

Rhetorics of Interdependence: Composing the *Ethos* of the
Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission

by

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Dedicated to my parents
and
Brita Elizabeth

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Abstract

Rhetorics of Interdependence: Composing the *Ethos* of the
Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission

by

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Chair: Anne Ruggles Gere

On the morning of November 3rd, 1979, the Communist Workers Party organized a “Death to the Klan” rally and parade in Greensboro, North Carolina. Violence ensued when, later in the morning, Ku Klux Klan and American Nazi Party members arrived at the parade starting point and fired on the protestors, killing five CWP members and injuring ten others. Local news crews captured the events on film, but despite this evidence the killers were not found guilty for the deaths. Twenty-five years later, Greensboro citizens hoping to redress injustice and heal “long-standing divisions in the community” formed the first truth commission of its kind in the United States—the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This dissertation explores both spoken and written rhetorical performances surrounding the operation of the Greensboro TRC in order to demonstrate how its members and advocates attempted to establish the authority to carry out the Commission’s mandate and legitimate its claims about the “context, causes, sequence, and consequence” of the 1979 killings. Through a series of close readings, the project argues that they did so, in part, by drawing upon the rhetorical traditions circulating within the field of transitional justice. These traditions provided rhetorical resources that the Commission’s members and advocates reaccentuated in their rhetorical performances

to construct the Commission's *ethos*, thereby establishing the grounds for their actions and claims.

Grassroots truth commissions and other commissions of inquiry are increasingly common in the United States, and this dissertation brings into relief some of the ways that these organizations are able to garner authority—a prerequisite for understanding how the field of transitional justice is developing in the U.S., how truth commissions construct social change in response to past violence or injustice, and how they may be implemented more effectively in other contexts in the future. Furthermore, as various chapters of the project trace how facets of the traditions offered by transitional justice were performed to meet the contingent demands of the Greensboro context, they simultaneously advance contemporary rhetorical theory by complicating recent scholarship on middle ground arguments, constitutive rhetorics, corporate constructions of *ethos*, and definitional arguments.

Chapter I

“Inescapable Networks of Mutuality”: Authorizing Truth and Reconciliation in Greensboro

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the
flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

Langston Hughes, “The Negro
Speaks of Rivers”

I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality tied in a single garment of destiny.

Martin Luther King Jr.,
“Letter from Birmingham Jail”

On Saturday morning, November 3rd, 1979, members of the Communist Workers Party gathered for a rally and parade in Greensboro, North Carolina to protest recent Klan

activity in the area. As CWP members displayed fliers and assembled placards, they enthusiastically sang, “We shall not be moved,” and chanted, “Death to the Klan! Death to the Klan!” Around 11:20 am, the scene turned violent when a caravan of KKK and American Nazi Party members arrived at the parade starting point, with guns. A fight ensued, and both parties fired shots. Eighty-eight seconds later, five members of the CWP were dead; ten others were wounded. News crews, who had been covering the CWP’s rally, recorded much of the attack and its immediate aftermath on film. However, despite video evidence of the killings, KKK and American Nazi Party members were acquitted, by all-white juries, in both a state murder trial in 1980 and a federal criminal trial in 1984. To attain the first acquittal, the defense pleaded that the killings were a case of self-defense: they pointed to the fact that both parties had guns and noted that the CWP precipitated the violence by beating on the cars. The second trial turned on whether or not the Klan members and Nazis had violated the civil rights of the protestors because of their race, their religion, and/or their participation in an integrated activity. Jurors said no: they believed “that the exchange of gunfire was equal and that the prosecution’s evidence of racial motivation rather than anti-communism was unconvincing” (GTRC, *Final Report* 289). In 1985, a federal civil trial took place. In that trial, some members of KKK, the American Nazi Party, and the Greensboro Police Department were found jointly liable for the wrongful death of one of the five victims—Dr. Michael Nathan. The city of Greensboro paid the \$385,000 settlement on behalf of these three groups.¹

Over twenty years after the third trial, on May 25th, 2006, some of the survivors of November 3rd, 1979 and many other members of the Greensboro community gathered at the Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel at Bennett College for the final ceremony of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Truth commissions, broadly defined, are organizations instituted to investigate past injustices in countries and communities, report on their findings, and make recommendations for redressing those injustices

¹ This retelling of the events of November 3rd, 1979 and the three trials is purposefully a minimalist account. The reasons for a minimalist account are twofold. First, these events have already been recounted in detail elsewhere (see, for example, Elizabeth Wheaton’s book *Codename GREENKIL*). Second, the events of November 3rd, 1979 and its aftermath are highly contested, and, in this project, my intent is not to enter into debates about what happened or who was to blame.

(Hayner 5).² They are one of several strategies that societies undergoing regime changes have used to facilitate what has come to be known as transitional justice. Louis Bickford, the Director for the Policymakers and Civil Society Unit of the International Center for Transitional Justice, defines transitional justice as follows: “Transitional justice refers to a field of activity and inquiry focused on how societies address legacies of past human rights abuses, mass atrocity, or other forms of severe social trauma, including genocide or civil war, in order to build a more democratic, just, or peaceful future” (1045). The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission had been formed by survivors and community members who did not feel that justice had been served in relation to the events November 3rd. Concerned also about lingering “fear, division and distrust” in the city resulting from a lack of “common understanding about this painful episode in Greensboro’s history,” these individual had instituted the Commission on June 12, 2004 to examine “the context, causes, sequence and consequence of the events of November 3, 1979” (GTCRP, “Context”; “Mandate”). Having worked for nearly two years, the seven commissioners presented their *Final Report* to citizens of Greensboro and the surrounding communities. Commissioner Pat Clark summarized the Commission’s main findings, remarking, “We [the members of the Greensboro TRC] found that the offense of November 3rd, 1979 [was] woven through with issues of race and class. Our report discusses underlying issues including racial and economic justice, white supremacy, and the failure of the police and justice system to provide equal protection to all residents.” Following Clark’s comments, the Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel erupted in applause.

It was fitting that the Commission delivered its findings in the Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel: the chapel had already served, several times, as the site for other gatherings devoted to the redress of racial and economic disparities in Greensboro and

² “Truth commission” is the most common generic term for these institutions, although the accuracy of this term is disputed, as Pricilla Hayner notes: “Some observers, having watched past commissions and the reports they produce, are uncomfortable with the generic name of *truth commission* that these bodies have acquired... Some people, including former staff of some of these bodies, would prefer the generic *commission of inquiry*, which would lift the pressure to be both perfect and comprehensive” (22). Hayner goes on to note that *truth and reconciliation commission* is increasingly being used as the generic term, but she thinks this usage is “inaccurate and should be avoided, since many of these commissions on the truth have not held reconciliation as a primary goal of their work, nor assumed that reconciliation would result” (23). Throughout this project, I use “truth commission” and occasionally “commission of inquiry” to refer generally to these institutions. Hayner’s definition of “truth commissions” plays an important part in the argument that I make in chapter five of this project.

the United States. A brief look at these gatherings, and some of the events surrounding them, provides a historical and rhetorical backdrop for the primary object of study in this dissertation—the rhetoric of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This backdrop attests to the complex network of rhetorical activity that shaped the struggle for civil rights both in and beyond Greensboro, and such an account is a useful starting point, given the arguments I make in the chapters that follow.

The Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel was the location where, in 1937, Bennett College students and professors had planned a boycott of Greensboro movie theaters (Ahearn B1). It was also the site where—on February 11, 1958, nearly fifty years before the commissioners took the stage—Martin Luther King, Jr. had delivered a sermon entitled “Room in the Inn” to an auditorium overflowing with Greensboro citizens.³ The size of the crowd that came to hear King preach in 1958 belies the fact that he did not initially receive a warm reception in Greensboro. As Greensboro historian William Chafe records, “Fearful of economic reprisals, A&T College and the black public schools refused to make their auditoriums available for King’s speech. Many ministers also held back, unwilling to identify openly with the direct-action tactics associated with King’s Montgomery bus boycott” (112). In the end, only Willa Player, the President of Bennett College, offered King a place to speak: “‘I told them,’ Player recalled, ‘that this is a liberal arts college where freedom rings—so Martin Luther King can speak here’” (Chafe 112). On that occasion, King preached on the subject of “progress in the area of race relations,” claiming, “We’ve come a long, long way, but we have a long, long way to go” (“Room” 3, 5). He also advocated non-violent protest (22).

It was a sermon that turned out to be important for one member of the audience in particular—Ezell Blair, Jr., a high school student at the time, who, two years later, would take a seat at the segregated Woolworth’s lunch counter in downtown Greensboro with three other black men. That action would, in turn, lead to similar protests across the South. When, some years later, Blair was interviewed by Chafe about his role in initiating the sit-in movement, he talked about some of the influences that led him to take a seat at

³ Elsewhere the speech is referred to as “A Realistic Look at Race Relations” (King, *Papers* 94). No audio recording or transcript of this speech was thought to exist until 1999, when the audio recording of the speech was rediscovered in the archives at Bennett College. Bennett College later made a transcript of the speech available in *The Bennett College Social Justice Lecture Series*.

that lunch counter: one was King's 1958 speech, about which Blair remarked, "[H]is words were such that the vibrations that came over the microphone, over the loud speaker... It was so strong, I could feel my heart palpitating, it brought tears to my eyes" (King, *Papers* 38; Chafe 113). Another influence, Blair said, was Langston Hughes's poem "My Soul Runs Deep Like a River," introduced to him by his eleventh-grade English teacher (Chafe 112). It's a poem that connects African-American agency and identity, in part, to Africa: "I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young / I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep / I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it" (Hughes 23).

When King spoke at Bennett in February of 1958, he, too, had been thinking a lot about Africa. Roughly one year before his address in Greensboro, King traveled to Ghana to join in that country's independence celebration (King, *Papers* 8). While he was there, he met with anti-colonial activist Michael Scott to discuss the ongoing civil rights initiatives both in the United States and in Africa (8). King is said to have "expressed admiration for the bus boycott then taking place in Johannesburg, South Africa, and remarked that there was 'no basic difference between colonialism and racial segregation...at bottom both segregation in America and colonialism in Africa were based on the same thing—white supremacy and contempt for life'" (8-9).⁴ Later that year, on July 27, 1957, King traveled to New York City to meet with Ambrose Reeves—the Anglican Bishop of Johannesburg, South Africa—to take stock of the twin liberation movements occurring in South Africa and in the U.S. (King, *Papers* 45). And that same year he joined the National Committee of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA)—an organization that would initiate an anti-apartheid protest on December 10th to condemn the recent arrests of Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, and 153 other South African anti-apartheid activists (King, *Papers* 516).⁵ The ACOA protest

⁴ The quotation in this citation originally appeared in Jack 446-448.

⁵ King served as vice-chairperson of the December 10th protest alongside U.S. chairperson Reverend James Pike and International chairperson Eleanor Roosevelt, and he was also instrumental in publicizing it. In a letter dated November 8th, 1957 addressed to Chester Bowles, a man actively involved in international relations throughout his lifetime, King and Pike write, "We are writing to you in the conviction that the time has come for a world-wide protest against the organized inhumanity of the Government of the Union of South Africa" (King, *Papers* 313). Bowles responded enthusiastically to the idea of a protest, as did imprisoned South African activist Oliver Tambo, who sent a letter addressed to King, which thanked those involved in sponsoring the event: "We, the oppressed people of South Africa, highly appreciate this step and we now appeal to you to give your full support" (King, *Papers* 325). But

helped contribute to a victory in South Africa: on December 17th, the South African government dropped the charges against 61 of the 156 activists.

Over the next decade, the ACOA was instrumental in establishing economic sanctions against South Africa, and such actions were significant in bringing about South African reforms. Les de Villiers, a South African diplomat to the U.S., acknowledged that the ACOA's tactics helped to bring about the end of apartheid rule in South Africa (Korey 7). Nelson Mandela made similar claims when he received the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway on December 10, 1993. In his acceptance speech for the award, he referred to all those around the world who helped to end institutionalized apartheid in South Africa, citing, in particular, Martin Luther King, Jr. (de Villiers 194; Mandela "Nobel"). Likewise, South African Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu praised Americans for their support of the anti-apartheid cause in South Africa on a number of occasions—one of which was at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina on November 3rd, 2005, the twenty-sixth anniversary of the Greensboro killings. In that speech, entitled "Reconciling Love," Tutu praised the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and then he remarked, "I now speak on behalf of millions of my compatriots when I say, even now, thank you for that remarkable support you gave to help us [in the South African struggle against apartheid]" (Tutu, "Reconciling"). Tutu did not mention Martin Luther King, Jr. explicitly in the speech he gave in Greensboro; however, he did quote him. What's remarkable is that Tutu quoted something that King had said while he was in Greensboro in 1958. During King's visit to Bennett College, he had been interviewed by the student campus publication *The Bennett Banner* (King, *Papers* 364-367). In the interview, King repeatedly emphasized the importance of human dignity as he and the student interviewers talked about the Montgomery bus boycott; the "Arkansas situation," in which nine black children integrated Central High School; the "Crusade for Citizenship," a campaign to "stimulate voting and registration among the Negroes in the South"; and King's "greatest moment of fear" (364-367). They also talked about forgiveness:

Oliver Tambo was not the only person in South Africa who received the American Committee on Africa's message. Two days after the December 10th day of protest, the South African Foreign Minister could be heard on the radio decrying the ACOA as "decidedly pinkish" and characterizing its leader as "a known leftist" (de Villiers 23).

[*Interviewer 3:*] Doctor, I have just a few questions. Now you talk about forgiveness and that you must forgive. Do you find that really in your heart you can forgive the men who, say, killed Emmett Till or castrated this innocent man? And don't you find it really hard [...]
[*King:*] [*interrupting*] Well, if you really love on the basis of Christian concepts, forgiveness is very difficult. *It isn't easy*. And when it becomes so easy it really isn't forgiveness. There is pain and agony. (King, *Papers* 366, emphasis added)

Nearly fifty years later, in the same U.S. city, Desmond Tutu would speak the same words to a community that had, in the interim, seen the integration of public businesses and schools and had struggled to address the November 3rd, 1979 murders.

“Forgiveness,” Tutu said, “is not cheap. *It isn't easy*. It cost God the death of God's son” (Tutu, “Reconciling”).

The Project

In ways that parallel the material presented in this introduction, this dissertation presents an argument about rhetorical interconnectedness—an “inescapable network of mutuality,” constituted in and through rhetorical performances.⁶ Transnational in scope, this network extends, primarily, between the members of the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project, commissioners and staff of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, former commissioners of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and individuals working in the field of transitional justice. It is, moreover, built diachronically, as rhetors in Greensboro reaccentuate prior rhetorical performances to their own ends.

My primary aim in the project is to demonstrate how advocates of the Greensboro TRC—which, unlike most truth commissions, lacked state-sponsored support—attempted to establish authority to carry out its mandate and, ultimately, legitimate its claims about the events surrounding November 3rd, 1979. I show that they do so, in part, by drawing upon the rhetorical traditions circulating within the field of transitional justice in significant and compelling ways. These traditions provide rhetorical resources that these advocates deploy and reaccentuate in their rhetorical performances to position the Commission in relation to the Greensboro community (i.e., construct the Commission's

⁶ I borrow the phrase “inescapable network of mutuality” from King's “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (693).

ethos). More than a mere study of the influences that shaped the rhetoric surrounding the operation of the Greensboro TRC, this dissertation aims to understand how, in James Jasinski's terms, rhetorical traditions "'actually function' in the field of textual action" (Jasinski, "Instrumentalism" 216). Complexities emerge as I trace how the facets of the rhetorical tradition offered by transitional justice are performed to meet the contingent demands of the Greensboro context. Various chapters demonstrate, for example, how multiple attempts to perform facets of a rhetorical tradition within a single text may be used to powerful effect in constructing *ethos* (chapter two); how concepts deployed explicitly may simultaneously be reaccentuated implicitly in a given text (chapter three); how the resources for constructing *ethos* provided by rhetorical traditions may contain inherent, but productive, tensions (chapter four); and how the resources of rhetorical traditions may be used to competing ends (chapter five). Further complexities—which are addressed, primarily, in the concluding chapter—arise from the fact that the rhetorical tradition circulating in and through the field of transitional justice was not the only one that the advocates of the Commission drew upon, nor were they always successful in doing so.

Taken together, the arguments presented in the chapters of this dissertation are important for a number of reasons. Perhaps most importantly, they offer insights into the development and operation of the Greensboro TRC itself: it is my hope that members of the Greensboro community will find in this dissertation a series of talking points for continuing the discussions that the Commission started and, perhaps, a few resources for thinking about next steps. The arguments presented here also speak to practitioners and scholars of transitional justice. There are many communities in the U.S. and throughout the world that are haunted by past and present violence and are defined by relationships of hatred and prejudice, distrust and fear. Given the pervasiveness of these communities both in the U.S. and abroad, there is a need to better understand how mechanisms like truth commissions are implemented and how these institutions come to have the authority to bring about change and redress injustices. As one of only a few community-based truth commissions in the world and—as the Commission's supporters marketed it—"the first of its kind" in the U.S., the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission offers a productive site for these inquiries, and the results of the inquiries promise to provide

insights into the ways in which the field of transitional justice is developing in the United States and have implications for the ways in which transitional justice might be practiced more effectively in the future (“Swearing in”). The arguments presented in this dissertation also speak to rhetoricians. For one thing, they contribute to a “thickening” of rhetorical theory, i.e., they augment our understanding of the ways rhetoric works. In the chapters that follow, for example, I explore conventional and unconventional middle ground and definitional arguments (and their functions), highlight the importance of temporality in interpreting constitutive rhetorics, and bring into relief some of the possibilities for constructing *ethos* available to corporate rhetors that may not be as readily available to individuals. And all of the chapters serve, in various ways, to deepen our understanding of *ethos*, particularly with regard to its constitutive functions. Secondly, by lingering over the texts of the Greensboro TRC, this dissertation also provides rhetoricians with a glimpse at the rhetorical workings of a grassroots operation—a site of study that deserves more attention in our field.

The purpose of this first chapter is to clarify the key terms of these claims and to lay the historical, methodological, and theoretical groundwork for my study. I begin by providing additional background about the events of November 3rd, 1979. Because the events surrounding that day are highly contested, and because my object of study in this project is not the happenings of November 3rd but one group’s rhetorical responses to those happenings, I provide background about the events by way of a survey of past accounts of the events by others. The survey of these accounts brings into relief what is at issue, what is contested, regarding the events of November 3rd, 1979. Following this survey, I describe how the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission came to be in more detail and elaborate on one of the central challenges facing the Commission as it constructed its own account of November 3rd, 1979—its need to establish authority. I then define authority and articulate what is at stake in studying how it is constructed. Next I describe—and provide detailed rationale for—my methodology (a type of rhetorical criticism most akin to close reading) and make explicit the theoretical commitments associated with my approach. Defining constructs like rhetorical tradition, rhetorical performance, and *ethos* clarifies how rhetors construct authority in general and sets the stage for my demonstration, throughout this dissertation, of how the advocates of

the Greensboro TRC construct authority in particular. From here, I take a step back, articulating and defending my central presupposition—namely, that there are rhetorical traditions circulating within the field of transitional justice—by surveying scholarship devoted to that field. I conclude with a more extensive overview of each of the chapters of this project.

“Looking through a Kaleidoscope” at November 3rd, 1979

Many accounts of the events of November 3rd, 1979, as well as explanations of its causes and descriptions of its repercussions, have appeared over the past twenty-nine years. From November 4th, 1979 to November 1985 alone, Greensboro’s two newspapers—*The Greensboro Daily News* and *The Daily Record*—ran over four hundred articles about November 3rd and its aftermath (GTRC, *Final Report* 510). In addition, accounts have also appeared in political pamphlets, memoirs, books, plays, and documentaries. With these many accounts come a variety of perspectives about what happened on November 3rd, 1979 and who is to blame.

Several writers have commented on this last point, including—most notably—Elizabeth Wheaton. In 1981, Wheaton was working as a journalist, and she reported on the Greensboro killings for the Institute for Southern Studies. The pamphlet she drafted for the Institute, along with her subsequent reporting work on the trials of the Nazis and Klansmen for United Press International, would lead to the 1987 publication of the book *Codename GREENKIL: The 1979 Greensboro Killings*, which remains one of the most thorough accounts of the events surrounding November 3rd, 1979 produced to date. In the book’s prologue, Wheaton speaks to the fact that there are many different points of view about the events of November 3rd, 1979:

The full story of the Greensboro killings may never be revealed, not because there is a lack of information but because there are a multiplicity of perspectives from which we can view the available facts. It is as though we were looking through a kaleidoscope and the events fell into one pattern when viewed through the CWP’s perspective, another through that of the Klan and Nazis, and yet another through that of the police and federal agents. Each pattern has its own logic, but when they are superimposed, the image becomes a jumble of contradictions and conflict
(4)

This paragraph, which appears at the beginning of Wheaton’s book, is meant to highlight the difficulty in writing about the events of November 3rd, 1979; and, given Wheaton’s aim in *Codename GREENKIL* to present a relatively unbiased account of the events, it is not surprising that she seems to view the “multiplicity of perspectives” as a barrier to uncovering the “full story.” But I think it worth pointing out that, in one sense at least, the “multiplicity of perspectives” is quite revealing: taken together, the many perspectives highlight what was at issue for the people of Greensboro with regard to the killings. In what follows, I look briefly at a few of the many accounts that proliferated in 1979 and the early 1980s. Doing so brings into relief the fact that one of the main things at issue for Greensboro citizens with regard to the killings was the role that race and racism played in the events and their aftermath. It also points to the impetus for the formation of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which I describe in detail.

Within weeks after November 3rd, 1979, CWP survivors formed “The Committee to Avenge the Murder of the Communist Workers Party” and published the pamphlet “Turn the Country Upside Down to Beat Back the Renewed Wave of Attacks from the Capitalists’ Tools – KKK, Nazis, Pigs, and FBI,” which mourns the loss of fallen comrades and describes the killings as “a premeditated political assassination by the capitalist state.” The pamphlet continues, “This monstrous crime has laid bare the fascist heart of Carter’s ‘human rights’ policy. Carter and all the rest of the dirty capitalist politicians’ hands are permanently drenched with the blood of these five communist fighters of the U.S. working class. The assassination of our beloved comrades has unleashed a torrent of anger and condemnation against U.S. imperialism from the world’s people” (“Turn”). The claims articulated here were reinforced by CWP survivors Paul and Sandy Bermanzohn in a book published the following year: *The True Story of the Greensboro Massacre: Why the government conspired with the Klan and Nazis to murder the Communist Workers Party 5 in Greensboro on November 3, 1979. An account by eyewitnesses*. The book describes the November 3rd killers as government “sharpshooters” and describes their actions on November 3rd as a “military maneuver” (19). Thus, in the immediate aftermath of the killings, one of the issues to emerge was whether or not November 3rd, 1979 was part of a capitalist government’s conspiracy

against the CWP and its communist ideology. Consistent with this account, the CWP also claimed that the killings pointed to class-based inequities.

Members of the Black Liberation Movement looked at the event differently. In 1980, they published the pamphlet “The Greensboro Massacre: Critical Lessons for the 1980’s.” Although the authors of the pamphlet agree that the events of November 3rd, 1979 involved “collusion” between the state and the Klan and Nazis, they are adamant that the conspiracy was not, as the CWP claimed, simply against the CWP. Here is how the pamphlet frames November 3rd:

By launching the attack they did on November 3rd, [Klan members] were able to deal a real blow not only to their immediate targets [the CWP] but to the Black masses and their struggle. By invading the Black community and openly killing people the Klan raised the threat of open terror against the Black struggle in a sharper way than had been done in years. At the same time by launching the attack against an isolated band of predominantly white leftists, they created conditions that would make it particularly difficult [for groups like the Black Liberation Movement] to build the kind of militant mass response that would give the Black community confidence that the terrorist threat could be effectively countered. They also greatly inspired their basic racist constituency; and by combining racism with anti-communism, they created conditions for building the broadest possible base of support among white people for their action. (“Critical Lessons”)

For members of the Black Liberation Movement, then, the events of November 3rd, 1979 were perceived as deeply racist, albeit in complex ways. And it is worth noting that the Black Liberation Movement’s charges of racism were directed, at least in part, at city officials.⁷ For their part, most city officials (as well as many members of the Greensboro community) rejected the notion that November 3rd, 1979 was about questions of race. According to the pamphlet, Mayor of Greensboro Jim Melvin reportedly claimed that

⁷ The pamphlet asserts, “In responding to the obvious questions around the absence of police protection [for the CWP marchers], the Mayor and Police Chief promised a full investigation. Meanwhile, they pushed a Black police Lieutenant out front, claiming he had been in charge that day and could answer [the media’s] questions. It later came to light that while this Black officer was the overall duty officer that day, other white officers were actually in charge of planning and supervising police activity relative to the march and conference. It was further revealed that some of the information about the imminent arrival of Klansmen at the demonstration site was not relayed to the Black officer. He had, in fact, previously been scheduled to be attending an unrelated community meeting at the time the march was going on; and he was to be consulted only if an emergency developed. By pushing the Black cop out front, the power structure obviously hoped to frustrate the developing protest by saying ‘If you want someone to attack, you have to attack this Black cop first’” (“Critical Lessons”).

“the murders in no way reflected the nature of race relations in the city” (“Critical Lessons”).

By November 1980, one year after the killings, the debate over whether or not November 3rd, 1979 was related to questions of race and racism was widespread throughout the Greensboro community—a fact attested to by a report published by the North Carolina Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights. The report, entitled “Black White Perceptions: Race Relations in Greensboro,” was “initiated by the North Carolina Advisory Committee as a result of conflicting assessments of the causes of the confrontation in Greensboro on November 3, 1979, during which 5 persons were slain at an anti-klan rally” (ii). A compilation of a series of oral interviews by city leaders, business people, citizens working in education and in the media, and members of the religious community, the report provides a summary of the many different perspectives circulating in Greensboro at the beginning of the 1980s about the events of November 3rd, 1979. A few of these perspectives, as presented in the report, are worth highlighting.

According to the report, in his oral interview, Mayor Jim Melvin disassociated the city of Greensboro from both the KKK and the CWP. Melvin claimed that the KKK and Nazi members that carried out the killings were not members of the Greensboro community—“nor were they welcome”—and that the CWP acted recklessly by engaging in “‘dare you-to-step-across-the-line’ maneuvers” and “actively sought the confrontation” (5). Critical of media coverage that “drew conclusions that race relations in Greensboro were poor and that discord and ill will abounded,” Melvin described Greensboro as “a quiet community that allows everyone to have full rights and to express them openly and freely on all subjects” (5). Similar sentiments were expressed by John Ellison, Jr., the Executive Vice President of the Ellison Company. According to the report, “Mr. Ellison told the Committee that in his view the November 3rd tragedy was not an outgrowth of the climate of race relations in the city, but that the incident was primarily ‘an isolated conflict between two extremist groups,’ neither with widespread following or support in either the black or white community” (12). Another interviewee, Grand Dragon of the North Carolina Chapter of the KKK Virgil Griffin, also dismissed notions that November 3rd, 1979 was primarily about race. He protested the “characterization of the November

3rd demonstration as ‘a civil rights march,’” claiming, instead, that “the Communist Party was assembling for a ‘Death to the Klan’ rally and ‘to advocate violence to overthrow our government’” (10). CWP spokesperson Nelson Johnson—one of the survivors of November 3rd, 1979—claimed that, by enlisting the KKK and Nazis on November 3rd, the government purposefully manufactured racial tensions in order to mask other problems; according to the report, Johnson claimed that “the Nazis and Klan were being used [by the state apparatus] as ‘shock troops of capitalism’ for the purpose of turning one race against the other thereby diverting the focus of attention from the real source of people’s political and economic problems” (9). Other interviewees saw November 3rd, 1979 as connected much more directly to race. For example, Ed Whitfield, the co-chairman of Concerned Citizens Against the Klan, reportedly “expressed the view of his organization that the November 3rd incident and the flurry of activities and kinds of investigations conducted in its wake were very much a reflection of the ‘real’ character of race relations in the Greensboro area” (9). Fred Taylor, the Director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference noted that “the entire Nation has had a renewed interest in race relations since the November 3rd ‘massacre’ in Greensboro” (17). And John Erwin, Vice President of the Greensboro Chapter of the NAACP, told the Commission that November 3rd “did not cause race relations to regress, but helped bring facts to light” regarding discrimination against minorities and the poor (12).

In 1987, Elizabeth Wheaton added her own perspective to this “multiplicity of perspectives” in writing *Codename GREENKIL*—a book that might best be described as narrative journalism. Wheaton’s narrative spans sixteen years and relies on personal interviews, news reporting, court documents and testimony, FBI files, and video evidence to chronicle the lives of the individuals involved in the event, describe the groups (e.g., CWP, KKK) to which they belonged, narrate the convergence of these groups at Morningside Homes on November 3rd, 1979, and recount the three subsequent trials of Klan and Nazi members. Wheaton’s account of the causes and consequences of November 3rd, 1979 is too detailed to do justice to here, but it is worth noting that, at the end of her epilogue, she turns her focus to the role that race and racism played on and after November 3rd. She describes the fight of the survivors of November 3rd, 1979 as a “fight against racism and racist violence”—a fight which, she says, “will continue,

although not in the overtly confrontational mode of 1979” (293). And after noting that survivors of November 3rd “returned all or part of their share [of the settlement from the third trial] to establish a fund for victims of racist violence in the South,” Wheaton ends on this note: “It would be a fitting legacy if the spirits of Jim Waller, Mike Nathan, Sandi Smith, César Cauce, and Bill Sampson could thus continue to confront the ghosts of racism that haunt the South” (293).

Continuing this catalogue of the perspectives expressed about November 3rd, 1979 from the early 1980s to the present would fill several volumes.⁸ For the purposes of this project, one general observation about contemporary views of November 3rd, 1979 must suffice: there is still a multiplicity of perspectives about November 3rd, 1979 circulating in Greensboro, and there remains widespread skepticism about the role that race played in causing the events and in their aftermath. For example, current Mayor of Greensboro Keith Holliday, whose views on the matter are shared by the majority of the Greensboro city council, has publicly echoed the sentiments expressed by former Mayor Jim Melvin over twenty-five years earlier: “I strongly resist the belief,” he said at an April 2005 city council meeting, “that this event was a major contributor to Greensboro's racial issues. I believe that it is obvious to anyone who studied this tragic event, and the events that led up to November 3rd, that this was driven by labor disputes, including the fact that the rally

⁸ Many accounts of November 3rd and its aftermath have proliferated in the interim. Two books—both written by November 3rd, 1979 survivors—that describe events from the sixties to the near present in more detail are Signe Waller’s *Love and Revolution: A Political Memoir* and Sally Bermanzohn’s *Through Survivor’s Eyes: From the Sixties to the Greensboro Massacre*. Waller’s *Love and Revolution* is an “intensely personal and intensely political” account, which presents a sympathetic reading of the CWP’s actions through “first person narrative, journalistic essay, philosophical discussion, political analysis, the prosaic, the poetic, the humorous, and the critical” (ix-x). Bermanzohn’s *Through Survivor’s Eyes* offers interspersed, first-person accounts of six of the survivors of November 3rd, organized chronologically around significant happenings in Greensboro from the 1960s to the present. Moreover, many artists and directors have chosen the events of November 3rd, 1979 as the subject for their work. Emily Mann’s play *Greensboro: A Requiem*—which premiered on February 6, 1996 at the McCarter Theater in Princeton, New Jersey and was later performed in Greensboro by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Theater Department as part of the twentieth anniversary commemoration of November 3rd, 1979—is one of the most notable artistic renderings of the event. Composed of “verbatim interview material, courtroom transcripts, public record and personal testimony,” the play is at once a eulogy for the murder victims and a commentary on contemporary race relations. Several documentaries have also been produced about November 3rd, including “88 Seconds in Greensboro,” produced by the PBS Frontline Series; “Greensboro: Clash with the Klan,” an episode of A&E’s “City Confidential” series; “Lawbreakers: The Greensboro Massacre,” an episode of The History Channel’s *The Ku Klux Klan: A Secret History*; and “Greensboro’s Child,” which frames the event in light of the life story of Kwame Cannon, who, as a boy, attended the CWP rally with his mother and later received two life-sentences for burglary, a judgment which many in the community thought to be racially-motivated and excessive given the nature of Cannon’s crimes.

was organized by Workers Viewpoint Organization. It was driven by class issues, union organization issues, anti-communist mindsets, and, most importantly, previous confrontations in other areas of the state, prior to the outside groups coming to Greensboro. In fact, I do not believe that the Klan loaded up their cars to come to Greensboro with a vision to do harm to black people” (“City Council”). Holliday’s views, as well as those of other Greensboro city council members, will be explored, in much greater detail, in chapter five of this project.

In highlighting the fact that questions of race were—and still are—one of the main things at issue with regard to people’s views of November 3rd, 1979, I do not mean to suggest that race was (and is) the *only* thing at issue in discussions about the event. Chelsea Marshall, the public hearings coordinator for the Greensboro TRC, recently compiled a list of some of the other questions that have circulated in Greensboro with regard to the event and its aftermath, many of which continue to circulate among citizens:

Did the Klan and Nazis come with the intention to kill [Workers Viewpoint Organization/Communist Workers Party⁹] protestors or were they acting in self-defense? Did the protestors who carried guns anticipate violence and expect to harm any counter-demonstrators? Why were there no police officers on the scene of the shootings when they knew that a caravan of Klan and Nazi members had driven to the intersection at which the WVO/CWP members were preparing for the march? Did the WVO/CWP intend the march to turn violent so that their cause would be noticed more broadly? Since their police informant led the caravan to the WVO/CWP protestors, was the Greensboro Police Department complicit in the shooting deaths of the five protestors? Were the prosecutors in the state and federal trials unsuccessful because they were part of a conspiracy against the communist survivors of these deaths? (Marshall 33-34)

This list of questions is a partial one; however, the list—along with aforementioned opposing views about the role of race and, to a lesser extent, class in causing the events—provides a good indication that the events of November 3rd, 1979 continue to be highly contested.

It was, in part, in an attempt to answer these and other questions that the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission was formed; and, in and through its operation, the Commission constructed yet another account of the events of November

⁹ Shortly before November 3rd, 1979, the Workers Viewpoint Organization changed its name to the Communist Workers Party.

3rd, 1979. Before briefly summarizing that account, it is necessary to elaborate on how the Greensboro TRC came to be.

In 1999, on the twentieth anniversary of the killings, individuals in Greensboro commemorated the deaths of the November 3 victims (GTRC, *Final Report* 427). During these events, victims' families and other members of the community discussed ways in which they might address divisions in the community that resulted from the five deaths. This discussion led members of the group to contact the Andrus Family Fund, a philanthropic organization committed to collaborating “with those working to create safer environments” and contributing “to the body of knowledge and experience about what is necessary to create effective change...by focusing on Transition – that critical juncture in time and process – that, if properly attended to, affects positive change” (Andrus). The Andrus Family Fund put the group in contact with the International Center for Transitional Justice, which recommended forming a truth commission (Bermanzohn 370).

Based on the suggestion of the International Center for Transitional Justice, the individuals eventually formed an independent coalition—the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project—with the expressed purpose of forming a truth commission. In the spring of 2002, with the support of both the International Center for Transitional Justice and the Andrus Family Fund, the Project formed a National Advisory Committee and a Local Task Force in order to develop a process for selecting commissioners and to describe what the commissioners' duties would be. Almost a year later, in mid-February of 2003, the National Advisory Committee and the Local Task Force revealed the selection process for commissioners and approved the “Mandate for the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” a document detailing the purposes of the yet-to-be-established Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission: to promote “healing and reconciliation of the community” through truth-seeking and dissemination; to “clarify the confusion” surrounding the events of November 3rd; to acknowledge “feelings of loss, guilt, shame, anger, and fear”; and to “facilitate changes in social consciousness” (GTCRP, “Mandate”). The seven commissioners were selected about one year later; and, in mid-June of 2004, they were sworn in at a public ceremony at the Historic Depot in downtown Greensboro. From June 2004 until May 2006, the

Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission worked to complete its mandate, attempting to examine “the context, causes, sequence and consequence of the events of November 3, 1979” (GTCRP, “Mandate”).

As I’ve already noted, the Commission presented its 529-page *Final Report* to the Greensboro community at a public ceremony in the Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel at Bennett College for Women. The contents of the *Final Report* include an introduction, describing precedents for the operation of a TRC in Greensboro and outlining the Greensboro TRC’s methodology, as well as fourteen additional chapters divided into five main sections. Section one explores the historical circumstances that led to the killings; section two gives an account of what happened on November 3rd; section three describe the aftermath of the event; section four offers conclusions and recommendations; and section five is comprised of a series of annexes, containing a timeline of the TRC’s operation, its defining documents, and other primary texts used by the Commission. Regarding the Commission’s primary findings, the report describes the “malicious intent” of the KKK and Nazis who arrived at the CWP rally, the “inflammatory” language of both the CWP and the KKK, the “intentionality [of the Greensboro police] to fail to provide adequate protection” at the rally, and the attempts by the Greensboro police and the city managers to “deliberately [mislead] the public regarding what happened on Nov. 3, 1979” (*Final Report* 370-376). The commissioners situate these findings within the context of larger claims about racial and class-based inequities in Greensboro, commenting, for example, on the “injustice in the justice system”—a system that “tends to be disproportionately imperfect against people of color and poor people” (*Final Report* 377).

Given the debate about the role of race (and, to a lesser extent, class) in precipitating the events of November 3rd, 1979, the Commission’s findings are highly significant. But the perceived legitimacy of such claims within the Greensboro community—and the degree to which the Commission’s accompanying recommendations would subsequently be acted upon by community members—did not rest solely in the claims themselves; rather, the legitimacy of such claims depended on the Commission’s authority within the community.

The Question of Authority

One of the key concepts in this dissertation is authority, which, as I define the term, consists of the warrants, grounds, and justifications for an entity's actions or claims.¹⁰ The importance of the concept of authority to this dissertation is based, in large part, on the exigencies facing the Commission itself: from the Commission's inception, establishing the Commission's authority was a fundamental task for both the members of the Project and the commissioners themselves. A memo—sent to members of the Project by Lisa Magarrell, a senior associate for the International Center for Transitional Justice and primary consultant to both the Project and the Commission—confirms that the question of authority was of great importance to the Commission and that it was given explicit consideration by the Commission's architects. In the memo, Magarrell prompts the Project to consider from where the Commission will derive its authority (“Developing” 2). To do so, she describes two types of truth commissions: those that are “granted quasi-judicial power” and those that “rely on voluntary participation and collaboration.” The former, she notes, derive their authority from legal sources, which allows them “to compel appearances, testimony, [and] access to documents and information”; the latter rely on alternative forms of authority, of which she lists three: public opinion, moral authority, and persuasion. “What power,” she concludes, “does the Commission need and where will it come from?” (“Developing” 2).¹¹

¹⁰ In *The Uses of Argument*, Stephen Toulmin uses similar terms to describe the syllogism (87-105). However, although I borrow several of Toulmin's terms for my definition of authority, I do not restrict my conception of warrants, grounds, and justifications to propositions, as Toulmin does in his discussion of the syllogism. One example of a non-propositional warrant, ground, or justification is an ideograph (like “freedom” or “reconciliation”). An ideograph, according to Michael McGee, is “an ordinary-language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and beliefs which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable” (15). Another non-propositional warrant, ground, or justification for action—which I will have more to say about later in this chapter—is *ethos*, a rhetor's inherited or constructed subject position.

¹¹ Although Magarrell uses the word “power” in her memo, I will use the term “authority” throughout this project to describe the concept that Magarrell seems to be referring to here. For the purposes of this project, I view the difference between the concepts as a matter of emphasis. I use the term “power” when I want to deemphasize human agency and emphasize the ways in which traditions and social forces shape individual and collective actions; I use the term “authority” to emphasize the ways in which individual and collective actors make use of traditions and work strategically and tactically with and against social forces.

Largely out of necessity, the Project established the Commission according to the second of the two models presented by Magarrell. The need to do so was the result of widespread lack of support for the truth and reconciliation process. Many truth commissions have the support of their governments and, thus, are granted at least some state-sponsored authority to carry out their respective mandates. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission is one example of a truth commission with considerable state-sponsored authority: through an act passed by the South African Parliament in 1995, the South African TRC was given the authority to “grant individualized amnesty, search premises and seize evidence, subpoena witnesses, and run a sophisticated witness-protection program” (Hayner 41). Unlike the South African TRC, the Greensboro TRC lacked the support of the government: the majority of the city officials of Greensboro were publicly opposed to the truth and reconciliation process; and, in April of 2005, the Greensboro city council voted not to endorse the work of the Commission (“City Council”).¹²

The importance of the question of authority to the Commission’s operation is also made apparent by Lisa Magarrell and the Commission’s communication director Joya Wesley in their co-authored book *Learning from Greensboro: Truth and Reconciliation in the United States*. In the book, Magarrell and Wesley describe, from a largely sympathetic perspective, the practical considerations surrounding the formation and operation of the Commission. Although the main purpose of the book is not to analyze how the Commission attempted to garner authority, the book serves as further evidence that this question was one of the central issues facing its advocates and members. Magarrell and Wesley write, for example, about the need to drum up public support for the process and the difficulties of engaging people, noting, “With no subpoena power or ability to offer immunity from legal action to entice people to come forward, one of the big questions was, ‘If we build it, will people come?’” (53-54). They also cite Sofia Macher, a former member of the Peruvian Commission, who, after visiting Greensboro in April of 2005, wrote, “The fact that the Greensboro TRC does not have official status

¹² The Commission’s mandate addresses this point as well: “The Commission will have no authority either to pursue criminal or civil claims or to grant immunity from such claims” (GTCRP, “Mandate”).

means that the legitimacy of its work depends solely on the community itself, and this is no easy task” (99).

In short, because Project members and commissioners lacked an endorsement from the city, they had to construct authority for the Commission in other ways, and one of the central aims of this dissertation is to explore how they attempted to do so.¹³ One reason that this dissertation’s central aim is important and, I think, compelling is that it involves looking at processes of authorization at the level of grassroots organizing. Within the discipline of rhetorical studies, the contributions of grassroots organizations to the mobilization and maintenance of larger social movements are too often overshadowed by scholars’ attention to famous speeches and orators, and there is an ongoing need both to understand such processes of authorization and to develop more nuanced ways to talk about them.

Another reason the central aim of this dissertation is important is that it promises to provide insights into the ways that subsequent attempts to seek social justice in Greensboro might be developed and implemented. Among citizens of Greensboro—both supporters and opponents of the truth and reconciliation process alike—there are few who maintain that racial and economic inequities in the city have been eliminated, and this study brings into relief tactics and strategies for authorizing future efforts to redress such inequalities. In this respect, this dissertation serves as a response to the commissioners’ call, during their Report Release Ceremony and in their *Final Report*, to read and discuss their findings, and to think critically and reflexively about the truth and reconciliation process.¹⁴

Studying the truth and reconciliation process in Greensboro using the lens of authority is also important given the many recent calls for truth commissions in the U.S.—many of which point to the Greensboro TRC as a model to emulate. In “The Altar of Truth,” for example, Joyce Hollyday argues that the truth-telling approach advocated by the Greensboro TRC should be a normative practice in the United States. Hollyday

¹³ It is worth noting that Stéphane Leman-Langlois and Clifford D. Shearing consider a similar question in their inquiry into the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. “Our focus,” they write, “is on this process of authorization [of the “truth” offered by the South African TRC] and its purposes and consequences” (223).

¹⁴ Aside from Magarrell and Wesley’s book, several local (and some national and international) news stories, and Adam Zucker’s documentary *Greensboro: Closer to the Truth*, very little has been written about the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission to date.

concludes her piece by noting, “We in the United States have our own history of ‘forced removals.’ Until we tell the whole truth about our genocidal policies toward native peoples, our enslavement of millions of Africans, Jim Crow segregation and lynchings, and the ongoing legacy of racism in this country, we are living a lie—and we will never heal. I invite all of us to do our own hard work of confessing what needs to be confessed—at local and national levels—seeking both truth and reconciliation” (23). Jill Williams, the former Executive Director of the Greensboro TRC, makes a similar point in her piece “Truth and Reconciliation Comes to the South.” Williams frames the Commission as a response to conflicting mythologies about November 3rd, describes the Commission’s institution and operation, sketches some of the public responses it elicited, touches on the Commission’s significant findings, and reflects on shortcomings and successes. Like Hollyday, Williams endorses the application of the model elsewhere in the United States, noting, “We are now in a time when some call on governments and other institutions to apologize for slavery, Jim Crow laws, and other symptoms of racism, and others, like Virginia state delegate Frank Hargrove, call on Black citizens to ‘get over it.’ A grassroots truth and reconciliation process is a promising tool for creating the space for engaging everyone in these difficult discussions without having to wait for another national tragedy to force us to do so.” Chelsea Marshall’s thesis “Transitional Justice in ‘Non-Transitioning’ Societies: Evaluating the Success of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission” makes similar claims: one of Marshall’s primary arguments throughout her project is that the truth commission model can be applied in a non-transitional society (18, 39).¹⁵ Finally, civil rights lawyer Sherrilyn Ifill mentions the Greensboro TRC in the final pages of her book *On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the Twenty-first Century*. Throughout *On the Courthouse Lawn*, Ifill argues that communities dealing with the legacy of lynching should “take up the project of truth-telling and reconciliation” to address this legacy (xix). In response to those making these calls for truth commissions elsewhere in the U.S. (as well as those studying them), this dissertation’s exploration of the ways in which the Greensboro TRC garnered authority to carry out its mandate in the Greensboro community offers insights

¹⁵ In constructing this argument, she makes a strikingly similar case to the Commission itself—a fact I return to in the fifth chapter of my project.

about how these institutions function as tools to bring about social change and suggests strategies for implementing these institutions effectively elsewhere (in addition to providing insights about what to avoid when doing so). To those looking specifically to the Greensboro TRC as a model for action in other U.S. communities, my study may help to clarify what that might look like, i.e., what about the Greensboro TRC should—and, perhaps, should not—be modeled.

Since the formation and operation of the Greensboro TRC, other truth commissions have already been implemented in the United States. There have been two recent, short-term truth commissions held in the U.S. to address questions of poverty in this country as well as at least one truth commission that, while based out of Liberia, established a U.S. branch to collect statements from Liberians living in the U.S. The implementation of these truth commissions suggests that transitional justice, which heretofore has been practiced primarily in South America and Africa, may be emerging as a viable means of social action in the U.S. But given the U.S. social and political context, it is unlikely that the field of transitional justice will look the same or develop along the same lines as it did elsewhere. Many scholars think that the kind of political reconciliation often called for by truth commissions is incompatible with liberalism (Philpott); and, should these scholars be correct in their assessment, it is unlikely that our national government will institute a truth commission in the near future—or, perhaps more precisely, it is unlikely that our national government will institute a truth commission like those in South America and Africa in the near future. Looking at how the Greensboro TRC was authorized to act provides some indications about how the field of transitional justice is developing (and may continue to develop) in this context.

How, then, did the members of the Project and the commissioners attempt to construct authority for the Commission? The pragmatic answer to this question is that they canvassed for support for the Commission in the Greensboro community. The Commission's architects circulated a petition throughout the community prior to the Commission's installation, asking individuals to pledge their support for the truth and reconciliation process, and they also collected letters of support from prominent individuals within and outside of the Greensboro community, several of which were eventually posted on the Commission's website. Another of their important attempts to

garner authority for the Commission was the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, held in 2004, to install the commissioners. Comprised of speeches, testimonies, prayers, and song, the ceremony helped to constitute the grounds upon which commissioners would act. Once the Commission itself had been established, commissioners conducted a door-to-door campaign, sponsored a local television program called “TRC Talk,” published a weekly newsletter, and set up a blog where community members could ask questions about the Commission and dialogue with them about their work. They also petitioned members of the Greensboro community for written statements about the events of November 3rd, 1979 and sponsored community-wide forums about reconciliation. The commissioners’ most important events in its bids for authority were its three public hearings and its Report Release Ceremony, in which it released its findings to the public.

While this list of canvassing practices provides a rough outline of the ways that the Project and the commissioners worked to garner authority for the Commission, it says little about the specific ways they made their case for the Commission to the Greensboro community. For a more thorough answer that highlights the complexities of the Commission’s attempts at authorization, it is necessary to look closely at these practices; and, given that most of these practices are primarily discursive in nature, one way to answer the question in greater depth and clarity is to interrogate what was said and written in these instances. To do so, I turn to rhetorical studies—an academic discipline well suited to answer the questions I have posed. It is well suited, in part, because of rhetoric’s traditional associations with persuasion—an activity that, as Lisa Magarrell’s aforementioned memo highlights, is one of the key ways that truth commissions lacking state-sponsored authority garner authority for themselves. But the profit of turning to rhetorical studies goes well beyond rhetoric’s affiliations with persuasion: rhetorical studies provides a critical approach with which to explore the myriad ways—strategic and tactical, conscious and unconscious—that rhetors in Greensboro position themselves in relation to their audiences in their attempts to construct authority. These resources allow me to attend both to the concrete performances between Greensboro rhetors and their audiences as well as to the larger social forces that shape and are shaped by these performances.

Project Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Methodology

To introduce this project's methodological and theoretical frameworks, it is productive to sketch, briefly, two different approaches to rhetorical criticism: the close reading approach of Michael Leff and the critical rhetoric approach of Michael McGee.¹⁶ Sketching these two approaches—which Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar has aptly described as “competing”—is productive because it brings into relief an important debate over methodology in the field of rhetorical studies, in which the definition of rhetoric is contested, as is the nature of the object of critical analysis, the role of human agency in rhetorical production, and the perceived relationship between theory and method (“Object” 290). This discussion sets the stage for my own approach to reading the texts surrounding the operation of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Michael McGee, and many practitioners of critical rhetoric, conceptualize their endeavor as a kind of practice or performance in which the primary aim of the critic is to create possibilities for emancipation by exposing the ways in which power circulates in discourse and marginalizes individuals and groups (Jasinski, “Critical Rhetoric” 117, 122). To accomplish this aim, practitioners of critical rhetoric typically investigate the traces of what Michel Foucault refers to as discursive formations—i.e., those configurations of “practices and institutions that produce knowledge claims that the system of power finds useful”—to expose their logic (Erickson 124).¹⁷ The primary aim for Michael Leff, and other proponents of close reading working in the field of rhetorical studies, is to understand how the construction of a given text “invites a reconstruction of the events [or, more broadly, the world] to which it refers” (Leff, “Textual Criticism” 554). Close readers accomplish this aim by scrutinizing the grammatical moves and word choices; the clause, sentence, and paragraph structures; the patterns of style and

¹⁶ Dilip Gaonkar focuses on these two approaches in his article “Object and Method in Rhetorical Criticism: From Wichelns to Leff and McGee,” which appeared in the *Western Journal of Speech Communication*'s special issue on rhetorical criticism. It is worth noting that the two approaches I present here were developed in the late eighties and early nineties and do not necessarily reflect the current views of their proponents. However, this historically-situated debate offers a productive starting point for introducing my own methods, and explaining the rationale for them.

¹⁷ Erickson cites from S. Wolin's definition of discursive formations here (Wolin 184).

argument; and the figures of speech and thought that unfold within the text (Jasinski, “Close Reading” 93).¹⁸

As even these brief overviews of critical rhetoric and close reading suggest, Leff and McGee have two very different understandings about their objects of study, i.e., about the nature of the “text.” For Leff, texts are a “field of action,” with identifiable boundaries, where aesthetic form and representational content intersect; whereas, for McGee, texts are the “fragments” or “residues” of discursive formations (Jasinski, “Text” 571-573).¹⁹ Put another way, Leff’s texts are “constructed products” to be unpacked, while McGee’s are “constitutive processes” to be uncovered and/or reconstructed (Gaonkar, “Object” 290-291). These differences with regard to the nature of the text point to a larger difference between Leff and McGee regarding the definition of rhetoric itself: Leff understands rhetoric to be an “intentional art,” while McGee views it as an “extensional power” (Leff, “Things” 225). This difference is not insignificant, especially with regard to questions about agency.²⁰ In Leff’s approach, rhetors are agents who use rhetoric—both strategically and aesthetically—to respond to situational exigencies and accomplish particular purposes. McGee’s critical rhetoric, however, calls such agency into question. For McGee, and many proponents of critical rhetoric, rhetors are not agentive; rather, their subjectivities are constituted in and through discursive formations, which shape their so-called identities and actions. Rhetors, in McGee’s view, serve as points of articulation for the discourse formations that they inhabit. Finally, Leff’s close reading and McGee’s critical rhetoric differ on the starting point for critical inquiry.

¹⁸ Gaonkar’s has productive described close reading as “neither an engaging paraphrase of what is ‘said’ nor a laborious cataloguing (troponomy) of formal features. The positive stress on the interpretative act suggests that ‘close reading’ is actually a mode of critical writing that aspires to reconstitute the text. And such reconstitution is attempted and sometimes achieved through an interpretative act of making explicit ‘the rhetorical dynamics implicit within’ the text. Thus, textual criticism is a species of grounded interpretation” (Gaonkar, “Object” 312).

¹⁹ This description of Leff and McGee’s conceptualizations of the “text” is, of course, a simplification. For more on this topic, see Jasinski, “Text” 569-575.

²⁰ According to Leff, these divergent understandings of rhetoric point to “a contemporary embodiment of a persistent problem rooted in Western thought about rhetorical practice” (“Things” 225), and the difference appears in multiple language-oriented disciplines, albeit in a variety of manifestations: intrinsic art and extrinsic power (Leff, “Things”), discursive practice and discursive formation (Foucault), little-d discourse and big-D Discourse (Gee; Johnstone), linguistic utterance and the linguistic field (Bourdieu), local talk and global social process (Erickson). And while it may be a gross oversimplification to suggest that all of these binaries are actually versions of the same binary, the pairings do all engender similar arguments in their respective fields, including the debate over volunteerism and determinism (Erickson 112).

McGee's critical rhetoric, like much of postmodern critical practice, assumes the impossibility of an atheoretical stance. The critic should, therefore, explicitly articulate the theoretical presuppositions informing his or her inquiry. Leff's close reading, at least in its earliest conceptions, does not take as its starting point a theoretical orientation. In his early descriptions of the practice, Leff is skeptical about the possibility that one can "apprehend (or redescribe) rhetorical phenomena exclusively in the meta-language of theory" (Gaonkar, "Object 311").²¹ Leff claims that theory-building should not precede the analysis of the rhetorical text; that is, close reading begins not with abstract rhetorical theory but "with a severely empirical orientation" (Leff, "Textual Criticism" 547). Leff's claim that the critic's first orientation is empirical does not mean that he eschews theory entirely: since close reading "necessarily entails principles or categories 'not native to the original,' it requires an exercise of judgment at some level of abstraction, and it eventuates in something we might call *theoretical understanding of the particular case*" (547). In other words, theory in Leff's schema is not discarded but relocated and redefined: it is rendered contingent upon the specificity of the rhetorical text under consideration—a kind of "generalization within cases" (551). Close reading, then, eventuates in a double boon: it "not only leads to a richer understanding of the particular text but also contributes to, in Gaonkar's terms, 'the thickening of [theoretical] concepts through grounded critical readings'" (Jasinski, "Close Reading" 94).

My approach tends toward the approach to rhetorical criticism advocated by Leff.²² I say *tends toward* here because, although my project is comprised primarily of close readings, I also find value in and make some gestures toward critical rhetoric. Instead of affirming the validity of one approach and denying the validity of the other, I take a more pragmatic tack, maintaining that both close reading and critical rhetoric have merit, depending on the nature of one's research endeavors.

²¹ About Leff's position Gaonkar notes, "Rhetoric is an incomplete art in that it cannot achieve theoretical formalization beyond a certain point... The peculiar nature of the rhetorical art can be understood only in and through its local discursive manifestations. In Leff's words, rhetoric is 'a universal activity that finds its habitation only in the particular.' As a global process (conceived either as argument or as style), rhetoric is susceptible to theoretical abstraction and formalization" (311).

²² For more on close reading (which is also referred to as "textual analysis" or "textual criticism"), see Jasinski, "Close Reading"; Burghardt; Leff, "Textual Criticism." "Things," and "The Idea"; and Lucas. For more examples of close reading, see Leff and Sachs (fn. 23).

The merit of close reading for the present project is grounded, in part, in the perceived need among scholars studying truth commissions for more studies that interrogate the actual texts—in Leff’s sense of the word—surrounding truth commissions. This need stems from the fact that there are a limited number of scholars that take a language-oriented approach to the study of truth commissions; and, among those that do take a language-oriented approach, most focus on the philosophical and/or theoretical issues surrounding truth commissions to the neglect of empirical work and the close reading of actual texts.²³ Teresa Godwin Phelps speaks to this point in her book *Shattered Voices*: “[T]here is,” she writes, “much that *Shattered Voices* does *not* do: it does not take on the many-headed hydra question of what ‘truth’ is in truth reports. . . . Nor does it investigate actual victim responses to truth reports. Although I know and have talked to some victims, I purposely left this book theoretical. Empirical work is a welcome next step, as is an investigation of other ways in which countries continue to advance the discussion of the past—through websites and art, for example” (179-180). My turn to close reading is one attempt to meet the need for such studies.

Another reason I emphasize a close reading approach has to do with my own political commitments. One of the Greensboro TRC’s primary aims was to help redress inequalities in the Greensboro community; and, given my own sympathies toward this aim, I thought it important to adopt a methodology that acknowledges the worth of those individuals whose speech and writing I’m analyzing and validates their words. Leff’s close reading, with its affirmation of human agency and its view of texts as “fields of action,” seemed to me to be more generous in this regard than McGee’s critical rhetoric, with its decentered subjectivities and textual fragments.²⁴ Moreover, in a project

²³ For examples of language-oriented studies of truth commissions that take a more philosophical/theoretical approach, see Phelps or the works of Doxtader.

²⁴ Note that this assessment of critical rhetoric and close reading is certainly not true in every case. In situations where rhetoric is more hegemonic and more oppressive than it is in the case of the Greensboro TRC, McGee’s critical rhetoric approach might be actually be more generous toward human agents, to the extent that it exposes ways in which individuals have been marginalized and creates conditions for the redress of this marginalization. It is also worth noting that most postmodern critical theorists allow at least *some* space in their theories for agency amidst the constraints of global social forces. Maurice Charland, for one, argues that, despite the fact that rhetoric constitutes us as subjects, such subjectivities are contested. We are interpellated—or hailed—by multiple constitutive rhetorics, which contain contradictory subject positions that “place a strain upon identification with a given subject position and render possible a subject’s rearticulation” (142). In addition to Charland’s work, see Bourdieu on heretical discourse (128-

exploring how the Commission attempted to garner authority, I did not think it right to detract from that authority by taking on an approach that positioned the commissioners and their words as the product of forces beyond their control: I would rather err on the side of helping contribute to the Commission's authority than on the side of helping detract from it. These admissions do not mean that all of my readings are uncritical of and sympathetic toward the rhetorical activity surrounding the Commission—they are not. Nor are they meant to suggest that larger social and political forces never shaped the Commission's identity and actions—I believe they often did and attempt to account for this in what follows. However, these admissions do mean that, throughout this dissertation, I refer to members of the Project and the commissioners as rhetorical actors and view their words not simply as the residue of discursive formations but as strategic and tactical products. (It is, in part, to familiarize more people with the work of the Greensboro TRC that I have chosen to cite a few long passages of text throughout this project. Also, unless necessary to my analysis, I have for similar reasons purposefully avoided “close transcriptions,” many of which, in my opinion, often present speakers as less articulate or cogent than listening to their speech warrants.²⁵)

A third reason I've chosen to emphasize the close reading approach is that I find its dual functions compelling. Close reading is a means by which one can better one's understanding of a particular case, while simultaneously helping to develop more robust accounts of theoretical concepts as they get worked out in practice. My general aims in each chapter of this project, therefore, are twofold: I hope to contribute to the current understanding of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission (and, by extension, the field of transitional justice) and to contribute to the “the thickening of [theoretical] concepts through grounded critical readings” (Gaonkar, “Oratorical” 270). Some of the concepts and types of arguments that my study helps rhetoricians understand include (but are not limited to) middle ground arguments, constitutive rhetoric, organizational rhetoric, definitional arguments, and—most importantly—*ethos*.

129); Butler on repetition (13-14); de Certeau on *la perruque* (25, 29); Foucault on commentary (221); and Hariman on decorum (*Political* 180).

²⁵ I do not, for example, typically include instances of stuttering or words like “um” and “uh” in my transcription. Occasionally I insert additions in brackets to clarify the meaning of what is said.

Having highlighted my rationale for favoring close reading in this project, I want to acknowledge two problems with the approach, as least as I've articulated it above. First, I take issue with the possibility, expressed by Leff in his early conceptions of close reading, that an empirical orientation can precede a theoretical one.²⁶ In this regard, I agree with proponents of critical rhetoric who maintain that all critics approach their inquiries with particular biases and that these should be stated as explicitly as possible. Second, Leff's close reading runs the risk of producing a formalistic and overly aesthetic account that fails to consider the ways that larger social forces shape (and, for that matter, are shaped by) the texts it explores.²⁷ This problem stems from privileging rhetoric as intentional art and ignoring the possibility that rhetoric also functions, like McGee suggests, as an extensional power. Rhetorical criticism is better served by acknowledging that both Leff's rhetoric-as-intentional art and McGee's rhetoric-as-extensional-power have some validity, and that Leff's text-as-constructed-product and McGee's text-as-constitutive-process should not be conceptualized as contested ways of defining the text but rather as two different—mutually constitutive—phenomena. Critical approaches that take both Leff's and McGee's objects of study into account and attempt to explore the ways in which they shape and are shaped by one another, are particularly generative.²⁸ To address both of these problems simultaneously, I next articulate the theoretical framework informing this study's close readings.

²⁶ In his later work, Leff, too, acknowledges this point, admitting that his approach “does not simply promote a direct encounter with rhetorical texts, but that it involves something very like a theory of rhetorical reading” (“Things” 223). For my part, I conceptualize the relationship between theory and method in terms of what others have called the “hermeneutic circle.” That is, our methods of rhetorical criticism are always based on some prior rhetorical theory, which itself gets redefined and reconceptualized as we practice rhetorical criticism, and so on.

²⁷ Leff acknowledges this problem in his later work as well. He writes, “In my version of textual criticism, the text becomes stabilized as a field of rhetorical action through a calculus that subsumes its extensional thrust within its intentional dynamics. This allows for a synthetic judgment about particular cases, but it also tends to fix the particular text outside the larger field of intertextual developments. The narrowing of focus, I believe, has some heuristic and pedagogical advantages, but it tends to deflect attention from the scenes of controversy out of which these texts arise and for which they are made. Thus, the project is incomplete on its own terms, since it does not accommodate issues of power and social circumstance that decisively influence the focal object of study” (“Things” 226).

²⁸ My approach is by no means novel. According to Leff, many scholars have attempted to negotiate or to merge “the two opposing orientations” (“Things” 225-226).

Theoretical Framework

In his article “Inventing Authority: Bill Clinton, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Orchestration of Rhetorical Traditions,” Professor of Speech Communication John Murphy develops a theoretical framework that facilitates close readings which negotiate between the tensions of rhetoric-as-intentional-art and rhetoric-as-extensional-power and texts-as-constitutive-processes and texts-as-constructed-products.²⁹ This dissertation draws upon Murphy’s theoretical framework, not only because it allows the critic to negotiate these tensions but also because it offers a means of conceptualizing how authority is derived rhetorically. In the article, Murphy develops a conceptual vocabulary that describes the tension between texts-as-constitutive-processes and texts-as-constructed-products: he refers to the former as rhetorical traditions and the latter as performances. Drawing upon Thomas Farrell’s description, Murphy defines rhetorical traditions as “common patterns of language use” that are “‘marked by characteristic figurative and argumentative devices,’ and shaped by dialogic interactions in which actors share, repeat, critique, revise and satirize the tradition itself” (72). Such patterns of language use exist solely as “linguistic potentialities” and are only “manifested” in and through the performances (72).³⁰ Rhetorical performances are, much like Leff’s texts, constructed products (and fields of action); however, they are implicated in the constitutive processes of rhetorical traditions.

²⁹ As Leff revised his thinking about close reading, he has also developed a framework with which to negotiate these tensions. He argues that rhetorical production and interpretation are not distinct practices: rhetorical production is always only made possible by interpretation of prior texts—an “intertextual network,” which, Leff says, “constitutes a tradition” (Leff, “The Idea” 93). This insight implies that the practice of close reading involves tracing how texts under investigation make use of the resources of intertextual networks to make meaning (Leff, “Idea” 93; See also Jasinski, “Close Reading” 95). One strategy that Leff advocates for bringing into relief the ways in which texts draw upon intertextual networks is to focus on controversy—or “oppositional discourse” (Leff “Things” 229). (For yet another strategy, see the work by Leff and Sachs on the concept of iconicity as an interpretative strategy.) By looking at controversies as embodied in texts, critics are able to expose “the issues of power and situated interest that inform their whole development” (229-230). This approach, says Leff, “pushes” close readers beyond texts-as-constructed-products as they identify the intertextual networks that rhetors make use of to produce their texts (Leff, “Things” 228; Jasinski, “Close Reading” 95).

³⁰ For more on rhetorical traditions, see Jasinski, “Instrumentalism” 195-224. According to Jasinski, the central “hermeneutic burden” for the rhetorical critic studying rhetorical traditions is “[u]nderstanding how performative traditions ‘actually function’ in the field of textual action” (216). This statement accurately describes what I am attempting to do in each of the chapters of this project.

Rhetorical traditions provide individuals with a set of “enabling constraints” for their performances.³¹ On the one hand, Murphy notes that rhetorical traditions “‘imply (when accepted) certain notions of preferable behavior’” and “organize the ‘social knowledge’ of communities” (72). In other words, rhetorical traditions are in some sense constitutive of individuals’ identities and actions. On the other hand, Murphy emphasizes that these patterns of language use do not simply constrain but also enable individuals to act (71-72). Murphy supports the claim that rhetorical traditions do not simply constrain but also enable action by describing such traditions in terms of Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept heteroglossia:

Even the most constraining of traditions...partake of the multiple languages (heteroglossia) and voices (polyphony) of the social world (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 259-422). Rhetorical traditions exist in history; they shape and share the ambiguities of historical experience and communal life. As a result, there are layered and dissonant voices within and between traditions. Traditions ‘speak’ to each other and to pressing problems of the day. No one tradition can finalize the world or itself. (72-73)

Because rhetorical traditions themselves “partake of multiple languages” and display “layered and dissonant voices,” they never totally constrain or discipline individuals, who are enabled to perform rhetorical traditions in new configurations to meet the demands of new contexts. Rhetorical traditions provide individuals with resources for invention, where invention is understood to be the “reaccentuation” of the resources of rhetorical traditions “into coherent artistic representations of community life in contingent circumstances” (71, 74-75).

Reaccentuation—as I conceptualize the term and use it throughout this project— involves invoking, in a rhetorical performance, any of the characteristic figurative and argumentative devices that comprise one or more rhetorical traditions and adapting (or even transforming) these devices through selection, arrangement, emphasis, evaluation, etc., in order to bring them to bear on current circumstances (Murphy 74-75; Bakhtin 423). When rhetors reaccentuate the elements of a rhetorical tradition or traditions, they put their own “‘imprint’ on prior discourse” without totally erasing the prior discourse, calling forth and making use of facets of the tradition “to accomplish different purposes from those for which the materials were originally intended” (Murphy 74, Erickson

³¹ The phrase “enabling constraints” comes from Judith Butler (16).

166).³² The concept of reaccentuation affirms the possibility of human agency, seeing the rhetor as a kind of *bricoleur*, an agent “who acts by making do or improvising with the limited materials that are available in a particular situation. The rhetor is a language ‘tinkerer’ pasting together bits of linguistic material and persuasive strategy”—taken from rhetorical traditions—“to meet the demands of the occasion” (Jasinski, “Invention” 329).³³

Thus Murphy’s framework, unlike many postmodern critical approaches, does not attempt to completely do away with the notion of the author. Nor does it attempt to do away with author’s etymological cousin—authority. In fact, Murphy’s framework provides a means of conceptualizing how authority is derived rhetorically. Authority, says Murphy, “derives from the reaccentuation of rhetorical traditions in a performative display of practical reason”; and, drawing again upon Thomas Farrell, he adds that “[s]uch a view sees authority ‘as a variation of *ethos*,’ in which actors reaccentuate, that is, adapt, modify, and position in the ‘open-ended present’ ...the wisdom of the past” (75). Murphy’s explanation of how rhetors derive authority is consistent with the term’s etymology (76). Authority comes from the Latin *auctōritas*—a word that, as Lynn Clarke notes (citing Hannah Arendt), “embodied a respect for ‘tradition,’ an interest in preserving...the ‘sacred founding’ of the Roman body politic” (2). But *auctōritas* does not simply involve passively respecting and preserving tradition; the term is also closely related to the verb *augere* (meaning “to augment”) and often entailed notions of “producing, production, [and] invention” and “deliberate judgment” as well (Arendt 121-122; Clarke 2). Murphy’s explanation takes all of these facets of *auctōritas* into account.

However, although I agree with Murphy that authority “derives from the reaccentuation of rhetorical traditions,” I find his emphasis on performances of practical reason—or *phronesis*—to be limiting. Reaccentuating rhetorical traditions in a performative display of practical reason is indeed one way for a rhetor to establish authority rhetorically, but there are many other types of performances that also may

³² My definition of “reaccentuation” includes three components: there is an *action* (elements of a rhetorical tradition are invoked in performance), which involves *innovation* (the elements are adapted or transformed), in order to accomplish a *contextually defined purpose*.

³³ For more on the figure of the *bricoleur*, see Erickson 165-167. Another resource for exploring the actions of the *bricoleur* is Michel DeCerteau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life*, which grounds human action in “making do” and “making use” (29-42).

establish authority. Rhetors may, for instance, establish authority rhetorically when they reaccentuate rhetorical traditions in their performances to establish moral character (*arête*) or goodwill (*eunoia*). For Aristotle, moral character and goodwill were, along with practical reason, the three components to *ethos*; and, while my understanding of *ethos* differs from the threefold schema of Aristotle, I would like to suggest that one productive way to broaden Murphy's claims about authority is to move beyond considerations of performances of practical reason to performances of *ethos* more generally (Aristotle 37-38, 120).³⁴ Building on Murphy's explanation, then, I maintain that authority—which, as I defined it earlier, consists of the warrants, grounds, or justifications for an entity's actions or claims—may be derived rhetorically as rhetors reaccentuate rhetorical traditions in performances of *ethos*.

Ethos is typically translated from Greek into English as “character”; however, many scholars have noted that this translation does not do justice to the term's etymology.³⁵ Both Michael Hyde and S. Michael Halloran highlight that the ancient Greeks frequently used the term to refer to a “dwelling place” or “habitual gathering place” (Hyde xiii; Halloran 60). Nedra Reynolds, too, calls our attention to similar uses of the term: citing Arthur Miller's previous work, she notes that, in addition to “character,” the Greek roots of *ethos* are “habit” and “custom” (327). The singular form of the term, she continues, referred to “an accustomed place,” while the plural often referred to one's “haunts or abodes” (328). The recovery of these etymological facets of the term prompts Reynolds to note that *ethos* “encompasses the individual agent as well as the location or position from which that person speaks or writes” (326). She elaborates on this notion further in an article coauthored with Susan Jarrett. They write that it “is precisely the concept of *ethos* in rhetoric that theorizes the positionality in rhetoric”

³⁴ Warranting this move is the fact that many scholars working in the field of rhetorical studies conceptualize a close relationship between authority and *ethos*, although they articulate this relationship in many different ways. S. Michael Halloran, for example, simply equates the two when he remarks, “In its simplest form, *ethos* is what we might call the argument from authority” (60). Thomas B. Farrell expresses the relation between *ethos* and authority somewhat differently from Halloran, calling authority a “variation of *ethos*” (290). And Nedra Reynolds has highlighted the “potential of *ethos*...to examine how writers establish authority and enact responsibility from positions not traditionally considered authoritative” (326). See also Murphy 75; and Reynolds 334.

³⁵ For example, see Halloran; Reynolds; Jarratt and Reynolds; and Davis and Gross.

(47).³⁶ Later in the article, they add that “the rhetorical practice of *ethos* marks the position of the self, to the admittedly limited extent that it can be articulated by the author, making no claim that this speaking self is completely known or stable...*ethos* is the admission of a standpoint, with the understanding that other standpoints exist and that they change over time” (53).

Consistent with these contemporary reflections on *ethos*, I define the term as the rhetor’s subject position as it is constructed in and through his or her (and occasionally others’) rhetorical performances. Describing *ethos* in terms of subject positions brings into relief the ways in which it is both a product of larger social and political forces (i.e., rhetors *are positioned* by the constitutive processes of rhetorical traditions) as well as an active response to the contingent circumstances of a given rhetorical situation (i.e., rhetors *position themselves* in their rhetorical performances) (Murphy 74).³⁷ And it is by constructing such positions, by situating themselves in the midst of larger traditions and in the midst of their particular contexts, that rhetors establish and reinforce the warrants, grounds, and justifications for their actions and claims, i.e., their authority.

In describing my theoretical framework, I am aware of a concern about rhetorical theory recently raised by Dilip Gaonkar in the edited volume *Rhetorical Hermeneutics: Inventions and Interpretation in the Age of Science*. Gaonkar contends that rhetorical theory may be inadequate as a hermeneutic, thereby calling into question the very possibility of approaches to rhetorical criticism, like close reading and critical rhetoric (“Idea” 33). The reason rhetorical theory may be inadequate, at least in its present state, is because it is a “thin” and “abstract” theory: it does not provide critics with sufficient constraints to produce verifiable or contestable claims. This dissertation might be seen as a response to Gaonkar’s concerns about the ability of rhetorical theory to function as an interpretative paradigm.³⁸ For one thing, I aim in each chapter to “thicken” rhetorical concepts “through grounded critical readings”—as much close reading tries to do (Jasinski, “Close Reading” 94). I also answer Gaonkar’s critique by making an

³⁶ Related to this point, Davis and Gross write: “For many contemporary cultural critics and Marxist theorists, concepts such as “subalternity,” “positionality,” and “cultural discourse” indicate precisely such a strong rediscovery of the social relation of *ethos*” (6).

³⁷ Such an approach some affinities with positioning theory, which have also recently emerged within the field of discursive psychology. See Davis and Harre; and Harre and Slocum.

³⁸ This critique of rhetorical theory as an interpretative paradigm is also challenged—persuasively, I think—by many of the volume’s other contributors, including James Jasinski.

interdisciplinary move: from time to time throughout my analysis, I draw upon the interpretative tools offered by systemic functional linguistics (SFL) to unpack how grammatical resources are used to realize *ethos*. SFL is not a “thin” theory of language.³⁹ Rather, it provides a robust framework with which to interpret texts, and I make use of this framework and its nuanced vocabulary—especially when there is a need to look at texts at and below the level of the clause.⁴⁰ Drawing upon the framework of SFL is also useful because it allows me to make claims about texts that are contestable and may be verified by others.

SFL was developed by M.A.K. Halliday, who maintained that all languages are used to realize three, interrelated metafunctions: “Any language use serves simultaneously to construct some aspect of experience, to negotiate relationship, and to organize the language successfully so that it realizes a satisfactory message” (Christie 11). J.R. Martin and David Rose note that “these three functions of language are interwoven with each other, so that we can achieve all three social functions simultaneously” (7). But the ways in which each of these three metafunctions are achieved can be studied independently of the other two, and, in this project, I am primarily (though not exclusively) concerned with the ways that rhetors in Greensboro use language to enact and negotiate relationships—that is, realize the interpersonal metafunction. According to Halliday, grammatical resources which serve the interpersonal metafunction allow a speaker or writer to use “language as the means of his [or her] own intrusion into the speech event: the expression of his comments, his attitudes, and evaluations, and also of the relationship that he sets up between himself and the listener—in particular, the communication role that he adopts, of informing, questioning, greeting, persuading, and the like” (Halliday 91-92). This description resonates with my definition of *ethos*, suggesting that the frameworks used to demonstrate how this metafunction is realized may be used effectively to unpack how *ethos* is constructed.

³⁹ As Martin and Rose note, “SFL has been described as an ‘extravagant’ theory” (3).

⁴⁰ This approach is not inconsistent with work in the field of rhetorical studies by Slagell and Lucas, who, as Lucas puts it, “probe...discourse microscopically—at the level of the sentence, phrase, word, and syllable” (564).

Transitional Justice

With this framework in place, I turn to the field of transitional justice. Throughout my close readings of the rhetorical performances of the Greensboro TRC, one of my underlying presuppositions is that there is a rhetorical tradition or—perhaps more accurately, given the breadth of the field—a set of rhetorical traditions circulating within the field of transitional justice. In other words, I take as a given that, in the activities and inquiries that comprise the field of transitional justice, there are “common patterns of language use...marked by characteristic figurative and argumentative devices” (Murphy 72). With regard to truth commissions, these patterns and characteristic devices include commonplaces (truth-telling is necessary for reconciliation); political styles (the repentant perpetrator, the forgiving victim); speech acts (the confession, the testimony); acts of dissociation (distinguishing “retributive justice” from “restorative justice”) and metaphors (the bridge, the rainbow). They also have their own idioms (phrases like “come to terms with”) and ideographs (terms like reconciliation, truth, justice); genres (the public hearing, the final report, the report release ceremony); and even, as rhetorician Philippe-Joseph Salazar’s book *An African Athens* so aptly demonstrates, master orators (the two most prominent of which are Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela). These characteristic ways of using language, as with other rhetorical traditions, are only ever realized in rhetorical performances, which shape and are shaped by the traditions.

Viewing the field of transitional justice with a language-oriented lens, as I do in this dissertation, is not common, as a brief overview of the scholarship of the field suggests.⁴¹ Studies of the practices of transitional justice abound and tend to fall into one of two categories: predominately descriptive accounts (with some normative elements) or predominantly normative accounts (with some descriptive elements).⁴² Accounts that are predominantly descriptive typically catalogue the practices of transitional justice, as well

⁴¹ Kritz’s collection is essential for understanding the field of transitional justice. Other good collections are McAdams; and Bassiouni. For additional materials on transitional justice, see Hayner (255, fn. 3).

⁴² This distinction is, of course, somewhat artificial: *all* descriptive accounts involve choices about what to describe and what not to describe and are, therefore, normative. It is worth noting that, regarding the scholarship on truth commissions in particular, Stéphane Leman-Langlois and Clifford D. Shearing distinguish between “three broad types”: normative or jurisprudential analysis, ‘therapeutic’ evaluations, and descriptive accounts (223). Most therapeutic evaluations, however, tend to double as normative accounts.

as their origins and effects. They often do so by focusing on one or more case studies, an approach that lends itself to comparative analysis and frequently results in a kind of typology of transitional justice practices.⁴³ Accounts that are predominantly normative go one step further: they develop a set of criteria that is used to evaluate past transitional justice practices and guide the subsequent actions of countries undergoing transformations toward democracy as well as the international community's response to those countries.⁴⁴ The criteria for appraising transitional justice practices are often based upon ethical standards (e.g., are the practices right, moral?), legal precedent (e.g., are the practices consistent with international human rights and humanitarian law?), practical constraints (e.g., are the practices feasible, given the political and economic circumstances of the country?), the potential effects on liberalization (e.g., do the practices promote democratic ideas?), or some combination of these (e.g., what should humanitarian law look like given the practical constraints of a given transition?).

Such studies have been instrumental in exploring and assessing the practices of transitional justice and have certainly been invaluable to emerging democracies as they reckon with their pasts and shape their futures. They are also noteworthy for their interdisciplinarity: it is not uncommon, for example, for a given study to explore political, legal, and ethical questions simultaneously. What most of these studies do not typically do, however, is utilize language-oriented theoretical frameworks to study the practices of transitional justice. Of the many studies into the practices of transitional justice, legal, political, and ethical approaches tend to predominate, as do historical and journalistic approaches; rhetorical and/or linguistic approaches are not as common. On a related note,

⁴³ For predominately descriptive accounts of transitional justice, see Elster; Minow; and Doxtader and Villa-Vicencio. Regarding truth commissions in particular, Pricilla Hayner's *Unspeakable Truths* remains one of the most comprehensive descriptive accounts to date. Hayner describes the purposes for truth commissions, surveys twenty-one commissions, and considers some of the key issues surrounding truth commissions as they have arisen in various cases.

⁴⁴ A few examples of attempts to develop normative frameworks for transitional justice include Aukerman; Crocker, "Transitional"; Crocker, "Reckoning"; and Zalaquett. Other normative accounts in the field of transitional justice include Mark Amstutz's call for political forgiveness as a strategy of transitional justice in *The Healing of Nations: The Promise and Limits of Political Forgiveness*; Russell Daye's development of a model of political forgiveness based on the transition in South Africa in *Political Forgiveness: Lessons from South Africa*; and Erik Posner and Adrian Vermeule's assertion that recent scholarship mistakenly treats transitional justice as distinct from ordinary justice and lawmaking as it occurs in democracies in "Transitional Justice as Ordinary Justice." A few of the many studies that advocate the TRC model as a means of dealing with human rights abuses include Garkawe; and van Zyl. For a less enthusiastic view of truth commissions as a means of addressing human rights abuses, see Landsman.

many studies of transitional justice focus on the *large-scale* strategies or policies that past regimes have employed to address past legacies, including amnesty, historical inquiry and truth telling, reparations, purges (i.e., lustration), and trials (Amstutz 18). These strategies are frequently discussed in relation to their ability or lack of ability to bring about democracy as well as other perceived normative goods, including retribution, justice, official acknowledgment, reconciliation, and forgiveness. They are not typically discussed with regards to the myriad rhetorical performances constituting and underlying them.

But a few studies do utilize language-oriented lenses, do take a sustained look at the rhetorical performances constituting and underlying the large-scale practices of transitional justice. Though these language-oriented studies do not explicitly refer to the “rhetorical traditions” of the field of transitional justice, they provide grounds for the presupposition of this project that there are rhetorical traditions circulating within the field of transitional justice, as well as some additional insights regarding the nature of these rhetorical traditions themselves.

Ruti Teitel, for example, has reflected on the narrative patterns—especially with regard to national or societal narratives—that circulate in the field of transitional justice. He writes, “Transitional narratives follow a distinct rhetorical form: beginning in tragedy, they end on a comic or romantic mode” (“Liberal,” 252). Unlike “classic” tragic tales in which the revelation of knowledge foretells the demise of one or more characters, in narratives of transition “the revelation of knowledge actually makes a [positive] difference. The country’s past suffering is...reversed, leading to a happy ending of peace and reconciliation” (“Liberal,” 252). He goes on to add, “Transitional narratives have a distinct structure. Their revelations of truth occur through switching mechanisms, critical junctures of individual and societal self-knowledge. There is a ritual disowning of previously secreted knowledge, a purging of the past, as well as an appropriation of a newly revealed truth, enabling a corrective return to the society’s true nature” (“Liberal,” 255). And, typically, implicated in this narrative trajectory is a liberalizing political shift; that is, transitional narratives tell the stories of nations and societies that transition from

authoritarian or totalitarian regimes toward democratization (*Transitional 5*).⁴⁵ Teitel's central argument gives support to the presupposition that, in the activities and inquiries that comprise the field of transitional justice, there are patterned ways of using language (i.e., rhetorical traditions).

A related study is Teresa Godwin Phelps's book *Shattered Voices: Language, Violence, and the Work of Truth Commissions*. Phelps, too, looks at narratives—although, instead of focusing on the characteristic types of societal and national narratives that are told during periods of transition (by advocates and practitioners of transitional justice, governments, the media, etc.), she considers the personal testimonies that, in the case of truth commissions, are told by human rights victims in their written statements, during private interviews, and in public hearings. Phelps uses the reports of Latin American and South African truth commissions (as well as the Chilean play *Death and the Maiden*) as evidence for her argument that the testimonies and stories told during truth commissions effect a kind of justice by “balancing” the suppression of language that often accompanies torture and other forms of physical violence. Whereas torture forces victims to adopt “pre-language screams,” thereby limiting their opportunities to produce meaningful utterances of any kind, “The processes by which truth commissions gather stories have great potential for creating a kind of justice that not only publicly exposes truth and vindicates people, but also a kind of justice that is dynamic and ongoing, not perfect of course, but a visible manifestation of an ethical and political commitment that honors truth, individual worth, dignity, and equality” (40, 72). Such stories may also circulate beyond their immediate context, as Kay Shaffer and Sidonie Smith demonstrate in *Human Rights and Narrated Lives: The Ethics of Recognition*. As stories circulate in other local or global contexts, they are consumed or deployed by others to accomplish a

⁴⁵ While the reasons that this narrative structure and trajectory have become commonplace are undoubtedly myriad, Neil Kritz's field-defining three-volume compilation—*Transitional Justice: How Emerging Democracies Reckon with Former Regimes*—may have been a contributing factor. As the former Director of the Rule of Law Initiative for the United States Institute of Peace Charles Smith notes in the Introduction to Kritz's *Transitional Justice*, “These volumes are limited, as the subtitle indicates, to the way that emerging *democratic* societies address the legacy of their repression of their own people. This approach has excluded consideration of non-democratic successor states (for example, the transition from the Pahlavi to Khomeini regimes in Iran, or from Somoza to the Sandinistas in Nicaragua) It has also excluded most material on the transitional policies of occupation authorities (such as post-World War II Japan)” (xvi). For more on liberalization within the field of transitional justice, see Teitel; and Ní Aoláin and Campbell, 173. Ní Aoláin and Campbell speak to the emphasis on liberalization in regards to both “paradigmatic transitions” and “transitions in conflicted democracies.”

variety of different ends. Shaffer and Smith note that well-to-do readerships may consume testimonies of suffering in order to “reinvent imagined securities” (25). These readerships may also consume testimony characterized by the narrative trajectory that Teitel explores “to believe in the achievable goals of justice and freedom, to keep faith in narratives of progress, and to believe in the efficacy of collective action against the overwhelming forces of fragmentation” (26). But stories can also be used in more positive ways as well: “In the midst of the transits that take stories of local struggle to readerships around the world, NGOs and activists enlist stories from victims as a way of alerting a broader public to situations of human rights violations” (27). Both Phelps’ and Shaffer and Smith’s explorations of the testimony and storytelling genres—which are important facets of the rhetorical traditions of transitional justice—serve as a reminder that these rhetorical traditions, for all the ways in which their patterns constrain those working with and within them, also may be enabling and emancipatory—a perspective I share and emphasize throughout this dissertation.

Erik Doxtader’s work serves as a similar reminder. It does so by looking not at the characteristic narratives or genres of the rhetorical traditions of transitional justice but at one of the field’s central terms—reconciliation.⁴⁶ In “Reconciliation – A Rhetorical Concept/ion,” Doxtader discusses the problem of defining reconciliation, a concept which, he claims, opposes both definition and the act of essentializing, insofar as reconciliation always reinvents the past; it “(re)constitutes the power to define (itself),” inventing a beginning and opening up the potential for speech between adversaries (268-

⁴⁶ Doxtader, “Making”; “Rhetorical Concept/ion”; “Potential”; and “Faith.” Doxtader’s study is certainly not the only one to explore terms central to the field of transitional justice, like reconciliation, truth, and justice. But like most scholarship in the field of transitional justice, many of these studies tend to be descriptive accounts that trace what these terms mean in particular contexts or normative accounts that say what they ought to mean. In neither of these two types of studies, however, is the focus usually on how these terms or their definitions function *rhetorically*. That is, the aim in these studies is more often to better understand these concepts themselves, as opposed to the ways that the discourse of truth commissions functions. Hamber and Van der Merwe, as well as Posel, offer two examples of descriptive accounts. Both of these studies sketch definitions of reconciliation that emerged during the operation of the South African TRC. Dwyer provides a good example of a normative account of reconciliation; she makes the case that reconciliation is best understood as “narrative incorporation” (86-88). Additional studies that, like Doxtader, take a more rhetorical approach to the study of such concepts include work by Bharucha as well as a study by Leman-Langlois and Shearing. Bharucha draws upon what he refers to as a “performative mode of analysis” to deconstruct the coupling of “truth” and “reconciliation” and to disrupt the causality by which these terms seem to be linked (361, 388); Leman-Langlois and Shearing ask, “What is the *function* of truth?” instead of asking what truth *is* (223).

269).⁴⁷ Based on these claims, Doxtader argues that reconciliation is a rhetorical construct: a “call for rhetoric and a form of rhetorical activity” (268). Through this article and in his subsequent work, Doxtader demonstrates how the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s “(re)presentation of reconciliation...is important to the degree that it marks a process for (re)building the conditions for speech, opening a space for talk, and creating moments in which individuals can speak with the hope of an audience” (“Faith” 138). In conceptualizing reconciliation in this manner, Doxtader’s work at once affirms the central presupposition of this project and simultaneously highlights an important feature of those traditions—namely, that many of the patterned ways of using language that circulate in the field create opportunities for subsequent speech and dialogue, both in public and private venues. In other words, the rhetorical traditions of transitional justice ask individuals to see themselves as *rhetors* and to produce discourse that both sustains the field and enables its augmentation.

In *An African Athens: Rhetoric and the Shaping of Democracy in South Africa*, Phillippe-Joseph Salazar explores some of the key rhetorical performances that occurred in South Africa during its political transition from an apartheid state to a democratic nation. Salazar’s book productively highlights the extent to which the “activities and inquiries” that comprise the field of transitional justice are fundamentally rhetorical in nature. For example, Salazar not only reads as rhetorical the speeches of Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela, but he also reads as rhetorical rituals (like Tutu’s dance accompanying the public delivery of the TRC’s final report to Mandela), South African newspaper inserts and advertisements, South African voting ballots, *Elle* magazine covers, and geographic spaces like Robben Island. Although I look primarily at spoken and written texts in this dissertation, Salazar’s study suggests that rhetorical traditions are performed in and through other, non-conventional types of texts as well. His book also serves to highlight

⁴⁷ Doxtader develops this notion further of reconciliation further in a response to John B. Hatch’s article “Reconciliation: Building a Bridge from Complicity to Coherence in the Rhetoric of Race Relations.” In Doxtader’s response to Hatch, he theorizes that the call to reconciliation constitutes a time in which opposing parties realize that they share together in something—namely, their opposition to one another. Thus, without negating “adversarial discourse” and physical violence that often accompanies situations of conflict, the call to reconciliation “fashions its potential in distinction to that violence, which forecloses on those history-making words that invite human beings to begin in relation” (“Potential” 379). Reconciliation involves sharing (in opposition) that is the beginning of relationship between disparate groups.

that the rhetorical traditions circulating within transitional justice have been, at least in the South African context, implicated in the process of nation-building.

Taken together, these studies provide glimpses, necessarily scattered and incomplete, of the rhetorical traditions circulating in the field of transitional justice. My study will, likewise, offer additional glimpses, as I demonstrate how the people of Greensboro—primarily the members of the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project and the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission—reaccentuate such traditions in their rhetorical performances to construct *ethos* and thereby attempt to establish their authority.

Dissertation Overview

Each of the chapters in this project unpacks the *ethos* constructed in the rhetorical performances surrounding the operation of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission and, to a lesser extent, those of its predecessor and model, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Throughout my close readings of performances of *ethos* in Greensboro, I demonstrate how the performances reaccentuated the resources of rhetorical traditions circulating in the field of transitional justice. I begin, in chapter two, by close reading Desmond Tutu's "Chairperson's Foreword" to the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*. My close reading of the Foreword demonstrates how Tutu uses multiple middle ground arguments to authorize the South African TRC's findings in the report, and this analysis brings into relief some of the resources that the rhetorical traditions of transitional justice provide to rhetors like the Greensboro commissioners. Subsequent chapters offer close readings that demonstrate how such resources were reaccentuated in Greensboro, North Carolina by advocates of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Chapter three close reads a speech that was delivered at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony for the Greensboro TRC commissioners by Bongani Finca, a former member of the South African TRC. I contend that, in the speech, Finca reaccentuates the South African notion of *ubuntu* to construct an authoritative subject position for the Greensboro TRC in relation to the people of Greensboro. Chapter four close reads texts produced during the Greensboro TRC's Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, its public hearings, and its Report Release

Ceremony. In the chapter, I trace how the Commission's advocates position it, somewhat paradoxically, as both representative of the larger Greensboro community and radically different from it—positions previously utilized, albeit in different ways, by the South African TRC. Chapter five looks primarily at the Introduction to the commissioner's 529-page *Final Report*, demonstrating how the Commission reaccentuated Pricilla Hayner's definition of "truth commissions" to frame their work and construct their *ethos* in relation to the Greensboro community and their opponents on the Greensboro city council. Finally, chapter six functions as a conclusion, in which I tie the different threads of my argument together and discuss the project's implications for the citizens of Greensboro, the practitioners of transitional justice, scholars studying truth commissions, and rhetoricians. I also suggest avenues for further exploration and briefly consider what it might have meant to have utilized a critical rhetoric approach emphasizing rhetoric as constitutive process rather than constructed product.

From Greensboro to South Africa

During my first visit to Greensboro, on the morning before I attended the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Report Release Ceremony, I decided to explore the city's historic downtown area. Walking north on Elm Street, the city's main thoroughfare, it seemed to me then as if the struggle for civil rights was everywhere present. One marker of this struggle, located at the corner of Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive and Elm Street, is a statue—a bronze-colored bust of King. Beneath the bust is a plaque that reads as follows:

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,
planned to speak at
Trinity AME Zion Church
in Greensboro (A few blocks
from here) on April 4, 1968. He
canceled his visit to Greensboro
to remain in Memphis where he
was assassinated on that day.

Further north from King's statue is the Woolworth's storefront. With its gold-plated lettering set against a stark red background, Woolworth's stands out on the strip. The store is currently being renovated as a museum, a tribute to the site where four black college students from N.C. A&T University refused to move from their seats at a

Greensboro lunch counter nearly fifty years ago. Even further north on Elm is another marker of the civil rights struggle in Greensboro—this one, much less visible. It's the unassuming, but perhaps aptly titled, "Self Help Building," where the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission rented office space during their operation. From King to Woolworth's to the Commission: it would be possible to read one's northbound journey on Elm Street as a kind of trajectory for the development of civil rights in Greensboro and the means of authorization for the Greensboro TRC to carry out its mandate. But such an account would be incomplete, as would an account that merely situated the Commission within the context of a history of civil rights in the South. In order to understand the Commission's authorization, it is necessary to begin by looking to rhetorical traditions that have heretofore been most prominent *outside* of the United States.

Chapter II

In Medias Res: Desmond Tutu's Variations on the Middle Ground

This chapter close reads the “Chairperson’s Foreword” of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, unpacking, in particular, the ways that Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the Commission’s chairperson, positions the Commission in relation to the dominant South African political parties—the National Party and the African National Congress. The close reading complicates commonly held views regarding the ways that Tutu shaped the character—the *ethos*—of the Greensboro TRC, going beyond the ubiquitous, but frequently underdeveloped, claims that Tutu directly shaped the character of the TRC through his emotional outpourings and his religious affiliations. It also contributes to a theoretical understanding of the uses of middle ground arguments—which, as I demonstrate, Tutu employs in three very different ways. Within the context of the dissertation as a whole, the chapter provides a historical and—more importantly—a rhetorical context for my close readings in the following chapters: it serves to bring into relief some of the rhetorical resources that were subsequently deployed and/or reaccentuated in rhetorical performances in Greensboro to garner authority for the Greensboro TRC.

In 1995 the South African Parliament established the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission in response to decades of violence resulting from institutionalized apartheid. Its mandated aims were, broadly speaking, to “uncover as much as possible of the truth about past gross violations of human rights” and to “help lead the nation away from a deeply divided past to a future founded on the recognition of human rights and democracy” (SATRC, *Final Report* 48). To accomplish these goals, the South African TRC held a series of victim hearings throughout the country, in which victims of past atrocities were invited to share their stories with members of the Commission’s Human Rights Violations Committee, and with the general public.

Desmond Tutu—who, as the Commission’s chairperson, made many of the Commission’s appointments—took the role of chair of the Human Rights Violations Committee on himself and, therefore, presided over many of the victims’ hearings, which were highly publicized events, both in and outside of South Africa (Allen 348).

Due, perhaps, to Tutu’s role as the TRC chairperson, his visibility as chair of the Human Rights Violation Committee, and his dynamic personality, commentators tend to focus on the person and persona of Desmond Tutu when writing about the institutional character, the *ethos*, of the South African TRC. For example, South African journalist Antjie Krog, speaking about Tutu’s role in shaping the TRC process, remarked, “Whatever role others might play, it is Tutu who is the compass...It is he who finds language for what is happening” (qtd. in Allen 370).⁴⁸ The emphasis on Tutu’s role in shaping the South African TRC is not itself problematic: he was the Commission’s primary spokesperson and advocate and was, without question, more responsible for positioning the Commission than any other individual. What may be problematic, however, is the emphasis in the scholarship devoted to the TRC on Tutu’s public outpouring of emotion at the hearings and—to an equal, if not greater, degree—on his religious identity as Archbishop. When commentators speak of Tutu’s role in shaping the *ethos* of the Commission (and the TRC process more generally), they frequently refer to one or both of these things.

At an international conference on transitional justice held in New Delhi in May of 2001, no fewer than four of the presenters described the TRC process by referring to Tutu’s emotional outpouring, his religious affiliations, or both. South African judge and author Albie Sachs began his paper by noting, “Judges do not cry. Archbishop Tutu cried” (49). He went on to characterize the South African TRC not as “a court of law in the sense of an austere institution making formalized findings” but as “an intensely human and personalized body, there to hear, in an appropriately dignified setting, what people had been through” (49). Two other presenters—Yadh Ben Achour and Avishai

⁴⁸ Others have made similar remarks. For example, South African President Nelson Mandela, upon formally receiving the Commission’s *Final Report* on October 29, 1998, remarked, “At the helm of [the TRC process] has been the Most Reverend Desmond Tutu, who has, during the hearings, conveyed our common pain and sorrow, our hope and confidence in the future” (Mandela, “Statement”). Alex Boraine, the deputy chairperson of the TRC, has noted, “I don’t think the Commission could have survived without the presence and person and leadership of Desmond Tutu” (qtd. in Allen 370).

Margalit—noted how Tutu’s religious identity shaped the TRC process. Ben Achour claimed that the TRC process “bore a strong resemblance to the act of repentance; it was perhaps no accident that it was a priest, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who presided over the commission” (132). And Margalit made similar remarks in his talk:

It took the moral authority of Desmond Tutu, with his deep religious convictions, to reconcile the black community to reconciliation, with its implied acknowledgement of wrongdoing on their side too. Tutu indeed conferred a religious meaning on the act of reconciliation as an act of atonement, which requires an explicit confession of sins as a necessary condition for restoring the original relation between man and God. (63)

A fourth presenter, Rustom Bharucha, called attention to both Tutu’s tears and his religious identity to support the claim that the Commission functioned as a “grand performance.” He said, “[T]he ‘extravagant drama’ of the TRC...was played out in a wide range of registers, at levels of pain and trauma that would be hard to imagine. Witnesses periodically broke down, and unlike judges in court, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the commission’s chairperson, was seen weeping openly during the sessions, as well as praying, lighting candles, and bursting into song” (371-372).

These viewpoints have been taken up by other scholars as well. South African historian Leonard Thompson writes that “Tutu was a man of the utmost integrity, but his appointment and that of three other clergy, including the vice chairperson, gave the TRC an overridingly emotional and religious tone rather than a legal one, even though six of the commissioners were lawyers” (275). Similarly, in his book *An African Athens*, rhetorician Philippe-Joseph Salazar focuses on the role that Tutu’s Christianity played in shaping his vision for the new South Africa (2-16). Salazar demonstrates how Tutu, in his speeches, drew heavily on religious discourse, including the book of Revelation; the Biblical notions of *shalom* (peace, wholeness), *koinonia* (community, unity), and *kairos* (timeliness); tropes of conversion and transfiguration; and turns of phrase, like the “fullness of time.” And political scientist Daniel Philpott notes the effect that Tutu’s presence had on the hearings: “Religious language and ritual pervaded the proceedings. In publicly presenting the commission through speeches and writings, Tutu and other commissioners explained it in explicitly theological terms” (Philpott 31). Philpott also notes that, in addition to Tutu’s theological explanations, the Archbishop also began and ended each public hearing with prayers and hymns—an act of framing that may have

indirectly affected the ways audience members responded to testimony. Words would sometimes fail commissioners after hearing particularly horrible accounts of human suffering, and oftentimes, at these moments, “the people in the hearing room, participants and onlookers alike, would break out into hymns, thus acknowledging, ritualizing, marking, honoring, and strengthening wounded victims and witnesses” (31-32).

Many of these commentators point to one of two events to support their claims. The first event that is typically recounted happened during the public hearings in Johannesburg. Before the hearings, some of the other commissioners asked Tutu to begin the hearings with a moment of silence as opposed to prayer. Tutu tentatively agreed; however, when the hearing began, “Tutu was patently uncomfortable. He was unable to start with the proceedings. He shifted the papers on the table in front of him. He cleared his throat. When he spoke to the audience, he said, ‘No! This is not the way to do it. We cannot start without having prayed. Close your eyes!’” (Meiring 124). The second event occurred during the public hearings in East London and is recounted, by Tutu himself, in his book *No Future Without Forgiveness*:

One day during our very first victim hearing in East London the last witness to take the stand was Mr. Singqokwana Malgas. He was now confined to a wheelchair but had in his prime been politically active as a member of the [African National Congress] and, predictably, had fallen foul of the law and was being harassed by the police. He had, as was seemingly standard practice, been tortured and had also served time on Robben Island, where black political prisoners were jailed. The end result was that he had a stroke which left him half paralyzed and suffering from a speech impediment.

During his testimony he was asked to describe some of the torture he had undergone. Up until that point I thought I had done quite well that day keeping my composure, though I had been close to tears many times as I heard one heartrending story after another. Still, I had not broken down and this was to be the last witness for the day. Mr. Malgas tried to describe some of the torture methods used on him. He began to speak about one that we were to encounter many times afterward—the so-called “helicopter” method. The police handcuff your hands behind your back, your ankles are manacled together, then you are suspended upside down and spun around.

Mr. Malgas tried to elaborate on his written statement and tell us all this. Whether it was that he could not bear to recall the memories of the torture or whether he was frustrated that his tongue could not articulate what he wanted to tell us, I will never know. (He died even before we had handed over our report to President Mandela.) Whatever the reason, he

just put his normal hand over his face and cried. I was too full from all that I had heard and it was all too much for me too. I could not hold back the tears, I just broke down and sobbed like a child. The floodgates opened. I bent over the table and covered my face with my hands. (143-144)

Tutu's emotional outpouring for Mr. Malgas prompted a great deal of debate in and outside of South Africa. For some, the empathy that Tutu demonstrated helped to validate the truth commission process in the country; for others, the event discredited the supposedly objective work of the TRC, which subsequently came to be known, by a number of people, as "The Kleenex Commission" (Tutu *Forgiveness* 110; Allen 352).

Given these events, as well as the sheer number of commentators who point to Tutu's emotional displays at the hearings and his identity as an internationally-renowned religious leader, I do not want to suggest that Tutu did not shape the *ethos* of the Commission in these ways; he did. But I do think the emphasis on these two factors has overshadowed some of the *other* ways that Tutu helped to shape the *ethos* of the TRC in his rhetorical performances. What is needed, specifically, is more empirical work interrogating how Tutu's discourse helped to constitute the *ethos* of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Such work promises to provide a more robust understanding of the ways in which the South African TRC attempted to establish its credibility and constitute change in the country. More broadly, given the prominence of the South African TRC in the field of transitional justice, this work promises to provide insights into a facet of the rhetorical traditions circulating within the field—traditions that other truth commissions have been able to draw upon in their own contexts. To these ends, in this chapter I close read Desmond Tutu's Foreword to the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, paying particular attention to the way in which Tutu positions the Commission (i.e., constructs its *ethos*) in the text.

I've chosen to focus on Desmond Tutu's Foreword for a number of reasons, central among them is the fact that, in it, Tutu brings together many of his stock remarks about the TRC—remarks that he used over and over again during the TRC process and that he repeated, in other settings, after the report's release—to present an overview and defense of the Commission's work. While the Foreword is not, of course, a comprehensive collection of Tutu's remarks about the Commission, it is nevertheless a useful resource for beginning to explore how Tutu constructed the Commission's *ethos*.

The Foreword's placement within the context of the final report is also important. At over three thousand pages and close to a million words long, the final report is a massive—and, in many places, unwieldy and labyrinthine—document; it is a collection of multiple genres, and the style of report varies from the intensely personal to the highly bureaucratic. As the report's first word, the Foreword serves as a frame, a kind of terministic screen, for the rest of the report, potentially shaping how it is read and understood. Moreover, although the Foreword is often cited, it has not, to my knowledge, been the subject of close reading. This may be due, in part, to the mixed reception that the report received upon its publication in fall of 1998 (which I will discuss in more detail in this chapter's conclusion). But despite the initial mixed reception of the report, there is a need to study the text closely. As the final product of the most influential—and, arguably, most successful—truth commission to date, the report is a rhetorical performance that provides significant insights into the rhetorical traditions circulating within the field of transitional justice.

My close reading of the Foreword calls attention to three middle ground arguments that Tutu uses, as the text unfolds, to position the Commission in relation to the people of South Africa. The first and second middle ground arguments I discuss both help Tutu position the Commission between the two dominant political parties in South Africa, the African National Congress and the National Party. Through the first middle ground argument, Tutu positions the Commission as a prudent course of action, even as he constructs what prudence means for the people of South Africa in their context. The prudent response, Tutu suggests, involves responding with restraint to calls for justice and responding audaciously to calls for amnesty.⁴⁹ Through the second middle ground argument, Tutu both positions the Commission as an unbiased institution and simultaneously aligns the ANC and NP with one another around their respective critiques of the TRC. And the third middle ground argument—less conventional than the previous two—both reinforces and inverts the relationships established by the prior middle ground arguments: Tutu positions the Commission as representative of the people of South Africa, suggesting that they are actually in the midst of the Commission. Tutu's third

⁴⁹ As I elaborate on in what follows, my understanding of the way that Tutu constructs prudence is informed by James Jasinski's "Idioms of Prudence in Three Antebellum Controversies: Revolution, Constitution, and Slavery," which describes prudence in terms of restraint and audacity.

middle ground argument, which productively complicates and deepens our theoretical understanding of these types of arguments, allows Tutu to appeal to all South Africans (not simply members of the ANC and NP) and also allows him to warrant the notion that the Commission serves as a model for the people of South Africa. These three middle ground arguments lend credibility to the South African TRC and to the Commission's findings in the *Final Report*—a report that was the subject of some measure of controversy in the days leading up to Tutu's official presentation of the report to Mandela. These arguments also serve as one aspect of a larger attempt to forge a new national vision for South Africa. Not least of all, they matter to the Greensboro TRC. Some of the specific ways that Tutu positions the South African TRC in his Foreword were reaccentuated by advocates of the Greensboro TRC in their attempts to garner authority, as I demonstrate in subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

Historical Context

Before turning to Tutu's middle ground arguments in the Foreword, it is necessary to provide some background on the South African historical context and trace how the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission came to be. It is a story that is too complex to do justice to here; however, in order to provide a measure of historical context for my analysis, this section sketches a few of the major events in South African history that led to the institution of apartheid as national policy in 1948. It then describes the major events that precipitated the formation of a truth commission.

In his book *The Making of South Africa: Culture and Politics*, historian Aran MacKinnon traces the origins of racial discrimination in South Africa to the 1652 arrival of the Dutch East Indian Company in the Western Cape (25). This merchant firm—operated by Dutch Europeans, who came to refer to themselves as Afrikaners—established a colonizing presence in Cape Town and gradually expanded their influence in the interior of South Africa over the next 150 years, marginalizing native African tribes in the process (26). At the close of the 18th century, the British arrived in South Africa, espousing Western Christian values and calling for the abolition of slavery (48). But the abolition of slavery did not mean an end to injustice: MacKinnon writes that,

although slavery was formally abolished, “the transition to emancipation would lead to equally restrictive labor relations for the colony’s working class” (49).

Afrikaners resisted British policies of colonization, resulting in two Anglo-Boer wars and the so-called “Great Trek”—in which Afrikaners left the cape to establish their own interior states and, in the process, displaced the Africans who inhabited those regions. These events contributed to growing nationalism among Afrikaners, who eventually formed the Nationalist Party on a platform of “white purity” (102, 189). In 1948, the Nationalist Party won enough of a majority in the all-white parliament to institute apartheid as a national policy (211). Following the 1948 election, forty-five years of race-based separation prevailed in South Africa, reinforced by segregation legislation, including, but not limited to, the 1911 Mines and Works Act, which prohibited strikes by African workers (186); the 1913 Native Land Act, which forced Africans to reside in designated “homelands” (211); and the 1949 Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (215).

Liberation groups like the African National Congress (ANC), the South African Communist Party (SACP), and the more militant Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) gained momentum in the 1960s, and, to quell insurrection, the Nationalist Party-led government banned these groups and imprisoned their leaders, including ANC member Nelson Mandela. The next thirty years were violent: the clash between resistance groups and, most notably, the government-supported Inkatha Freedom Party resulted in a series of human rights violations, including “massacres, killings, torture, lengthy imprisonment of activists, and severe economic and social discrimination against [South Africa’s] majority nonwhite population” (Hayner 41). Then in the 1980s, in the wake of increasing violence, President P.W. Botha and the South African government began attempts to negotiate with Mandela, who had been in prison at the behest of the government since 1962 (MacKinnon 264-265). These talks did not get far because of Botha’s inflexibility and unwillingness to meet Mandela’s demands, but Botha’s successor F.W. de Klerk was somewhat more amenable:

After meeting with Mandela in 1989, de Klerk set the stage for momentous change by un-banning the ANC, the PAC, and the South African Communist Party (SACP), removing restrictions on other opposition parties, and freeing political prisoners. He also removed hateful

petty apartheid legislation such as separate amenities as well as the Group Areas and Land Acts. On 11 February 1990, in an historic event, the government unconditionally released Nelson Mandela, after 27 years in prison. Mandela, whose stature at home and abroad had risen to heroic dimensions, emerged as a triumphant leader of the ANC. (265)

Negotiations between the African National Congress, the Nationalist Party, and several of the other, smaller political parties now began in earnest: a Multi-Party Negotiating Forum was established and, in 1993, an interim constitution was drafted (269). The interim constitution included a postamble—agreed to, literally, in the “final hour of negotiations”—which called for healing in the country and amnesty for perpetrators of human rights violations (Hayner 41). The postamble, titled “National Unity and Reconciliation,” notes the following: “The adoption of this Constitution lays the secure foundation for the people of South Africa to transcend the divisions and strife of the past...there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* but not victimization” (Tutu *Forgiveness* 45). To accomplish these ends, the postamble calls for amnesty, stating, “In order to advance such reconciliation and reconstruction, amnesty shall be granted in respect of acts, omissions and offenses associated with political objectives and committed in the course of the conflicts of the past” (45-46).

One year earlier, in 1992, the ANC had suggested that a truth commission be instituted to deal with the legacy of apartheid (Hayner 41). The postamble gave the idea traction. In 1994, following a conference entitled “Dealing with the Past,” Alex Boraine—who had been working under the auspices of the Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa and would eventually be appointed to serve as the deputy chairperson of the TRC—wrote a letter to Nelson Mandela, days before the latter was elected as President of South Africa. In that letter, Boraine asked Mandela to consider setting up a truth commission. Here is a brief excerpt from the letter, dated April 19, 1994:

It is public knowledge that the African National Congress has called for a truth commission to be appointed as soon as possible after the installation of the new government. However, there has been very little debate on this issue and Kadar Asmal and Albie Sachs asked me whether I would put a small group together in order to let you have a possible mandate for the appointment of such a commission, should you decide to go ahead. (Boraine 30)

Following Mandela's election on April 27th, Boraine met with a member of Mandela's newly elected Cabinet, Minister of Justice Dullah Omar. The end result of that meeting was Omar's presentation to Parliament, one month later, in which Omar announced that the government planned to institute a truth commission. At that session of parliament, Omar remarked, "If the wounds of the past are to be healed, if a multiplicity of legal actions are to be avoided, if future human rights violations are to be avoided and indeed, if we are to successfully initiate the building of a human rights culture, then disclosure of the truth and its acknowledgement are essential" (Boraine 41). The majority of the discussion in Parliament that day focused on the details of the Commission's mandate and the composition of the Commission.

In May of 1995, Omar presented Parliament with the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, the bill to formally establish the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Boraine 67). The Act mandated the Commission to "provide for the investigation and the establishment of as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights committed during the period from 1 March 1960 to the cut-off date contemplated in the Constitution, within or outside the Republic, emanating from the conflicts of the past, and the fate or whereabouts of the victims of such violations" (South Africa). In line with the postamble to the interim constitution, the Act included an amnesty provision; but, significantly, it made the attainment of amnesty conditional upon one's "full disclosure of all the relevant facts relating to acts associated with a political objective committed in the course of the conflicts of the past during the said period." Victims, too, were to be given the opportunity to share their stories, and the Commission was mandated to make recommendations to the government about reparations for these individuals. The Act was signed into law on July 19 and dated July 26.

Next the commissioners were chosen. According to the Act, the final composition of the Commission was ultimately to be decided upon by Mandela and his Cabinet, but the President formed a selection committee to narrow down the applicant pool before he made his final decision (Boraine 71-72). Mandela's selection committee was comprised of four individuals who were each affiliated with a different political party (the Inkatha Freedom Party, the National Party, and Freedom Front, and the African National

Congress) and four individuals affiliated with various Non-Governmental Organizations (Boraine 72).⁵⁰ This selection committee solicited nominations for commissioners, of which they received 299. Then the committee invited a selection of these individuals to each participate in a public hearing—a process which reduced the field to twenty-five names. These twenty-five names were submitted to the President.⁵¹ Of the twenty-five names given him, Mandela chose fifteen. He then, somewhat surprisingly, appointed two additional commissioners whose names were not on the list, and, unsurprisingly, appointed Desmond Tutu to chair the Commission and Alex Boraine to serve as his deputy chairperson (Boraine 73).⁵²

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission had a 300-person staff and an annual budget of 18 million dollars, making it the largest and most well-funded truth commission to date (Hayner 41). It also had the power, seldom exercised, to search premises, seize evidence, and subpoena witnesses (41). From December 1995 to October 1998, the Commission collected 21,000 written and oral testimonies, conducted 2,000 public hearing interviews, and received over 7,000 applications for amnesty (42-43). On October 29th, 1998, Desmond Tutu presented the Commission's five-volume final report to President Mandela at a public ceremony.⁵³

⁵⁰ Among the latter was Bishop Peter Storey, who served as Nelson Mandela's prison chaplain. Storey played an instrumental role in the formation of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and he offered the benediction at the Greensboro TRC's Report Release Ceremony.

⁵¹ In describing the selection process in his book, Alex Boraine goes to great lengths to demonstrate that the process was a fair and democratic one. Regarding the public hearings for the nominees, Boraine records a letter that he wrote to Dullah Omar on April 12, 1995: "The more I think about it the more I am convinced that hearings would be preferable. In the first instance, it would meet the demand for transparency; secondly, it would enable anyone to apply so that we can never be accused of turning away from anyone without a hearing; thirdly, it would sort out a lot of people whose record relating to human rights is either neutral or worse. Finally, it would I think give greater confidence to the final selection and enable Commissioners to defend their position much more effectively" (72).

⁵² The Commission included the following: "Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Chairperson), Dr. Alex Boraine (Vice-Chairperson), Ms. Mary Burton, Adv. Chris de Jager, the Revd. Bongani Finca, Ms. Sisi Khampepe, Mr. Richard Lyster, Mr. Wynand Malan, the Revd. Dr Khoza Mgojo, Ms. Hlengiwe Mkhize, Mr. Dumisa Ntsebeza, Dr. Wendy Orr, Adv. Denzil Potgieter, Dr. Mapule F. Ramashala, Dr. Fazel Randerera, Ms. Yasmin Sooka and Ms. Glenda Wildschut" (44).

⁵³ The South African TRC's Amnesty Committee did not finish their work by the October 1998 deadline; as a result, two additional volumes were published later.

Middle Ground Arguments

Desmond Tutu's Foreword to the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Final Report* is, much like the multi-volume *Final Report*, a sprawling text. In the course of just a few pages, Tutu describes how the *Final Report* came to be, justifies the methods taken by the Commission, rebuts a number of accusations leveled against the Commission, condemns apartheid, exhorts South Africans to forgive and reconcile with one another, expresses gratitude toward those who assisted the Commission, and beckons South Africans "into the glorious future of a new kind of society where people count, not because of biological irrelevancies or other extraneous attributes, but because they are persons of infinite worth created in the image of God" ("Foreword" 22). As a result, perhaps, of the variety of aims that Tutu attempts to accomplish and the number of subjects he addresses in the Foreword, the text appears somewhat disjointed, rambling. It is not anchored by a single idea or theme. And yet, despite this ideational sprawl, the text is rhetorically forceful—due, in part, to the way in which Tutu positions the Commission in relation to his South African audiences. These constructions of *ethos* are construed, in large measure, through Tutu's use of middle ground arguments.

Middle ground arguments, defined generally, are a type of comparison argument that involves positioning a thing between two extremes (Jasinski, "Argument" 40). One of the rhetorical effects of this type of argument is to add value to—that is, to positively appraise—the middle term (40). When speakers and writers appraise things, their appraisals are always warranted by the criteria that they use, either implicitly or explicitly, to make the judgments; and, in the case of middle ground arguments, the criteria warranting the positive appraisal of the middle term are implied in the extreme examples. That is, the extremes demonstrate, through negation, what it means for something to be of value. When set in contrast to extreme (and, therefore, often less aesthetic, less feasible, etc.) examples, the middle term is rendered more aesthetic, more feasible, etc. In an article analyzing Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s argument for "a middle way out of Vietnam," Stephen Depoe productively notes that middle ground arguments may also be constructed through the technique of dissociation, which he describes, following Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, as follows: "Dissociation is the splitting of a seemingly

unitary concept into two parts by linking each part to a philosophical pair of terms, the first of which has a negative connotation and the other a positive connotation (such as appearance/reality, letter/spirit). At the conclusion of dissociation, a previously single term has been divided into a favorable and an unfavorable term” (153). This technique allows rhetors to create at least two of the three terms of a conventional middle ground argument: after the unfavorable term has been established, it can be rendered one of the extremes in the argument; then, once the opposing extreme has been established, the favorable term can be rendered as an aspect of the middle ground. Alternatively, rhetors may perform the technique of dissociation twice (i.e., on two different terms). In this case, the two unfavorable terms are rendered extremes of the argument, while the two favorable terms are both rendered as facets of a complex middle ground.

Middle ground arguments offer a means by which rhetors construct *ethos*. Here it is worth recalling that, etymologically, the term *ethos* referred to an “accustomed place” or one’s “haunts or abodes” (Reynolds 327-28). As rhetors fashion the middle ground (or, as it’s sometimes referred to, the *tertium quid*), they build themselves a place from which to stand, a position to occupy. The positions created through middle ground arguments are, as James Jasinski suggests in his article “Constituting Antebellum African American Identity,” contingent on context and often only “provisionally stable,” but they nevertheless have instrumental and constitutive potential (27-57).

“The Third Way”: Between Nuremberg and Amnesia

One of the main arguments that Tutu weaves throughout the pages of the Foreword is that the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s policy for dealing with the perpetrators of gross human rights violations is an appropriate course of action. That policy, frequently referred to as “individual amnesty,” meant that perpetrators were granted amnesty for their politically-motivated crimes, provided that they were willing to tell the truth about the past, to fully disclose their involvement in human rights violations (7). To make his case for the propriety of the individual amnesty approach, Tutu begins, not by articulating the policy’s particular merits, but by introducing two alternative approaches to transitional justice, both of them historically situated (5-8). He first describes the trials that took place in Nuremberg, Germany in the

years following the Second World War, in which high-ranking Nazi officials were tried for their war crimes. Then he describes what he refers to as national amnesty—an approach enacted during Chile’s political transition to absolve military rulers of their deserved punishment. As Tutu puts it in his book *No Future Without Forgiveness*, “General Augusto Pinochet and his cohorts gave themselves amnesty as a precondition to handing over from their military junta to a civilian government” (27). Throughout the Foreword, Tutu typically refers to these two approaches as “Nuremberg” and “amnesia,” and he frames these two approaches as inappropriate courses of action for South Africa.

To briefly summarize Tutu on these points, he asserts that the Nuremberg option would have been inappropriate on three counts. First, given the “military stalemate” in South Africa between the National Party and the African National Congress, no one was “in a position to enforce so-called victor’s justice,” as was the case following the Second World War; second, given South Africa’s limited resources, its overburdened justice system, and its citizens’ fragile emotional states, criminal trials would have cost more, financially and psychologically, than the country could afford or handle; and third, given that legal standards require “proof beyond reasonable doubt,” trials would have left many of the facts obscured (6). The amnesia option, he says, would have been inappropriate because it would have ignored the past, resulting in the “further victimization of victims” and the repetition of past atrocities (7). In short, Nuremberg would have been inappropriate because its demands were excessive, while amnesia would have been inappropriate because its demands were inadequate. Nuremberg was too costly; amnesia too cheap. But, Tutu then goes on to say, there was a third option—a *tertium quid*—that navigated between the excessive accountability of Nuremberg and the lack of accountability of amnesia: individual amnesty. And when framed between two (unattractive) poles on a continuum of approaches to transitional justice, the Commission’s individual amnesty seems (relatively) attractive.⁵⁴

This middle ground argument allows Tutu to positively appraise individual amnesty as a course of action by means of comparison. But positive appraisal is not the only rhetorical effect of Tutu’s middle ground argument; it also helps Tutu to position

⁵⁴ Many of Tutu’s arguments in this section of the Foreword are reiterated in Volume 1, Chapter 5 of the report as well.

himself as a *phronimos* (i.e., a prudent person) and position the Commission as a prudent course of action (Cape 638). Robert Hariman, a Professor of Communication at Northwestern University, maintains that establishing prudence involves two acts—one, cognitive; the other, performative. “Prudential conduct,” Hariman writes, “includes both an act of calculation and a politically consequential performance” (“Theory” 32). The former involves deliberation or decision-making in which “general principles and ‘particular’ cases are brought into contact to reach judgments about courses of action” (Jasinski, “Prudence” 463); and the latter involves publicly enacting that deliberation. Tutu’s middle ground argument in the Foreword may be understood as a performative dimension of prudence. Through the argument, Tutu enacts the deliberation—that is, the act of cognition—involved in selecting the Commission as an appropriate course of action for South Africa. He does so by bringing “general principles” (which, in this case, are the general approaches typified by Nuremberg and amnesia) into contact with a “particular” case (the South African political and economic context) in order to “reach judgments about courses of action” (namely, that individual amnesty was indeed the proper course of action for South Africa to pursue). It is in and through this performative display that Tutu demonstrates his capacity to weigh options and make decisions about a course of action in a specific context.

One of the instrumental effects of such rhetorical maneuvering is to lend credibility to the Commission’s approach and, by extension, to legitimate the findings in its report. Tutu’s middle ground argument, the performance of which allows him to position himself as prudent and the Commission as a prudent course of action, serves as an appeal to victims and perpetrators of human rights violations that is intended to ensure the Commission’s work is embraced by as many South Africans as possible. There are, moreover, other important effects: Tutu’s middle ground argument also has constitutive potential. To see why this is so, it is necessary to point out that the middle ground is not a universal or a fact of essence; rather, the middle ground is always only contingent and provisionally stable, as Jasinski suggests (“Constituting”). Therefore, every middle ground argument has the potential to (re)constitute what the middle ground is in a given context—to enact what Eugene Garver refers to as “a transformation of moderation” (qtd.

in Jasinski, “Prudence” 466). Individual amnesty is the middle ground between Nuremberg and amnesia not because it is essentially so, but because Tutu frames it thus.

Similarly, in and through his performative display of the middle ground, Tutu not only positions himself as prudent; he also constitutes what prudence means—or ought to mean—in the South African context. Simply put, prudence for Tutu means acting like the Commission did in relation to victims and perpetrators of human rights violations. To be more specific on this point, it is helpful to use James Jasinski’s recent work on prudence to look at two passages from Tutu’s middle ground argument in greater detail—the first of which makes the case against Nuremberg; the second, against amnesia. As I’ve already noted, for Jasinski the middle ground (upon which prudence is built) is never “simple” or “stable”; rather, it is always contingent and only provisionally stable, and it is often a site of internal tensions (“Constituting”). It is, therefore, not surprising that Jasinski conceptualizes prudence as “a kind of practical oxymoron: a momentary, provisional stabilization of antagonistic, but not mutually exclusive, forces and impulses that enables decision and action” (“Idioms” 149). To read performances of prudence, Jasinski identifies two “titular or master terms”—audacity and accommodation—which each represent “antagonistic, but not mutually exclusive” prudential idioms “through which individuals and communities confront human contingency and uncertainty and the political controversies they entail” (148).⁵⁵ Jasinski continues:

The play between these terms and the idioms they encapsulate, the struggle to determine the proper blend of audacity and accommodation, is continually enacted in rhetorical performances, especially those which are responsive to significant social and political controversies. Describing the particular terms and performative norms and gestures that constitute and textualize these idioms, and charting the interanimation between the idioms, makes visible a shifting, historically grounded, sense of prudence. (149)

For Jasinski, the idiom—or “terminological cluster”—represented by audacity includes “subordinated terms and norms such as timeliness, ambition, innovation, daring, novelty, risk, energy, and, perhaps most importantly, public action”; the idiom represented by accommodation includes terms like “deferral or delay, hesitancy, circumspection, caution, adaptation, moderation, and restraint (particularly with respect to public action)”

⁵⁵ Jasinski contends that these antagonistic master terms of prudence—audacity and accommodation—have their origins in renaissance republicanism (146-147).

(149). There are similar antagonistic forces at work throughout Tutu's arguments against the Nuremburg and amnesia options.

Urging Restraint in Response to Calls for Justice

Calls for justice for victims of the crimes of apartheid were prevalent in South Africa during the operation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. One of the most pivotal of these for the TRC was the call for justice for the death of Steve Biko, a leader of the Black Consciousness movement and anti-apartheid activist, who, in 1997, was beaten to death by police while being held in detention. When it was announced that Biko's murderers would apply to the Commission for individual amnesty, the Azanian Peoples' Organization, representing the relatives of Biko and other murdered political activists, challenged the constitutionality of amnesty in the court case *Azanian Peoples' Organization (AZAPO) and Others verses the President of the Republic of South Africa and Others*: they sought justice and punishment for the crimes against Biko and others. The court ruled against the plaintiffs, upholding the constitutionality of the amnesty. Justice D.P. Mahomed, who delivered the majority opinion of the court, used a middle ground argument similar to Tutu's in his legal opinion to justify amnesty, noting the importance of a "balancing act between the need for justice to victims of past abuse and the need for reconciliation and rapid transition to a new future" (*Azanian* 686). It is in response to such calls for justice that, throughout the Foreword, Tutu urges restraint, asking South Africans "to shut the door on the past – not in order to forget it but in order not to allow it to imprison us," and, a few lines later, reiterating the point: "My appeal is ultimately directed to us all, black and white together, to close the chapter on our past" (22-23). He reinforces this plea in his argument against the Nuremburg option⁵⁶:

21 There were those who believed that we should follow the post World War II example of putting those guilty of gross violations of human rights on trial as the allies did at Nuremberg. In South Africa, where we had a military stalemate, that was clearly an impossible option. Neither side in the struggle (the state nor the liberation movements) had defeated the other and hence nobody was in a position to enforce so-called victor's justice.

⁵⁶ Each of the paragraphs in the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report* is numbered. I retain this convention throughout the chapter.

22 However, there were even more compelling reasons for avoiding the Nuremberg option. There is no doubt that members of the security establishment would have scuppered the negotiated settlement had they thought they were going to run the gauntlet of trials for their involvement in past violations. It is certain that we would not, in such circumstances, have experienced a reasonably peaceful transition from repression to democracy. We need to bear this in mind when we criticize the amnesty provisions in the Commission's founding Act. We have the luxury of being able to complain because we are now reaping the benefits of a stable and democratic dispensation. Had the miracle of the negotiated settlement not occurred, we would have been overwhelmed by the bloodbath that virtually everyone predicted as the inevitable ending for South Africa.

23 Another reason why Nuremberg was not a viable option was because our country simply could not afford the resources in time, money and personnel that we would have had to invest in such an operation. Judging from what happened in the De Kock and so-called Malan trials, the route of trials would have stretched an already hard-pressed judicial system beyond reasonable limits. It would also have been counterproductive to devote years to hearing about events that, by their nature, arouse very strong feelings. It would have rocked the boat massively and for too long.

24 The Malan trials and the Goniwe inquest have also shown us that, because such legal proceedings rely on proof beyond reasonable doubt, the criminal justice system is not the best way to arrive at the truth. There is no incentive for perpetrators to tell the truth and often the court must decide between the word of one victim against the evidence of many perpetrators. Such legal proceedings are also harrowing experiences for victims, who are invariably put through extensive cross-examination.

(5-6)⁵⁷

Throughout this passage, Tutu implies that, in response to the call for the Nuremberg option, the prudent response is restraint. He does so, in part, by framing the South African situation immediately preceding the formation of the interim government in 1993 as fragile and delicate, as if the country was at a kind of tipping or breaking point. For

⁵⁷ Colonel Eugene de Kock was the head of the police death squad in South Africa, and General Magnus Malan was the former Minister of Defense. Tutu elaborates on the costs of their trials in *No Future Without Forgiveness*: "It had taken a whole bevy of Department of Justice and Safety and Security (police) personnel eighteen months to make a case successfully against de Kock, and since he had been a former state employee, the state was obliged to foot his legal bill, which came to R5 million (nearly U.S. \$1 million)—an amount that did not include the cost of the prosecution and its bureaucracy, or an expensive witness protection program. In the case of General Malan...the prosecution failed to nail their men and the costs were astronomical, running into nearly R12 million (U.S. \$2 million) just for the defense, which again had to be borne by the state. In a country strapped for cash and with a whole range of pressing priorities in education, health, housing, and other fields, tough decisions had to be made about what the country could be expected to afford" (22-23). Matthew Goniwe was one of the "Cradock Four"—a group of four ANC supporters who were brutally murdered by police. The Goniwe family's inquest into Matthew's death was unsuccessful: the magistrate found that "he and his comrades had been killed by persons unknown" (Tutu, *No Future* 166).

example, he describes the relationship between the African National Congress and the National Party as if the two were in a precarious balancing act with one another (he describes the situation as a “military stalemate”); the South African economy in terms of its scarcity (“our country simply could not afford the resources in time, money and personnel that we would have had to invest in such an operation”); and the South African judicial system as overextended (the system is “already hard-pressed”). He even implies, in the last sentences of paragraphs twenty-three and twenty-four, that the emotional state of South Africans has reached a kind of psychological limit. Given this situation, South Africans should step lightly in response to calls for justice.

This characterization of the South African situation allows Tutu, in turn, to characterize Nuremberg-like trials as an excessive course of action. The terms Tutu uses to describe the consequences of taking the criminal trial approach bear this out: these terms draw upon language that J.R. Martin and David Rose have identified as belonging to systems of “Appraisal” in English, which are used to convey positive and negative attitude and amplify or downgrade the force of a judgment (*Working with Discourse* 25-71). For the most part, Tutu uses terms that convey an attitude of “negative appreciation,” and many of the terms he uses are accompanied by intensifiers (which are “words that amplify the force of attitudes,” like “very” or “extremely”) or are themselves examples of attitudinal lexis (words that themselves indicate “degrees of intensity,” like “overwhelmed”) (38, 42-44). For example, Tutu uses words and phrases like “overwhelmed,” “bloodbath,” “stretched,” “very strong,” “beyond reasonable limits,” “harrowing,” and “extensive.” Tutu suggests that trials would have required South Africans to “devote years” to the endeavor, and he emphasizes the length of time by noting that it would have been “counterproductive” for South Africans to have had to sustain the high emotional pitch that trials exact. To further amplify this point, Tutu implies that the standards of the justice system—“proof *beyond* reasonable doubt”—would have been too rigorous in the South African case. Criminal trials, he concludes, would have “rocked the boat massively and for too long.” Tutu’s use of the metaphor “rocking the boat” (in conjunction with modifiers “massively” and “too long”) further emphasizes his negative evaluation of the Nuremberg option. In contrast, Tutu conveys an attitude of “positive appreciation” toward the approach taken by the Commission,

which, he says, resulted in “a relatively peaceful transition” and “a stable and democratic dispensation.” And he emphasizes this attitude by referring to the negotiated settlement—which accommodated perpetrators, ensuring that they did not need to “run the gauntlet of trials”—as a “miracle.”

Tutu’s description of the Magnas Malan trial as a “so-called” trial highlights a second point: restraint was the prudent response to the call for criminal trials not only because they would have been excessive, but also because they would have been ineffectual. Trials would not have brought about what Tutu says is most needed in South Africa—truth. His claim that “often the court must decide between the word of one victim against the evidence of many perpetrators” implies that the “truth” that the court system ascertains is likely to be the truth of the majority. The message that this claim sends to victims of human rights violations is that, should they have taken the trial option, their voice was likely to be lost amidst the many voices of those who victimized them.

As the *AZAPO* case makes clear, one of the things at issue in the way that Tutu constructs prudence in relation to the Nuremberg option is justice. In implicitly valuing accommodation in response to perpetrators’ desire to avoid trials and restraint in response to calls for criminal trials, Tutu runs the risk of failing to account for the demands of justice or seeming to render it as imprudent. To address this possible inconsistency, Tutu redefines what counts as justice. In a rhetorical move that he made repeatedly before, during, and after his work on the Commission, Tutu distinguishes between two different types of justice—retributive and restorative justice. Here is the relevant passage from the “Foreword”:

We [the members of the South African TRC] have been concerned...that many consider only one aspect of justice. Certainly, [individual] amnesty cannot be viewed as justice if we think of justice only as retributive and punitive in nature. We believe, however, that there is another kind of justice – a restorative justice which is concerned not so much with punishment as with correcting imbalances, restoring broken relationships – with healing, harmony and reconciliation. Such justice focuses on the experience of victims; hence the importance of reparation. (9)

The distinction that Tutu sets up in this passage is an example of dissociation—that rhetorical technique by which rhetors split a concept into two parts, appraising one part positively and the other negatively. In this case, justice is split in two. And throughout the Foreword (and in his other writings), Tutu positively appraises justice that involves

“restoration” (as well as “healing, harmony, and reconciliation”) and negatively appraises justice characterized by retribution. The commissioners, Tutu notes, “have been concerned” that the retributive aspect of justice has been emphasized to the exclusion of its other facets. By redefining justice in this way, Tutu can both reject criminal trials and uphold a commitment to justice.

Urging Action, Audacity in Response to Calls for National Amnesty

Prudence for Tutu did not simply involve restraint. There were, as Jasinski might put it, antagonistic forces and impulses at play here, as Tutu’s subsequent argument against national amnesty (or “amnesia”) reveals. Even as there were South Africans who sought trials for the perpetrators of human rights violations, so too were there South Africans—many of whom were associated with the apartheid regime—who called for national amnesty. Tutu attacks such calls in the following paragraphs of the Foreword:

26 There were others who urged that the past should be forgotten – glibly declaring that we should ‘let bygones be bygones’. This option was rightly rejected because such amnesia would have resulted in further victimisation of victims by denying their awful experiences. In Ariel Dorfmann’s play, *Death and the Maiden*, a woman ties up the man who has injured her. She is ready to kill him when he repeats his lie that he did not rape or torture her. It is only when he admits his violations that she lets him go. His admission restores her dignity and her identity. Her experience is confirmed as real and not illusory and her sense of self is affirmed.

27 The other reason amnesia simply will not do is that the past refuses to lie down quietly. It has an uncanny habit of returning to haunt one. “Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it” are the words emblazoned at the entrance to the museum in the former concentration camp of Dachau. They are words we would do well to keep ever in mind. However painful the experience, the wounds of the past must not be allowed to fester. They must be opened. They must be cleansed. And balm must be poured on them so they can heal. This is not to be obsessed with the past. It is to take care that the past is properly dealt with for the sake of the future.

28 In our case, dealing with the past means knowing what happened. Who ordered that this person should be killed? Why did this gross violation of human rights take place? We also need to know about the past so that we can renew our resolve and commitment that never again will such violations take place. We need to know about the past in order to establish a culture of respect for human rights. It is only by accounting for the past that we can become accountable for the future. (7)

In this passage, Tutu constructs what prudence looks like in relation to calls for the national amnesty option. The first, and perhaps most obvious, thing to note about this passage is how Tutu describes national amnesty. He refers to it here (and elsewhere throughout the Foreword) as “amnesia,” a terministic screen that frames the policy approach of national amnesty as a kind of disorder and associates it with loss. It is, moreover, a frame that the whole passage reinforces: in the course of these three paragraphs, Tutu negatively appraises the policy with the following cluster of words and phrases: “victimisation,” “awful experiences,” “kill,” “lie,” “uncanny,” “haunt,” “doomed,” and “fester.” And those who advocate national amnesty are framed as doing so “glibly,” as if the policy were the product of thoughtlessness.

Thus, like Tutu’s presentation of criminal trials, national amnesty is presented here as something to be avoided. What is different here, however, is *how* one best avoids this option. Whereas the prudent way to avoid Nuremberg is through restraint, the prudent way to avoid amnesia is through public action—specifically, truth-telling. To construct prudence in these terms, Tutu draws upon the idiom of audacity, as illustrated through his strategic (mis)reading of Ariel Dorfman’s play *Death and the Maiden*.⁵⁸ Tutu uses this example to demonstrate that, in the face of a buried past, it is only through action—in this case, the perpetrator’s verbal admission of guilt—that positive

⁵⁸ In the penultimate scene in *Death and the Maiden*, the woman in the play, Paulina, threatens to kill the man, Roberto, if he does not confess of his crime against her. She gives him ten seconds to repent, and begins to count upward. After she reaches nine, she remarks, “And why does it always have to be people like me who have to sacrifice, why are we always the ones who have to make concessions when something has to be conceded, why always me who has to bite her tongue, why? Well, not this time. This time I am going to think about myself, about what I need. If only to do justice in one case, just one. What do we lose? What do we lose by killing one of them? What do we lose? What do we lose?” (Dorfman 68). And with that the penultimate scene’s dialogue ends. The final scene in *Death and the Maiden* takes place “some months later” at a concert hall in the moments before a play begins (which, too, is called *Death and the Maiden*). Here are excerpts from the stage directions: “Paulina has bought some candy, and as she pays, Roberto enters, under a light which has a faint phantasmagoric moonlit quality. He could be real or he could be an illusion in Paulina’s head...Geraldo [Paulina’s husband] and Paulina sit in their seats. Roberto goes to another seat always looking at Paulina...Geraldo looks at Paulina, who looks forward...After a few instances, she turns slowly and looks at Roberto. Their eyes interlock for a moment. Then she turns her head and faces the stage...The lights go down while the music plays and plays and plays. Curtain” (71). It is not clear from this section of the play’s script that Paulina did not kill Roberto, as Tutu suggests. Even more tenuous is Tutu’s claim that Paulina’s dignity and identity has been restored at the play’s end. Tutu’s misreading, however, allows him to illustrate what prudence looks like in response to calls for national amnesty.

consequences result, such as the restoration of the victim's dignity and identity, the confirmation of her experience, and the affirmation of her "sense of self".⁵⁹

Then, in paragraph twenty-seven, Tutu implies that accommodation toward those who called for national amnesty is unacceptable, in part because the past will not be accommodated: "[T]he past refuses to lie down quietly. It has an uncanny habit of returning to haunt one." Here again, the proper response is action: "However painful the experience, the wounds of the past *must* not be allowed to fester. They *must* be opened. They *must* be cleansed. And balm *must* be poured on them so they can heal" (emphasis added). Note in particular, the modality of this passage, which appears within the next paragraph of the Foreword as well: "We...*need* to know about the past so that we can renew our resolve and commitment that never again will such violations take place. We *need* to know about the past in order to establish a culture of respect for human rights. It is *only* by accounting for the past that we can become accountable for the future." The modality of these passages suggests that, with regard to calls for national amnesty, restraint is simply not appropriate: action is an obligation and a necessity.

For Tutu, then, prudence involves restraint in response to calls for (retributive) justice and action in response to calls for amnesia. Put another way, Tutu implicitly suggests that accommodation is the proper response to perpetrators' requests that they not be subjected to criminal trials, while audacity is the proper response to their requests for complete amnesia. The way in which Tutu constructs prudence here gives South Africans a way to read and respond to the many findings in the final report: they should not seek retribution against those found guilty of human rights violations, nor should they simply dismiss the report and leave its comments unexamined; rather, they should proclaim, debate, and contribute to the report's truths. Early in the Foreword, Tutu remarks, "My appeal to South Africans as they read this report is not to use it to attack others, but to add to it, correct it and ultimately to share in the process that will lead to national unity through truth and reconciliation" (4).

⁵⁹ Tutu's reading of the two characters from *Death and the Maiden* actually illustrates *both* of the "antagonistic, but not mutually exclusive" aspects of prudence that Tutu constructs in the Foreword. The perpetrator demonstrates the prudent response to amnesia (he confesses); while the victim demonstrates the prudent response to retribution (she shows restraint).

“Without Bias”: Between the Criticisms of the ANC and NP

Accusations about the Commission’s stance toward justice and amnesty were not the only ones it faced during its operation: it also faced repeated accusations of bias. In July 1998, only three months before the South African TRC’s report was published, a public opinion poll showed that 83 percent of Afrikaners and 71 percent of English-speaking whites thought that the TRC was biased (Meredith 315). Afrikaners and English-speaking whites were not alone: only 60 percent of blacks felt that the TRC had been fair to all sides (319). In the Foreword, Tutu responds to accusations that the Commission was biased, and he does so, primarily, by constructing a second middle ground argument in a section of the Foreword entitled, “Criticisms and Challenges.” As I will demonstrate, Tutu’s second middle ground argument serves to frame the Commission as unbiased and, simultaneously, to discursively align various South African political parties with one another in their opposition.

Spanning thirty-four paragraphs, “Criticisms and Challenges” is the longest section of the ninety-five paragraph Foreword (8-17). Tutu begins the section, noting, “It would have been odd in the extreme if something as radical as this Commission had met with universal approval and acceptance.”⁶⁰ He then sets about the task of responding, at length, to the following criticisms of the Commission: the Commission’s composition unfairly favored the African National Congress; the Commission was too accommodating to former South African president P.W. Botha; the Commission acted unfairly toward the ANC in its decisions about amnesty and the locations of public hearings; the Commission allowed prominent perpetrators (like Winnie Mandela and P.W. Botha) to “get away with murder”; the Commission should not have granted amnesty to “those responsible for the St. James’ Church killings or the murder of Amy Biehl”; the Commission targeted former state security force members; and that the Commission was inconsistent in declaring some violence morally justifiable and some violence unjustifiable.

Tutu’s second middle ground argument is built, primarily, through the way in which he organizes these objections and his rebuttals to them. In paragraphs thirty-seven through forty-four, Tutu responds to five different objections to the Commission, each of

⁶⁰ He admits, at this point, that some of the criticism of the Commission was legitimate, although he does not specify which criticism was legitimate.

which attacks the Commission for being politically biased. But the objections that Tutu mentions and responds to are not uniform regarding *whom* the Commission is biased toward: some attack the TRC for favoring the African National Congress; others, for favoring the National Party. What is noteworthy here is that, in arranging this section of the Foreword, Tutu staggers the criticism so that accusations of bias toward the ANC follow accusations of bias toward the NP, which follow accusations of bias toward the ANC, and so on. For example, in paragraph thirty-seven, Tutu responds to the criticism that the Commission favored the African National Congress and other liberation groups: “The Commission has...been harshly criticised for being loaded with so-called ‘struggle’-types, people who were pro-ANC, SACP or PAC.” Then, in paragraph thirty-eight, Tutu addresses the complaint that the Commission was too accommodating to former South African president P.W. Botha—an accusation that the Commission favored the National Party. In the next two paragraphs, Tutu takes up another complaint accusing the TRC of ANC bias, noting, “We [the commissioners] were told that we revealed our true colours when blanket amnesty was granted to thirty-seven ANC leaders.” Following this accusation of ANC bias, Tutu once again reorients his perspective, mentioning another of the ANC’s objections of the Commission: here Tutu recalls that the ANC almost refused to participate in the TRC process because they claimed to be involved in a just war against the apartheid regime. Finally, in paragraphs forty-two through forty-four, Tutu addresses another accusation that the TRC was biased toward the ANC. This objection was originally leveled at the Commission by National Party members who took issue with the fact that the TRC did not hold public hearings in the ANC camps in Angola, where gross violations of human rights were said to have taken place at the hands of the ANC. There is, in this organizational pattern, a kind of balancing of the criticisms leveled against the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Accusations by the National Party of the TRC’s bias toward the African National Congress are not only met with a counterargument from Tutu but also, should that counterargument not persuade National Party critics sufficiently, a subsequent accusation by the African National Congress of the Commission’s bias toward the National Party (and vice versa); thus, each criticism that Tutu mentions serves to abate the force of the criticism that precedes and/or follows it.

By alternating between accusations of the TRC's pro-ANC bias and accusations of the TRC's pro-NP bias, Tutu positions the Commission on a middle ground between the interests of the ANC and the interests of the NP. The "extremes" that Tutu uses here are similar to the extremes he used to position the Commission in and through the first middle ground argument, which located the Commission between calls for national amnesty (which were primarily, though not exclusively, issued by members of the National Party) and calls for trials (which were primarily issued by members of the African National Congress). The main difference here is that, in the process of *refuting* each of the many accusations against the Commission, Tutu constructs a middle ground that is not so much a compromise between the interests of the ANC and NP as a site of political disinterestedness. The Commission, in other words, is positioned as unbiased—a politically neutral arbiter of past human rights violations in South Africa.

This middle ground position—the Commission as the unbiased middle between two interested parties—is one that Tutu goes to great lengths to reinforce, here and elsewhere in the Foreword. One way he does so is by describing the Commission as transparent: "One of the unique features of the South African Commission," he writes, "has been its open and transparent nature. Similar commissions elsewhere in the world have met behind closed doors. Ours has operated in the full glare of publicity" (1). Tutu also describes the Commission's final report as transparent, noting that it "provide[s] a window" to the past (2). The implication here is that both the Commission and the discourse it produces are not political or politically motivated. Other, more explicit attempts to reinforce the middle ground position follow the back and forth criticisms in paragraphs thirty-seven through forty-four. For example, in paragraph forty-five, Tutu writes, "These examples should surely be sufficient to establish that *we are politically independent and not biased* in favour of any particular political party or group" (emphasis added). It's a refrain that he repeats again and again, with minor variations, as the Foreword unfolds. In paragraph fifty-five, for example, Tutu writes, "It would be the height of stupidity as well as being self-defeating for the Commission to subvert its work by being anything less than *fair and even-handed*. This is, after all, required by the law that brought it into being. We want our work to be generally accepted. Some of us have been *characterised by an independence* that has led us to condemn wrong wherever it

happened or whoever was the culprit, and have done so without fear or favour. *We could not change this critical independence* when so much hinged on it.” (emphasis added). The next paragraph in the Foreword, paragraph fifty-six, echoes this point: “We have sought to carry out our work to the best of our ability, *without bias*” (emphasis added). Tutu concludes this litany in paragraph sixty, writing, “I have been at great pains to demonstrate the Commission’s *independence and lack of bias* because we are concerned that its work and report should gain the widest possible acceptance” (emphasis added).

Scattered among these quotations lies one answer to why this second middle ground argument is important: much like the first middle ground argument, it functions instrumentally as an attempt to ensure, as Tutu puts it, that the Commission’s work and report “be generally accepted,” that it “should gain the widest possible acceptance.” By positioning the Commission as unbiased toward all of the various groups in South Africa, Tutu helps to establish the credibility of the Commission and increases the likelihood that the findings in the report will receive broad public support.⁶¹ Perhaps more importantly, Tutu’s second middle ground argument serves to constitute a kind of unity between ANC and NP members. Positioning the Commission between the criticisms of the ANC and the NP—the “extremes” of this middle ground argument—might seem to further polarize the two groups; however, even as Tutu calls attention to the different viewpoints and interests of the ANC and the NP, he demonstrates an important similarity between them: the ANC and the NP share in, and are aligned about, the act of criticism itself.

Similar positioning work runs throughout the entirety of Tutu’s Foreword, beginning with its two-paragraph introduction. In the first paragraph of the Chairperson’s Foreword—the first paragraph of the South African TRC’s five volume final report—Tutu lists several violent events that have occurred in South Africa in the last few decades: the Sharpsville killings, the Soweto uprising, the Amanzimtoti Wimpy Bar bombing, the St. James’ Church killings, and others (1). “Our country,” he goes on to write, “is soaked in the blood of her children of all races and of all political persuasions.” This paragraph offers the first of the report’s many attempts to constitute South African

⁶¹ Tutu’s attempt to construct authority for the Commission by positioning it as unbiased appeals to the cultural capital of positivist epistemology, in which the discovery of truth and the production of new knowledge is a function of one’s critical distance. This stance assumes that the knower may be disassociated from what is known.

unity—a unity crafted, somewhat paradoxically, out of the bloodshed that, in soaking the landscape, has touched all citizens. Then, in the second paragraph of the Foreword’s introduction, this construction of unity is reinforced and, at the same time, radically altered along the lines of the middle ground argument in the “Criticisms and Challenges” section:

2 It is this contemporary history – which began in 1960 when the Sharpsville disaster took place and ended with the wonderful inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first democratically-elected President of the Republic of South Africa – it is this history with which we have had to come to terms. We could not pretend it did not happen. Everyone agrees that South Africans must deal with that history and its legacy. It is how we do this that is in question – a bone of contention throughout the life of the Commission, right up to the time when this report was being written. And I imagine we can assume that this particular point will remain controversial for a long time to come. (1)

Here again, as in the Foreword’s first paragraph, Tutu attempts to constitute unity. Note, however, that an important shift has taken place. Whereas in the first paragraph unity was predicated on violence, in this second paragraph unity is predicated on words; South Africans, Tutu notes, have had to “come to terms.” With the exception of Tutu’s claim that there is agreement about the need to address the past, Tutu’s appeal to unity here is still predicated on a shared opposition; however, it is not a sharing in bloodshed but a sharing in disagreement—a controversy, a “bone of contention,” a “question” about how to address the past. And, significantly, it is in the midst of discussing this disagreement that the Commission is mentioned for the first time in the Foreword.

Both here and in the Foreword’s “Criticisms and Challenges” section, Tutu positions the Commission as a flashpoint for controversy, against which both groups are pitted.⁶² This observation gives credence to what some commentators believe may have

⁶² To facilitate the construction of this unity, Tutu typically does not attribute the aforementioned criticisms to particular sources. Instead he relies on ambiguous pronouns, the antecedents of which do not appear in the Foreword: “There were *those who* decided from the outset...to discredit us”; “*Many* here and overseas have criticized us sharply for having been so conciliatory and accommodating towards Mr PW Botha”; “*Others* have taken us to task because they were unhappy when the Amnesty Committee gave amnesty to certain perpetrators”; “I think *some people* have wrongly thought that we were targeting former security force members”; and “*Some* have criticized us because they believe we talk of some acts as morally justifiable and others not.” Tutu also uses passive grammatical constructions to similar effect: “The Commission *has also been harshly criticized* for being loaded with so-called ‘struggle’-types”; “*We have been accused* of handling [Mr PW Botha] with kid gloves”; “*We were told* that we revealed our true colors when blanket amnesty was granted to thirty-seven ANC leaders”; and “*We have been accused*, too, of an ANC bias for refusing to hold public hearings over the gross violations that allegedly took place in the

been one of the central achievements of the Commission—namely, that the Commission was often able to diffuse the criticisms that the various political parties had for one another by redirecting the parties’ criticisms onto itself (Shea 59).

With regard to this point, it is worth noting that Tutu’s second middle ground argument itself is structured much like a dialogue: criticisms of the TRC are staggered in such a way that suggests the ANC and the NP are talking to one another. And while they may not share the same viewpoints, Tutu positions the two groups as co-participants in a kind of conversation about the TRC. Like the second paragraph of the Foreword, the unity that Tutu attempts to establish through his second middle ground argument is predicated not on violence or bloodshed, but on words. Members of the ANC, NP, and Commission alike are positioned as part of a culture of argument, in which claims and counterclaims circulate as part of a functioning, healthy society. Thus, even though Tutu’s primary aim in the “Criticisms and Challenges” section of the Foreword may be to rebut criticisms of the TRC, he simultaneously affirms the act of criticism itself. (This is not to say that Tutu finds all criticism legitimate: he takes issue with criticism that he says was “merely political point scoring” or that was meant to “pre-emptively...discredit the Commission and hence its report,” but he is also emphatic about the fact that South Africans must critique the report, if it is to be of any use.)

It may be overstating the case to say that the arguments in “Criticisms and Challenges” promote empathy among Tutu’s readers for their parties’ opposition parties. But, at the very least, Tutu forces each side to *see* the concerns of the other, which, as he frames it, are not so different. Other paragraphs of the Foreword attempt to cultivate empathy much more explicitly. Take, for example, paragraph forty-nine, which discusses

ANC camps in Angola.” Even though it is evident from the content of these criticisms to which political parties they belong, the grammatical ambiguity helps to blur distinctions among critics. Here it is not Nelson Mandela versus P.W. Botha or the African National Congress versus the National Party so much as it is the Commission versus critics.

The opposition between ANC and NP is further undermined in the text that immediately follows paragraphs thirty-seven through forty-five. Tutu writes, “Another frequent criticism has been that we have allowed people such Ms Madikizela-Mandela, Mr PW Botha and Dr Wouter Basson, in a manner of speaking, to ‘get away with murder’” (11). Here, Tutu grammatically links Winnie Madikizela-Mandela—a member of the African National Congress—and P.W. Botha and Wouter Basson—members of the National Party and advocates of apartheid—in a parallel series. The coordination of Mandela, Botha, and Basson brings into relief the fact that members of both the NP and ANC share a criticism of the TRC in common: namely, that the TRC allowed individuals to “get away with murder.”

three different acts of violence: the St. James' Church killings, in which members of the Azanian People's Liberation Army attacked a multi-racial, but predominantly white, congregation in Kenilworth; the murder of white anti-apartheid activist Amy Biehl by a group of black men; and the murder of eleven blacks as a result of the actions of Brian Mitchell, a white man:

49 [Some] have taken us to task because they were unhappy when the Amnesty Committee gave amnesty to certain perpetrators – such as those responsible for the St James' Church killings or the murder of Amy Biehl. Clearly these people have forgotten the *raison d'être* for amnesty. Amnesty is not meant for nice people. It is intended for perpetrators. There are strict criteria to be met and we believe that the Committee has used those criteria to determine whether or not amnesty should be granted. Amnesty is a heavy price to pay. It is, however, the price the negotiators believed our country would have to pay to avoid an “alternative too ghastly to contemplate”. Sadly, in almost all cases, there was an outcry only when the victim was white and the perpetrator black. I wonder whether people have considered how the Trust Feed Farm community must have felt when Brian Mitchell got amnesty since it was his misinterpreted orders that led to the death of eleven persons in that community? (11-12)

Here, Tutu discusses two cases in which the perpetrators were black and the victims were predominately white (i.e., the St. James' Church killings and the murder of Amy Biehl), and then asks his white readers to consider how the black members of the Trust Feed Farm community “must have felt” when Brian Mitchell—a white man—received amnesty for his role in the death of eleven blacks. This is a call to empathy, to see and experience the world from the point of view of another. And it's a call that Tutu makes elsewhere in the Foreword as well. For example, in response to the criticism that the Commission was too “conciliatory and accommodating towards Mr PW Botha,” he asks his audience to “imagine the reaction in certain quarters had Mr Botha been a member of the ANC.”

In Our Midst: The Commission as Microcosm

There is a third—less conventional—middle ground argument woven throughout the pages of the Foreword. As I have shown, the two other middle ground arguments position the Commission between calls for Nuremberg and calls for amnesia, between criticisms from the ANC and criticisms from the NP. In both of these cases the

Commission is positioned in the midst of the people of South Africa, their voices and opinions. The third middle ground argument, however, both affirms and radically inverts these positions. Through the logic of representation, the Commission is constituted as a locus set in the midst of people of South Africa and, in whose midst, all members of the country—ANC and NP, victims and perpetrators—dwell together.

The third middle ground argument is another response to accusations of bias against the Commission. As I noted earlier, the seventeen commissioners had been chosen with great care. Nevertheless, the Commission's composition was the subject of controversy, due, in large part, to the fact that there were only two Afrikaners on the Commission and, over the course of the Commission's operation, one of the two resigned; the other signed the Commission's report on the condition that his dissenting minority report would be included in the publication (Thompson 277). Many Afrikaners felt that the majority of the Commission was comprised of "'struggle' people or English-speaking liberals" (Meredith 313).

To address these accusations, advocates of the TRC described the Commission as representative. For instance, in his book *A Country Unmasked*, deputy chairperson of the Commission Alex Boraine notes the following about the Commission's composition: "Among the seventeen commissioners there were seven women, ten men, seven Africans, two 'coloureds', two Indians, and six whites. It was, therefore, a fairly representative group that had been appointed by President Mandela" (Boraine 75). Tutu makes similar remarks in the Foreword, and it is in his discussion of the selection process and the Commission's composition that the first traces of the third middle ground argument emerge. Tutu writes:

37 The Commission has...been harshly criticized for being loaded with so-called 'struggle'-types...We want to say categorically we did not choose ourselves, nor did we put our own names forward. We were nominated in a process open to anyone – whatever their political affiliation or lack of it. We were interviewed in public sessions by a panel on which all the political parties were represented. Moreover, when the President made his choice from a short list, it was in consultation with his Cabinet of National Unity, which included the ANC, the IFP and the National Party. No one, as far as we know, objected publicly at the time to those who were so appointed. Indeed, many of us were chosen precisely because of our role in opposing apartheid – which is how we established our credibility and demonstrated our integrity. I am myself, even today,

not a card-carrying member of any political party. I believe, on the other hand, that some of my colleagues may have been chosen precisely because of their party affiliation, to ensure broad representivity. (9)

This passage appears in the “Criticisms and Challenges” section of the Foreword and, like much of the section, is intended to indicate that the Commission was fair. However, unlike much of the section, such fairness is not predicated upon the notion that the commissioners were unbiased; in fact, the opposite seems to be the case. Here Tutu emphasizes that commissioners have political commitments: they have views on apartheid, and many were chosen “precisely because of their party affiliation.”⁶³ What positions the Commission as fair in this instance is Tutu’s repeated claim that the political commitments of the commissioners are politically *representative* of the people of South Africa. The selection process involved a nomination process “open to anyone,” involved interviews in which “all the political parties were represented,” was made in consultation with the Cabinet of National Unity (comprised of members of all parties), and was not initially criticized by any of South Africa’s parties. The Commission, Tutu suggests, is characterized by what he refers to as “broad representivity.” Put another way, the Commission is the South African population in little.

Tutu reinforces the notion of the Commission’s representivity later in the Foreword. In a rhetorical move that draws upon the Christian trope of substitutionary atonement, Tutu suggests that, through the truth commission process, the members of the Commission have taken the effects of apartheid upon themselves. He writes, “We [commissioners] have borne a heavy burden as we have taken onto ourselves the anguish, the awfulness, and the sheer evil of it all” (21). Following this statement is one of the most graphic, and one of the most powerful, passages in the entire Foreword:

⁶³ Even though Tutu claims that he himself is “not a card-carrying member of any political party,” his own personal affiliations come out clearly elsewhere in the “Foreword”: he positions himself as a moral exemplar and a man of God. He does so, primarily, through his use of biblical references and allusions, which build upon and reference his extrinsic ethos as the “Most Reverend D. M. Tutu Archbishop Emeritus”—his full title and the heading given to the “Chairperson’s Foreword.” Throughout his introduction, Tutu quotes from the prophet Jeremiah (17) and references the story of Jacob and Esau (15). He also draws upon the Christian theological doctrine that humans are created *imago Dei*—in the image of God—to warrant his claims that South African society is characterized by unity in diversity (22). Furthermore, the Chairperson’s Foreword is prefaced with a black-and-white image, spanning two pages of the report, showing Tutu in his cassock and collar, clutching a cross in prayer, while another cross hangs in the background.

87...The [Commission's] interpreters have...had the trauma of not just hearing or reading about the atrocities, but have had to speak in the first person as either a victim or the perpetrator,

They undressed me and opened a drawer and shoved my breast into the drawer which they then slammed shut on my nipple! [or] I drugged his coffee, then I shot him in the head. Then I burned his body. Whilst we were doing this, watching his body burn, we were enjoying a braai on the other side.

88 The chief of the section that typed the transcripts of the hearings told me:

As you type, you don't know you are crying until you feel and see the tears falling on your hands. (21-22, emphasis original)

The italicized font in paragraph eighty-seven gives two brief excerpts taken from the Commission's public hearings, one of which is taken from the testimony of a victim of human rights violations and one of which is taken from the testimony of a perpetrator. But Tutu's recounting of these testimonies are not meant to highlight the experiences of either victim or perpetrator; rather, these testimonies are recounted to demonstrate that members of the Commission have themselves been forced to identify with the positions of the witnesses, both victims and perpetrators alike. They have had to "speak in the first person as either a victim or perpetrator," and they have suffered trauma from having had to do so. Reinforcing this notion is the way that these paragraphs are presented on the page. In terms of page layout, the quotation of the transcriber in paragraph eighty-eight is given the same weight as the quotations of the victim and the perpetrator in paragraph eighty-seven: both are indented and italicized in the same fashion; both count similarly as testimony. The position that Tutu attempts to establish for the Commission is one of solidarity with South Africans. Commissioners themselves are participants in the atrocities of apartheid. "Some of us [commissioners]," Tutu writes in the next paragraph, "have already experienced something of a post traumatic stress and have become more and more aware of just how deeply wounded we have all been; how wounded and broken we all are. Apartheid has affected us at a very deep level, more than we ever suspected." Commissioners are, in Tutu's words, "wounded healers."

Tutu seems to suggest, then, that the Commission is representative of the people of South Africa in at least two senses: it is politically representative, and it is representative in suffering. And to these two arguments, Tutu adds a third toward the end of the Foreword, noting, "We in the Commission have been a microcosm of our society,

reflecting its alienation, suspicions and lack of trust in one another. Our earlier Commission meetings were very difficult and filled with tension” (22).⁶⁴ The Commission, in other words, is also representative of the people of South Africa in terms of the kinds of relationships and interactions between its members, which were not, Tutu suggests, initially characterized by reconciliation and forgiveness.

Tutu’s repeated attempts to position the Commission as representative of the people of South Africa suggest new possibilities for conceptualizing the middle ground. In this case, the middle ground is once again the Commission itself; however, unlike the other middle grounds that Tutu constructs in the Foreword, this one is neither a compromise between two extreme positions, nor a rejection of extreme positions. Rather, it is a space where a multiplicity of (often extreme) positions are brought into contact with one another and held in productive tension. The Commission is rendered as a locus, in the midst of the fragmented and alienated people of South Africa, where individuals from a variety of constituencies come together in all their diversity and with all their diverse opinions. To use a geometric metaphor, Tutu adds another dimension to the middle ground: if the middle ground, as conventionally constructed, is understood as the midpoint on a line (or continuum) between two extremes, the middle ground that Tutu constructs here is the hub or core at the center of a range of surrounding positions. At the heart of this middle ground argument is a kind of paradox. On the one hand, Tutu situates the Commission in the midst of the South African people; the Commission is the meeting place or locus, where a part of the South African population gathers and synecdochically stands in (and together) for the whole. On the other hand, Tutu situates the South African people in the midst of the Commission; as representatives, each commissioner synecdochically stands in for different South African constituencies.

Like Tutu’s first two middle ground arguments, the third reinforces the Commission’s credibility and legitimates its findings. Tutu renders the Commission more believable, and its report more trustworthy, by suggesting that the Commission represents

⁶⁴ Some examples of these tensions are recorded by Tutu’s biographer, John Allen. Allen writes that tensions emerged when the Commission’s first three staff appointments were given to whites (349). He also notes that some commissioners had suspicions about deputy chairperson Alex Boraine, who had served in Parliament during apartheid. Some commissioners took particular offense at Boraine’s use of the personal pronoun “we” in “relaying decisions to which not all commissioners had been party” (349).

the South African people. The appeal of this argument is, of course, much broader than the appeals of the previous two middle ground arguments: the appeal to representivity extends beyond members of the ANC or NP to all South Africans who are able to identify with one or more members of the Commission.

The third middle ground argument is important to Tutu for another reason. Tutu's argument allows him to establish the possibility for—i.e., the grounds for—future reconciliation among the people of South Africa and the development of a new South African society. In demonstrating that the Commission is representative of the people of South Africa, Tutu describes commissioners' political diversity, their deep suffering, and their early suspicion and distrust of one another. But significantly, Tutu does not leave the Commission in this place. Immediately after noting that the Commission was a microcosm that reflected the "alienation, suspicions and lack of trust" of South Africans and that early Commission meetings "were very difficult and filled with tension," Tutu says, "God has been good in helping us [commissioners] to grow closer together." By following up his claim that the Commission represented the people of South Africa in all their struggles and diversity with a claim that God has helped unify commissioners despite their differences, Tutu constitutes the possibility—as he puts it, the "hope"—that the people of South Africa will be able to find unity as well, a point which he articulates in the next line: "Perhaps we [commissioners] are a sign of hope that, if people from often hostile backgrounds could grow closer together as we have done, then there is hope for South Africa, that we [all] can become united" (22). It is because commissioners are both representative of South Africans in their differences and different from South Africans in their unity that Tutu can claim that the Commission has laid a foundation for South Africans to move forward: "Like our Constitution," he writes, "the Commission has helped in laying 'the secure foundation for the people of South Africa to transcend the divisions and strife of the past'" (23).⁶⁵ And it is on the basis of this foundation that Tutu can issue the following exhortation to a new kind of South African society, which calls people to unity-in-diversity:

Ours is a remarkable country. Let us celebrate our diversity, our differences. God wants us as we are. South Africa wants and needs the

⁶⁵ The Commission is, in a sense, a visible manifestation of the constitution of the new South Africa; commissioners have performed the unity and reconciliation sought for by the Constitution.

Afrikaner, the English, the coloured, the Indian, the black. We are sisters and brothers in one family – God’s family, the human family. Having looked the beast of the past in the eye, having asked and received forgiveness and having made amends, let us shut the door on the past – not in order to forget it but in order not to allow it to imprison us. Let us move into the glorious future of a new kind of society where people count, not because of biological irrelevancies or other extraneous attributes, but because they are persons of infinite worth created in the image of God.
(22)

Central to both the way in which Tutu positions the Commission and the new society that Tutu envisions here is the South African concept of *ubuntu*.⁶⁶ The concept, which I will explore in much greater detail in the next chapter, is often rendered into English as “I am who I am because of who we all are” or “people are people through other people”; and it is reflected, in the above text, in Tutu’s dual claims that South Africa needs (and needs to celebrate) diversity and that South Africans are “sisters and brothers in one family.”

Contributing to a Tradition

Prudent. Unbiased. Representative. Through his middle ground arguments, Tutu positions—and positively values—the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission in each of these three ways as his Foreword unfolds. These three ways of constructing the Commission’s *ethos* are not, of course, the only ways that Tutu positions the Commission in the Foreword, nor are they necessarily consistent with one another (constructions of *ethos* may be contradictory or contested); however, they indicate important ways that Tutu shaped—or, at least, attempted to shape—the TRC that go beyond the claims that he did so through his emotional outpourings and/or through his

⁶⁶ Tutu explicitly mentions *ubuntu* only once in the Foreword (8); however, it is described, in detail, later in the report: “As far as traditional African values are concerned, the fundamental importance of *ubuntu* [to the operation of the Commission and transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa] must be highlighted. *Ubuntu*, generally translated as ‘humaneness’, expresses itself metaphorically in *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* – ‘people are people through other people’. In the words of Constitutional Court Justice Makgoro: ‘Its spirit emphasizes respect for human dignity, marking a shift from confrontation to conciliation.’ Constitutional Court Justice Langa has said: ‘During violent conflicts and times when violent crime is rife, distraught members of society decry the loss of *ubuntu*. Thus, heinous crimes are the antithesis of *ubuntu*. Treatment that is cruel, inhuman or degrading is bereft of *ubuntu*.’ He goes on to observe that: ‘We have all been affected, in some way or other, by the ‘strife, conflicts, untold suffering and injustice’ of the recent past. . . . But all this was violence on human beings by human beings. Life became cheap, almost worthless.’ It is against this background, vividly illustrated by the Commission process, that ‘a spontaneous call has arisen among sections of the population for a return to *ubuntu*’” (127).

role as Archbishop. The three middle ground arguments, while different, each serve a similar end: they lend credibility to the Commission. Even more significant is the fact that they each do so by appealing to multiple audiences simultaneously. The Commission, positioned as a prudent course of action, appeals both to those who call for amnesty and those who call for justice; the Commission, positioned as unbiased, appeals to all South African political parties simultaneously, by suggesting that none will receive preferential treatment; and the Commission, positioned as representative, appeals to all those South Africans who are willing to identify with one or more of the commissioners.

The fact that each of these constructions of *ethos* appeals to multiple audiences simultaneously may, in part, be a function of middle ground arguments themselves. That is, in addition to increasing the value of a middle term (e.g., individual amnesty), part of the *instrumental* potential of middle ground arguments may lie in their capacity to respond effectively to multiple audiences at the same time or, put another way, to manage the heteroglossia circulating in a society. This potential, of course, always comes with a risk: in attempting to speak for multiple audiences, one always runs the risk of speaking for none. The middle ground arguments I have looked at in this chapter each have *constitutive* potential as well. Through them, Tutu potentially helps to shape what prudent action means in South Africa, to build identification between oppositional groups (around their acts of criticism), and to construct the possibility—the grounds—for a new vision of South Africa, characterized by unity-in-diversity.

Gauging the Foreword's (and, more broadly, the final report's) actual influence and importance in facilitating the transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa is complicated by events surrounding the official presentation ceremony of the report. The month leading up to the presentation ceremony had been an especially tense one for the commissioners (Allen 366-67). They had distributed notices, weeks before the day of ceremony, to people and groups they had found fault with in the report, offering them the opportunity to respond in writing to the findings before the report was actually published. Instead of responding to their notice in writing, members of the ANC requested a meeting with commissioners. The Commission denied the request, fearing that its credibility would be compromised if it agreed to meet with the ANC after having stipulated that responses should be in writing. As a result, the ANC submitted its written response to the

report's findings past the date when they were due: the report had already been sent to the printer. Tutu's biographer, John Allen, records what happened next, as well as Tutu's reaction:

The ANC...then apparently lobbied sympathetic commissioners. Two days before the report was due, simultaneously, to be handed to Mandela and published, a group of commissioners argued that the question of a meeting be reopened. Tutu was staggered: "I really could not believe what I was hearing...I had a hollow sensation in the pit of my stomach as I saw the whole enterprise sinking without a trace." Their resolution was narrowly defeated, whereupon the group proposed that the ANC's [late response] be considered. The vote was split evenly, seven for and seven against. Tutu settled the matter by voting against the proposal. (367)

When the ANC was denied a meeting by the Commission a second time, it appealed to the South African High Court by submitting an application for an injunction against the publication of the Commission's findings against the ANC. The ANC's hearing took place on the morning of October 29th—the day the report was to be presented to the President. Tutu, who was in Pretoria waiting to hand the report to Mandela, was incensed by the ANC's actions, and he voiced his anger at a morning press conference:

I have struggled against a tyranny [apartheid]. I did not do that to substitute another...Let them [the ANC] know that I will oppose them with every fiber of my being. That is who I am...I didn't struggle in order to remove one set of those who thought they were tin gods and replace them with others who are tempted to think they are. (Meredith 303)⁶⁷

Fortunately for Tutu and the TRC, the ANC's application to ban publication of the report was denied, only three hours before the noon ceremony. Together, Tutu and Mandela worked to salvage the ceremony. They danced on stage together at the event, and Mandela, who accepted the report "with all of its imperfections," remarked, "The commission was not required to muster a definitive and comprehensive history of the past three decades. Nor was it expected to conjure up instant reconciliation...Yet we are all confident that it has contributed to the work in progress of laying the foundation of the edifice of reconciliation. The further construction of that house of peace needs my hand. It needs your hand" (Thompson 278; Meredith 306). Thus, despite the ANC's last minute attempt to ban the report—as well as several boycotts of the report by other political

⁶⁷ Tutu publicly apologized the next day for these remarks, saying that they were born out of his "self-righteousness" and "arrogance" (Shea 39).

parties, including the National Party—the presentation ceremony was largely a success. The significance of this moment is reflected in the fact that historian T.H.R. Davenport chose an image of Tutu passing the five volumes of the report to Mandela as the cover for the fifth edition of his expansive *South Africa: A Modern History*. And Philippe-Joseph Salazar has described the presentation ceremony as a “demonstration of the nature of the new social contract” in South Africa. Salazar goes on to say, “The very existence of the *Report*, regardless of its authorship, process, content, findings, and delivery, constitutes proof that the founding act of post-apartheid South Africa (Act No. 108 of 1996, Constitutions of the Republic of South Africa, October 11, 1996) and, before it, the agreement to a negotiated settlement were valid in their claim of promoting truth and reconciliation” (79).

Not surprisingly, initial reactions to the report’s content were negative. Thabo Mbeki, leader of the ANC, described the report as “wrong and misguided” (Thompson 278); while the National Party called it “an expensive disaster” and “fatally flawed and divisive” (Meredith 306). Former South African President F.W. De Klerk remarked, “I fear the TRC report has left our communities more divided than at any time since the inauguration of the government of national unity [in 1994]” (Meredith 306). Many media sources, however, were much more positive. The morning after the presentation ceremony, the South African *Sunday Times* proclaimed, “It is the duty, as Tutu has so eloquently put it, of every South African, of every institution in civil society, of every church, to ensure that we do not repeat the past. We must now ensure that the commission’s report, with all its flaws, becomes part of our popular memory” (Meredith 305). David Bereford, long-time foreign correspondent for the *Mail and Guardian*, claimed that the report was “the most important political testament to emerge from South Africa” (qtd. in Christie 185). And in *South Africa: A Modern History*, T.H.R. Davenport, writing about the initial reception of the report, records that “its even-handedness was widely accepted” among South Africans (702).

But given the reactions from the NP and ANC, it is unlikely that Tutu’s three middle ground arguments had their intended effects in the days immediately following

the report's publication.⁶⁸ To the extent that they had any immediate effect, their rhetorical power probably lies, as is the case with most rhetorical performances, in their reinforcement of prior performances, spoken and written, that occurred during the operation of the South African TRC. It may, however, be the Foreword's long-term effects that are most important. In the months and years following the report's presentation ceremony, South African newspapers published segments of the report. And at least some discussions are underway about ways to make the report more accessible to the majority of South Africans. For example, in 2006, the South African Institute for Justice and Reconciliation hosted a conference to assess the unfinished business of the TRC, at which the need to make the report more accessible to South Africans was discussed (61-63). Pumla Dineo Ggola, an Associate Professor at the University of the Western Cape, commented on the current inaccessibility of the report:

Although there are now English web-versions, one at a private news service and another in open-content format on the Government Information website, there are various indicators that the report is still not accessible. Chief among these is the high price of the TRC Report in both electronic form (CD Rom) and hard copy. The price of the five-volume hard copy version makes it out of reach for most South Africans, while the inaccessibility of the electronic version is further exacerbated by the fact that it is issued under a single user license fee and works with one programme, Folio, which is supportable on a specific proprietary platform, Microsoft Windows. This excludes large numbers of young people who use Free and Open Source Internet access...Equally wrong is the absence of the report in languages other than English and the absence of guidelines on how such copies may be generated. (61-62)

At the conclusion of her talk, Ggola noted, "The challenges that remain with us in relation to the South African TRC include ensuring that these publicly owned records, the TRC Report and entire archive, are released into real and meaningful public ownership again" (63). The long-term rhetorical effectiveness of Tutu's Foreword for South Africans may hinge, in part, on the extent to which the challenges Ggola mentions can be overcome.

But, at least to some degree, the arguments in the Foreword have *already* enjoyed wide circulation. Many of them appear, verbatim, in Tutu's widely read book *No Future*

⁶⁸ That said, despite the report's bulkiness, its mistakes, and its initial poor reception, the report now makes it impossible, according to U.S. Institute of Peace guest scholar Dorothy Shea, "to plausibly deny the nature or extent of atrocities that took place in apartheid South Africa" (56).

Without Forgiveness. Chapter two of the book, for example, is entitled “Nuremberg or National Amnesia? A Third Way.” The chapter elaborates on Tutu’s middle ground argument point by point and, at times, follows it word for word. Tutu has also reused much of the material in the Foreword in speeches that he has delivered around the world—the most relevant of which, for my project, is a speech that he delivered in Greensboro, North Carolina on November 3rd, 2005. Tutu arrived in Greensboro on November 2nd to meet privately with the commissioners and staff of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission and encourage them in their work. The next day, on the twenty-sixth anniversary of the Greensboro massacre, Tutu delivered an address entitled “Reconciling Love: A Millennium Mandate” at Greensboro’s Guilford College as part of the college’s Bryan Series lectures, themed, “Spirit and Spirituality.”

I discuss Tutu’s speech in more detail in the next chapter, but I want to conclude this chapter by considering a few brief moments from the beginning of the speech. Before doing so, it is first worth reiterating the overarching purpose of this dissertation, which is to determine—or, at least, begin to determine—how the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission garnered the authority for its actions and claims. Tutu’s address on November 3rd was likely instrumental in this regard. He begins the speech by recounting a recent interaction that he had while dining with an acquaintance at a restaurant in the United States. After ordering their food, his acquaintance pointed to Tutu and asked the waiter, “Do you know who this is?” The waiter replied, “Are you a famous singer?” Upon telling this story, Tutu—and his Greensboro audience—erupted in laughter; and, after regaining his breath, Tutu remarked, “That was good for the soul.” The vignette is, I think, an indication of Tutu’s oratorical skills, in that it demonstrates that Tutu does not take his stature as an internationally-renown religious and political figure too seriously, while simultaneously calling his audience’s attention to that stature. And having thus reinforced his own *ethos*, Tutu immediately makes use of it, in service of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He says:

It is... a very great privilege to come to this city, which is the very first in the United States to have set up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, embodying – wonderfully – the theme of this series of lectures – reconciling love. And the world salutes Greensboro. And I wonder whether we shouldn’t ourselves here want to recognize all of those wonderful people associated with this extraordinary initiative. Maybe we

should give them a small clap. Don't you think? (Tutu, "Reconciling Love")

Through these remarks, which received a standing ovation, Tutu—arguably the most prominent “author” of TRC discourse—publicly endorsed the work of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission and prompted his audience to do the same. Such comments, from such a prominent source, were likely instrumental in authorizing the Commission to carry out its mandate. But the way in which Tutu helped to build the Greensboro TRC's authority goes well beyond this expression. As Tutu's speech unfolded, he reiterated many of the arguments that he made in his Foreword and, later, in his book. For instance, he described South Africa's choice to avoid both Nuremberg and national amnesty, explained the importance of the South African notion of *ubuntu*, distinguished between retributive justice and restorative justice, and used similar designations like “wounded healer.” In the Greensboro context, Tutu's arguments accomplished different ends than they did in the *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa*. For one thing, they served to historically contextualize the operation of the Greensboro TRC for the Greensboro audience, giving the Commission a legacy and, thus, credibility.

Desmond Tutu's arguments also provided the members of the Greensboro TRC with rhetorical resources that they reaccentuated in their own rhetorical performances to establish their own *ethos* and thereby warrant their actions and claims (i.e., establish their authority). In subsequent chapters of this project, I demonstrate how such performances—as well as other performances that, like Tutu's, contributed to the rhetorical traditions surrounding the operation of the South African TRC and, more broadly, to those circulating within the field of transitional justice—were made use of to meet the demands of the Greensboro context. Chapter four demonstrates the link between Tutu's arguments and the Greensboro TRC's constructions of *ethos* most explicitly, by exploring how the latter positioned itself, in terms of representivity and objectivity. Chapter five looks at the ways that the Greensboro TRC reaccentuated Pricilla Hayner's widely accepted definition of truth commissions—a definition shaped largely by the South African TRC, the most prominent truth commission to date. In the next chapter, I explore how the South African notion of *ubuntu*—as described by Tutu and, to a greater

extent, by Bongani Finca, another member of the South African TRC—was reaccentuated in Greensboro.

Chapter III

“A person is a person because of other persons”: A Rhetoric of *Ubuntu* in Greensboro, North Carolina

This chapter serves as a bridge between this dissertation’s discussions of the rhetorical performances of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission and discussions of the rhetorical performances of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission by offering close readings of speeches delivered in Greensboro by members of the South African TRC. It focuses, in particular, on the performances of Reverend Bongani Finca—a member of the South African TRC who traveled to Greensboro to observe the work of the Greensboro TRC and to speak on its behalf. In and through his speeches, Finca helps to constitute the warrants and grounds for the Greensboro TRC’s establishment and, later, its actions. He does so, in large part, by making use of the rhetorical traditions surrounding the operation of the South African TRC. Most notably, his speeches build authority by reaccentuating the South African notion of *ubuntu* in the Greensboro context.

Ubuntu has been described, aptly, as “a multidimensional concept” (Kamwangamalu 114) that “defies a single definition or characterization” (More 156). As a means of introducing the concept and this chapter, it is productive to survey some of the definitions and connotations typically associated with *ubuntu* and to look, briefly, at some of the ways that the term has been made use of in South Africa and elsewhere. In doing so, I follow rhetorician Edward Schiappa’s central claim in his book *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning* that definitions should be treated pragmatically: they should not be conceptualized as “facts of essence” that correspond, more or less accurately, to what things “really are” (i.e., some objective reality) but as “facts of usage” that describe how people make use of particular words in particular contexts to particular ends (5-10).

The term *ubuntu* derives from the Bantu languages, and there are phonological variants in a number of African languages, including, for example, the Sotho word *botho* (Kamwangamalu 114, 120). According to Michael Battle in his book *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu*, the term *ubuntu* is the plural form of the word *Bantu*, which, says Battle, was recorded by nineteenth-century German linguist Wilhelm Bleek and subsequently used to describe the “similar linguistic bond among African speakers” (39). It is sometimes translated, simply, as “humanity” or “humanness”; however, because of the semantic richness of *ubuntu*, most writers expand on this basic definition, often with the help of terminological clusters. Sociolinguist Nkonko Kamwangamalu, for example, begins his study of *ubuntu* in South Africa by noting that the term is used to connote “respect for any human being, for human dignity and for human life, collective sharedness, obedience, humility, solidarity, caring, hospitality, interdependence, [and] communalism” (114). Similarly, philosopher Mabogo More says that *ubuntu* “has been variously equated with African communalism of African humanism, and has been associated with values such as caring, sharing, hospitality, forgiveness, compassion, empathy, honesty, humility, or ‘brotherhood’” (More 156).⁶⁹ At the hub of these terminological clusters, and thus central to most descriptions of *ubuntu*, are notions of interdependence and connectedness. These connotations derive from the fact that the term is often used, synecdochically, for the Xhosa and Zulu expression, “*umuntu ngumuntu nganabantu*,” which in English is rendered as, “each individual’s humanity is ideally expressed in relationship with others,” or, more typically, “a person is a person through other persons” (Battle 39; More 157).⁷⁰ Thus, Sonja Laden refers to *ubuntu* as describing “a collective solidarity whereby the self is perceived primarily in relation to the perception of others, that is, persons are perceived less as independent of one another, and more as interdependent of one another” (as qtd. in Kamwangamalu 134). Kamwangamalu refers to interdependence as *ubuntu*’s key value, noting, “The essence of *ubuntu* is that an individual owes his or her existence to the existence of others... This

⁶⁹ The many meanings associated with the term are often said to derive from the values that circulated within the structure of the African village and chiefdom, although this explanation is not universally accepted; historian Christoph Marx, for example, calls this explanation an “invented tradition” (59).

⁷⁰ The equivalent Sotho expression—“*Motho ke motho ka batho ba bang*,” which is typically translated, “I am, because we are”—also contributes to the fact that *ubuntu* is often associated with notions of interdependence and connectedness (More 157).

interpersonal character of *ubuntu* is the source of many of its distinctive virtues that have been highlighted in the literature, such as patience, hospitality, loyalty, respect, conviviality, sociability, vitality, endurance, sympathy, obedience, sharing, to list but a few” (116). Jomo Kenyatta asserts that, according to *ubuntu*, “nobody is an isolated individual. Or rather, his uniqueness is a secondary fact about him; first and foremost he is several people’s relative and several people’s contemporary” (as qtd. in Kamwangamalu 115). And More, describing what he refers to as the term’s “politico-ideological sense,” relates *ubuntu* to the viewpoint “that an individual is not a human being except as he or she constitutes part of a social order. This is a conception of the self as intrinsically linked to, and forming a part of, the community. In this communal orientation the self is dependent on other selves and is defined through its relationships to other selves” (157).⁷¹

Ubuntu was one of the central commonplaces underpinning the operation of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Reasons for the Commission’s emphasis on *ubuntu* were undoubtedly myriad, but chief among them was the term’s importance in the Commission’s discursive architecture. In 1993, before the South African TRC was established, the authors of the postamble to South Africa’s interim constitution used the term to describe what the country’s transition from an apartheid regime to a democracy needed to look like. “There is a need,” they wrote in their historic postamble, “for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* but not victimization” (qtd. in Tutu, *Forgiveness*: 45-46). It was this threefold call for understanding, reparation, and *ubuntu* that prompted the South African Parliament to pass the “Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act,” the legislative act responsible for establishing the South African TRC (“South Africa”).

Once the Commission was underway, Desmond Tutu and many of the other commissioners frequently deployed the term to support their emphasis on restorative, as opposed to retributive, justice; it was on the premise of the interconnectedness of all

⁷¹ More also describes *ubuntu* as a moral or ethical concept, noting, “As a moral or ethical concept, [*ubuntu*] is a point of view according to which moral practices are founded exclusively on consideration and enhancement of human well-being; a preoccupation with human welfare. It enjoins that what is morally good is what brings dignity, respect, contentment, and prosperity to others, self and the community at large (Wiredu 1980: 6). *Ubuntu* is a demand for respect for persons no matter what their circumstances may be” (More 156-157)

humans that members of the South African TRC claimed that the restoration of victims depended upon the restoration of perpetrators. Tutu's discussion of *ubuntu* in *No Future without Forgiveness* illustrates this point: "We are bound up in a delicate network of interdependence because, as we say in our African idiom, a person is a person through other persons. To dehumanize another inexorably means that one is dehumanized as well... Thus to forgive is indeed the best form of self-interest since anger, resentment, and revenge are corrosive of that *summum bonum*, that greatest good, communal harmony that enhances the humanity and personhood of all in the community" (35).⁷² *Ubuntu* also provided grounds for the celebration of diversity. "*Ubuntu*," Tutu remarked at his lecture at Guilford College in Greensboro, "says I am because you are. I am with all of my gifts and my shortcomings... because of you with all your gifts and your shortcomings. God is smart. God has created us so that we could never really be self-sufficient. I need you to make up for what I lack, as I make up for what you lack. And you can almost see God rubbing God's hands in glee and saying, 'Ah, even if I have to say so, that really is smart'" (Tutu, "Reconciling Love").⁷³ Diversity, in other words, was said to be valuable because people with different gifts, taken together, complete one another.

In the South African TRC's final report, commissioners claim that "a spontaneous call has arisen among sections of the population for a return to *ubuntu*" (127); and, judging from the many different ways the term has been applied in post-apartheid South Africa, this assessment would seem to be accurate. *Ubuntu* has been taken up, for example, by the South African business sector as a framework for revamping managerial paradigms and increasing productivity through a return to "traditional African values." *Ubuntu*-informed business practices focus on mentoring as opposed to managing, teamwork as opposed to competition and individualism, diversity as opposed to uniformity, and affirmative action as opposed to discrimination (Kamwangamalu 118). *Ubuntu* has also been taken up by some educationalists, like Philip Higgs and Elza Venter, who argue that the goal of African pedagogies should be to foster *ubuntu* (Enslin and Horsthemke 548). Non-governmental organizations, like the *Ubuntu* Education Fund

⁷² *Ubuntu* was used in a similar manner in the South African TRC's final report. See, for example, Volume 1, Chapter 5.

⁷³ Claims like this one prompt Christoph Marx to claim that "Archbishop Desmond Tutu... 'Christianized' *ubuntu* into a form of human compassion, which, as a Christian commandment, could be contrasted to the divisiveness of the apartheid state" (52).

and *Ubuntu* Africa, have drawn upon the concept to warrant their educational and health-related community action programs (*Ubuntu* Education; *Ubuntu* Africa). The *Ubuntu* Education Fund, for example, has applied the *ubuntu* philosophy—which it describes as a “universal bond of sharing that connects all of humanity”—to “create programs within a community that provide knowledge and resources to change how that community sees its potential and acknowledges the future” (*Ubuntu* Education).⁷⁴

Ubuntu has also been deployed *outside* South Africa, and one of the main goals of this chapter is to demonstrate how the term has been used in Greensboro, North Carolina, in an effort to help establish authority for the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission. To that end, I turn to the rhetorical performances surrounding the operation of the Greensboro TRC, with an eye, in this chapter, to the activity of the Commission’s international affiliations and guests.

From South Africa to Greensboro

In 1999, one year after the South African TRC released its *Final Report*, individuals from Greensboro initiated the process that would eventually lead to the establishment of the Greensboro TRC. They contacted the Andrus Family Fund—a philanthropic organization that provides economic resources “to support transition frameworks for social change”—to inquire about possible mechanisms to address racial and economic divisions within the Greensboro community (Andrus). In response to their inquiry, the Andrus Family Fund provided monetary support to the people of Greensboro and connected them with International Center for Transitional Justice, a non-governmental organization with offices in New York and South Africa, whose stated

⁷⁴ Given such developments, and many others like them, it is little wonder that Mabogo More cites the recent emphasis on *ubuntu* as one of the “three most important developments in African society” (156). But reactions to this “return to *ubuntu*” have been mixed. Some, like philosopher Augustine Shutte, view such developments as positive and call for their expansion. Shutte claims that *ubuntu* offers an ethic for all of life, and he develops this ethic on topics such as gender relationships, sex and the family, education, health-care, work, politics, and religion. “[It] is my view,” he writes, “that the understanding and vision of humanity embodied in the concept of *ubuntu* is something of vital importance to the contemporary world, not just to contemporary South Africa but to all the rest of the nations as well, developed or undeveloped” (Shutte 2). Others, like Nkonko Kamwangamalu, qualify such enthusiasm, questioning whether *ubuntu* should be incorporated into the business sector. And still others, like Christoph Marx, argue that *ubuntu* is being used to cultivate a new cultural nationalism that uncritically replaces the nationalism promoted by many Afrikaners during the apartheid era. Demonstrating the parallels between the development of Afrikaner nationalism and the current Africanist nation-building project, Marx claims that *ubuntu* is being used to promote conformity that is inimical to the development of democracy (50, 52).

mission is to assist “in the development of integrated, comprehensive, and localized approaches to transitional justice comprising five key elements: prosecuting perpetrators, documenting and acknowledging violations through nonjudicial means such as truth commissions, reforming abusive institutions, providing reparations to victims, and facilitating reconciliation processes” (ICTJ). The ICTJ had, until its contact with the Greensboro community, primarily focused its efforts to promote transitional justice at the level of the nation-state, in Peru, Liberia, and elsewhere. But despite its prior focus, the organization agreed to work with the people of Greensboro to assist in fostering transitional justice in their community. To that end, the ICTJ appointed one of its senior associates—Lisa Magarrell—to serve as a consultant to the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project and, later, to the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In her role as consultant, Magarrell helped to form (and subsequently served upon) the Project’s National Advisory Committee, a group of forty-five individuals who set up a Local Task Force in Greensboro and, together with the Local Task Force, created the defining documents of the Greensboro TRC, including its mandate (GTRC, *Final Report* 428). After the Commission was formed, Magarrell provided support and recommendations to the Commission, both in person and via memo, about policy issues related to truth commissions and transitional justice.

Lisa Magarrell and the ICTJ also connected the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission with other practitioners of transitional justice from around the world, who visited Greensboro before and during the Commission’s installation. As a result of the ICTJ’s networking, Dr. Peter Storey, the former prison chaplain to Nelson Mandela, served on the Project’s National Advisory Committee and attended the Commission’s Report Release Ceremony; Sofia Macher, a member of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, traveled to Greensboro to assist the Commission planning their public hearings; Eduardo Bonzalez, the coordinator of the Peruvian TRC’s public hearings, came to Greensboro for the twenty-fourth anniversary of the Greensboro massacre; and Reverend Bongani Finca—a minister within the South African Presbyterian Church and former member of the South African Truth and Reconciliation

Commission⁷⁵—made three trips to Greensboro, the first for the twenty-fourth anniversary of the Greensboro massacre, the second for the Greensboro TRC’s Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, and the third for the Commission’s first public hearing.⁷⁶ Each of these individuals—along with Desmond Tutu, who also made two visits to Greensboro—played a critical role in helping to establish authority for the Commission to fulfill its mandate.⁷⁷ However, with the exception of Desmond Tutu, Bongani Finca was arguably the most visible of the Project’s and Commission’s national and international guests. Whereas individuals like Macher and Magarrell primarily strategized with the Commission in private, Finca spoke publicly each time he was in Greensboro. He served on a public discussion panel with Bonzalez in October of 2003, gave the keynote address at the Commission’s Swearing in and Seating Ceremony in June of 2004, spoke at New Light Baptist Church on the night before the first public hearing in July of 2005, and offered some concluding remarks at the Commission’s first public hearing, in which he praised commissioners for their excellent work and expressed his solidarity—and the solidarity of South Africans—with the people of Greensboro (Steadman B4; Swensen B1). This chapter close reads Bongani Finca’s keynote address at the Greensboro TRC’s Swearing in and Seating Ceremony.

The Swearing in and Seating Ceremony was organized by the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project to formally install the seven individuals selected to serve as commissioners. It took place on June 12, 2004 in the city’s historic depot, which, on the day of the event, was filled to capacity—over 500 people were in attendance. At the front of the depot’s main assembly room, members of the Project had constructed a dais, upon which the commissioners and other individuals participating in the program sat during the ceremony. Behind them was draped a large banner that read, in bold green typeface, “The Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project.”

⁷⁵ Bongani Finca was also one of the signers of the 1985 *Kairos Document*—a statement by South African theologians and clergy that called for an end to apartheid in South Africa (*Kairos Document* 54).

⁷⁶ It is worth noting that Desmond Tutu, too, visited Greensboro on two separate occasions, but, although he had contact with both the Project and the Commission, neither of these visits was arranged by the ICTJ.

⁷⁷ Desmond Tutu’s daughter Naomi Tutu also came to Greensboro (McLaughlin, “Confronting” B1). Speaking at a news conference at North Carolina A&T University on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Greensboro massacre, she said, “If we say we are those who want to pass on a better world to the next generation, we have to come up with a better way, and we know the only way for healing is for us to listen to one another’s stories and to incorporate those stories into a bigger whole” (B1).

The Project's motto was displayed prominently on the stage's lectern: "Facing Our Past, Shaping Our Future." To the right and left of the dais, a number of flags were displayed, each of which represented a country where a truth commission had taken place or was currently taking place. The ceremony began with a processional, an introduction by members of the Project, and an invocation. Then master of ceremonies Gregory Headen introduced Reverend Bongani Finca, whom Headen described to the audience as "a member of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, who is currently responsible for ensuring ongoing democratic elections in his country" (GTCRP, "Swearing in"). With that, Finca took the podium. His speech was eleven minutes long, and, in it, he praised and encouraged the commissioners and community, conveyed South African solidarity with the people of Greensboro, described the origins of the truth commission model, and exhorted the community to support the commissioners. He concluded his speech by remarking, "Today I am proud to be South African, but today I am also proud to be a little tiny part of Greensboro. We salute you. We praise you. We thank you. We will travel with you, until the dream of realizing the truth is realized, because there is no alternative to truth for us to be healed. We need it. So let truth reign. I do thank you," upon saying which the assembly room erupted in applause (GTCRP, "Swearing in").

After the applause had subsided, Gregory Headen again took the podium and remarked, "Amen." Then, after a brief pause, he added, "Much of our inspiration for our process grows from South Africa, the Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and eighteen other truth commissions from around the world, many of whose flags are displayed."

One reason I've chosen to make Finca's address the centerpiece of this chapter is that it occurred at a pivotal moment in the life of the Commission, only minutes before the commissioners took their oath. Another reason is the compelling positioning work that Finca does in and through the address, which was probably highly instrumental in helping to establish authority for the Commission to complete its mandate. At various points throughout the chapter, I make connections between Finca's address and other rhetorical performances that occurred in Greensboro, including Desmond Tutu's Guilford College speech and Finca's remarks following the Commission's first public hearing. This chapter, then, provides some insight into how individuals associated with past truth

commissions and the field of transitional justice helped to authorize the Commission, while offering insights about the rhetorical concept of identification.

Reaccentuating *Ubuntu*

Rhetorical performances almost always draw upon multiple rhetorical traditions to make meaning, and Finca's speech is no exception, as his quotations of Neil Armstrong and Desmond Tutu, within just a few lines of each other, suggest. But while it is certainly the case that Finca draws on multiple traditions, he seems to rely most heavily on those surrounding the operation of the South African TRC. For example, he cites Desmond Tutu, reads a poem from the day that he was installed as a commissioner in the South African TRC, describes Nelson Mandela's release from prison, quotes from the famous and oft-quoted postamble to the South African interim constitution, describes the notion of *ubuntu*, and conveys a number of commonplaces that were central to the South African TRC, including, for example, the notion that "the past will continue to haunt the present" until the truth is told—a claim that, as I have shown in chapter two of this dissertation, Tutu made in his Foreword to argue against national amnesty. The ways in which Finca deploys each of these facets of the rhetorical traditions surrounding the South African TRC helps to position the Greensboro TRC (i.e., helps to construct its *ethos*) as a legitimate truth commission; however, of all of these facets, the most important to the Commission's legitimization—and most integral to the speech as a whole—is his use of the notion of *ubuntu*. It is important, in part, because Finca *explicitly* mentions the concept twice and, toward the end of the speech, defines it. It is also important because of the ways that Finca makes use of the concept *implicitly* as the speech unfolds.

To demonstrate how, exactly, Finca makes use of *ubuntu*, it is helpful to begin by tracing some of the *other* positioning work that Finca does in the speech. In what follows, I close read several sections of the address, showing how, in each section, Finca constructs authority for the Commission in a different way: broadly speaking, Finca begins his address by endorsing the Commission; then he symbolically entrusts it with the truth commission model; and, finally, he attempts to position the people of Greensboro as subordinate to, yet in collaboration with, the Commission. In addition to

showing the complex ways that Finca constructs the Commission's authority, these close readings illustrate that the way in which Finca positions the Greensboro TRC and members of the Greensboro audience is not static; he identifies them—in a Burkean sense—with a variety of individuals, organizations, and people-groups as the speech unfolds. As a result of these identifications and re-identifications, the primary subject position that emerges is defined by its flux—a position of positions, which, I suggest, is consistent with the South African notion of *ubuntu* (at least as Finca himself defines it in his address). Put another way, the speech, in its entirety, is a call—or, in Louis Althusser's terms, a hail—to Greensboro commissioners and audience members alike to take on *ubuntu* as a subject position.

Endorsing the Ceremony and the Commissioners

The first third of Finca's speech functions, primarily, to endorse the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony and the Greensboro TRC commissioners themselves. That is, through this section of the speech, Finca expresses his public support for the ceremony and commissioners, and conveys the support of the people of South Africa.

The entirety of Finca's address may be classified as belonging to the epideictic branch of oratory, which, in distinction from oratory whose purpose is either to adjudicate about past actions or deliberate about future ones, aims at issuing praise or blame of something in the here and now. And nowhere, perhaps, is the epideictic nature of Finca's speech more evident than in its opening salutation. Finca begins by greeting and praising his Greensboro audience: "I bring you all greetings, very warm greetings. I also bring you a lot of respect and admiration and a message of congratulations, solidarity, and encouragement from South Africa." The purpose for such expressions of praise and support is left unstated but, given the occasion, is nonetheless clear: such expressions are in reference to the attempt to establish the Greensboro TRC. This point is, in many ways, confirmed by the next lines of Finca's speech, in which he shifts the object of his praise from his audience to the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony itself:

I bring it [this praise and support] to this occasion which is unique, an occasion which is indeed the first of its kind in the history of our struggle to build reconciliation based on truth. As South Africans we believe that

this occasion perhaps better deserves to be referred to as one small step for a man and one giant leap for mankind.

Here Finca praises the ceremony itself. He builds up the significance of the ceremony, in part, by using the word “occasion” three times—an act of repetition that serves to amplify the event’s importance. Furthermore, each time he repeats the term, he appraises it positively, first by describing it as “unique,” then by suggesting that it is historic, and finally by associating it with Neil Armstrong’s famous quotation, which he deploys in the Greensboro context to suggest that, for South Africans, the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony is as momentous as a moon landing.

Two things are worth emphasizing about the way in which Finca’ positions himself and his audience in these introductory remarks. The first is that the praise and support Finca conveys at the beginning of his speech for the people of Greensboro is contingent upon the existence of the Commission and, thus, doubles as a tacit expression of praise and support for the Commission itself—an implicit endorsement of the Commission that helps to reinforce its legitimacy. The second is that, in the space of these three or four lines, Finca repeatedly uses the grammatical resources of projection. Instances of projection are usually comprised of a *projecting* clause that attributes speech or thought to a particular source (“she says” or “Desmond Tutu thinks,” for example) and a *projected* clause that presents a locution or idea (Christie 25).⁷⁸ Finca uses the projecting clause, “I bring,” to introduce projected clauses, which, in this case, are a series of semiotic nouns (i.e., nouns like “greetings” and “message,” which refer to other texts). What is important for my purposes is how such grammatical resources position Finca and his audience. By using these resources, Finca is able to position himself as a messenger—or, perhaps more aptly, a kind of ambassador—speaking to his Greensboro audience *on behalf of* South Africans. Thus, Finca’s expressions of praise—first for the people of Greensboro (and, by implication, the Commission) and then for Swearing in and Seating Ceremony—are not simply framed as his own expressions; they are said as if they had the weight of the people of South Africa behind them, and they serve to align—to rhetorically connect or join—the people of South Africa with the people of Greensboro.

⁷⁸ The projecting clause, as linguist Francis Christie notes, “takes something said or thought before and reinstates it” (25).

Similarly, Finca begins the next segment in his address by continuing to position himself as a messenger, although, in this case, he speaks on behalf of different sources and addresses his message to a different audience:

To the commissioners about to be inaugurated into office, I bring a special message of support of love and solidarity from the members of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa; from our esteemed chairperson, his grace the Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who writes in his personal letter to yourselves as Commissioners, and I quote, “The task of a Commission such as this is to bring to life the truth in order to promote reconciliation.” He continues to say, “You have the additional burden of initiating the first TRC in the U.S. Many will be looking to you to assess whether similar Commissions might be helpful in other communities also.”

To position himself as a messenger here, Finca uses projection resources, such as “I bring,” “Desmond Tutu, who writes,” and “I quote.” The sources of the messages he “delivers” are the members of the South African TRC and Desmond Tutu, and the recipients of the messages are not his entire Greensboro audience but “the commissioners about to be inaugurated into office.” It is not until the next lines of his speech that Finca finally speaks on his own behalf, noting, “Let me begin my own remarks with the words I wrote in December 1995, when I stood, as these commissioners will stand today, and took my oath to be a commissioner in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I called my thoughts that day ‘When Hope Decays.’” Finca concludes this section of his speech by reading these thoughts, which take the form of a poem.

The positioning work at play in these passages is significant. Much like the way in which Finca aligns the people of Greensboro with South Africans in his speech’s introduction, he aligns the members of the Greensboro TRC with the South African TRC in these passages. He begins by aligning the Greensboro commissioners with the South African commissioners around a shared message of solidarity from the latter. As his speech continues, Finca introduces the “personal letter” from Desmond Tutu to the Greensboro commissioners, thereby realigning the Greensboro TRC with Tutu. Finally, Finca references the “oath” he took to become a commissioner, again realigning the Greensboro commissioners, this time with himself. In taking the oath, Finca says he “stood, as these commissioners will stand today,” and he reinforces this connection by reading the remarks he wrote on the day he was installed as a member in the South

African TRC. Thus, in these short segments of his address, Finca repositions the Greensboro TRC commissioners no less than three times; he affiliates them first with the entire South African TRC, then with the chair of the South African TRC, and finally with himself, a member of the South African TRC. There is a kind of movement here, a narrowing of scope, that reinforces the connection between the South African TRC and the Greensboro TRC on multiple organizational levels—institution, chair, and member.

This section of Finca's speech still sits squarely in the category of epideictic oratory. To see why this is so, it must be remembered that even as Finca is directly addressing the Greensboro commissioners in this passage he also is indirectly addressing the rest of the audience attending the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony. Consequently, the members of the Greensboro audience serve as witnesses to the alignments that Finca constructs between the members of Greensboro and South African truth commissions. Looked at from the perspective of those in attendance at the ceremony, Finca's positioning work functions as a kind of endorsement—a public display of support—for the Greensboro TRC commissioners from, respectively, the South African TRC, Tutu, and Finca. And, to the extent that the people of Greensboro acknowledge the status of these entities, such rhetorical moves help to warrant the installation of the Commission and help to justify the Commission's subsequent attempts to carry out their mandate. These endorsements, in short, help to authorize the Commission, as Finca puts it, "to do the task that you [the people of Greensboro] have set for it to do."

Finca's remarks at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony were not his only public endorsements of the Commission, and I want to step away from Finca's speech at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony for a moment in order to briefly explore another example. One year after Finca's first visit to Greensboro for the Swearing In and Seating Ceremony, he returned, this time to attend the first of three public hearings that the Commission held in the summer and early fall of 2005. Each public hearing was a two-day event, in which the seven commissioners called experts and eyewitnesses to offer testimony related to the 1979 killings. Much like at the South African public hearings, the commissioners sat behind a long table in the front of an auditorium, while those offering testimony sat at a separate table nearby.

At the end of the first public hearing, after all of the testimonies had been given, Finca took a seat at the witness table. From start to finish, Finca's remarks that evening functioned as an endorsement of the Commission. He began, "I feel very uncomfortable speaking from here [the witness table]. I'm used to speaking from there [the commissioners' table]. I hope, however, I'm not going to be asked any difficult questions from yourselves" (GTRC, "First"). Finca's humor here, which prompted knowing chuckles from the audience, played upon the generic conventions of the public hearing; the fact that he delivered his remarks to the commissioners from the witness table was incongruous with his identity as a former commissioner of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. By highlighting this incongruity, Finca aligned himself, at least in the eyes of the audience, with those sitting behind the commissioner table. This move was reinforced by a subsequent remark: "Commissioners," Finca said, "have a certain family relation, whether they are here or anywhere else in the world, and there is a sense where, if there is going to be a hearing, we sense discomfort or anxiety about how it's going to turn out." Having thus aligned himself with the commissioners, Finca continued:

[A]s you began your hearings, in some village back home in South Africa, there was an activity of bells which were ringing to mark our solidarity with you at two o'clock your time, at nine o'clock our time. Those bells were meant to indicate that we were beginning this process in solidarity with yourselves. But having participated in these hearings as an observer yesterday and today, I have a feeling that it is not sufficient that we [South Africans] should ring bells when [you] start your hearings. I think we have to do more than that. We should light a candle and maintain a vigil, because the task that you face requires that we continue to be in solidarity with you.

The theme of Finca's remarks on this occasion is, arguably, solidarity—a term that Finca uses no less than three times in this passage alone. But he doesn't simply mention solidarity here, he also helps constitute it between the Greensboro TRC and the people of South Africa. To understand how he does so, it is necessary to know that, at the beginning and end of each day of its three public hearings, the Greensboro TRC observed eighty-eight seconds of silence, the same length of time that the violence lasted on November 3rd, 1979. To mark this time of silence, Reverend Mark Sills—one of the seven commissioners—rang chimes. Thus Finca constructs solidarity here by calling

attention to the shared practice of tintinnabulation between the Greensboro commissioners and South Africans. Then, as if to construct some permanence for this solidarity, Finca suggests that the one-time practice of bell ringing is insufficient. As indicated by the verbs that Finca employs in the last sentence (i.e., “maintain,” “continue”), what is needed is a symbolic gesture that indicates continuity, duration: a candlelit vigil.⁷⁹ The voice of this passage, moreover, frames the relationship between South Africans and the Greensboro commissioners as increasingly intimate. At the beginning of the passage, Finca uses passive constructions to describe South African action (e.g., “there was an activity of bells which were ringing”; “Those bells were meant to indicate...”). By the end of the passage, however, he has shifted to the active voice and uses the modal verb “should” to express obligation. The trajectory of this passage culminates in the following direct speech-act, a pledge to the Greensboro commissioners: “I just wish to pledge to you, on behalf of the fellow commissioners in South Africa and indeed in other parts of the world, our solidarity, our support, and our prayers.”

Like Finca’s address at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, the rhetorical situation at this event was complex. While Finca ostensibly directed his comments about solidarity and his pledge to the Greensboro commissioners, the audience of Greensboro citizens was present to witness the comments. What they witnessed might accurately be described as a public pledge of allegiance, i.e., an endorsement.

Entrusting the People of Greensboro with the Truth Commission Model

Bongani Finca’s attempt to establish authority for the Commission to act is not solely a matter of endorsement, as is evident from the second third of his speech at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony. Following his recitation of “When Hope Decays,” Finca takes his speech in a different direction, reflecting on the origins and authorship of the truth commission model:

We, as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, are humbled and honored that the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been established using the model of South Africa. As we think of that model, we pay tribute to Nelson Mandela, who became the

⁷⁹ Although the metaphor is different, these remarks resonate with Finca’s comments at the conclusion of his address at the Swearing In and Seating Ceremony: “We [South Africans] will travel with you, until the dream of realizing the truth is realized.”

author and the pioneer of that model. As you will remember, he emerged out of prison, having spent twenty-seven past years of his life, crushing stones and confined in cells. But he emerged with a message which was later adopted as a preamble [*sic*] to our constitution, and I quote from that preamble [*sic*]: “We need to find understanding, but not vengeance. We need to find reparation, but not retaliation. We need to find *ubuntu*, but not victimization.” These are the pillars of the route you have chosen to deal with the shame of November 3, 1979, eleven hours twenty-three, at the corner of Carver and Everett Street.

The opening sentence of this passage refers to the South African TRC as a “model” for the Greensboro TRC, and it is worthwhile to trace the development of this term as the paragraph unfolds. Simply put, the South African “model” began as a “message” that was incorporated into a “constitution,” the clauses of which are “pillars” of the method employed by the people of Greensboro. At each point in this progression, Finca reaccentuates the notion in ways that lend it significance. The “model,” for example, is attributed to Nelson Mandela. The attribution is strategic: Mandela did not, of course, author the truth commission model, nor was it originally his idea to use the model in South Africa (Boraine 11); but associating the model with Mandela—an internationally respected, iconic figure—increases its value, as does the implications that the model was born out of adversity, the product of Mandela’s twenty-seven year tenure in prison “crushing stones and confined in cells.” Next Finca associates the model—now referred to in the speech as Mandela’s “message”—with Mandela’s release from prison, an event with near-mythic status, celebrated in South Africa and around the world as the beginning of the end of apartheid in the country. As the passage continues to unfold, Finca associates the model with the postamble to the South African interim constitution—a section of the constitution, drafted in the final moments of negotiations between the various South African political parties, that made possible the subsequent establishment of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (Most South Africans would immediately recognize Finca’s reference from the interim constitution, which has been quoted more often than any other line from the document. That said, whether or not the people of Greensboro know these details, the association of the model with a constitution renders it more legitimate.) The line that Finca quotes from the constitution calls for understanding, reparation, and *ubuntu*—three norms that Finca frames as the “pillars” chosen by the people of Greensboro to address the events of November 3rd, 1979. This

final iteration from understanding, reparation, and *ubuntu* to “pillars” frames such norms as foundational.

Even as Finca invests the truth commission model with increasing value, he provides his audience with a history of its propagation from context to context and, in doing so, establishes a trajectory for the model. As this trajectory unfolds, Finca affiliates the model more and more closely with Greensboro, linking the people of Greensboro to the model first by their memory of its origins (e.g., “As you will remember, he emerged from prison”) and then by their choice to use it (e.g., “These are the pillars of the route you have chosen”). Finally, in the next part of the speech, Finca affiliates the people of Greensboro even more closely with the model. With the help of yet another iteration, the model is transformed into a series of commonplaces:

You have awakened, as we did, to the truth that bygones will not be bygones until they are confronted honestly, truthfully, and responsibly addressed. You have realized, as we did, that the tears on the eyes of those who were victimized will not be dry. No amount of ignoring those tears will make them dry. They will only be dry when we stop and face them and confront our shame and dry them. You have found, as we did, that the truth must be told, that the record must be set straight, that forgiveness must be asked for and pardon must be given, before we can move together as communities and as nations. You have learned, as we did, that our past will continue to haunt our present, until we agree to face that past with all its shame and address it.

Up until this point in the address, Finca has located authorship for the truth commission model in South African sources—Nelson Mandela, the South African interim constitution, etc. However, having sketched how the people of Greensboro came to be recipients of this model, Finca takes a different tack in this passage, attributing the model, at least in part, to the people of Greensboro themselves. He does so by employing four parallel projections—which take the general form, “You have [mental projecting verb], as we did”—to introduce a series of commonplace statements that, he suggests, the people of Greensboro and the people of South Africa have authored together. Thus, the trajectory of these two paragraphs, facilitated by transformations from one instance of intertextuality into another, functions as a magnanimous performance in and through which Finca extends the authorship of the truth commission model from South Africa to the people of Greensboro. What was originally framed as belonging to South Africa is, by the end of this section of the speech, also attributed to Greensboro.

Authorship and authority are, of course, linked etymologically, and this etymological link points to the fact that authorship tends to carry with it certain rights and entitlements. In the case of Finca's address, the extension of authorship helps to entitle the Greensboro community to use the model (as the members of the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project have done in setting up the Commission), thereby warranting the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony of the commissioners.

Considered in the context of Finca's entire speech, this section functions not only to extend authorship of the model to the people of Greensboro; it also functions to entrust the people of Greensboro with the model—that is, it both extends to them the model and charges them with responsibility for it. That the people of Greensboro are responsible for the model is clear from Tutu's letter to the commissioners (which Finca cites): "You have the additional burden of initiating the first TRC in the U.S. Many will be looking to you to assess whether similar Commissions might be helpful in other communities also." Here Finca implies, by way of Tutu's letter, that as the first truth commission in the United States, the Greensboro TRC bears some responsibility for the development of the truth commission movement at the community level. Later in the address, Finca elaborates upon this notion, suggesting that, because the Greensboro TRC is the first TRC in the U.S., it is responsible for the development of the truth commission movement all over the world:

[The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission] is the first of its kind in the U.S. It must set a model that must succeed. If it does succeed, it will give us all hope that one day there will be truth commissions on Iraq, that there will be truth commissions on Ireland, that there will be truth commissions on the Middle East. If it [does] succeed, as it must, it will give us hope that one day we will know the truth of Rwanda and know the truth of Burundi and know the truth of Angola. If it [does] succeed, as it must, it will give us all hope that one day we will know the truth on neighborhoods and ghettos on villages and towns and cities, where the blood of the innocent has been spilt, and the cloud of silence has hovered over the national shame.

By this point, which comes near the end of Finca's address, authorship of the truth commission model has been fully extended to Greensboro. No longer is it the people of South Africa or the South African TRC that sets a model for Greensboro; rather, it is the Greensboro TRC that "must set a model" for other countries and communities all over the world: for Iraq, Ireland, the Middle East, Rwanda, Burundi, and Angola. Finca's use of

the modal verb “must” no less than four times here constitutes the Commission’s obligation to succeed and, thus, is yet another way that he indicates that Greensboro is responsible for the model.

Establishing the Commission’s Stature in the Community

In the first and second sections of his address, Finca primarily positions his audience—the people of Greensboro and the members of the Greensboro TRC—in relation to South Africans, including members of the South African TRC, Tutu, Mandela, and himself. In the third part of the address, however, Finca primarily positions the people of Greensboro in relation to the Greensboro commissioners. This is, in terms of the Commission’s authority, the pivotal moment of the address, and, significantly, it is precisely at this point that Finca chooses to explicitly deploy the South African notion of *ubuntu*. He begins by describing the English rendering of *ubuntu ungamntu ngabanye abantu*. “In our language,” he says, “we have a saying that a person is a person because of other persons.” He then elaborates, “In that saying we recognize that a person is not complete until she embraces other persons and struggles to make them complete also. We recognize that a person can not be fulfilled until she finds fulfillment for others also. We recognize that we can not have real peace until we move in isolation and find peace for those on our side and for those who live on the other side.” The subject position that Finca describes here is one that he intends to be normative for the people of Greensboro: it calls members of his audience to see their identities as defined in relation to one another, despite any differences they may have, and emphasizes complementarity. To this point, Finca’s description of *ubuntu* does little to establish the Commission’s authority; however, he then nuances his description by adding the following:

But *ubuntu* goes further than that. It says if you appear a bit taller than others who stand with you, it is not because you are really taller than them, but it is because others are carrying you in [sic] their shoulders. For this Commission to fulfill its mandate, and to do the task that you have set for it to do, we urge you as the community of Greensboro, to carry the commissioners on your shoulders, to support them, to encourage them, to be with them, and to pray fervently for them.

This excerpt speaks to another facet of *ubuntu* that I have not yet mentioned in this chapter but that Michael Battle speaks to in his book on *ubuntu*—namely, that it

“excludes competitiveness” (Battle 41). *Ubuntu* excludes competitiveness—it even exposes the falsity of comparisons (e.g., I am “a bit taller” than you)—because, insofar as “people are people because of other people,” one’s achievements are wrapped up in those of others: one is carried on the shoulders of others.

However, although Finca’s explanation of *ubuntu* excludes—perhaps even deconstructs—competitiveness, it does not exclude or discredit positions of authority; conversely, Finca’s explanation actually opens up a space for positions of authority. The imagery that Finca uses, of some individuals sitting atop the shoulders of others, depicts a hierarchy in which some are positioned higher than others. This image is, I think, actually a kind of metaphor for authority: those who carry others provide the warrant or grounds for the height of those who are carried. Note, then, that, for Finca, *ubuntu* allows individuals to see themselves and their achievements for what they really are (i.e., dependent on others), but, in doing so, it does *not* involve the dissolution of the hierarchical relationships. Finca, in fact, uses *ubuntu* to exhort the people of Greensboro to accept those relationships: “[W]e urge you as the community of Greensboro, to carry the commissioners on your shoulders, to support them, to encourage them, to be with them, and to pray fervently for them.” Thus, through his description of *ubuntu*, Finca attempts to bring the people of Greensboro under the authority or guidance of the Commission, even as he maintains that the two groups are consubstantial with one another and part of a common, collaborative enterprise.

This is, as I have said, a pivotal moment in the address, at least in terms of Finca’s ability to establish the Commission’s authority in the community, and its efficacy depends, largely, on the extent to which the audience identifies with the subject position of *ubuntu*. Such a subject position does not, of course, go uncontested in the Greensboro context. In the broadest sense, the notion of *ubuntu* is, according to Michael Battle, incongruous with some of the commonplaces about identity that circulate in the West. Battle writes, “Many Western views of personhood center on the lone individual, whose essential characteristic is that of self-determination, whereas the African view of a person depicts the person’s meaning or intelligibility only in the context of his or her environment. In the African concept of *ubuntu*...human community is vital for the individual’s acquisition of personhood” (37). More specifically, *ubuntu* is incongruous

with other subject positions constructed during the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony. Take, as just one example, U.S. Congressperson Melvin Watt's comments at the event. Watt was one of three people who led the commissioners in their oath in the moments immediately following Finca's address. Before charging the commissioners to complete their mandate, Watt remarks:

Good morning. As a member of the United States House of Representatives and, specifically, a representative of the twelfth congressional district of North Carolina, and as an active participant in the Faith and Politics Institute, which has become an institution in the United States Congress and which has traveled to South Africa to observe up-close the Truth and Reconciliation process, I consider it a significant privilege to participate in this history making occasion. One of the founding documents of this republic, the Declaration of Independence, declares, quote, "We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." The history of our nation will show that obtaining these rights for all the citizens of this country has been a long, demanding, and often torturous undertaking. It is an undertaking that is still incomplete. We are gathered here today in the spirit of the many citizen-initiated efforts to continue the fight to secure these rights. For example, the revolutionary war, the long struggle to abolish slavery, the struggle for universal suffrage, the struggle against child labor abuses, and the struggle for civil rights and labor justice. All of these initiatives are part of ongoing efforts initiated by citizens to secure and maintain the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The circumstances, events, and aftermath related to the tragic killing of labor and community organizers, the wounding of ten other people, and the terrorizing and disruption of this community, must now attach themselves to the long legacy of citizens efforts to seek truth, justice, and peace for their community. ("Swearing in")

There are similarities between what Watt says and what Finca says; both, for instance, refer to the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony as a historic occasion. But it is the differences between what the two men say that are most striking. For, although Watt mentions the South African TRC in conjunction with his role at the Faith and Politics Institute, he frames the citizen-led effort in Greensboro as an outgrowth—not of the South African political transition, the interim constitution, and *ubuntu*—but of the U.S. political transition, the Declaration of Independence, and civil rights. Watt's remarks, like Finca's, help to establish authority for the Commission; but, unlike Finca's remarks, they do so by "attaching" it to a series of "ongoing efforts initiated by citizens to secure and

maintain the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” And it is worth noting that a subject position characterized by *ubuntu* (as Finca describes it) is a different thing than a subject position characterized by equality and inalienable rights. The latter takes as central individual personhood, with a view toward individual self-determination; while the former is concerned not primarily with an individual’s self-determination but with community fulfillment or wholeness. *Ubuntu*, moreover, does not emphasize equality among persons; rather, it affirms the differences and complementarity of people.

My point in bringing these different emphases into relief is *not* to highlight a fundamental or essential difference between South African culture and Western culture⁸⁰; rather, it is simply to bring into relief the fact that, in the context of the Commission’s Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, subject positions were constructed that were incongruous with that subject position constructed by Finca.

Given that other subject positions (like Watt’s) were constructed during the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, Finca’s remarks about *ubuntu* might strike some as somewhat inconsequential, but I think Finca’s remarks about *ubuntu* were particularly forceful. One of the reasons they were so relates to Finca’s repeated pledges of solidarity—a notion that resonates with Finca’s description of *ubuntu*—to the Commission and community at the beginning and end of his address, as well as at the Commission’s first public hearing. Furthermore, Finca’s explicit remarks about *ubuntu* were reinforced by an implicit reaccentuation of the concept as the speech unfolded. More precisely, the speech, taken as a whole, functions as a constitutive rhetoric that hails audience members into a subject position consistent with the notion of *ubuntu*. I’m using the concept of “constitutive rhetoric” here in a very specific sense, derived from the work of Maurice Charland. In his influential article “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of

⁸⁰ Such contrasts have become commonplace in writings and reflections devoted to *ubuntu*. As noted earlier in this chapter, Michael Battle contrasts Western and African views of personhood when writing about *ubuntu* (39). Kamwangamalu makes similar remarks in his study of *ubuntu*. “Interdependence,” he writes, “is valued highly in Africa, much as it is in Asia. However, in the West, independence rather than interdependence is the norm. Consequently, these two values, independence and interdependence, tend to clash when those who hold them come into contact” (116). And, finally, Augustine Shutte’s call to an ethic of *ubuntu* also hinges on this distinction: “Both [African and European traditions] base their ethics on their understanding of humanity. For both the moral life is intrinsically connected to human flourishing and fulfillment. But they present us with different insights into human nature. The African insight is into our communal nature, persons depend on persons to be persons. The European insight is into the freedom of the individual” (51). Such claims are generalizations that essentialize cultures and, as Christoph Marx has correctly noted, are seldom based on evidence (59-60).

the *Peuple Québécois*,” Charland claims that conceptualizing rhetoric simply as *persuasion* essentializes audiences, incorrectly assuming audiences are “extra-rhetorical” (133). But Charland sees in Kenneth Burke’s work on *identification* a generative alternative for thinking about rhetoric and the rhetorical situation. Burke called identification the “key term” of rhetoric (“Old and New” 63). He introduced the term, in part, to downplay the emphasis, in rhetorical studies, on persuasion and “deliberate design” and to widen the scope of rhetoric; through the concept of identification, he suggested that rhetoric is not simply about strategic attempts to persuade, but about all the ways in which symbol uses “induce cooperation” in their audiences (63).⁸¹ Rhetorical identification allows individuals to achieve what Burke referred to as “consubstantiality,” “a type of mixed ontological state in which people are ‘both joined and separate’ or part of a community of shared interests while remaining autonomous individuals” (Jasinski, “Identification” 306). Charland perceptively points out that “Burke’s stress on identification permits a rethinking of judgment and the working of the rhetorical effect, for he does not posit a transcendent subject as audience member, who would exist prior to and apart from the speech to be judged, but considers audience members to participate in the very discourse by which they would be ‘persuaded’” (133). Rhetoric, in short, not only persuades but also constitutes individuals. More specifically, Charland contends that through identification individuals are interpellated—or hailed—into subject positions by rhetorics that “‘always already’ presume the constitution of subjects” (134).⁸²

Audiences are always hailed in the initial moment of their address. Thus when Finca salutes the “people of Greensboro” on behalf of South Africans, or when he conveys a “special message” of “love and solidarity” to the Greensboro TRC commissioners, he helps to constitute these groups as such. However, according to Charland, the rhetoric of identification is also an ongoing phenomenon (138). That is, the rhetoric of identification is “not restricted to one hailing, but [is] usually a part of a rhetoric of socialization” (138). The fact that the rhetoric of identification is ongoing

⁸¹ The concept of identification is perhaps best understood in light of Burke’s anthropology. Burke contends that humans are essentially—or, perhaps more accurately, *substantially*—divided from one another. This division necessitates rhetorical identification: “If men were not apart from one another,” he writes, “there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were wholly and truly of one substance, absolute communication would be of man’s very essence” (*Motives* 22).

⁸² Charland also draws upon Louis Althusser’s essay on “Ideological State Apparatuses” here.

means that subject positions may be reified over time and through the process of multiple hailings. It also means, importantly, that subject positions are not fixed from the initial moment of address. For Charland, subject positions may and often do develop as a result of the fact individuals “live with multiple texts”—i.e., they inhabit multiple, often contradictory, constitutive rhetorics. The contradictions, he says, “place a strain upon identification with a given subject position and render possible a subject’s rearticulation” (142).

With regard to developing subject positions, what Charland’s article does not take into account is the fact that “texts have texture”—i.e., spoken and written texts unfold in time and space (Martin and Rose 341). As a result, texts have the potential to constitute the world and identities in a multiplicity of ways as they unfold. Michael Leff is helpful on this point. In his germinal piece “Textual Criticism: The Legacy of G.P. Mohrmann,” Leff emphasizes the importance of acknowledging a text’s temporality:

[W]e need...recognize that rhetorical discourses are themselves temporal phenomena. They emerge in [historical] time; they are conditioned by other discourses and by the progression of events, but they are also constructed things that occupy a span of time...Every rhetorical text is a particular construction that unfolds in time as it is written or spoken and as it is processed by a listener or reader. (“Textual Criticism” 553-554)

The temporality of texts—the fact that they unfold in time—offers possibilities for rhetors to shape or fashion subject positions with a given text. As texts unfold, subject positions may be rendered more or less complex, nuanced, reified, etc. Or, as is the case with Finca’s address, they may be forged. Understanding how Finca forges a subject position for the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the people of Greensboro in his speech requires interrogating how, as the text unfolds, he identifies—in a Burkean sense—his audience with multiple individuals and groups.

As I demonstrated earlier in this chapter, Finca begins his address by identifying the people of Greensboro with South Africans and the Greensboro commissioners with the entire South African TRC, its chair Desmond Tutu, and one of its members (himself). Note that there is, in this first third of the speech, a contraction in the scope of the identifications that are constructed, from people-groups to institutions to individuals. This movement, however, gives way to an expansion, when Finca reads his poem:

When hope decays there is a particular stench in the air, of bitterness, of strife, of holding on for dear life to things that neither heal nor help. When hope decays there is anger that pulls down what others try to build. There is frustration with those who build, with those who dream, and with those who think, for how dare they dream and hope and think, because our hope has decayed. But when hope is reborn, we dream the dreams which others scorn. We sing the songs of birds that fly. We embrace our past with all its shame, and say to it you, too, belong to us. We hope, we dream, we think, because our hope is reborn.

Here Finca identifies his audience with all of humanity. The “we” in the passage is a universal we, transcending specific people-groups, institutions, or individuals. Following this poem, the scope of the identifications Finca constructs once again contracts and then expands, as he identifies the people of Greensboro with Nelson Mandela and then with South Africans. As I have noted, this section of the speech, which culminates in Finca using several mental projections to introduce a series of shared commonplaces, serves to entrust the people of Greensboro with the truth commission model. It also establishes identification: employing mental projections to introduce these commonplaces implies that the commonplaces have been discerned or discovered through similar reason and/or experience. This move suggests that the people of Greensboro and South Africans are consubstantial with one another. Consubstantiality, to borrow again from Kenneth Burke, refers to “a type of mixed ontological state in which people are ‘both joined and separate’ or part of a community of shared interests while remaining autonomous individuals” (Jasinski, “Identification” 305). The way that Finca introduces the commonplaces suggests that the people of Greensboro and the people of South Africa are “joined” together, that they share interests, motives, attitudes.

Next, Finca attempts to establish identification between two groups sitting in his audience: the people of Greensboro watching the ceremony and the Greensboro TRC commissioners. In a move that lends authority to the commissioners, Finca introduces the concept of *ubuntu*, asking those in the audience to see their identities and interests as wrapped up in the identities of the commissioners. Finally, toward the end of his speech, Finca attempts to identify the people of Greensboro with those, throughout the world, living in places that are or have been characterized by violence: Iraq, Ireland, the Middle East, Rwanda, Burundi, Angola.

What Finca seems to be doing here, be it intentional or not, relates back to the notion of *ubuntu* as he describes it. Finca identifies and re-identifies his audiences with each other and others as his speech unfolds and, by doing so, calls attention to their positionality. One's identity, he implies, is inextricably linked to and defined by others. In other words, the individual ways in which Finca positions his audiences, taken together, forge a subject position consistent with the logic of *ubuntu*: "I am who I am because of who we all are." This emergent subject position, coupled with Finca's explicit description of the concept, gives the speech rhetorical force, and understanding the importance of this subject position to Finca's address helps to clarify one of his concluding remarks. "Today," he says, "I am proud to be South African, but today I am also proud to be a little tiny part of Greensboro."

It is worth noting that, over a year after the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, a similar subject position emerged in Desmond Tutu's address at Guilford College in Greensboro. In the speech, Tutu discusses the "delicate network of complementarity" between people, calling to mind both Martin Luther King Jr.'s memorable statement in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail" that humans are "caught in inescapable network of mutuality" as well as the notion of *ubuntu*. Tutu goes on to describe the concept of *ubuntu* explicitly:

At home we have something that is very difficult in fact to render into English— *ubuntu*. *Ubuntu*—the essence of being human. And we say, "A person is a person through other persons." I am human ultimately only because I belong. I would never know how to be able to speak as human being; I wouldn't know how to think as a human being; I wouldn't be able to walk as a human being; yes, I wouldn't know how to be human. I need other human beings to help me to become human. And *ubuntu* says my humanity is caught up in your humanity. When you are dehumanized—whether or not I like it—inexorably, when you are dehumanized, I am dehumanized. (Tutu, "Reconciling Love")

Much like in Finca's address, Tutu's explicit description of *ubuntu* here is complemented by an attempt to implicitly position his audience in a way that is consistent with the concept. One of the key moments comes toward the beginning of the speech when Tutu thanks the international community for their help in overcoming institutionalized apartheid in South Africa. "We wouldn't have made it without the international community," Tutu says, and he goes on to add, "I speak on behalf of millions of my

compatriots when I say, even now, thank you for that remarkable support: thank you, thank you, thank you” (Tutu, “Reconciling Love”). Tutu’s expression of gratitude here prompts light applause from the Guilford College audience, but Tutu stops them and in mock disgust says, “no, no, no.” He then remarks, “You are very shy and reserved, and so I discovered that I, in fact, had a special magic wand. When I wave it over people, they turn into instant South Africans.” Amidst audience laughter, Tutu proceeds to wave his hand over the audience, remarking, “So I wave it over you and so say to you, fellow South Africans, let’s give these Americans a real humdinger of an applause.” At this point the auditorium at Guilford erupts into applause (for itself); and, when the applause subsides, Tutu adds, “Thank you. Oh, yes, and I wave it again over you, and you revert to your normal shy selves” (Tutu, “Reconciling Love”). Tutu’s performance here calls attention to the differences between South Africans and the people of Greensboro (the latter are, for instance, “very shy and reserved” as compared to the former), but it also momentarily elides those differences in positioning the audience as “fellow South Africans” with Tutu. There are, in fact, three subject positions constructed for the audience in this brief excerpt from Tutu’s speech: Tutu first positions the people of Greensboro as members of the international community (which supported South Africa during their transition from apartheid), then as honorary “South Africans,” and finally back to their “normal shy selves.” In these alignments and realignments, this excerpt highlights the audience’s positionality (albeit in a different way and to a lesser extent than Finca’s speech does); that is, it prompts them to acknowledge the interdependence among people.⁸³

Reaccentuating *Ubuntu*, Again

Jacques Derrida, in his famous piece “Declarations of Independence,” raises a question that is relevant to my discussion of Bongani Finca’s address at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, which comes moments before the commissioners take an oath

⁸³ It is worth noting that Tutu and Finca were not the first to reference *ubuntu* in Greensboro. Writer Mark Mathabane—who was born in Johannesburg, South Africa and currently lives in North Carolina—delivered a lecture in the Greensboro area on September of 1999, entitled, “Discovering the Importance of *Ubuntu*—Our Common Humanity” (“Author” 6). Later, in 2001, Greensboro’s News & Record published a story on Mathabane’s work (Caranna D1). The piece touches on Mathabane’s work of fiction *Ubuntu*, and it describes the concept as follows: “*Ubuntu* is a Zulu word that means ‘soul’ or the ‘quality of being human.’ ‘You cannot be a human being just by yourself,’ Mathabane says to put the word in context. ‘How you treat other people is how you become a human being’” (Caranna D1).

and sign a pledge, thereby founding the Commission as an institution. Derrida asks, “[W]ho signs, and with what so-called proper name, the declarative act which founds an institution?” (8). Considering the United States Declaration of Independence, he then goes on to contend, in his characteristically oblique way, that such declarative acts are “fabulous” events, in that the signer of such acts does not exist until he has signed the act. “The signature,” as Derrida puts it, “invents the signer” (10). Such acts are, therefore, self-authorizing: the signature, he writes, “opens *for itself* a line of credit, *its* own credit, for itself *to* itself” (10). Derrida’s discussion in “Declarations of Independence” is relevant to this chapter because, in many ways, the founding of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission is an event similar to those “fabulous” events about which Derrida speaks. Because the Project and Commission both lacked state-sponsored support, the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony was a kind of self-authorizing “fable”—a performance in and through which the Project attempted to open a line of credit for the Commission. The Swearing in and Seating Ceremony was like the events to which Derrida refers in another sense as well: it was a kind of declaration, by the Project, of the Commission’s independence. In taking their oath, the commissioners pledged to carry out their mandate “while operating independently from any external influence, including the Project” (GTRC, *Final Report* 17).

Given that events like the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony are “fables,” their authority can be called into question (as Derrida does, playfully, with the Declaration of Independence in his piece).⁸⁴ Bongani Finca’s speech, however, works against those who would expose the authority of the Greensboro TRC as a “fabulous” attempt at self-authorization. It does so by providing answers to the question of “with what so-called proper name” the seven individuals take their oath to be commissioners. According to Finca, the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project—i.e., the organization administering the oath—is entitled to form a truth commission on the grounds that they share in the authorship of the truth commission model with Nelson Mandela and the people of South Africa. Moreover, when, moments after Finca’s

⁸⁴ In chapter five of this project, I show that the Commission’s opponents called the Commission’s authority into question, often by accusing it of bias toward the Project that established it. Such accusations of bias attacked the legitimacy of the Commission’s founding moment: they essentially called the Project’s declaration of the Commission’s independence into question.

address, the chosen individuals stand, raise their right hands, and take their oath to become members of the Greensboro TRC, they stand—thanks, in part, to Finca’s address—as individuals endorsed by South Africans; and they stand—again, thanks to Finca—upon the shoulders of the citizens of Greensboro. And reinforcing all of these endorsements is the fact that Finca positions his audience in a way that is consistent with the notion of *ubuntu*.

Finca’s address also contributes to our understanding of a constitutive rhetoric as it is used in rhetorical practice—a theory of the case. It provides an example of a constitutive rhetoric constructed not solely at the initial moment of address—i.e., no one in the Greensboro audience is hailed into the subject position of *ubuntu* in Finca’s opening remarks—but as the text unfolds in time. What Finca’s speech suggests is that the temporality of texts allows rhetors to construct complex, nuanced subject positions. It also suggests that, after audiences are interpellated into subject positions in the initial moments of address, the temporality of texts allows rhetors to alter these positions.

But what about the *effects* of Finca’s address? Was the constitutive rhetoric of *ubuntu* that Finca constructed successful in hailing audience members? Measuring the success of the speech with regard to the Greensboro public is, of course, difficult to do, especially given the fact that it is not known who was in attendance in the audience at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, let alone how they have (or have not) responded to Finca’s address in the past few years. What can be said with some certainty, however, is that Finca’s address—in conjunction with his many other public appearances in Greensboro, as well as those of Desmond Tutu—had the effect of reinforcing the association between the Greensboro TRC and the South African TRC in the public eye.⁸⁵ In the days surrounding his visits to Greensboro, Finca was mentioned several times in Greensboro’s *News & Record*; and, in each case, associations were made between the Greensboro TRC and the South African TRC. For example, in the days leading up to the twenty-fourth anniversary of the Greensboro massacre, the *News & Record* reported the following:

⁸⁵ In chapter five of this project, I demonstrate how the Greensboro TRC commissioners themselves attempted to reinforce the association between the South African TRC and the Greensboro TRC, while most of their opponents tried to downplay such connections between the South African TRC and the Greensboro TRC.

The [anniversary] events begin Friday with a devotion, panel and audience discussion that includes the Rev. Bongani Finca, who serves [sic] on the model South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission formed to help that country heal wounds left by the struggle for independence. (Steadman B4)

The South African TRC is here described as a “model” for Greensboro. Similar remarks were made in the paper on June 14, 2004, two days after the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony:

The Greensboro commission, considered by many to be a first of its kind in the United States, is modeled after groups in South Africa and Peru. “There is no alternative to truth for us to be healed. We need it,” said the Rev. Bongani Finca, a member of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which sought to heal racial division in post-apartheid South Africa. (Church, “Panel” B1)

And on June 16, 2004, the *News & Record* suggested that the truth commission process taken up in Greensboro originated in South Africa:

[T]he renovated Depot was the starting point for another kind of journey Saturday – seating of Greensboro's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, formed to revisit the Nov. 3, 1979 deaths of five anti-Klan protestors. Filling the terminal beneath the old Southern Railway clock, VIPs [e.g. Bongani Finca] from as far away as South Africa, where the reconciliation process was born, spoke of communities outside Greensboro that will be watching this process – from Wilmington, Montgomery and Philadelphia to Belfast, Baghdad and Kigali, Rwanda. (Ahearn B1)

These excerpts from the *News & Record*—which do not cite Finca at length, if at all—suggest that one of Bongani Finca’s greatest gifts to the Greensboro TRC may have simply been his repeated presence in Greensboro. As a former member of the South African TRC, Finca embodied the rhetorical traditions of that truth commission, and his presence reinforced the endorsements of the Greensboro TRC that he constituted in his address.

The commissioners themselves acknowledged the importance of Finca’s presence in Greensboro in remarks they delivered during and after their first public hearing. At their first public hearing, a little more than a year after the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, Commission co-chair Cynthia Brown responded, on behalf of the other commissioners, to Finca’s expression of solidarity:

Thank you very much Reverend Finca. We certainly appreciate those words of encouragement and support, and the support that you have

provided actually since we were installed. I remember even prior to our installation, before any of us knew what we would be doing, I remember your speaking...during a ceremony where...you tried to make the community aware of the kind of challenge that we face. And I really appreciate, and I think that the full Commission appreciates, the fact that you have stayed the course in terms of this journey that we're on as a community. (GTRC, "First")

Furthermore, in a letter from the Greensboro commissioners to Finca—dated August 16, 2005, exactly one month after he spoke at the first public hearing—the commissioners again acknowledged how important it was that Finca attended the first public hearing: “Your presence alone,” they write, “added great meaning and legitimacy to the hearing” (GTRC, “Letter to Finca”). At the end of the letter, they added, “By traveling to, observing, and commenting on our first public hearing you reminded us of the distinguished company we keep, and we thank you for your support, wisdom, and presence.” These observations by the Greensboro commissioners in their letter to Finca are, I think, on the mark: it mattered greatly to the Commission that Bongani Finca chose to be, as he himself put it, “a little tiny part of Greensboro.”

I also want to suggest that, in addition to the effort he made to travel to Greensboro three times, Finca gave another great gift to the Greensboro TRC as well—namely, the concept of *ubuntu*. In the months following Finca’s address at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, the members of Greensboro TRC reaccentuated the concept—i.e., they took it up and made use of it to their own ends. For example, on February 22nd, 2005, eight months after the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission began publishing a weekly email newsletter and corresponding webpage to inform the Greensboro community of their progress and notify them about the Commission’s upcoming events. They titled their newsletter “*Ubuntu Weekly*,” giving the following definition of *ubuntu* at the top of each installment: “I am what I am because of who we all are” (GTRC, “*Ubuntu Weekly*”). By the time that the Greensboro TRC finished its work in May of 2006, the newsletter had over 800 subscribers. The Commission’s use of *ubuntu* here is different than Finca’s use of *ubuntu* in his speech at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony: Finca’s speech constructs an underlying subject position consistent with the notion of *ubuntu*, while the Commission uses *ubuntu* to entitle—to name—its weekly publication. To draw again on the work of

Kenneth Burke, the title functions as a kind of “terministic screen”—a term that “directs the attention [of readers, in this case] into some channels rather than others” (*Language* 45). In using *ubuntu* here, commissioners attempt to shape the character of the publication and the ways that the material in it will be consumed: everything presented in the publication, the title seems to say, should be understood as an attempt to build community. The title also serves to reinforce the connection between the South African and Greensboro TRCs, and it may even function as a reminder to the people of Greensboro of Finca’s endorsement of the Commission. But, while Finca’s and the Commission’s uses of *ubuntu* are somewhat different, both are performances of facets of the rhetorical traditions surrounding the South African TRC that help to establish authority for the Commission to do its task.

The concept was, I think, reaccentuated in another important way as well: it was represented visually on the front and back covers of the Greensboro TRC’s *Final Report*, which was distributed to the Greensboro public at a ceremony in Bennett College for Women’s Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel on May 25th, 2006 (see Figure 1). Chapter five of this dissertation looks at the Commission’s *Final Report* in more detail; however, I want to conclude this chapter with a brief reading of the report’s covers.



Figure 1: Front and Back Covers of the Greensboro TRC *Final Report*

As Figure 1 shows, the five victims of November 3rd, 1979 circle the center of the front cover of the *Final Report*. Proceeding counter-clockwise from the top left corner are images of Sandra Neely Smith, César Cauce, Michael Nathan (holding daughter Leah), James Waller, and William Sampson. Completing the circle, in the top right corner, is an image of another person impacted by the events of November 3rd, 1979—César Weston, whose mother Floris Weston was César Cauce’s wife at the time of the massacre. Centered on the front cover are images taken from events surrounding the operation of the Greensboro TRC. Just right of center is an image of five roses placed on five empty chairs—a gesture that the commissioners made at each of their public events. Right of that image is a picture of one of the Commission’s volunteers, standing before a banner, between the words, “Past” and “Present.” Left and up from center are images of the commissioners: Mark Sills, Muktha Jost, and Barbara Walker gaze right across the page, and Robert Peters, Cynthia Brown, Patricia Clark, and Angela Lawrence each stand with right hands raised as they take their oath at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony. Above the latter four commissioners, the Commission’s logo is prominently displayed: two doves, one black and one white, holding an olive branch between them. And just down of center is an image of Bongani Finca giving his address at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, before the people of Greensboro who attended the event.

The back cover of the *Final Report* is a mosaic of images from the events surrounding November 3rd, 1979, which, for the most part, progress chronologically, starting in the lower left corner and moving clockwise. The cover includes images of a KKK member hoisting a confederate flag in China Grove, North Carolina at a showing of D.W. Griffith’s racist film *The Birth of a Nation*, a few months before the killings (bottom left); a member of the Klan/Nazis firing at a CWP protester on November 3rd, 1979 (top left); a survivor clutching one of the victims (top); CWP survivor Marty Nathan, who was widowed on November 3rd (top); CWP survivor Nelson Johnson, describing the shootings after the event (in the top right corner); and the Greensboro police, lining the streets after the killings (bottom right).

In *Reading Images: the Grammar of Visual Design*, Gunter Kress and Theo van Leeuwen present a framework for reading visual images, grounded in M.A.K. Halliday’s functional grammar, which provides resources for unpacking the front and back covers of

the *Final Report*. They describe three principles of visual composition—framing, information value, and salience—that help to realize the meanings of a given image (177). (Such principles of visual composition are analogues of what Martin and Rose refer to as texture—the way a spoken or written texts unfolds in time or space.) The first of these, framing, is central to the positioning work that the commissioners are doing on the report’s covers. Framing devices, according to Kress and van Leeuwen, create unifying and dividing lines, and “the presence or absence of [these] devices...disconnects or connects elements of the image, signifying that they belong or do not belong together in some sense” (177). The central framing device of the report’s covers—which organizes the two collages of images and also thematically connects the front and back covers—is, of course, the denim jacket; and this framing device serves, I think, as a kind of visual reaccentuation of *ubuntu*: “People are people through other people,” it seems to say. The folds and stitching of the dark-blue denim fabric, juxtaposed with the many images of people, present a visual argument about the connectedness and interdependence of those implicated in November 3rd, 1979—victims, perpetrators, survivors, and police—as well as the people of Greensboro, the Greensboro TRC commissioners, the Commission’s staff, and Bongani Finca and the people of South Africa. In other words, the covers tie represented participants together in “a single garment of destiny” (to cite Martin Luther King, Jr.), which symbolically weaves together perpetrator and survivor, commissioner and victim, and—as the banner on the front cover suggests—past and present. It is not, I think, a coincidence that positioned in a prominent place on the front cover, just below center, is an image of Finca addressing the people of Greensboro at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, delivering his message of *ubuntu*.

However, *ubuntu* is not simply being performed on the covers of the *Final Report* in order to make a case for interconnectedness. Much like Finca’s reaccentuation of *ubuntu* in his address, the commissioners’ reaccentuation of *ubuntu* helps them establish their authority. Here again it is instructive to introduce another distinction put forward in *Reading Images*. Kress and van Leeuwen contend that the way in which representations are structured visually usually takes one of two forms: they are usually organized as narrative (“presenting unfolding actions and events, process of change, transitory spatial

arrangements”) or conceptually (“representing participants in terms of their more generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence, in terms of class, or structure or meaning”) (79). Taken in isolation, each of the images on the covers of the *Final Report* display a narrative structure; however, taken together, the images present viewers with a conceptual structure—a collage that suggests the juxtaposed images are part of a similar “class, or structure or meaning.” More specifically, commissioners structure the images according to a conceptual scheme that Kress and van Leeuwen refer to as a network; they write, “Networks seek to show the multiple interconnections between participants. Any participant in a network (‘node’) can form an entry-point from which its environment can be explored, and the vectors or lines (‘links’) between these participants can take on many different values, the value of signification (‘a means b’), of combination (‘a goes with b’), of composition (‘a contains b’): the essence of the link between two participants is that they are, in some sense, next to each other, or close to each other, associated with each other” (84). Understood in this way, both the front and back covers of the report present viewers with a network of images, each image functioning as a node that offers viewers a different entry-point for exploring the relationships of the network.

In order to understand how the commissioners construct their authority through the report covers, it is worth underscoring that, although networks may appear to be value-neutral, they are always motivated, i.e., they always operate according to a particular logic, deflecting some realities and selecting others. Kress and van Leeuwen speak to this point:

[Networks] on the one hand provide the reader with many choices, many paths to follow, but on the other hand tend to obscure the fact that the range of choices is ultimately pre-designed and limited. As such, networks are, in the end, just as much modeled on forms of social organization in which everything has its pre-ordained place in a grand scheme unified by a single source of authority. (84)

What’s important to note for my purposes is that the commissioners’ two visual networks—the front and back covers of the report—are modeled according to two very different grand schemes, and commissioners identify themselves with one set of images, while distancing themselves from the other.

The back cover bears witness to the violence and sorrow surrounding November 3rd, 1979. The violence, symbolically demonstrated in the hoisting of the confederate flag

in the lower left corner of the cover, is rendered painfully physical in the top right, as a CWP protester (probably William Sampson) doubles over, after having been shot at close range by a member of the KKK/Nazi caravan. The posture of the KKK/Nazi killer is mirrored, on the opposite side of the page, in CWP leader Nelson Johnson's retelling of the event, as he lifts a bandaged hand in the form of a gun. Situated between the two is Marty Nathan, mourning the loss of her husband Michael. And the picture in the lower right corner of police lining a Greensboro street testifies to the violence inflicted on the community itself. While these images on the back cover seem to be thematically connected by the violence and sorrow of November 3rd, the images on the front cover operate according to a different logic: Commissioners use this space to display images of speech-making and listening—the Commission's primary modes of operation. Such images include Bongani Finca speaking to the people of Greensboro, three of the victims (César Cauce, César Weston, and James Wallace) speaking into microphones, and four of the commissioners performing their oath; at the same time, the three remaining commissioners stand in silence, their eyes directed at the five roses and five empty chairs, and the Commission's volunteer stands in silence between past and present. It is almost as if the back and front covers are meant to perform, respectively, the Commission's two great aims—truth and reconciliation.

What is so telling about these two networks is where commissioners do and do not position themselves. In keeping with the notion that their inquiry into the truth of November 3rd, 1979 should maintain a critical distance or objectivity, they do not appear on the back cover. Rather, they place themselves on the front cover, as part of the mosaic of images of speech and silence. Here it is worth highlighting the front cover's "information value," another of Kress and van Leeuwen's principles of visual composition. Kress and van Leeuwen write, "The placement of elements [in a visual composition]...endows them with the specific informational values attached to the various 'zones' of the image: left and right, top and bottom, centre and margin" (177). On the front cover, commissioners place images of themselves and their operations in the center location, while positioning images the victims on the margins around them. In doing so, they write themselves into the story of November 3rd, 1979 in a way that identifies themselves with the victims and reaffirms their particular approach to

addressing the many atrocities represented on the back cover—not with additional violence, but by giving and hearing testimony. Commissioners stand symbolically between past and present, suggesting that they serve as the bridge between the two; and they reconcile black and white, as suggested by their logo of the doves and olive branch, a twofold symbol of peace.

It's also worth considering how *viewers* of the covers are positioned. When looking at images, there are two kinds of participants to consider: there are represented participants, the people depicted in the image, and there are interactive participants, which Kress and van Leeuwen describe as “the people who communicate with each other *through* images, the producers and viewers of images” (114). Both kinds of participants are connected through vectors, which often—though certainly not always—take the form of sight lines between represented participants or between represented participants and interactive participants. On the back cover, most of the represented participants' gazes are directed at unknown sources outside of the camera's frame. (The exception to this is the policeman talking to a mother and her two children.) No vectors are established between the represented participants and us, the viewers. There are, nonetheless, important vectors established between represented and interactional participants—namely, the vectors of the KKK member's gun and Nelson Johnson's bandaged hand, which takes the form of a gun. Viewers of the back cover are, in other words, positioned as victims would be positioned: they are positioned as targets of violence.

On the front cover, commissioners construct a network of gazes that functions as a kind of visual memorial, and there are several vectors constructed between *represented* participants that help to constitute this visual memorial. First, César Weston (who testified at the public hearings) glances from the upper-right quadrant across the page to victim Sandra Neely Smith in the upper-left quadrant, and this vector is reinforced by the similar color tone of these two images (a feature of visual composition that Kress and van Leeuwen call “salience”). Second, three commissioners gaze, this time from left to right across the page, at the rose-filled empty chairs. This gaze, too, is reinforced by a similar color tone. Both of these vectors seem to symbolize the acts of remembering—as does, perhaps, the downward vector between Michael Nathan and daughter Leah as well as the inward vector established between the Commission volunteer and the banner “Past and

Present.” This visual memorial is not, however, something that the observer of the front cover stands outside of, insofar as there are two additional vectors that emerge outward from the page. These vectors are what Kress and van Leeuwen, following Halliday, refer to as a “demand”: “[T]he participant’s gaze (and the gesture, if present), demands something from the viewer, demands that the viewer enter into some kind of imaginary relation with him or her” (118). In this case, victim William Sampson and baby Leah look outward at viewers, establishing vectors between represented and interactive participants. Such vectors function to identify viewers with the logic of the front cover, to align viewers with the victims and draw them into the network of memorializing gazes, and—perhaps most importantly—to interpellate viewers, much like Finca’s speech interpellates audience members, into the logic of *ubuntu*.

Chapter IV

The Greensboro TRC and the *Ethos* of Representivity: A Close Reading in Four Acts

Chapter two of this dissertation explored how Archbishop Desmond Tutu positioned the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission in his Chairperson's Foreword to the Commission's *Final Report*. In one section of that chapter, I demonstrated three ways that Tutu establishes what he refers to as "representivity" in order to position the Commission in the midst of the people of South Africa and to position South Africans in the midst of the Commission. He highlights how commissioners' political affiliations reflect those of South Africans. He suggests that commissioners are "wounded healers" who share in the violence of apartheid experienced by the larger South African society (Tutu, "Foreword" 22). And he brings into relief conflicts among commissioners, which reflect the conflicts among South Africans from different backgrounds. "We in the Commission," he writes, "have been a microcosm of our society, reflecting its alienation, suspicions and lack of trust in one another" (22). Tutu's threefold construction of representivity serves as a warrant for the Commission's judgments and recommendations as detailed in their *Final Report*: positioning the Commission as representative of the South African society helps to ensure, as Tutu puts it, that the Commission's "work and report should gain the widest possible acceptance" (15). In this chapter, I explore the notion of representivity in more detail, as it is performed in and through the rhetorical activity of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

As a key performance of the rhetorical traditions surrounding the operation of the South African TRC, Tutu's construction of representivity in the Chairperson's Foreword may be an important aspect of the genealogy of representivity as constructed by the Greensboro TRC. While tracing the line from Tutu's use of the concept to the Greensboro TRC is difficult, one probable link between the two is the work of the

International Center for Transitional Justice in Greensboro and, more specifically, of its senior associate Lisa Magarrell.⁸⁶ In a June 26, 2002 memorandum, Magarrell exhorts the Greensboro TRC’s architects to carefully consider what the composition of the Commission should be—which, she claims, will be one of the Project’s “key decisions” (2). She advises the Project to sketch “a general logic for the commission’s overall make-up” in the Commission’s mandate, and she provides a series of questions to help them develop that logic:

Should the commission be somehow representative? If so, representative of what? (Community? Economic, political, geographic, racial, ethnic, gender balance? Interested parties? Neutrality? Diverse but opinionated voices on the issue?)...A decision must be made about the local vs. national composition. (All local? All national? Mixed in some proportion?) (2-3)

Despite the fact that Magarrell raises the issue of representivity in the form of a question, she seems to suggest it is of paramount importance: it’s the first (and most developed) criterion she lists for determining the Commission’s make-up, and she returns to it again later in the memo when discussing who should select the commissioners, claiming that the panel that selects the commissioners should be “a broader coalition of people *representative* of the community” (emphasis added). Shortly thereafter she reiterates the point, noting, “A small selection panel could be formed from *as wide and representative a group as possible*, allowing the selection process to satisfy *the need for representation*” (emphasis added). In these passages, when Magarrell suggests that Greensboro TRC should be “somehow representative,” she seems to be using the term primarily to mean that the Commission should be typical—i.e., having the distinctive qualities—of some class, group, or body of opinion. (It is worth noting that when Tutu uses the term “representivity,” he seems to be using it a similar sense, i.e., to highlight the typicality of the South Africa TRC in relation to South Africans.) But note that, although Magarrell emphasizes the importance of and need for a representative Commission, she prescribes

⁸⁶ Peter Storey, the former prison chaplain to Nelson Mandela, may also have been involved in bringing the notion of representivity to the Greensboro process. Storey served on the National Advisory Committee, which helped to draft the Greensboro TRC’s defining documents; and, in an email to Lisa Magarrell, he wrote, “To get a commission that has broad acceptance, you have to involve the widest number of different constituencies” (Magarrell and Wesley 57). Lisa Magarrell also had another direct link with the South African TRC: the founder of the International Center for Transitional Justice was Alex Boraine, who, with Desmond Tutu, had chaired the South African Commission.

neither what group the institution should be representative of nor what distinctive qualities of that group the institution should embody. Instead she offers the Greensboro TRC's architects a list of possibilities from which to choose.

One of this chapter's central aims is to explore how and to what ends the members of the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project and the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission take up some of these possibilities to position the Commission as representative. In exploring how the Commission positions itself as representative, I am primarily concerned—as Magarrell seems to be—with the ways in which the Commission positions itself as typical of some larger class, group, or body of opinion. This distinction is necessary because there are moments, before and during the life of the Commission, in which various involved parties are positioned as representative in another sense—namely, as groups consisting of people chosen to act or speak on behalf of the constituencies of a wider group. To prevent confusion, I use the adjective “representative” to mean typical or characteristic of a wider group, unless I explicitly specify otherwise. I also borrow Tutu's term “representivity,” which I use, much like Tutu does, to specify a subject position characterized by typicality in reference to a wider group.⁸⁷

This chapter demonstrates that representivity is constructed frequently throughout the Commission's operation, albeit in a variety of different ways. I show that, at the beginning of its operation, during the Commission's Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, the Project constructs the Commission's representivity primarily in terms of demographic differences; whereas at the end of its operation, during the Commission's Report Release Ceremony, commissioners construct representivity, at least in part, by describing themselves as a microcosm of the Greensboro community and by highlighting their different viewpoints. At the midpoint of the Commission's operation, in its three public hearings, the Commission establishes representivity not for itself but for its group of fifty-four invited speakers. These findings are complicated by the fact that, during each of the Commission's aforementioned public events, the Commission positions itself (and is

⁸⁷ It is worth noting that when Tutu speaks of the “representivity” of the South African TRC, he does not seem to be claiming that the Commission is “representative” in the sense that they have been chosen to speak and behalf of others—he *never* makes this claim in the Foreword—but simply that they, as a group, are a typical or characteristic sample of South Africans more generally.

positioned by its advocates) as decidedly unrepresentative or atypical of the wider Greensboro community: commissioners are, for example, positioned as extraordinary, objective, and dialogic. While these multiform, somewhat contradictory constructions of *ethos* might be read as attenuating one another, I argue that it is often the tension established between the Commission's representivity and unrepresentivity that gives the Commission its rhetorical force.⁸⁸ In and through each of these constructions of *ethos*, commissioners attempt to identify with multiple constituencies of the Greensboro community, even as they warrant their claims to adjudicate fairly about the past and ascertain truths about November 3rd, 1979. Moreover, toward the end of the Commission's operation, this tension allows the Commission to position itself as a model of community for the people of Greensboro—a model that is characterized by unity in diversity. The arguments I present in this chapter contribute to the larger aim of this dissertation, which is to determine how the Greensboro TRC establishes its authority to act. They also contribute to an understanding of organizational rhetoric by unpacking some of the rhetorical possibilities that are available to corporate rhetors.

Organizations—or “system[s] of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons”—are, according to George Cheney, “fundamentally rhetorical in nature” insofar as they are constituted in and through discourse (*Rhetoric* 3, ix). The inverse of this statement is, for Cheney, also often true: “[M]uch of contemporary rhetoric is organizational in that many of the messages which individuals ‘hear’ are from ‘corporate’ or collective sources. Today individuals do much of their speaking to one another through the auspices of corporate or organizational ‘persons’” (ix). However, speaking or writing with the collective voice of an organization is different than speaking or writing as an individual; corporate rhetors, in other words, have different rhetorical enablements and constraints than do individual rhetors. And Cheney suggests there is a

⁸⁸ My thinking about the ways in which the Greensboro TRC constructs its *ethos* was informed, primarily, by two sources. One is Ruti Teitel's *Transitional Justice*, in which he notes, in passing, that most truth commissions are expected to be both “politically balanced” and “neutral” (*Transitional* 81). The second is D. Robert DeChaine's *Global Humanitarianism*. Writing about the non-governmental organization Doctors without Borders, DeChaine notes that the organization has two “contradictory motivations”: they make use of both a rhetoric of neutrality and a rhetoric of moral-ethical commitment. DeChaine notes, for example, that Doctors without Borders' practice of *temoignage*—i.e., its practice of “bearing witness to, and speaking out against, perceived human injustices that its volunteers encounter” (83)—demonstrates a “precarious navigation of political neutrality and moral conviction” (77).

need among scholars to explore these differences: corporate voices, he notes, are ubiquitous in our society, and we must become more adept at learning how to interpret their messages (*Rhetoric* 21).⁸⁹ Cheney himself begins to address this need through a case study of the U.S. Catholic bishops' 1983 pastoral letter, *The Challenge of Peace*. Drawing upon Kenneth Burke's theory of identification as a framework for analysis, Cheney explores, in detail, how the U.S. Catholic bishops "moved from 'I's' to 'we' in constructing a constitutional document" and provides "a framework for analyzing how corporate 'we's' of all sorts are constructed" (x). The present chapter builds on Cheney's work, answering his call to examine "the (good) organization speaking (well)," by exploring, in the rhetorical performances of the Greensboro TRC, some of the possibilities for constructing *ethos* that are open to corporate rhetors, which are not as readily available to individuals.

To do so, I trace how the Commission's *ethos* is constructed diachronically. Unlike previous chapters that focus primarily on a single text, this chapter looks at a series of texts surrounding four important stages—four "acts"—in the performative life of the Commission. Beginning where Lisa Magarrell's memo leaves off, I look at discourse surrounding the selection process for the commissioners and their installation during the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony. I then turn to excerpts from the Commission's three public hearings, focusing on the commissioners' opening remarks at each of the hearings. Finally, I consider discourse taken from the Commission's Report Release Ceremony. I've chosen to focus on discourse surrounding the Commission's installation, public hearings, and concluding ceremony because—in addition to the Commission's *Final Report*, which is the subject of the next chapter—these were the Commission's most widely-publicized public events. Along the way, I contextualize my close readings with newspaper coverage of the events appearing in Greensboro's main newspaper—the *News & Record*.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Adapting Quintilian's famous definition of rhetoric, Cheney writes, "The rhetorical theory that is required in an organizational age therefore cannot be exclusively a theory of the 'good *person* speaking well.' Rhetorical analysis of *organizational* rhetoric requires simultaneous conceptualizations of individually and collectively created discourse. We need to examine the (good) organization speaking (well)" (*Rhetoric* 21).

⁹⁰ My choice to contextualize my readings with information from the *News & Record* is based on three factors: it is Greensboro's only daily newspaper, it was one of the main media sources through which the Commission sought to publicize its events, and it has a wide readership in the city. With regard to the

Act I: Setting Up the Commission

On May 6th, 2003, a little over a year before commissioners were sworn in at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project took out a full-page advertisement in three local newspapers—the *News & Record*, *The Carolina Peacemaker*, and *The Rhinoceros Times* (GTCRP, “Call”). In the advertisement, the Project published both the “Mandate for the Greensboro TRC,” which stated what the Commission’s future work would entail, and the “Selection Process for the Greensboro TRC,” detailing how the commissioners would be chosen. Greensboro citizens were to nominate potential commissioners using the nomination form included in the advertisement; and, from the resulting list of nominees, a yet-to-be-formed Selection Panel would choose the seven commissioners. The advertisement also described how this Selection Panel, which was to “work independently and free of any outside influence,” itself was to be selected: the Project would invite a variety of interest groups from the Greensboro community each to appoint one individual to serve on the panel. The list included the student body chairs, Presidents, and Chancellors of Greensboro’s six colleges and universities, the Chamber of Commerce, the Neighborhood Congress, Police Officers Association, the Truth and Community Reconciliation Project (GTCRP), the Guilford County Democratic Party, the Guilford County Republican Party, the Jewish community, the NAACP, the National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ), the Mayor of Greensboro, the Muslim community, the Pulpit Forum of African American Churches, the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the Daughters of the Confederacy, the Triad Central Labor Council, and a consortium of traditional Protestant, Catholic, and Independent churches. Ultimately, fourteen of the Project’s invited interest groups appointed an individual to serve on the Selection Panel, which began reviewing nominations on February 9th, 2004 (GTRC, *Final Report* 431).⁹¹

last point, Lisa Magarrell and Joya Wesley have noted that the paper “claims to have a circulation of over 92,000 (rising above 110,000 on Sundays) to a racial demographic that tilts toward white readership but that roughly corresponds to the area’s population (69 percent white readers and 29 percent black readers, as compared to a 65 percent to 31 percent demographic in the larger Guilford County population)” (163).

⁹¹ At its first meeting, the Selection Panel chose its chairperson—Judge Lawrence McSwain, who had been appointed to serve on the panel by Mayor of Greensboro Keith Holliday.

The selection of the seven commissioners was, of course, the primary intended purpose of this process. But the process was important for other reasons as well. For one thing, the process—especially its call for nominations—was intended to engage Greensboro residents and, in so doing, may have helped to secure their investment in the yet-to-be-established Commission.⁹² Moreover, through the selection process, the Project was able to simultaneously identify Greensboro residents with the Commission (at least indirectly) and distance itself from the Commission. Key to both this identification and division was the Project’s creation of an intermediate organization standing between the Project and the Commission—namely, the Selection Panel.

On the one hand, the Project’s creation of the Selection Panel allowed it to fashion a subject position—associated with the truth commission process and, thus, with the Commission—with which a large number of Greensboro residents could identify. Put another way, through the creation of the Selection Panel, the Project established an attractive *persona*—or public face—for the commissioner selection process. The Project fashioned this subject position, primarily, through its acts of invitation to various institutions to appoint individuals to serve on the Selection Panel (and through the publication, in its advertisement, of these acts of invitations). The Project’s acts of invitation were highly rhetorical, insofar as the Project selected some institutions to appoint individuals to the Selection Panel and not others, thereby shaping the *ethos* of the Selection Panel and potentially the outcome of the entire selection process. Furthermore, the eclectic list of institutions chosen by the Project made it difficult to define the character of the Selection Panel, and this was, of course, precisely the Project’s intent: in selecting the particular institutions that it did, it aimed to create a Selection Panel that appeared to be characterized, first and foremost, by representivity. The Project itself acknowledged as much in comments that it made both in its advertisement and on its website, noting that the various groups were chosen because “they reflect the broad range of interests in this community” (GTCRP, “Selection”). “It is hoped,” they continue, “that residents of Greensboro can look at this list and see their perspectives at least partially

⁹² In *Learning from Greensboro*, Lisa Magarrell and Joya Wesley note, “There was discussion on how to identify and reach out to different identity groups within Greensboro to tap the community for commissioner nominations as well as for selection panel representatives” (53). As a result of their efforts, the Project received sixty-seven nominations (GTRC, *Final Report* 456).

represented by one or more of the groups” (GTCRP, “Selection”). These comments not only indicate that that the Project intended the Selection Panel to be representative, but they also suggest what the Project intended the Selection Panel to be representative of—namely, the “broad range of interests” and “perspectives” of the residents of Greensboro.

The rhetorical efficacy of this construction of representivity—i.e., the extent to which individual audience members were persuaded by this subject position—hinged, in part, on whether or not the list of institutions chosen to appoint a member of the Selection Panel appeared, to the readers of the *News & Record* and other Greensboro newspapers, to accurately correspond to the array of perspectives of the residents of Greensboro. Gauging how accurate the list seemed to Greensboro readers is, of course, difficult to determine. But it is probably fair to say, in general, that the more extensive and heterogeneous the list, the more likely it was perceived to be representative.⁹³ It is most likely for this reason that the list included institutions from both the public and private sector; was characterized by a number of different institutional types, including educational institutions, religious organizations, political parties, a labor union, and other interest groups; and contained several institutions implicated in the events of November 3rd, 1979.

The Project’s creation of the Selection Panel was a noteworthy rhetorical move insofar as it allowed the Project to identify with the people of Greensboro through existing institutions with which they already identified. Furthermore, the Project’s choice to publish the list of groups that were invited to appoint representatives to the Selection Panel was a highly persuasive move because the list included several groups that were antagonistic toward one another (or, at least, had competing ideological interests or different viewpoints about November 3rd, 1979), and this fact probably prompted many of the groups to appoint a representative so as to prevent their opponents from dominating the selection process. To the extent that the institutions agreed to appoint a representative (and most did so), they appeared to tacitly endorse, to commit themselves to, the TRC process. (The fact that this tacit endorsement had at least some legitimacy was evident

⁹³ The greater the heterogeneity of the group of institutions that the Project constructed, the greater the probability that a majority of the residents of Greensboro could point to at least one group on the list that it identified with as well as several groups that it did not identify with—both of which were important for creating the appearance of representivity.

from the fact that Mayor of Greensboro Keith Holliday, who was opposed to the TRC process, felt it necessary to make explicit that he did not endorse the process after he appointed Judge Lawrence McSwain to the Selection Panel.⁹⁴)

On the other hand, the Project's creation of the Selection Panel allowed it to appear to distance itself—and, for that matter, all other interested parties—from the Commission. To reinforce the distance between any one particular interest group and the Commission, the Project stated the following in its advertisement: “The Selection Panel will work independently and free of any outside influence.” It also advised the Selection Panel to carry out its work in private. Part of the reason the Project wanted to distance itself from the Commission was to head off accusations that the Commission was biased in favor of the Project, which had been formed, in part, by former members of the Communist Workers Party and families of victims of November 3rd, 1979. The formation of the Selection Panel also helped to head off accusations that the Commission was biased toward other groups. By inviting an array of groups to appoint individuals to the Selection Panel, the Project attempted to ensure that no one group, including itself, could dominate the selection process.

There seems to be, then, something of a tension inherent in the subject position that the Project created for the Selection Panel. On the one hand, the Selection Panel was to be representative of the interests of the Greensboro community, and, on the other hand, it was to work independently of the interests of the Greensboro community. This subject position helped to garner support for the TRC process from community members, who were able to see the process as taking into account their interests and yet, at the same time, fair. Furthermore, to the extent that the people of Greensboro associated the

⁹⁴ An April 10th, 2004 article in the *News & Record*, entitled “Reconciled?,” confirms this point. The author of the article reports, “Just because he asked Judge Lawrence McSwain to serve on a panel for the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Project does not mean Greensboro Mayor Keith Holliday now backs the group’s mission. Last year, Holliday became one of the most visible critics of the group’s plan to re-investigate the 1979 Klan-Nazi shootings at Morningside Homes that led to the deaths of five Communist Workers Party demonstrators. He said the project would only reinforce a negative image. But a statement issued by the group this week begins: ‘When Mayor Keith Holliday asked him to serve on the Selection Panel for the Greensboro Truth & Reconciliation Commission as his representative, Judge Lawrence McSwain agreed....’ Holliday said that the group asked him to be a part of its selection panel. ‘I did not feel comfortable serving on the selection committee based on what my overall feeling was on the commission,’ Holliday said. Having McSwain participate, Holliday said, gives him ‘a little bit of comfort’ that the project’s deliberations will be more even-handed. But, Holliday said, “Without a doubt, I am not endorsing this project” (Dyer et al, B1).

Commission with its organizational origins, it also helped, by extension, to establish the credibility of the Commission itself. But the tension was also more directly relevant to the Commission: in the advertisement, the Project gave little instruction to the Selection Panel with regard to what the Commission should look like; however, in the few stipulations it did give, it began to construct a similar tension. On the one hand, it said that “strong consideration” should be given to the Commission’s “racial, socio-economic, religious, and sexual diversity.” On the other hand, it said that commissioners are to be people of “recognized integrity and principle” and “demonstrated commitment to the values of truth, reconciliation, equity and justice.” These positions were not mutually exclusive; however, they do seem to position the Commission in two fundamentally different ways in relation to the Greensboro community: the former establishes difference among commissioners to establish identification with a broad audience; while the latter suggests that the commissioners are of a similar ilk—they are moral exemplars—in order to distance them from the community (so that the Commission might do the work of truth-seeking, reconciliation, and justice that the community has heretofore been unable to accomplish).

After all of the nominations had been collected and the Selection Panel had been formed, members of the Selection Panel demonstrated their seriousness by working for over three months to select the seven commissioners. Then, on May 27th, 2004, they released the names of the commissioners: Cynthia Brown, Patricia Clark, Muktha Jost, Angela Lawrence, Robert Peters, Mark Sills, and Barbara Walker.⁹⁵ The press coverage in the days immediately following the release of the commissioners’ names indicates that the Project seems to have been at least somewhat effective in shaping how the selection process and Commission were perceived. For example, in a May 30th editorial that was otherwise largely critical of the TRC process, the author noted both that commissioners “represent a broad range of occupations and backgrounds” and that the Selection Panel that chose them was an “independent” body (“In Search” H2). Similarly, a June 11th article reported, “An independent panel chose the seven commission members in May from a list of more than 70 nominations” (Shallcross, “Truth Commissioners” B1). But

⁹⁵ The commissioners were first listed in the May 28th edition of the *News & Record* (McLaughlin, “Panel” B1).

despite these successes, the Project's selection process did not quell *all* concerns about the Commission's composition. According to the *News & Record*, when the Selection Panel released the names of the commissioners, one of the questions they were asked was "whether the board [i.e., the Commission] was stacked with people who might lean a certain way because of their work on behalf of social justice issues" (McLaughlin, "Panel Forms"). And at least some citizens, upon hearing about composition of the Commission, lamented the exclusion of any "high-profile names" or "even one high-profile community skeptic," which "would have added considerable weight and credibility to this cause" and given the Commission a more "'bipartisan' flavor" ("In Search" H2).

These concerns about the Commission's composition were met, immediately, with responses from the chair of the Selection Panel, Judge Lawrence McSwain, who argued that the fact that the Commission is "stacked" with advocates of social justice "doesn't mean they'll go out and falsify information" (McLaughlin, "Panel Forms") and also noted that what commissioners lack in "star power...they make up for in commitment and integrity" ("In Search" H2). Then, using adjectives that reflected and reinforced an aspect of the subject position constructed by the Project, McSwain added that commissioners "have no choice but to be fair, balanced and open." Concerns about the Commission's composition were also met by the Selection Panel and the Project at the Commission's Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, which took place on June 12th, 2004, sixteen days after the commissioners' names had been released. At that ceremony, both representivity and unrepresentivity were constructed again, albeit in slightly different—though nonetheless noteworthy and important—ways and to slightly different ends.

Act II: The Swearing in and Seating Ceremony

Bongani Finca was not the only speaker at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony to position the commissioners in relation to the people of Greensboro. In this section of the chapter, I unpack other constructions of the Commission's *ethos* at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, looking, in particular, at the discourse that came after Bongani Finca's keynote address. As I demonstrate in what follows, the way in which the Commission was positioned was by no means consistent throughout the ceremony. Judge

McSwain, speaking on behalf of the Selection Panel, positioned the Commission in terms of representivity, but he did so differently than other constructions of representivity that emerged during the ceremony: responding to questions issued by the media, McSwain primarily constructed the Commission's representivity using a series of demographic binaries, whereas other constructions of representivity that emerged during the ceremony looked similar to the representivity that the Project established for the Selection Panel. Further complicating this picture is the fact that—at various times throughout the ceremony, including during McSwain's remarks—the Commission was positioned as decidedly unrepresentative of the people of Greensboro in the audience. Such complex positioning work was, I think, necessary to establish authority for the commissioners to take on different aspects of their multi-faceted mandate.

Judge McSwain began his remarks by speaking extemporaneously about the selection process of the seven commissioners. Given that the Selection Panel conducted the majority of its work in private, the way in which McSwain publicly described the panel's work was instrumental in shaping how the Greensboro community understood the process. In his remarks, McSwain construed the process as one that involved much dialogue and deliberation among members of the selection panel, yet resulted in a unified decision. To accomplish the former, McSwain establishes that the primary activity of the panel involved dialogue, noting that the panel wrote to nominees, nominees responded, and the panel reviewed their responses. This characterization of the panel's activity as dialogic continues throughout the remainder of McSwain's comments. For instance, when he describes how the panel winnowed down the list of names from twenty to seven, McSwain refers to the proceedings of the Selection Panel using several semiotic nouns—terms that refer to other texts. He recounts the panel's "long discussion" about whether or not to appoint a lawyer to serve on the Commission; the "words" of one panel member who claimed that appointing a lawyer to serve on a truth commission was an oxymoron; and his own "explanation" to the other members of the panel about why appointing a lawyer might be a good idea. He also utilizes a number of verbal projecting clauses over the course of his remarks—including "we said," "we talked," and "we call"—and interjects several questions that frame the activity of Selection Panel as a kind of back and forth exchange. Both of these moves appear in the following comment: "[W]e

talked,” he says, “about one of our representatives having what we would call an Asiatic background. Well, ‘Will that be good enough?’ And we said, well, ‘We like this person, so we want this person to be on here whether it’s good enough or not.’” Such lexical and grammatical choices, along with the interjection of the questions, construe the process of commissioner selection as a highly deliberative, involving careful consideration and discussion among members of the Selection Panel.

At the same time, however, McSwain is careful not to overemphasize the panel members’ deliberation to the neglect of the panel’s unity and, in so doing, to risk undermining the panel’s choices. Thus, although there are many instances of verbal projection in this passage, McSwain consistently attributes those projections to a single, unified source: he uses the pronoun “we” over fifty times in reference to the panel. Additionally, McSwain appraises the panel’s choices in very positive terms. Appraisal, according to J.R. Martin and David Rose, “is concerned with evaluation – the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned” (25).⁹⁶ In his remarks, McSwain repeatedly expresses the “good” feelings of the members of Selection Panel—a type of appraisal that Martin and Rose classify as “positive affect” (29). He notes, for example, that the Selection Panel “felt good about” the pool of nominees who were willing to serve; that it came to the consensus that “a lawyer would be good for the Commission”; that the Selection Panel choose a person of “Asiatic background” because they “like[d] this person”; and, finally, that the Selection Panel “felt good about all the people we selected, and we think that we were fair” (GTCRP, “Swearing in”). This nuanced position—deliberative yet unified—suggests that each of the groups who selected a representative to serve on the Selection Panel was able to contribute to the process (i.e., the process was not hijacked by any one interest group), while simultaneously highlighting that the end product of the Selection Panel’s work was a unanimous decision. Looked at separately, each of the two positions helps to establish the credibility

⁹⁶ For Martin and Rose, appraisal resources construe the tone or mood of a passage as it unfolds: “Appraisal resources are used to establish the tone or mood of a passage of discourse, as choices resonate with one another from one moment to another as a text unfolds. That pattern of choices is thus ‘prosodic’. They form a prosody of attitude running through the text that swells and diminishes, in the manner of a musical prosody. The prosodic pattern of appraisal choices constructs the ‘stance’ or ‘voice’ of the appraiser, and this stance or voice defines the kind of community that is being set up around shared values” (59).

of the Selection Panel and its work; however, together they pack a double punch: McSwain's emphasis on the panel's deliberation renders their consensus about the end product of their work all the more significant.

The credibility that McSwain establishes for the Selection Panel serves, in turn, to legitimate the subject position that he establishes for the Commission, i.e., to legitimate his construction of the Commission's *ethos*. Regarding what this construction of the Commission's *ethos* looks like, McSwain's remarks reflect one of the few bits of advice that the Project gave to the Selection Panel before the latter selected the commissioners. The Project, as I've already noted, stipulated that the Commission should be characterized by "racial, socio-economic, religious, and sexual diversity" (GTCRP, "Selection"). With the exception of considerations of religious diversity, McSwain frames the selection process in terms that are fairly consistent with the Project's request. It is worth noting that he does so, primarily, by constructing a series of binaries. Early in his remarks, for example, McSwain refers to the nominees as either male or female, professional or non-professional, lower-level workers or upper-level workers, and college-educated or un-college-educated; and, later on in the passage, he refers to them as "of color" or "not-of-color." Even his explanation about the decision to include a lawyer on the Commission presents the matter as a binary: "There was a long discussion about *whether or not* we should include a lawyer on the commission" (emphasis added). The diversity—the difference among commissioners—that McSwain sets up here is, I think, established with an eye toward constructing the Commission's representivity in relation to the people of Greensboro (McSwain twice uses lexemes of "representative" in the passage to describe the commissioners); but note that even if this is not the case—even if McSwain is not concerned with the Commission's representivity at all—the subject position he constructs has a similar intended effect: it helps to appeal to multiple constituencies in the Greensboro community who identify with one or more of the demographic categories McSwain utilizes. (To put the matter another way, organizational diversity may stand in for representivity in a community that sees itself as diverse and, therefore, may accomplish similar ends rhetorically.)⁹⁷

⁹⁷ It is worth noting that, even within the last year, the Commission's advocates, like McSwain, continue to appeal to diversity and representivity when discussing the Commission. In *Learning from*

In addition to positioning the Commission as representative, McSwain also positions the Commission as objective—an organization characterized by its impartiality and lack of prejudice in its search for the truth. This position, which uncritically assumes the possibility that one can distance oneself from contextual contingencies, is articulated most explicitly toward the end of his extemporaneous remarks, in which twice McSwain says that, in seeking the truth, the Commission starts with a “clean slate” without any agendas. For McSwain, these claims are grounded, at least in part, in the notion that the Selection Panel operated independently from the Project. The Selection Panel was, as McSwain puts it, “outside” the Project; there was no communication between the two groups, with the exception of a little help from the Project with the panel’s mailings; and the Project was not privy to the selection process, to the extent that they first learned who the commissioners were at the Selection Panel’s press conference. McSwain’s comments here function as a means of forestalling criticism by combating the aforementioned accusation that, because of the Project’s affiliations with survivors of November 3rd, 1979, the Commission would be biased toward them and simply parrot their interpretations of the event. (Interestingly, McSwain’s comments recognize the same warrant as that accusation—namely, that the character of an institution depends upon its origins. However, whereas critics attempt to link the Commission to its institutional origins, McSwain, like the Project, attempts to construct distance—or, in Burkian terms, division—between the two.⁹⁸)

Greensboro, for example, Lisa Magarrell and Joya Welsey write, “The selection panel chose a very diverse group that, taken together, represented Greensboro well” (65). To support this claim, Magarrell and Welsey point to the commissioners’ genders, races, professional backgrounds, residency in and outside of Greensboro, and income (65-66). After making these points, they quote Greensboro city councilperson Claudette Burroughs-White, who, after hearing about the Commission’s composition, remarked, “I knew a lot of them, and like them—thought some of them were strange, thought they were representative” (66).

⁹⁸ These attempts to distance the Project and the Selection Panel and, thus, to position the Commission as objective are reinforced by McSwain’s discussion about the panel’s decision to include a lawyer on the Commission. In this excerpt, McSwain addresses the commonplace belief that lawyers are dishonest and not objective—a commonplace which may have led some Greensboro citizens to conclude that lawyer Bob Peters should not serve on the Commission. But what could be counted as a blow to the Commission’s objectivity, McSwain reframes as a boon. Lawyers, McSwain says, are trained to argue different sides of the same issue, a point that underscores commissioner Bob Peters’ capacity to act impartially. It is also worth mentioning how McSwain positions himself here. He claims that he was the person who the other members of the Selection Panel looked to for information, referencing the fact that they called him “judge.” By highlighting his status on the panel in this way, McSwain helps to establish his authority with the audience at the ceremony. And his explanation to the Selection Panel that “[lawyers] have professional duties to represent people, even when it’s unpopular to do so” doubles as an explanation to the audience attending the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony. One of the reasons that this move is so

McSwain also attempts to reinforce the Commission’s objectivity—and, in this way, the Commission’s unrepresentivity—by emphasizing that the question of the nominees’ ethnicities (“ethnicity” being a category that McSwain seems to use interchangeably with “race”) did not dominate the selection process and did not shape each and every decision about the composition of the Commission. In fact, he notes, no less than four times, that ethnicity was the last factor that the Selection Panel considered in choosing who would serve on the Commission:

- (1) “[W]e committed as a panel not to look at the ethnic background of the commission until we had looked at all of the other variables.”
- (2) “The last thing we did was to look at the ethnic background of people.”
- (3) “The last thing we discussed was what will be the make-up between people of color and people not-of-color.”
- (4) “That [the question of ethnicity] was the last thing we considered.”

Such remarks were probably intended as a response to the criticism, leveled against the proponents of the truth commission process, that it would inappropriately read race into the events of November 3rd, 1979.⁹⁹ In emphasizing that the issue of race did not dominate the selection process, McSwain counters these accusations and reinforces his other attempts to establish the Commission’s objectivity.

Thus, in and through his extemporaneous remarks about the selection process, McSwain constructs two subject positions for the Commission: on the one hand, the

effective rhetorically is that it positions the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony audience and the Selection Panel similarly. Because of this positioning, when McSwain recalls how the members of the selection committee responded to his explanation (“[A]fter that explanation people said, well, ‘Maybe a lawyer would be good for the commission to help explain some of the legal processes in things that obviously will come up’”), it puts words in the mouth of the audience.

⁹⁹ Such criticisms surfaced publicly at the April 19, 2005 Greensboro city council meeting by Mayor of Greensboro Keith Holliday and other council members opposed to the truth commission process. For instance, the mayor remarked, “Much has been said regarding this event being a part of a larger racial problem in Greensboro, which adds to the distrust that exists amongst races. While I will acknowledge that we as a community have racial issues and areas of distrust, I strongly resist the belief that this event was a major contributor to Greensboro’s racial issues. I believe that it is obvious to anyone who studied this tragic event and the events that led up to November 3rd that this was driven by labor disputes, including the fact that the rally [on the morning of November 3] was organized by Workers Viewpoint Organization. It was driven by class issues, union organization issues, anti-communist mindsets, and, most importantly, previous confrontations in other areas of the state, prior to the outside groups coming to Greensboro. In fact, I do not believe that the Klan loaded up their cars to come to Greensboro with a vision to do harm to black people. But rather, came to confront many of the same labor organizers and communists that they had encountered several weeks earlier at China Grove, who were mostly white. This was an event where the... Communist Workers Party members actually traveled to confront the Ku Klux Klan. Therefore, I am especially concerned that the examination of this tragic event will lead us locally and even nationally to believe it was all about race, rather than two individual groups that, quite frankly, hated each other” (“Truth”). I consider these remarks—as well as similar remarks made by other council members—in detail in chapter five.

Commission is positioned as representative of the Greensboro community (or, at the very least, diverse, like the people of Greensboro); and, on the other hand, McSwain positions the Commission as objective and impartial. These two positions resonate with the Project's earlier positioning work setting up the Selection Panel and issuing the call for nominees in their advertisement; they also resonate with other attempts, by the Project, to construct representivity and unrepresentivity during the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony.

One of the Project's main attempts to construct the latter follows immediately after McSwain's remarks about the Commission's composition, when he leads commissioners in their oath—a speech-act that distances the commissioners from the audience in attendance at the ceremony. By speaking the words of the oath, by pledging “I will” in the presence of the Greensboro audience, the commissioners are set apart—positioned as “other”—from that audience. To put the matter differently, the oath is a performance of the sanctification—literally, the “setting apart”—of the commissioners for their task. My borrowing of religious discourse to describe the oath here is not accidental. The oath is, after all, a highly ritualistic segment of the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony—an event which itself is steeped in ritualistic elements, including but not limited to a procession, an invocation, an occasional address, special music, and public expressions of acknowledgement. Such ritual can effect rhetorical division, as Bruce Lincoln underscores in his book *Discourse and the Construction of Society*:

For over the course of the last two decades, it has gradually become clear that ritual, etiquette, and other strongly habituated forms of practical discourse and discursive practice do not just encode and transmit messages, but they play an active and important role in the construction, maintenance, and modification of the borders, structures, and hierarchic relations that characterize and constitute society itself. (qtd. in Jasinski, “Ritual” 496)

Lincoln's comments here help us better understand how the ritualistic elements of the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony are functioning. These elements, from the fact that the commissioners raise their right hands when they take the oath to the bestowal of stoles, construct a border or structure between the commissioners and the people of Greensboro. Audience members participate in the construction of this border through gestures (e.g., standing and clapping), song, and silence—all of which are prompted by

the leaders of the ceremony. The sanctification of the commissioners is also reinforced by the ways in which the speakers at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony characterize the event. Take, for example, the remarks delivered by master-of-ceremonies Gregory Headen that come immediately before and after McSwain's administration of the oath. Headen introduces the oath by noting, "We pray that all here sense the *potential of this moment*"; and he concludes it as follows: "I would like to invite you at this time to a *moment* of silence in recognition of the *significant transition* we have made by this *historic seating*, and to invoke the spirit to guide this process" (emphasis added). Similarly, the event is referred to earlier in the ceremony as a "historic moment" (by Headen), as an "amazing event" (by Cynthia Nance), as "one small step for a man but one giant leap for mankind" (by Bongani Finca), as a "history-making occasion" (by Melvin Watt), and as a "historic undertaking" and a "historic step" with "potential for good" (by McSwain). Many of these individuals (as well as the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony program) also refer to the Commission as the "first of its kind." These descriptions frame the ceremony—and, in particular, the oath—as an extraordinary moment, a moment set apart from other moments. The distinction constructed here, between extraordinary and ordinary time, is aptly captured by the two terms for "time" in ancient Greece—*kairos* and *chronos*. As Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee explain, "[The ancient Greeks] used the term *chronos* to refer to linear, measurable time, the kind with which we are more familiar, that we track with watches and calendars. But the ancients used *kairos* to suggest a more situational kind of time, something close to what we call 'opportunity.' In this sense, *kairos* suggests an advantageous time" (37). The ceremony and oath, then, is framed as a *kairotic* event, an event outside of the flow of ordinary time, reinforcing the distance between the Commission and audience.

One of the Project's other main attempts to construct representivity during the ceremony mirrors the method they used to shape the *ethos* of the Selection Panel: the Project, in addition to inviting Bongani Finca to speak at the ceremony, invited eighteen individuals from the community to say a few words supporting the commissioners and their task. Each speaker only spoke for a minute or two, and their support for the Commission took a number of different forms; however, on one point, the speeches demonstrated uniformity, as the following excerpts attest:

“I want to tell...the commissioners today [that] there was uniform, unanimous, clear support for this Commission, and *I can speak, I think, for the neighbors and the citizens across Greensboro.*”

Patrick Downs, Co-chair of the Neighborhood Congress

“The Pulpit Forum supports the work of this Commission. It is our belief that we must harmonize the gospel, celebrate signs of these times, and to that end, we greet you, we support you, and we welcome you in the words of the old church fathers, “to the bitters and to the sweets.”

Rev. Mazie Ferguson, President, Pulpit Forum

“I come to you today in my uniform, my teamster uniform. I’m a teamster representative...The truth is I need your help commissioners. I am a man that believes in God, and I promise you that I will go down this path of truth with you; I will go down this path of reconciliation with you, seeking peace and justice and truth in the end.”

Chris Roth, North Carolina AFL-CIO

“I am...honored to be among those who will speak on this historic and herstoric occasion. *I do so for the entire education community and, of course, as the President of Bennett College for Women...*May the newly installed Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission do its work well, so that from the darkest and most shameful hour, in the modern history and herstory of Greensboro, truth and reconciliation will pour down upon us, and peace with justice will come in the morning.”

Dr. Johnnetta Cole, President, Bennett College

“On behalf of the Piedmont Triad region of the National Conference for Community Justice...I bring the best wishes and hopes for the important work that this Commission is about to begin. NCCJ in this community felt honored and even compelled by our mission of fighting bias, bigotry, and racism to join in this effort, to help make is successful, to help make it work.”

Steve Simpson, Executive Director, NCCJ

“The NAACP has historically, I’m sure you’re all aware, the history of defending not only civil rights but human rights, not just for the African-American community, but the community of all peoples of this world.

Therefore it is fitting that *the NAACP wholeheartedly endorsed this project*. It is committed to pledge our continued support.”

Viola Fuller, Spokesperson, Greensboro Branch of
the NAACP

“*On behalf of the students of the six institutions in Greensboro, North Carolina*, I stand to applaud and to thank the Commission and to accept its charge to seek the truth about a disconcerting event, which occurred on November the 3rd, 1979.”

Rashaad Hoggard, Student, North Carolina A&T
University

“*On behalf of the survivors of the Greensboro Massacre*, I would like to thank the Local Task Force for making this day possible... These times are times of terrible crimes, mass violence, lawlessness, and torture. Our history is replete with often hidden social, terrible crimes. How can we live together? We wait for you [commissioners] to help us answer that question.”

Dr. Martha Nathan, Survivor of November 3rd, 1979
and Executive Director, Greensboro Justice Fund

These speakers are both representatives and representative. As these excerpts illustrate, almost all of the speakers, at some point during their speeches, invoke a corporate voice: three individuals begin with the phrase “on behalf of”; two claim to “speak for” their organizations; two others simply speak for their organizations; and one person explicitly describes himself as a “representative.” These speakers are each, individually, representatives—spokespersons—who speak on behalf of a larger group, including but not limited to Elected Officials, Neighborhood Organizations, Greensboro Youth, Religious Community, Education Community, Labor Community, Civil Rights Leaders, College Students, Morningside Homes, and Survivors (GTCRP, “Program”). The speakers are also, taken together, intended to be representative—typical or characteristic—of the even larger group made up of all these groups.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, once all of the speakers have spoken, master-of-ceremonies Gregory Headen provides a kind of coda that attempts to broaden the representivity constructed here: “We want you to know,” he says, “that those you have heard today are only a sampling of the many supporters and well-wishers for this project and this process.” And then he goes even further, calling audience members to “autograph the pledge that the commissioners took as a show of your own support for this truth and reconciliation process.” Another instance during the latter half of the ceremony in which the Project

Note that, in this instance, it is not the Commission that is positioned as representative but the group of speakers. But what larger group is this group of speakers representative of? Much like the group of institutions represented by the Selection Panel, it is a group that is not easily described: it's comprised of institutions from both the private and public sector; it's characterized by a number of different institutional types, including educational institutions, religious organizations, political parties, a labor union, and other interest groups; and it contains several institutions implicated in the events of November 3rd, 1979. For the most part, the institutions represented cross lines of race, ethnicity, gender, class, age, and profession.

Thus, like the Selection Panel, it may be precisely the heterogeneity of the group of institutions represented by the speakers, as well as other differences among the speakers themselves, that gives this moment during the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony its rhetorical force. While the eighteen individuals who give speeches do, of course, share some characteristics with one another, they also embody multiplicity in terms of their respective affiliations, demography, etc. They also bring a multiplicity of rhetorical and linguistic styles to the occasion. For example, the speakers draw upon several rhetorical traditions, they position themselves in a variety of ways in relation to their audience (*ethos*), they appeal to different community values and beliefs (commonplaces) and emotions (*pathos*), and they use various reasons (*logos*) to support the claim that they (and their respective organization) support the Commission. This is not to say that there are no rhetorical or linguistic commonalities among them; however, in inviting these individuals to publicly declare their support, the Project establishes a complex, polyvocal rhetorical situation, in which the Project's message is iterated and reiterated, and through which identification can be established with a variety of different audience members.¹⁰¹

attempts to establish representivity in a similar manner occurs when the ceremony's master-of-ceremonies Gregory Headen holds up a large scroll and remarks, "We...hold in our hands from the community thousands of petitions. Literally thousands of citizens of Greensboro and the greater Greensboro area have signed petitions as a show of support for your [the Greensboro TRC's] work and what you will be doing, and we just are so happy [about] the overwhelming support, and I think that alone is a reason for us to clap our hands" ("Swearing in"). The Project's petition drive solicited responses from members of the community, who, in signing their name, help to reinforce the representivity of the Commission's supporters.

¹⁰¹ Unpacking how, exactly, identifications are established during the performances of the eighteen speakers is beyond the scope of the current project; it does, however, merit extended analysis at some point.

In sum, in the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, various constructions of representivity and unrepresentivity are constructed and/or emerge. With regard to the constructions of representivity, the ways in which the Project's invitation to eighteen individuals from the community constitutes the Commission's representivity probably does a better job of approximating and appealing to the many voices that make up the Greensboro community than McSwain's remarks. In McSwain's remarks, he establishes representivity by constructing only two groups (male and female, of color and not-of-color, lower-level workers and upper-level workers, etc.) for each of several ways of categorizing the entire Greensboro population (gender, race, profession/class, etc.). Alternatively, the eighteen speakers establish representivity by embodying eighteen, possibly overlapping groupings (Elected Officials, Neighborhood Organizations, Greensboro Youth, etc.) for a single means of categorizing the entire Greensboro population (in terms of institutional affiliations). Given that the latter presents audience members with more groupings with which they might identify, it is probably a more persuasive construction of representivity. But questions about which construction of representivity is more persuasive aside, each of the constructions of representivity and unrepresentivity are an attempt to authorize the Commission's installation, insofar as they establish some of the necessary warrants for the Commission to accomplish each of the four main aspects of its mandate, which include the following:

1. Healing and reconciliation of the community through discovering and disseminating the truth of what happened [on November 3rd, 1979] and its consequences with the lives of individuals and institutions, both locally and beyond Greensboro.
2. Clarifying the confusion and reconciling the fragmentation that has been caused by these events and their aftermath, in part by educating the public through its findings.
3. Acknowledging and recognizing people's feelings, including feelings of loss, guilt, shame, anger and fear.
4. Helping facilitate changes in social consciousness and in the institutions that were consciously or unconsciously complicit in these events, thus aiding in the prevention of similar events in the future. (GTRC, *Final Report* 16)

Some of these goals are facilitated by constructions of unrepresentivity. Only a Commission that is unbiased and objective—distanced from the community—can do what the community, because of its conflicting interests and opinions, has as of yet been

unable to do: discover the truth and clarify the confusion about the events of November 3rd, 1979. Others of these goals are facilitated by representivity. Only a Commission that is able to broadly address the entire community can hope to identify with the different members of the community and thereby reconcile the fragmentation and facilitate changes in social consciousness. These positions, in other words, allow the commissioners to both understand and somehow transcend the divisions of the community.

The Project's attempts to construct representivity at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony were reinforced by the Greensboro *News & Record* on the day following the ceremony. The paper reported that a "slate of nearly two dozen speakers encouraged the commission and recognized the efforts of those supporting its work," highlighting that "speakers at the event included government officials, religious leaders, representatives from civil and human rights groups, survivors of the massacre and students" (Church, "A Panel" B1). But not all of the press that the ceremony received strengthened the Commission's *ethos*. On June 21st, 2004, for example, the paper ran a letter to the editor entitled, "Commission Pursues One Version of Truth." The writer of the editorial, Ian Miller, wrote that the "[Greensboro] Truth and Reconciliation Commission has been designed after the same program hatched by the African National Congress in South Africa. Interesting to note that the ANC is also a communist organization. I urge readers to get on their computers and research every aspect of this event, the people involved, and exactly whose truth these people are pursuing" (A8). Miller's implicit claim here is that the Commission is not objective because it is tied to those in the Project who were formerly associated with the Communist Workers Party. Such a comment attempts to discredit the Commission by suggesting that it is biased in favor of one of the parties involved on November 3rd, 1979. The Mayor of Greensboro, Keith Holliday, also expressed his disapproval of the Commission in the days following the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, albeit in more nuanced ways. A June 25th, 2004 article reported that Holliday viewed the Commission as detrimental to the city of Greensboro's image (Rizzo, "City Cool" A1).

Furthermore, only three months after the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, the Mayor announced a project of his own—the Greensboro Bicentennial Mosaic

Partnerships Project. The Project, patterned after an initiative in Rochester, New York, was intended to “improve communication among the city’s racial and ethnic groups” by pairing “180 top civic leaders across racial lines and encourag[ing] them to become friends and share experiences” (Williams, “Mayor to Unveil” B1). According to the *News & Record*, Holliday claimed that “the program wasn’t a reaction to the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project” (Williams, “City Hopes” A1). But it is difficult not to read it as such, especially in light of the fact that the date for the official launch of the Mosaic Project was set for November 4th, 2004—one day after the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Greensboro Massacre (“Greensboro Initiative” A8).¹⁰² However, whether or not the Mosaic Project was a response to the installation of the Commission, it generated noteworthy press for the Commission. In the September 14th edition of the *News & Record*, a cover story compared the Greensboro TRC to the Mayor’s Mosaic Project, noting that the two efforts share a common goal—addressing the racial divide in Greensboro—but attempt to achieve that goal in different ways: “Holliday’s effort will be funded and directed by the community’s established institutions and is limiting participation to top leaders of civic groups. Leaders of the reconciliation project say they are taking the opposite strategy, hoping to work with the wider community to face racial problems and to tackle tough truths” (Williams, “City Hopes” A1). Citing Reverend Zeb Holler, an organizer of the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project, the article noted, “While Holliday’s group aims for its work to ‘trickle down,’ Holler said the reconciliation project’s approach is ‘bubble up.’ He welcomed the new effort and said there’s a need for both approaches to solve the problem” (Williams, “City Hopes” A1). Similarly, Mayor Carolyn Allen, who helped install the commissioners at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, reportedly said that the Greensboro TRC “works more from the grass roots up but is following along the same lines as Holliday’s effort” (Williams, “City Leaders” B1). The Mayor’s Mosaic Project, in short, offered the Commission’s advocates a counterpoint to emphasize its broad appeal and grassroots design in ways not inconsistent with the *ethos* of representivity.

¹⁰² Some have pointed to the fact that the city stopped funding the Mosaic Project shortly after the Commission completed its work as further evidence that the program was simply reactionary. Lisa Magarrell and Joya Wesley note, “[J]ust weeks after the GTRC issued its *Final Report*, the city...dropped its support and turned the Mosaic Program over wholly to the community funding agencies” (170).

Act III: The Public Hearings

Following the Commission's installation, commissioners rented office space, hired a staff, and held several public events—the most important of which were their three public hearings that occurred in the summer and fall of 2005. Each of the three hearings was a two-day event, organized around a single question. The first, entitled “What brought us to November 3, 1979?”, took place on July 15-16; the second, “What happened on, and after, November 3, 1979?”, took place on August 26-27; and the third, “What does the past have to do with the present and future?”, took place on September 30 and October 1. Given that commissioners heard and responded to testimony for the better part of six days, there is simply too much material to do justice to here. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on the commissioners' opening remarks at the first hearing—which were repeated, with only minor variations, at the beginning of each day of hearings—and reflect on who was invited to participate in the hearings. My close reading in this section demonstrates that, in their remarks at the public hearings, commissioners tend to position themselves primarily in terms of objectivity and impartiality, instead of representivity. Such positioning work helps to warrant the Commission's goal, at this stage in their operation, to engage in unbiased fact-finding and to listen impartially to the many perspectives pertaining to November 3rd, 1979. This position also lends that credibility to the Commission's findings, when they do, some months later, issue them at their Report Release Ceremony and in their *Final Report*. But despite the commissioners' emphasis on their objectivity, representivity is nonetheless constructed in the public hearings. Here the Commission follows the Project's lead, constructing representivity by inviting people to speak at the hearings. However, in this context, representivity is constructed somewhat differently than it was during the setting up of the Commission. Rather than issue a broad invitation to various sectors of the community, commissioners primarily invite those individuals directly implicated in November 3rd, 1979.

Commissioners began each day of the public hearings by reading a formal statement (GTRC, “First”). In this statement, commissioner Cynthia Brown called the day's hearing to order, thanking “everyone here for their willingness and openness to listen to the variety of viewpoints on traumatic events in our history.” Then each of the

other commissioners read prepared remarks. Bob Peters articulated the rationale for their inquiry and summarized the goals of the Commission's mandate. Muktha Jost asked audience members to take notice of the five empty seats at the front of the auditorium, intended to commemorate those who lost their lives on November 3rd, 1979. Mark Sills acknowledged the ongoing international support for the work of the Greensboro TRC, stating, "Just before we came out we received greetings from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and we have learned that, in a village in South Africa, this afternoon, bells are ringing in a church in support and in solidarity with the work of this Truth and Reconciliation Commission." Sills then led the audience in eighty-eight seconds of silence (i.e., the same length of time that violence ensued on November 3rd). After this time of silence, Barbara Walker petitioned audience members to get involved with the truth and reconciliation process in various ways and described the Commission's other research efforts (in addition to the hearings). Then Patricia Clark described the format and audience guidelines for the hearings. Last to speak was Angela Lawrence, who introduced the topic of the day's hearing and welcomed invited guests, which, at the first public hearing, included Reverend Bongani Finca of the South African TRC and Lisa Magarrell of the International Center for Transitional Justice.

In their introductory remarks, commissioners do little to position themselves as representative of the Greensboro community. Although each member of the Commission speaks here (and throughout the public hearings), they do not emphasize their individual differences; rather, they emphasize their unity as a body, primarily through the repeated use of the first person plural pronoun "we." The corporate stance they take is a deeply humanistic one—commissioners say, several times, that their examination is born out of the value they place on humanity and human life—and yet, at the same time, the stance is also fundamentally objective. This objectivity is constructed, primarily, through statements in which commissioners profess to eschew conclusions and evaluation at this stage in the TRC process. "The Commission," says Patricia Clark, "has not made any findings or conclusions at this point." Barbara Walker adds that, as the Commission listens to testimony, "There will be no judgment of presentations given." To reinforce their objectivity, commissioners also distance themselves from the specific perspectives of the speakers. The Commission does not, says Angela Lawrence, endorse any of the

speakers' views, and twice in their statement do commissioners say that the speakers' statements are not the final conclusions/findings of the Commission.¹⁰³ Commissioners also stress that speakers' statements are "just a portion of the evidence" that the Commission will consider, thereby indicating that they are not totally dependent on the information presented at the hearings to make their findings. Such remarks attempt to forestall the criticism that the speakers that the Commission invited implicitly reflect the Commission's views about November 3rd, 1979: "Speaker selection is not evaluation," commissioners seem to say here.

Another important remark that reinforces the Commission's objectivity is offered by Mark Sills, who claims that "the violence of November 3rd, 1979 is the window we look through as we examine the multitude of issues that brought us to that day, and that also are connected to our present and to our future." Despite the somewhat curious nature of the "window" metaphor to describe violence, this remark suggests that historical events are somehow transparent, and that commissioners can discover the "truth" and the "facts" about them in ways unmediated by commissioners' own backgrounds and contexts—an assumption that is consistent with, and therefore reinforces, the Commission's purported objectivity. The underlying assumption here—that the truth *can* be known objectively—operates elsewhere in the commissioners' introductory statement as well. It operates, for instance, in the way in which commissioners position the audience attending the hearing. The audience is positioned, in the commissioners' own terms, as "observers" of the testimonies, and the Commission seems to go to great lengths to interpellate—to hail—the audience into this subject position. "Hearings," says Patricia Clark, "are not a time for audience participation." Such directives are an important part of the Commission's performance of objectivity: if only distractions at the hearings can be

¹⁰³ These statements by Clark and Lawrence are further reinforced by Cynthia Brown's prepared closing remarks, read at the end of each of the public hearings: "We have invited speakers to the hearing based on the contributions they can make to the public's understanding. Such an invitation does not amount to an endorsement by the Commission of that speaker's views or the acceptance of his or her statement as fact. All speakers participating in this hearing have signed written statements certifying that their statements are true to the best of their knowledge. The Commission is committed to accuracy and will not publish information as fact that is knowingly false. The presentations today are not the Commission's findings but rather just a portion of the evidence we will consider. We will consider these statements and many others, along with numerous forms of documentary evidence and then determine our findings about matters of fact" (GTRC, "Third").

eliminated or reduced to a minimum, then the commissioners might come to know truths articulated by the speakers objectively.

These detailed directives for the audience have other effects as well. They contribute to the highly ritualistic nature of the hearing, and such ritual, as I noted with regard to the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, lends legitimacy to the event.¹⁰⁴ More importantly, however, they help to create a space where invited speakers can have their opinions heard without interruption. And, in this regard, Clark's directives also facilitate the Commission's construction of representivity. Much like the Project's construction of the Selection Panel's representivity or its construction of representivity at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, the Commission constructs representivity at its hearings less through what they say than through their act of invitation. What did the Commission's *ethos* of representivity look like, based on the identity of hearing participants? The answer to this question is that the Commission's representivity was constructed in relation to parties directly implicated in the events of November 3rd, 1979. The Commission received testimony from former and current Klan members, survivors (i.e., former Communist Workers Party members), members of the Greensboro police department, former residents of Morningside Homes (where the shooting took place), attorneys and judges from the trials that followed the November 3rd killings, city officials, and community activists.¹⁰⁵ To play up the representivity of this group, commissioners call attention, during their introductory remarks, to "the variety of viewpoints" that will be presented during the hearings, and they emphasize that the hearing's speakers "offer a range of perspectives" that "highlight the complexity of this tragedy." Such positioning

¹⁰⁴ In a memo dated July 26, 2005 from Lisa Magarrell to the commissioners, Magarrell commented on the importance of ritual in constructing the legitimacy of the first public hearing: "The Commission's symbols—the five empty chairs, white roses, 88 seconds of silence, and the references to victims in the opening remarks—were extremely effective in conveying the gravity of the occasion, recalling the humanity of those who lost their lives, and centering the proceedings on that loss. The commissioners' bearing, the use of the sash and the formality of the proceedings also helped to instill a sense of importance and with to the occasion. (I should add that some survivors told me that the 88 seconds of silence gave them severe flashbacks, so the Commission might want to consider if this is TOO symbolic. As an outsider I am unable to judge the pros and cons of this, so the Commission might best be advised simply to ask the survivors if this is too painful for them or if they appreciated it as a way to penetrate the consciousness of others in the Community.)" (Magarrell, "Notes on first" 1).

¹⁰⁵ Additionally, in each of the hearings, a significant number of academics presented their research on a variety of issues related to November 3rd, 1979. These researchers, however, probably did less to reinforce the Commission's claim to representivity than they did to reinforce the Commission's claim to objectivity.

work even continued after the hearings were over. According to a video summary of the hearings, produced after all three hearings had concluded, commissioners claim that one of main criteria that they used for choosing whom to invite to participate in the public hearings was the individual's potential contribution "to complexity and diversity of speakers with regard to: a. different speakers at each hearing; b. different viewpoints and perspectives, particularly those that have not been heard previously; c. race; d. gender; e. age" (GTRC, "Hearings").

The Commission's invitation to individuals associated with the events of November 3rd, 1979 to share their story in public is a means of securing tacit endorsement from these individuals for the Commission's work. It also allows the Commission to appeal to a multiplicity of subject positions. "Multiplicity" is the key word here, insofar as the greater the number of constituencies represented by the speakers, the more traction this construction of representivity has and the more credible the Commission and the TRC process seems. Commissioners were aware of these facts, as indicated by a four page memo from Lisa Magarrell to the commissioners dated July 11, 2005—only four days before the first public hearing—titled "Notes on Klan testimony at the public hearings." In the memo, Magarrell reflects on "the significance of the participation of the KKK" in the public hearings and discusses procedural issues, in terms of the way in which commissioners will address speakers and facilitate hearings (e.g., how commissioners will deal with possible violence and hate speech; what type of questions commissioners ask of participants; etc.). For my purposes, Magarrell's comments about Klan participation are most relevant:

As you all have surely noted already, this [the participation of the KKK in the public hearings] is a positive factor for the Commission's credibility, because it points to the seriousness and importance of the Commission's work that even those opposed to it feel that it is important to participate to have their say. Any truth commission process is enhanced, one hopes, by providing space for a broad range of actors to tell their stories and thus giving depth and complexity to the various layers of personal and forensic truth that the Commission is exploring...the Klan's participation reflects the power of the Commission's moral authority, since there is nothing else pushing the Klan to participate. While this participation lends credibility to the Commission's endeavor, it should not be confused with providing credibility to the Klan. (Magarrell, "Notes on Klan" 1)

Here Magarrell links the Klan participation—and, more generally, the participation of a variety of individuals, a “broad range of actors”—to the Commission’s “credibility.” This is, perhaps, one of the most explicit articulations, from the discourse surrounding the operation of the Greensboro TRC, of the importance of the Project and Commission’s invitations to the Greensboro community in constructing the Commission’s *ethos*, and, although Magarrell does not mention representation per se, it seems to be this notion that is warranting her claims about the Commission’s credibility. There is an acknowledgement here, moreover, that the participation of the Greensboro community is related to the Commission’s authority; and, while I think that the Klan’s participation doesn’t so much “reflect” as “construct” the Commission’s authority, this acknowledgement suggests that the rhetorical moves I have been describing were, at least at some level, strategic and intentional, as well as tactical and unconscious.

The efficacy of the Greensboro TRC’s construction of representivity is brought into relief when one considers the testimony of Virgil Griffin—the Imperial Wizard of the Cleveland Knights of the Ku Klux Klan and one of the members of the Klan/Nazi caravan on November 3rd, 1979—in light of the response to his testimony in the *News & Record*. In his testimony, which occurred on the second day of the first public hearing, Griffin was recalcitrant toward the Commission and did not show any remorse for the killings, nor did he issue an apology. He began by lambasting the TRC process:

Well first, I’d like to say I don’t think this Commission’s going to solve anything. I think it’s a total waste of time. And...this thing would have been forgotten 20 years ago, if it hadn’t been [for] people like this Commission and the news keep bringing it up in the paper. It’d have been forgotten after the trials...I think you’re hurting Greensboro, and bringing more harm to Greensboro than anything. I think if people here [are] worried about the citizens of Greensboro and worried about Greensboro, you should forget 1979, and go on with your life. The truth was proved in the trials. (Griffin)

Then, after articulating why he joined the Klan, he spoke about why he came to Greensboro on November 3rd, 1979:

The reason I came to Greensboro [was because] they put the poster out: Death to the Klan, [they] said we [were] hiding under rocks, we were scum. I’m not scum. I’m as good as any man walks on this earth. I’m as good as anybody. That’s why I came to Greensboro. I don’t hide under a rock from nobody. I’m not scum, I’m not ashamed to say I’m [an]

Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, and I'm not afraid of no man. And I don't hide. That's why I'm here today.

Later in his testimony, he indicated that he believed that members of the Communist Workers Party deserved the blame for the massacre:

The blame is on Nelson Johnson [for] putting that ["Death to the Klan"] poster up, and Paul Bermanzohn and the Communist Party for letting him. That's the only reason I came to Greensboro. If they hadn't put that poster up saying I was scum hidin[g] under a rock, I'd [have] been in another town rallying. I don't go around protestin[g] other people's rallies. If Jesse Jackson comes into the town I'm livin[g] in rallyin[g], I go to the next town and hold my rally. Or if the NAACP's rallying there, I go in another town and rally.

When asked by commissioners if he thought it strange that no Klansmen were shot during the attacks, he replied, among other things, "Maybe God guided the bullets, I don't know."

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Greensboro *News & Record's* coverage of the first hearing, including its many letters to the editor about the event, focused on Griffin. In the days leading up to the hearing, a number of articles emphasized that Griffin was slated to speak and that, as a result, police security would be tight at the hearings (Townsend, "Wizard" A1; Townsend, "Truth Panel Lists" B4; Townsend, "Truth Panel Reveals" B1; Coletta, "Truth Panel Hears" A1). And the headline story in the paper on the day after the first public hearing read, "Klan Leader Remains Defiant; Virgil Griffin Tells the Truth Panel it's a 'Waste of Time' to Study the Shootings" (Townsend A1). What is important for my purposes is the fact that most of these responses to Griffin's testimony in the *News & Record* suggest that, despite the Klansman's recalcitrance and his troubling ideology, his very *presence* at the hearings did lend considerable credibility to the Commission. For example, a July 19th editorial stated, "With the first of three public hearings completed, the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission appears, at least so far, to have put to rest...concerns that this process would be rigged to tell one side of the story" ("Sad Truths" A8). Two articles appearing in the July 24th "Ideas" section of the paper—one by Allen Johnson; the other by Edward Cone—made similar claims. Johnson wrote that readers should "give credit" to Griffin for testifying and give credit to the Commission for offering him the invitation to do so; he then added, "Despite widespread skepticism that this was a kangaroo court, the commission seems genuinely committed to a balanced

retrospective on a day Greensboro finds so hard to remember and so impossible to forget” (“Nov. 3” H2). Cone began his article with a concession. “So it turns out,” he wrote, “that the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission might be interested in the truth after all” (Cone, “Impressive Debut” H3). His reason for this claim was grounded on the balance of voices who testified at the event:

[T]he opening round of public statements showed that the seven-person panel is interested in hearing more than the party line. The party in question – the Communist Workers Party that organized the “Death to the Klan” rally – got plenty of time at the microphone to recount its version of the events leading up to Nov. 3, with talk of government conspiracy and right-wing death squads. But the commission also heard voices that strongly challenged some of the theories used by the victims to explain the context of the killings.

And an August 7th letter to the editor, written on behalf of the League of Women Voters endorsed the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission and commended the Commission for being “inclusive” (H2). “The commission,” the article continued, “now seeks the thoughts and memories of *all*. We hope the residents of Greensboro will avail themselves of the opportunities to participate and to read the report” (emphasis added). Such responses indicate that the Commission’s constructions of representivity may have been at least somewhat successful.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ There were a few editorials that criticized the Commission in the days following the hearing. In a letter to the editor entitled, “Is commission really seeking truth?”, Donnie Stowe wrote, “In reading about the self-appointed Truth and Reconciliation Commission ‘hearings’ in the paper [on] July 27, I was struck by the apparent small part that truth plays in these proceedings” (A6). Similarly, a letter to the editor from Marion Griffin notes, “One wonders if the rare individual who claims to await anxiously any conclusions, recommendations or other emanations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is really sincere. When those involved have in their majority people who have already decided the outcome beforehand, mutual understanding and an abrogation of prejudice and animosity among the participants are most unlikely to be in the offing. Rather than blame one side in the ‘Death to the Klan’ rally – which seems to be the goal of most commissioners – it seems to me that the only intelligent and constructive conclusion is to castigate both sides severely and then ‘get over it.’ The event was another example of two sets of fools shooting at one another with one set loaded with expert marksmen and the other set able to aim only vitriol and condemnation at its opposition” (A14).

But these two articles aside, most of the blame appearing the *News & Record* was reserved for members of Greensboro City Council, for their failure to attend the event (Cone, “Truth Commission” H3; Flynn, “Give Truth” A8; Hummel, “Council Absent” A1; Johnson, “Nov. 3” H2; Manning-Moss, “Council Shuns” H2; “Sad Truths” A8). Some writers petitioned city leaders to participate. “I would ask our city leaders, and those citizens of Greensboro who share their skepticism, to take another look at the work of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission,” wrote Steve Flynn (“Give Truth” A8). Others, like Edward Cone, expressed disappointment. Cone wrote, “Maybe it’s vain to hope that the City of Greensboro will look at the process as it is unfolding and consider some measure of cooperation with the panel. A council that voted along racial lines to oppose the entire process will take a whole lot of convincing. But the silence of the city at the hearings was almost as sad as the silence at the start of the proceedings to remember the

Act IV: The Report Release Ceremony

From the last of the three public hearings on October 1st, 2005 until the Report Release Ceremony on May 25th, 2006, the Commission kept a low profile, and coverage of the Commission in the *News & Record* was subsequently at a minimum.¹⁰⁷ During the Report Release Ceremony, the commissioners continued their attempts to establish their own representivity, but they did so, first and foremost, by emphasizing their diverse viewpoints from one another. With regard to their construction of unrepresentivity at the ceremony, commissioners deemphasized their objectivity, and they tended to downplay the notion that they were somehow extraordinary or moral exemplars; instead, they demonstrated that what set them apart from the community was their work toward reconciliation, which involved, primarily, engaging one another in dialogue. This means of constructing *ethos* was important to the commissioners because it enabled them to identify with their audience, while simultaneously demonstrating that they had performed their mandated task. Moreover, it allowed the commissioners to position themselves as a model for the Greensboro community.

The Commission's Report Release Ceremony was held in Greensboro in the Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel at Bennett College for Women. The seven commissioners, seated on the stage in the front of the chapel, each wore a blue stole, similar to the yellow stoles they had been given upon taking their oath at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony. Each of the commissioners took turns leading the audience through various parts of the ceremony. Commissioner Mark Sills began by asking the audience to participate in eighty-eight seconds of silence. After the silence, Sills led the audience in

dead" (Cone, "Truth Commission" H3). And Johnson, for his part, issued the following not-so-subtle indictment: "City officials may have stayed away in droves from the first Truth and Reconciliation hearings last week, but the Ku Klux Klan didn't" ("Nov. 3" H2).

¹⁰⁷ However, in the days before the Report Release Ceremony, articles about the Commission began reappearing in the paper. These articles bring into relief some of the criticism of the Commission that was circulating in Greensboro at the time—namely, that the Commission was likely to "skim [over] controversial aspects of the deadly incident" (Banks, "TRC mum" A1); that "only parts of the truth...[would] be told"; that it is inappropriate to put a "guilt trip...on our 235,000 citizens who are not responsible for Nov. 3, 1979"; that the Commission "is a thinly veiled attempt to recast history in favor of the communist protestors and against the city of Greensboro" (Friedman, "Moment" A8); that the "role of some survivors...in creating the Truth and Reconciliation Commission [has] inherently taint[ed] its objectivity"; and that the event under investigation "meant nothing to this city – that Greensboro merely suffered the misfortune of being randomly chosen as a battleground between two equally reviled, extremist groups. Nothing more, nothing less."

an invocation and introduced the special music for the evening. Bob Peters took the podium after the special music to discuss the Commission’s mandate. Then Cynthia Brown and Barbara Walker took a few minutes to acknowledge all of the individuals and organizations that had supported the Commission in various ways. Following these expressions of gratitude, the commissioners showed a video chronicling the truth and reconciliation process in Greensboro from its inception to the present. Next Muktha Jost described some of the challenges faced by the Commission, and Angela Lawrence talked about how the Commission went about doing its work. The *raison d’être* of the ceremony was the disclosure of the Commission’s findings and their recommendations to the city, which were summarized by Pat Clark and Angela Lawrence and distributed, in the form of an Executive Summary of the *Final Report*, by the commissioners to each audience member. After the Executive Summaries were distributed, several members of the community—including victims of the November 3rd tragedy, a city council person, members of the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project, and representatives from other public bodies in Greensboro—each gave brief remarks, all of them positive, about their experiences participating in the truth and reconciliation process. Many of the same individuals that spoke at the Swearing In and Seating Ceremony, spoke at this time. To conclude the ceremony, the Reverend Peter Story, one of the architects of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, delivered a benediction; and Mark Sills dismissed the audience, charging them to continue the work started by the Commission.

The video shown at the Report Release Ceremony was central to the Commission’s construction of *ethos* (GTRC, “Final Video”). With footage taken from the November 3rd killings, the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project’s planning meetings, the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony (including an excerpt from Finca’s address), and the public hearings, the video summarizes some of the Greensboro community’s responses to the Commission’s work, both favorable and unfavorable.¹⁰⁸ Most noteworthy, for my purposes, is the video’s conclusion; the conclusion is comprised of seven short statements, each given by one of the seven commissioners, in which they

¹⁰⁸ For instance, the video shows footage of the city council meeting, in which the council voted not to endorse the commission’s work. I discuss this city council meeting in more detail in chapter 4.

reflect on the truth and reconciliation process and comment on what they believe the Commission has accomplished. In many of their individual statements, commissioners position the Commission as representative of the Greensboro community, and they do so, for the most part, by highlighting the differences between themselves: the Commission is representative of the diversity of the community. Lawrence, for example, notes that the commissioners represent “different parts of the city.” Walker notes, similarly, that “each of us [commissioners] came from very different places,” and, as a result, there were “different perspectives”—a point that she emphasizes by highlighting the “different views” among commissioners about the meanings of words like “consensus.” Peters comments, in the space of a few lines, on the fact that his fellow commissioners have “significantly different background[s],” “radically different—quite radically different—backgrounds,” “significantly different points of view,” and “different perspectives” than he does. Brown uses a similar phrase—“different vantage points”—and also refers, here and at other points during the Commission’s operation, to the Commission as “a microcosm of the broader community”—a designation that Desmond Tutu used in his Chairperson’s Foreword to refer to the South African TRC.¹⁰⁹ (And finally, although she does not mention the differences of the commissioners explicitly, Clark calls attention to the eighteen “different representatives” that spoke during the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, a series of speech-acts that helped, as I have already demonstrated, to establish the Commission’s representivity.)

The emphasis that commissioners give to their differences in these statements is reinforced by similar characterizations elsewhere in the ceremony. For example, prior to the showing of the video, Brown says, “[It] has become very clear that we have very different perspectives” (GTRC, “Report Release”). It is, moreover, reinforced by the fact that commissioners position themselves as ordinary—not extraordinary—individuals.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Gregory Headen, co-chair of the Local Task Force and one of the masters-of-ceremonies at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, made a similar claim in his brief remarks at the Report Release Ceremony: “We have also learned that the Local Task Force was in a very real way a microcosm of the community. We’ve had our own struggles. There have been times when some of us didn’t know whether we were coming back” (GTRC, “Report Release”).

¹¹⁰ I do not mean to suggest here that commissioners are never positioned as exemplary or extraordinary individuals during the Report Release Ceremony; however, for the most part, such designations come from those outside of the Commission. For instance, when, at the end of the Report Release Ceremony, then-President of Bennett College for Women Johnnetta B. Cole thanks the commissioners for their work, she addresses them as “extraordinary sisters and brothers,” adding, “I want

In a series of remarks describing some of the struggles that the Commission faced, commissioner Muktha Jost refers to the Commission as “a group of ordinary people engaged in something extraordinary.” Jost suggests here that it is not the commissioners themselves but *the truth commission process* that is “something extraordinary.” Commissioners, on the other hand, are “ordinary.” “We [commissioners],” says Jost, “have brought deep faith and hope to our work, but naturally, we have brought our human flaws, too.” Jost’s comments here—which are a departure from the way in which commissioners are positioned by the “Call for Nominations,” by the procedure for establishing the Selection Panel, by McSwain at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, and even by the commissioners’ comments at their public hearings—reinforce representivity to the extent that they identify the commissioners with Greensboro citizens. Claims to ordinariness attenuate the sanctification—the “setting apart”—of commissioners from the community.

There are, I think, two things worth noting with regard to the way in which representivity is constructed and reinforced throughout much of the Report Release Ceremony. For one thing, the commissioners are more ambiguous in describing their differences. Unlike McSwain’s explicit description of the commissioners in terms of binaries of race, class, and gender (i.e., “of color” or “not-of-color”), here the commissioners are vague when describing how, exactly, they represent the Greensboro community. Commissioners simply refer to their different “backgrounds” and/or note that they come from different “places,” without further specification as to what these differences entail. Angela Lawrence is perhaps the most explicit of all the commissioners in noting that commissioners come from “different parts of the city,” but she does not clarify who came from where, nor does she indicate how such differences might matter. Brown’s claim that the Commission is a microcosm of the Greensboro community functions in a similar way, insofar as it highlights commissioners’ differences and reinforces the Commission’s representivity without making explicit the features of the Commission that warrant such a label. The second thing worth noting is an emphasis on commissioners’ points of view. That is, according to commissioners, what differentiates

to literally bow in acknowledgement of your work, your dedication, your soulfulness” (GTRC, “Report Release”).

them is not so much their demographic differences (as McSwain’s speech during the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony indicates) but their different opinions and voices.

Before discussing why this shift in positioning matters, it is necessary to unpack how commissioners construct their unrepresentivity, i.e., how they distance themselves from the Greensboro community. Here again, the way in which they do so looks different than their prior constructions of unrepresentivity. Rather than emphasize their objectivity or impartiality, they emphasize their work and, in particular, dialogic engagement with one another; that is, it is the actions that commissioners take with regard to November 3rd, 1979 that sets them apart from the community.¹¹¹

Such positioning work occurs, in part, in the commissioners’ seven video statements: Clark refers to “the magnitude of the [TRC] endeavor,” Lawrence talks about the “struggles” commissioners faced, Jost emphasizes commissioners’ “[work] together,” Brown claims that the commissioners have done “important work,” and Sills comments on “what [commissioners have] accomplished.” This positioning work continues throughout much of the Report Release Ceremony as well. Peters, for example, describes the work the Commission needed to accomplish when he summarizes the Commission’s Mandate; Jost talks about the ways the Commission carried out that work when discussing the struggles faced by commissioners; and the Executive Summary of the Commission’s *Final Report*—which Lawrence and Clark read excerpts from and which was distributed to all of the audience members—serves as material proof of the work the

¹¹¹ One of the first times that the commissioners position themselves in this way occurs during in the closing moments of the last day of public hearings, when Cynthia Brown departs from her prepared remarks and notes, “I want to publicly thank my colleagues here on the Commission, my brother and sister commissioners for the work that they are doing. Thank you. Thank you very much. This is one of probably the most challenging things that I certainly have done, and I would trust that it is one of the most challenging things—if not equally rewarding, but absolutely one of the more challenging things—that any of us has taken on, because what you have observed in these series of hearings is only a fraction of the work that we have to do. We have taken public statements; we attend numerous meetings, and they continue to grow. I can only imagine for those of us who are working or and those of us who are retired, who did not dream June 12th of last year [of] the kind of time commitment you were making. But it’s more than a time commitment; it is an emotional commitment. If you are justice-loving and justice-seeking people in the face of such controversial, disturbing information, it’s going [to] be challenging, and our [upcoming] work will be to begin to work on the November 5th community dialogue or continue the planning around that, to continue to take public statements, to continue to review all kinds of documentary evidence, and to continue to do a tremendous amount of meetings so that we can create a final report that is useful to this community, to come up with...final recommendations that you as a community will be responsible for carrying forward so that our work really has meaning.”

Commission has done. However, this emphasis is nowhere more evident than in Lawrence's other remarks during the ceremony.

Lawrence begins by articulating the purpose for her remarks. "I am here this evening," she says, "to talk to you about how we did our work" (GTRC, "Report Release"). Throughout these remarks, Lawrence continually positions the commissioners as actors. To be more precise, in many of the clauses, the commissioners are construed as either the clause's agent—i.e., the participant that instigates the clause's processes—or the clause's medium—i.e., "the core participant... 'without which there would be no process'" (Martin and Rose 91). The Greensboro community, on the other hand, is positioned as much less agentic. Take, for example, the following clauses, which are only a small sampling of the total number of clauses constructed in this manner: "[W]e met with some two hundred people"; "We spoke with former and current Klansmen and Nazi party members, former CWP members, former residents of Morningside Homes, police officers, city officials, citizens of Greensboro, judges, and attorneys"; "We sifted through ideas and evidence"; "We took every sentence and put it up for evaluation"; "At times we brought in our outside experts, who could help us understand complex issues"; etc. Moreover, in almost every clause in which the Greensboro community is mentioned, the community does not instigate and/or perform the action (with the exception, perhaps, of the statement, "As the community often reminded us..."). Here, then, is an instance in which commissioners are, through their activity, distanced from the members of the community, who are positioned as inactive.

To emphasize the commissioners' activity, Lawrence frames the process of engaging the community as difficult (e.g., she notes "*how much* it takes to get people to talk" and claims that "progress was *not easily won*"); the commissioners' research as extensive (e.g., she says, "*much* has already been said and written about November the third, and we went through *a lot* of that information"); and the analysis of the data as intense (e.g., she explains that the commissioners "move[d] to a phase of *intense* research). The force of these claims, which themselves suggest a high degree of gradation, are amplified by the modifiers Lawrence uses. For example, she notes that the Commission knocked on *countless* doors; investigated *rich and voluminous* archive materials; examined a *wealth* of information; referred to *extensive* media coverage;

conducted *intense* research and *intense* analysis; held *frequent, often all-day* meetings; came up with *burning* questions; and spent *countless* hours checking and re-checking facts; the process, she says, was *rigorous*. The force of Lawrence’s claims is also amplified by her use of long, parallel series, which function to emphasize the extensiveness of the process. Two examples of long, parallel series in Lawrence’s remarks are the following: “We spoke with former and current Klansmen and Nazi party members, former CWP members, former residents of Morningside Homes, police officers, city officials, citizens of Greensboro, judges, and attorneys”; “We searched...[p]olice documents and reports, court documents, video footage, newspaper articles, research papers, theses, etc.” With regard to the second series, in order to further emphasize the length of the list and, thus, the breadth of the work, Lawrence caps off the list with an expression of exhaustion, “Woo!” She also uses a third long series to describe the different types of media the Commission used to reach the public: “We used word of mouth, door-to-door efforts, the telephone, the radio, volunteers, TV, newspapers, blogs, websites, music, poetry, and interns.” Lawrence’s delivery of this list is noteworthy; she emphasizes the first syllable of every item in the list, creating a kind of cadence that plays up the length of the list and, like her expression “Woo,” indicates fatigue and, as a result, the extensiveness of the list. Finally, the force of Lawrence’s claims is amplified through repetition. For instance, she uses the word “countless” twice; notes that the Commission spent time “checking and re-checking the facts and findings”; and repeats the word “intense” four times in a short span of dialogue, three of which appear in the following excerpt: “At our *intense* research meetings, we held up one finding at a time for *intense* analysis. I really have to say that one more time: It was very *intense*” (emphasis added).¹¹²

¹¹² The expressed intensity of the commissioners’ work is amplified throughout much of the rest of the ceremony as well. For example, at one point during the ceremony, Brown calls the Greensboro TRC’s task “daunting” and then says, “[Y]ou can not begin to imagine what a challenge this was. To be a part of a process where you investigating a tragedy, that had such a horrific impact on people’s life, and to approach this work with the kind of integrity that we have attempted to do, and to have the level of scrutiny and innuendo about our work, has really been a challenge. The time that it has taken, the effort to try to engage as many people as possible has been a real challenge” (GTRC, “Report Release”). Here Brown uses the term “challenge” three times, each of which is accentuated in various ways: *You can not begin to imagine* the challenge, it has *really* been a challenge, it has been a *real* challenge. Commissioner Jost, too, amplifies the expressed intensity of the Commission’s work when she notes, “We have faced *many forceful challenges* to our work in the last two years, as many of you know. A big part of the challenge comes from

It is also significant that, when Lawrence speaks about the commissioners' work in her remarks, she refers not only to the Commission's work in the community but also to the institution's internal operations: "As we looked outside for information and evidence, we were mindful of our own differences, diversity, strengths, and hopes. We retreated on several occasions to talk through our own struggles and to stay true to our principles and promises." Subsequent excerpts elaborate on the Commission's internal operations. What these excerpts indicate is that a significant part of the work of the commissioners involved engaging one another. This point is reinforced by several of the statements in the video: Lawrence, for example, highlights that the commissioners had to "come together and at least talk"; Walker notes that commissioners had "hardy discussions" and "opened our minds" to differences; Jost comments that commissioners "worked together"; and Peters twice mentions "opportunity to engage" other commissioners.

Furthermore, commissioners signal that their engagement with one another has had positive consequences. Peters, for example, claims to have "gained personally" and been "enriched" by engaging people with different points of view. Brown echoes this sentiment elsewhere in the Report Release Ceremony, when she notes that such engagement "has led each of the seven us on a journey toward self-reflection and self-transformation." And Jost notes that, through this engagement, commissioners have achieved a kind of unity:

Two years back I came to this process and the people, a stranger. With the exception of Barbara Walker, I hadn't set eyes on any of the other commissioners and didn't know them. And later this evening when we disband as a group of commissioners, I will feel a great sense of loss because we have become like siblings. Like brothers and sisters we have spent way too much time together in the last two years... We have fought and struggled together and argued and fussed and disagreed and agreed; and, like siblings, we also share a bond. (GTRC, "Report Release")

the very nature of a truth commission's work: the process of truth seeking and truth finding and even truth sharing has neither a prescribed how to nor a precise technique, despite the nearly forty truth commissions around the world. Each Commission explores a different social, political, cultural, and economic context; and, while some factors are universal, many of them are not. There are no clear cut, step-by-step rules to follow in solving the problem, in revealing the truth about November 3rd. It's not like getting a problem right in math. The answer to a math problem is the same for a child in the east part of town as it is for the child in the west part of town, but it's not so in truth seeking. You may sift through the confusion and identify the facts, and others can still argue with you."

In this passage, Jost indicates that commissioners have engaged one another—by fighting and struggling and arguing and fussing and disagreeing—and, in the process, have moved from being strangers to being family, from being a group divided to a group that shares a bond, to the extent that Jost will feel “a great sense of loss” when the Commission disbands.

In sum, the tension seen in the Project and the Commission’s earlier discourse between positions of representivity and unrepresentivity persists in the Report Release Ceremony. Here, however, representivity is constructed more ambiguously and more in terms of the commissioners’ perspectives and opinions than in previous iterations, and unrepresentivity is constructed in terms of commissioners’ activity and engagement with one another and less in terms of their exemplary character or objective judgment. In the context of the Report Release Ceremony, these positions both have important functions. Much like in the discourse of the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony and the Public Hearings, constructions of representivity allow the commissioners to identify with the many constituencies that make up their Greensboro audience, which, in turn, helps to ensure that the findings and recommendations will receive broad public support. Constructions of unrepresentivity—which, in this case, the commissioners establish by pointing to their activity—serve as evidence that the Commission has been efficacious in completing its mandate; it has accomplished its task. But there is more going on here. In the process of establishing these multiform constructions of *ethos*, commissioners (as well as the members of the Project) constitute a vision of community—which might be best described as dialogic engagement among diverse individuals—that is intended to be exemplary for the people of Greensboro.

As I have demonstrated throughout this chapter, it’s a subject position that is performed, in various guises, at nearly every public stage of the Commission’s operation: in the coming together of the diverse members of the Selection Panel; in the formation and work of the Commission; and in the gathering of invited speakers at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony and the Public Hearings. However, it is primarily at the Report Release Ceremony that commissioners emphasize the relevance of this subject position for the Greensboro community. For example, in the midst of thanking those individuals

and organizations who made the Greensboro TRC possible, commissioner Cynthia Brown makes the following remark:

You [the audience at the ceremony] have to know that at many points in this process as we have worked together, it has become very clear that we have very different perspectives. And if this work is to be real, from this moment forward, you have to be prepared to take on the challenge of hanging in there when things get tough. That's what we've had to do. This is a microcosm of what will be expected of all of us in this room and the people in this city who we hope you will touch beyond this point. We have struggled together. We have laughed together. We've had fun together. We've left meetings together thinking we may not come back, if I tell you the truth.

In this passage, Brown emphasizes both the commissioners' differences from one another and their engagement—a clear articulation of the *ethos* I have been describing. But Brown goes on: what will make the commissioners' work “real,” she says, is what the audience and larger Greensboro community do in response to that work. Community members must act as the Commission has acted.

Brown and many of the other commissioners reinforce these remarks during their video statements (GTRC, “Final Video”). Brown, for example, describes the Commission as “a model to show what's possible if you give something time to really try to work from different vantage points about a particular issue you might disagree about.” Similarly, Jost calls the people of Greensboro to action, noting, “[T]here's a lot of work that needs to be done by the community, starting with putting the effort to understand what really happened, and to look at our findings, and to look at our recommendations. Agree, disagree, question, critique: do everything that a healthy, critical community would do, but get engaged.” (And, elsewhere during the ceremony, she adds, “Through this process, we hope that we have modeled to you how a diverse group can come together to talk about these uncomfortable things, so we can all live together in a safe place, where everyone feels honored and affirmed.”) Lawrence says that her “greatest hope is that the west side of Greensboro and the east side of Greensboro will come together and at least talk, like we had to do as commissioners.” Walker remarks, “We opened our minds, and I hope that what [the people of Greensboro] read in the report and what they garner from it is going to be a similar experience—that they will open their minds to the idea of reconciliation as really a goal to be sought.” And Sills, for his part,

describes the Commission as a model as well, not simply for the Greensboro community but for communities elsewhere: “I’m very proud of what we’ve accomplished, and I’m thankful that a lot of communities around the U.S. are looking at us for leadership as a model to follow.”

But the Commission’s vision for the Greensboro community, as well as its call to the audience to take up that vision, is articulated nowhere more forcefully than in the opening prayer and closing remarks at the Report Release Ceremony, which were delivered by commissioner Mark Sills and, taken together, serve as apt bookends to the Commission’s final public event. One of the first things worth noting about the opening and closing moments of the ceremony is that Sills makes little distinction between commissioner and non-commissioner: the boundaries between the Commission and the community have dissolved into Sills’ all-inclusive “we.” Sills, in fact, seems to go out of his way to avoid making the distinction, when, in his opening prayer, he notes, “We seek your blessing upon the work that has been done, which we have gathered to celebrate this evening.” Sills’ use of the passive voice here allows him to avoid mentioning who did the work (i.e., the Commission), thereby circumventing the distinction between commissioners and the audience. And he quips, in the closing remarks, that, given the length of the ceremony, audience members “know a little bit of what it’s like to be on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission” also functions to blur the distinction between Commission and the community. For the most part, then, the opening and closing remarks call all of those attending the Report Release Ceremony to participate in a single, new kind of community.¹¹³

But what does the community—the image of the “people”—to which Sills calls the audience of the Report Release Ceremony look like? The short answer to this question is that it looks like the Commission. Sills calls ceremony participants to see differences as valuable (e.g., he calls their differences “rich and beautiful”), and he calls them to (inter)action, “to go forth from here and *to work* for a kind of civility that is truth-seeking and that [leads] toward reconciliation.” It is in and through this work—a “shared

¹¹³ The single subject position established in this discourse is, according to Sills, underwritten by God. Whereas throughout much of the Report Release Ceremony it is the Commission who acts and the people of Greensboro who witness these acts, in these passages it is primarily the “God of all people” who acts: God creates us in our difference, calls us into community, blesses our work, and guides us in our future. This shift helps to blur the distinction between commissioner and non-commissioner.

commitment to making Greensboro a place...of equity, justice, and inclusion”—that the community is “united,” and it is in this united community that we can be “whole, complete, secure, healthy, and glad.” Significantly, this vision of community is articulated three times within the first three sentences of Sills’ invocation:

Let us pray. God of all people we gather here today in a large room full of unique and separate individuals. We each have our own story, and yet, in some fashion, our stories are interwoven into a social fabric that unites us in a search for truth and reconciliation. It is you who has made us, each distinct and different; it also is you who calls us together into a shared community.

Although we are “unique and separate individuals,” we “gather together”; although “we each have our own story,” our stories are “interwoven into a social fabric that unites us”; although we are “distinct and different,” we are called together into a “shared community.” For those in the audience at the Report Release Ceremony who had also attended the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, the vision of community that Sills articulates may have sounded familiar. It is, after all, strikingly similar to the notion of *ubuntu* that Bongani Finca articulated at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony. Sills’ claim, for instance, that “our stories are interwoven into a social fabric that unites us” resonates with Finca’s descriptions of human interdependency. And certainly the notion that we become “whole” and “complete” in and through community is consistent with *ubuntu*, as both Finca and Desmond Tutu describe it. Where Sills’ account may differ slightly from Finca’s *ubuntu* is in his description of individual identity. For Finca, our individual identities are corporately constructed and defined, first and foremost, by our relation to others: “I am who I am because of who we all are.” While Sills affirms this, he puts a bit more emphasis on the fact that we are “unique” and “separate.” “[W]e each,” he says, “have our own story.” But Sills’ slightly greater emphasis on our individuality, which appeals, perhaps, to the premium that many Americans place on this commonplace, still gives way to a conception of identity defined through relation that shares much with *ubuntu*. We are defined by what others are not—our differences.¹¹⁴ We are, in essence, creatures made for community. It is, I think, in light of *ubuntu* that the

¹¹⁴ Here one cannot help but be reminded of Tutu’s frequent references to South Africa as a rainbow nation.

commissioners' choice to conclude their final public event with the following Reinhold Niebuhr quotation makes sense:

As we close we wish to leave you with the words of a great American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, who once said that "Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope. Nothing which is true, or beautiful, or good, makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we are saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as it from our standpoint; therefore we be saved by the final form of love, which is forgiveness." Let us continue our work together, of seeking truth and working for reconciliation. Thank you and good night. (GTRC, "Report Release")

This closing quotation seems to me to be yet another articulation of *ubuntu*, insofar as it is an acknowledgement that who we are and what we do is only made complete outside of ourselves as individuals.

Conclusion

One of the things this chapter's study of representivity and unrepresentivity brings into relief is the fact that corporate rhetors have different options for constructing *ethos* than individual *rhetors* do. Organizations like the Greensboro TRC can utilize the fact that they are both a unity and plurality, a single "we" and a multiplicity of "I's," to perform *ethos* in ways that emphasize identification among members of the organization, division between members, or—as is the case with the Greensboro TRC—both identification and division, congregation (the groupness shared by the individuals) and segregation (the individuality of the group's members). Put another way, corporate rhetors have the option to position themselves as a single voice (hence the term, "corporate person"¹¹⁵), which highlights their unity, or as a multiplicity of voices, which highlights the individuality and symbolic personal investment of each member. Furthermore, in constructing *ethos*, corporate rhetors can also make use of the fact that organizations maintain both internal and external operations. All organizations have both internal and external commitments—commitments that may conflict and thus require

¹¹⁵ "The corporation," as Cheney puts it, "allows individuals to speak with a collective voice while retaining anonymity and symbolic detachment, if the individuals who are doing the speaking wish it so and are legally and rhetorically successful" (4).

complex rhetorical maneuvering on the part of the organization's members. To negotiate these commitments, members employ rhetoric, constructing identification and/or division both within and outside of their organization. George Cheney's case study provides a detailed account of this negotiation at work, insofar as he describes how the authors of *The Challenge of Peace* "acted in a very real sense as 'managers' of their identities...both inside and outside of the Roman Catholic Church" (ix). However, his organizational analysis, which explores how a group of individuals "balanced" a variety of commitments both within and outside of their organization, is only possible when one has access to the inner rhetorical workings of an organization (as Cheney does, in part, through interviews that he conducted with bishops and archbishops in the Roman Catholic Church). What Cheney does not make explicit is that, unless an organization conducts its internal affairs in public (which many do not), the knowledge that outside audiences can have about the organization's internal workings—e.g., the relationships between its individual members or groups, the structure and processes of the organization, etc.—depends in large measure upon how the organization presents itself. In such cases, organizations can strategically describe their internal practices to position themselves in ways that reinforce or attenuate their positions as established by their external practices.

Generally speaking, the Greensboro commissioners' ability to construct representivity hinged upon the fact that they were able to emphasize the Commission's internal divisions, i.e., to present themselves as a multiplicity of "I's." Correspondingly, the commissioners' ability to position themselves as unrepresentative hinged upon the fact that they were able to emphasize the Commission's internal identifications with one another—i.e., to present themselves as a unified "we," in terms of their objectivity, exemplary moral standing, or hard work. And it was these two positions, held in tension, which helped warrant the commissioners to carry out their mandate. In positioning the Commission as representative of the Greensboro community, commissioners were able to identify with a number of different constituencies in the community. Simultaneously, in positioning the Commission as unrepresentative of the Greensboro community, commissioners constructed the critical distance necessary to claim that they were able to adjudicate fairly about what happened on November 3rd, 1979 and to develop an

alternative model for what (inter)action in the community should look like. One of the risks for commissioners, in performing representivity, was that they might reify the divisions in the community; and one of the risks, in performing unrepresentivity, was that commissioners might alienate the community from the TRC process. It was, therefore, important for the commissioners to hold the two positions in tension with one another throughout their operation, thereby enabling them to both identify with the community and embody what the community should become.¹¹⁶

For at least some of Greensboro's residents, the Greensboro TRC's constructions of representivity and unrepresentivity were so persuasive that they considered the Commission to be representative in another sense: they considered the Commission to speak and act on their behalf. Johnnetta Cole—who, at the time of the Commission's operation, was the President of Bennett College for Women—exemplified this position in her remarks at the Report Release Ceremony. Having just elaborated upon three important connections between the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Bennett College for Women, President Cole concludes her remarks as follows:

Let me say, my sisters and my brothers, if these strong connections – three – did not exist between this College and this essential, necessary, long overdue process of truth-telling and reconciliation; if these three connections did not exist, the Bennett family would still have the responsibility to bear witness. We would still have the responsibility to be present here [at the Report Release Ceremony]. We would still have the responsibility to speak out about what did and did not happen on that third day of November in 1979. The reason is captured in words written in

¹¹⁶ The interplay between these two positions gets at an important point about Kenneth Burke's notions of identification and division: identification always presumes division, just as division always presumes identification. George Cheney expresses this point eloquently in *Organizational Rhetoric*:

Just as estrangement or alienation from one social unit often implies identification with another, so does individual difference with respect to some other person imply sameness with regard to a third party. Thus, similarity and difference mutually implicate one another, exist in ongoing dialectical tension, and provide the formative context for what we call our "identity." We are in this way charged with building our differences out of unique combinations of "sameness," linking ourselves with some groups and organizations and distancing ourselves from others. This is the basis of both consensus and conflict in social life; in Kenneth Burke's terms, the grounds for rhetoric are in the conditions of "congregation" and "segregation." (13)

As this chapter has demonstrated, the "dialectical tension" that Cheney mentions here—a tension between similarity and difference, identification and division, congregation and segregation—is of central importance with regard to the Commission's construction of *ethos*, and one way to conceptualize what I have tried to do throughout this chapter is provide a diachronic exploration of this tension and its intended effects.

1945 by Martin Niemöller. He wrote these words about the silence of German intellectuals following the Nazi rise to power in Germany: “First they came for the Communists, and I didn’t speak up, because I was not a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn’t speak up, because I was not a Jew. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn’t speak up, because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time there was no one left to speak up for me.” Thank you to seven, seven sisters and brothers, for speaking up for all of us. (GTRC, “Report Release”)

As Cole’s remarks indicate, for some in Greensboro, the Commission served as a kind of proxy—i.e., as a group entrusted to do the work of the people of Greensboro, to speak and act on their behalf. Thus, for those like Cole, the commissioners’ construction of *ethos* does more than model what the community should look like; it is an important step toward reconciliation in the community.

But certainly not everyone in Greensboro agreed with Cole: there were many in Greensboro who disapproved of the TRC process—who, despite the commissioners’ best efforts, remained unconvinced of the Commission’s objectivity, value, or helpfulness. In the next chapter, I explore some of the resistance that the Commission faced, looking, in particular, at remarks delivered by the members of the Greensboro City Council, who voted, 6-3, “to oppose” the work of the Commission at their April 2005 meeting. I also look at the Commission’s response to this opposition, as well as some of their findings, in their *Final Report*.

Chapter V

“We Joined a World”: Definitional Maneuvering in the Introduction to the Greensboro TRC *Final Report*

The GTRC has had the opportunity to meet with and have communication with a number of people associated with truth commissions around the world. We have been struck by the interest they have taken in our small process. From them, we have learned about the value of taking statements from a broad range of people, the positive effect of engaging the public through hearings and discussion forums, and, surprisingly often, what to expect in terms of challenges and opportunities as we moved forward. But perhaps most of all, the GTRC learned that we were not alone in the task of revealing the truth about the past; instead we joined a world in which many people are challenging unfinished and misshapen stories about past abuses and violence that continue to sow distrust and even hate in our nations and our communities today.

Greensboro TRC *Final Report* (12)

The Greensboro commissioners completed their work by publishing the *Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report*. They presented an Executive Summary to the citizens of Greensboro at the Report Release Ceremony on May 25th, 2006, and, in the days following the ceremony, they distributed the complete spiral-bound report in the community, and also made copies available at the Greensboro Public Library and online. Like many reports published by other truth commissions, the Greensboro Commission’s *Final Report* reflects an attempt by commissioners to be thorough. Its 529 pages include an “Introduction & Methodology” section; three sections that correspond to the three public hearings (entitled, “What brought us to November 3, 1979?”; “Planning for and sequence of November 3, 1979”; and “What happened after November 3, 1979?”); a “Conclusion & Recommendations” section; and fourteen annexes that contain timelines, maps, and other “defining documents” (GTRC, *Final Report* v-vi).

The cover of the report is especially noteworthy. Front and back flaps are comprised of images of the five victims of November 3rd, 1979, the Greensboro TRC commissioners, and members of the Greensboro community—all of which overlay an indigo-colored, denim pattern. The collage of images, “woven together” by the denim fabric, is, as I noted in chapter three, a kind of visual representation of *ubuntu*. And standing out starkly against this dark background is bold, white typeface, which reads, “Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report.” It is this title—or, more specifically, the commissioners’ claims to the title “Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission” in their *Final Report*—that is the subject of the present chapter.

Much like the term *ubuntu* and the notion of representivity considered, respectively, in chapters three and four, the title “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” is a feature of rhetorical traditions that did not originate in Greensboro. The title was first used by Chile’s Comisión Nacional para la Verdad y Reconciliación, a Commission instituted by Chilean President Patricio Aylwin in 1990 to investigate the “mass arrests, torture, killings, and disappearances” committed during Augusto Pinochet’s seventeen year military rule of the country (Hayner 35). It is, however, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, with its heavily publicized and dramatic hearings, that is often credited with popularizing the title—one of the results being that “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” is now often used as the generic term for these institutions, despite the preference of many scholars to refer to them generically as “truth commissions” or, alternatively, “commissions of inquiry” (Hayner 22-23).¹¹⁷

Alex Boraine, the deputy chairperson of the South African TRC and subsequent founder of the International Center for Transitional Justice, describes the decision to title the South African inquiry as a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in his book *A Country Unmasked*. Boraine recalls a meeting between himself and Dullah Omar, the South African Minister of Justice who brought the proposal for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to the South African Parliament. He writes, “[W]hen we talked about the possibility of a commission, I urged Omar not to call it simply a truth

¹¹⁷ Following the operation of the South African TRC, several countries and communities have utilized the title, including Sierra Leone, Liberia, Peru, and Greensboro.

commission, because of the Orwellian overtones of the term, but rather to talk in terms of truth and reconciliation, in the hope that the uncovering of the truth, which could lead to acknowledgement of that truth and accountability, would assist us in bringing about the elusive prize of peace and reconciliation. He agreed almost immediately but said that obviously the final decision about the title would have to be made in consultation with his own colleagues and with Parliament. It may well be that the title promised more than we could ever hope to deliver” (37-38). Borraine’s recollection here not only offers insight about the origins of the title of the South African (and Greensboro) inquiry; it also acknowledges the rhetorical efficacy of such titles. Titles shape subsequent speech and action, delineating, in the words of Edward Schiappa, “a limited range of appropriate responses”—which is to say that titles enable some responses and constrain others (112). The choice to call the South African inquiry a “Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” on the one hand, enabled the use of TRC-specific genres like public hearings and final reports to effect social and political change in the country and, on the other hand, constructed appropriate responses to the violence of apartheid as limited to performances of reconciliation, forgiveness, and dialogue (as opposed to retribution, forgetting, and, perhaps, silence).

Because they shape perception and action, titles like “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” can be powerful rhetorical resources for constructing (or deconstructing) an entity’s authority to act—the central topic of this dissertation.¹¹⁸ But titles are not always simply accepted as matters of fact; individuals, says Edward Schiappa, “do not always agree on how to describe a given phenomenon, and the degree of denotative conformity obtained in various situations can vary widely and change over time” (111). In such cases, which Schiappa refers to as “disputed entitlements,” rhetors defend or critique the titles in question, often by means of definition arguments. Schiappa’s comments here describe well what occurred in Greensboro: advocates and opponents of the Greensboro

¹¹⁸ Schiappa speaks to this point, noting, “To ‘entitle’ something—‘X’—is not only to give X a title in the simple sense of assigning X a name or label but it is also to give X a particular status” (114).

TRC disputed the Commission's title¹¹⁹; and, as I will demonstrate in this chapter, they did so using definition arguments.

Definition Arguments

My close reading in this chapter builds upon the work of Edward Schiappa's *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning*. Schiappa defines definitions as "rhetorically induced social knowledge" and describes three types of definitional arguments: arguments *about* definitions, arguments *from* definitions, and arguments *by* definitions. Arguments *about* definitions, which answer the "What is X?" question, make the case that a particular word is defined (or ought to be defined) in a particular way (36). Arguments *from* definitions propose that, given an entity's attributes, the entity belongs to a more general class that shares those attributes (109-110). This type of definition argument often takes the following general form: All X are Z. Y is an X. Therefore, Y is Z. "Arguments *by* definition," notes Schiappa, "function strategically by redefining phenomena without acknowledging that a redefinition is taking place" (130). He then continues, "Rather than explicitly advancing an argument *about* a definition (X should be defined as Y) or constructing an argument *from* definition (All X are Z; Y is an X; therefore Y is Z), advocates simply posit that X is Y and move on." I use Schiappa's threefold typology of definitional arguments at various points throughout this chapter to describe how, exactly, the Greensboro TRC attempts to lay claim to the title "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" and how opponents of the Greensboro TRC dispute those claims.

I also take seriously Schiappa's call to approach definitions as "facts of usage" rather than "fact of essence" (6). That is, I think Schiappa is right when he contends that considering how definitions are or ought to be *used* is more productive than debating the accuracy of a definition's correspondence to some objective reality (3-6). The latter, as Schiappa notes, obscures the fact that definitions are political and always serve particular interests (69, 178). He writes, "[A]ll definitions serve some sort of interests, even if those interests are as simple as coordinating our linguistic behavior so we know how and when

¹¹⁹ According to Lisa Magarrell and Joya Wesley in *Learning from Greensboro*, one of the "nagging questions" that the Commission's advocates faced was "whether the Greensboro TRC was even a truth commission at all" (229).

to use a word in a socially acceptable manner” (69). Part of the burden of this chapter is to tease out what interests are being served through the definitional arguments constructed by the commissioners as well as by their critics. Related to this last point are, of course, questions of authority. The relationship between definitions and authority (or, as the discussion is more often framed, between definitions and power) has been the topic of much critical discussion in recent years; and one question that often gets asked when considering the relationship between definitions and authority is, “Who has the authority to define?”¹²⁰ While this question is, I think, an important one, my chapter takes a slightly different tack, exploring how the Commission uses definitional arguments in an attempt to garner authority to act and how others use definitional arguments to contrary ends.

In what follows, I close read the Introduction to the Commission’s *Final Report*, which contains the commissioners’ clearest and most detailed attempts to position their inquiry as a truth commission.¹²¹ I argue that, throughout the Introduction, the commissioners construct a complex definitional argument, drawing heavily upon a widely-accepted definition of “truth commissions.” The argument is complex because the authors attempt to expand the popular definition of “truth commission” (through arguments *about* and *by* definition) even as they argue that the Greensboro inquiry fits within the definition (an argument *from* definition). These definitional maneuvers attempting to lay claim to the title “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” are supported by comparison arguments, running throughout the Introduction, that align the Greensboro TRC with other recognized truth commissions around the world. The discursive position—the *ethos*—that the commissioners establish for the Commission identifies them with other truth commissions and helps to garner authority for their findings and recommendations, as presented in the remainder of the *Final Report*. However, as with most definition arguments, the argument that the commissioners construct in the Introduction are political and serve particular interests, and I attempt to bring these

¹²⁰ Schiappa speaks extensively on this topic throughout *Defining Reality*. See, for example, Schiappa 177-178. For a brief, but helpful, survey of studies that consider the relationship of definitions and power, see also Clarke 2.

¹²¹ Throughout this chapter, I refer to the commissioners as the authors of the *Final Report*; however, they were not the only individuals involved in the writing process of the document. The Commission’s research director Emily Harwell drafted several sections of the report and also consolidated the submissions of the commissioners and other staff members. Commissioners then revised and edited these initial drafts (Magarrell and Wesley 119).

political implications into relief by contextualizing my analysis of the Introduction with comments taken from a Greensboro city council meeting on April 19th, 2005, in which members of the council voted 6-3 not to officially endorse the work of the Commission (“Truth”).¹²² The juxtaposition of these two texts, the Introduction and the city council meeting, highlights that the definitional debate about the legitimacy of the Greensboro TRC was connected to beliefs about the role that racism played in the events and aftermath of November 3rd, 1979—a point that I discuss in detail in the latter half of the chapter. The chapter concludes by considering implications of my close reading of the Commission’s definition arguments for rhetorical critics.

(Re)defining “Truth Commission” in the *Final Report*

The starting point for the commissioners’ definitional argument in the Introduction to their *Final Report* is Pricilla Hayner’s definition of “truth commission.” Hayner is considered to be one of the foremost experts on truth commissions. Her book *Unspeakable Truths*, published in 2001, catalogues the work of twenty-one truth commissions and is regarded as one of the most important descriptive accounts of truth commissions available today. In the book, Hayner defines “truth commission” as follows:

I use the term [truth commission] to refer to those bodies that share the following characteristics: (1) truth commissions focus on the past; (2) they investigate a pattern of abuses over a period of time, rather than a specific event; (3) a truth commission is a temporary body, typically in operation for six months to two years, and completing its work with the submission of a report; and (4) these commissions are officially sanctioned, authorized, or empowered by the state (and sometimes also by the armed opposition, as in a peace accord). (Hayner 14)

A fifth characteristic that Hayner mentions, a few pages later in her book, is that “truth commissions should not be equated with judicial bodies, nor should they be considered a

¹²² The city council’s discussion and vote on April 19th, 2005 was a response to a petition, initiated by the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project, asking for the city’s support of the Commission. The main portion of the petition, which was signed by over 5,300 Greensboro residents, reads as follows: “We, the undersigned residents of the greater Greensboro area, call upon the Greensboro City Council to endorse, support and fully embrace the truth and reconciliation process and to encourage all residents of the City, including current and former police, journalists, newspaper executives, city officials, textile workers and managers, business leaders, religious leaders, and others to participate in the process” (Magarrell and Wesley 154).

replacement for trials” (16); and, finally, she notes that “all [truth commissions] were created to look into recent events, usually at the point of a political transition” (17).

It is worth noting how, in the Introduction to their *Final Report*, the Greensboro commissioners reaccentuate Hayner’s definition.¹²³ Citing Hayner’s *Unspeakable Truths*, commissioners define “truth commission” as follows:

Generally, when people talk about truth commissions they are referring to what are *usually* temporary bodies, officially sanctioned, authorized or empowered by the state. They are non-judicial in nature, and operate independently of government and other outside influences. *Usually*, truth commissions are created within some moment of political transition, focusing on the past and investigating patterns of abuse that have occurred over time, *usually* referring to violations of human rights. *Typically*, truth commissions complete their work with the submission of a final report that contains conclusions and recommendations. (GTRC, *Final Report* 10, emphasis added)

This passage, which appears early in the commissioners’ Introduction, is a fairly accurate representation of Hayner’s definition. Commissioners reference all of the defining characteristics of truth commissions mentioned by Hayner and, in some cases, do so verbatim. Moreover, the commissioners’ additions to Hayner’s definition—i.e., that truth commissions “operate independently of government and other outside influences” and focus on “violations of human rights”—are not inconsistent with Hayner’s description of truth commissions elsewhere in her book. What *is* notably different, however, is the commissioners’ introduction of additional mood adjuncts, such as “generally,” “usually” (used three times), and “typically”—each of which helps to realize what has been called the modality of usuality (Martin, Matthiessen, and Painter 64). Modality is a grammatical resource that rhetors use to express varying degrees of commitment to their propositions; that is, it “sets up,” in the words of J.R. Martin and David Rose, “a semantic space between yes and no, a cline running between positive and negative poles” (Martin and Rose 53). And, in this case, the commissioners’ use of modality introduces an element of

¹²³ Although I begin my analysis in this chapter with the commissioners’ definition of “truth commissions” (which appears on the second page of the Introduction), I should note that their definition argument actually begins earlier, in the preface to the Introduction. Commissioners preface their report with two brief epigraphs, one from an essay entitled “Memory and Hate” by Professor of Law Martha Minow and one from the Preface to the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission final report (GTRC, *Final Report* 9). Together these epigraphs describe remembering and truth-telling as ethical acts and as means of enacting justice. These epigraphs position the Greensboro TRC squarely within the field of transitional justice and, thus, serve a facet of their definitional argument.

possibility into Hayner's definition, which, for the most part, is declarative and positively polarized.¹²⁴ For example, modifying the claim that truth commissioners are "temporary bodies, officially sanctioned, authorized or empowered by the state" with the mood adjunct "usually" creates a space, with the category of "truth commissions," for institutions that are not "temporary bodies, officially sanctioned, authorized or empowered by the state."

The modality of usuality is a significant aspect of the commissioners' definitional argument. Because it subtly redefines Hayner's definition of truth commission without explicitly acknowledging that an act of redefinition is taking place, it might be described as an argument *by* definition; and it is this argument *by* definition that helps to constitute a semantic space for commissioners to construct a broader definition of truth commission (through arguments *by* and *about* definition) in the remainder of their Introduction.

Throughout their Introduction, commissioners elaborate on, and rhetorically maneuver around, four aspects of the definition of truth commissions—all of which potentially might have excluded the Greensboro inquiry from laying claim to its title. The first thing that compromised the Commission's ability to lay claim to the title "truth commission" was the fact that the Greensboro TRC was not "officially sanctioned, authorized or empowered by the state." Secondly, the Commission's claims to independence were frequently called into question by those accusing the Commission of bias. Third, the Commission was seemingly called on to investigate a one-time event, as opposed to "patterns of abuse that have occurred over time." And, finally, it was not self-evidently the case that the Commission was "created within some moment of political transition." Opponents of the Greensboro inquiry highlighted these discrepancies to discredit the inquiry and/or suggest that the Greensboro context did not call for a truth commission; conversely, the Commission attempted to mitigate (and, in some cases, negate) these discrepancies, in order to position itself within the category of "Truth and Reconciliation Commission." I examine, in turn, the definitional arguments surrounding

¹²⁴ Hayner only uses the modality of usuality with respect to her claim that truth commissions occur during political transitions.

each of these four points, looking both at the commissioners' arguments as well as those of their opponents.¹²⁵

A State-Sanctioned Commission?

At the April 19th, 2005 Greensboro city council meeting, before the council voted whether or not to endorse the work of the Greensboro TRC, Mayor of Greensboro Keith Holliday read a prepared statement, stating his objections to the truth and reconciliation process ("Truth"). Central to Holliday's many objections to the process is the Commission's lack of state sanction. He calls attention to the fact that the Commission lacks "authority, subpoena power, [and] ability to grant immunity" and later emphasizes the point, highlighting that the Commission "does not have the authority or safeguards usually afforded in other judicial proceedings."¹²⁶ Such claims about the Commission's authority, which pertain primarily to the Commission as an institution, are complemented

¹²⁵ It is necessary at this point in my argument to acknowledge the work of Chelsea Marshall, who served as the Commission's public hearing coordinator. In May 2006, the same month that the *Final Report* was published, Marshall wrote a thesis for the Department of Government at Smith College, entitled, "Transitional Justice in 'Non-Transitioning' Societies: Evaluating the Success of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission." In chapter two of the thesis, Marshall considers the Greensboro TRC in light of both Hayner's definition of truth commissions as well as the work of four other truth commissions, and she makes the following claim: "the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission challenges the typical understanding of truth commissions, yet due to the pliability of the [truth commission] model, the GTRC may be considered a truth commission and should be evaluated as such" (18). In short, the chapter, much like the *Final Report*, advances arguments *about* the definition of truth commissions (e.g., the truth commission model is "pliable") and arguments *from* definition (e.g., "the GTRC may be considered a truth commission"). Many of the arguments that Marshall presents in the chapter are the same as, or similar to, the arguments presented in the Introduction to the *Final Report*—which is not surprising, given the fact that Marshall worked closely with the Greensboro TRC and was, presumably, highly invested in the project.

I mention Marshall's thesis here because it helped me to clarify my own argument in this chapter. Seeing Marshall's arguments alongside those in the commissioners' Introduction confirmed for me the aspects of Hayner's definition that were at issue for the Greensboro TRC (e.g., that truth commissions "address patterns of abuses," "are officially sanctioned by the state," attempt to be "impartial," and "occur during periods of transition"). And my subheadings in this section of the chapter are similar to several of Marshall's subheadings (34-39). However, it is worth emphasizing that, while our subheadings are similar, our purposes are different. Marshall's primary purpose is, like the commissioners, to make the case that the truth commission model is flexible and that the Greensboro inquiry is, in fact, a legitimate truth commission; my purpose is to unpack the commissioners' definitional arguments, to show how they function rhetorically.

¹²⁶ This problem regarding the Commission's lack of authority was raised by two of the other council members as well during the meeting. Councilperson Don Vaughan remarked that he agreed with Mayor Holliday, noting, "Many of the red flags as far as a formal endorsement does come up: there's no subpoena power here, there's no governmental immunity, there's no process to compel testimony as far as a formal governmental endorsement, and I don't think that's proper for the city of Greensboro to do" ("Truth"). And councilperson Sandy Carmany noted that the city has no power to compel testimonies from former police officers, all of whom have "retired, died, or moved on" since November 3rd, 1979 ("Truth").

by statements intended to call into question the commissioners' authority as individuals; Holliday points out, for example, that most of the commissioners—with the exception of attorney Bob Peters—lack “legal training as to the rights afforded under the Constitution of the United States.” Furthermore, Holliday reinforces these explicit claims about the Commission's and commissioners' lack of state-sanctioned authority with statements that implicitly discredit the Commission: he discredits the Commission by suggesting that its central concern—the events of November 3rd, 1979—was, until recently, only the concern of “a few dozen people”; and he challenges the Commission's ability to procure witnesses. “I will be surprised,” he says, “if one could even realistically get Klansmen to come testify.”

Having established the Commission's lack of state sanction authority, Holliday uses the information as a basis for a causal argument, intended to demonstrate why the Commission is a bad idea. Simply stated, Holliday argues that, because the Commission lacks state-sanctioned authority, its inquiry will result in a number of negative consequences, including “a tremendous amount of negative feelings,” a “detrimental” characterization of Greensboro, and “more division” in the Greensboro community. The logical connection between the cause (i.e., the Commission's lack of state-sanctioned authority) and the effect (i.e., the negative feelings, detrimental characterization of Greensboro, and increased divisions) in this argument is remote, and, to compensate for this fact, Holliday lays out a chain-of-causes argument connecting the two. The first link in Holliday's chain-of-causes argument is that, as a result of the Commission's lack of authority, the Commission will not be able to ascertain the “whole truth” (and/or truth that is “completely accurate”). The rest of the links in the chain-of-causes argument follow in quick succession from this assertion: “harm,” he says, “can come from an inaccurate truth, leading to inaccurate accountability, leading to non-forgiveness and especially non-reconciliation, therefore, actually creating more division.” In presenting this chain-of-causes, Holliday does not reject the logic of the Commission's mandate, but rather argues that its opposite is also true in order to dissuade other council members from voting to endorse the work of the Commission.

The causal argument presented here hinges upon Holliday twice using the rhetorical strategy of dissociation. Dissociation, according to Edward Schiappa, involves

“an arguer’s effort to break up a previously unified idea into two concepts, one that will be positively valued by the target audience and one that will be negatively valued... Arguers enact dissociation through the use of ‘philosophical pairs,’ one of which is usually considered metaphysically, epistemologically, or ethically superior to the other” (Schiappa 36). Holliday’s first use of dissociation breaks up the concept of authority into two parts—state-sanctioned authority and non-state-sanctioned authority. Holliday doesn’t actually mention the latter, but it is both implied and simultaneously devalued in his use of the adjective “real” to modify the former: “[W]ithout any *real* authority, subpoena power, ability to grant immunity, not to mention recount through twenty-five year old memories, absolute truth will be impossible” (emphasis added). The rhetorical effect of this dissociation is to challenge the grounds upon which the Commission acts—non-state-sanctioned authority. Holliday’s second use of dissociation breaks up the notion of truth as set forth in the Commission’s mandate into multiple concepts, setting up the “whole truth” as the positively valued term and contrasting it with “parts of the truth, or untruths, or falsehoods” as well as truth that is “skewed,” “not...completely accurate,” and, later in the passage, “inaccurate.” By constructing this philosophical pair, which might be summarized as the “whole truth” versus everything but the whole truth, Holliday frames the Commission’s task as much more difficult than its mandate does, thereby making increased division within the Greensboro community (the end result in his chain-of-causes) seem a more likely outcome of the Commission’s inquiry than reconciliation.

In the Introduction to the *Final Report*, commissioners respond, directly and indirectly, to several of Holliday’s remarks; however, they speak most forcefully to the issue of state sanction—the basis for Holliday’s causal argument. One likely reason for this emphasis is that, given that both Hayner and the commissioners cite state sanction as a defining characteristic of truth commissions, the Greensboro inquiry’s lack of state sanction threatens to undermine its legitimacy as a truth commission (as well as the commissioners’ ability to lay claim to their own title). Commissioners address the fact that they lack state sanction in two interrelated ways: they broaden the definition of truth commissions to include non-state-sanctioned endeavors, and they frame non-state-sanctioned authority positively.

Broadening “Truth Commission” to include Non-State-Sanctioned Endeavors

Immediately after providing their aforementioned definition of “truth commission” in the Introduction, commissioners begin working to broaden the category of truth commission to include non-state-sanctioned inquiries—an important aspect of their definition argument regarding truth commissions. Many of their comments function as argument *by definition*. To construct this argument, commissioners introduce a distinction between “truth commissions” and “truth projects,” citing Louis Bickford of the International Center for Transitional Justice (GTRC, *Final Report* 10).¹²⁷ Commissioners note that, for Bickford, the term “truth commission” refers to official institutions established by the state whereas “truth projects” are unofficial institutions emerging from civil society. They attempt to clarify Bickford’s distinction by providing a series of examples. Not surprisingly (given its prominence and broad jurisdiction), the South African TRC is held up by commissioners as a prime example of an official institution. Commissioners emphasize the South African inquiry’s official status by noting that it was “authorized by legislation” and by twice quoting from the South African interim constitution:

The TRC came just two years after a new constitution marked a democratic beginning for a country that had been torn apart by the injustice and violence of apartheid. The constitution proclaimed the need to provide “a historic bridge between the past of a deeply divided society characterized by strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice, and a future founded on the recognition of human rights, democracy and peaceful co-existence and development opportunities for all South Africans, irrespective of color, race, class, belief or sex.” In an often quoted passage that encapsulates the underlying premise of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the country’s constitution states: “There is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* but not for victimization.”

Two paragraphs later, commissioners list other institutions established by state governments, including the commissions of Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru, East Timor, Ghana, Sierra Leona and Morocco. Then they provide examples of non-state-sanctioned inquiries, including the Catholic Church’s Rescue of Historical

¹²⁷ With regard to this quotation, the commissioners cite a March 2004 draft of Bickford’s *Unofficial Truth Projects: a discussion paper*, written for the ICTJ.

Memory Project in Guatemala, the Ardoyne community's attempts at truth-telling in Northern Ireland, and the Catholic Church's inquiry into abuses in Brazil. With regard to these inquiries, commissioners make a point to emphasize the fact that they are unofficial: the first of these three non-state-sanctioned inquiries operated "prior to" Guatemala's "official" Historical Clarification Commission; the second occurred because members of the Ardoyne community were "dissatisfied with official inquiries"; and the third combated "official silence" about crimes in Brazil.

Reinforcing Bickford's distinction between truth commissions and truth projects is an important rhetorical move for the commissioners because, in the process of doing so, they are able to introduce and elaborate upon examples of unofficial inquiries and thereby establish precedent for their own unofficial inquiry, as well as demonstrate the need, at least in some contexts, for unofficial truth-seeking inquiries (as opposed to official inquiries).

However, even as Bickford's distinction allows them to establish precedent for their own unofficial inquiry and demonstrate the occasional need for unofficial inquiries, it also threatens to undermine the commissioners' claim to their title of "truth commission" to the extent that, according to Bickford's criteria, the Greensboro inquiry is more aptly classified as a truth project, not a truth commission. Thus, to strengthen their claim to their title, the commissioners obscure Bickford's distinction within a few paragraphs of introducing it. That is, having elaborated upon truth projects, commissioners subsequently collapse Bickford's distinction, subsuming both truth commissions and truth projects into the category of truth commissions; they write, "All of these truth commissions – *whether official or unofficial*, whether they emerge in new democracies or well-established ones – tell a version of history that includes the victims' experiences and voices, recognizes their humanity and rights, and seeks to come to terms with abuse in all of its many dimensions" (emphasis added). An important shift has taken place in this sentence: the defining characteristics ("official" and "unofficial") that, in Louis Bickford's formulation, distinguish different categories ("truth commissions" and "truth projects") from one another have been reconstituted as characteristics of the same category ("truth commissions"). "Official" and "unofficial" are no longer presented as category-defining characteristics; they are rendered incidental to the definition of truth

commissions, as opposed to essential. Note that, according to both Hayner's definition and Bickford's categories, an "unofficial truth commission" would qualify as a contradiction in terms. But, by explicitly introducing new categories and, subsequently, by implicitly collapsing these categories back under the label of "truth commission," commissioners attempt to expand the definition of "truth commissions" to make room for the Greensboro TRC, for themselves.

Commissioners attempt to broaden the definition of truth commissions in another way as well. They do so by stating, matter-of-factly, that truth commissions need not be instituted solely on the state level (as both Hayner's definition and their own definition of "truth commission" imply) but may also emerge in local communities. The relevant rhetorical move first appears in a paragraph of the Introduction urging readers not to develop unrealistic expectations for the truth commission process: "While truth commissions can accomplish many things and set a country – *or a community* – on a path to a stronger and more respectful future, it is important to recognize that expectations for truth commissions can run too high" (12, emphasis added). The parenthetical addition of the phrase "or a community" broadens the definition of "truth commissions" by suggesting that these institutions need not be state-sponsored. This somewhat surreptitious parenthetical remark is reinforced in a subsequent paragraph: "[T]he GTRC learned that we were not alone in the task of revealing the truth about the past; instead we joined a world in which many people are challenging unfinished and misshapen stories about past abuses and violence that continue to sow distrust and even hate in our nations *and our communities* today" (12, emphasis added). Without explicitly calling attention to it, then, these passages suggest that what has heretofore been a national phenomenon is feasible on the local level as well.

Framing Non-State-Sanctioned Authority Positively

There is, in addition to these attempts to broaden the definition of truth commission to include non-state-sanctioned (and community-based) endeavors, an attempt to validate the kinds of authority that the Commission *does* have—a move that operates in contradistinction to Holliday's remarks, which dissociate state-sanctioned authority from non-state-sanctioned authority and devalue the latter. One way

commissioners attempt to validate their authority is by framing the non-state-sponsored authority that Holliday dismissed during the city council meeting positively. It is, for one thing, given a name (i.e., moral suasion) that helps to establish the propriety of such authority (GTRC, *Final Report* 15). Commissioners also present their non-state-sanctioned authority as efficacious: they use words like “powerful” and “power” in reference to it, and they describe it as having prompted happenings and actions, including “moving individuals to come forward,” “bringing [individuals] to the table,” and “[beginning] to melt the ice.” Commissioners reinforce their attempts to frame “moral suasion” as efficacious by listing the many constituencies who testified at the Commission’s public hearings: “We have demonstrated this power [i.e., moral suasion] in bringing to the table, against many dismissive predictions to the contrary, not only former communists, but former Klansmen and Nazis, residents of the Morningside neighborhood [where the CWP rally took place], police officers, judges, trial attorneys, city officials, journalists and citizens from all parts of the city.” The point is amplified by the comprehensiveness of the list, at least in regard to the parties that were involved in November 3rd, 1979. Framing non-state-sanctioned authority in a positive way attenuates the force of Holliday’s claim that state-sanctioned authority is a *necessity* in determining the truth and bringing about reconciliation.

Commissioners also work to attenuate the force of Holliday’s claim that the Commission lacks the power to compel testimonies or produce evidence. They write, “[Some in Greensboro] have criticized our Mandate and suggested that we cannot operate as a truth commission because we have no power to compel testimonies or the production of evidence. It is true that this was a limitation, but it is one shared by a number of other truth commissions, including El Salvador, Guatemala and Peru.” The first thing to note about this excerpt is that commissioners introduce Holliday’s criticism using the verb “suggested” as opposed to a more forceful projecting clause. Moreover, while they do acknowledge here that the lack of state-sanctioned authority was a “limitation,” they also contend that other truth commissions have operated without the power to subpoena witnesses, and they go on to add that even those with such authority often did not use it. What is important here is that commissioners utilize one of the criticisms leveled against them—i.e., one of their supposed limitations—to align themselves with other truth

commissions, thereby reinforcing their claim to their title. It is possible, of course, to imagine an account in which the commissioners emphasize differences between truth commissions, in terms of these institutions' varying degrees of state-sanctioned authority. For instance, unlike the Greensboro TRC, the South African TRC had the power to subpoena witnesses, and commissioners could have highlighted this difference. However, rather than do so, they foreground what the Greensboro TRC "shared" with the truth commissions of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Peru. Likewise, in a subsequent paragraph, they call attention to the fact that the Greensboro TRC is "like many others" in terms of its inability to enforce recommendations. They continue, "Many truth commissions, even officially sanctioned ones, are undertaken without a prior commitment that recommendations will be put into immediate effect." These are the first of the commissioners' many attempts to emphasize their similarities with other truth commissions, and such comparisons serve as an important facet of their definitional argument by which they attempt to position their inquiry as a legitimate truth commission.

An Independent Commission?

A second objection of some of the council members was that the truth and reconciliation process in Greensboro was biased toward former members of the Communist Workers Party. This accusation—which, like the claim that the Commission lacked state-sanctioned authority, related to the Commission's origins—stemmed from the fact that the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project was initiated, in part, by some of the families of the November 3rd victims and survivors of event.¹²⁸ This objection to the truth and reconciliation process in Greensboro was voiced publicly

¹²⁸ In raising this concern, the Greensboro city council members were echoing and reinforcing the sentiments of a number of Greensboro residents. One such resident was John Young, who had been a member of the Project (and signed the Declaration of Intent to form the Commission) but grew increasingly concerned about bias and expressed these views in the *News & Record*: "Many think that the Commission, like everyone else, will take sides and the result will be a report tilted toward the survivors because they have suffered greatly and because they have been the key presence behind the creation of the process" (Magarrell and Wesley 137). Some residents worried, in particular, about the role that former CWP member Nelson Johnson—now a vocal advocate for the Commission and member of the Project—would play in the process (78, 158). And many residents expressed concerns when the Greensboro TRC and the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project held a joint press conference to announce where the Commission's archives would eventually be held (133).

at the April 19th, 2005 city council meeting by councilperson Sandy Carmany, one of the six members of the council who voted not to endorse the work of the Commission:

If [the Commission] had been initiated by a totally unbiased group that had nothing to do with [November 3rd, 1979]...I could have been more comfortable with it. But knowing how it began, how some of the early rhetoric in some of the written and spoken pieces that have been put out there...presented a very biased viewpoint from the very beginning, it was quite obvious what the intent, or what the outcome, is expected to be from this effort. (“Truth”)

Carmany does not clarify which “written and spoken pieces” she is referring to, and she does not elaborate on what she expects the outcome of the Commission’s inquiry to be. However, the attack on the Project’s “early rhetoric” is, I believe, a veiled attempt to discredit the Project (and, by extension, the Commission) by highlighting its connections to the Communist Workers Party, which, following November 3rd, 1979, was accused by some members of the Greensboro community of using violent rhetoric that, according to some, provoked the killings.¹²⁹ The implied connection here between the Project and the CWP is also established by councilperson Florence Gatten, who notes that the Project has used “the shopworn rhetoric and tactics of the 1960s and 70s—those of marches, petitions by non-stakeholders, and the promulgation of a one-dimensional version of events” (“Truth”).

Gatten reinforces the connection later in her remarks as well. Many in Greensboro viewed the Communist Workers Party of the late 1970s to be both divisive in terms of its effects on the Greensboro community and divided within its own ranks. (The latter of these two perceptions was due, in large part, to the fact that the group was often changing names and gaining and losing members; in fact, just weeks before the November 3rd, 1979 killings, the group had changed its name from the Workers Viewpoint Organization to the Communist Workers Party.) Gatten plays to such perceptions about the CWP when describing the truth and reconciliation process—a move serving to align the former with the latter. She describes the TRC undertaking as “divisive” and claims that the

¹²⁹ Those making this argument point to, among other things, the title of the CWP’s rally (i.e., “Death to the Klan”) and the poster for the event (which read: “The dogs (the Klan) have no right to exist! They must be physically beaten and driven out of town. This is the only language they understand”) (qtd. in GTRC, *Final Report* 191-192). In their *Final Report*, the commissioners write, “Much of the public debate about the causes of the Nov. 3 shooting has centered on the role of aggressive speech in bring about violence” (191).

Project's petition, asking the council to vote to endorse or not endorse the Commission, "would create divisions" and "sets up an environment of division and mistrust" in the community. And she paints the truth and reconciliation process as internally divided as well:

The general public watching this broadcast needs to understand that we come to this evening with two, three, or maybe more factions residing uncomfortably under the same truth and reconciliation umbrella. Each with claims and counterclaims and arguments with ascendancy over each other. The Project, the Commission, the Students for...I'm not sure what the name of that group is. And there could be more splinter groups I haven't even discerned. What is clear is that the actions of this collective group to date have been very uninviting and very un-unifying.

Here Gatten frames the truth and reconciliation process as fractured and contentious by characterizing the groups involved in the process as "factions" and "splinter groups," by referring to their actions as "very uninviting and very un-unifying," and by describing the relationship between these groups as competitive as opposed to cooperative. Her claims that there are "two, three, or maybe more" groups and that there are groups she hasn't "even discerned" reinforce the point, suggesting that there are myriad divided groups and, at the same time, implying that these groups are not significant. (In a similar way, Gatten's failure to recall the name of the Concerned Students for Truth and Reconciliation detracts from the group's authority.)

What Gatten's description of the truth and reconciliation process suggests is that it is little more than the continuation of the CWP; indeed, she goes on to add that those involved in the truth and reconciliation process are nothing more than CWP "conspiracy theorists who have been looking for adherence unsuccessfully for the past twenty years." And at one point, Gatten goes even further: she suggests that associating with those involved in the truth and reconciliation process may, in fact, be dangerous:

I noted with interest the UNC student who spoke to council at our last meeting, who said he had been warned that it was, quote, "dangerous to be involved," end quote. That something, quote, "might happen to him." Ironically, when I voiced my opposition to this [process] two years [ago]...I received the same warning. Yet the citizens who have contacted me, who I represent not just in my district but in my city, are expecting me to give voice to their concerns and their opposition to this negative and divisive undertaking, and I will, knowing full well that there is a cost.

One of the implications of these warnings is that those involved in the truth and reconciliation process in Greensboro stifle dissent—a point which Gatten elaborates upon in what follows by setting up a contrast between her own behavior and the behavior of those associated with the Commission. Whereas she “listened for two years with respect to those promoting this project,” engaged in “open interchange” with students studying the process, and now “respectfully” asks college students to consider whether they should be involved, those associated with the Commission were “uninviting,” “neither heard nor respected” her, “ignored” Greensboro citizens who were “trying to speak,” and treated other citizens “rudely” and “badly.” Taken together, these many invectives against those involved in the truth and reconciliation process threaten to undermine the Commission’s credibility in a number of ways, but I think the attack falls hardest against the Commission’s claims to be unbiased and independent of its founders (some of whom were former CWP members). There is, running throughout all of these remarks, the suggestion that the Commission shares the characteristics of the CWP and that it has a particular agenda.

Commissioners, in the Introduction to their *Final Report*, once again use accusations like those of councilpersons Gatten and Carmany as an occasion to align the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission with other truth commissions around the world:

Some in Greensboro have questioned the role that the survivors of November 3rd, 1979, played in creating the GTRC. In looking at other commission experiences around the world, including South Africa’s, which has earned so much attention and credibility, we observe that those most affected – accompanied by others who share their concerns – have almost without fail been the moving force behind truth-seeking initiatives. Truth commissions are victim-oriented – able to offer an outlet for people affected to tell their stories and to be heard in a new setting with new possibilities for understanding. But we are not victim-biased; we operate independently of the influence of the victims and their supporters. (GTRC, *Final Report* 14-15)

In this passage, commissioners address the accusation of bias while simultaneously acknowledging the needs of the November 3rd, 1979 survivors by way of a distinction: “Truth commissions are victim-oriented...but we are not victim-biased.” This antithesis is strategic: the first clause in this antithesis is written in the third-person, setting forth a general principle about truth commissions; the second clause, however, shifts to a first-

person plural perspective. Through the introduction of the pronoun “we” in the second colon of the antithesis, the authors of the report align themselves with other truth commissions, reifying their identity as a truth commission.

To address accusations of bias more directly, and distance themselves from any association with the CWP, commissioners attempt to make the case that they are an independent entity, without commitments to the organization that founded them. They reiterate that the process the Project established for selecting commissioners was necessarily dissociated from the Project. “Wisely,” they write, “those who crafted our Mandate foresaw that we would only truly be able to seek the truth from all sources if we were created through an independent selection process” (15). Later, partly in the interest of full disclosure, they detail the specific ways that the Project has supported their work. They write, “[The Project’s] support [for us] has taken several different forms, including gathering signatures on a petition asking the City Council to endorse the truth and reconciliation process, soliciting grassroots financial donations, organizing various worship services prior to some of our public events, and making a commitment to foster dialogue and work towards the other recommendations in this report.” This list functions to render what the commissioners write next all the more significant: “[T]hey [the members of the Project] have no prior knowledge of what is included herein. We affirm that we have conducted our research and community engagement in accordance with our mandate to operate independently of any external influence, including the GTCRP” (24).¹³⁰

This statement (which takes the form of a kind of pledge or vow) is really the only “evidence” the commissioners can offer regarding their independence from the GTCRP, insofar as proving a negative—i.e., proving that they were *independent* of and *not* influenced by the GTCRP—is impossible. They can and do, however, attempt to establish their independence in other ways, one of the most interesting of which is by returning to the question of state sanction. More specifically, commissioners put a positive spin on their lack of state-sanctioned authority, reframing it in terms of their

¹³⁰ During their operation, commissioners had taken other moves to distance themselves from the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project, which they don’t mention in their report. For example, they requested that the Project change its name, to prevent confusion and allow residents of Greensboro to distinguish more easily between the two groups (Magarrell and Wesley 80, 150). The Project ultimately decided to keep its name.

“independence.”¹³¹ Here they point to the very city council meeting that I have been citing throughout this chapter:

In response to the GTCRP’s petition – signed by more than 5,000 residents – [that the City Council endorse the work of the Commission,] the City Council voted, along racial lines, to oppose the truth and reconciliation process. We chose to view this opposition as an affirmation of our independence. Unlike other truth and reconciliation commissions around the world, ours has been a process independent of even government sponsorship. This independence has arguably made some aspects of our work more difficult (for example, some city employees have not felt comfortable giving statements). However, given the high levels of fear among some residents that they will face serious retribution if they participate in this process, its grassroots nature and independence from government control made it seem more trustworthy to others. (24)

And elsewhere they reiterate the point, noting that, because they did not receive the support of the city council, they were “in some ways... even less fettered than ‘official’ commissions, which may feel pressured by authorities even when nominally independent” (15). In these passages, commissioners construct a definition argument within a definition argument. That is, they reframe their lack of state-sanctioned authority in terms of their independence, rendering one of their attributes that *disqualified* them from the category “truth commission” as an attribute that *qualifies* them to claim that title. To use Schiappa’s terminology, commissioners have performed an argument *by* definition (in transforming one of their attributes into a different attribute) in order to reinforce their argument *from* definition—namely, that they are a legitimate truth commission.

Investigating a Pattern of Events?

As with the first two of the city council’s objections to the truth commission process in Greensboro, the third also attacks the Greensboro TRC on definitional grounds. This objection, however, focuses not on the Commission’s origins but on its object of inquiry. Recall that both Hayner’s definition of truth commissions and the Commission’s definition indicate that truth commissions investigate a pattern of abuses

¹³¹ Chapter four of the dissertation revealed how the Project and the Commission attempted to address such accusations of bias, before and during the Commission’s operation. It is worth noting here how the Commission addressed this accusation in their *Final Report*.

over a given period; and, additionally, Hayner's definition specifies that truth commissions do not focus on "a specific event." It is, therefore, noteworthy that Mayor Holliday refers, multiple times, to the object of the Commission's inquiry as a specific event: early in his comments, he notes, "I believe everyone would agree that November 3rd, 1979 was a tragic event in the history of Greensboro," and he later reiterates the point, remarking, "November 3rd, 1979 was a tragic event" ("Truth"). These remarks frame the object of the Commission's inquiry as a singular, as opposed to an ongoing, phenomenon. It is worth noting that the mayor also attempts to disassociate November 3rd, 1979 from the city of Greensboro: he describes it as "a confrontation between two *extremist* groups where over ninety percent of the participants were from *outside* of Greensboro" (emphasis added).

This is not, moreover, the only way that the mayor frames the object of the Commission's inquiry so as to suggest that it is a "specific event" and not a "pattern of abuses." He does so by claiming that the abuses for which other truth commissions around the world were instituted are not comparable to the events of November 3rd, 1979. The mayor's remarks are simple and clear-cut on this point: "To pattern the project from the model of what happened in South Africa, over many years of abuse and inhumane treatment, to the November 3rd 1979 event here in Greensboro is almost like comparing apples to oranges." This comment, tempered only by the mayor's use of the qualifier "almost," frames the object of the Greensboro TRC's inquiry as qualitatively different from the human rights abuses in other countries. It's a distinction that is reinforced later during the council meeting by Florence Gatten:

I disagree respectfully with basic assumptions that are being put forward [by those in favor of the truth and reconciliation commission]...[T]he recent visit and comparison of the truth and reconciliation process in Peru, where they are discussing, quote, "Twenty years of murders, tortures, and rapes," end quote, is a specious one. Whatever Greensboro – white, black, rich, poor, Hispanic, Cambodian, Montagnard – whatever Greensboro you envision, it is not one characterized by twenty years of murders, tortures, and rapes. Nor is a single incident in 1979 emblematic of racial divisions in our community that would justify the South African model.

One of the main differences, emphasized by both the mayor and Gatten, between the object of inquiry of the Greensboro TRC and the object of inquiry of other truth commissions has to do with the duration of the events under investigation. Note again

how the mayor and council member describe what happened in South Africa and Peru in comparison to the way they describe what happened in Greensboro: what happened in South Africa and Peru took place “over many years,” while what happened in Greensboro is framed as a one-time “event” and as “a single incident in 1979.”

Not surprisingly, the argumentative strategies adopted by the mayor and Gatten are the converse of those taken by the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In the *Final Report*, commissioners construct their object of inquiry as larger than a specific event. They focus on multiple “local events” within a “timeframe”—namely, “the lifetime of most of those involved in the confrontation on Nov. 3, 1979” (GTRC, *Final Report* 23). They then continue, “But because historical events at larger scales often figure prominently in community consciousness, we have also examined *key events that loom large in collective memory* such as the importance of the United States’ history of Constitutional rights, slavery, white supremacy, key labor or civil rights organizing efforts and geopolitical conflicts” (23, emphasis added). They also describe their object of inquiry in terms of the oral and written “information” generated by the November 3rd event: they have investigated “a large body of knowledge,” including “26 years” of “rumors and misinformation” as well as “hundreds of newspaper articles, films and other media portrayals” (23). And whereas the mayor framed those involved in November 3rd, 1979 as “extremist groups” from “outside” of Greensboro, commissioners include “local and federal law enforcement, the city government of Greensboro, the residents of the Morningside community and local media” as key participants in addition to the CWP and KKK, and they consider not just the “roles of key individuals” but also the roles of “groups of institutions.”

Commissioners also frame their object of inquiry as larger than a specific event by emphasizing that it has involved causal analysis and historical contextualization. This emphasis begins on the cover of the report—which describes the inquiry as “an examination of the context, causes, sequence and consequence of November 3, 1979”—and continues in the Introduction:

Our Mandate reads: “In addition to exploring questions of institutional and individual responsibility for what happened, as a necessary part of the truth-seeking process we urge the Commission to look deeply into the root causes and historical context of the events of November 3, 1979.” We

affirm this instruction. To look at the events of Nov. 3, 1979, without an understanding of its context and causes, would not contribute to the “truth” of the event...The greatest value in our report, we believe, is placing this information within a historical context and examining these events with a broader view of history to inform the “truth.” (23)

Here, historical contextualization and causal analysis is framed as a necessity, by the wording of the Mandate (e.g., “a necessary part...”), the use of negative polarity (e.g., a failure to understand context and causes “would *not* contribute to the ‘truth’ of the event”), and positive appraisal (e.g., historical contextualization is the “greatest value” of the *Final Report*). Thus, while the commissioners never describe their object of inquiry as a “pattern of abuses,” they do make significant rhetorical gestures in that direction.

The commissioners also address the mayor and Gatten’s objections that November 3rd, 1979 cannot be compared to the atrocities committed in South Africa and Peru. They do so by transforming what the mayor and Gatten set up as a difference of order into a difference of degree. Differences of order, as rhetoricians Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca note, point to qualitative distinctions, in which those things that are being compared are of two separate classes. Differences in degree, on the other hand, are quantitative, in which both things belong to a single class (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 345-49; Jasinski, “Ambiguity” 11). To effect this transformation, commissioners begin by reintroducing the mayor and Gatten’s objection to the truth commission process. They write, “Many have said that comparing the killings in Greensboro in 1979 to apartheid South Africa is a forced parallel and that the two have nothing in common” (“Truth” 13-14). The difference expressed here is a difference of order: the events that took place in South Africa are *nothing* like the events that took place in Greensboro. In response to this objection, commissioners acknowledge that there is, indeed, a difference between the Greensboro context and the South African context; however, they frame the difference as a matter of “scale,” not a categorical difference. That is, they describe the difference between the Greensboro killings and the atrocities in South Africa in quantitative not qualitative terms: they mention the “*thousands* of state-sponsored disappearances and killings,” the “*thousands* killed,” the “*massive* and *widespread* human rights abuses, the “*massive* displacement, enslavement, starvation, torture and rape of women,” the shocking “*numbers*,” and the horrific “*statistics*.” What is preserved in framing the difference in this way is the qualitative similarity of the

Greensboro event and crimes in other countries. No less than three times in the space of three paragraphs, commissioners shift their discussion from the quantitative differences to the qualitative similarities, in each case using a different term of concession—yet, while, and but—as a kind of rhetorical pivot to emphasize the similarities. Take, for instance, the following excerpt:

While there is a difference in scale, much of what the GTRC has had to review is similar to incidents experienced on the local level in South Africa, where, like members of the Ku Klux Klan and Nazi party, individuals used race as a reason to treat others as less than human. We also found links between Greensboro and local experiences in Peru, where the economic and ethnic divide marked the terrain of vulnerability to violence and indifference. Greensboro’s 1979 killings shared with international tragedies the pain felt by survivors, the impact on others directly involved in violence, and the unresolved nature of the legacy of these events.

The difference in scale between November 3rd, 1979 and the atrocities committed in South Africa and Peru gives way here to a number of similarities. Greensboro crimes may not be like South African and Peruvian crimes in terms of degree, but the underlying causes of the crimes (e.g., using “race as a reason to treat others as less than human,” “economic and ethnic [divisions]”) as well as the outcomes of the crimes (e.g., “the pain felt by survivors, the impact on others directly involved in violence, and the unresolved nature of the legacy of these events”) are the same. To strengthen their case, commissioners go on to note that, when examined at the “local level,” the atrocities committed elsewhere in the world look much like the events of November 3rd, 1979. Here again, they begin by highlighting the quantitative differences, followed by a pivot, noting, “But...while the numbers are shocking, they are insufficient: they do not explain the inequities, the responsibility for what happened or the ways in which horror was inflicted...nor do statistics illustrate the suffering of victims.” Then they continue, “It is this human picture at the local level that in many ways can be likened to the GTRC’s exploration of restraints on labor organizing, anti-communism and deep-seated racism that were, in part, responsible for what happened here on Nov. 3, 1979.”

In sum, in contradistinction to dissenting members of the city council, commissioners frame their object of inquiry as a series of events spanning many years, and they emphasize the qualitative similarities (i.e., the similarities of order) between the

object of inquiry of the Greensboro TRC and the object of inquiry of other truth commissions. While they do not go so far as to describe their object of inquiry as a “pattern of abuses,” the way in which commissioners frame their object of inquiry is much more consistent with this description than the framing done by Holliday and Gatten, which isolates November 3rd, 1979 as a specific event, detached from Greensboro’s larger history. Given that the way in which commissioners frame their object of inquiry is more consistent with the phrase “pattern of abuses,” I read it as additional support for their argument *from* definition, running throughout the Introduction, that they are indeed a truth commission (according to Hayner’s and their own definitions).¹³²

A Political Transition?

The definitional debate in the previous section hinged upon descriptions of the Commission’s object of inquiry. A related problem for commissioners had to do with the political context in which their inquiry took place. Truth commissions, as Hayner and the commissioners’ definitions suggest, (typically) operate during periods of political upheaval or transition. However, as demonstrated by many of their comments in the previous section, dissenting city council members clearly rejected the notion that

¹³² It is important to note that, in their Introduction, commissioners do not deny that there are some differences between the Greensboro TRC and other truth commissions. Mention of differences are, however, seldom elaborated upon in the Introduction and are almost always mentioned in conjunction with claims about similarities between the Greensboro TRC and other truth commissions. For example, in the first paragraph of the Introduction, commissioners write, “The Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s identity and purpose are consciously modeled on – but differ from – a body of experiences of truth commissions around the world that have worked to ‘unbury’ truths about past wrongs and to pierce the veil of longstanding denial and disregard for people who have suffered harm and deprivations of their rights. This chapter examines the truth commission idea that was a source of inspiration for the GTRC’s Mandate – exploring the common ground we share with other commissions, the courageous precedents we found in our own country, and the differences that made ours a unique process” (GTRC, *Final Report* 9). And toward the end of the first section of the Introduction they bookend this claim with the following remark: “While the GTRC recognizes the differences between Greensboro’s history and the abuses addressed by other truth commissions, we share a common aspiration: that the truth about the past will help us build a better, more just and more inclusive future”(15). Two things are worth noting in these quotes. The first is, as I have already alluded to, the fact that mention of differences is always accompanied by mention of similarities, and second is the clause structure. Mention of difference is embedded in a parenthetical remark in the first passage (i.e., “but differ from”) and is introduced in a subordinate clause in the second passage (i.e., “While the GTRC recognizes the differences between Greensboro’s history and the abuses of other truth commissions...”). Both of these grammatical structures allow the commissioners to deemphasize difference and emphasize similarity—a pattern that extends beyond the grammatical structure of these excerpts to the Introduction itself.

Greensboro qualified as a place of political upheaval or political transition. Moreover, they framed members of both the Project and the Commission as incapable of bringing about a positive transition. Councilperson Gatten claimed, in her remarks, that those associated with the Project and Commission “are locked in the 70s, locked in the past, looking back when we need to be looking forward” (“Truth”). She described the Commission’s object of inquiry as “the wrong focal point” because “it does not address where we are now.” And not only does the inquiry fail to address the needs of the present, it also compromises the work that is being done, by taking resources away from more positive initiatives that would bring about constructive change:

I reject the basic assumption that no progress can be made in our city [until] an issue from 1979 is resolved. It is my considered opinion that this effort takes energy and resources away from the real work that the citizens of our city wish, hope, and are paying to get done. Providing good paying jobs, ensuring educational opportunity, and increasing the stock of affordable housing. It’s hard to see how any good will come from the way this is currently being organized and promoted. Instead of bringing reconciliation and harmony, it is clear from what you are hearing tonight that this effort will further polarize our community. It is not constructive. It is negative energy that our city does not need. It is living in the past. And it is using the past as a barrier to keep us from moving forward into the promise of our future.

What Gatten claims here is that the inquiry of the Greensboro TRC hampers, not promotes, positive transition. Similar sentiments are expressed by the final councilperson to voice his comments at the April 19th, 2005 city council meeting, Robbie Perkins. Perkins contrasts his own forward-looking perspective with that of those who choose to spend their time “focusing on one event that happened on one day that we all regret happened.”

To address the claim that Greensboro does not qualify as a political transition, the authors of the Introduction once again attempt to redefine what the term “truth commission” means—an argument *about* definition. They do so by clarifying that, in fact, there have been truth commissions that did not occur during times of “political upheaval” in a given country:

Truth commissions are not necessarily limited to contexts of marked political upheaval. In Australia, for example, a commission was empaneled only a decade ago to examine the policy of removing aboriginal children from their homes to be schooled in the Anglo culture,

away from their own heritage, communities and families. That report, titled “Bringing them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families,” led to reconciliation efforts that reverberated across Australia. On May 26, 2000, an estimated 250,000 people turned out for a walk across the Sydney Harbor Bridge to support the reconciliation process on a National Sorry Day. (GTRC, *Final Report* 11)

The example given in this paragraph—Australia’s Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission—is described by Pricilla Hayner as a “historical truth commission,” a label which she distinguishes from “truth commission” and which she defines as follows: Historical truth commissions “are present-day government-sponsored inquiries into abuses by the state that took place many years earlier (and that ended years earlier). Such an inquiry is not established as part of a political transition, and indeed may not pertain to today’s political leadership or practices, given the time that has passed, but serves instead to clarify historical truths and pay respect to previously unrecognized victims or their descendents” (Hayner 17). The Greensboro report introduces Australia’s Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission without distinguishing between a “historical truth commission” and a “truth commission”—a rhetorical move that allows them once again to broaden the definition of the term “truth commission” to include those inquiries that are not necessarily “established as part of a political transition” or established during “marked political upheaval.”

Commissioners attack this problem from another definitional angle as well: not only do they construct an argument *about* the definition of “truth commission”; they also attempt to frame the Greensboro context as a transition. Here is the relevant passage from the report:

We have been asked why a mechanism like a truth commission should apply in the United States, where no evident political transition is underway, and where there is a functioning court system and a vibrant media. We believe that, while some transitions are dramatic, like countries emerging from a civil war or a period of repressive rule, others are more subtle. In Greensboro, we believe that this effort arises out of a willingness to honestly move from a less respectful and less tolerant city to one that is more democratic and more inclusive. As Lisa Magarrell from the ICTJ has observed, “Any turn towards greater respect for all citizens of a community should be seen as a transition that can be aided by the truth.” (GTRC, *Final Report* 14)

This paragraph presents the argument that the context in which the Greensboro TRC operated is, in fact, transitional. It is an argument that is fully realized in the sentence that describes the situation in Greensboro as a transition from a “less respectful and less tolerant city to one that is more democratic and more inclusive.” This claim, which highlights that the *telos* of the transition is a city that is more *democratic*, implicitly situates the work of the Greensboro TRC squarely within the larger field of transitional justice, which focuses almost entirely on democratic transitions. Furthermore, to support the claim that Greensboro is in transition, the authors make use of a rhetorical strategy that I’ve already discussed. They transform a difference of order into a difference of degree. Whereas those opposing the truth and reconciliation process took the line that the Greensboro context (a city in a democratic country, with a “functioning court system and vibrant media”) was *qualitatively* different than the transitional contexts in which other truth commissions had operated, the authors of the final report claim that both the Greensboro context and the contexts in which other truth commissions operated could be classified as “transitional.” They do so by suggesting that the notion of “transition” should be measured *quantitatively*: “We believe that, while some transitions are dramatic, like countries emerging from a civil war or a period of repressive rule, others are more subtle.” The rhetorical move here, which opens up a space for the Greensboro TRC to define their own situation as transitional, is then reinforced by a quote from the Commission’s representative from the International Center for Transitional Justice, Lisa Magarrell: “Any turn towards greater respect for all citizens of a community should be seen as a transition that can be aided by the truth.”

The Commission, the Council, and the Role of Race

This chapter, like earlier chapters of this dissertation, demonstrates how the Greensboro TRC reaccentuated elements of a rhetorical tradition; however, two differences between this chapter and earlier chapters are worth calling attention to. First, the rhetorical tradition in question here is broader than the rhetorical traditions considered in previous chapters: whereas previous chapters primarily looked at the reaccentuation of resources from the rhetorical tradition surrounding the operation of the South African TRC, this chapter explores the reaccentuation of Hayner’s definition of “truth

commissions,” which emerged from the work of multiple truth commissions and now circulates both wherever new commissions are formed and in the scholarly discourse devoted to transitional justice. Secondly, and more importantly for my purposes, this chapter illustrates that the resources that rhetorical traditions provide may be used to different, even competing, ends. City council members who objected to the Greensboro TRC did so on largely definitional grounds, while commissioners used (and, in some cases, attempted to modify) the normative definition of truth commission to position themselves so as to warrant their findings and recommendations in their *Final Report*.

The definitional arguments at the center of the discourse surrounding the operation of the Greensboro TRC, concerning whether or not the Greensboro TRC is a legitimate truth commission, may have been conscious or unconscious on the part of participants; that is, they may have been the product of a conscious strategy to legitimate (or discredit) the Commission and its actions or the result of a tactical, unconscious “making use” of rhetorical resources to similar ends.¹³³ It may not be possible (and is not, I think, necessary) to determine whether the arguments, or various facets of the arguments, were conscious or unconscious, strategic or tactical: reaccentuating rhetorical traditions happens on both levels. What *is* important here, however, is what is at stake in this dispute, and I think part of what is at stake in these arguments is the legitimacy of two very different (constructed) images of Greensboro. The city council members attempt, during their public meeting, to constitute the city as progressive, evolving; the image of the city that they construct, and into which they attempt to interpellate their listeners, is one that emphasizes continuous, positive improvement with regard to racism (and other issues). The commissioners, on the other hand, challenge this vision of Greensboro in their *Final Report*, constructing an image of a city in which there are systemic problems, especially with regard to race, that have not been addressed and are not being addressed. One group, in other words, presents the city as already enjoying a successful transition, while the other presents the city as in need of transition. Aspects of both of these two versions of reality are constructed in and through some of the excerpts I’ve already explored throughout the chapter, and, in what follows, I want to return to

¹³³ For more on this distinction, see Michel de Certeau’s book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (29-42).

these excerpts, and others, in order to demonstrate what it is, exactly, that the Greensboro TRC is attempting to authorize through their definitional arguments in the Introduction.

The presentation of Greensboro as a progressive, evolving city comes up throughout the mayor's remarks, as well as those of the other dissenting councilpersons. At the beginning of his remarks, the mayor describes Greensboro as a progressive city quite explicitly: "[P]rior to three years ago," he says, "I do not believe that there was more than a few dozen people who constantly talked about, contemplated, and considered the events of November 3rd, 1979 as holding us back from being a progressive city. Greensboro was a progressive city in 1979 and is even more progressive today" ("Truth"). This remark, in addition to presenting Greensboro as progressive, reinforces the mayor's attempts to belittle the group that formed the Greensboro TRC, by framing it as insignificant in size and as comprised of somewhat obsessive individuals, as suggested by the mayor's adverb "constantly" as well as the three successive verbs. Moreover, it may be, given this negative framing of the group coupled with the assertion that Greensboro was and is progressive, that the mayor's remarks are not simply meant to frame the group's concern (i.e., that November 3rd is holding Greensboro back "from being a progressive city") as an obsession but to imply that the group itself is holding the city back from being progressive. The way in which the mayor constructs reality in these excerpts is, moreover, taken up by councilperson Tom Phillips in his short statement. Like the mayor, Phillips attempts to disassociate the city of Greensboro from November 3rd, 1979, by claiming that the event has not "divided our community over all these years." (He then emphasizes the point with the following assertion, stated matter-of-factly: "I just don't believe that.") Also like the mayor, he describes the city as progressive—or, if not progressive, than at least as having progressed beyond this specific event. And, to complete the echo of the mayor's remarks, he also belittles the group behind the formation of the Greensboro TRC and their project. In this case, he doesn't do so by suggesting that the members of this group are obsessive; rather, he does so by suggesting that the Commission is the recent agenda of a select group of individuals, not a systemic concern in the city.

Councilperson Gatten goes even further than the mayor and Phillips in this last respect, asserting that the group's suggestion that November 3rd, 1979 is holding the city

back from being progressive is an insult, both to her and to those who have “worked so hard to make changes” in the community:

In the last twenty years, I’ve been proud of the ongoing initiatives taken to address racial harmony and to build a sense of community. We’re an evolving city, not the same city we were in 1979, and to suggest otherwise is a slap in the face to all of us, myself included, who have worked so hard to make changes. It dishonors the memory of those who have toiled in the cause of justice and have gone on to their reward. Let me be very specific. One example of progress—real progress—is the major sea change in how we elect city government. Going from an at-large system to one that is a combination of districts and at-large to ensure equitable representation. This was a significant change in how city council was elected and has had a successful track record in ensuring that diverse representation sits in front of you tonight. Our city provides a variety of programs to promote community dialogue: Other Voices, Undoing Racism, The Citizens’ Academy, Community Policing, and the Mosaic Partnership Program. Race relations and community justice is something that we’re working on every day, through the Human Relations Commission, the Commission on the Status of Women, our MWE program, and a host of others.

Gatten reinforces and elaborates upon the image of Greensboro as constructed by the mayor. She does so by describing the city as “evolving” and by using terminology like “ongoing initiatives,” “real progress,” “major sea change,” “significant change,” and “successful track record” to describe city operations and policies. Furthermore, in order to make her case, Gatten attempts to position the city council in terms of representivity (much like the Commission attempted to do, as explored in detail in chapter four of this project), claiming that the change in city election processes ensures “equitable” and “diverse” representation. Here again, those who challenge this image of Greensboro are negatively appraised, and, in this case, dramatically so: their suggestion that Greensboro is not an evolving city is “a slap in the face” and it even, she suggests, dishonors the dead. The work of the Commission is also negatively appraised, insofar as Gatten’s emphasis on “real” progress is yet another example of dissociation, which positively values the work that the city is doing and simultaneously suggests that whatever work the Commission is doing is not, in fact, progress. Finally, implicit within her long list of current “programs to promote community dialogue,” is the claim that the city of Greensboro does not need another program of this sort.

Councilperson Gatten’s remarks in the above paragraph also add another layer to the image of Greensboro constructed by dissenting council members—racial equity. This

layer is woven throughout the various attempts to construct Greensboro as progressive and evolving. That is, in constituting Greensboro as progressive the mayor and others emphasize that Greensboro is racially progressive. Consistent with this emphasis, they also repudiate claims that race was a causal factor in the events of November 3rd, 1979. Take, for example, the comment, mentioned earlier in the chapter, of Gatten, who noted, “Whatever Greensboro – white, black, rich, poor, Hispanic, Cambodian, Montagnard – whatever Greensboro you envision, it is not one characterized by twenty years of murders, tortures, and rapes.” This comment, which appears in an argument contrasting Greensboro and South Africa early in her statement, introduces issues of race and ethnicity (as well as class) into her objections of the Commission, and characterizes the city according to these distinctions; however, having introduced the distinctions, she immediately clarifies that November 3rd, 1979 is not “emblematic of racial divisions in our community.” Similar comments are made by the mayor:

Much has been said regarding this event being a part of a larger racial problem in Greensboro, which adds to the distrust that exists amongst races. While I will acknowledge that we as a community have racial issues and areas of distrust, I strongly resist the belief that this event was a major contributor to Greensboro’s racial issues. I believe that it is obvious to anyone who studied this tragic event and the events that led up to November 3rd that this was driven by labor disputes, including the fact that the rally [on the morning of November 3] was organized by Workers’ Viewpoint Organization. It was driven by class issues, union organization issues, anti-communist mindsets, and, most importantly, previous confrontations in other areas of the state, prior to the outside groups coming to Greensboro. In fact, I do not believe that the Klan loaded up their cars to come to Greensboro with a vision to do harm to black people. But rather, came to confront many of the same labor organizers and communists that they had encountered several weeks earlier at China Grove, who were mostly white. This was an event where the...Communist Workers’ Party members actually traveled to confront the Ku Klux Klan. Therefore, I am especially concerned that the examination of this tragic event will lead us locally and even nationally to believe it was all about race, rather than two individual groups that, quite frankly, hated each other.

Here again, there is an attempt by the mayor to disassociate the events of November 3rd from the city of Greensboro. He emphasizes that the confrontations precipitating the event occurred “in other areas of the state” and describes the participants as “outside groups coming to Greensboro” and as “two individual groups.” By framing the event as a

confrontation between two individual, outside groups, the mayor is able to isolate blame, absolving the larger community for its responsibility, whether implicit or explicit, in the killings. More importantly, to the extent that the mayor does attribute the events to more systemic problems in Greensboro, he claims that race was not a major factor, nor, he says, did it further exacerbate Greensboro's "racial issues and areas of distrust." The polarity of the mayor's claims with regard to race is striking. It would have been more a subtle approach, and therefore probably more persuasive, for him to describe the cause and effect of the November 3rd events in terms of racism *in addition to* labor disputes, class issues, union organization issues, anti-communist mindsets, and prior confrontations. But he opts not to take this approach, instead making largely unqualified (and often amplified) declarative statements that race did not play a major role in November 3rd, 1979. "I do *not* believe," he says, "that the Klan loaded up their cars to come to Greensboro with a vision to do harm to black people" (emphasis added). It's a belief, moreover, that he "strongly resist[s]," and the fact that it was a labor dispute should be "obvious" to anyone who has studied the event.¹³⁴

While the mayor's remarks may not seem like the most persuasive response to November 3rd, 1979, they may be read as part of the attempt to maintain an image of Greensboro as racially progressive. For him to admit that racism was either a factor in causing or a consequence of the events of November 3rd, 1979 would undermine the image of Greensboro reinforced throughout the proceedings, especially in light of the fact that the city had not formally acknowledged any institutional blame for the events of November 3rd, 1979.

Finally, it is worth noting that other accounts of November 3rd, 1979 that challenge the image constructed by the mayor and council in addition to those of the Project and Commission are also discredited during the city council meeting. For example, Holliday and Gatten take issue with the national and international media for oversimplification and decontextualization of their positions. The mayor, for his part, criticizes the news reporting that has already been done about the Greensboro TRC, noting, "I have given over fifteen interviews to national media sources, and even though I

¹³⁴ Given the mayor and councilperson Gatten's insistence that November 3rd, 1979 is not connected to larger racial issues in Greensboro, it is not surprising that they strongly resist comparisons between the event and apartheid South Africa.

insist on a lengthy interview to explain my position in great detail, the end result is a typical one-sentence that goes something like this: ‘The white mayor of Greensboro does not support the truth and reconciliation project because it will hurt the city’s image,’ unquote.” Here the mayor accuses the media of simplifying his objections to the Greensboro TRC, and his insertion of the word “white” implies that the media focuses unduly on issues of race. Later he also adds that the media has pointed out “more sensationalism, controversy, and previously known revelations, that now can be told over and over and over again.” And councilperson Gatten accuses the press of decontextualization: “Like the mayor,” she says, “since July of 2003, I have been interviewed by media outside Greensboro regarding this project. Media as far away as France, a broadcast interview on Canadian Public Radio, the Atlanta Constitution, the Charlotte Observer, and many more. External media wanting to meddle in our business, without taking the time to have the benefit of context.” Both lament the effects of this negative publicity. Holliday contends that the results of the Greensboro inquiry will be “a tremendous amount of negative feelings and characterization of Greensboro will be seen and heard by hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, and that will be detrimental to our future.” He then adds, “I believe more harm can come from this process than progress.” And Gatten echoes the mayor’s anxieties, noting, “There is a legitimate concern regarding the potential impact [of] the publicity this project is generating, nationally and internationally.”

It is against these constructions of reality, these images and imaginings of Greensboro, that the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission speaks in its *Final Report*. And I believe that one significant factor that allows them to do so, in addition to the rhetorical moves that I’ve elaborated upon in prior chapters of this dissertation, is the definition argument in their Introduction, in which they lay claim to the title of “truth commission.” In positioning the Greensboro inquiry as a legitimate truth commission, the commissioners tap into a tradition that has, in and through the operation of dozens of past truth commissions, constructed a measure of political and moral authority to act, materially and discursively, in the world. The commissioners themselves put the matter eloquently: “[W]e joined a world,” they write, “in which many people are challenging unfinished and misshapen stories about past abuses and violence that

continue to sow distrust and even hate in our nations and our communities today” (GTRC, *Final Report* 12). Then, in a remark that is consistent with my project’s central argument, they add, “By adapting the truth commission idea to our own conditions we were able to draw inspiration and some comfort that what seemed to be an impossible task might actually be something we could accomplish” (12-13).

As a truth commission, one “inspiration” from which the Greensboro TRC was able to draw was the genre of the *Final Report* itself. Although space does not allow me to perform a genre analysis of truth commission final reports, a few brief comments about the genre of the truth commission final report are warranted, given the object of inquiry of this chapter. For the purposes of this chapter, I’ll adopt J.R. Martin and David Rose’s definition of genre in their book *Working with Discourse: Meaning Beyond the Clause*. About genre Martin and Rose write, “We use the term genre in this book to refer to different types of texts that enact various types of social contexts...For us a genre is a staged, goal-oriented social process. Social because we participate in genres with other people; goal-oriented because we use genres to get things done; staged because it usually takes us a few steps to reach our goals” (8). Describing truth commission final reports as “staged” is probably an understatement: final reports are usually unwieldy documents, often comprised of facts and figures, maps, testimonies, etc. The arguments presented with such reports make use of several—if not all—of the rhetorical stases, answering questions of fact (what happened here?), cause (how did it happen?), value (who is wrong or at fault?), and action (what should be done about it?). The Greensboro TRC’s *Final Report* performs these elements of the genre well, offering a description of what happened on November 3rd, 1979 and why, findings that make judgments about the individuals and institutions involved, and recommendations for future action in the city. The report also contains, as stated previously, fourteen annexes, labeled with letters a. through o., that contain a wealth of facts related to the events of November 3rd and the operation of the Greensboro TRC. Within them one can also find commissioner biographies, two separate timelines (one charting the life of the GTRC; the other, the events surrounding November 3rd), the documents that established the Commission, maps of the community, acknowledgements to donors, etc.

The bulkiness, the unwieldiness, of the genre of the final report derives from an attempt, by truth commissions, to be thorough and thereby to compensate for a previous lack of information or disinformation regarding past atrocities (in places like Argentina, for instance, where many of the victims were simply “disappeared”). These observations speak to the second facet of Martin and Rose’s definition of genre: genres are goal-oriented, i.e., they get things done. The use of multiple stases—as well as the extremely detailed catalogues of facts about the past (which often includes place-names and dates of crimes, detailed descriptions of torture facilities and methods, and detailed tellings and retellings about past events)—is a means of social action, to the extent that it provides the groundwork for a new national (or community-based) narrative to emerge that counters the official line, the status quo, of an abusive past regime. The Greensboro TRC is no exception here. In and through the Introduction and the remainder of the *Final Report*, the commissioners construct an image of Greensboro that challenges the official line constructed at the city council meeting.

The image of Greensboro that the Commission constructs is of a city in which racism was a systemic problem in 1979, and still is today. Excerpts from the Introduction that I have already explored help to establish this image of Greensboro—a few of which merit returning to briefly. In making their case that the Commission operated independently of outside influences, the commissioners make a point to note that the city council, in the meeting I have been close reading, voted “along racial lines, to oppose the truth and reconciliation process” (GTRC, *Final Report* 24). The remark calls into question Gatten’s praise of the council as “equitable” and “diverse,” and it challenges the claims of the city council members who point to the progress in the city with regard to questions of race and who eschew racism as a systemic problem. In addition to their comments about the 6-3 vote, the commissioners’ contention that racism in Greensboro is a systemic problem is also, of course, constructed and reinforced through the Commission’s comparisons of Greensboro and South Africa. By establishing qualitative similarities between Greensboro and apartheid South Africa, the commissioners are able to reinforce the notion that racism permeates the city or, as they put it, is “deep-seated” (GTRC, *Final Report* 24).

With regard to their findings, commissioners reject the mayor's claims about November 3rd, 1979: they assert, unequivocally, that racism was one of the primary causes of the Greensboro killings. To make their case, commissioners begin by posing the issue as a question: "We have been constantly asked during our process, 'Was Nov. 3, 1979, really about race?'" (310). Note that, even before commissioners answer this question, they have already implicitly made the case that this question matters greatly (they have, in other words, already constructed exigence for the issue), by indicating the extent to which they have been asked about race—i.e., *constantly*. Commissioners then answer the question twice, effectively amplifying the emphasis of the claim. They first cite Greensboro labor organizer Si Kahn, noting, "Labor organizer Si Kahn offered a clear answer when he said in our first hearing, 'Scratch the surface of any issue in the South and you will find race.'" Kahn's quotation allows commissioners to answer the question in the affirmative and, simultaneously, to indicate the pervasiveness of the problem. Moreover, by describing Kahn's answer as "clear," commissioners frame their finding as obvious. Then, as if to avoid any potential ambiguity about the definitiveness of their position that may arise from the fact that the source of claim came from Kahn, commissioners immediately and explicitly state their position on the matter: "We found that the events of Nov. 3, 1979, are woven through with issues of race and class." Following this claim, commissioners present several pieces of evidence to back it up, in the form of a bulleted list, which I reproduce here:

- A group of demonstrators aiming to empower laborers in a poor black neighborhood were holding a "Death to the Klan" rally.
- The leading organizer of the rally was a local black activist who was outspoken on issues of racial inequality. This leader was widely demonized for his role in the city's traumatic 1969 incident of mass racial unrest prompted by the "Dudley/A&T Revolt."
- The "Death to the Klan" marchers were shot down by Klan and Nazis who were twice acquitted by all-white juries.
- The city acted to try to prevent subsequent citizen protest against the Klan and white supremacist violence.

What I find most compelling about this list (and what follows it) is its trajectory, which, as the text unfolds and readers move from one bullet point to the next, implicates the city of Greensboro and Greensboro citizens more and more directly. The first two bullet points implicate the individuals and groups present on November 3rd, 1979; the third

implicates the juries; and the fourth, the city. Through this organizational scheme, then, commissioners call attention to the fact that racism was not simply an individual matter but also a systemic problem in the community in 1979. But they do not stop there.

Commissioners go on, in the next paragraph of their report, to implicate the readers of the report by prompting them to imagine November 3rd, 1979 in “racial reverse”:

Imagine for a moment that these elements were racially reversed, viewed as a photographic negative. Imagine a group of demonstrators is holding a demonstration against black terrorism in the affluent white community of Irving Park. A caravan of armed black terrorists are allowed to drive unobstructed to the parade starting point, and photos are taken by the police as a fight breaks out and demonstrators are shot dead. Most of the cars are then allowed to flee the scene, un-pursued, even as they threaten neighborhood pedestrians by pointing shotguns through the windows. The defendants are tried and acquitted by an all-black jury. The first shots – fired by the black terrorists screaming “Shoot the Crackers!” and “Show me a Cracker with guts and I’ll show you a black man with a gun!”– are described by defense attorneys and accepted by jurors as “calming” or “non-hostile” shots. Meanwhile, the city government takes steps to block citizen protest of further black terrorist violence including a curfew in the white neighborhood. The scenario is so unlikely as to be preposterous. Yet, in racial reverse, it is exactly what happened. (310-311)

The narrative here is intended, in part, to highlight the extent to which race was a factor in the events and aftermath of November 3rd. What is so significant about this passage rhetorically, though, is that, insofar as readers buy in to the claim that the scenario is “so unlikely as to be preposterous” and agree with the commissioners that it goes against common sense, they are forced to acknowledge that even their own notions of common sense have been shaped by racism and that there are still ongoing racial inequities in Greensboro. At this point in the report, commissioners go on to disabuse readers of the notion that racism is not a contemporary problem in Greensboro. Writing now in the present tense, they note, “Racism, it goes without saying, divides our community and suppresses dialogue. It also routinely acts through institutions to disadvantage entire groups of people. This is often so in the justice system, which was created by white leaders to protect the interests of the majority power structure” (311).¹³⁵ Racism is

¹³⁵ The commissioners address injustices in the justice system earlier in their report, noting, “the majority of us believe that the system is not just randomly imperfect; rather it tends to be disproportionately imperfect against people of color and poor people” (377).

presented here as a matter-of-fact: its dividing of the Greensboro community “goes without saying,” and it “routinely” acts to disadvantage.

A central aspect of the narrative that commissioners construct about past and present racism in Greensboro is the city’s “progressive mystique,” a term commissioners borrow from American historian William Chafe. Chafe first introduced the term “progressive mystique” in his book *Civilities and Civil Rights*—which explored the civil rights struggle in Greensboro from 1945 to 1975¹³⁶—and he used the term again when asked by commissioners to issue a written statement about the “context, causes, sequence, and consequence” of November 3rd, 1979. Here is an excerpt from Chafe’s written statement, in which he defines the “progressive mystique”:

What is the “progressive mystique”? It is a series of beliefs focused on perceiving Greensboro, and the Piedmont more generally, as moderate in its politics, tolerant in its social behavior, and above all, courteous and open to people of all persuasions as long as they play by the rules of the game. What are those rules? First, that people treat each other with civility. Second, that they are willing to listen to petitions for change, but only if these are offered with due deference and courtesy. And third, that any significant alteration of the status quo requires consensus that change is necessary – in effect, unanimous consent...Part of what Greensboro needs to address in its own truth and reconciliation process, then, is to explore and disclose the ways in which the old rules of the “progressive mystique” and “civilities” served as a means of reinforcing the racial status quo. It is a complicated story. Blacks as well as whites believed in “civilities.” Issues of class and power operated in both communities, within as well as across racial divides. But unless and until people of all backgrounds are ready to deflate the mystique and examine its consequences, it will be difficult if not impossible to arrive at a fresh start where manners and courtesy operate effectively because people have equal power, not as a mean of keeping some people in subservience to others. (38)

¹³⁶ In *Civilities and Civil Rights*, Chafe writes, “[T]he culture of white progressivism...has for so long dominated North Carolina’s political and economic life. The more I studied Greensboro, the more it became clear that progressivism did not operate as a political system with rigid regulations and procedures. Rather, it functioned as a mystique, a series of implicit assumptions, nuances, and modes of relating that have been all the more powerful precisely because they are so elusive. In this sense, the ‘progressive mystique’ is best understood through certain motifs that reflect—almost unconsciously—the underlying values of progressivism. Most North Carolina progressives, for example, believe that conflict is inherently bad, that disagreement means personal dislike, and that consensus offers the only way to preserve a genteel and civilized way of life. The underlying assumption is that conflict over any issue, whether it be labor unions, race relations, or political ideology, will permanently rend the fragile fabric of internal harmony” (6-7).

This excerpt introduces the first chapter of the commissioners' *Final Report*, and the concept of the "progressive mystique" functions as a kind of theme or narrative frame for the chapter.¹³⁷ The chapter, titled "From Black Power to Multicultural Organizing in Greensboro," describes the context for the events of 1979 and highlights, in particular, racial inequalities in the city in terms of housing, schooling, employment, and access to public health (GTRC, *Final Report* 39-42). It then goes on to tell the story of several attempts, throughout Greensboro's history, to address these inequalities, including the Black Power movement (42-44), the Greensboro sit-ins (44-45), the Congress of Racial Equality (45-47), voter registration efforts (47), an anti-poverty organization called the Greensboro Association for Poor People (47-57), and multiracial organizing efforts that led to the formation of the Communist Workers Party (57-61). Throughout this narrative, commissioners repeatedly demonstrate how attempts at black activism were hampered by Greensboro's "progressive mystique." Commissioners note, for instance, that the rhetoric of Black Power "caused deep anxiety among the city's white elite and black middle class that did not favor such confrontational tactics" and that the rhetoric of the Communist Workers Party "was even more upsetting to the city's 'progressive mystique' across racial lines" (39). Later in the chapter—under a heading titled, "Greensboro: Civility meets Black Power"—commissioners describe the "activists' impatience with the city's culture of civility, which kept the status quo in place" (42); and they refer to the sit-in movement as the "most widely felt confrontation between black power and Greensboro's culture of civility" (44). Toward the end of the chapter, they write, "For many of its citizens, Greensboro has been a model of progressive moderation in times of tumultuous social change, while at the same time many in its black community have felt that this enforced moderation has often been another form of refusing change" (60). And they conclude the chapter with the following observation: "Tension between activism that resisted the status quo of class and racial inequalities and the powerful institutions trying to curtail that activism meant that on some level a clash was inevitable" (61).

Commissioners use the notion of "progressive mystique" as a kind of narrative frame for contemporary Greensboro as well. They write, "[A]s a grassroots citizen effort

¹³⁷ Chafe's written statement to the commissioners, along with his book *Civilities and Civil Rights*, also probably served as an important resource for Mark Sills' closing remarks about civility at the Report Release Ceremony, which I touched upon at the end of the previous chapter.

that challenges the status quo, we have learned firsthand that a pattern of resisting change and suppressing the efforts of those who seek it continues in Greensboro” (382). Once again, they use a bulleted list to provide the evidence to support this claim:

- City Council voted 6-3, with the three black members dissenting, to oppose the truth and reconciliation process;
- Council members promoted rumors about the GTRC intimidating opponents and sowed confusion about our funding and our relationship to the GTCRP;
- Information known only to the GTRC, police and city officials was leaked to the media, jeopardizing the public hearing testimony;
- Police officials met with representatives of Mount Zion Baptist Church without GTRC staff about a GTRC event planned there;
- Prospective statement givers and community dialogue participants indicated being discouraged to participate. (382)

The fact that commissioners use the same format—a bulleted list—to support *both* their claim that November 3rd, 1979 was “woven through with issues of race and class” *and* their claim that a pattern of resisting change continues in Greensboro presents an implicit argument that Greensboro is not as progressive as some city council members would lead citizens to believe. Furthermore, both here and in the text surrounding these bullet points, commissioners describe the city as maintaining the “status quo,” “protecting... stability,” “resisting change,” and “suppressing efforts.” They also use appraisal terms like “indifference,” “discomfort,” and “distaste” in reference to their opponents’ emotional states—all terms that implicitly judge and condemn their character. These remarks, in addition to the commissioners’ reference to the mayor’s remark that he finds the truth and reconciliation process “unappetizing,” suggest that Greensboro continues to suffer from the “progressive mystique.”¹³⁸

¹³⁸ At one point, commissioners write, “We find it ironic that so many of the city’s leaders insisted that there was no point to establishing the GTRC because, in the words of one city council member, ‘The real truth is that it’s a big yawn for this community.’ Such a statement leads us to believe many of our elected leaders are either horribly out of touch with, willfully blind to, or simply unconcerned about the lingering pain and the stifling workings of power in this community” (379). That said, even as commissioners construct an image of Greensboro that highlights its continued maintenance of the progressive mystique, it also simultaneously calls into question the civility of the city leaders. That is, the civility that commissioners suggest covers over racial and economic inequalities is a sham. Commissioners note that city leaders “promoted rumors,” “leaked information,” and “sowed confusion.” And the use of appraisal terms like “surveillance, intimidation and rumor-mongering” condemn the character of city leaders much more harshly. There is even an implication of criminal activity, in the commissioners’ reference to their “mysteriously broken file cabinets.”

In these bullet points, and throughout many of the passages I have been discussing, commissioners position themselves in opposition to city leaders. It is worth noting, however, that they do not do so primarily by aligning themselves with the history of black activism in Greensboro or, more specifically, with the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project. Instead they primarily draw upon their status as a truth commission to position themselves in opposition to the city leaders. They refer explicitly to their process as one of “truth and reconciliation” and mention their public hearings, a genre that identifies them with other truth commissions. They also highlight the goals of their endeavor—goals that identify them with other truth commissions. That is, they claim, in this same section of the report, that their primary aims are to foster dialogue and accountability, seek and speak the truth, honestly examine the past, and bring about justice, which, they say, is a prerequisite “to restore trust and to heal.” This last point brings us back to the importance of the definition arguments constructed in the Introduction: the commissioners’ identification with other truth commissions gives them a place from which to stand—an *ethos*—to challenge the image of Greensboro constructed by city leaders.

It is worth noting that they make use of their *ethos* as a truth commission again when critiquing the U.S. justice system. They claim that the justice system is imperfect, but not “randomly” so. “It tends,” they write, “to be disproportionately imperfect against people of color and poor people.” To speak against the inherent injustices in the justice system, commissioners make use of the act of dissociation that Desmond Tutu frequently employs (as described in chapter two of this project): that is, they distinguish “retributive justice” from “transformative justice,” and positively appraise the latter:

The “retributive justice” model of the U.S. legal system confines judicial inquiries to the proof of a defendant’s guilt (criminal cases) or liability (civil cases), under a narrowly defined set of laws and rules of procedure. As a result, the examination of the role of individuals and institutions, outside of the particular defendants on trial, is limited solely to their relevance to those particular proceedings. Similarly, the scope for defining and addressing other types of harm and other stakeholders in the incident is also very narrow. The courtroom is the realm of technical knowledge and expertise, with little leeway for richness of context or consequences that surround wrongs. The promise of “transformative justice” is in drawing the community to the table to discuss what wrongs were done and to whom and by whom. Transformative justice also facilitates exchange of

diverse perspectives on why these wrongs occurred and what should be done. In this way, transformative justice works in concert with retributive justice, not as a repeat or replacement of it. (378-379)

Having positioned the Greensboro TRC as a truth commission earlier in the report, here the commissioners lay claim to one of the characteristic argumentative devices of the rhetorical tradition surrounding truth commissions. On the one hand, using the retributive/transformative distinction provides commissioners with a critical framework, giving them a place to stand from which “to take a fresh and more dispassionate look at the procedural and substantive issues involved in these trials” and from which to expose how the process “inevitably reflects and also is influenced by the prevailing social and political contexts, and how in this particular case the system failed some expectations for justice”—especially the expectations of those who hoped the courts would address racial inequities (377). On the other hand, the distinction allows the commissioners to avoid completely rejecting the U.S. legal system. That is, they are able to validate the importance of the retributive justice of the legal system, even as they are able to speak to the ways that the courts may reproduce racial and economic inequities. “By looking at the issues more holistically,” they write, “truth commissions can better diagnose the underlying causes and consequences, which may not be relevant to particular legal proceedings” (379).

Reactions and Responses

The Commission’s definition arguments matter. They matter because they provide a place for the commissioners to stand—grounds, constructed in part by prior truth commissions, from where they are able to speak against the status quo and offer a very different image of Greensboro than the one constructed by the mayor, the dissenting city council members, and others. And this image of Greensboro, this counter-narrative, also matters. It matters because it shaped (and continues to shape) the public sphere in Greensboro, determining what is prioritized in the city and what is not: one narrative necessitates action on the part of the city and the citizens; the other does not. The image of the Greensboro community constructed by the mayor and the dissenting council members, as well as their descriptions of November 3rd, 1979, do not necessitate any new actions on the part of the city or the citizens. The narrative constructed by the

commissioners, on the other hand, speaks of injustice in the U.S. legal system; attributes blame to city officials and the Greensboro police for their actions and inactions on November 3rd, 1979; and brings into relief the systemic racism and economic inequalities in the city. Such a narrative creates a number of obligations—obligations that require actions at both institutional and individual levels.

The commissioners list what these actions might look like in the “Recommendations” section of their report (GTRC, *Final Report* 383-390). They include, but are not limited to, formal apologies from those involved in November 3rd, 1979, including the Greensboro Police Department and City of Greensboro (384); the construction of memorials and historical exhibits to commemorate the tragedy (384); the formation of discussion forums for the community and “a healing workshop or retreat for children of CWP members, shooters and others directly involved in the events of Nov. 3, 1979” (384); the institution of anti-racism training for city and county employees, and for other community organizations and citizens; the city’s issuing of “annual reports on race relations and racial disparities” (385-386); the institution of a living wage for city and county workers (385); the development of a curriculum “based on the events of Nov. 3, 1979,” for primary and secondary students (387); and the formation of a community justice center in Greensboro (387). These are actions that, should they be enacted in the future, could have significant material and psychological consequences for the people of Greensboro.

The release of the report touched off a substantial amount of commentary and debate in the opinion pages of the Greensboro *News & Record*.¹³⁹ Some editorials claimed that the report merely confirmed suspicions that the Commission was biased toward the Communist Workers Party, as several headlines attest: “Commission proposes political agenda,” “Truth Commission shows obvious bias,” and “We hold these truths to be self-serving” (Clark A11; Vickers A6; Millar A8). Others claimed that the report was a major achievement and that the Commission had done a good job maintaining a balanced and objective stance. Signe Waller, one of the survivors of November 3rd, 1979,

¹³⁹ As a means of ensuring that their *Final Report* and these recommendations were at least talked about by community members, commissioners invited various groups from the Greensboro community to pledge to serve as designated Report Receivers “to review the report and engage in meaningful dialogue around its contents” (“Report Release Ceremony Program”). Over forty-five groups pledged to do so, including the Greensboro Police Department and the Griffin Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

described the report as a “milestone” (“It’s Been Said” A15); Dean Driver, a citizen of Greensboro, wrote, “Contrary to the expectations of those who claimed the commission was biased toward the victims [i.e., the CWP], the report actually distributes blame among nearly everyone involved” (“TRC report” A10); and Z.N. Holler, one of the members of the Task Force that helped establish the TRC, noted, “The Truth and Reconciliation Commission did its best—an excellent best, in my opinion—to try to seek out, sort through, understand and present fairly the complexities of what happened [on November 3rd, 1979] and why” (“TRC did well” A7). And still others, like Edward Cone, took a more nuanced perspective, noting that the report was flawed and, in some places, inconsistent—particularly regarding its stance toward the Communist Workers Party—but nonetheless was of extreme value to the community (“TRC delivers a flawed but useful report” H1). Additionally, several articles urged members of the community to read and debate the findings (Ahearn, “Bellwether city” B1; Ahearn “City Hall” B1).

The response of the Greensboro city council to the report was, not surprisingly, lackluster. The council did eventually agree to meet on July 18th, 2006 to discuss the Commission’s findings (Banks, “Council heatedly agrees to review” A1)¹⁴⁰; and, at that meeting, after debating the Commission’s report and recommendations for seventy-five minutes, they agreed to discuss the report further and planned to instruct Greensboro’s Human Relations Commission to do so as well (“City council advances” A8; Banks, “City finally joins” A1). Many of the Commission’s supporters viewed this meeting—initially, at least—as a positive step toward healing: the *News & Record* reported that, while some council members “registered skepticism” and “criticized much of the TRC’s work,” “no one opposed contentions by [Yvonne] Johnson, Goldie Wells, and Dianne

¹⁴⁰ Not all the council members initially agreed to do this. Shortly after the report was released, councilperson Mike Barber claimed that he didn’t want to get involved “in a dialogue about something that happened 26 years ago” (“Full council” H2). Similarly, councilperson Tom Phillips said he would only read the report if something piqued his interest, noting “I’ve got better things to do with my time” (Banks, “No apology necessary” A1). Phillips also claimed that the council had “more important things to do” than discuss the report. Later, when the council scheduled a meeting to discuss the report, Phillips claimed he wouldn’t attend, stating, “We don’t need this kind of continuing discussion about everything” (Banks, “Council heatedly agrees to review” A1). But, after making these comments, Barber and Phillips received pressure to attend. One editorial noted, “Despite [the] flaws [in the report], and arguably even because of them, the report provides a valuable opportunity for reflection... Barber should reconsider [whether or not he will attend] and at least show up to listen on July 18. So should Tom Phillips, who has said he won’t come either. In fact, every council member should attend. It’s a safe assumption they won’t all agree with the report. But at least they ought to know what it says” (Full council” H2).

Bellamy-Small [the council's three black members] that Greensboro has problems of class and race relations that its leaders should address" ("City council advances" A8). But the promised discussions never happened. On December 12th, 2006, an article appeared in the paper lamenting the fact that "[it's] been almost seven months since the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission issued its report examining the events of Nov. 3, 1979, and their consequences, and the document hasn't shown up on the City Council's radar since July" ("City needs" A8). And in March of 2007, the council voted down a resolution to "seriously consider" the recommendations of the Greensboro TRC (Banks, "Council votes" A7).

The mayor also rejected the Commission's recommendation that Greensboro's public bodies should issue an apology to the survivors and members of the Greensboro community "for their failure to protect the public"—a recommendation to which Mayor Holliday reportedly said, "If that's the standard, then 'we would issue an apology for every crime in Greensboro that occurred when we weren't there to protect the citizens'" (Banks, "No apology necessary" A1). "The problem with an apology," he continued, "is it makes it look like all the police department is at fault."

However, in spite of the city's response, the Greensboro TRC's report did have some effects—in addition to generating this commentary and debate in the pages of the *News & Record*—that suggest that it was at least somewhat successful. It prompted, for example, several apologies from members of the community. One resident of Greensboro, Julie Shelburne, submitted her apology as a letter to the editor:

I don't understand why it is so hard for many of our city's leaders to accept the results of the report made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. When facts that have been carefully researched and studied are denied by them, surely they are not setting a good example for this city. Don't they realize that others in our state, and even abroad, are watching the results of this two-year study in resolving differences? Would they rather continue to be infamous in connection with Nov. 3, 1979, than to be famous in 2006 for taking steps to resolve a difficult and complicated conflict? Thank goodness the Rev. Nelson Johnson has the grace to apologize and admit mistakes. Is it all up to him to do it? I was here in 1979 and was quite ignorant of the wrongdoing. I would like to apologize to Johnson, Jackie Clapp, Signe Waller and so many others who suffered. I hope others will join me in this. ("Resident apologizes" A10).

In addition to such apologies, the report has prompted a number of forums and discussions in Greensboro about November 3rd, 1979 and race relations in the city. Within the past two years, Greensboro residents have gathered at City Hall, at the Greensboro Public Library, and in a number churches to consider the Commission's findings and strategize about ways to implement the Commission's recommendations (Alexander, "Public" B3; Alexander, "Church" B2; "Calendar" GR29). Many of Greensboro's colleges and universities have also incorporated the study of November 3rd, 1979 into their curricula.¹⁴¹ Of these educational initiatives, one of the most successful has been Spoma Jovanovic's communications course at University of North Carolina Greensboro, which, in the spring of 2007, organized a seminar for community members, held at North Carolina A&T University. The seminar explored "issues raised by the killings and their aftermath" through a series of spoken-word presentations, documentary films, art and drama, and academic papers (Alexander, "Seminar to address" B1).¹⁴²

Moreover, following the release of the report, an international forum was held at Bennett College for Women in Greensboro to compare the work of the Greensboro TRC with the work of other truth commissions and "to help people from other U.S. communities that have begun similar projects, or are considering them, to consider options and avenues for their work" (Alexander, "Overseas" A1). Representatives of

¹⁴¹ According to the August 20th, 2006 edition of the *News & Record*, "Instructors at UNCG, Guilford College and GTCC plan, or are discussing, incorporating the report and the issues it raises into curricula. Students in Spoma Jovanovic's class on communications, community and civil rights at UNCG will review the report as part of a larger curriculum focusing primarily on modern Greensboro history. This will be the third time she has taught the course but the first since the report was released in May. 'We'll be studying up to 1960 through William Chafe's book ('Civilities and Civil Rights') and then beyond to 1979,' said Jovanovic, an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies. Greensboro's incident, she says, will be compared with incidents of violence in Wilmington, Orangeburg, S.C., Tulsa, Okla., and other places. At Guilford College, Vernie Davis, a professor and director of peace and conflict studies, will be incorporating the report into a class. Davis was still planning this past week and could not provide details. At GTCC, Jo Ann Buck, chairwoman of the English/humanities department, said she and some colleagues are in the 'talking stage' in considering whether to incorporate the report into her department's argumentative-research courses, which focus in part on examining issues from multiple perspectives. Besides the colleges, the Servant Leadership School of Greensboro, a nonprofit spiritual-education agency, will offer a 10-week course this fall, open to the public, on the report and the issues it raises" (Alexander, "This term's homework: truth report" B1).

¹⁴² I presented a paper at this conference. The event was a moving experience for me: I had the opportunity to talk with survivors of November 3rd, 1979 and with the Commission's executive director, Jill Williams. As an outgrowth of the conference, two of Spoma Jovanovic's students and I developed a panel presentation on the Greensboro Massacre and TRC for the Rhetoric Society of America's 13th Biennial Conference, which was held in Seattle, Washington in May, 2008.

other truth-seeking initiatives from Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Peru, as well as other U.S. communities met for a series of round-table discussions (Alexander, “International” A1; “Studying” B4; Jarboe, “Truth project’s report” A1). The forum served, I think, to further legitimate the positioning work that the commissioners had been attempting to do in the Introduction of their *Final Report*: it suggested that the Greensboro TRC was, in fact, a legitimate truth commission; and the group of delegates, gathered together in the Annie Merner Pfeiffer Chapel, attested to the rhetorical tradition that the Commission had attempted, throughout its operation, to tap into—the seat of its authority. Participants in the forum met in private on Thursday and Friday, but at the end of each of their sessions, they shared their discussions with the news media. On Saturday, they spoke to the Greensboro public.

According to the *News & Record*, many of the forum’s participants in attendance were surprised to learn that truth commissions “appear to be a growth industry” in the United States (Alexander, “Studying the Past” B4). For example, Eduardo Gonzalez, who served on the Peruvian TRC, remarked, “I’m impressed that there is an emerging trend in this country to recover memory that has been repressed for decades... This is going to be important if the U.S. is going to strengthen itself as a nation.” And Rich Rusk—a representative of a Georgian organization working to construct a memorial to honor four African Americans who were murdered in 1946 by an unknown assassin—expressed encouragement that initiatives like his were occurring elsewhere in the U.S. At one point, he said, “It’s a very spooky feeling to be doing this... We thought we were all by ourselves.” The forum, in other words, functioned to build solidarity between participants, helping them to assemble the grounds for their subsequent speech and action in their own communities. It is as if, through the gathering, practitioners of transitional justice assembled a platform from which to speak with authority. The gathering was especially important for the members of the Greensboro TRC, whose stance toward the city council was amplified by the voices of the other participants, as the following blurb from a *News & Record* article evinces:

The city’s truth and reconciliation project was opposed at the outset three years ago in part because opponents, such as Mayor Keith Holliday, feared it would only reinforce a negative image of Greensboro... But participants from other communities and countries in a two-day convention of truth

and reconciliation projects at Bennett College said Friday that Greensboro's effort has burnished the city's image. The only damage, they said, has been to opponents' reputations. (Alexander, "TRC's effects" B1)

The article then continues by citing forum participants, who each praised the commissioners for their achievements and roundly critiqued the city council members who opposed the process. For example, Mark McGovern, who attended the forum on behalf of a truth group in Northern Ireland, claimed that the Commission's work was "a remarkable set of best practices" and "and an extraordinary achievement." "The problem," he continued, "is city officials." Similarly, Eduardo Gonzalez described the *Final Report* as "a towering achievement," and he went on to say that the Commission's recommendations offered "a golden opportunity for Greensboro to...reverse its imprudent decision to oppose the project." And Doria Johnson—the head of committee in South Carolina to memorialize lynching victims—said that the Greensboro city council's "refusal to wrap their arms around the truth-and-reconciliation process simply exposes them for who they are." These individuals certainly reinforced the narrative that commissioners offered in their *Final Report*. But more than this, these practitioners of transitional justice identified themselves with commissioners through their remarks, thereby reinforcing the commissioners' definition arguments in the Introduction and helping to legitimate the commissioners' claim to their title.

Conclusion: On Definition Arguments

One of my goals in this chapter has been to provide insights into the rhetorical workings of the Introduction to the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Final Report*. As the chapter has demonstrated, commissioners reaccentuated the widely-accepted definition of "truth commissions" to identify with other truth commissions and thereby garner authority for their version of reality and bring about change in the community. Complicating this rhetorical reaccentuation, however, was the fact that the commissioners did not issue their report in a rhetorical vacuum; they issued their report in a context in which opposing definitional arguments circulated. There was, in other words, a definitional dispute over the status of the Greensboro TRC. While this definitional dispute rarely surfaced explicitly in the statements of the city council members or in the writings of the commissioners, it had a great impact on the Commission's ability to

garner authority. Therefore, I have tried, throughout this chapter, to bring this definitional dispute into relief by juxtaposing the commissioners' arguments in their Introduction with the arguments of the mayor and city council members. I believe that this chapter testifies to the fact that definitions serve as both enablements and constraints, and that they are used to serve particular interests.

My close reading highlights that the complex definition argument that appears in the Introduction of the Greensboro TRC's *Final Report* simultaneously attempts to redefine what the term "truth commission" means and to position the Greensboro TRC as a legitimate truth commission, in order to garner its authority. But my analysis in this chapter has implications beyond this clearer understanding of the ways in which the Commission garnered authority through its *Final Report*. It also contributes to rhetorical studies, both by highlighting some of the strategies that rhetors use to define and redefine terms and by demonstrating the value of an interpretative framework that considers the ways in which acts of definition may be used to constitute *ethos* and garner authority. With regard to the former, in his *Sourcebook on Rhetoric*, James Jasinski notes that, within the discipline of rhetorical studies, there has been important work done on the changing meaning of key terms that circulate in American culture, like the changing meanings of the term "liberal," for example ("Definition" 152); however, a need remains for scholars to highlight the strategies that rhetors use to effect these changes: "While scholars have been devoting increased attention to charting the shifting definitions of key terms in our political culture, less attention has been paid to the particular discursive dynamics—the strategies of definition and redefinition—by which the meanings of words are remade" (153). He then lists seven strategies of definition and redefinition that have already been identified by other scholars, which include stipulative definitions (an act of definition based on how a term should be used in a particular context), condensed definition (an act of definition that makes a case for what is "essential" about a given term), authoritative definition (an act of definition that appeals to the ways that those in positions of political/cultural power use a term), etymological definition (an act of definition grounded in the historical meanings of a term), dissociation (an act of definition that purports that some meanings of a term are Real, while others are illusory), negation (an act of definition based on what a term does not mean), and metaphorical

definition (an act of definition in which metaphors are used to attribute meaning to a term) (153-154).

My reading of the Greensboro TRC's *Final Report* adds to this list several strategies for *expanding* the meaning of a term—a type of argument *about* definition. One such expansion strategy involves what I'll call "category synthesis," in which rhetors expand the meaning of a term (e.g., truth commissions) by introducing a second category of things (truth projects) that is distinct from but similar to the category in question and then collapsing the two categories into a single category. They collapse the two categories by arguing, explicitly or implicitly, that the distinguishing features of the categories (truth commissions are official, and truth projects are unofficial) are not essential but incidental and by holding up a feature shared by both categories as essential (both, according to the Greensboro TRC's *Final Report*, "tell a version of history that includes the victims' experiences and voices, recognizes their humanity and rights, and seeks to come to terms with abuse in all of its many dimensions"). Another closely related expansion strategy involves the rhetor introducing examples of things that fall in a second, separate category (e.g., Australia's Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, which is typically defined as an "historical truth commission"), without highlighting that a different category of things has been introduced. Provided that audiences do not question whether or not the example (Australia's Commission) belongs in the category under consideration (truth commissions), its defining attributes (establishment in a time of relative political stability) may be assimilated into the first category of things. Figures of speech may also facilitate this type of expansion: in claiming, for example, that "[t]ruth commissions are victim-oriented...but we are not victim-biased," the Greensboro TRC positions itself as a truth commission; yet their use of antithesis, which repeats and thus highlights the term "victim" in the second half of each colon, detracts attention away from the fact that a definitional move has been made here.

In addition to highlighting these strategies that may be used to redefine terms, my close reading also reveals important strategies for making arguments *from* definitions. One particularly interesting strategy involves reframing an attribute (lack of state sanction) that would typically disqualify some entity (in this case, the Greensboro TRC)

from belonging to a category (truth commissions) as another attribute (independence) that qualifies that entity for the group. A second, related strategy involves reframing the situation in which the definition argument at issue is being put forth, in order to validate the definition argument. Thus, the commissioners (and members of the Project) frame the object of inquiry—the events of November 3rd, 1979—in terms of the “context, causes, sequence, and consequence” of the event, suggesting that it is more akin to a “pattern of events” than a “single event,” and lending credibility to the following syllogism: a truth commission investigates a pattern of events; the Greensboro TRC investigates a pattern of events; therefore, the Greensboro TRC is a truth commission. In both of these cases, other acts of definition—arguments *about* definition—are being utilized in order to lend legitimacy to the argument *from* definition in question.

My close reading in this chapter also has implications for rhetorical critics, particularly with regard to the interpretative questions we bring to definition arguments. Toward the end of his book *Defining Reality*, Schiappa offers two important sets of questions intended to aid in the interrogation and interpretation of definition arguments. The first set of questions to ask when interpreting definition arguments includes the following: “*Whose* interests [and values] are being served by a particular definition?” (177). The second set includes the question, “Who has the power to define?” (178). Schiappa goes on to elaborate why such questions are important. “[I]t is important,” he writes, “to ask questions about power relations because our lives can be profoundly affected by such decisions; indeed, the questions of who would have the authority to make definitional decisions amounts literally to who has the power to delineate what counts as Real” (178). I agree with Schiappa that such questions are important; however, he makes an assumption here, and throughout much of his book, that I think this chapter begins to call into question. One of the things this chapter suggests is that acts of definition have the potential to contribute to or detract from a rhetor’s *ethos* and authority. This point may be obvious in the case of the Greensboro TRC’s argument *from* definition, in which the definitional status of the Commission itself is in question. But it is also true in cases in which the rhetor is not the entity that is being explicitly defined, and rhetorical critics should pay more attention to this fact.

Schiappa admits, of course, that definitions shape our worlds (e.g., “they delineate what counts as Real”), but he seems to assume that those doing the defining are, to cite Maurice Charland, “extra rhetorical” (133). That is, Schiappa’s questions suggest that the stakeholders in a given definition argument (as well as their authority) exist outside of the rhetorical situation and the act of definition itself. To give another example of this, Schiappa writes earlier in his book that “nukespeak”—the way “insiders and experts” use technical jargon to define weapons—allows these insiders and experts to obscure, normalize and trivialize the way such weapons are used to kill people (133-134). Without diminishing the point Schiappa is making, it is worth highlighting that the definition work in question here does not just shape how we understand what weapons are and what they do; it also helps constitute the “insiders and experts” as such. The identity of these insiders and experts, as well as their authority, is implicated in their use of technical jargon.

One of the reasons Schiappa does not consider how acts of definition constitute speakers and their authority may be rooted in the fact that he chooses, at the beginning of his book, to define his project solely in terms of persuasion: “A rhetorical analysis of definition...investigates how people persuade other people to adopt and use certain definitions to the exclusion of others” (4). However, as Charland has noted drawing upon the work of Kenneth Burke, a focus solely on persuasion “implies the existence of an agent who is free to be persuaded” (133). Charland then issues the following critique:

[R]hetorical theory’s privileging of an audience’s freedom to judge is problematic, for it assumes that audiences, with their prejudices, interests, and motives, are *given* and so extra rhetorical. Rhetorical criticism...posits the existence of transcendental subjects whom discourse would mediate. In other words, rhetorical theory usually refuses to consider the possibility that the very existence of social subjects (who would become audience members) is already a rhetorical effect. (133)

What this discussion and my close reading suggest, then, is that there is another interpretative question to consider—in addition to “Who has the power to define?”—with regard to authority and definitional arguments: How do acts of definition constitute both “who” rhetors are and what “power” they have?

Before concluding this chapter, it is worth noting that the definition arguments that the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission constructs in the Introduction

to its *Final Report* extend beyond the Introduction itself, although their appearances elsewhere are less explicit, though perhaps no less significant. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, the Greensboro TRC's attempts to position itself as a truth commission reinforce its right to particular forms of social action, including the genre of the final report itself—a genre that offers commissioners a space to make judgments and propose future actions. This process of authorization is recursive: the definition argument reinforces the right to the genre, and, in turn, the use of the genre reinforces the argument *from* definition that the Greensboro TRC is, in fact, a truth commission. Recall that both Hayner and the Commission's definitions of "truth commission" stipulate that these institutions conclude their work with the submission of a final report.¹⁴³

Similar arguments can be made about the Commission's title. At the beginning of this chapter, I suggested that the definition arguments in the Introduction helped the Commission lay claim to their title. But the reverse is also true: the Commission's title—spoken thousands of times, and printed in newspapers and ceremony programs, on websites and weblogs, on banners and fliers, and even throughout this dissertation—reinforces that the Greensboro inquiry is a legitimate truth commission. Titles are, after all, constitutive. To borrow from Kenneth Burke's famous discussion of "terministic screens" in his book *Language as Symbolic Action*, the title "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" is not only "a *reflection* of reality, [but] by its very nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function as a *deflection* of reality" (45). "Nomenclature," Burke continues, "necessarily directs the attention into

¹⁴³ The materiality of the report plays a role in this process. In *An African Athens*, author Philippe-Joseph Salazar devotes part of a chapter to the rhetorical ritual surrounding the presentation and delivery of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission's five-volume final report to President Nelson Mandela on Thursday, October 29, 1998. He says, "The delivery of the *Report* marked a change in tempo in the unfolding of South African democratic rhetoric. It was no mere remitting of a written document, but a way for the TRC to administer proof of its claim that it had achieved its aim: to tell the truth, and to promote reconciliation" (Salazar 76). The actual report, he goes on to add, is highly significant in this demonstration of the TRC's accomplishment: "The material nature of the TRC *Report* is an indication of one rhetorical facet of the presentation itself. It is a laudation of the ability of the commission to encapsulate its work and to fulfill its mandate" (Salazar 77). Salazar is right on this point, and his insight is one that may be applied, with little difficulty, to the Greensboro TRC's report. The Greensboro TRC's *Final Report* itself is most certainly a kind of proof, demonstrating the commissioners' accomplishments and validating the commissioners themselves. But more importantly for my purposes, the Greensboro report (and here, like Salazar, I'm speaking of the material nature of the report) is a significant means—along with the public hearings—by which the Greensboro TRC lays claim to the title "truth commission." That is, the report itself provides physical, material evidence of the definitional argument put forth in the Introduction.

some channels rather than others” (45). In other words, titles shape how we perceive and understand the world. And they are more than mere labels; they give things “a particular status” (Schiappa 114). I take it to be highly significant, then, that, though the mayor and dissenting city council repeatedly attacked the Commission on definitional grounds, and did so in ways that suggested the inquiry was not a truth commission, they continued to refer to it as such. To my knowledge, at no point do any of the Commission’s critics call for a name change.

While it is difficult to say, less than three years after the Commission’s operation, how (and how extensively) the commissioners’ claims to the title of truth commission will shape the rhetorical traditions of the field of transitional justice, there is evidence that they will indeed shape the traditions to at least some extent. One indication of this fact is Pricilla Hayner’s own reconceptualization of the term. At the time the Commission was being formed, Hayner worked as the research program director for the International Center for Transitional Justice, the organization that provided consultation and support to both the Project and the Commission. In a telephone interview with Sally Bermanzohn, one of the survivors of November 3rd, 1979, Hayner remarked, “Many countries are holding truth commissions organized by governments or nongovernmental organizations...[these] many truth-seeking projects reflect a global realization that something is missing in the process of addressing human rights abuses, even when the victims have successes in courts. A nation, or a community within a nation, needs to reflect, to come to terms with specific incidents or patterns of injustice” (Bermanzohn 370). Note, in the space of a few lines, Hayner’s definitional maneuvering around her own widely-accepted definition of “truth commissions”: here, unlike in *Unspeakable Truths*, she does not distinguish between “truth commissions” and “truth-seeking projects”; she suggests that nongovernmental organizations may be the organizing force behind truth commissions; she suggests that truth commissions can operate at a national or community level; and she expands the object of inquiry of truth commissions to “specific incidents” as well as “patterns of injustice.”¹⁴⁴ What I’m struck by in both

¹⁴⁴ Hayner was even more explicit in a January 23rd, 2006 interview with Chelsea Marshall, the Commission’s public hearings coordinator: “[T]he difference in definition is much, much less important than the bigger picture of what [the GTRC] was supposed to do” (Marshall 85).

Hayner's remarks and in the commissioners' Introduction is their willingness to use definition to meet the contingent demands of a particular context. Both Hayner and the commissioners seem to acknowledge, even if only implicitly, that definitions are best conceptualized pragmatically, as rhetorical tools with which to act in communities and in the world.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

This dissertation has explored how, through rhetorical means, the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission attempted to garner the authority to bring about social change in the Greensboro community. Using a close reading approach, I have demonstrated that the Greensboro TRC and its advocates reaccentuated, in their own context, the rhetorical traditions of prior truth commissions to position the Commission in the community, and thereby warrant its actions and claims. To set up this argument, I highlighted, in chapter two, the rhetorical moves made by Desmond Tutu in his Foreword to the *Final Report* of the South African TRC, focusing, in particular, on Tutu's use of middle ground arguments to strategically position the Commission in relation to the African National Congress and National Party, as well as other antagonistic groups in South Africa. Chapter three explored Bongani Finca's performance of *ubuntu* in his speech at the Greensboro TRC's Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, which functioned to endorse the commissioners and position them as authorities among their fellow citizens of Greensboro. Commissioners, as I showed in chapter four, established both identification with and division from the Greensboro community by constructing their organizational *ethos* in two, somewhat incongruous ways: as both representative and unrepresentative of the Greensboro community. These conflicting positions allowed commissioners to warrant various actions throughout the Commission's operation, and also allowed them to set the Commission up as a normative model for the community. But not all of the community was receptive to the Commission, as chapter five demonstrated. In the Introduction to their *Final Report*, commissioners used Pricilla Hayner's widely-accepted definition of "truth commissions" to position themselves alongside past truth commissions and thereby warrant their narrative about the city of

Greensboro and November 3rd, 1979—a contested narrative about systemic racism in the community.

Advocates of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission often championed it as the first of its kind in the United States, which it was (GTCRP, “Program”). But this dissertation has demonstrated that, though the Commission was the first of its kind *in* the United States, it was not solely *of* the United States. The Commission repeatedly reaccentuated rhetorical traditions circulating outside of Greensboro, as well as those circulating outside the borders of the United States. And while this claim is not meant to suggest that the Commission did not rely on any aspects of U.S. rhetorical traditions in its bids for authority, it is meant to suggest that connections between Greensboro and South Africa played an essential role in the Commission’s construction of authority. That is, the practices of the Greensboro TRC were bound up in the practices of international communities—communities whose members included (among others) Desmond Tutu, Bongani Finca, Peter Storey, and members of the International Center for Transitional Justice, like Lisa Magarrell and Pricilla Hayner. This final chapter lays out some implications of these findings.

This dissertation’s arguments situate the project primarily in the discipline of rhetorical studies and are intended to address a community of scholars who, despite their commitments to different theoretical and methodological frameworks, share the common convictions that language shapes our worlds and that the study of language is necessary to understand those worlds and also provides a way to act in them. The choice to address this particular audience shapes what is at stake in this project and shapes what the implications of this project’s findings are. This final chapter reflects upon the significance and implications of this project for this audience as well as other audiences: upon what the project might mean for the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project; for scholars studying truth commissions; for future practitioners of transitional justice, especially those in U.S.-based communities or community organizations looking to redress past injustices; and for rhetoricians. Because I am not a member of some of these groups, the remarks here are not intended as recommendations but as reflections; ultimately, the ways in which this work may (or may not) matter to these communities should not be left solely up to me. What I hope emerges from this

attempt to attend to several different audiences in this chapter is, on the one hand, a sense of the worth of reading, with care, the words of those seeking justice in one city in the United States and, on the other hand, a sense of the limitations of a study such as this one. This chapter begins by considering the latter.

Project Limitations and Future Directions

This dissertation leaves many things unsaid. Some things remain unsaid—and have undoubtedly even been obscured—as a result of the project’s methodological and theoretical emphases; other things remain unsaid as a result of the choice to focus on the field of transitional justice and foreground the Greensboro TRC’s reaccentuation of the rhetorical traditions surrounding truth commissions (as opposed to other rhetorical traditions that were drawn on by the Greensboro TRC). This section is an attempt to reflect on some of what has been left unsaid, first by interrogating this project’s methodology and suggesting a possible alternative approach to the study of the Greensboro TRC and second by mentioning a few of the other rhetorical traditions that informed the performances of the Commission.

Reflections on Method

As explained in chapter one, in this study I navigate between rhetoric as extensional power and rhetoric as intentional art, using the concepts of rhetorical tradition and rhetorical performance. My intent is to provide robust accounts of the text surrounding the operation of the Greensboro TRC as well as the contexts in which these texts emerged. And yet, the analyses place a greater emphasis on rhetorical performances than on rhetorical traditions and a corresponding emphasis on constructed textual products as opposed to constitutive textual processes. Given the lack of empirical work in the field of transitional justice, such an emphasis is productive and necessary; but, as with all methodological approaches, in the process of bringing some facets of the Greensboro TRC’s operation, other things have been obscured. For one thing, my argument highlights the enabling resources that the rhetorical traditions surrounding truth commissions afforded the members of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation

Commission at the expense, perhaps, of an account of the ways in which the traditions constrained those who were caught up in it.

Thus, there is still a need to explore the ways that power circulates in and through the rhetorical traditions surrounding truth commissions, and how such traditions shut down possibilities for action and elide *difference*. There is, in other words, a need for another project—complementary to this one—that would explore the rhetorical traditions surrounding truth commissions as a discursive formation. Instead of taking a close reading approach as my dissertation does, such a project might take a genealogical approach to discourse. That is, the project might involve tracing (and, perhaps, deconstructing) the ways in which the patterned ways of using language constrain knowledge production and constitute (shifting) relations of power (Foucault 233-34). Such a project might also investigate how individuals are interpellated as subjects by the rhetoric of truth and reconciliation and how this discourse functions ideologically. It might, for example, interrogate some of the dominant ideographs of the discourse (e.g., “truth,” “reconciliation,” and “restorative justice”) and their clustered relations to one another. An ideograph, according to Michael McGee, is “an ordinary-language term found in political discourse. It is a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal. It warrants the use of power, excuses behavior and beliefs which might otherwise be perceived as eccentric or antisocial, and guides behavior and belief into channels easily recognized by a community as acceptable and laudable” (McGee 15). Such a study might help to unmask the ways in which reconciliation may function as what Erik Doxtader calls a “new mode of colonial logic.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ My focus on rhetorical traditions as opposed to discursive formations, and on enablements as opposed constraints, may betray my personal belief that the Greensboro TRC was, for the most part, using rhetoric to do doing positive political and social work in Greensboro in order to challenge the ways in which some individuals had been marginalized as a result of their race and/or class. While I tried, throughout this project, to provide a descriptive and objective analysis of the Commission’s rhetorical activity, my methodological choices themselves may reflect my bias that truth commissions can be effective social tools for restoring relationships and working toward social justice. Given my own beliefs about the value of the truth and reconciliation process in Greensboro, I did not want to vilify the Commission. I think such an emphasis is appropriate: sometimes—and, perhaps, often—rhetorical activity needs to be celebrated for the ways in which it challenges harmful assumptions, promotes dialogue, and builds community.

Reflections on Findings

This dissertation focuses on the ways in which the Greensboro Project and the Commission reaccentuated the rhetorical traditions surrounding truth commissions, focusing on the influence of the South African TRC. There are additional complexities to the rhetorical situation of the Commission that warrant further study: other rhetorical traditions were circulating in Greensboro during the operation of the Commission (not all of which were consistent with those that emerged from South Africa), and the Commission also drew upon some of these traditions in an attempt to garner authority for its claims and actions. These multiple traditions do not exist in isolation from one another. To quote John Murphy, “[T]here are layered and dissonant voices within and between traditions. Traditions ‘speak’ to each other and to pressing problems of the day. No one tradition can finalize the world or itself” (73). A monograph might consider, in more detail than I do here, how the Commission orchestrated these multiple traditions: it might involve, to cite James Jasinski, “charting the organization of, and interaction among, performative traditions within the field of the text” (Jasinski, “Instrumentalism” 212).¹⁴⁶ While I want to maintain that my emphasis on the rhetorical traditions surrounding truth commissions is essential for understanding how the Commission garnered authority (and also essential for understanding how the field of transitional justice is developing in the United States), it is worth highlighting three other rhetorical traditions that the commissioners performed, which would undoubtedly play a central role in such an account.

The Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project drew upon rhetorical traditions surrounding the civil rights movement. Two examples warrant brief mention. The first occurred during the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, when speaker Congressman Melvin Watt connected the events of November 3rd, 1979 to the civil rights movement:

One of the founding documents of this republic, the Declaration of Independence, declares, quote, “We hold these truths to be self evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit

¹⁴⁶ About “orchestration” Murphy writes, “[A]s the metaphor [of orchestration] implies, each instrument in the orchestra asserts its integrity and demands respect. The various voices illuminate each other and the composition as a whole” (74).

of happiness.” The history of our nation will show that obtaining these rights for all the citizens of this country has been a long, demanding, and often torturous undertaking. It is an undertaking that is still incomplete. We are gathered here today in the spirit of the many citizen-initiated efforts to continue the fight to secure these rights. For example, the revolutionary war, the long struggle to abolish slavery, the struggle for universal suffrage, the struggle against child labor abuses, and the struggle for civil rights and labor justice. All of these initiatives are part of ongoing efforts initiated by citizens to secure and maintain the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The circumstances, events, and aftermath related to the tragic killing of labor and community organizers, the wounding of ten other people, and the terrorizing and disruption of this community, must now attach themselves to the long legacy of citizens efforts to seek truth, justice, and peace for their community. (GTCRP, “Swearing in”)

Watt connects events surrounding the Communist Workers Party’s November 3rd, 1979 rally to other citizen-led efforts to establish civil rights—efforts that Watt characterizes in terms of struggle. He uses the word no less than four times in this passage, as well as modifiers like long, demanding, and torturous. What is important here is that, for Watt, the events of November 3rd, 1979 are not simply *like* the other struggles he mentions; rather, they “attach” to and serve as a continuation of them. This is a casebook example of what rhetoricians refer to as articulation, which is “the way in which discourse is used to make connections, establish associations, or build links between different things—different events, different social movements, different ideas, different people, and so on. The type of connection that is made through articulation is different from the connections established through *analogy* or *parallel case* argument...In discursive articulation, the cases are not simply parallel or similar to each other; they are fused, combined, and connected” (Jasinski, “Articulation” 65). Watt’s act of articulation reframes November 3rd, 1979: while members of the CWP did see their work on that day as an attempt to establish rights for marginalized individuals, they were highly suspicious of the government at the time and would not have framed the November 3rd, 1979 rally as an outgrowth of a larger *national* project, as Watt does here by quoting from the Declaration of Independence and connecting the event to a “history of our nation” characterized by citizen-led initiatives to secure life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all. Reframing November 3rd, 1979 serves as an attempt to render the event—and, by

extension, the Commission's inquiry into the event—as more palatable to the citizens of Greensboro.

The second instance worth mentioning occurred on the night before the Report Release Ceremony. On that night, the Project held an interfaith religious service, so that the community could prepare, spiritually, to receive the report. The Project invited Rev. Vernon King, the nephew of Martin Luther King, Jr., to deliver the sermon at the preparation service. Vernon King's message—which called the Greensboro community to turn off their televisions, get off their couches, and act for social justice—made mention of Martin Luther King, Jr. multiple times, aligning King's project with that of the Commission.

Watt's act of articulation and the Project's invitation to Vernon King to speak at the service of spiritual preparation both differ considerably from the approach taken by the commissioners, who did not refer to their work as an outgrowth of the founding documents of the United States or civil rights efforts. While the Project drew upon the rhetorical traditions surrounding civil rights initiatives to garner authority for the Commission, the commissioners themselves did not often do so, in part because one of the things *at issue* in their inquiry was whether or not the November 3rd, 1979 rally was, in fact, primarily about civil rights. And since the Commission could not position itself as an extension of civil rights initiatives to garner its authority and speak against racial and economic injustices, it used different rhetorical traditions—namely, those surrounding truth commissions—to accomplish these same ends.

As the interfaith religious service on the eve of the Report Release Ceremony suggests, the performances surrounding the operation of the Commission also drew upon rhetorical traditions of civil religion, at least as practiced in the United States, to garner authority. Civil religion has been defined as “the ‘operative religion’ of a society...the system of rituals, symbols, values, norms, and allegiances that function in the ongoing life of the community and provide it with an overarching sense of unity that transcends all internal conflicts and differences” (Pierard 267). It is the “general” religious faith of a society, as opposed to “the ‘particular’ faith of sectarian or denominational groups which can claim the allegiance of only a segment of the population” (267). During the operation of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the rhetorical traditions of civil

religion were performed primarily through the prayers at the beginning and end of the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony and the Report Release Ceremony—each of which included an invocation and a benediction directed to a transcendent, non-specific deity that was appealed to for unity. The commissioners’ choice to end their final event, the Report Release Ceremony, with a quotation of Reinhold Niebuhr is another example of the deployment of civil religion traditions; religious scholar Martin Marty has described Reinhold Niebuhr as one of the “prophets” of civil religion in America (267).¹⁴⁷ In addition to providing rituals that direct audience attention and behavior in ways that reinforce the Commission’s claims to objectivity (as discussed in chapter four of this project), these rhetorical moves function to garner the support of audience members from a variety of religious backgrounds, many of whom were probably comfortable with non-specific religious ritual but may have been less comfortable with creedal formulations taken from particular religious faiths and denominations. Put another way, the Project and Commission’s performances of civil religion serve as an attempt to ground the commissioners’ work in a higher authority without risking alienating audience members by making definite claims about the nature of that authority.

¹⁴⁷ In claiming that the Project and the Commission drew upon the rhetorical traditions surrounding civil religion in the United States is not to say that they did not also, sometimes simultaneously, draw upon other religious rhetorical traditions, especially Christianity. While it is not possible to do justice to these influences here, a fuller account would have to acknowledge such influences. Such an account might consider, for example, the reaccentuation of rhetorical traditions through the performance of musical selections at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony and the Report Release Ceremony. For example, at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony, the commissioners recessed out of the auditorium to the song “We are Marching in the Light of God,” composed by a South African in the 1950s. The song, originally written in Afrikaans and later translated into Zulu, was published in the songbook *Freedom is Coming: Songs of Protest and Praise from South Africa* in 1984 and was later adopted in a variety of hymnals. The song “By and By”—sung at the Report Release Ceremony—comes from a different tradition. Written in 1905, the song has connections to the Methodist denomination and was written by preacher Charles Tindley, who is considered to be one of the originators of American gospel music. (More broadly, I think it would be worthwhile to trace, diachronically, the ways in which the rhetorical traditions of Christianity are implicated in the rhetorical traditions of truth and reconciliation commissions—a project that, to my knowledge, has not yet been attempted. Suffice it to say that the South African reaccentuation of the rhetorical tradition of truth and reconciliation commissions often shaped the tradition according to the themes and tropes of Christian doctrine. As I noted in chapter two, chair of the South African TRC Archbishop Desmond Tutu was often blamed with bringing specifically Christian doctrine to the truth and reconciliation process, although a more nuanced critique would need to acknowledge the roles that non-governmental Christian religious organizations in South Africa played in instituting the Commission and implementing the Commission’s broad and complex mandate throughout the country’s many regions.)

Finally, members of the Project and the commissioners invited academics to participate in the Commission's inquiry and public events to bolster authority for their claims. For example, commissioners hired a research director—Dr. Emily Harwell, who, after receiving her Ph.D. from Yale University, worked on the East Timor Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation—and two research assistants. Additionally, nearly a fourth of the fifty-four people that testified at the Commission's public hearings were professors or doctoral candidates. And the Commission's *Final Report* is, in many ways, organized much like a research project in the social sciences: it includes a methodology section, highlighting the Commission's data sources, standard of evidence, theoretical framework, and means of community engagement; historical analyses; a series of findings; and a conclusion. The invitation to academics, as well as the adoption of some of the facets of academic discourse in the *Final Report*, helps to lend credibility to the commissioners' inquiry by showcasing "experts" and expert-like genres.

While this list of other rhetorical traditions deployed by the Project and the Commission is not exhaustive, it provides an indication of some of the traditions that would inevitably play into a larger project that traces how the Project and Commission negotiated multiple, sometimes contradicting traditions to garner the authority to carry out their mandate and legitimate their claims about November 3rd, 1979.

Project Implications

Having sketched a few of this project's limitations, and, in so doing, gestured toward some possible avenues for future research, I want to turn to the chief burden of this chapter: a discussion of the implications of my findings for members of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Project, for scholars studying the field of transitional justice, for practitioners of transitional justice, and, finally, for rhetoricians.

Implications for the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project

This study may have implications for action for members of the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project and other members of the Greensboro community who continue to work, daily, to bring about racial and economic justice in the city. It may, for example, offer community members ways of making sense of the formation and

operation of the Greensboro TRC that help them develop policies—or make rhetorical moves—to bring about and/or sustain social change in the city. However, rather than suggest a course of action for the people of Greensboro based on my findings, I leave it to these individuals, who know the community much better than I do, to make use (or not make use) of my work as they see fit. To them, I offer this dissertation as a possible talking point—an answer to the Project’s call to continue to discuss and critique the Commission’s work.

Implications for Scholars Studying Truth Commissions

There has been a tendency, in the study of truth commissions, to conceptualize these institutions as national projects that operate, largely, in and through the civil society of a given country. Pricilla Hayner’s book *Unspeakable Truths* is representative in this regard: Hayner surveys twenty-one truth commissions in the text, and she arranges her descriptions of these truth commissions by the country in which they were instituted. Given that most truth commissions are instituted by national governments, such divisions are not surprising. However, what these divisions elide, and what my study begins to bring into relief (by tracing how the Greensboro TRC drew upon rhetorical traditions of past truth commissions in their rhetorical performances), is the importance of transnational forces in shaping and being used to shape the establishment and operation of truth commissions. While this point is not meant to suggest that all past truth commissions relied on international affiliations to the extent that the Greensboro TRC did (although many certainly may have), I think there is a need among scholars studying truth commissions—even those studying highly nationalistic commissions—to pay greater attention to the international forces that help give rise to and sustain these institutions. Such a research agenda may be generative in furthering our understanding about how truth commissions work (or don’t work) as political and social tools to bring about change.

The need for a more thorough account of the ways that international forces give rise to and sustain truth commissions may be predicated, in part, on the emergence of global civil society. Civil society is typically defined as the sector of society comprised of voluntary groups and organizations—which include, but are not limited to, religious

institutions, trade unions, mass media, and political parties—that is not controlled by the government. It is understood both to provide protections against the authoritarian interests of the state and, to the extent that civil society is also made possible by the protections offered by the state, often to serve state interests. Truth commissions—even those instituted by the state—are typically understood to carry out much of their work in civil society. However, in recent years, expanded and enhanced networks of communications and media technologies have developed, which have given rise to “an interweaving and strengthening of ties between multiple civil societies” (DeChaine 5). The result has been the development of what some are calling global civil society—the societal sphere comprised of multiple civil societies that are interconnected by common values and interests, often across geographical spaces and nationally defined territories. As D. Robert DeChaine’s recent work on humanitarian NGOs makes clear, global civil society offers a viable source of political authority for non-governmental actors (like those who founded the Greensboro TRC as well as the commissioners themselves), and the political authority garnered through global civil society may serve to attenuate the authority of the nation-state. Drawing upon the work of Stuart Hall and Ronald J. Deibert, DeChaine writes, “Through its circumnavigation of political boundaries, the transnational social forces that make up global civil society ‘undermine states’ monopoly of legitimate authority over a territorially defined populace, which is one of the central ideas of sovereignty” (6).¹⁴⁸ This undermining of the “legitimate authority”—the sovereignty—of the nation-state means that, for some members of the state, “‘global identifications begin to displace, and sometimes override, national ones’” (30).¹⁴⁹ Authority is thereby redistributed so that “national governments are increasingly sharing traditionally sovereign powers with nonstate actors, signifying a weakening of state powers in relation to national autonomy” (50). (Take, as just one example from my study, Bongani Finca’s attempts at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony to establish global identifications between the people of Greensboro and the people of South Africa. While it is unlikely that Finca’s remarks alone overrode the audience’s national identifications, they, together with the many other global identifications established through the truth

¹⁴⁸ DeChaine quotes here from Ronald J. Deibert’s “Altered Worlds” (35).

¹⁴⁹ DeChaine is quoting Stuart Hall here (302).

commission process, may have attenuated some individuals' alignments with the city and strengthened alignments with the Commission.) To avoid looking at international forces in the study of the development of truth commissions is to risk missing important ways in which these institutions act in their communities and nations.

Attending to international forces and global civil society is especially important for the study of truth commissions in the U.S. context. One of the reasons it is so important relates to an argument, put forth by some scholars, that the goals of political reconciliation offered by truth commissions are incompatible with the values of liberalism (Philpott 11-44). Daniel Philpott lists several reasons why the two are often seen as incompatible. For one thing, the commonplace operating within the tradition of liberalism that criminals should be punished for their crimes is inconsistent with political reconciliation. Mechanisms of political reconciliation, like truth commissions, often do not provide accountability in the form of punishment, or, at the very least, they suggest that criminals should be punished in different ways than in the liberal tradition (e.g., perpetrators receive moral censure as opposed to jail time or even death) (26). Another reason that political reconciliation and liberalism are often seen as incompatible is because the former and all it entails (i.e., forgiveness, repentance, etc.) is viewed as an "improper concern of the state" (27). The tradition of liberalism demarcates "spheres of activity in which the state is not to interfere" (otherwise known as "negative liberties"); and reconciliation, with its ties to personal belief, is one of those spheres (27). A third, more practical reason that Philpott mentions is that calls for political reconciliation do not guarantee social unity. If a given public views attempts at political reconciliation as unsuccessful or as "depriving victims of their due," then, says Philpott, "it will regard political reconciliation as a drain on the legitimacy of the new regime" (34). Such arguments are convincing; and, to the extent that they are correct, it is unlikely that the U.S. national or state governments will issue a call for a truth commission in the near future: most truth commissions in the U.S. will probably develop along lines similar to that of the Greensboro TRC, drawing heavily on the resources of past commissions and transnational networking made possible by an emergent global civil society. It therefore behooves those studying U.S.-based truth commissions to take into account the roles that international forces play in their development. In point of fact, since the formation and

operation of the Greensboro TRC, several truth commissions *have* been instituted in the United States, and a brief look at these commissions would seem to confirm the necessity of research that explores the international affiliations of these institutions (or, at least, situates such institutions in an international context).

Certainly one of the most striking examples of a truth commission operating in the U.S. is the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Liberia formed a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2005; and, while Liberia's political history is too complex to adequately recount here, a few remarks about this history are necessary to understand what the Liberian TRC might have to do with the development of transitional justice in the United States. Liberia was originally established in the 1820s by the American Colonization Society as a colony for freed African-American slaves. These Americo-Liberians settlers, as they came to be called, established their country's independence in 1847. However, like most colonial narratives, this one involves conflict and marginalization of peoples: the West-African region that would become Liberia was not unoccupied when it was settled by the Americo-Liberians, and the history of Liberia from the middle of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century might arguably be read as a series of conflicts between the indigenous Liberians (who make up the vast majority of the Liberian population) and the Americo-Liberians. The latter controlled Liberia for much of the twentieth century, and they often imposed their cultural beliefs on the former. However, in 1980, a military coup, led by indigenous Liberians, gave way to a shift in political power. The new leadership took a more authoritarian approach to governing than the previous regime, and two civil wars followed, lasting from 1989 to 1996 and from 1999 to 2003 (Dunn-Marcos et al. 4). It is estimated that, during these wars, over two hundred thousand people were killed and hundreds of thousands were displaced from their homes (2). In response to these forced displacements, the United States developed a resettlement program for Liberian refugees. More than 24,000 Liberians have traveled to the United States since 1989 (1).

The authoritarian government was ousted in 2003, and a transitional government was formed in the country, leading to peaceful, democratic elections in 2005. Following the elections, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf called for the establishment of a Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission to address the mass atrocities committed in the

country; and, on May 12, 2005, the Liberian National Transitional Legislative Assembly established the Liberian TRC, in order to investigate “gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law as well as abuses that occurred, including massacres, sexual violations, murder, extrajudicial killings and economic crimes, such as the exploitation of natural or public resources to perpetuate armed conflicts, during the period January 1979 to October 14, 2003” (Liberian TRC). As I’m writing this chapter, Liberia’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission is in the process of conducting hearings and taking statements. What is important for my purposes is the fact that this process has not been limited to those living within Liberia but has been extended to include displaced Liberians living in the United States and elsewhere (Minnesota Advocates, “Liberian”).¹⁵⁰ The non-governmental organization Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights has partnered with the Liberian TRC with the hope of collecting up to two-thousand statements from Liberians living in the U.S. (Minnesota Advocates, “Volunteer”). According to the organization’s website, U.S. statement-taking began in Minnesota in 2006, and statements are currently being collected from Liberians living in other U.S. cities, including Atlanta, Chicago, New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Providence, and Washington D.C. (Minnesota Advocates, “Liberian”; Barry). The organization also plans to conduct public hearings and will contribute to the Liberian TRC’s final report.

The Liberian TRC provides another example of how transitional justice has developed in the U.S. In this case, the U.S.-based non-governmental organization gathering testimony, the Liberian Diaspora Project, has even stronger international ties than the Greensboro TRC did; its authority is warranted, in large measure, by the Liberian government. This is not to say that rhetorical performances are not important; however, the Liberian Diaspora Project does have access to state-sponsored authority, which the Greensboro TRC lacked. Despite these and other complex differences with the Greensboro TRC, the case of the Liberian TRC confirms the importance of transnational affiliations in the authorization of transitional justice endeavors in the U.S. Like the

¹⁵⁰ The Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights are also collecting statements in the United Kingdom and in Ghana.

Greensboro TRC, the Liberian Diaspora Project in the U.S. relies on transnational affiliations to warrant its actions.

Two other truth commissions were recently formed to address questions of poverty in the United States, and these truth commissions, too, speak to the importance of transnational affiliations as a means of authorization. On July 15-17, 2006, the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign held a three-day truth commission in Cleveland, Ohio, attended by over 500 people (PPEHRC). The Commission's website notes that it was "modeled after similar commissions in Africa and Latin America" and that it "brought people from all across the U.S. and the world to bring to light the actual suffering and economic human rights violations that many Americans endure on a daily basis" (PPEHRC). The Commission was comprised of both domestic and international commissioners—one of which was South African Winnie Mandela. In addition to the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign's truth commission, a smaller poverty truth commission was organized by Union Theological Seminary in New York City on April 13, 2007 (Poverty Initiative). The day-long truth commission was, according to its website, "inspired by the Truth and Reconciliation work done in places such as South Africa and Peru" and "based on the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (Poverty Initiative).¹⁵¹

Another truth commission initiative in the U.S. is the formation of STAR, which stands for Southern Truth and Reconciliation. According to STAR's website, the organization "responds to requests from communities with histories of lynching and other communal forms of racial and ethnic violence. STAR partners with communities to adapt the truth and reconciliation process to local needs, on the premise that truth-telling and acknowledgement by all stakeholders must precede healing, reconciliation, and justice for the entire community" (Southern Truth and Reconciliation). While the organization has not yet formally instituted a truth commission, it did sponsor a conference at the University of Mississippi in March of 2006, entitled "Racial Violence and Reconciliation" (Ifill 174). What is telling with regard to STAR is that the organization was formed at the prompting of Desmond Tutu, during his recent two-year visiting

¹⁵¹ Significantly, one of the commissioners at Union Theological Seminary's poverty truth commission was Nelson Johnson, who helped organized the November 3rd, 1979 rally in Greensboro and was later instrumental in forming the Greensboro TRC.

professorship at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Law Professor Sherrilyn Ifill records how Tutu's injunction came about in her book *On the Courthouse Lawn: Confronting the Legacy of Lynching in the Twenty-First Century*. She writes, "After listening to academics and community leaders offer critiques of the South African TRC, Tutu issued a challenge: 'Stop studying our TRC and begin your own reconciliation process.' Community leaders took up the challenge and began to formulate what became STAR in 2003" (Ifill 174).¹⁵² Ifill, who currently serves as one of the members of STAR's advisory board, has been particularly vocal in taking up Tutu's call and advocating for truth and reconciliation projects to be developed in the United States. In her aforementioned book, Ifill explores the Eastern Shore lynchings and argues that the truth and reconciliation model should be employed to address the U.S. history of lynching and other forms of racial and ethnic violence (Ifill xv, 126).

These brief examples, in concert with my study, highlight the importance of a research agenda that focuses on truth commissions not simply as national projects operating in civil society but also as transnational phenomena that operate in and through global civil society. D. Robert DeChaine's conceptualization of NGOs provides an excellent model for how we might begin to think about truth commissions, at least as they are emerging in the U.S. context. For DeChaine, the current emphasis on NGOs as "monolithic organizational 'structures'" is problematic, insofar as it presupposes that such organizations are isolated from one another and obscures the "ever-shifting currents, nonlinear interconnections and interimbrications, and often less than tangible imaginative energies" between them (155). To address this problem, DeChaine references Arjun Appadurai's notion of "new neighborliness" and recommends re-conceptualizing NGOs as "shifting flows of people, ideas, resources, and most of all, power"—an act of definition that DeChaine claims will allow scholars to better attend to the ways in which resources—both material and non-material—travel in and among organizations (155). Studying truth commissions not as monolithic organizational structures but as shifting flows of resources may help us better understand how they function as social tools (and, perhaps more importantly, how they might function as *more effective* social tools) to

¹⁵² Other organizations devoted to the promotion of truth and/or reconciliation are the Alliance for Truth and Reconciliation, the William Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation, and the Philadelphia Coalition: Alliance for Truth and Racial Reconciliation.

redress inequalities. Moreover, to the extent that the interconnections and interimbrications that DeChaine mentions are discursively constructed (as many of them surely are), rhetoricians are particularly well suited to take up this work.

Implications for Practitioners of Transitional Justice

To other U.S.-based communities looking to address past violence or injustices, this study certainly highlights the importance of establishing affiliations outside of the community in order to garner authority to act—i.e., the importance of working in and through global civil society to bring about change. A second—and no less significant—thing at stake here for practitioners of transitional justice is the way in which they conceptualize how truth commissions (and, by extension, other forms of transitional justice) function as models for other countries and communities. As I indicated in chapter one, there has been a tendency among those who advocate for (and those who study) truth commissions to describe them as models at the structural or institutional level. Elizabeth Kiss, for example, notes that it is the “*institutional* repertoire of truth commissions [that] may be helpful in developing innovative approaches to a variety of moral and political challenges” (92, emphasis added). Furthermore, to the extent that truth commissions are conceptualized as models for action, there has been a tendency to focus on the large-scale, pragmatic policies implemented by truth commissions, such as amnesty, reparations, etc. While these tendencies have not been unproductive, they may give short shrift to some of the other ways that truth commissions function as models. What often gets elided in the current model talk surrounding truth commissions are the patterned ways of using language, the figurative and argumentative devices, and the genres that make up this rhetorical tradition—all of which may be used as rhetorical models for subsequent rhetorical performances. In bringing into relief the ways in which the rhetorical tradition surrounding truth commissions is deployed and/or reaccentuated in new contexts, this dissertation complements the emphasis on truth commissions as structural/institutional models or models of large-scale policy: it suggests that truth commissions also provide countries, communities, and individuals with models of rhetorical action at the level of discourse, clause, and even grammar. For example, in making explicit the different ways that the Greensboro Project and Commission

constructed the tension between representivity and unrepresentivity, this study may better allow subsequent truth commissions to use these subject positions strategically, as they work to establish broad community support. While I am not, of course, advocating that subsequent truth commissions make rhetorical moves identical to the Greensboro TRC, this dissertation suggests that members of future truth commissions may benefit from paying careful attention to the figurative and argumentative devices of past commissions.

The bulk of this project focuses on *ethos*. Future research might unpack other aspects of the rhetorical tradition surrounding truth commissions, including its characteristic commonplaces, appeals to *pathos* and *logos*, genres, and figures of speech and thought. In describing the rhetorical traditions surrounding truth commissions, such research promises to offer communities a much more robust model for action, both at and below the institutional level. Communities and countries looking to institute truth commissions would, I think, find it exceedingly valuable to have detailed descriptions, not simply of typical committee structures (and their functions), but of the genre conventions of public hearings and final reports; the characteristic commonplaces employed by truth commissions (e.g., “bygones will not be bygones” or “the truth makes free”); the reoccurring ideographs (e.g., truth, reconciliation, *ubuntu*); common appeals to *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*; and other distinctive rhetorical moves, such as the act of dissociating justice into restorative/transformativ and retributive justice.

Ultimately this research might enable U.S. communities to take up the rhetorical tradition surrounding truth commissions in new ways. As the case of the Greensboro TRC demonstrates, implementing a truth commission is not easily accomplished: it requires considerable financial resources as well as numerous volunteers who are willing to commit their time and energies without compensation; moreover, establishing these institutions to “dig up” the past is likely to engender resistance—and even open hostility—from various sectors of the community. Because of these difficulties, it may be more feasible for some communities to perform aspects of the tradition, without actually installing a truth commission at the institutional level. Communities might simply choose to perform one of the many genres of truth commissions (e.g., they might hold a one-day public hearing to address a particular concern). Or they might reaccentuate aspects of the rhetorical tradition in novel institutional configurations (e.g., they might facilitate a

working group, comprised of representatives from different sectors of the community, to discuss racial or economic inequities and offer recommendations to the city government).

My suggestions here are not inconsistent with recent calls for truth and reconciliation in the U.S.: many people are calling for institutional alternatives to redress inequalities at the community level. For example, in her call for the use of truth and reconciliation processes to address the history of lynching in the U.S., Sherrilyn Ifill speaks to the variety of institutional forms that truth and reconciliation processes may take: “Without question, conversations within communities about racial violence will have to take many forms. Some discussions may take the form used by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, in which witness come forward to give written or oral statements to a group of commissioners. In other instances, a form of town hall meeting may be appropriate. But productive conversations on race must provide opportunities for community members—black and white—to . . . talk to one another” (Ifill 152). In addition to the town hall, another form for performing the rhetorical tradition of transitional justice that Ifill advocates is community conferencing, which she describes as “facilitated discussion that enables those who have been ‘affected by behavior that has caused serious harm’ to work together to find solutions and to repair harm” (151). Similarly, Southern Truth and Reconciliation—the organization to which Ifill belongs and serves on the advisory board—advocates truth and reconciliation forums, which, according to the organization’s website, is one of “a ‘menu of options’ from which constituent communities might discover and develop their own ideas for community-building events, programs and activities to promote restorative justice, healing, and dialogue” (Southern Truth and Reconciliation). And a third alternative form, mentioned by Elizabeth Kiss in the edited volume *Truth v. Justice*, is the short term public hearing. According to Kiss, such a hearing—which, she says, might incorporate “some of the institutional aspects of a truth commission”—could offer the members of broken communities opportunities “to air grievances, educate the public, offer reparations, and create opportunities to move forward in a spirit of reconciliation” (Kiss 93). Each of these options—town halls, community conferencing, truth and reconciliation forums, and short term public hearings—may provide U.S. communities with institutional alternatives to truth commissions. However, such alternatives have yet to be developed or successfully

implemented. The research I'm proposing would, I think, make transparent resources of the rhetorical tradition surrounding truth commissions that communities could use in developing and implementing such alternatives.

There are, of course, potential risks to such work—one of which is articulated lucidly by rhetorician Erik Doxtader. Doxtader is interested in reconciliation as a rhetorical conception, but, in one of his articles on that subject, he raises concern about its transposability to other contexts. The passage is worth citing in full, especially insofar as he mentions the Greensboro TRC explicitly:

Reconciliation appears to have come into its time. Talk of its potential is widespread, and calls for its practice are now heard as a serious alternative to realist doctrines that offer little solace to those caught in the grip of total violence. . . . In all of this, there is little doubt that reconciliation's current cachet has much to do with its prominent role in the South African transition from apartheid to constitutional democracy. Over the last decade, South Africa's 'unique experiment' has been read by many as a precedent, the basis for a model that can be installed and employed productively in other situations. Among a number of larger efforts, the mandate for the recently created Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Greensboro, North Carolina, shows a strong family resemblance to the charge that was handed to the South African TRC in 1995. Imitation may not be risk-free. While it is still [in its] early days, reconciliation's (over)claimed potential may harbor some significant costs. Backed by multimillion-dollar budgets, several international organizations currently devote themselves to advocating reconciliation and providing resources for its formal development, work that has led some to question whether reconciliation represents a new mode of colonial logic. ("Potential" 379-380)

That calls for reconciliation—and, by extension, all aspects of the rhetorical tradition surrounding truth commissions—may represent a “new mode of colonial logic” is a legitimate concern. Truth commissions may impose particular ways of thinking, acting, and being on others, and they may serve as a means of exploiting—or maintaining power over—individuals, groups of people, or entire countries. But note that the fact that the risk exists does not in and of itself mean that countries and communities should simply eschew the truth commission approach: in a world increasingly characterized by deterritorialization and globalization, it seems to me that almost any strategy for addressing past human rights violations runs the risk Doxtader articulates. What is necessary is to be aware of the risk and to be actively engaged, throughout any truth

commission process, in identifying and working to mitigate ways that the process may be harmful to some, and attempting to meet the contingent demands of the new context.¹⁵³ (My recommendation that, at least in U.S. contexts, communities model facets of the rhetorical tradition of truth commissions below the level of institution may also help to prevent the colonialism that Doxtader fears, to the extent that such modeling would not need to be as pervasive in the community.)

It is worth noting that, until this point in the dissertation, I have intentionally avoided using the term “imitation”—describing, instead, how the people of Greensboro reaccentuated the rhetorical tradition surrounding truth commissions. My rationale for avoiding the term is that it is often used, in contemporary speech, to suggest rote repetition. In the above quote, Doxtader seems to be using imitation in this sense, fearing that the Greensboro TRC’s mandate too closely resembles that of the South African TRC. I certainly do not advocate that countries and communities imitate prior truth commissions in this sense, either. But they may benefit from practicing imitation in ways more consistent with the classical doctrine of *imitatio*, at least as it is explicated, in the following passage, by Michael Leff:

In classical rhetoric, the doctrine of *imitatio* marked the most obvious intersection between the reading of texts and the production of persuasive discourse. Although this doctrine held a prominent and persistent place in traditional rhetoric, modern scholars have only begun to give it serious attention, and it is sometimes badly misunderstood because of the aversion to “imitation” that we have inherited from the Romantic movement. *Imitatio* was not the mere repetition or mechanistic reproduction of something found in an existing text. It was instead a complex process that allowed historical texts to serve as *resources for invention*. (“Humanist” 97, emphasis added)

To the extent that countries and communities practice imitation in this classical sense there is less danger of colonialism: *imitatio* does not simply impose old forms on new contexts; rather, it takes into account contingency and makes old forms new to meet the demands of the context. As I hope this dissertation has illustrated, imitation of the discourse of past truth commissions offers opportunities for those doing the imitating: the

¹⁵³ If individuals allow post-colonial theory to rule—not simply inform—their decision-making, it seems to me that they will be reduced to a state of paralysis. They then may be running the even greater risk of inaction in the face of injustice. While action (including speech-action) always shuts down some possibilities and thus elides *difference*, that fact alone does not—it must not—mean that action should be avoided.

rhetorical tradition of truth commissions provides countries, communities, and individuals with enablements, as well as (potentially colonizing) constraints.

Implications for Rhetoricians

One of the recent and ongoing debates in the field of rhetorical criticism is whether or not rhetorical theory provides a sufficient framework to produce defensible interpretations: some scholars argue—albeit in a variety of ways—that rhetorical theory provides an adequate hermeneutical framework for interpreting texts; others contend that rhetorical theory is too meager, leading to interpretations that “are not falsifiable, not even legitimately contestable” (Gross and Keith 14). This debate plays out, in detail, in the edited volume *Rhetorical Hermeneutics: Invention and Interpretation in the Age of Science*. The volume begins with an essay by Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar—a “provocation” to which a number of scholars, working in the field of rhetorical studies, respond in subsequent essays. In a complex and multifaceted argument, Gaonkar calls into question the possibility that rhetorical theory can function as a “hermeneutic discourse,” arguing that, among ancient rhetoricians, it was a theory of performance and production and may not be readily translatable into a framework for understanding and interpretation (Gaonkar, “Idea” 25, 32). One of the reasons this theory of performance may not be readily translatable is that rhetorical theory is characterized by “thinness,” i.e., it is characterized by “the abstract quality of the traditional vocabulary as illustrated, for instance, in the tripartite scheme of proofs (*ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*) that enables one to find its presence in virtually any discourse practice” (33). While Gaonkar concedes that the thinness of rhetorical theory is appropriate for productive or performative practice, “it is [currently] inadequate for a critical reading of what gets ‘said’ (or ‘done’) in performance” (33). For Gaonkar, if rhetorical theory is to function as a hermeneutic, “the current productionist vocabulary would have to be ‘deepened’ and made more specific” (33).

But how can this be done? In one of the many responses to Gaonkar in the volume, James Jasinski provides an answer to this question—an answer which I have attempted to perform, more and less successfully at times, throughout this dissertation. Jasinski notes that the concepts of rhetorical theory may be enriched or deepened through

critical readings (i.e., rhetorical criticism) that explore “the orchestration of performative [or rhetorical] traditions—idioms, voices, argumentative and figurative patterns, textual practices and generic conventions—in textual action” (“Instrumentalism” 217). Such close readings “‘vibrate’ theory against text and text against theory. This form of close reading not only leads to a richer understanding of the particular text but also contributes to, in Gaonkar’s (1989) terms, ‘the thickening of [theoretical] concepts through grounded critical readings’” (Jasinski, “Close Reading” 94).

The close readings in chapters two through five of this dissertation are each intended to contribute to a richer understanding of rhetorical concepts. Chapter two’s reading of Tutu’s Foreword offers insights into the rhetorical potential of middle ground arguments. In looking at how Tutu used middle ground arguments to identify with members of both the African National Congress and the National Party and with both perpetrator and victim, the chapter demonstrates the potential of middle ground arguments to appeal to two or more constituencies simultaneously. The reading also shows that, in constructing middle ground arguments, rhetors are able to display prudence; but more than this, because the two “poles” or “extremes” of a middle ground argument are fixed in and through the rhetors’ performances, they are able to constitute what prudence means in a given context, or, more generally, to use middle ground arguments to shape the norms and values of a community. Chapter two also brings into relief the fact that middle ground arguments need not be used to simply positively appraise the middle term, while negatively appraising the two extremes. Tutu, for example, uses a middle ground argument to position the South African TRC as objective, even as he uses the “extremes” of the argument—the criticisms of the ANC and NP—to suggest a proper course of action for these parties, i.e., politically interested, yet dialogic. Finally, the close reading in chapter two demonstrates that rhetors may construct a middle ground, even when there are more than two parties involved, by appealing to representivity.

Chapter three’s reading of Bongani Finca’s address at the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony highlights the importance of taking into account a text’s temporality (i.e., its texture) for understanding how constitutive rhetorics function. In Maurice Charland’s important work on constitutive rhetorics, in which he draws heavily on Louis Althusser’s

theory of interpellation, he emphasizes that the constitutive function of discourse precedes the persuasive function: before persuasion occurs, from the very moment of address, subject positions are “always already” established (133-134). While I agree that it is, in fact, the case that subject positions are created in the initial moment of address, I maintain that, for most subject positions, what is more important are the ways that the subject positions are (re)fashioned (or reified) as the discourse unfolds. These subject positions—like the position characterized by *ubuntu*, for instance—are complex and must be established through several successive hailings. Finca’s address provides evidence of this phenomenon: chapter three demonstrates that, even as his speech explicitly calls the people of Greensboro to *ubuntu*, it implicitly builds up that subject position, in and through the ways that various groups and individuals are aligned with one another as the speech unfolds.

Chapter four’s unpacking of a number of texts surrounding the operation of the Greensboro TRC offers insights into *ethos* and organizational rhetoric. The chapter demonstrates that, when constructing *ethos*, the Commission is able to address several, sometimes conflicting, aims simultaneously by negotiating multiple, sometimes conflicting, subject positions (i.e., various iterations of representivity and unrepresentivity). Chapter four productively brings into relief some of the complexities of reading rhetorical situations involving corporate rhetors, many of which stem from the fact that such rhetors have the capacity to emphasize both their organizational unity and their organizational plurality to rhetorical effect. Reading corporate rhetoric requires accounting for the fact that an organization not only may establish identification and division between itself and the audience (as is the case with individual rhetors) but also may establish identification and division between its members. In the case of a corporate rhetor whose internal operations are not disclosed to the public (like the Greensboro TRC), the ways in which the rhetor *performs* identification and division between its members—the way it presents to the public what happens internally—is an important resource for constructing *ethos* and for establishing identification and division with external audiences. Furthermore, corporate rhetors have the capacity to represent and, more importantly, to model community identity in addition to individual identity. The full implications of this observation require further exploration; however, one insight of my

study is that organizations have the potential to represent community in ways that account for diversity and even disagreement (and thereby appeal to multiple constituencies), even as they attempt to reshape the community and redefine how such diversity and disagreement are performed in the community.

Chapter five's analysis of the Greensboro TRC's Introduction to the *Final Report* demonstrates how the Greensboro TRC's definitional maneuvering helped facilitate its institutional legitimization. In his book *Definitions and the Politics of Meaning*, Edward Schiappa discusses three types of definition arguments, and he gives examples of each type of argument in separate chapters and separate sections of the book. While these neat divisions are appropriate for Schiappa's central aims, they may obscure the fact that many—perhaps most—of the definition arguments constructed by rhetors do not fit perfectly within the three categories. Rhetors may, for example, attempt to make a case *from* definition, even as they attempt to redefine the central terms of the argument, both explicitly (arguments *about* definition) or implicitly (arguments *by* definitions). In the Greensboro TRC's Introduction to its *Final Report*, the commissioners do just that: they make the case that they are a legitimate truth commission, even as they attempt to redefine what a "truth commission" is. Chapter five also highlights that, when interrogating the relationships between definitional arguments and authority, scholars should not only seek to determine "*who* has the power to define" (as Schiappa prompts us to do) but also consider how acts of definition shape who "*who*" is in a given instance. Rhetors who engage in acts of definition are not extra-rhetorical: they are constituted in the very act of defining. In a similar way, authority does not simply precede a rhetor's act of definition but also may be established in and through it.

Thus, each of the chapters of this dissertation stands alone in deepening our understanding of a variety of rhetorical concepts; however, all of the close readings in the chapters share an emphasis on *ethos*, and I want to suggest that, taken together, they help to "thicken" our understanding of this concept. As I noted in the first chapter of this dissertation, the term "*ethos*" is traditionally defined in terms of an individual's character¹⁵⁴; however, scholars studying the history of rhetoric have recently recast *ethos*

¹⁵⁴ In his edited volume on *ethos*, James Baumlin affirms that there has been an emphasis on the self as "singular, stable, [and] 'central'" as opposed to "social" in Western intellectual culture: "Western

as a fundamentally social phenomenon, citing that, for many classical rhetoricians, the term “*ethos*” was not simply used to refer to an individual’s character (as many modern translations render the term) but was also used to refer to the customs or habits of a community—or, as Robert Davis and David Gross put it, those patterns “of social practice inseparable from social relations” (65).¹⁵⁵ For instance, based on the ancient Greek definition of *ethos* as “a habitual gathering place,” S. Michael Halloran notes that “*ethos* emphasizes the conventional rather than the idiosyncratic, the public rather than the private” (60). “To have *ethos*,” he goes on to write, “is to manifest the virtues most valued by the culture to and for which one speaks” (60). Similarly, Nedra Reynolds claims, “Careful attention to the etymology of *ethos*—its connections to space, place, or location—helps to reestablish *ethos* as a social act and as a product of a community’s character” (327).

One of this dissertation’s important contributions for rhetoricians is that, by exploring concrete performances of *ethos* in the life of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it has highlighted some of the complexities of what it means to claim, as these scholars do, that *ethos* is implicated in the social and is “inseparable from social relations” (Davis and Gross 65).

This has involved, to a limited degree, demonstrating how the performances of *ethos* of the South African and Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commissions are, as Reynolds notes, *products* of their communities’ characters and how they “manifest,” as Halloran claims, the “virtues most valued” by their respective cultures. I have shown, for example, how Tutu tailored his construction of the South African TRC’s *ethos* to the two major South African political parties, the African National Congress and the National

intellectual culture has tended to embrace the ‘central,’ serious, or as I might term it, *philosophical* model of selfhood over the ‘social,’ dramatic, or *rhetorical* model. Western culture, in other words, has largely identified itself with the tradition beginning with Plato and Isocrates and developed by Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant—all of whom treat the self as a moral, metaphysical, and ultimately, theological category (rather than as a function or effect of verbal behavior). An alternative, sociolinguistic model is only occasionally affirmed – by Aristotle, as we have seen, by the sophists Gorgias and Protagoras, by the Renaissance skeptics Machiavelli and Montaigne, by Nietzsche and several modern theorists (most notably Burke and Bakhtin)” (viii).

¹⁵⁵ The recovery of *ethos* as a social phenomenon is implicated in the recent linguistic turn in the humanities, which calls into question the notion of “the traditional Cartesian (masterful) subject of knowledge” and the possibility of personal agency (Davis and Gross 66). The self, following the linguistic turn, is “understood as a thoroughly social creature or a creature that lacks any enduring essence but, rather, consists of a shifting array of social roles, conventions, customs, and habits” (Jasinski 230).

Party; how the Greensboro commissioners took on a position of representivity, attempting to typify the identities and opinions of the Greensboro community; and how the Greensboro TRC used the criticisms expressed by the Greensboro city council to set up its *ethos* in the Introduction to the *Final Report*. But unpacking the ways in which the Commission's *ethos* is the product of a community's character has not been the primary emphasis of this dissertation; I have also attempted to demonstrate that the Commission's *ethos* shapes the Greensboro community. That is, this project attests to the fact that *ethos* and community are mutually constitutive; or, to adapt Reynold's language, *ethos* is not simply the product of social relations but also is, in some cases, productive of social relations. Edwin Black's important work on the "second persona" helps to clarify my point here. In 1970, Black argued that rhetoricians, in addition to explicating the author implied by a given text, ought to pay closer attention to the "second persona"—the implied auditor—of the text (192). While I would substitute Black's "implied" author and "implied" auditor with adjectives like "constructed" or "positioned," what I am claiming here is that, at times, the rhetor's construction of *ethos* and the second persona overlap. Put yet another way, performances of *ethos* function, in at least some cases, as what Maurice Charland refers to as constitutive rhetorics—they provide subject positions that members of a community may be interpellated, or hailed, into (thereby reshaping the community).

Chapter four provides an example of the constitutive function of *ethos*, in which one of the subject positions that the Commission establishes for itself is intended to be a model for the community. Each time the Commission fashions the *ethos* of representivity, it does not simply *reflect* particular constituencies of the Greensboro community but also helps to *create* the community as such. That is, the Greensboro TRC's construction of representivity is always already premised on a definitional act—a definition of the community itself. In this respect, the constructions of *ethos* of the TRC—as well as those of the Selection Panel and the groups of invited speakers at the TRC's public events—are constitutive rhetorics. And the image or model of community that commissioners are most vocal about the people of Greensboro taking up is one characterized by dialogic and considerate engagement among diverse individuals. This example echoes another that appears earlier in the project. Tutu, in positioning the South African TRC as a kind of

middle ground, is able to constitute what prudent action should look like for the South African people and to establish a model for what the community can and should be.

That said, other sections of this dissertation illustrate that the performances of *ethos* surrounding the operation of the Greensboro TRC are not always meant to function as constitutive models for the community (i.e., performances of *ethos* and constructions of the second persona are not always meant to line up); however, even though some performances of *ethos* are not meant to be taken up by the people of Greensboro, they play crucial roles in helping establish alternative constitutive rhetorics that are meant to be taken up by the people. Thus, Tutu is able to constitute members of the African National Congress and National Party as dialogically engaged with one another by positioning them in relation to an “objective” South African TRC. Finca, moreover, is able to position various individuals and groups—including Tutu, Mandela, the people of South Africa, the people of Greensboro, and himself—in relation to the Greensboro commissioners and, in so doing, to establish *ubuntu* as a subject position for the people of Greensboro and the commissioners, even as he attempts to give the latter a place of prominence in relation to the former. And, as I show in chapter five, it is the Commission’s alignment with other truth commissions that gives it a platform from which to disrupt calls for civility (which functioned as a powerful constitutive rhetoric circulating in Greensboro).

One of the reasons that the Commission’s *ethos* is able to function in these ways, to serve as an instrument of change in the Greensboro community by reshaping that community, is because the Commission’s *ethos* is not simply the product of the community in and for which the commissioners work. As a result in part of the development of global civil society, commissioners occupy a variety of different “haunts” or positions (in addition to those haunts occupied by the people of Greensboro) from which they are able to engage, critique, and reshape the community. To explore how the Commission was able to use such positions to reshape the community, I have looked at how the commissioners and the Commission’s advocates situated themselves within alternative rhetorical traditions—i.e., how they took a stance in these traditions—and essentially (re)instantiated these traditions in the Greensboro context. In a recent article unpacking Martin Luther King, Jr.’s *ethos* in his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” Michael

Leff and Ebony Utley contend that, in interpreting *ethos*, rhetoricians must account for the ways “that rhetors place themselves within a network of communicative relationships” (39-40)—a point with which I agree. They go on to claim that, “[at a] minimum, the explication of this process demands attention to: (1) the rhetor’s construction of self, (2) the rhetor’s construction of the audience (what Edwin Black calls the “second persona”), and (3) the enactment within the text of the relationship between rhetor and audience.” To this I would add, as each of the chapters of my dissertation attests, that there is much to be gained by also considering the rhetorical traditions that the rhetor draws upon, which often play an instrumental role in the positioning work done between rhetor and audience. Doing so adds another layer of complexity to the act of close reading, but it helps to bring into relief the ways in which authority may be established rhetorically.

A Final Word

Another of this dissertation’s main contributions, for rhetoricians, may simply be the choice of subject matter. There remains a tendency, especially among rhetoricians who practice close reading, to focus on canonical texts—texts that, over time, have attained the status of rhetorical masterpieces: “The Declaration of Independence,” Lincoln’s “Second Inaugural Address” and “House Divided” speech; King’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail” and “I have a dream” speech; Daniel Webster’s “Plymouth Rock Oration”; and the list goes on (Slagell, “Anatomy”; Leff, “Rhetorical”; Leff, “Instrumental”; Cox, “Fulfillment”; Browne, “Reading”). This emphasis is not necessarily unwarranted: many canonical texts merit continued attention due to their historical importance, the magnitude of their audience or readership, and even their status as aesthetic artifacts. But there is also a need to attend, with care, to texts outside the rhetorical canon. The majority of the rhetorical artifacts that matter most to us—that constitute our lives—are not made on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial or signed by the hands of political leaders; they are made in our towns and cities, our neighborhoods and backyards. It is often at the grassroots level, below the gaze of the national media, that possibilities are created for reifying or changing our worlds. It is my hope that, by lingering over the texts surrounding the operation of the Greensboro Truth and

Reconciliation Commission, I have demonstrated the importance of close reading non-canonical works in addition to rhetorical masterpieces.

Giving our time and energy to such texts is, of course, a political move: in choosing some objects of study, we neglect others—and criticism, too, shapes our worlds, creating possibilities for some ways of understanding and not others. Thus, it is certainly the case that, at least in some small measure, this dissertation has contributed to or detracted from the very phenomena I have attempted to study: the authority of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Looking back over my work, I think I have probably done more to contribute to the Commission's authority than detract from it. The part of me that has been shaped by positivist thinking tells me that I should be more ambivalent about this than I am, but I cannot seem to muster that ambivalence. The reason I cannot is because the greater part of me does not buy into the positivist project. I believe that all discourse is, by definition, *interested* discourse; and I am more comfortable having aligned myself a bit more closely with the Commission than its critics. While the Commission certainly was not perfect, it did attempt to bring about dialogue and understanding in Greensboro, and it helped to reinforce a global network of individuals and organizations committed to redressing injustices.

Epilogue

“When Hope Is Reborn”

I love it that in my home state of North Carolina we are taking leadership from the ANC [African National Congress], from people in South Africa, and of course making it our own as we will. I believe that the death of hope is an act of violence. I hope that we re-establish a level of hope. And I think it can begin in Greensboro, I think it can spread to other places.

Si Kahn, executive director of
Grassroots Leadership in Greensboro
 (“Testimony” H1)

When hope decays, there is a particular stench in the air, of bitterness, of strife, of holding on for dear life to things that neither heal nor help. When hope decays, there is anger that pulls down what others try to build. There is frustration with those who build, with those who dream, and with those who think, for how dare they dream and hope and think, because our hope has decayed. But when hope is reborn, we dream the dreams which others scorn. We sing the songs of birds that fly. We embrace our past with all its shame, and say to it you, too, belong to us. We hope, we dream, we think, because our hope is reborn.

Bongani Finca, Swearing in
Ceremony for the Greensboro TRC
(GTCRP, “Swearing in”)

But did the Commission work? Was it successful? These are the questions that I’m asked more than any others when talking to people about the Commission, and they’re some of the most difficult questions to answer. One of the reasons evaluating the success of the Commission proves difficult has to do with the nature of the Commission’s mandated objectives, which tended to be abstract and subjective. How does one gauge the extent to which the Commission reconciled the community, clarified people’s confusion, acknowledged people’s feelings, or facilitated changes in social consciousness? Does it matter that people define reconciliation and healing in different ways? And what is the

“extent” of the Commission’s impact that would count as success? If five hundred people claim to have been healed (or even partially healed) through this process is that sufficient to count the Commission as a success? If two people claim to have been reconciled is that sufficient? What about two people twenty years from now? And should we even evaluate the Commission based on their own objectives?

As these questions imply, the question of the Commission’s success depends on the criteria one chooses to evaluate success. For instance, if one chooses to evaluate the success of the Commission based on the response of city government, the Commission would probably be deemed a failure: the Greensboro city council voted twice “to oppose” the Commission’s work, and many of the Commission’s recommendations for the city have not been implemented. But if one chooses to evaluate the Commission based on its ability to stimulate public engagement and community dialogue, the case could be made that the Commission was, at least somewhat, successful. The public events of the Greensboro TRC generated a modest, but not insignificant, turnout. Attendance at both the Swearing in and Seating Ceremony and the Report Release Ceremony was over five hundred people, and there were several hundred individuals who attended the Commission’s three public hearings. Despite the fact that the city council voted not to endorse the Commission, they were forced to publicly consider—and discuss—the events of November 3rd, 1979 and the Commission.¹⁵⁶ With regard to the final report, many organizations pledged to read and discuss it, and several have done so. Furthermore, a few of the Commission’s recommendations have been or are being taken up by Greensboro citizens. For example, the Commission’s recommendations prompted a minimum wage campaign in Greensboro (which may have real material consequences for the people of Greensboro), led the Department of Social Services in Guilford County to institute Undoing Racism workshops, and resulted in a number of college course offerings devoted to the events of November 3rd, 1979 and the work of the Commission.

¹⁵⁶ Lisa Magarrell and Joya Wesley also speak to this point, when they evaluate the Commission’s success toward the end of *Learning from Greensboro*: “[T]he fact that the ‘official’ city engaged at all, even in this negative way, was an important part of the process of revealing the truth about November 1979 and its aftermath in the community. The process was so present in the community that it *did* matter, it could *not* be ignored. And despite the discomfort of the city...they entered the dialogue about what the report and recommendations meant” (174).

Another measure by which one might deem the Commission successful was in its creation of a public forum for survivors of November 3rd, 1979 to tell their stories and be heard. Given that former CWP members' stories were not validated by the city or the judicial system, the creation of such a forum was not insignificant. In her book *Shattered Voices: Language, Violence, and the Work of Truth Commissions*, Teresa Godwin Phelps persuasively argues that the public testimonies prompted by truth commissions effect a kind of justice, balancing the destruction of language that results from physical violence. She writes, "The processes by which truth commissions gather stories have great potential for creating a kind of justice that not only publicly exposes truth and vindicates people, but also a kind of justice that is dynamic and ongoing, not perfect of course, but a visible manifestation of an ethical and political commitment that honors truth, individual worth, dignity, and equality" (Phelps 72). In creating a space for survivors to speak and be heard, the Greensboro TRC may have helped to constitute the kind of justice Phelps mentions here—a justice that involves the restoration of language to those who have been previously silenced.

Finally, one might claim the Commission a success to the extent that its advocates, with the help of the Andrus Family Foundation and the International Center for Transitional Justice, were able to build a global network of individuals and organizations. This network—which, as I have argued—helped the Greensboro TRC establish its authority, may have positive implications for people beyond Greensboro. As a result of the relationship forged with Bongani Finca, members of the Greensboro Truth and Community Reconciliation Project sent a twenty-three person delegation to South Africa for ten days in November 2007, during which time "participants both shared the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation process with their South African counterparts and learned from the rich struggle that has emerged out of apartheid" (GTCRP, "Delegation"). Other positive implications of this network include Nelson Johnson's participation in the poverty truth commission in New York City.

All that said, I've found that responding to questions about the Commission's success by highlighting that the answer depends upon the criteria one uses to measure success does not always satisfy people. When I answer that—based on some criteria (like the Commission's ability to generate dialogue about November 3rd, 1979), I think that the

Commission was moderately successful; based on other criteria (like the Commission's ability to persuade city council members to issue a public apology), I think it wasn't successful; and based on still other criteria (like the Commission's ability to facilitate reconciliation), I think it's difficult or impossible at the current time to say one way or the other—some people press me on the point. “Yes,” they say in response to my spiel about evaluative criteria, “but was the Commission successful or not *overall*?”

I must admit that I don't like this question, and I believe there are good reasons to resist answering it. One reason to resist answering the question has to do with its timing. I'm writing this epilogue in 2008, only two years after the release of the Commission's *Final Report*. At this point, I believe it is still too early to say what the “overall” impact of the Commission will be. (It may even be too early to properly evaluate the immediate effects of the Commission, the success of which is surely dependent, at least in part, on the community's ability to sustain such effects.) A second, perhaps more important, reason to resist answering the question is that it seeks a general pronouncement—a summative “last word”—about the Commission. Setting aside the problematic presumptuousness of a general pronouncement, I worry that such “last words” assume that reconciliation is a product rather than a process, contributing to a closing off of possibilities and serving to undermine, however slightly, the ways in which the work of the Greensboro TRC may yet shape the community. There is, in other words, a certain finality to “last words” that risks contributing to inaction: to the extent that the Commission is understood to be an overall failure, community members may choose not to seriously engage its findings; to the extent that it is deemed an overall success, community members may be tempted to view the Commission's work as sufficient.

What is the alternative to issuing a presumptive “last word”? I believe that the appropriate critical stance in response to questions about the overall success of the Commission is the stance taken by the commissioners themselves—namely, hope. In her wonderful book *Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in English Composition*, Paula Mathieu distinguishes wishing from hoping, and, following Marxist utopian philosopher Ernst Bloch, she defines the latter as follows: “To hope,” she writes, “is to look critically at one's present condition, assess what is missing, and then long for and work for a not-yet reality, a future anticipated. It is grounded in imaginative acts and projects, including

art and writing, as vehicles for invoking a better future” (19). For me, this definition exemplifies the stance taken and promoted by Greensboro commissioners, who, throughout the entirety of their operation, attempted to critically assess their situation, to work actively for a better future through their speeches and writings, and to prompt others to do the same. Even at their last public event, the Report Release Ceremony, commissioners resisted dwelling on their successes and emphasized the work yet to be done by members of the community. Here I’m reminded, in particular, of the words of commissioner Muktha Jost, who, in describing the challenges faced by the Commission, remarked, “Our work shows that there is much from the past about November three that needs to be redeemed. When we consider how this past can be redeemed, we realize the immensity of the work ahead for you. As we present our findings and conclusions, we want to remind you that this is the result of a modest but spirited and sincere approach for the truth around November three. We believe that it’s important to recognize that we are not free from human rights abuses and injustice here in the United States, and we hope that the truth about the past will help us understand the present better and build a safer, more just, and inclusive future. It is in that spirit that we present to you our findings, conclusions, and recommendations” (GTRC, “Report Release”).

It is this stance of hope, as defined by Mathieu and performed by Jost and the other commissioners, that I believe critics of the Commission would do well to emulate. Such a stance does not mean that we will withhold any and all judgments: we can and should offer critique of the ways in which the Commission is problematic and validation of the ways in which it is exemplary. Nor does such a stance mean that we cannot or should not speak of the particular successes and failures of the Commission. But it does mean that, in making these appraisals, we should be careful to avoid issuing the last words on the matter; the question of the Commission’s success must remain an open question. It is, I think, in this spirit that commissioners write the following:

We believe the truth and reconciliation process in Greensboro opened up the debate around Nov. 3, 1979, in a positive way and has successfully engaged a broad spectrum of the community in an effort that offers hope for reconciliation. As a Commission that looks a bit like Greensboro in microcosm, we found that this process—and our own struggle to hear and understand each other—had a profound impact on our perceptions of the issues we explored. Our individual and collective commitment to the truth

helped us persevere. And the human stories and emotions we encountered along the way moved us to do our best to leave behind a legacy we hope will serve Greensboro for years to come. We cannot say what the future will hold for this community or what the long-term impact of this process will look like, but we hope that this process also serves as a learning tool for others in this county who, like Greensboro, are burdened by a legacy of hurt and inspired by the possibility of honestly coming to terms with their own history. (*Final Report* 390)

In this excerpt—which concludes the commissioners’ *Final Report* and, thus, serves as their own last word—one can find evidence for many of the arguments made in the preceding pages of this dissertation; however, when reading this passage, I’m moved most of all by the commissioners’ hopefulness, which cuts through the text fiercely and confidently.

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