bozzoli's article that in the spaces used for these hearings are very specifically and consciously laid out. Witnesses were to be seated in such a way that they face both the commissioners and the audience which then added to this sense of closeness and contact. See Belinda Bozzoli, "Public Ritual and Private Transition: The Truth Commission in Alexandra Township, South Africa 1996," *African Studies*, vol. 57, no. 2 (1998), 171.

hall (closest to the judge and proceedings), and coloured people directly behind them.⁵⁸ This suggests a very specific ordering of a space which in itself enacts a certain kind of racialised power. In this way black witnesses and accused, seated in separate, more distant seating were in some sense removed from the proceedings rendering them largely as spectators rather than participants.

An important dimension in partly constituting the silence of the marchers in the transcripts of the Commission and trials, relates, I want to suggest, to the part of translators and/or interpreters. As noted in Chapter 1 much of the discussion before both the Commission and courts had gone through translators.⁵⁹ Written statements collected at the Paarl police station after the arrests clearly show that translation/interpretation was happening at this level as well as during the Commission and court proceedings. Furthermore it seems that it was often the same translator, Gerald Twala, which was used during interrogations at the police station.⁶⁰ I want to suggest that such a translator had significant power over what was finally recorded as the accused's words. In terms of such multiple levels of translation and interpretation, what was ultimately taken by the Commission and the courts as the X witness or accused's answer to their questions, was in effect actually a response to the interpreter's question- which could be significantly different.⁶¹ Yet with all of the documents eventually transcribed into English

⁵⁸ "Saal word in 'n hof omskep" *Paarl Post* (11 December 1962). "Inquiry into Paarl Events," *The Torch* (12 December 1962).

⁵⁹ See for example the questioning of witnesses George Skoen, the X witnesses and Matiyose Zenani before the Snyman Commission. Snyman Commission, 36, 1017. Supreme Court case, *State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others*, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544. Supreme Court case, *State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others*, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542. Supreme Court case, *State vs Shadrack Mbekile and 20 others*, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556. Supreme Court case, *State vs Jonathan Sogwagwa*, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561.

⁶⁰ In several cases the interpreter, often the same one- Gerald Twala who had, along with Detective Sergeant Dirk Vermeulen of the Paarl police taken the accused's statements after arrest, appeared before the court and was questioned about his linguistic competency and the accuracy of his translations. Twala's signature appears on several of the written statements attached to the court files. Supreme Court case, *State vs Titus Nyovu*, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561. Supreme Court case, *State vs Jonathan Sogwagwa*, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561.

⁶¹ See Peter Parker and Joyce Mokhesi-Parker's discussion of the process of trials during the post-Sharpeville period. Peter Parker and Joyce Mokhesi-Parker, *In the Shadow of Sharpeville: apartheid and criminal justice* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 67.

or Afrikaans, we have no way of tracing the original discourse between the accused (or witness) and the translator. It is necessary then to consider the mediation occurring in these texts which get taken up by Lodge and others as documentary sources without regard to questions of orality and mediation.⁶²

Another key factor in the suppression of voice seems to emerge from the fact that in both cases of the Commission and court cases there were suggestions that confessions were often the result of undue influence.⁶³ According to Anna Pearce the police produced several people before the Snyman Commission who had ‘first hand evidence’ of the events leading up to the march. However, “they had all those who were in prison to choose from, and were presumably able to promise an indemnity against prosecution if they gave satisfactory evidence.”⁶⁴ It is necessary then to suspect the procedures through which such evidence was secured. Pearce consequently questions the reliability of these statements which as, in the case of the X-witnesses, she suggests can be “accepted only with reservations because these men, at the time in custody, knew that their freedom might depend on giving the kind of evidence the police wanted.”⁶⁵

The evidence presented by black witnesses and the accused both before the Commission and the courts, needs to be read against the background of the state’s massive legal and extra-legal mechanisms put in place during the post-Sharpeville period, and particularly in terms of the

⁶² In her work on the TRC, Catherine Cole, discusses the role of the translators and interpreters as “highly charged intermediaries.” (67) Here again there is clearly an element of power, as Cole argues that “the very first line of transmission of testimony was mediated and interpolated” by interpreters. (68) Cole notes an important distinction between translation and interpretation- while translation works with the source language and carefully passes the best translation from the source to the target language; interpretation is not meant to be a verbatim translation of the speaker’s words but conveys the basic meaning. See Catherine Cole, *Performing South Africa’s Truth Commissions: Stages of transition* (USA: University of Indiana Press, 2010), 66-68.

⁶³ This seems to come across more clearly during the trials. See Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542. Supreme Court case, State vs Johannes Notyawo and Vanele Matikinca, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/560.

⁶⁴ Pearce, *A Permit to Live*, 254.

⁶⁵ Pearce, *A Permit to Live*, 273.

increasingly repressive crackdown after the Paarl march.⁶⁶ This was a period of massive trials including the well-known Treason Trial (1961).⁶⁷ By 1962/1963 the state's response to Poqo's "terrorist" activities in Paarl and the Transkei, as well as the parallel Umkhonto activities, was rapid and dramatic. Not long after Snyman had submitted his report, the General Law General Law Amendment (Sabotage) Act was rushed onto the statute book by June 1963. This Act defined the offence of sabotage and, accompanied by the "Ninety-Day Law," allowed police officers to detain a person suspected of politically motivated crime for up to three months without arrest.⁶⁸ This meant that the Paarl accused were detained for long periods of time while awaiting trial.

For such political detainees physical violence and torture seems to have become the rule during interrogations.⁶⁹ Such torture was often associated with a special police unit drawn from the SAP's investigative section, known as the "Sabotage Squad," who according to the TRC report, travelled all over the country to conduct interrogations of political detainees.⁷⁰ Poqo and PAC members who had been arrested in connection with the violent activities in South Africa in 1962 and 1963 had, according to TRC findings, often been tortured in attempt to obtain confessions and evidence against other members which would be used in trials.⁷¹ If this is the sense in which statements and evidence had been secured for the purposes of the Commission and Paarl trials, then this is certainly an important lens through which to read

⁶⁶ Fullard, "State repression in the 1960's," 342-350.

⁶⁷ Fullard, "State repression in the 1960's," 341.

⁶⁸ Fullard, "State repression in the 1960's," 345-346.

⁶⁹ Madeleine Fullard, "State repression in the 1960's," 355-362. Also see Hugh Lewin, a white journalist and Liberal Party member gives explicit description of the torture he endured during interrogations by members of the Security Police while he was detained in 1964 under the Ninety Day Law following the Park Station bombing in Johannesburg, which killed one white woman. Considering the absolute lack of mercy with which Lewin as a white man was treated, it is improbable that the Paarl detainees were not subjected to torture. See Hugh Lewin, *Bandiet Out of Jail: Seven years in a South African prison* (Johannesburg: Random House, 2002).

⁷⁰ *Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Vol. 2 (Cape Town: Juta, 1998), 197. See also Fullard, "State repression in the 1960's," 358.

⁷¹ TRC Report, Vol. 2, 195, 197. Fullard, "State repression in the 1960's," 357.

this 'evidence' and ultimately the findings that these institutions produced. Yet much of the literature around the march has not significantly engaged with this.

The trials therefore similarly require us to be aware of police power. One needs to question the reliability of the statements and evidence given by the accused as well as by state witnesses, who were also detained prior to appearing in court. In his study which examines the apartheid state's use of political trials against its opponents during the 1970's, Michael Lobban, similarly suggests that witnesses testifying in court in the presence of the same policemen who had tortured them or offered them their release from detention in return for giving 'satisfactory' evidence, were as a result unlikely to be completely neutral sources of fact. He argues that judges often failed to provide witnesses with sufficient protection and tended to accept evidence that was blemished.⁷² Yet it is this evidence that scholars have turned to in their efforts to reconstruct Poqo, describe its recruitment policies and organisational practices and activities, seemingly without paying too much attention to the possibility that the authorship for at least some of this evidence may well have been the SAP's Security Branch.

There are at least three examples from the Paarl trials where the accused had alluded to the fact that their evidence had been subject to torture or force. In the March 1963 case of the State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, two of the accused suggested that their evidence had been coerced. One of the accused maintained that while being questioned at the police station he had been threatened with assault by the interpreter while a certain Warrant Officer Basson stood by. In the same case another accused also described having been assaulted by a Detective de Villiers during the period in which he was giving evidence. He maintains that he had been beaten and interrogated about Poqo and that he had been forced to say certain

⁷² Michael Lobban, *White man's justice: South African political trials in the black consciousness era* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 119.

things.⁷³ Similarly in the case of State vs Johannes Noyawe and Vanele Matikinca heard on 3 June 1963, Notyawe argued that he had made a statement to the Paarl magistrate after being handcuffed to a tree and assaulted by the municipal police in Mbekweni who had told him that the magistrate had condoned such abuse.⁷⁴

Within such contexts of power, I want to argue, it is very difficult, if not impossible to attempt to retrieve the voices of the marchers. Both the Commission and trials are marked by a deafening silence with regard to the perspectives of the participants themselves. In both cases it often seems as if a narrative had already been in place when witnesses were called to give evidence and, from the ways in which advocates posed their questions, it is clear that witnesses were meant to simply provide confirmation.⁷⁵ By posing particular questions and avoiding others, the respective advocates largely silenced sections of the participant witness' memory and confined the narrative of the march to a specific version, thus triggering what Trouillot calls "the cycle of silences."⁷⁶

It is clear then, as Ashforth and others have noted, that a commission of inquiry and judicial trials under the context of apartheid were engaged in processes of the production and performance of knowledge involving the workings of power at multiple levels. However at the same time I want to suggest of the Snyman Commission, in particular, that the state and Snyman were not always entirely in control of the Commission's discourse. If one is to read the Snyman Commission and court cases against the grain in this way, with a constant awareness of the power relations and discourses at work, ambiguities and cracks in the dominant narrative of the march seem to start to reveal themselves. The following section

⁷³ Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542.

⁷⁴ Supreme Court case, State vs Johannes Notyawe and Vanele Matikinca, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/560.

⁷⁵ As suggested in Chapter 1, witnesses before the Commission were often presented with leading questions and were not really given the space to provide alternative versions or additional information. See for example questioning of X witnesses. Snyman Commission, 252, 270, 1451.

⁷⁶ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 34.

looks more closely at the Commission and trials procedures as they worked to produce the Paarl march and Poqo, with a particular interest in how this might allow us to interpret these fractures.

Reading the Snyman Commission

In response to the set terms of reference, the Snyman Commission's 32 page report submitted in April 1963 essentially presented Snyman's interpretation of the events at Paarl. Besides his description of the causes of the uprising, as discussed in Chapter 1, Snyman recommended that the state move swiftly in response to the Poqo problem but also that the state train and employ men "with patience, sympathy and understanding; and above all men of the highest integrity" who would manage Bantu affairs in Paarl, and South Africa more generally.⁷⁷ It is to this document that many scholars have looked in attempting to write the Paarl march.⁷⁸ None however have really begun a deconstructive reading of this state document and its narrative expressed clearly in the language of political discourse. Lodge, in particular, has failed to note the extent to which descriptions of the events as provided in the Commission's report already constituted interpretations of their nature.

The apartheid state had taken up Snyman's interpretation in the report as the authoritative statement with regard to the events in Paarl and Poqo. Dr Verwoerd, prime minister at the time, announced that the report "should help to show that the government was on the right road. The opposition had been wrong in blaming legislation for what had happened."⁷⁹ The findings and interpretation presented in the report were then used to legitimate the state's

⁷⁷ Report, 14.

⁷⁸ Muriel Horrell, *Action, reaction, counteraction* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1971), 53-55, 59, 61. Gerhardt, *Black Power in South Africa*, 204, 225-226. Dirk Kotze, *African politics in South Africa, 1964-1974* (London: C. Hurst and Co., 1975), 20-22.

Lodge, *Black Politics in South Africa*. Maaba, "The PAC's war against the state."

⁷⁹ Pearce, *A Permit to Live*, 292.

massive repressive response which targeted all PAC activities throughout South Africa.⁸⁰

Poqo was considered the most urgent problem at hand and for most of 1963, much of the situation in Mbekweni remained the same with the same officials in charge of its administration.⁸¹ It was only in September 1963 that Paarl's director of Bantu Administration, Le Roux, was suspended.⁸² The report's findings regarding corruption and the state of Bantu Affairs in Paarl also brought about significant changes in the Paarl Town Council.⁸³

At the outset of the report Snyman's power in the writing of this narrative is clear. As Snyman outlined in his report the procedures of the Commission concerning the attaining of witnesses and evidence, and what would ultimately be heard in public, it becomes clear that he had engaged in a process of selection, summary and interpretation; which was then also an exercise in exclusion and silencing.⁸⁴ That which remains part of the archive of the Snyman Commission is therefore that which Snyman had decided was in line with his terms of reference and the interests of the Commission, and is largely his interpretation of the evidence.

Ultimately the Commission's mandate had in many ways limited and determined the kinds of conclusions reached. The mandate structured the terms of debate and the understandings of the Paarl march and Poqo. As argued in the *Torch* newspaper on 12 December 1962, "the commission is bound by its terms of reference and works within the framework of the laws of South Africa. It is impossible for the commission, therefore, to come to a conclusion such as that the cause of the 'riot' is the fact that the laws of South Africa, from the constitution

⁸⁰ Fullard, "State repression in the 1960's."

⁸¹ Pearce, *A Permit to Live*, 293.

⁸² "Paarl Council Suspends Le Roux," *The Torch* (23 September 1963).

⁸³ Paarl's Town Council was almost entirely voted out of office in the next local elections with a total of 9 of the 12 council members being replaced, including the Mayor, Mr Herholdt and two other prominent councillors. "The Snyman Report on the Paarl riot of November," *Cape Argus* (2 September 1963). "Paarl's Political Pool Tinged with Mud," *Cape Argus* (2 September 1963). "Sensational Paarl Election Result," *Cape Argus* (5 September 1963).

⁸⁴ Report, 1-2.

onwards, carve up the population into ‘racial’ groups and discriminate against the majority of the population.”⁸⁵ However, while it is true that the mandate had limited what could be said about the Paarl march and that the Commission would not openly express such conclusions, I want to suggest that there were moments at which it revealed ambiguous spaces where alternative versions were hinted at.

While the Snyman Commission and its report can be seen to have followed many of the characteristics laid out by Ashforth, there were moments at which it seemed to fit uncomfortably with this mould. Snyman did not simply hold to the ‘official narrative,’ but was forced to open up questions of administration, corruption and structural violence raised by other parties. It becomes clear that the Commission was not always entirely in control but rather that there was some difficulty in controlling the discourse. The Commission unfolded into a space where national debates were made in a way that was certainly not expected, intended or desired by the apartheid state. The Commission became less easy to control and contain as accusations of corruption and racism, and particularly the concerns around the discriminatory state policies, at times led the Commission beyond official arguments and interpretations.⁸⁶

While disputes had arisen during the Commission’s hearings particularly between the state and SAIRR representatives with regard to interpretations that had pointed a finger at state policies, including influx control and pass laws, these seem to have been quickly quieted by the argument that the Commission was not a political platform and that “there was never any intention that the principles of state policy in regard to the Bantu people should be examined.”⁸⁷ Advocate Steyn, who appeared for the SAP and the Bantu Affairs Department

⁸⁵“Inquiry into Paarl Events,” *The Torch* (12 December 1962).

⁸⁶ See Ann Stoler’s discussion of colonial commissions of inquiry in India. Ann Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 141-179.

⁸⁷ Snyman Commission, 366.

argued that, “the Commission was not created with the purpose of supplying a platform for the propagation of purely political grievances against the state as such.”⁸⁸ Clearly then in prescribing a mandate which was partly concerned with causes, the state had not anticipated the ways in which these might come to implicate its own policies.

These issues were more easily controllable in the form of the report. Pearce’s suggestion of the part of influx control and pass laws, and Kasi’s argument for the grievances about the availability and condition of facilities, were briefly noted and written into the archive even if they were closed down by Snyman who ruled that he did “not find any of them to be causes of the Riots.”⁸⁹ Similarly in the Report Snyman admitted that black people had been aggrieved by the restrictions on their movement and the “interference with his mode of living,” yet at the same time he remained an official of the apartheid state and accordingly maintained that these were necessary policies which were “not intended to be oppressive but are based on social and economic needs.”⁹⁰ Snyman’s explanation for black grievances with the state policies suggested that it was not the fault of the policies but that of the unsympathetic Bantu Administration officials and the black people who were too “underdeveloped and primitive” to understand them.⁹¹

Nonetheless I want to argue that although Snyman attempted to stage-manage the arguments, the Commission developed in unexpected ways and that at times its mandate had been disrupted by other interests and arguments that came into play.⁹²

⁸⁸ Snyman Commission, 366.

⁸⁹ Report, 17.

⁹⁰ Report, 14.

⁹¹ Report, 17.

⁹² Nicky Rousseau and Madeleine Fullard have made a similar argument in relation to the TRC. Rousseau and Fullard argue that the TRC did not always follow its mandates or the expected trajectory, but at times developed in unanticipated directions. They argue that, “The possible outcomes of truth commissions and other truth-telling initiatives, in particular in relation to their intersections with and production of identities, are difficult to predict and not reducible to what their mandates may prescribe.” See ‘Madeleine Fullard and Nicky Rousseau, “Truth-telling, identities, and power in South Africa and Guatemala,” in Paige Arthur, *Identities in Transition: Challenges for transitional justice in divided societies* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

In many ways the narrative of the Paarl march became about politics and Poqo as a threat to state power, even though the immediate response of the state had been to argue against any political connection.⁹³ State policies and the state itself come under question to some extent, although largely closed down by Snyman who preferred a localised explanation. The SAIRR's argument which implicated state policy was met by harsh criticism and the argument that, "This commission was not created with the purpose of supplying a platform for the propagation of purely political grievances against the state as such."⁹⁴ The state had clearly not intended or anticipated the Commission to be employed as a platform to debate or critique its policies. However I want to propose that the debates which emerged and the way in which these were snubbed, hints at different understandings of the march as well as the state's inability to control the discourse entirely.

Reading the Paarl Court Cases

As I suggested in Chapter 1, the courts dependence on the Commission in hearing cases relating to the Paarl march and previous incidents of violence largely masks the fact that these trials failed to generate any new evidence of their own. Reproducing several of the same witnesses, arguments and exhibits, the trials largely reproduced and continued the narrative of the Commission.⁹⁵ As a result while under normal circumstances a court first hears evidence before reaching 'the facts,' it seems in the case of the Paarl trials that this system was reversed. It seems at the outset that there was already knowledge and an acceptance of 'the facts' about the march as based on Snyman's findings. While the Commission had been primarily concerned with the causes of the march, these court cases were interested in determining individual culpability. In this sense the Paarl court cases in some sense became

⁹³ As previously noted, prior to the Commission's inception the SAP and government had attempted to argue that the Paarl march was not political but criminal. "C.I.D Progress at Paarl," *Cape Times* (24 November 1962).

⁹⁴ Snyman Commission, 366.

⁹⁵ See Chapter 2, 19.

the place where the Commission's interpretation was in some sense fixed as the 'true narrative' of the Paarl march.

During the Paarl trials, as routinely happens, it was the prosecution that was first to present an interpretation based on the evidence it secured, which it meant to be accepted as the preferred version of the facts.⁹⁶ In this way it is the prosecution's theory which then largely becomes the yardstick against which other arguments were measured. In contrast to many ANC trials and trials of prominent PAC members, the Paarl accused had to make do with a state attorney in some cases, and in most other instances were poorly defended. These trials were cursory, especially since they were enacted as capital cases, and where defence attorneys were present, in general they appeared to make little effort.

As a result there was no real attempt to oppose the suspicions and stereotypes built up around the accused. By and large the defence failed to present any real evidence of its own but on several occasions simply responded by arguing that the state had failed to prove its arguments beyond reasonable doubt.⁹⁷ Several of the court cases surrounding the Paarl events contain applications for leave to appeal on such grounds, however all of these applications seem to have been denied as the respective judge would simply re-affirm his support of the original arguments and confidence in the evidence of "satisfactory" witnesses.⁹⁸ As such, although there were some cases in which the defence had attempted to point out faults in the narrative,

⁹⁶ Supreme Court case State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538. Supreme Court case State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542. Supreme Court case State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544. Supreme Court case State vs Kulekile Qutsu, September 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556. Supreme Court case State vs Shadrack Mbekile and 20 others, 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/556. Supreme Court case State vs Johannes Notyawwe and Vanele Matikinca, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/560. Supreme Court case State vs Jonathan Sogwagwa, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561. Supreme Court case State vs Titus Nyovu, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561. Supreme Court case State vs Baden Koboka and ten others, 1966. National archives, Boxes 1/1/1/820, 1/1/1/821, 1/1/1/822, 1/1/1/823.

⁹⁷ Nunn, "The Trial as Text," 793. Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538. Supreme Court case, State vs Jonathan Sogwagwa, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561.

⁹⁸ Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538. Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544.

(such as reliance on the evidence of a single witness or attempts to prove an argument of “common purpose”) these seem to have been largely ignored.⁹⁹

Rather than really being able to establish motives for the attack on the police station for each one of the accused, the judgements of these courts were largely based on generalisations and arguments that people acted with “common purpose” thus making no differentiation between the individual subject and the collective force.¹⁰⁰ As previously suggested the court cases revealed only silences and denials of affiliation to Poqo.¹⁰¹ The Paarl court cases, like the Commission, engaged in the subjection of agency and one never gets any real sense of the accused’s interpretation of the event or their own part therein. In this sense, once again, it seems to me that Poqo was perhaps more of a product of state imaginary which got depicted- and taken up- as a threat to the security of the white state after the Paarl march.

The court proceedings largely record and reinforce the silences and denials of those accused of participation. As a result it is almost impossible to recuperate their voices through these judicial texts. If one is to apply Gayatri Spivak’s argument in relation to the banning of the sati in India to the case of Paarl, she might suggest that the subaltern black migrant workers cannot speak through these trials but rather that it is a representation of their speech that remains. In these court cases, as Spivak suggests of a colonial Indian context, the ‘subject’s’

⁹⁹ Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538. Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544. State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others on the grounds that the court erred in basing its findings on aims and methods of struggle of Poqo on the evidence of ‘accomplices,’ Szandisele Makhupela, Gange and Jackson Ndala, Supreme Court case, State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542. Supreme Court case, State vs Titus Nyovu, June 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/561.

¹⁰⁰ Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura, 1922-1992* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 95. As in the case of State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, an application was made for leave to appeal by a Mr Hartford (who acted pro-deo for 16 of the 21 accused in this case) on behalf of three of the accused Vezile Felix Jaxa, Lennox Madikane, Nxolosi Damane on the grounds that the court had not proven that the applicants were personally responsible for causing any damage to property or personal injury or death to any persons, rather the court relied on an argument that these men had acted in unison with “common purpose” whether or not they had individually perpetrated violence. See Supreme Court case, State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544.

¹⁰¹ See for example the statements by accused Lennox Madikane, Mxolisi Damane, Norman Siyeke, Ndabazandile, Alfred Mbolombo, and Enoch Fokwana. Supreme Court case State vs Action Makatezi and 20 others, March 1963. National archive, Box 1/1/1/544. Supreme Court case State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542.

consciousness and representation are dislocated and incoherent. In some sense Spivak suggests the representation of the subaltern was in fact more like a replacement of their own voices with that of others. These men cannot represent themselves but come to be represented rather by someone else who then has the power over what is said.¹⁰²

As Shahid Amin argues in relation to the Chauri Chaura trials in India, the rebel himself was displaced in the judicial discourse of the event. Amin suggests the silences of the accused in the trial records were superimposed upon and given meaning by the ‘speech’ of what he calls the ‘approver,’ in this case the state witnesses or accomplice testimony. In most cases, Amin argues, we are confronted with the statement of an ‘approver.’ This is certainly also the case of the Paarl trials as I have shown in Chapter 1 that the court tended to rely quite extensively on the evidence and statements of specific prosecution witnesses.¹⁰³ In this way our access to the Paarl march is simultaneously barred and made possible by such a witness’ testimony.¹⁰⁴

To a large extent then, what remains in these documents which we encounter as researchers, is a representation of the marcher’s voice. What is more, as Michel de Certeau argues in writing of the arraignment of a female sorcerer, it is a representation by an other- be it a judge, Snyman, police officer, doctor, state witness or interpreter.¹⁰⁵ In many ways then it is the discourse of such individuals that remains, rather than that of the subject.

¹⁰² Gayatri Spivak, “Can the subaltern speak,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds.) (USA: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 71.

¹⁰³ As argued in Chapter 1 the courts often relied directly on the evidence of state witnesses. For example in the case of the State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, the judgement relied directly on the evidence of prosecution witness Lucky Ndibaza. An application was made for leave to appeal on behalf of accused Aaron Njokwana on the grounds that the court had made a mistake in preferring the evidence of this one witness, Lucky Ndibaza. Yet this seemed to make little difference to the courts verdict. See Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538. Further in the case of State vs Enoch Fokwana and 17 others, the court relied on witness the evidence Goduka Gelem. Supreme Court case, State vs Joseph Bazalele Mqitsane and two others, February 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/538. Enoch Fokwana. Supreme Court case State vs Enoch Fokwana and 19 others, March 1963. National archives, Box 1/1/1/542.

¹⁰⁴ Amin, “Approver’s Testimony, Judicial Discourse: The case of Chauri Chaura,” in Ranajit Guha, *Subaltern Studies V: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987).

¹⁰⁵ Michel De Certeau, *The Writing of History* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1988), 252.

The possessed woman's statements, according to de Certeau, therefore function as a limit. The sources available, including court records and accompanying documents, all present the discourse of others, but in a way that suggests that it was the woman's own. As a result the understanding that we get of this woman is entirely influenced by the image that those who produced such documents had of her. Where she does speak, her speech is not considered to be her own, but the voice of her "other," or her judge, doctor or witnesses. As a result, de Certeau suggests that we never really access the woman's true voice. "Her speech is lost because even before this speech can be reformed through the discourses in which it figures by dint of citations, a battery of interrogations has determined all response ahead of time; they have fragmented the possessed woman's speech according to classifications that are in no way her own, but rather those of the inquirer's knowledge."¹⁰⁶

I want to argue that this is similarly the case in terms of both the Snyman Commission and court trials as what we encounter as researchers are essentially documents produced and controlled by discourses which are not the Paarl march participant or 'Poqo member's' own. In this sense, while we must suppose that the marcher's voice had originally been audible, even if only through the act of the uprising, it remains inaccessible to us as we have no way of reading it except via these state archives. I would agree with de Certeau then in his argument that in this sense the documents produced from such inquiries comprise a 'point of no return.'¹⁰⁷

The archives and history

The moment at which documents and 'facts' are assembled in an archive, is according to Trouillot yet another moment at which pasts are silenced, in some ways permanently.¹⁰⁸ The archives of the Snyman Commission and judicial trials need to be seen first and foremost as

¹⁰⁶ De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 252.

¹⁰⁷ De Certeau, *The Writing of History*, 252.

¹⁰⁸ Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 26.

produced by the counterinsurgency measures of the state and its functionaries. The Commission and court then each respectively archived the evidence that it required to support the history it had manufactured, and by archiving its evidence, it guaranteed the ‘truth’ of the history it produced. These archival records therefore reflect ‘reality’ as interpreted by the state and act through specific channels, including the people who produced them, the functionaries who directed them, the archivists who selected them for conservation, and the researchers who employ them in composing specific versions of the past. In this sense, neither the Snyman Commission archive nor the court archives can be approached, as Lalu would argue, as a “resource for the retrieval of *the truth*” about the Paarl march, but rather need to be read as specific “modes of evidence” through which we might be able to catch glimpses of discourses of power and social processes for the subjection of agency.¹⁰⁹

Besides the power involved in the production of these documents it is pertinent to consider the operation of power in institutions such as libraries and archives in which they are housed as well as the processes of archivability that impacted upon them. As Achille Mbembe argues, the archive is a very specific space which encompasses very specific practices. As an active, regulatory discursive system the archive always involves processes of rigid ordering and layers of selection- exclusions and inclusions. Therefore while the archive presents the illusion of totality, the idea that one would be able to access the whole truth of an event or life; they need to be understood as highly mediated institutions which produce specific epistemologies.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa*, 42

¹¹⁰ Verne Harris, Sello Hatang, “Freedom of information in South Africa and archives for justice,” Paper presented at the ‘Transactions of Public Culture Workshop,’ Cape Town (January 2003), 5.

As Verne Harris and Sello Hatang argue, “the archive is always about power...[it] never speaks to us as a thing in and of itself.”¹¹¹ Rather it is always “primarily the product of a judgement, the result of the exercise of a specific power and authority, which involves placing certain documents in an archive at the same time as others are discarded.”¹¹² Verne Harris argues that rather than reflecting reality like “windows on the truth,” archives “the documentary record provides just a sliver of a window into the event.”¹¹³ Through these documents the apartheid state archived its own version of the Paarl uprising and further regulated their archiving as the passing of the 1962 Archives Act meant that the archive functioned as a state organ. This meant that besides the usual practices of selection and distillation involved in archiving were further complicated by processes of ‘sanitation’ of official memory as the destruction and censure of records were authorised by the state. In this sense Harris argues what remained after such processes of exclusion was a ‘sliver’ from which archivists then further selected what they would preserve.¹¹⁴

While the archive is the site from which the past is initiated, the archive can only ever hold incomplete traces of the past.¹¹⁵ To apply Foucault’s formulation in his book *Archaeology of Knowledge*, the archive around the Paarl march by no means contains all the knowledge and evidence originally produced around the uprising and Poqo but rather reflects the state-defined “law of what can be said” about it.¹¹⁶ As such, by being eliminated or excluded from the records at the moment of their production and again by the archive, there are elements of the event that can never really be recovered or reinterpreted. As I have argued, the speech of the subaltern marcher seems furthest removed.

¹¹¹ Harris and Hatang, “Freedom of information in South Africa and archives for justice,” 4

¹¹² Achille Mbembe, “The power of the archive and its limits,” in Carolyn Hamilton et al (eds), *Reconfiguring the Archive* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2002), 20.

¹¹³ Harris, “The Archival Sliver,” 64.

¹¹⁴ Harris, “The Archival Sliver,” 64-65.

¹¹⁵ Harris, “‘Unearthing’ the ‘essential’ past,” 161.

¹¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Routledge, 1972), 145.

By filing documents or photographs in particular ways, and through processes of exclusion and inclusion, even if there were a ‘real history’ of the march to recover, which I have suggested is debatable, the archive further destroys its distinctiveness. As Jacques Derrida suggests in his book *Archive Fever*, “The possibility of the archiving trace, this simple *possibility*, can only divide the uniqueness.”¹¹⁷ The archive, according to Derrida in what he calls the “violence of the archive” reproduces silences and, at the same time as being the storehouse of memory, is implicated in processes of forgetting.¹¹⁸

In conclusion, the Snyman Commission and court cases that dealt with the events in Paarl first and foremost form part of massive state counter responses to the march and Poqo as an organisation. I have argued then that we can neither dismiss nor wholly rely on these documents and archives, but rather that we need a careful reading of these texts which is aware of the ways in which they were integrally connected to the formations of state power. As I have suggested the Commission and judicial trials need to be understood as having engaged in the production a particular history around the Paarl march and enacted state power, thereby engaging processes of selection and silencing. However at the same time I have argued that by reading these archives against the grain there are moments at which ambiguities emerge and at which points the state’s control over the narrative of the march was less than absolute. The chapter argues thus that these archives cannot be approached as sites from which to retrieve the Paarl march or Poqo from the historiography. Not only do the discourses which we encounter in these archives always already constitute an interpretation of the events and a representation of the marcher, but following Guha, they are themselves a mode of counter-insurgency through which insurgency is curbed.¹¹⁹ At best, even the most

¹¹⁷Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 6.

¹¹⁸ Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 10.

¹¹⁹ Guha, “The Prose of Counter Insurgency.”

enticing fissures in the dominant interpretation seem to do little more than hint at alternative versions for understanding the march.

Conclusion

“The event, the process, the origin, in its uniqueness, is irrecoverable.”¹

In March 2010 infamous ANC Youth League president Julius Malema announced publicly that the PAC had “Hijacked Sharpeville” and that its memory in fact “belonged to the ANC alone.” Malema was reprimanded for this statement by Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe who argued that a “common ownership of history” was “the basis of nation-building” and should never be undermined by any interest group based on the subjectivity of race, religion, class or ideology.”²

In some ways Malema’s comment reflects the fact that there is no “common ownership of history” in South Africa but rather that events such as Sharpeville and Paarl have been owned and denied sporadically at different moments based on what they came to mean. Represented as belonging to the PAC- and further to Poqo’s irrational and violent terrorist campaigns- Paarl has been largely displaced in the history of liberation struggles in South Africa. It seems to me that there cannot be a “common ownership of history” as long as events such as Paarl, which seem to disrupt the master narrative of the resistance struggle in South Africa, are largely silenced and where what is historically important is reduced to what is dominant. However marginal other moments of resistance are, to reduce the historical record to that which is dominant is to deplete and narrow our potential understanding of the multiple ways in which South Africans sought to change their worlds.

Since 1994 it has largely been an ANC dominated history which has been institutionalised as the history of the nation. The uneven historical power between the ANC and PAC continues to be reflected today as the dominant master narrative of a modern and intellectual resistance struggle refuses to be muddied by the PAC and especially Poqo’s activities that openly

¹ Verne Harris, “The Archival Sliver: Power, memory and archives in South Africa,” *Archival Science*, 2 (2002).

² “PAC hijacked Sharpeville march- Malema,” *The Star* (23 March 2010).

targeted civilians and which framed the anti-apartheid struggle as a racial war in some sense.³ Paarl continues to feign a “selective amnesia”⁴ and the march has little place in the public heritage image of the town which prefers to present Paarl as the place from which Nelson Mandela was released from prison and began his long walk to freedom, than to get its hands dirty with a violent midnight march. How then do we write a post-apartheid history of this event which pays attention to its specificity and does not just consign it to the margins of a dominant resistance narrative?

This thesis has proposed a study of the ways in which the Paarl march had been defined discursively. As such I have engaged in a careful reading of the archives around the event, particularly the texts of the Snyman Commission and court proceedings. I have argued that a very specific narrative was rapidly moulded around the event through means of the media coverage, the Commission and the judicial trials which followed. This narrative presented the march on Paarl as primarily the work of Poqo- then equated with the PAC- which had preyed on local grievances related to the poor administration of Mbekweni location and corruption of the location officials. In this way the Commission reduced various complexities to a focus on Poqo as the common thread and primary cause of the events in Paarl. This interpretation diverted attention from dissatisfaction with state policies, instead redirecting white anxieties and repressive state action towards a focus on Poqo and its activities throughout the country.

I have suggested that Poqo was only really constructed as a major threat after the Paarl march. At this stage, prior violent activities in the Paarl area as well as incidents of violence in other parts of the country were attributed to Poqo, all of which enabled the state propaganda to produce Poqo as a significant danger to white security. The Snyman Commission defined

³ See Sabine Marshall, “Pointing to the dead: Victims, Martyrs and Public Memory in South Africa,” *South African Historical Journal*, 60 (2008).

⁴ I borrow this phrasing from Shahid Amin. See Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura, 1922-1992* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 3.

Poqo and the massive judicial trials and executions which followed, were to attest to the extent of the ‘problem.’

I have shown that Poqo was defined at multiple levels. Yet in some ways there was little distinction between its representation by state and other liberation movement actors. The ANC significantly critiqued the movement and the events at Paarl, distancing its own modern, intellectual resistance struggle from the traditional and ineffective kind of conflict reflected at Paarl. In this sense Paarl came to take its place as “a heroic effort born out of oppression, but badly conceived” thus designating it to the shadows of South African liberation history and only retrieving it as a metaphor for the kind of resistance that would not achieve freedom.⁵ This representation has largely remained intact, and Poqo and Paarl continue to have little place in this history, particularly as the ANC became the governing party in South Africa in 1994.

Perhaps a midnight march on Paarl was not the most effective resistance attempt, yet it did jolt state consciousness and had significant consequences for the political landscape in South Africa. Much more work needs to be done on events such as Paarl and the Bashee Bridge incident, and the archives that they created. Such a focus may open the way for greater understandings of the modes of counter-insurgency and the discursive power of the state to which this thesis has pointed.

My thesis has been concerned with examining the histories that exist around the Paarl march and Poqo. It becomes clear that the Snyman Commission’s narrative is persistent in the accounts of the march by academic histories as well as the so called “struggle histories.” As a result, even those accounts that have attempted to alter the dominant representation of the march seem to largely continue the same narrative. While Tom Lodge remains the key scholar

⁵ “The ANC spearheads Revolution: Leballo? No! Leaflet issued by the ANC,” (May 1963) accessed at www.anc.org.za on 23 September 2011.

on the Paarl march and Poqo, I have argued that in his quest to recover the march, Lodge's dependence on the Snyman Commission has led him down problematic routes. Through a focus on causes to recover the Paarl Poqo cell's agency and rationality in carrying out the march, Lodge undermined his own argument, himself denying the marchers conscious action without the pressure of some external force. Furthermore by attempting to reinsert Poqo into the dominant resistance struggle historiography from within an existing framework Lodge undercuts the power of his own critique and betrays the distinctiveness of the event. By casting Poqo in an organisational light in this way, Lodge and others exclude alternative ways of thinking resistance. By relying directly on the Commission's interpretation, Lodge largely reproduced the state's representation of Poqo and continued the subjection of the participants' agency.

In many ways the endurance of this narrative reflects the failure of scholars writing on the Paarl march to really engage with the power relations and discourses involved in the production and archiving of the Snyman Commission and trial records. On this note, following Guha and Lalu's call for a careful reading of state texts, I have argued that it is necessary to read the archives around the Paarl march for the ways in which they reveal processes of mediation and representation and speak to the apartheid state's production of knowledge.⁶ Such a reading reveals the ways in which the Commission and trials, as institutions directly connected to the apartheid state, were meant to produce and regulate knowledge around the march in particular ways. In attempts to produce a particular official history of the march, they enacted state power and engaged in processes of selection, silencing and the subjection of agency. As such I have argued that we cannot recover the Paarl insurgent from these highly mediated texts as the discourses which we encounter in these

⁶ Ranajit Guha, 'The Prose of Counter Insurgency' in *Subaltern Studies Volume 11* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). Premesh Lalu, *The Deaths of Hintsa: Postapartheid South Africa and the Shape of Recurring Past* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2009).

archives always already constitute an interpretation of the events and a representation of the marcher's voice.

At the same time I have argued that a careful reading of these archives does reveal ambiguities and contradictions which might lead us to more nuanced understandings of the march. A reading of the Snyman Commission's transcripts reveals moments at which it seems the state had not entirely been in control of the discourse around the march and by setting a mandate that was concerned with causes, had unwittingly created the space for alternative interpretations to emerge.

Owing to constraints of time and space I have not been able to follow all of the threads that seem to coil and entwine around the Paarl march. While this thesis has focused on the ways in which the archive has been uncritically examined, one of the threads which could be pursued in future would be to develop a greater understanding of the modes of counter-insurgency and discursive domination by the state via an understanding of the events at Paarl, Bashee River Bridge, and perhaps also Stellenbosch, where although not carried to fruition plans had been made for violent action. I do think that Paarl also needs to take off its blinders with regard to its messier history and engage with this past in terms of the public history and tourism sector.

One way of complicating the dominant discourse around the march, I have suggested, involves a reading of its visual representation and particularly the photographs of the accused. In some ways these photographs do not fit comfortably with the kind of image of the march and of the savage bloodthirsty rioters that the state had produced and depended upon. I have suggested that it was perhaps for this reason that these images remained part of a private record rather than take on a public life. Further work needs to be done around these images in order to perhaps attempt to pull out the histories that I have suggested these photographs can merely hint at. Ultimately they remain part of the state record of the march and, like the

documents to which they are attached, must be read as involving very specific modes of representation. As such these images lead us to the same impasse, as the complicit and mediated archives continue to keep the march and the subaltern marcher just beyond our reach. This, I want to suggest, points to the limits of the archive which, even in its most enticing moments remains liable rather than reliable.

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