MIDDLE VOICES IN TRANSITION: THE FORM OF PUBLIC SPEECH IN POST-TRC SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract

Public speech contains the potential for transition. This essay is addressed to the contemporary debate in South Africa over how to define the form of public deliberation. As it presents the question of how collective deliberation moves between modes of opposition and agreement, this controversy both extends and challenges the logic of reconciliation. It is a debate about debate that marks a third phase of transition, a time in which the relationship between unity and difference comes to define the character (ethos) of politics.

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What is public speech? As it concerns the play of invention and judgement, this is a rhetorical question.[1] Between hermeneutic prejudice and prophetic expectation, it is a question that pivots in time, pointing to past norms of consensus, present opportunities for expression, and future hopes of understanding. At least one of its answers is obvious: public speech is difficult to find and hard to evaluate. The coffee-houses and pubs, the originary if not nostalgic sites of publicity, are now largely branded markers of global capital flow, resplendent in their chrome and replete with cyber-gateways to chatrooms where keyboard icons and abbreviations carry "conversation." Their plate glass windows offer handsome targets for the self-styled global civil society that now caravans from nation to nation, appearing in the public square with a message that has yet to generate much more discussion than how many riot police to deploy. In the early twenty-first century, public speech does not come with a guarantee of audience.

What is the public's speech? The question blurs subject and object. Who gets to ask this question? For whom it is asked? Is public speech that which constitutes the public, discourse spoken by public(s), words that appear in public spaces, or texts that delineate a public domain? Appearances, speech-actions, performances, and regulatory norms divide the public from what it is not. Yet, this means that there is something about the nature of public speech that presupposes itself, that doubles back, standing on what is already constituted in order to search for what is potentially constitutive. With what voice can the public ask after the substance of the very thing through which it is composed? As Antigone kneels outside the gates, mourning melancholy, weighing faiths of heart, city, and spirit, it is the chorus who reports that public speech is a complex constellation of private desire, collective interest, and institutional dictate.

What is speech in public? Do the operative terms of this question introduce an identitarian logic of definition into that which *is* in "the main contingent"(Aristotle)? Does the question aspire to set speech into language, driving unruly appearances towards the order of the archive (Foucault 1998)? There is no certain reply. Whether it is placed under the banner of civic virtue, prudence, or communicative action, the debate continues over whether and how attempts to legislate the *form* of public speech shape its *content*. Procedure and product exist in uncertain relationship, an ambiguity that appears explicitly when taken-for-granted interpretations of the collective good are challenged and revised.

"What is public speech?" is not a question that can be asked at all times. It comes to readability at particular moments, instances of controversy over the dynamics and norms of recognition, understanding, and representation. The query is usually set on the horizon of potential (*dynamis*), a belief that public speech is both transformable and transformative. It appears against standing definitions and accepted purposes of public speech. In short, the question is a transgression asked in the name of a beginning. With it comes an aspiration to power (potential) that places us – literally and figuratively – squarely in the middle of things, events, and people. Public speech constitutes a domain of appearance, figuring agency that turns between the times (Rose 1996). It moves within and fashions relationships, bonds and structures that stand between and join us. It enacts judgement, tying modes of reason and action that support the invention and practice of politics. In these beginnings, a point underscored repeatedly by Arendt (1956), public speech appears to contain the potential for transition, a risk that things may *become* other-

wise, the hope that the change will *be* for the better. Marx's claim that political transitions entail a play of ideal talk and pragmatic confusion could equally apply to public speech.

In the "middle time" of transition, it is difficult to resolve the question of what *is* public speech by defining it as this or that (Miering 2000, 127). The gesture degrades its rhetorical character. A certain reply ensures its recurrence. Put differently, there is a *kairos* contained in the question of public speech, a moment of faith in which identity is not only insufficient but a deterrent. The faith of public speech is the excess of law of non-contradiction that appears between the violence of self-certainty and imposed isolation. It is not negation but a shared negativity that holds the potential for transition, a faith that embodies the character and thus contains the substantial risk of the (public's) name. The question of public speech has much to do with our ability to see and understand the ambiguous (transitional) moments when public speech becomes its own object. Under what conditions do the institutions and conventions of public speech turn back on themselves, asking explicitly about the nature, benefits, and limitations of public speech? What kinds of talk appear around the question of how the public talks? How does the question of publicity induce motion, a movement in which the terms of public speech are both presupposed and invented? What is the character of public speech that supports the reconciliation of this already been and yet to come?

In various ways, these problems hover around middle, a space in which speech moves between and invents relationships. This means that public speech is often charged to discern if not create the potential for unity in difference. An explicit problem of recognition and reconciliation, critical social and rhetorical theory has devoted substantial attention to this struggle.[2] 1 Leaving ideal solutions to the side, my aim here is to consider the transitional *turn* of public speech, some of the ways in which it appears to move between situations of opposition and understanding. At present, there is substantial controversy in South Africa over how to define, create, and sustain publicity. The disputes mark a third phase of the country's transition, a period that follows directly from a constitutional and corporate attempt to effect reconciliation. Moreover, this debate about debate blurs the genre of public speech. It involves institutions speaking to public audiences about the private conditions for collective deliberation. It also brings members of different publics into a struggle for recognition that has both symbolic and material stakes. This event is not the repudiation or failure of reconciliation but its necessary complication. The South African transition did not result in reconciliation. Rather, the call for and performance of reconciliation set the stage for a period of transition in which public deliberation both shows and struggles for a middle voice, an *ethos* of collective history-making that is less the exception to politics than its rule.[3]

The South African transition from apartheid placed an enormous stress on the value of debate and public deliberation. From a situation of stasis, the risk of endless civil war that appeared at the intersection of mass power and institutional force, the transition began with "talks about talks" that then gave way to a "negotiated revolution." Over the course of three years, bargaining over how to legislate the end of apartheid occurred within a framework of "sufficient consensus," a kind of formal-pragmatic discourse that rested on honour not contractual duty. In a way that is persistently overlooked, these developments were motivated, underwritten, and supported by the idea and sometimes the practice of reconciliation.

Carried by a provisional amnesty, the successful negotiations left the question of history less forgotten than unresolved. Thus, the TRC was charged to "promote" reconciliation through a multi-faceted demonstration that the future could be made through the past. With its work, the Commission offered less transcendence than an extended lesson as to how the gift of the Word/word can be used to turn justifications for violence into oppositions that contained the potential for dialogue. Evident in the Commission's call for South Africans to create cultures of debate, reconciliation involves the creation of time and space for talk. It is a rhetorical concept, a good that entails discourse about discourse, an ongoing process of speaking about how to speak.[4]

As the Commission concludes the last of its work, critics inside and outside the country are busy questioning the chances for South Africa's successful democratisation. Many have divined the end of the miracle. If it happened at all, some claim that the "new beginning" of reconciliation is now a thing of the past. They warn that the warmth of Mandela's "rainbow nation" has given way to the calculating pessimism of a nation divided and doubled (Johnson 2001b). Indeed, there is widespread concern over President Mbeki's two-nation thesis, his rather dim view of a massive HIV-AIDS crisis, silence on the worsening situation in Zimbabwe, and apparent intolerance of criticism.[5] Reports beamed into the country from abroad show that the western press is listening for and purports to hear the drums of race war (Nyatsumba 2001; Smith 2001). Critics across the political spectrum bemoan the state of public discourse, claiming the Mbeki is insulated and paranoid. The recent announcement by the Minister of Security, that three high ranking members of the ANC had plotted to overthrow Mbeki, shook the party's allies and confirmed critic's suspicions to the point where they could unsheathe the knife of "banana republic." Such conclusions are premature if not hypocritical.[6] Throughout the tumult, there have been calls by government, media, and civil society for open, rigorous and vigorous public debate. A widely agreed upon rationale for such engagement is the need to promote participation, transparency and representation. Yet, the contours of the present debates are uneven, showing that these goals have much to do with the problems of who is able to enter public debate, how public deliberation should work and to what end. Given South Africa's other future, the outright civil war that most predicted, there is sense in which these definitional questions are a luxury. At a basic level, they are an indicator of what the speech action of reconciliation can and cannot do.

Some forms of public speech are addressed to the composition of the public and its relative capacity to speak. In August 2001, for instance, on the occasion of the second annual *Niep Oliver Tambo Lecture*, Thabo Mbeki delivered an address entitled "Where Are They Now?" In it, the president claimed that "the white [South African] politician" has taken the stage of opposition in order enunciate a "racism that is a millennium old." Directed at Tony Leon, the leader of the South Africa's largest and primarily white opposition party, Mbeki's charge drew little praise. It was cited as explicit evidence that the president viewed all criticism as racism.[7] A prominent academic opined that talk was confounding politics and claimed (incoherently) that he missed the "sheer absence of rhetoric" that characterised the Mandela presidency (James 2000).

Mbeki's address is (a) public speech that asks who can speak publicly in the "new" South Africa, how those words are heard, and the ways in which they are felt. Set against the legacy of a "colonialism of a special type," it is a speech that

attempts to diagnose the potential for public speech and collective action in the "new" South Africa. Mbeki begins with the proposition that apartheid deprived most South Africans of "identity and country." For the majority, reduced to a "labour unit, not a living human being with personal and civil rights," South African history marks a systematic attempt to annihilate a "people's belief in their names, their languages." Running through a vast and vertiginous range of post-colonial theory, Mbeki claims that this subjection is mediated by an "indigenous petite bourgeoisie" that stands midway between the "masses of the working class in town and country and the small number of local representatives of the foreign ruling class." Apartheid stripped, distorted and violently attributed identity, robbing human beings of a platform from which to speak.[8] In a country where the colonisers neither conducted their affairs from a distant shore nor departed after the transfer of power, Mbeki claims that the damage must be undone through a co-operative effort between the "select forces of liberation" and the "black intelligentsia." This work requires an unspecified degree of centralisation and the rejection of those class markers that hide and perpetuate the remnants of colonialism. Within a "capitalist society," Mbeki implores his "vanguard" to grasp that "300 years of colonial domination" has placed the capacity for material equality and upward mobility into a select number of hands, few of which have been opened or extended in the last six years. Praising the way in which Oliver Tambo exercised the "historic privilege" to lead the country toward non-racial democracy, Mbeki concludes the argument on an important note. Between the reality of the past and hope for the future, he claims that Tambo would "not have been surprised that the beneficiaries of racism consider it their duty to discourage the victims of racism from reflecting and acting on the pain that they feel."

Rome was not built in a day. Nor was Athens.[9] At heart, Mbeki's position is that the capacity for public speech in South Africa is far from given. Moreover, if the constitutive appearances and arguments of public life require a set of material resources, as deliberations require time and energy, Mbeki hints that the symbolic acknowledgement afforded by the TRC did not end many South African's struggle for recognition. Referring to a concept that grounded the Commission's work, Mbeki argues that a "belief in dignity" is necessary but not sufficient to overcome the history of encoded lessons about why blacks are not capable of doing the job. The announced goals of Bantu education policy said no less. The need to assume history, to overcome the exile from self, to recover the experiences that fund voice and energise speech is simply bracketed by liberal political parties that want to stoke the fires of opposition and criticism.[10]

Presence precedes interaction. Mbeki asks, Where are they now? What is the content of the present, the potential in the moment? In his terms, the struggle now is a fight "against the birth" of what has already come before and that threatens to degrade a collective capacity for innovation. The work to be done is history-making, the invention of the "qualitatively new" that sits between a "return to the source" and the Freedom Charter's promise of a "South Africa that belongs to all who live in it." This argument is not a repudiation of reconciliation but an enactment of its logic. Indeed, at the end of the address, Mbeki sets Tambo as the absent presence (Christ), the embodied memory of whom grants standing to citizens and marks out a space for collective (inter)action within a messianic moment that leaves the transformation from "underling" to equal less to fate than choice.

The common claim that Mbeki hears all criticism as racism may be borne of failure to listen. Evident in a number of speeches, the president's announced concern is not criticism *per se* but the ways in which criticism depends on historically-rooted norms of judgement, rules of civility that objectify blacks and presuppose their inability to act reasonably. Read this way, Mbeki's address is a form of public speech that diagnoses the condition of and attempts to lay the basis for speech in and by a public. It opposes and transgresses standing presuppositions about the nature of political-public debate, asking whether there are yet unseen conditions that hamper the ability of citizens to fashion the appearances that sustain collective interaction. From a position that blurs the divide between institutional, public, and private, the president's address questions whether the lived history of material want and inequity undermine the liberal presupposition that public speech is ready-made and ever-valuable.

Where are they now? Mbeki's hermeneutic question sets the language of public speech into motion. As Georgio Agamben suggests, it is a question of memory that moves between the certain existence (*ousia*) of a "they" charged to open the public as a space for inventing the collective good and the contingent potential (becoming) of a "now," a present moment that sits uneasily between the times (1991, 25, 44). The pain of the past is both evidence of a negation and a shared negativity that contains a voice capable of disclosing both the will to language and its place. It is a voice that appears in the memory of death – Tambo – and which is carried forth by his representative (apostle?) – Mbeki. Thus, the dilemma: Mbeki's call to recover and (re)make the grounds of public speech, the symbolic-historical and material prerequisites of deliberation, is addressed to an audience that, according to the president, does not actually exist. The force of Mbeki's argument depends on the very norm of representation that it contests in the name of a politics that strives to open space for the creation of constituency. With and without audience, the question becomes: Where is Mbeki (now)? How does the public yet-to-come hold the institutional call for public speech accountable? Does it need to?

The storm did not quell immediately. For over a month, Mbeki and his critics continued to tarry. In late August, opening South Africa's National Conference on Racism, the president appeared to offer something of an olive branch when he called for vigorous discussion about the matter of race relations and urged South Africans to "let a hundred schools of thought contend." More interesting, Mbeki recast the closing argument of the Tambo address, the claim that collective interaction is hindered by the silencing pain of the past. In the name of ending racism, work that is "fundamental to our future," Mbeki argued that "we have to ensure that it is discussed frankly, freely and openly. We must be ready to take the pain that will be an inevitable part of this open discourse." With this (temporal) shift away from the matter of how to create the conditions for public deliberation, the issue becomes how such interchange should occur. In the last year, this question has arisen repeatedly. It marks a turn from the problem of how to create the potential for deliberation to debate over its actual mechanisms and procedures.

In early 2001, spurred partly by an influence peddling scandal that grew out of the government's decision to purchase a large quantity of military equipment from primarily European companies, critics began to argue that the ANC faced a "crisis of public confidence" and that it was increasingly unaccountable to the people" (Friedman 2001b; Johnson 2001). Writing in his "personal capacity," James Myburgh,

a high-ranking member of the Democratic Alliance, claimed that the ANC's decision to alter and oversee the structure of provincial politics demonstrated a commitment to "centralism [that] increasingly conflicts with and overrides the 'democratic.'" Invoking Mill, Myburgh defended this charge on the grounds that the ANC has committed "offences against reasoned debate." No positive case was forthcoming. In response, Kader Asmal, a noted legal scholar, long-time member of the ANC's National Executive Committee, and current Minister of Education, lamented the "vindictive and biased" approach offered by the opposition and argued that Myburgh's position stemmed from his party's history of "lording over South Africa" and its profound discomfort with the coming of democracy. Thus, Asmal concluded, the opposition was nostalgic, longing for the "good old days" in order to generate "fear, anger and suspicion" among white South Africans. Stanley Uys countered that the ANC was simply trapped in its own anachronistic jargon, a vocabulary of "anti-racism" racism that it was using to seal off criticism and distract its "black constituents" from the fact that promised economic gains have yet to appear.[11] In devastating reply, Pallo Jordan wondered whether Uys' position was simply a crass apologetic for those unwilling either to wed reconciliation with justice or acknowledge the difficulties involved in South Africa's move from an economic system that benefited fifteen percent of the population to a one in which the same quantity of resources must be distributed amongst *all* citizens.

Far from resolved, these interchanges are markers of the significant amount of South African public speech that is now given to the questions of what counts as public speech and how it is best performed. More often than not, these debates hover *around*, addressing but not fully engaging, the question of how to define and enact norms of critical publicity. In many cases, very little specific clash is occurring over the matter. When a group of prominent black business leaders and academics took a full page advertisement in the *Johannesburg Star,* arguing that the media's criticism of president Mbeki was using the "language of democracy to subvert democracy," the press dismissed the position as one more example of "playing the race card."[12] The charge illustrates why it is difficult to have actual debate within debate about the form of legitimate and critical deliberation. At base, interlocutors are using different interpretations of the country's history to define and justify norms of public argumentation. While some argue that the ANC is trapped in the orbit of a "struggle logic," a tactical perspective that cuts away middle ground, the evidence suggests that the organisation is wary of the presumptions that back liberal codes of public debate. Repeatedly, the ANC advocates the development of a culture of "criticism and counter-criticism" while maintaining that the rules for such argumentation must take shape within the moral imperative to redress material inequity and the contextual (centralist) demands of democracy building. As it entails the risk of power sharing, debate is deemed unacceptable to the degree that it marks the entrenchment of economic and discursive inequality. Thus, there is a need to draw from the past in order to invent norms of legitimate public discourse that can be carried into the future. In contrast, the dominant media and opposition parties show a tendency to shuffle between claims about the significance of South Africa's past and arguments as to why the country must draw a line, wipe the slate clean, and move forward. In the same breath, it is common to hear representatives of predominantly white political parties proclaim the centrality of history to contemporary Afrikaner identity and attack affirmative action as unfair to those who

lack (historical) responsibility.[13] This approach seems to play both sides in order to close the middle: certain historical norms of opposition are valid while others carry no weight; accountability for (past) action is crucial to democratisation but history must be parsed in the name of not overburdening the present or justifying retributive sanctions for apartheid; the opposition is a victim of ANC power and never once a beneficiary of the old regime. In all cases, the principle of how to distinguish the useful history from the unproductive is never defined.

Disagreements about the proper procedures of public speech are tied closely to standing disputes about the ends of publicity. For many, public debate is valued for its contribution to the development of a civil society that both contributes to post-apartheid reconstruction and opens conduits through which citizens can interact with representative institutions. However, there is disagreement about whether a traditional liberal model of civil society fully serves the interests of the country. In her recent articulation of "why South Africa matters," Mamphela Ramphele (2001) argued that the consolidation of democracy demands that citizens and political leaders "come to grips with their competing visions of citizenship." Liberals and civic republicans, she argues, have yet to learn how to communicate. Again, the problem stems partly from conflicting assumptions about the meaning and exigency of South Africa's history. Given the pain of deep division, the tradition of *ubuntu,* and the economic need for compensatory centralisation, it is unclear whether it is useful to don the vestments of the autonomous liberal subject who sets out to practice eloquence and enact civic virtue in the town square.[14]

What can we say about public speech in South Africa? It is very difficult to find and it is everywhere. In the midst of transition, it moves rapidly across time and space, both constituting and upsetting the grounds of interaction. It is an institutional event that invents the collective audience of politics and, simultaneously, a diffuse exchange over how to define the (representative) power of institutions in light of apartheid's impact on the terms and voice of private life. The question of who can speak publicly is a central theme of public speech, a pivot point of the debate over the force of history and its relevance in defining the collective good. This debate about the ends and means of debate is frequently bedevilled by an absence of clash. While one side is extremely reluctant to specify the conditions under which they are willing to admit being wrong, the other tends to assume that its counterpart has always had access to political power. As a result, there are few shared referents that establish the terms of "proper" engagement. Public speech is torn between the poles of absolute unity and abstract negation, with each side accusing the other of undermining the former with the latter. In different ways, everyone appears to sit both inside and outside the transition, offering competing interpretations of history past and history yet to be made. Evident especially when parties accuse one another of playing the race card, the invention of shared deliberative norms is thwarted as appeals to experience and identity are heard to recall or portend exclusion. Thus, the crucial question is whether the benefits and mechanics of public speech are rooted in a commitment to identification or whether they depend on the recovery and expression of identity. What is the appropriate play between unity and difference?

With this question, there is little doubt that South Africa is still working within logic of reconciliation and struggling to sort out its implications for transition. Let us say quite clearly: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was neither created

ex nihilo nor was it the product of a feel-good compromise. The Commission took shape on a landscape that has long featured calls for, performances, and debates over the value of reconciliation. Ironic in an unproductive way, western critics keen to evaluate how the TRC recovered history have all but refused to set its work in a historical context. For many years, reconciliation was nothing less than a mode of struggle, an immanent and practical critique of the theology that "justified" apartheid. Its quite a bit less than synthetic spirit supported constitutional reform by legitimising a mutual forgetting of historical animosity, a forgetting that the TRC was charged to oppose. In all cases, calls for reconciliation – and its practice – involved considerable speech about how to speak, how to turn justifications for violence towards shared oppositions that were themselves platforms and reasons for dialogue. The TRC was a counterpart to the constitutional negotiations as it provided a provided a literal and symbolic platform for recognition, a demonstration that all citizens can – in principle – take the stage and enter into the work of authoring law. A presentation of self endowed with formal constitutional rights, the counterpart to this work is the present public debate over how to define the form and content of such participation, its material prerequisites, and the ways in which it can and cannot craft unity in the midst of difference. Against the banal slogans that underwrite some forms of multiculturalism, the task is not about agreeing to disagree. Rather, it is an oppositional event, a moment in which public speech must (learn to) move between but not mediate identity claims and norms of identification. It is the moment when the potential for representation must be rendered actual in a contingent way. The controversies that presently surround this turn, the invention of a public tropology, do not indicate the failure of transition but its third phase, a time of beginning in which public speech must both presuppose and invent the time of politics.

What is public speech? The question is important in the transitions that both bring new democracies and energise old ones. It is a question that beckons a middle voice, placing us between a sign system and lived experience such that public speech-action renders us patient and inaugurates us as agent. The public speaker is individual and plural, an identity in the midst of a search for the grounds of identification. Both transitive and intransitive, publicity is constituted within its performance and entails the performativity of a (human and juridical) constitution (White 1992; Jay 1993). It is both a transmission of tradition and an invitation to history making. Thus, the public's middle voice entails both the loss and potential for agency. It is a weak messianic power, the grounds of beginning in which the present plays between past and future in the name of turning violence not to its opposite but toward opposition. In this work, public speech appears *as* it is *not*, less a hypothetical (as if) or fate (if then) than the capacity to make things otherwise.

In the *kairos* that brings the question of public speech to readability, there is a call to release identity, the need for a commitment to speak without the banister of self-certainty. It is a moment in which the weaker appears the better. In the relationships of the public's speech, this figure of the middle voice is represented by *ethos*, habits of character that form only in relation and which demand (thus, paradoxically) that invention and judgement proceed within the gift (risk) of self to other. In public politics, the "character issue" is squandered when it is left to devolve into the third term of the pollster driven horserace. It is less about finding and mapping the qualities of private life than seeing (and hearing) private life

come to speech in which it must risk its quality. More than a concern for the state of public opinion or the intention of a speaker, *ethos* is a mode of risk (not abandonment) in which the authority to speak in public or name the public's speech is both used and deferred. The rhetorical and dialectical elements of the *polis* are linked by *ethos* such that speech both constitutes the self and renders it contingent. In coming to the question of whether, how, and to what ends it works, the *ethos* of naming public speech is the productive negativity that appears between the self-expression that begins agency and the beginning that comes with self-objectification. It is what backs the turn in which the self finds power (potential) within Other. The *ethos* of public speech appears in a middle voice, a relationship between difference and unity, a transition that plays between violence, opposition, and agreement.

Faith in the works of words. Isn't this the "object" of our question? The matter of public speech presents questions that have regained importance in light of remarkable events that turned out to be far, far less the end of history than occasions for its making. In these beginnings, there is no *answer* to the question of what sits between unity and difference, no formula for expressions that bring one into the other. We can only run within a shadow of a doubt about their relationship. In South Africa, this work remains tied to reconciliation, speech about whether and how speech can turn violence toward oppositions that fashion grounds for agreement. The transition goes on, perhaps as it should, a potential for justice in the wake of atrocity, the cultivation of an *ethos* that sets voice between the times and strives for a mature democracy that does not foreclose the right of (re)invention.

Can we learn what public speech *is?* Publicity is a verb. Its contingent appearances demand a faith that the action of its speech endeavours to perform. In this way, the potential of public speech represents a transition, a movement toward actuality that does not transcend but carries its own negativity, a self-opposition to that which it strives to *be*. In its middle, public speech is the rhetorical question of what it means to build a politics within an open dialectic of reconciliation.

Notes:

1. The author acknowledges the Social Science Research Council and the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation for their generous support of this research.

2. There is a voluminous literature that addresses the dynamics and significance of reconciliation and the public struggle for recognition. See, for instance, Hegel 1961; Honneth 1997; Fraser 1992; and Tully 2000. For an account of why critical theory's account of reconciliation tends to skirt the rhetorical question of how speech moves between modes of transgressive opposition and consensual unity see Doxtader 2000.

3. Relevant to the nature of South Africa's transition, the allusion is to Benjamin's call for a conception of history that transforms the everyday "state of emergency" into the exception that contains the potential for action.

4. In other work (2001), I have started to develop this rhetorical history of reconciliation in South Africa, focusing specifically on how reconciliation develops over time and depends on rhetorical argumentation to open and structure temporal modes of transition.

5. See the essays by Barrell 2000 and Seepe 2000. For a more structural account of the administration's dilemmas see Lodge 1999 and Butler 2000. The media's criticism led to an interesting if not bizarre response from Mbeki's Head of Communications, Parks Mankahlana. In a series of responses, Mankahlana seemed to confirm critic's accusations that the administration was paranoid when he argued that Mbeki was faced with the "rise of national socialism disguised as a clamor for the president to pay special attention to some fictitious national or domestic concern" (2000). This interchange occurred at just about the same time as the

Democratic Party released and posted one of its slogans for the upcoming mid-term election: "ANC without Opposition Equals Zimbabwe."

6. This claim prefigures a longer essay that investigates the ways in which the phenomena of globalism and the field of "democratic consolidation" set transitional societies into a double bind, demanding that they promote public debate but then sanctioning discourse as it constitutes a "sign" of instability.

7. For his part, Leon responded to the address by claiming that "everyone who ever disagrees with President Thabo Mbeki and his government is a racist or an alleged self-hating black."

8. Kader Asmal's (1996) defence of reconciliation offers a detailed examination of the cost of apartheid and how it distorted human relationships and confined human being(s) to a "zoo of being."

9. Philippe-Joseph Salazar's recent work (2002) provides a vital analysis of the ways in which South Africa's deliberative democracy has been rhetorically constituted.

10. See Makhaye 2001b. Indeed, the problem seems much more complicated. The common claim that South Africa must "unlearn its past" stands for an asymmetrical process in which some must abandon the identity logic of apartheid in favor of learning how to create identifications. At the same time, others must recover their historical identities and bring their experience to expression. For examples of this call to somehow "unlearn," see Friedman 2001 and Ramphele 2001.

11. With all due respect, Mr. Uys' position stretches the limits of credibility, especially as it asks bizarrely but in all apparent seriousness, "What significant racism is left in South Africa (among whites) if not for the periodic outbreaks of brutality among (mostly rural) *bittereinders,* all of whom can be hauled before a court?"

12. The advertisement ran in the Johannesburg Star on May 6, 2001 under the title "The Media vs. President T.M. Mbeki."

13. See Kornegay and Lansberg 2001. There is an issue of representation embedded in these claims. By no means am I suggesting that all Whites in South Africa identify as Afrikaner or Afrikaans-speaking. For an analysis of so-called ANC domination of the South African political process see Giliomee (1999).

14. The terms of the argument parallel Mamdani's (1996) assessment of civil society.

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