Demonstrative Displays of Dissident Rhetoric

The Case of Prisoner 885/63

In 1994, South Africa became an inclusive democracy. That there is a democracy in South Africa is a testimony to political vision and perseverance in the struggle that overthrew apartheid. With most opposition leaders imprisoned and its citizens of color subjected to the harsh social, economic, and political realities of the Afrikaner regime, the odds were stacked against organizing a successful resistance movement; they were even greater against a spirit of truth and reconciliation prevailing should one succeed. But the movement did succeed, and a principal reason for its success was the instruction in political identity and organization that occurred in the least likely place, the state prison on Robben Island.

Robben Island is located eight miles to sea off the Cape Town coast. Its history as an exile for the damned dates to 1525, when a Portuguese ship reportedly left some prisoners there. Since then it has been the place of banishment for South Africa’s outcasts: the chronically ill, insane, lepers, and prisoners. By 1931 the chronically sick, insane, and lepers were no longer treated on the island and the sanitariums were burned to the ground, but the prison remained. The island itself is inhospitable: the waters surrounding it are frigid, the weather conditions tend toward the extremes, and its landscape is poorly suited for agriculture and offers only meaningless labor in its rock quarry.

Beginning in the early 1960s, Robben Island became the principal place of incarceration for political prisoners convicted of crimes growing out of their opposition to apartheid. Its population included most of the opposition leaders, Nelson Mandela among them. White prisoners were transferred to other facilities, leaving only black, common-law prisoners as inmates with the newly arriving politicals. The common-law prisoners had organized into rival gangs and, although segregated in lockup from the political prisoners, included them among their targets for intimidation, sexual assault, and physical brutality. The guards, who typically were uneducated and/or without prospects for professional advancement, were sadistic and racist. Their treachery included using the prison gangs to totalitarian its environment of terror. The island, in short, was a location in which South Africa’s racist structure was mirrored by the racial composition of the inmates and conduct of their warders.
Confronted by conditions so extreme that survival had to be each man's foremost concern, the political prisoners soon determined that they could not count on the state or the prison system to initiate humane reform and took it upon themselves to change the prison's culture. Were we to follow the panoptic theory of power set forth in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, we would predict their efforts were doomed to failure. Remarkably, however, they succeeded in transforming the prison from a culture of violence to one that recognized the prisoners' human dignity and from an environment in which physical survival was paramount to a "university of resistance." Their success is all the more interesting in that it challenges the Foucauldian position, which focuses on how the operations of power constitute subjects and their knowledge, by suggesting that resistance has its own productive capacity, that it is capable of both halting an oppressive power and constituting power of its own. We are led to ask, what made such a transformation possible?

Clearly, no single factor can account for it. My endeavor is to explore one facet that contributed to this success by initiating a changed consciousness within the prison of the political prisoners' identity: *demonstrative* aspects of political conscience in the political prisoners' displays of dissent. I will begin this exploration by considering a suggestive lead in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* regarding the rhetorical character of display that links it to demonstration. I will argue that the prison is an ironic potenit rhetorical site in which resistance is enacted through performances of vernacular rhetoric. The most potent of these vernacular resources is the political prisoner's body, which becomes the locus of a deadly political struggle with the state. Within prison, and to those observing from outside, displays of resistance function as a vernacular mode of epideictic in which "showing" may acquire the demonstrative power of irrefutable proof. Such public performances interrogate power in a way that denaturalizes its expressions as imposed by prison warders and induces in those who observe them, as it does in those who read about them, a fantasy, an imagined visualization, of political conscience. Their bodily resistance, in short, serves as an invention loci. It frames the terms of affiliation through graphic displays that transform the political prisoner's identity into a prisoner of conscience and demonstrate political commitments that conscience bequeaths its attending public not to abandon. I will use as my evidentiary basis for these considerations Inders Naidoo's memoir of his incarceration as a political prisoner in South Africa's facility on Robben Island, *Island in Chains.*

**Demonstrative Rhetoric and the Fantasia of Display**

In *Institutio Oratoria*, book 6, Quintilian takes up the topic of emotional appeals. In candor, he observes, a great many pleaders are capable at discovering arguments adequate to prove their points. While he does not "despire" such adequate arguments, he allows that their true function is to instruct pleaders of genuine eloquence in the facts of the case. The real work of the orator, and the place where a person earns distinction, is arousing the judges' emotions. Making strong proofs, he admits, will incline judges to think our case superior to our opponent's, but when we arouse their emotions, they will want it to be better. "And what they wish, they will also believe" (6.2.5). By this line, Quintilian is led to conclude that emotions more than reason lie at the heart of eloquence. "For it is in its power over the emotions that the life and soul of oratory is to be found" (6.2.7).

In Quintilian's opinion, the first requirement for stirring emotions in others is to feel them personally. We cannot counterfeit grief, anger, or indignation. These and other emotions arise from a certain disposition evoked when we suffer events of personal magnitude and consequence. How else, he wonders, can we explain the eloquence of mourners expressing their grief or the fluency of an unlettered person stirred to anger? These are sincere expressions of feelings, and they are powerfully moving. Consequently, if we wish to give our words the appearance of sincerity and move the judges to share them, we must first adapt ourselves to the emotional state of those whose emotions are genuinely felt.

We achieve this emotional simulacrum by a special experience, which the Greeks called *fantasia* (fantasia). Fantasia occurs when we imagine the absent persons and events so vividly that we respond as if they were before our very eyes.

"Shall I not bring before my eyes all the circumstances which it is reasonable to imagine must have occurred in such a connection? Shall I not see the assassin burst suddenly from his hiding-place, the victim tremble, cry for help, beg for mercy, or turn to run? Shall I not see the fatal blow delivered and the stricken body fall? Will not the blood, the deathly pallor, the groan of agony, the death-rattle, be indelibly impressed upon my mind?" (6.2.31)

This remarkable passage, juxtaposed against the orthodoxy of reasoned argument as legitimating public judgment, restates the force of rhetoric in emotions and our emotions in the undeniable evidence of what we see. And what do we see? Quintilian offers us a sensuous image of the embodied orator whose corporeal experience is authenticated by its individual immediacy. It is authenticated by the orator's verbal display of the physical scene and by a response of strong emotions.

Those who are most sensitive to these pasing impressions of lush imaginative representation will achieve the state of *energeia*. In this state we seem not to narrate, Quintilian says, but to exhibit. Our words acquire the immediacy of an eyewitness whose emotions are so actively stirred as to leave the audience with an indelible impression.

For oratory fails of its full effect, and does not assert itself as it should, if its appeal is merely to the hearing, and if the judge merely feels that the facts on which he has to give his decision are being narrated to him, and not displayed in their living truth to the eyes of the mind. (8.2.62)

*Energeia* is the source of sincere emotional expression, which, Quintilian insists, the orator is duty bound to perform on behalf of his client whose interests are at stake. The emotional state induced by witnessing the scene (energeia) is complemented by the stylistic quality that captures the energy of the action occurring in the scene. In book 8, Quintilian adds his voice to those of other leading Greek and Roman rhetoricians by instructing the incipient orator to infuse his verbal portraits with *energeia*, which "finds its peculiar function in securing that nothing that we say is tame" (8.3.89). The audience experiences powerful feelings not just by being told what took place, but by seeing in its details actions in agreement with nature. For this reason, the orator must strive for stylistic qualities in his depiction of the scene that capture *energeia*: energy or vigor through action that an actual observer would witness. "Fix your eyes on nature and follow her," he advises. "All eloquence is concerned with the activities of life, while every man applies to himself what he hears from others, and the mind is always ready to accept what it recognizes as true to nature" (8.3.71).
The Roman rhetorics, which inextricably link verba and actio, were exquisitely sensitive to the fact that action requires engagement of situated deeds and that audiences become engaged by such deeds when the issues they raise touch their lives. Life-engaging decisions, such as those enacted in the law courts and the forum, necessarily involved emotions. While an audience convulsed with emotion would be a public menace, sound judgment on practical conduct requires an ability to experience the pleasures and agonies occasioned by public and private relationships. The classical tradition's rendition of rhetoric as an architectonically productive art couples emotional and rational engagement as tandem necessities for sound public judgment. Quintilian's reference to the orator's duty suggests he thought emotional engagement was essential for a judge to ponder proportion between acts and consequences so that prudence might prevail and that such engagement requires rhetorical display.

The concern with display that Quintilian emphasized in his discussion of emotional engagement was not confined to matters of style. Roman rhetoricians also accorded it paramount importance in their discussions of epicletic oratory, in which they captured display aspects of this genre when they changed its name from "epideicic" to "demonstrative." This switch, seemingly reliant on a different sense of display than in the passages above, ultimately returns to its energizing/functional features in a way that is both informative of display's dynamis, or rhetorical power, as the Greeks expressed it, and bears on the evocative power of rhetorical displays by political prisoners we shall consider momentarily.

Harry Caplan expresses the traditional interpretation of this shift from "epideicic" to "demonstrative" in his translation of Rhetorica ad Herennium. In a note on epideicic, Caplan states:

The Greek term "epideicic" did not primarily emphasize the speaker's virtuosity, nor was the Latin equivalent demonstrativum intended to imply logical demonstra-
tion. Whereas in both deliberative and judicial causes the speaker seeks to persuade his hearers to a course of action, in epideicic his primary purpose is by means of his art to impress his ideas upon them, without action as a goal.4

Even if the Romans did not mean to imply that demonstrative oratory was logical demonstration, Richard McKeon makes the important point that the transformation of Greek philosophical method into a rhetorical form was nonetheless a significant change of focus on what counted as proof.5 Caplan's point about not confusing the shift from "epideicic" to "demonstrative" with scientific demonstration is well taken, but it also reminds us that the Romans considered "display oratory" as a special mode of proof.6

A transformative spirit is at work in two additional and related aspects of Roman rhetoric relevant to this discussion: the primacy of the audience's criteria over the foundational ones of metaphysics or epistemology as the standards for judgment, and the relationship of performance to rhetorical invention. These tandem innovations are illustrated by Cicero's permutation of Greek philosophical categories, particularly Aristotle's, in his consideration of loci as an extension of Aristotle's topical theory.

Aristotle developed his theory of dialectical discourse, set forth primarily in his Topica and Categories, on an a priori system of first principles to which all possible meaningful statements had to conform. Cicero's appropriation of Aristotle's theory replaced its metaphysical foundations with the primacy of rhetorical experience. Cicero regarded rhetorical experience as culminating in the audience's determination of a claim's truth status based on whether it withstood the test of argumentation.8 His Topica transformed Aristotle's dialectical system of topoi into a rhetorized system of loci suited to analyze the needs of practical affairs or the conduct of public business that sought audience ascent.11

By replacing metaphysical assumptions with the rhetorical act of gaining audience ascent as the basis for knowledge and truth, Cicero captured the importance of loci for rhetorical invention in practical affairs and in philosophical systems. By this shift, Cicero also linked the invetional moment to enacted performance conducted in concert with the audience (actio), as well as to prior preparation.13

Cicero's emphasis on the primacy of the audience's judgment brings us back to Quintilian on emotions. The demonstrative speech was concerned with honor, a public virtue exhibited by deeds worthy of praise and emulation. Praise always pursues a double objective: to recognize the personal virtue of the extolled, which commands the honor that is their due, and to impart the civic lessons their lives exemplify to a public called upon to witness the honor being bestowed upon them.15 The rhetor's challenge was to awaken the community's desire to live its public life in ways that endorsed the values for which the extolled person stood, if not emulate this person's exemplary qualities. The orator did not inspire admiration and emulation by reasoning about past deeds but by exhibiting them. The same means that Quintilian argued were necessary to make the judges believe were equally the rhetorical means deployed to exhibit public virtue and, thereby, to offer a rhetorical form of demonstration. But there is more.

Quintilian's account attributes the invention of the most powerful appeals to an internal state of fantasy. Fantasia is equally operative as an audience's inherent prompt to discourse that relies on a narrative of deeds to support claims of praise and offer instruction on how to live a virtuous public life. As Nicole Loraux's study of funeral orations shows, Athenian's understanding of their city was a rhetorical invention, a fantasy of the social imaginary constructed through the epideicic form.19 Depictions of deeds extolled and condemned move us beyond abstractions. They teach us how to live our lives by bringing the scene before our mind's eye; they make us witnesses in our imaginations to acts that require our affirmation or condemnation for them to live in collective memory as concrete realities. The community teaches its citizens that courage is a virtue through the rhetori-
cally constructed fantasy of seeing brave deeds performed. Such displays demonstrate, through their imagined showing, both what we mean by bravery and that the honored citi-
zens were brave. Our collective understanding of both the praiseworthy deeds and their call for a common response is evoked by the fantasy of our collective seeing. By this simu-
lacrum in the collective imaginary we also witness a demonstration of sorts that has the force of rhetorical certainty—a symbolically constituted reality.

The rhetorical reflection that moves demonstration from a claim of knowledge to one of understanding cuts across the grain of general scholarly usage. The academy's perspective is predisposed to understand "demonstration" as referring to mathematical, logical, or scientific arguments that purportedly prove conclusions to a level of certainty that defies reasoned rebuttal. The history of science and of logic is replete with exceptions to that view. To take a famous example, the Holy Office of the Inquisition's response to Galileo's Dialogue, printed in 1633, shows that the logical derivation of purportedly certain claims to knowledge can be challenged by changing the axioms on which demonstration of the
claim's truth must rest. Even among scientists, one scholar's demonstration has been grist for another's refutation. René Descartes, for example, writing in the same century as Galileo, used a geometric model of deductive reasoning to establish his philosophical system as a basis of certain knowledge and scientific method, only to have it refuted by the empiricists, most notably Sir Isaac Newton, who turned his system on its head to establish a new observational basis for scientific proof. In either case, the linkage of "demonstration" with display of logical or observational grounds for "proving" displaced all association of the concept with rhetorical displays that called upon audiences to imagine and thereby witness actions that exhibited incontestable qualities of virtuous conduct that, in turn, bound them together in civic community.

The instability of demonstration as a concept and a reasoning practice is underscored further by the street rhetoric that became a staple for dissident displays of political disaffection during the twentieth century. Mesmerizing performances of pageants and spectacles and displays of mass demonstration, so much a part of contemporary, mass-mediated culture, are not unique to our time. The ubiquity of mass media representations has simply made us more conscious of, if not more critically reflective about, iconic representations and the vernacular rhetoric of street-level displays occurring beyond the halls of power. Such displays of political sentiment transform the ancient rhetorical practice of exhibiting communal values through demonstrative oratory to political demonstrations that carry the aura of self-evidence. The bridge from the Roman transformation of a rhetorical genre into a special mode of proving to political demonstrations in the street speaks the long history of rhetorical performance based on the fantasy of "seeing is believing." As Graham Nash extolled Americans through song during the tumult of the celebrated Chicago Seven trial, they could "change the world, rearrange the world" if they would simply "come to Chicago." These performances, enacted as if they conveyed social truths, underscore important conclusions about demonstrative rhetoric and the fantasy of display that are relevant to the discourse and action of dissident rhetoric. First, the demonstrations of rhetorical performances parallel qualities inherent in the demonstrations of logical and scientific "proving." Both purportedly are grounded, as Quintilian noted, "in the nature of the object with which they are concerned." Both also induce commitment through "showing" or "exhibiting"; the rhetorical demonstration exhibits in discourse or action virtues or vicious qualities of conduct that invite communal recognition and judgment; in comparison, the logical demonstration exhibits all the proof's elements that, in turn, inescapably yield the conclusion, and the scientific demonstration exhibits the necessary procedural elements that, in turn, foster reliable observation. Finally, each also makes claims that follow from purportedly irrefutable premises: rhetorical demonstrations possess an air of moral certainty that parallels (1) the logical certainty inherent to proofs that work consistently from accepted premises to claims in accord with formal rules of reasoning, as well as (2) the scientific certainty inherent in the presumption that whatever one is trained to observe and see is empirically real.

Second, rhetorical displays also demonstrate in one or both of two ways. Rhetorical performance can be enacted before an immediate audience with all the added persuasive power implied by the presumption that "seeing is believing." Often, however, rhetorical performances must be reenactments of actions or events that the audience did not immediately witness. In that case, rhetorical displays must marshal verbal and formal resources that induce the audience to undergo the fantasy of imagined seeing. The fantasy of seeing, in which the audience is brought into the emotional ambit of eyewitnesses, then carries the demonstrative force of self-evident, valid proving.

These considerations are especially relevant to dissident rhetoric. As numerous demonstrations protesting wars, denial of civil rights, policies contributing to degradation of the planet's ecology, and the like illustrate, displays of dissent arguably are as influential as official rhetoric in shaping public opinion, informing social judgment, and consolidating social will. For these rhetorical performances to exercise influence, they must organize social knowledge within a dialectic between official authority and moral conviction that makes displays of values and aspirations, as well as their disparity with lived realities, appear self-evident. At the same time, the reality of power differentials also requires that rhetorical displays of disidence serve as a wedge to open the possibility of negotiation with the adversary. Dissident rhetoric, we shall see, not only calls upon the persuasive powers of demonstration, whether before immediate or indirect audiences, but also requires a distinctive kind of rhetorical locus to generate rhetorical displays that can do so.

The Political Prisoner as Rhetorical Locus of Political Conscience

Political prisoners occupy a unique rhetorical position. They are unlike common felons in that their incarceration grows from the threat of their ideas. Often they have broken no law save the unspoken prohibition against disagreement with a totalitarian power. When their legal violations do involve acts of violence, they stem from embracing ideas at odds with the existing order. Their ability to display an alternative political vision to the existing order can be so compelling, as recent history has demonstrated, that repressive regimes remain willing to liquidate leading dissidents and even entire ethnic groups with genocidal fervor. The most recent report of Human Rights Watch cites such abuses on every continent, often with the eyes of world leaders averted when their national interests seem to warrant.

Removing dissidents from society makes the calculated wager that once they are off the public stage they will be forgotten and, if their treatment is horrendous enough, quite possibly they will recant. Consequently, repressive regimes remain willing to take their chances at success in forcing the opposition to be silent. However, this wager is not without risk. The impulse toward a pogrom can be checked in cases where the opposition has made effective use of the publicity principle and its enemy status is defined less on group identity than ideological differences. There prudence dictates that mere incarceration may suffice. Against the risk that the political prisoner will quicken public imagination as a symbol of the state's alien ethos, the regime calculates that removal from public view will toll the dissident's political death knell and possibly deliver a mortal blow to the ideas for which he or she stands. For those still on the streets, the regime banks on intimidation forcing them to avoid the kinds of overt acts that will bring them to the same fate, as the former Soviet Union's practice of show trials grimly testifies. Without public displays of disaffection and alternative visions of the political order, the bet is that opposition politics will disintegrate or, at worst, go underground.

Underground resistance may breed disaffection, but without the remedy of leading dissident voices, disaffection often succumbs to the toxicity of cynicism, itself a form of display, albeit unlikely to captivate public understanding or overpower the existing order's
The particular case I wish to examine in light of the foregoing is the prison memoir of 
Indren Naidoo recounting his experiences in Robben Island Prison. Naidoo was one of the 
first volunteers for the armed wing of the African National Congress (ANC), Umkhonto we 
Sivwe (Spear of the Nation). He fell victim to a trap in which he was caught bombing a rifle-
road signal box on the outskirts of Johannesburg. He was tried and convicted of sabotage 
in 1963 and sentenced to a ten-year term prison to be served at Robben Island. 
After he completed his sentence, Naidoo was virtually banned from further involve-
ment in South African politics; he was under house arrest weekends and evenings and for-
bidden to have contact with ANC members or to make public statements regarding his 
imprisonment. Still he used word of mouth to spread information about conditions on 
Robben Island and the continued resistance of the political prisoners there. These stories 
linked ongoing events, such as the uprisings in Soweto, to the larger political movement that 
Robben Island’s political prisoners were struggling to keep alive. He finally determined, 
however, that he had to leave South Africa in order to give greater publicity to the ANC 
cause and keep the resistance movement alive on Robben Island. With the help of Albie 
Sach, a lawyer who was also a noted dissident and prison writer banned from South 
Africa, Naidoo tells his story as prisoner 883/63 in his book Island in Chains.29 
Naidoo’s rhetorical burden was imposed by the leadership of the ANC prisoners, which 
charged released prisoners to publicize conditions in the prison so that others in South 
Africa and beyond would learn of the brutal conditions there and of their continued resis-
tance. He keeps faith with those still in the prison by providing a first-person account of 
his treatment. On the surface, the memoir seems reportorial, even anecdotal, by contrast 
to the writing of noted resistance leaders who faced the rhetorical challenge of explaining 
their movement’s political agenda or of overtly confronting the state it opposed. Conse-
quently his memoir lacks Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s analytical incision, Martin Luther King’s 
argumentative dexterity, Adam Michnik’s eye for political irony, Fleeta Drumgo’s unre-
strained political invective, Jacobo Timmerman’s skill at constructing an etiology of tor-
ture, Irena Ratushinskaya’s dialogical facility, Nelson Mandela’s political vision, or Václav 
Havel’s capacity to reflect on the deeper significance of his warders’ ordinary acts of dehu-
umanization.30 
If Island in Chains is not marked by closely reasoned argument, neither is it mere 
reportage. Its serial displays of confrontation between sadistic practices that deny human 
worth and resistance that affirms human dignity construct an emotionally evocative pre-
sentation.29 Naidoo brings his readers into the prison’s world of moral and mortal political 
struggle during the decade from 1963 to 1973—a time of horrific treatment that the pris-
oners managed, eventually, to reverse—by making them eyewitnesses to its concrete, phe-
nomenological manifestations. Even seemingly quotidian episodes in which prisoners 
exchange contraband, hide and circulate newspapers, or seek medical assistance for ailing 
comrades become displays of resistance and assertions of self-worth. At its heart, however, 
stands the prisoner’s body as a contested rhetorical locus that the prison authorities at-
tempt to control and mute and from which prisoners struggle to enact rhetorical displays of 
self-worth through defiant acts of civility and deception.

Prison and the Struggle for Rhetorical Place

The prison system arranges space and time in ways that suppress opportunities to enact 
rhetorical displays of political conscience. This is demonstrated in both the organizational
structure and the substance of Naidoo's narrative. Both show how prisoners of conscience must struggle to overcome powerful obstacles in finding a locus from which to enact a political conscience.

*Island in Chains* is organized into three parts: the trip to the island; the island, which is itself demarcated into two phases of chains bound and chains loosened; and the trip from the island. The first and third parts are organized as coherent stories. The trip to the island tells of his crime and arrest, horrific treatment by the police, trial and conviction, and journey across South Africa to the penal facility on Robben Island. Each of its episodes bears a narrative relationship to what preceded and what follows. The trip from the island details his final appearance before the parole board, the conditions of his release, the boat trip from the island, and his reunion with his family.

The island itself, which forms the center of the book and is the defining space for Naidoo's account of his time in prison, is organized differently. It consists of a series of disconnected episodes. Each is self-contained, and, in most instances, its order of appearance could be altered without discernable consequence to the narrative integrity of the whole. There is no apparent plot that organizes episodes or informs characters. There is no sense of temporal progression with a past or future or with a time frame that brackets episodes. Dates simply are not mentioned; calendar time is irrelevant. Its episodes are vignettes, illuminating in themselves as stories of conflict with unreasonable authorities and ignorant warders, of repetitive and meaningless activity, and of small acts to sustain community among the damned. At the same time, these small acts that inform us about the political prisoners' daily realities acquire added meaning as they are fitted into an account of resistance. Each is a vernacular rhetorical act, an evocation that appeals in ways other than the discourse of official forums but that is grasped and internalized by a people sympathetic to the individualization of each prisoner's pain. On its own, each quotidian act might be regarded as a form of 'gentle violence' in its insistence on solidarity from the other prisoners to resist the regime of terror inside the prison. Within the frame of bodies under assault, however, their dynamism is anything but gentle. Each encounter with the warders becomes a condensed expression of the national struggle, a synecdoche that, by concentrating a people's struggle in the besieged prisoner's body, releases uncommon energies.

From the moment they entered the penal system, South Africa's political prisoners experienced its world of regulation and control. As with the common prisoner, each one's sentence established an official chronotope through its terms of space and time that tempered any and all of the prisoner's daily negotiations with power. For political prisoners this negotiation was complicated by an ever-present awareness, shared with the authorities, that the isolation of prison remained outward looking: although removed from society's normal places of civic and private concourse, the political prisoners never relinquished hope of engaging its consciousness. Consequently, the authorities did whatever they could to isolate the political from the outside world. They were denied newspapers, radios, or other means for learning of outside events. Their communication privileges of mail and visitors were limited and often abridged. The chronotope of each political's sentence was meant to sever any connection to an externally inhabited local place and historic time that might have reinforced the meaning of resistance by harboring an alternative understanding to the official chronotope of the prison.

They also experienced the common prisoner's reality of bodily insufficiency. They worked, slept, ate, and relaxed in a world of systematic control and ubiquitous observation. Movement was confined to the cell, the latrine, the mess hall, the prison yard, the workshop. When they passed beyond the prison walls, it was to march to the quarry, where labor was hard and dangerous. There was no personal space under their control, no privacy from the other's gaze. Unlike common prisoners, most political were housed in common cells holding at various times from forty to eighty men. These conditions prohibited even the illusion of privacy. Nor could they escape the prison's unceasing noise. Even visitation, we learn, occurred in a space constructed to maximize noise and frustrate the consolation of communicating with loved ones. For South Africa's political prisoners, entering the penal system also meant entering a regime of systematic humiliation and terror. They were vulnerable to the caprice of another who subjected them to physical and psychological abuse and used the prison's public spaces as arenas for displays of authority.

Put otherwise, beyond the physical and temporal arrangements of prisons, the spatialization of the penal system includes its historically conditioned spatiotemporal patterns of social action and routine reflecting a vision of a social world. Robben Island Prison, as a specific place, refers not simply to a geographical location but to the dialectical relationship between its environment and the human narratives that occurred there. Its narratives were conditioned by a chronotope of degradation that denied prisoners access to a rhetorical place, an inviolable location from which to argue back.

This helps to explain how, in facilities like Robben Island, those with power are able to subject other humans to monstrous forms of brutality so stunning that we can only wonder at their human possibility. Studies of Nazi death camps find that a regime based on inflicting pain requires a system of depersonalization that fits the prisoner's body into narratives of the subhuman. The prison must strip the individual prisoner of individuality, otherwise the guards have difficulty executing barbaric tasks that transgress the moral boundaries for respecting human dignity. Bodies are routinely stripped, which is not the way humans present themselves in public. We tend not to congregate with other naked bodies, reserving our nakedness for the restricted place and gaze of privacy. Bodies are assembled in masse. Naked, they appear as herds of animals, not individual persons. Bodies are starved to the point where they eat like animals, some driven to scavenging for extra morsels of food. Prisoners are stripped of their names, which communicate individual identities with personalities, histories, and agency, and given numbers, which reduce them to ledger entries. They are required to live in their own filth, so that their cells come to resemble pens of livestock unable to keep themselves clean. Guards do not engage them in face-to-face interaction, which would require recognizing them as individuals and persons able to be conversational partners. Such tacit recognition of the other's humanity would impose limits making it more difficult later when called upon to administer bodily abuse. Language barriers also serve as a mode of depersonalization, since they make it difficult for prisoners to communicate individual thoughts, feelings, needs, or responses to their warders and reduce them to following set commands, much as animals.

Bodily displays of this sort can function as a deceptive form of inducement to an attitude of exclusion—a mishapen but extremely effective energetic of sorts. Naidoo's account exhibits each of these depersonalizing modes on Robben Island and how the prisoners' resisting bodies reframe their warders' acts. Against the overwhelming physical power of the prison, their bodies became symbolic means for inventing power vectors within the prison. In circumstances that appeared to preclude debating political ideals, their physical treatment became an extension of the dialectic between the political prisoners and a racist
regime. Their political identity framed their bodies so that each physical interaction was in some measure a statement of an alternative vision of the body politic. Their resisting bodies were, in this sense, a rhetorical locus from which to assert their personhood in the face of dehumanizing and depersonalizing treatment. Each mistreatment intended as a display of power could be read as a self-indicting response by the authorities and the state they represented to the dialogizing of the Afrikaner regime by the prisoners’ bodies and their implied national alternative of South Africa as a multiracial place. We should linger a moment on the first part of Naidoo’s story, then, because it alerts us to the commitments of the Afrikaner state that led to a regime of terror inside the prison. It also marks the start of Naidoo’s journey from a political prisoner fearful for his life to a prisoner of conscience determined to resist his oppressors.

Naidoo’s opening account of his arrest and interrogation is a ghastly and graphic display of physical and psychological torture that begins with his arrest (15–26). The police had been informed of the attempted midnight sabotage of a railroad signal box by Naidoo and two comrades and captured them in the act of committing their crime. Naidoo was shot attempting to flee, but he tells us this did not stop the police from hitting him with their rifle butts. After receiving medical attention to remove the bullet, the police refused to let him be hospitalized, as the doctor had ordered, and instead took him to the interrogation center. He recounts hearing his comrades’ screams of agony and cries for mercy as he waited to be questioned. When they emerged with faces disfigured beyond recognition, he was fixed by heightened dread, knowing he will be next.

He recalls being led into the interrogation room, where he counted twelve to fifteen police officers. Naidoo and his accomplices had concluded that Gammat Jardien, the person who had trained them, suggested the target, and supplied the dynamite, had laid their trap. When the interrogator asked who was in charge of the operation, he gave them Jardien. He describes how the police fell on him, punching and kicking until he cried with pain. When asked if he was going to make a statement, he kept repeating, “Ask Jardien, he knows everything.”

People came and went. Naidoo lost track of who was in the room. The torture continued, and, to assure the reader that these were not rogue cops, he notes that the authorities in charge knew what was going on. Since they did not put a stop to it, apparently they approved.

Next a wet canvas bag was placed over his head, and his tormentors started squeezing its knot and choking him. “I gasped for air, and every time I breathed in, the canvas hit me in my face. I was choking, my nostrils and mouth were blocked by the wet canvas; the harder I tried to get air into my lungs, the tighter the bag clamped over me, cutting off the air, preventing my lungs from working.” The police laughed and told him he was going to die that day. He recalls struggling and thrashing on the verge of unconsciousness from suffocation. There was more police laughter. “The bag was released and I swallowed air desperately, but then the canvas slapped into my mouth and once more I started to choke, my body in a total panic.” After nearly suffocating him, they removed his shoes and beat the soles of his feet with a rubber baton. He lost sense of time in the shock waves screaming up his legs. Then they pinned him and attached wires to his body. He recalls seeing the wires leading from his body to a dry cell battery, the wires being attached, “and as they attached the lead to the battery I felt a dreadful shock pass into my body. My whole being seemed to

be in shock—I learned afterwards that it was only for a few seconds, but at the time it seemed like five or ten minutes." All the while he screamed, “It’s Gammat Jardien . . . Ask Gammat Jardien. Gammat Jardien knows everything.” But the shock torture continued, convulsing every particle of his body. “I kept on screaming to them, begging, pleading with them to stop, but the more I cried the more they went on applying the shocks.”

Finally, the torture ended. As an exercise of political power, torture has value only if it produces a confession that serves a larger political purpose. Killing Naidoo without securing his betrayal of the ANC movement would turn him into a martyr. It also would expose the cause of his death to public scrutiny in the wider courts of opinion and the judicial system. Having failed to crack his body, Naidoo tells us they went to work on his mind.

He says the police told him the others had given a full statement, his comrades had sold him out, he was a fool to resist. Then Lt. Steenkamp, head of the Natal Security Branch, interrogated him and offered Naidoo a deal for his cooperation:

“Listen, man,” he said confidently, “we can get you off if you cooperate; you know the maximum penalty for sabotage is death, and the prosecution will ask for the death sentence in this case—you were caught red-handed. I’m a personal friend of Balthazar; I play golf with him every Wednesday”—he was referring to Vorster [head of the prison system]—“We can send you anywhere in the country, give you money, buy you a car, buy you a house—you’re a young man, twenty-six, you’re still got a long way to go; we can send you out of the country, we have many friends overseas. What do you say?”

Without overtly depicting his effort as heroic or his body as politically inscribed, Naidoo’s account of his arrest and interrogation brings his reader to a very dark place in human conduct. We become as witnesses to willing acts of dehumanization that are self-incriminations of the regime’s moral economy while simultaneously underscoring his manifest threat to the Afrikaner order, to its way of life, to its power. Meanwhile, Naidoo does not present himself as posing a threat but as a victim of monstrous acts of cruelty who is struggling for survival. Since we are not told whether he knew more than the identity of his betrayer, we have only his palpable, consuming terror in the face of his torment to judge his responses. His ordeal reminds us not to be judgmental of those who surrender. In Tavetan Todoro’s words, “. . . each victim stands alone and thus powerless before an infinitely superior force.” It also italicizes the prisoner’s body as a contested site and source of political meaning with implications for the rhetoric of display.

Since his body is no longer under his own control, the torture inscribes his person as not just embodied but as a public place: a contested site, a political place, with multilocality (the location of his body is many different places at the same time) and multivocality (in each place we may hear many different voices) of empowerment and disempowerment—of the state, the police, the ANC, Unkhonto we Sizwe, South Africa, and Naidoo himself. Its concreteness as a place opens his embodied person to interpretation as a rhetorical construction. More important for Naidoo’s story, these ontological conditions of place provide an enriched sense of his embodied person as a rhetorical place, a locus of invention possibility.

Naidoo’s account of his physical and psychological torture thus prefigures Robben Island and the larger struggle in which he is engaged: the dialectic of the state’s raw power
pitted against the frailties of the individual prisoner. This dialectic is particularized in the spatialization of the prison as an institution and in the body of the political prisoner. His opening depiction as defenseless, isolated, outnumbered, and overwhelmed leaves us without a sense of him as a challenger of the Afrikaner regime. We wonder how he will be able to survive what lies ahead and remain true to his political convictions. Immediately after his sentencing our question is answered, as he joins the struggle for his body as the place of battle and a locus for political conscience.

**Rhetorical Display and the Timely Enactment of Political Conscience**

The hard realities of South Africa’s prisons made them a regime of katora moments to display white supremacy and conscious choice. Each concrete episode, complete unto itself, was a revelation of the warders’ menace and the prisoners’ resistance. The meaning of resistance did not come from publicists outside the prison—there was little opportunity to reach the outside—but from bodily expressions of conscious commitments performed before other prisoners and the guards themselves.

Upon arrival at their first installation on the way to Robben Island, a prison outside Johannesburg called the Fort, Naidoo details how the prisoners were marched into the prison yard and ordered to strip. The guards mocked their naked bodies, prodded them with their batons, flicked their straps in the prisoners’ faces, coming as close to their eyes as possible, and hurled racial insults at them. They were then given the command, *Tausa* ("Dance"). The guards were ordering the naked prisoner to leap in the air and spin while opening his legs and clapping his hands overhead. He was to land making a clicking sound with his mouth, legs apart and body bent forward to expose an open rectum to the guard’s inspection (31). Naidoo recounts this initiating moment as a line the political prisoners were unwilling to cross.

By performing the *tausa*, the prisoner became an obligatory participant in his own ritualized humiliation, enacted in public before affirming witnesses who also saw it as an assertion of their superiority. But the *tausa* also was a ripe invention place for demonstrative performance of honor and dishonor, which the prisoners seized when they refused the command. The seriousness of resisting bodies as a locus for enacting a challenge of political conscience to the prison’s authority became apparent when the guards then escalated their act of conscience into a carnal chase.

The white warders moved away, leaving us to the mercy of the black warders, saying that we were the ones who had tried to blow up a train of black workers. *Kierekop* (sticks with heavy round knots at the top) flashed around us as the black warders chased us from one part of the yard to the other, threatening to beat the life out of us. We just ran and ran, exhausted and humiliated, knowing that our sentence had just begun (31).

The humiliation of the first day was repeated in countless ways as the prisoners were moved across the country on their journey to Robben Island. Naidoo recounts how the authorities gave them ripped clothes that did not fit, put them into frigid cells without sufficient blankets to retain body heat, shaved their heads, insulted them, poked them with their batons and tripped them as they ran during periods of forced exercise, served meager portions of inedible and unweighing food or denied them food out of caprice, subjected them to physically exhausting labor and beat them when they showed signs of fatigue, and each afternoon upon returning to the prison yard from their work detail subjected them to a strip search.

We were running upon, our clothes in our arms: a thousand of us streaming across a yard to place the clothes in a pigeon-hole, then racing, the cold air beating against our skins, to a door containing a metal detector, leaping through the doorway one after the other, and then grabbing the first set of clothes we saw in a pigeon-hole on the other side, irrespective of who had worn it the previous day dressing as we ran, ducking blows and hearing insults as we sped towards the kitchen, grabbing a plate of food from prisoners handing out the evening meal—worried that if we missed we would go without food (45).

Naidoo’s story continues episodically without any apparent organizing plot. In the penal system’s life-world, it seems, there are only experiences. Each experience, however, contains competing displays of *energia*: the warders using the spectacle of overt violence to control the prisoners’ bodies as a demonstration of white supremacy; the prisoners responding with the gentle violence of mundane acts of resistance as a demonstration of their human dignity. The journey to Robben Island fades as Naidoo’s organizing device, as the *energia* of the prisoners’ experiences is translated into the *energia* of verbal displays of the penal system itself. We are made witness to encounters that demonstrate how the ideology of white supremacy controls the penal system’s steering mechanism and constrains the prisoners’ apparent options. Its system logic, in which space is constricted to maximize control and temporal progression is replaced by episodic moments of humiliation, does not beckon heroic deeds; it dictates calculating each act for its survival value.

Finally Naidoo reaches Robben Island. He tells us that upon arrival the new prisoners were taken to the yard where they were forced to stand spread-eagle while the white warders subjected them to a humiliating hand frisk. The prisoners were further objectified when the guards insisted they be addressed only in Afrikaans. Insisting on Afrikaans was part of the mortification process to strip the prisoner of his sense of self. The language divide between warder and prisoner marked the initiate prisoner as lacking an essential human capacity to communicate. When Naidoo addressed a young guard in English, protesting that he did not speak Afrikaans, the guard ridiculed his use of English (which he could not speak). Mocking treatment of the initiate’s English further marked him as a barbarian, not a person. When Naidoo continued to correct the guard for referring to the prisoners as “cooies” while persistently referring to the warder as “sir,” the head warden was called to set Naidoo straight.

“If you know what’s fucking good for you [said the head warden], you will learn to speak Afrikaans bloody fast. Most of my warders don’t speak English and what’s more you must remember to address them as Basta. There’s no ‘Sir’ on the Island, only Basta” (66).

The warders’ insistence on being called basta (boss) was particularly demeaning because it insured the prisoner as a slave, subject to the power of his masters. If the depersonalized prisoner was only a slave, then what was to prevent his masters from treating him as an animal?
Naidoo, on the other hand, was not responding as an animal. His refusal to code shift for his guards was an act of defiance. His use of *sir* instead of *basha* refused to concede resignation, submission, or an unmitigated terror at the consequences for not acknowledging white supremacy. Moreover, his defiance, expressed through respectful speech, evoked telling crudeness from the guard and celebration of his own ignorance. For readers outside the Afrikaner's life-world, Naidoo's display of civility and linguistic skill reverses the roles of power by interrogating the limited horizon of his guards and demonstrating a conscience that insisted on being treated as a human being.

There is power of another sort present in this exchange—the power of gentle violence to transform overt violence. Repeated acts of civility toward the guards were a strategy to transform the riot of Robben Island Prison into a facility that respected the human dignity of the prisoners. As a first step toward this transformation, the ANC prisoners insisted on maintaining civility in their forms of address and response to the guards and insisted, as far as possible, that the guards do the same. Initially, polite speech may have been received as antagonistic, but over time its interrogation of the guards' limited horizons, it was hoped, would calm their threshold for inflicting pain.

After recounting this initiating exchange, the next day finds Naidoo commencing his sentence of forced labor at the lime quarry. He was to spend the next ten years of his life in the meaningless activity of crushing rocks. He recorded more beatings, more strip searches, the stench and mess of overflowing slop pots that made every confining moment in their cells a debasing misery, systematic degradation such as a prisoner buried up to his neck in the scorching sun for complaining about the extremity of that day's labor and later having his warder urinate on his face while taunting his thirst, medical neglect, refusal to acknowledge any communication not expressed in Afrikaans, and unrelenting insults to bodies in psychological and physical pain.

Naidoo's account is a relentless report of how the prison quotidien of language, oppressive work conditions, unreasonable orders, unenriching food, physical and psychological abuse, and more defines torture and terror in small statements magnified by the conditions of repetition and idiemics that, at the same time, fuel the counter chronotope of resistance. As time condenses to fit the confined and confining space of Robben Island, days, months, years flow together with no temporal referent beyond the episodes themselves. Each brings out the pointless cruelty of a world constructed to discipline and punish bodies that were neither difficult to handle nor overtly challenging the authority of the prison system.

Naidoo's account also displays a different organizational principle than the panoptic chronotope of discipline and punish. Public spaces dominated by a regime whose rule is enforced by armed guards are ill suited for deliberating prevailing conditions. As James Scott argues, under these conditions the subjugated counter the public transcript, recording who is in charge and the rules in play, with the hidden transcript of resistance constructed off stage. In prison, where the idiemics of prison time intensifies small things, clandestine conversations, private expressions of resentment, pilfering, sharing contraband, disseminating information, violating small rules, songs of identity and protest, speaking in one's native tongue, and so forth find their place—their invention—in the larger context of political objectives. Every day on Robben Island provided its *kritnis* moments to exert the responding gentle violence of such mundane resistance. On a daily basis, conduct in public places may have been guided by the Ethiopian proverb "When the great lord passes the wise peasant bows deeply and silently farts." However, the cumulative indignities suffered in silence and recorded in the hidden transcript built pressure behind commitments of resistance seeking release.

Through a miscellany of such episodes, *Island in Chains* constructs Naidoo as a fundamentally decent man with engaging thoughts, feelings, values, and political convictions and whose organizing principle is not the prison but his own body. True, Robben Island is the site where his prison experiences occur. However the experiences themselves are developed through displays of physical and psychological resistance. In a world in which warders respond to arguments with logical absurdities, his body becomes his most effective means for making statements and counterstatements that cannot be ignored. Consequently, when his body resists the injustices of his warders, it is not merely bodily display that we witness. This is a person known to us; his identity is fused with his political values. This fusion gives his body uncommon power as a fantasy of political conscience.

**Fantasia and the Dialogue of Dignity**

Naidoo's writing is doubly inscribed, reporting the episodes to which prisoners and prison personnel actually present were witness and presenting these scenes to us as readers. The treatment of prisoners is never fully visual in the sense of being open to documentation and sight. This is especially true of political prisoners, whose treatment often is fabricated in documents that deny their complaints or forge accounts of their treatment and that control the perceptions of external observers by steering them from the areas of harsh treatment. Naidoo's account brings us into this world in a way that we might read as a report of what took place so that we might understand. It also brings the scene before our eyes in a way that invents Robben Island as a locale of incarceration and as a domain of conflict between political ideals. This fantasia is most pronounced at moments in which gentle violence will not work, including moments of political spectacle.

Perhaps the most poignant of these, and illustrative of this double inscription, is Naidoo's response to being publicly whipped (120-26). He tells us the prisoners had been ordered to enter barefoot a stagnant pool of water polluted with slime and dead seagulls and whose bottom consisted of jagged stone. Naidoo refused and defended his action with a reasoned defense based on the necessary conditions for an order to be valid. He was told his reason had no place in Robben Island's world. His only course was to follow orders blindly, and he was found guilty of insubordination. His punishment was to receive four lashes with a bamboo cane.

Whippings were ritualized events. They took place in the hospital courtyard every Tuesday and Thursday. Naidoo's account offers a moving fantasy of his ordeal and demonstration of political conscience. He tells us that as he was brought into the courtyard he noticed the warder who was to whip him holding a six-foot-long bamboo cane, the hospital physician, three or four prison officials, and twenty or thirty guards. "I heard the burly chief warder saying . . . that he was going to kill me that day, and that I would have scars for the rest of my life. He kept boasting about how efficient he was . . . and the other warders egged him on, almost hysterical with excitement." He was stripped naked and strapped to a wooden frame called the "whipping Mary."
superiority. By rupturing the prison's surface of authority, Naidoo's challenge to the governing principle of "might makes right" renders his bodily display of self-possession an act of war, an aggression of spirit that reframes internal affairs between these prisoners and their warders as a power struggle in which the prisoners are not lacking resources.

Reading such deep consequences into Naidoo's refusal to break during the public caning is warranted by his narrative, which continues to develop a story of prisoner solidarity that leads to victories, however ephemeral, in the prisoners' struggle to realign the power vectors within the prison. It also suggests the need to revise my earlier characterization of Island in Chains as apparently lacking plot. Examining Naidoo's memoir in terms of its display rhetoric as a fantasy of political conscience discloses how its seemingly disjointed episodic structure and potpourri of dramatic moments and mundane acts are unified by the underlying manifestation of the power struggle that defined the prison experience at Robben Island as significant in advancing the ANC's cause to overthrow apartheid and establish South African democracy on the trajectory of truth and reconciliation. As the memoir continues, we read of prisoner solidarity in a hunger strike that achieved concessions from the prison authorities, of the warders' gradual lessoning of racial slurs and increased address by name of warders who spoke to prisoners in English and in some cases engaged in lengthy conversations. We learn that the prison department agreed to permit them to study and that the prisoners, many of whom were well educated, acted as tutors to guards who were struggling to pass their own high school and college courses. We learn of improved medical treatment, of access to outside observers from the Red Cross and the South African parliament to discuss conditions in the prison, of the formation of cultural clubs and activities that were either approved or permitted if not officially sanctioned. We learn of the formation of a soccer league and mini-Olympics that were organized and administered by the political prisoners. Finally, we learn of Naidoo's high esteem among the prisoners, as reflected in his numerous leadership positions. In short, the prisoners' spatialization of political conscience constructed an alternative political reality to the official chronotope of South Africa's penal system, projecting a multiracial civil society that was the antithesis of apartheid.

The visual possibilities of Naidoo's narrative, then, go beyond metaphorical reasoning, which portrays apparent differences as assimilated into a unity, and beyond irony, which portrays apparent unities as distanced from one another. It situates us in a story through the point of view of his voice, which, not incidentally, transports us to the scene through his bodily experiences. His bodily experiences have taken us from his paralysis with fear for his survival during the torture of his initial police interrogation, to acts of political resistance that seek realignment of power within the prison. The "as if" quality of what we see is not just Naidoo's body in pain, but a body fused with a political cause; what it does and what it suffers is iconic with the very principles for which it stands. If we hold as true what as readers we imagine "as if" present from Naidoo's point of view, we have experienced the state of belief. Quintilian situated at the heart of eloquence. If we respond to his body in pain with the belief we would accord an eloquent demonstration, "as if" to a fusion of suffering and truth, it is the result of fantasy, a rhetorical invention wherein we experience the "hallucination of presence." The margins of his memoir move us beyond responding "as if" to a narrated story where we now respond "as if" present to its scene and participating in it.
Conclusions

This chapter has been concerned with the demonstrative possibilities inherent to display rhetoric, how the *energeia* of display rhetoric can engage our emotions "as if" we were witnessing the scene, how the fantasy of witnessing can be so powerful as to induce a sense of certainty that compels assent, how bodily display may function as an inviolable place or locus while simultaneously serving as a place of political contest, and how narratives of bodily display invent expressions possessing demonstrative force. These considerations have been particularized in demonstrations of political conscience performed through bodily displays by Robben Island Prison's political prisoners who contested the prison's disciplining of the body with their own bodily resistance.

My argument has recognized that the public arena of the prison yard is not an agora. In the agora, the public nature of community truths requires they be spoken. Politics requires that public realities be seen and heard; it cannot be practiced as a private monologue about one's convictions. Political prisoners, on the other hand, are denied voice. Without open political congress, prisoners of conscience must find alternative means to occupy a public arena in which to contest the way things are. Their resistance publicizes otherwise internal realities.

Prisoners of conscience, by definition, behave as public persons. Consequently, even public spaces constructed to serve as sites of humiliation and capitulation become opportunities to display commitments of conscience through the *energeia* of bodily acts within the prison and the correlative *energeia* of verbal display in their narratives. Whereas the prisoner in prison time leaves the faint trace of a record—offense, sentence, time and place served, official actions—the prisoner of conscience leaves abundant traces through the *energeia* of dialogizing acts within the prison that can influence the minds and actions of others. Their defiance creates friction between assertions of personal identity and the de-personalizing system logic of the prison. This friction, in turn, becomes an inviolable place for generating a fantasy of political conscience, a product of imagination.

Given the urgency of these prisoners' personal and political situations, I have argued that displays of bodily resistance are often the only but also the most effective means for inventing displays of conscience. They open a negotiation of sorts—with enemies, other prisoners, and possibly an external public—that counters the sentence's arbitrary boundaries of space and time and the muteness it enforces with the concrete place and time of their embodied political conscience. Within this negotiation, the evocative power of the prisoner's body can reach beyond immediate witnesses to distant readers by bringing the prisoner's dialogue with terror before their eyes. Presenting this confrontation with *energeia*-inducing displays offers a form of argument that is difficult to refute.

Dorinda Outram, writing of the French Revolution, argues that bodies contesting the rights of the aristocracy "possessed the power, which the competing linguistic discourses obviously did not, to focus dignity and legitimacy in incontestable, because nonverbal, ways on the bodies of known individuals who acted as personifications of value systems." Similarly, for sympathetic viewers and readers, bodily displays by political prisoners function demonstratively, as irrefutable proof of the existing order's moral culpability. Even allowing that many of these prisoners had committed illegal and possibly life-threatening acts, the reader still is confronted with a basic moral question about limits to disciplining the body of another human and to responses to defiance. The fantasia of manhandling compels the conclusion that these limits have been transgressed.

Depictions of the body in pain are, in the larger scope of an ongoing political struggle, intentional loci. The prison writer's rhetorical problem often is to dissociate his person from a perception of his deeds as criminal so that he can emphasize his identity as a prisoner with political status. Naidoo addressed this problem in an instructive way. Through episodic engagements that inverted a political ethos, he dissociated his person from a perception of his deeds as criminal so that he could emphasize his political identity. This inverted image, constructed through a fantasia of his engagements with oppression, engulfed the state's best efforts at framing and organizing the meaning of its incarcerations in criminal terms. At the center of his story was the place of his body, whose struggles served to strengthen an already formed dissident character while indicting the habitus of the regime that he opposed and that held him prisoner for acting on his beliefs. Bringing these displays of terror and resistance before our eyes offered a further fantasia of civil society born of the contrast between an Afrikaner regime that constructed political prisoners as animals to be dominated by cruelty and the prisoners' ongoing acts of refusal aimed at creating a space for negotiating conditions in the prison.

ANC leader and former Robben Island prisoner Neville Alexander has written, "What happens in a prison is a reflection of what happens in the surrounding society." If we read the manhandling of political prisoners as indicative of a society with flagrant disregard for the human dignity of those who advance alternatives to the ruling social vision, surely Naidoo's embodied experience serves as an antedote inventing an alternative vision of civil(ized) society.

The contrasting images of society projected by the prison's disciplining of politicized bodies and the prisoners' bodily displays of resistance exhibit the recurring irony of the rhetorical domain occupied by prisoners of conscience. Symbolic resources in this domain are inherently entwined with the dissident body, transforming the apparent weakness of subjugated bodies into extremely potent rhetorical weapons against the powers that control them. Through juxtaposition of their treatment with their resistance, their displays of pain dialogize the rhetoric of the state by reversing the official and unofficial language of political appeal. Robben Island was, as Naidoo noted, intended to break the political spine of apartheid militants but instead became the center of resistance. The creative imagination driving its resistance belongs to a consciousness so committed to virtues of political conscience that its adherents refuse to cave. The mistreated body appears to us as driven to extremes, including the possibility of self-annihilation, over each principle it seeks to negate. Made visible, concrete, corporeal, personal, this fantasia of consciousness over- takes the prisoners' criminal status with a display of something far darker: the evil of treatment insensitive to their humanity.

Such bodily displays are demonstrative acts with strength analogous to logical force. By interrogating the state with performances embodying irrefutable and certain premises, they expose opposing premises as demonstrably bankrupt and weak. Wardens and warders who represent the state are presented through words and deeds that are cruelly indecent in their intransigeance and indifference before human pain. They seem unable to get beyond slang expressions of power lacking in historical consciousness or learned insight. Their performances reduce official speech to a parody of itself, uttering clichés as substitutes for
analysis. Through the place of the body, and the kairotic insertion of pain to steer its negotiation with power, prisoners of conscience confront their observing public with the monstrously of a government that condones such acts out of refusal to recognize that this disciplined body is also a human being. For a public situated in the fantasy of the resistor’s body, inflicting torture and abuse thus becomes a perverse self-interpretation by the regime of its own lack of conscience. Self-interrogated, self-indicted, entrenched power explodes in its dialectic with the dissident movement.

Being situated in the prisoner’s body has theoretical significance in another way. The persuasive power of particularity has been a staple of rhetorical thought since antiquity. The culture of Western modernity, on the other hand, has contrary impulses to stress the universal over the particular, to diminish the significance of the vernacular, and to favor the disengaged and anonymous over the personal. This bent deflects us from those aspects of rhetoric that have the greatest power to win the judges’ hearts and thereby, as Quintilian assessed matters, gain their assent. The edifice of objectivity and detachment encounters heavy weather whenever our eyes are directed toward those very facets modernity tends to discount.

Narratives of particular persons, as the Western tradition has recorded since Homer’s Iliad, are more than their individually embodied stories. Each person’s story, by the very fact that it is shared, means that this embodied being also inhabits a public place. It occupies a specific historical locale shared with other particular persons who have their own stories, each of which interacts in some way with the others. For this reason, human engagements with place are always political and, therefore, concerned with power; the rhetoric of their narratives is always constitutive of an “as if” reality occupied by some people’s stories and not others. Against abstract and disembodied space, the specificity of place involves a dialectic between these narratives and their environment.44 The demonstrative consequence of this dialectic over power, in fantasy’s thrill of this prisoner’s bodily place, compels assent to a particular history with an identifiable human pursuing a specific political pilgrimage toward an alternative destiny to what now exists. The dialectic situated in the body as a place or locale of resonance also suggests how the contested body functions as a rhetorical place or locus and, moreover, the dialectical character of rhetorical loci. Extrapolating from the body as a place from which we invent, we may speculate that loci generally are conditioned by and interactive with the context of inventing. As we move from conceptualizing “place” as an abstract heuristic category to “place” as an invitational standpoint, loci become particular, concrete places that cannot avoid engaging their indigenous multivocality and multilocalitys and whose meanings are interpretations of the dialectic occurring there.

Finally, contrary to the early Foucauldian characterization of oppressed bodies as objects or symbols manifesting existing power relations, the demonstrative force of Robben Island’s resisting bodies suggests they may be active creators of new power relations that sustain individuals in their confrontation with systems of power. Political conscience, enacted through bodily performances that resisted denial of their human worth, constructed dignified individual bodies that became a source of authority among the other prisoners and a public resource for their complaints. Within its counterfantasia to the state’s totalizing myth of power, displays of pain can be more than an individual’s anguish; each suffering body can become a synecdochic representation of an alternative body politic capable of affirming an independent identity. The rhetorically constructed body in pain writes its appeal at the sensuous level of individual experience. Sensuous experience bypasses the a priori epistemology that buttresses official rhetoric with the immediacy of identification that grows out of each reader (as each prisoner) having a personal body. Over and against a discourse of power, which decipher the criminal body with the abstractions of the existing social and political order that subjugates it, the body in pain produces its own knowledge through concrete sensory experience of the individual, which, transformed into abstractions, can transcend the body’s temporal constraints to speak uncontexted truths. Such bodily displays act as a demonstrative rhetoric exhibiting with irrefutable force where matters stand.

Notes
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2. For a convenient sample of prisoner accounts that testify to changes within Robben Island Prison over time, consult Jan K. Coetzez, ed., Plain Tales from Robben Island ( Pretoria: Van Schaik, 2000).

3. The relationship of the common law prisoner and resistance of conscience are beyond the scope of this analysis. Nor do I assume criminal acts committed for a political cause are inherently praiseworthy, as the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, made evident, at least from the perspective of the United States.

4. Prisoner 88/63 [Indres Naidoo], Island in Chains: Ten Years on Robben Island, as told to Abbie Sachs (London: Penguin Books, 1982). Subsequent references to Island in Chains are provided in the text by page numbers.


8. The Greeks gave some foundation for this view when they characterized epideictic as a deictic form, or mode of proof, that is distinguishable from other modes of proof. Thus, rhetorical displays were epideictic logos, demonstrations were apodeictic logos, and historical indications were endeictic logos. Moreover, in contrast with the Greek view, the Romans considered demonstration to be a mode of reasoning whose premises were grounded in the minds of judging audiences rather than in the nature of the subject undergoing demonstration. As Quintilian notes, speeches demonstrate through praise and blame the "nature of the object with which they [that is, the audience] are concerned" (3.4.14). The idea that standards for judgment of whatever is "demonstrated" are located within the audience rather than in some extrinsic metaphysical or epistemological foundation has as its corollary the need to discover resources for "proving" through rhetorical invention. An important example of this innovation is found in Cicero's consideration
of loci as an extension of Aristotle's metaphysically grounded topical theory. For a convenient review of the meaning associated with deixis, consult http://perseus.csd.u.csc.edu/cgi-bin/retrieve (last accessed February 25, 2002).


11. In Topic 2.6, Cicero pays homage to Aristotle in a way that situates his work as an extension of Aristotle's own theory. He argued, contrary to the Stoics (and Aristotle's Topics, which he ostensibly was appropriating), that a method for inventing claims to be tested was required prior to testing their truth. His upbuilding of the Stoics for neglecting the other half of Aristotle's system, coupled with his assertion that Aristotle founded the subject and that he regards his work as following Aristotle's, suggests Cicero thought he was advancing Aristotle's system. However, his specific complaint that the Stoics' almost exclusive focus on judgment paid insufficient attention to invention, ignores Aristotle's fixing the ends of dialectic as criticism and belief (albeit provisionally so), and that the emphasis of Aristotle's Topics is on testing the opponent's argument, or judgment (Cicero, Topics, trans. H. M. Hubbell [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968]).


23. For a discussion on the relationship of concrete "places" to abstract "space," see Philip Shel- drake, Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

24. Heteroglossia refers to the situatedness of all speech as providing an unrepeatable set of conditions that make its meanings to particular listeners at a particular time unlike any before or since. Discourse is "dialogized" when the privileged positions of prevailing power structures and ideologies are challenged, making us aware of competing positions and interpretations. These radiant engagements instigate a dialogue across the respective cultural languages "that mutually and ideologically intermate each other," giving new possibilities for understanding and expressing reality. See M. M. Bakhtin, The Dialogic Imagination, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), "Discourse on the Novel," 284-85, "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," 47, and editor's glossary, 626-27.

25. Island in Chains was published by Penguin Books in Britain, and Random House in the United States and Canada. Its publication by commercial presses suggests that its contents were not dictated by the ANC, as might be alleged were it to have appeared from a press under its influence or control.


27. See chapter 6 of Richard Sennett, The Fall of Public Man (New York: Vintage, 1979), for a discussion richly suggestive of such presentation's rhetorical potential.


29. My use of space and time is intended in the spirit of Bakhtin's observations on the chronotope in literature. See Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of Chronotope in the Novel," in The Dialogic Imagination, 84-258. My extension of his lens is grounded, however, in the rhetorical sense of place as an inventional locus and the priority of space over space as a particularized manifestation of historicity within space.

30. The visiting area consisted of two facing arenas with wire mesh from floor to ceiling. Guards patrolled the section between them. Prisoners and visitors faced each other across the divide and had to shout to be heard above the din. The consequence was noise so loud as to make hearing what was being said impossible.
33. Ibid., 130.
34. See Sheldrake, Spaces for the Sacred, 21.
35. Kairos refers to the discursive moment that opens to the possibility of decisive change. It may be manifested in a well-timed remark or may be the moment in a debate when the time is ripe to introduce certain arguments to advantage. For an overview of this concept, see John Poulakos, Sophistical Rhetoric in Classical Greece (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 61–73 passim.
36. Naidoo reports that efforts to complain to external authorities were rebuked as trivial, seldom transmitted, never responded to as serious, frequently dismissed with fabricated notations that the prisoner chose to drop the complaint, and likely to carry consequences for being lodged. When outside observers came to monitor the prisoners' treatment, the authorities carefully orchestrated where the visitors went and whom they interviewed to craft a perception of humane conditions. It was not until the airing of 90 Days on BBC in 1966 and subsequent public concern expressed by Helen Suzman in the South African parliament that national and world attention to Afrikaner treatment of political prisoners became a topic of public concern (Naidoo, Island in Chains, 162–63). Barbara Harlow also notes the visit of a Red Cross official who counteracted misleading government statements by filing a report highly critical of conditions in the prison (After Lives [London: Verso, 1996]).
37. Political prisoners commonly circumvent restrictions on communication by smuggling messages hidden in the body's orifices. Guards attempt to prevent this by subjecting prisoners to body searches. Prisoners regard this practice, even when performed without explicitly demeaning rituals such as the anus, as a humiliating invasion of their bodies.
38. Naidoo's ignorance of Afrikaans may have been a ruse, since he recounts in Afrikaans what the guard was saying and uses Afrikaans throughout the book.
39. Neville Alexander, Robben Island Prison Dossier: 1964–1974 (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 1994), 15–27, discusses the political inflection of baas. According to Alexander, "Just as a non-political prisoner's life would be worth nothing if he did not do this [that is, call the warder baas or a similar term indicating submission], so in 1962–1964 the political prisoners who refused to kow-tow in this manner courted death in the most literal sense. Many assaults were caused by refusal to say Baas. Virtually all prisoners use this searingly, readily debasing terminology until a stand was taken by certain prisoners and followed by the rest" (ibid., 27).
43. Alexander, Robben Island Prison Dossier, 50.
44. Sheildrake, Spaces for the Sacred, 1.