

Fairytale violence¹ or Sondheim on solidarity, from Karnataka to Kennedy road

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Once Upon A Time...

The murders of Sharpeville shook public opinion for months. In the newspapers, over the wavelengths and in private conversations Sharpeville has become a symbol. It was through Sharpeville that men and women first became acquainted with the problem of apartheid in South Africa (Fanon 1965).

Few struggles have been more ready for conversion into the format of a storybook than the struggle against apartheid. For many, in particular activists, the official story of that struggle has been smoothed of any imperfection. It has been sanitised. In activist literature, particularly the kind that seeks to inspire and mobilise, the social movement is a fairy tale hero of the unimpeachable kind. In the effort to tell a useful story – useful to a particular kind of audience in a particular kind of context, a story that subverts tales told by capital – it is easy, some say necessary, to elide the contradictions, imperfections, interactions that interrupt the flow of what feels like a sharply defined counter-hegemonic narrative.

There's no better place to start deconstructing fairy tales than Stephen Sondheim's masterpiece of twentieth century American musical theatre, *Into The Woods*.² As with the musical, the first half of this chapter begins with a number of stories, with characters whose lives and themes feel familiar, and whose stories end largely happily except for the villains'. If in the first set of pre-interval stories, you're irked by my rather cavalier use of terms like 'activist', 'local', 'global' and 'resistance', this is only because I'm writing to form, to a style common among a certain set of activists, occupying certain class positions, writing certain kinds of narrative. After the interval, however, we hear the same stories in minor keys, jumbled and interacting (for no story is an island) with darker themes, themes we know from the less romanticised lives, yet more

familiar for all that. Terms become far trickier, with moorings not quite as firm as they initially felt. Not only is there a change from major to minor, but in Sondheim's second act, as in real life, the narrator assumes a far more causal role.

The aim of all this is to investigate how activist stories are told, and the kinds of relations they incite within a politics of solidarity. What do we understand by 'global civil society' when the stories that circulate about specific places are authored in a particular kind of dialectic, with a particular literary form, emphasising and reconstituting relationships of protagonist, activist, and author through the telling? And when global solidarity, that international sociological ambrosia, depends so much on these kinds of stories, what is it that we're doing when we declare solidarity?

Story 1: The Karnataka State Farmers Association: Global resistance against neoliberalism

When I started to write this chapter, I began with an investigation of the Karnataka State Farmers' Association (KRRS). It is an organisation to which I am well disposed, largely but not entirely because I find myself seduced by the stories that circulate about the KRRS within certain circuits of international activism. The stories include the fact that the KRRS is a part of the international peasant federation, *Via Campesina*, the largest social movement federation in the world. When you work with movements in South Africa that are lucky to muster 10,000 on a demonstration (and this is a telling metric of social movement power) to learn of an organisation that can take over trains and put together demonstrations of one million is inspirational, and aspirational. Particularly when the accompanying politics are so good. KRRS have been involved in a range of struggles against the neoliberalisation of agriculture in India. Their entry into the folds of this international, and initially Latin-American dominated, organisation came from a mutual recognition that peasant movements around the world were fighting similar kinds of international trade regimes (Desmarais 2002; Borras 2004). In 1992, fully seven years before the Battle of Seattle, the World Trade Organisation was being talked about not in the corridors of power in Geneva or Washington DC, but in the fields of Karnataka. Indeed, in 1989, the first warning bells were being sounded by the KRRS leadership. Within months of its publication, the KRRS had translated into Kannada the text of the Dunkel Draft of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the document that was to become the charter for the World Trade Organisation. Although the organisation was unsuccessful in preventing the Indian government's active participation in the WTO, it has managed to curb some of the wilder excesses of agrarian neoliberalism within Karnataka. When

the state has been unwilling or unable to effect the desired response, the KRRS has been involved in a range of direct actions, from the destruction of ecologically harmful eucalyptus plantations to the sacking of the offices of the Monsanto corporation. They're clearly a social force to be reckoned with. Although many within the movement still fall victim to the state, and came in for special targeting under the BJP government, despite the death of the organisation's founder and leader Prof Nanjundaswamy at the beginning of 2004, and notwithstanding the internecine debates and splits to which all movements are heir, the KRRS continues its fight against neoliberalism, representing an important social force and beacon within India, and South Asia. It represents a countermovement to the increased marketisation of agriculture in the region. This, at least, is the tale, and it's one popular through certain kinds of relations, ones constituted through activist conversations, a handful of policy articles and polemics, traffic on listservs around the global justice movement, and the releases from non-profit and activist organisations in Spanish, French and English in the Global North.³ For the time being, let's leave hanging the questions of position, of constitution, and space that the circulation of these narratives demand. All I need confess to now is a pining for solidarity with the KRRS, akin to the one that I felt I had with the idea of South Africa in the anti-apartheid struggles in Britain. This is enough to betray a certain kind of politics, not of transference so much as transferability, of a dematerialisation and dislocation of solidarity such that it can be transmitted over the wires, if only a sufficiently compelling tale can be told. I'll show this by telling more stories now, about South Africa.

Story 2: Taking on the World Bank's Carbon Trading Scheme: Sajida Khan and Kyoto in Durban

The apartheid regime involved a cascading series of brutalities, not just the high profile ones that made the headlines outside South Africa. The police and South African Defence Force were not the only agents of apartheid – the regime was written in the country's economic geography. But just as the distribution of the rewards of exploitation was policed, so was the distribution of the detritus. The white path to development generated its own waste, and in its disposal, apartheid's racial boundaries became a little more porous, with white waste ending up in black neighbourhoods. This transfer needed administration, of course, and it fell to local municipalities to be the agents of this discipline.

Under apartheid, in the late 1970s, the Durban city council decided that it needed a site at which to dispose of the solid waste from a growing and industrialising city. Apartheid's 1960s industrial boom had soaked up high levels of white unemployment, but dripped industrial effluent as a consequence. This waste was siphoned away to black areas, and in addition to the Mariannahill

and LaMercy sites, a key dump site was chosen directly adjacent to a largely working-class community, a community denominated by the state as Indian, under the Group Areas Act. The area is called Clare Estate. The community protested vigorously, pointing out the obvious noise, smell and environmental hazards that come from placing this sort of facility in a residential area. The city ignored the protests, and in 1980, the Bisasar Road Landfill was opened for business.

A great deal of rubbish has passed through its gates since then. In the 1990s, new legislation was introduced to police the kinds of refuse that could be deposited at the site, though these regulations have not been rigorously enforced. This means that a wide range of stuff has ended up in the landfill over the past quarter century, from a 22,000 ton shipment of stale eggs to raw sewage which continues to be illegally dumped there, to equally illegally dumped industrial refuse. Families growing up in the area have complained for a generation of the nausea they live with daily, which becomes unbearable in the heatwaves to which Durban is prone. The waste rots in the heat before it is covered, and all who grew up near it in Clare Estate recall the rancour, the pinching of noses when going anywhere downwind of the dump. Of course, not all in the Clare Estate had to suffer the stench. The richer Indians were able to afford houses higher above the dump, with a sea view untainted by the smell. The campaign against the dump continued through the 1980s, and in September 1986 the apartheid Durban City Engineers Department announced that the life expectancy of the dump was nine years. Ten years later, the democratic Durban Municipality announced that it had reissued a permit for the dump.

The sea breeze that curls round the dump doesn't, however, just carry with it the promise of nausea. It brings something far worse. Until 1997, an incinerator burned some of the waste in the dump, casting a pall of dioxins and other carcinogens over the community. One local woman, Sajida Khan, noticed that many people in her community were becoming sick. She herself developed and has, since this piece was written, succumbed to cancer. She began a campaign against the dump. Conducting her own impromptu survey, she found that seven out of ten households had had someone experience some sort of metastasis, a tumour, whether malignant or benign. Khan mobilised the community, organised a march on the gates of the dump⁴, and instituted legal proceedings against the city, documenting at length the breaches of protocol and process which have occurred in the dump's continued operation.

The dump has, however, been given a new lease of life because of a concatenation of global forces in a story that sounds a great deal like the original rationale for the Bisasar Road dump. The growth strategy for industrialised countries is heavily dependent on the consumption of fossil fuels. This growth path has led to the production of gases which have in turn led to climate change. Those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change have been, and will

continue to be, the poor. In this moment, again, the excreta of the rich poison the poor. And, once again, the detritus needs management. The instrument for this management – notably absent the US, Australia, China and India – is the Kyoto Protocol, and in particular the Prototype Carbon Fund, heavily sponsored by the World Bank. Within the protocol is a provision for the creation of a market in carbon credits. The logic is that, since global warming is precisely global, a worldwide market will direct funding to reduce carbon emissions where it can most efficiently be used. Since it is invariably cheaper to engage in greenhouse-gas-reducing projects in the Global South than the Global North, the vision is to make it easier for rich countries to do their bit to reduce global warming, by paying poor countries not to foul the air. More than one commentator has noticed that this smacks of ‘climate apartheid’¹⁵ - and it’s an apt description. But, as Dorsey notes, ‘The fact that marginalised people bear the brunt of environmental degradation should come as no surprise’ (Dorsey 1998).

When rubbish rots, it produces greenhouse gases. In particular, it produces methane, together with a range of other byproducts that are toxic to humans and very effective greenhouse gasses – methane is 21 times more effective than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere. The World Bank has undertaken to provide funding for the dump to install power generators that will burn the methane to provide electricity. The greenhouse gases thus prevented from being released into the atmosphere will be converted into carbon credits and sold on the carbon exchange. And there’s a buyer’s market for them. It’s an irony that the Kyoto protocol’s supply-side economists have had a great deal of trouble finding a supply of such projects.

This is why the Bisasar Road has become internationally contested. The World Bank has been pleased to celebrate it, and the African National Congress has been keen to trumpet its virtues too – on a World Bank website we learn that:

The ‘Durban Landfill Gas to Energy Project’ in South Africa may be a first of its kind for Africa... ‘I think the example we are setting in Durban, working with the World Bank to deal with landfill, is a huge innovation. We are turning dirt and garbage into a raw material that we could grow wealth from. If you wanted to say to yourself, ‘we want to be the cleanest city in the world’ waste, in my view, is the best place to start,’ said Obed Mlaba, Mayor of Durban (Prototype Carbon Fund 2004).

Bisasar Road’s adoption by the World Bank is also, however, its moment of conscription into a ‘global civil society’. In being inducted into this international context of counter-movement, certain platforms become available that might not previously have been available. This is a view emphasised by social movement scholars such as Keck and Sikkink (1998) and Tarrow (2001). Thus,

for example, Khan was able to put her case in a Washington Post article, one largely sympathetic to her cause, that

It is another form of colonialism... You are talking about gaining credits and making money, but the people on the ground will continue to suffer... My goal is to protect the community and close the site down and compensate people for their losses (Vedantam 2005).

And so the struggle continues. The Kyoto Protocol certainly compounds the difficulty that Khan and residents of Clare Estate face in closing down the dump, cleaning it up, and rebuilding their lives free from the toxic stain of apartheid. Yet the positioning of Khan's campaign within an international series of skirmishes around the Kyoto Protocol gives her some leverage, even as the injustices of apartheid live on, metastasising through the bodies of this embattled community.

Story 3: Taking on the City Council – the Kennedy Road Mutiny and the Third Nelson Mandela

From the outset, the fringes of the Bisasar Road dump supported a small informal settlement of 'African' families living between Bisasar Road and Kennedy Road. Many of the families were outcastes from the white development project, and of Durban's other infrastructural needs. Nonhlanhla Mzombe, who works at the dump, remembers

My granny came here from Inanda dam [where the apartheid regime had displaced hundreds of families]. People were coming from all over to wash for the Indians. My mother schooled us by picking the cardboard from the dump. I was four years old when she came. Now my child is 15 years old (Pithouse 2005).

After the end of the Influx Control Laws after 1994, the informal settlement blossomed. The changes in the economic underpinnings of apartheid meant that the founding members of the Kennedy Road settlement were joined by new migrants from communities in rural areas that could no longer be sustained through remittances from the cities – the jobs just weren't there anymore. Many families now in the Kennedy Road settlement make a living from picking garbage, and from selling labour as domestic servants to the predominantly Indian community in Clare Estate. Mzombe puts their plight like this

All this time living in the shack and working so hard. We are fighting no one. We are just trying to live but they say we are the criminals. We haven't got no problem if they build just some few houses that can't fit everyone. But they must just try (Pithouse 2005).

The entry to the settlement is piled high with trash. The municipality accuses the settlement of being unclean, but the irony is that this settlement, perched as it is on the side of the rubbish dump cannot get its garbage collected. The municipality will only collect trash in specially marked sacks that it provides to its ratepayers. Because the community has no formal address, its residents pay no rates, and so they have to take their own trash down the road, along a freeway, and into the dump. The example of trash collection demonstrates the contradictions of contemporary South African state attitudes to the poor. The settlement is both left to its own devices, and strictly policed. Transgressions beyond its boundary are severely sanctioned – as we'll see – and demands for electricity, water, and sanitation have fallen on deaf ears.⁶ In certain respects, the settlement's closest analogue is the prison – it is a paradigm carceral space for neoliberalism, from which labour is siphoned out when needed, privileges rationed by the state, and internal mechanisms of discipline developed.

One of the ways the state is able to maintain hegemony over the settlement – it's not all coercion – is through the promise of land. This is a promise that has been renewed at every election since the democratic dispensation, and one that has been betrayed just as often. Small concessions have been won over the years – the settlement has a community centre, and for a while had a functioning pre-school. Yet these concessions have not been won from government. The main community structure, a community hall, with offices and a one-room pre-school beneath it, was built by The Urban Foundation, an NGO set up by South African businesses to show that the market could provide the trappings of development which the state could not. When I first visited the settlement in Kennedy Road, the doors to the preschool room were locked, most windows shattered; the few panes that were not broken were held in place by fading 'Vote ANC' stickers.

The irony is that while they are denied the privileges of ratepayers – such as refuse collection – the residents of Kennedy Road all have vote cards, which they are encouraged to use in service of the ANC. Many in the settlement are members of the ANC. For its part, the ANC has been systematically underinvesting in Kennedy Road, assuming that its plans to relocate the residents of the informal settlement would one day come to pass. In the meantime, the residents have been left to fend for themselves. In one room of the community centre, Mzombe pointed to two plastic sacks of clothing, collected in the community for those whose shacks have recently burned down. 'They lost everything, and so we have some clothes for them.' Mzombe points to the handful of water stand-pipes in the area, where young women queue to collect water, and carry it in containers to their homes at the bottom of the hill on which the settlement spreads. 'Down there when it rains, it's very hard to climb up. There are only four stand pipes... There are 1,250 families here.' And indeed, the next day when the skies open, the path to the water pipes gushes with slurry. It is impassable.

Along Kennedy Road, a hundred metres away from the entrance to the settlement, is a small spit of land, barely a hectare. This land has been promised to the community for as long as anyone can remember. Negotiations with the local councillor have been protracted and frustrating. The councillor is Yakooob Baig a man who started his career in the National Party, then transferred his allegiance to the opposition Democratic Alliance, and in 2004, joined the ANC.⁷ As recently as 16 February 2005, Baig promised that the land would, in time, be transferred to the community. Four weeks after that, on a Thursday, bulldozers began work on the area. The community was elated. S'bu Zikode, a man lucky enough at that time to have a job pumping petrol ten kilometres away, and an elected community organisation leader was, however, suspicious. 'Why would they have started building houses for us without telling us?' he said. 'So I went there to ask them what they were doing.' The construction workers reported that they were preparing the land for the Greystone Brick Company, which had recently purchased the land.⁸ Work stopped that day as the word spread in the community and a crowd gathered to confront the construction workers. The day after, however, the bulldozers returned with what Zikode called 'the army'.⁹

By Saturday morning, the community was livid. Zikode had this to say: 'on Saturday morning the people wake us. They take us there to find out what is happening. When you lead people you don't tell them what to do. You listen. The people tell you what to do. We couldn't stop it. If we tried the people would say 'You guys are selling us'. So we go. A meeting was set up with the owner of the factory and the local councillor, but they didn't come. There was no Greystone, no councillor, no minister, nobody.'

What there was, was violence. There was no fighting – with the construction workers and their armed guards home for the weekend, there was no one to fight. But people from the community blocked a main road, rolling their own tyres down to a six lane feeder road for a major highway and setting fire to them. The middle classes could not return from their Saturday shopping. The police came. Then the counsellor phoned. He told the police 'These people are criminals, arrest them'. Zikode describes the escalation of violence incited by the police: 'We were bitten by the dogs, punched and beaten. The Indian police I can definitely tell you that they have this racism. They told us that our shacks all need fire.' (Pithouse 2005).

The police pulled a cordon around the protesters, and before they knew what was happening, fourteen people, including two school-going juveniles had apparently been selected at random for arrest. The next day, 1,400 people from Kennedy Road marched on the local police station, arguing that if the police wanted to arrest 14 of them, they should arrest them all. The police held their ground, and the crowd returned disappointed.

At the arraignment, the Kennedy 14 opted to represent themselves – an understandable move, given their previous experience with the forces of criminal justice. To some extent, their suspicion of these forces was vindicated at the trial. Although the docket could not be found, the prosecutor told the magistrate that these 14 people had set fire to tyres and smashed windows. Not knowing that, at that moment, they were entitled to speak in their defence, the 14 remained silent. The magistrate made no attempt to tell them that they, in fact, had the right to rebut these accusations, and bound them over pending a bail hearing. The 14, including two children, were in jail over the Easter holidays. Many of the Kennedy Road 14 had children in the community whom they'd not seen in days, and one woman had a child in serious condition in hospital, whom she had promised to visit.

Local activists, including me, went to the community to offer support, arranging legal representation and a bail fund. At the bail hearing, a high-powered defence counsel was able successfully to argue that the 14 people were unable to afford bail, and presented the court with affidavits testifying to the home addresses of the community members. The magistrate, perhaps impressed by the fact that two highly qualified lawyers, including a personal friend, were representing the Kennedy Road 14, released them on their own recognisance.¹⁰

At the celebration party that evening, a vast spread was laid out. Chicken, beef, bottles of Sprite and Coke, and even a bottle of champagne were brought into the community centre and put on the table. S'bu Zikode and Nonhlanhla Mzombe sat behind the table and called the 14 to the front of the hall. No one moved. In the end S'bu grabbed the nearest by the wrist and dragged them to the table. 'They can't believe this is for them,' he explained. A spread that might have passed for children's party nibbles in Durban's richer suburbs had the community in awe.

Before the food was eaten, speeches were made. All 14 spoke, men and women, old and young, each vastly pleased to be free, each unrepentant for their actions, each committed to doing it again if they had to. In his closing speech, in a moment that held the room rapt, Zikode said the following:

'The first Nelson Mandela was Jesus Christ. The second was Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. The third Nelson Mandela are the poor people of the world.'

The room was silent for seconds afterwards. And then the music was cranked up, and people began to dance.

The struggle continues for this community. The week after the protest, the local government announced – without referring to Kennedy Road – that it was going to make land available to poor communities, but that it would not tolerate 'rioting' or 'occupation'. But the councillor had yet to visit the community. The

charges had yet to be dropped. And the spirit of the community was stronger than ever.

Intermission

Story 4: Into the woods: Race, gender and class in Kennedy Road

The day after the party, I returned to the community centre. On the door was still posted the sign ‘Well come 14 heros’, and below it another piece of cardboard, on which had been posted a newspaper article about Kennedy Road.¹¹ Yesterday, it had been a locus of attention. Someone had highlighted the parts in the article where individual community members’ names were mentioned, and everyone going to the party had stopped for a moment to read it, before entering the hall.

Today, the newspaper had been taken away, revealing the placard underneath:

Mrs Khan!
 Hlala Ngentom[b]i [Stay like an innocent girl]
 We demand proper homes
 We demand gas to electricity project
 We demand project sanitation.

There had to be an interaction between the Kennedy Road struggle and the battle against the Kyoto Protocol. The residents of Kennedy Road support the dump, and they do it against Sajida Khan’s activism. In this, Khan’s body has itself become a contested site. The cancer which she fought was evidence to her of the poisons of apartheid, poisons that continue to kill, and against which she fought daily.

Her behaviour towards the community seemed to be read by someone in the community as gendered transgression. Zikode accused her of standing outside a meeting held with the dump authorities with a loud hailer, pouring scorn on the project and its backers, though this is disputed by representatives from outside the community, who wonder why she’d do this.

There are material interests behind the community support for the dump. Many people, though by no means the majority, in Kennedy Road are supported by the dump. While precise numbers are hard to establish, around two dozen people seem to be formally employed, and a further three to four dozen involved in subcontracting work through them. On top of this is informal work collecting garbage from the dump for resale in secondary markets, such as aluminium can recycling and cardboard. With each paid job feeding a subsequent ten people, it’s easy to see how a community of over a thousand households can receive a range of multiplier effects from the single toxic employer against whose borders they abut. It is equally clear why an attempt to close the dump permanently is likely to be received with hostility. Even if families within the Kennedy Road

settlement don't receive any income, directly or indirectly, from the dump, it remains the largest single employer within the community – everyone has a friend or neighbour dependent on its income.

There are other material forces at work, ones that rest within the political economy of representation within the community itself. The World Bank requested, as part of the consultative process which they had largely failed to undertake with the Clare Estate community, that the manager of Durban Solid Waste, Lindsey Strachan, visit with the Kennedy Road settlement leaders. According to Strachan, at that meeting he reported that as a result of the World Bank energy project, 45 jobs would be created, and three bursaries offered for children from affected communities to study engineering, possibly in Uganda. This is a little odd – there are perfectly good engineering schools in South Africa. The presence of Uganda in the stories we heard around the dump may have something to do with Strachan's status as a consultant with the World Bank – there are suggestions from some informants that if the experiment at Bisaser Road doesn't work out for him, Strachan will work for the Bank in Uganda.¹²

The issue of scholarships for children in the community was one with a great deal of currency. A number of people within the settlement volunteered this information as the primary reason for supporting the project. The figure of bursaries volunteered, however, was 'about 50 scholarships'. This figure was also one reported by residents outside the squatter camp, in a historically coloured area adjacent to the dump. Somehow, the number of children going to university for these impoverished community has soared, possibly a symptom of a Chinese whispers mechanism for consultation. Those in a position to know the accuracy of the figures, particularly Zikode and Mzombe, have children of school-going age, and Zikode mentioned that CVs were being prepared for consideration for these scholarships.

While the material forces at work within the Kennedy Road community are important, there is also the issue of recognition. The day after the publication of news about the blockade, two activists, Richard Pithouse and Mandisi Majavu, went to the camp. They were greeted with suspicion and hostility by some. Indeed, the only constituency to pay any attention to the community until that point had been Durban Solid Waste, the municipal authority under instruction from the World Bank to conduct consultative exercises in the area. The fact that the World Bank had commissioned a formal recognition of the community seems central to the community's support of the project, and is in contrast with the attitude of richer activists engaged in climate change work. Zikode again: 'We invite them to the presentation here in the hall so that we can be together. They didn't come. They have their meetings in places we can't go to. They don't invite us but they always represent us.'

This participation in government is important. It is quite correct to pour scorn on the World Bank's simulated democratic techniques of 'consultation'

and ‘participation’ when they are a pallid substitute for genuine democracy. But when communities have been systematically denied dignity, ‘consultation’ isn’t a substitute for democracy – it’s a substitute for marginalisation. The Kennedy road community is used to marginalisation. Indeed, the processes that led to the occupation of the main road beneath the settlement wouldn’t have happened had the rules of marginalisation been adhered to. Zikode once more:

‘If only they would come and bluff us, that would have been okay. They have been bluffing us for fifteen years. But they did not come.’

The end of the pretence set off the street violence, directed not against any particular piece of property, but against its flow. Not against any individual cars, but against the traffic that fouls the air beneath the settlement (as it fouls all air) ignorantly, nonchalantly. The Kennedy Road comrades wanted, in addition to jobs and futures for their children, recognition (Fraser and Honneth 2003). And when it was denied them, they took it.

Story 5: If all the world’s a stage, who’s the audience?

Two things are going on here. First, language games. These activist narratives conform to certain kinds of Wittgensteinian dance of language. There are language games at play, and ways we are encouraged to tell the difference between morally valent concepts and categories, depending on our concerns. Let’s take, for example, Sajida Khan’s scientific endeavours in Durban. As Horton notes, the scientific data to support Khan’s case doesn’t exist because the state has little interest in investing the resources to justify her (Horton 2005). So Khan’s own investigations, deprived as they were of formal scientific training, or the resources to be able to come to robust conclusions, spoke in the space of the state’s silence. The size of samples used to make claims, for example, about the prevalence of cancer in the Bisasar Road area would come under more strenuous attack were there the resources for conducting a survey with a larger sample. Claims such as seven in ten households have cancer are ones that need a bigger N than ten. Certainly, sampling only the houses downwind of the dump site incinerator is, perhaps, a little disingenuous. Yet more interesting than Khan’s reporting is the reporting of it. Context is all, and the meaning that Khan’s findings take within the internationalised context of civil society are different from those which it would take within a scientific forum, or an official space of public policy formation. Within different language games, the same utterance – in this case, a claim about cancer rates – incites different reactions, depending on the community of speakers (Wittgenstein 1997). Sajida Khan’s science is a way of telling a science rendered partial by the state’s censure. But the context of this science is one that is transmuted through circuits of international activism, civil society and the media, allow her to represent the

case of an impoverished community against the World Bank. The fact that this community is certainly affected by the dump, that the dump ought never to have been placed there, that there have been undeniable health costs associated with burning trash from the dump, that the local municipality has no desire to respond to the large Clare Estate community, and the 6,000 members of that community who marched on the dump to close it down, and that the Kyoto protocol licences the municipality to extend the life of the dump even when apartheid engineers called for it to be closed, these are all facts that need and deserve report and action. In this, her representation as a South African 'Erin Brockovich' seems accurate: a figure willing to do whatever it took, despite the predations of apartheid and its legacy institutions, to fight for her community. The way that Khan's science works, through the circuits of international civil society activism, however, is as a spectacle. In Debord's terms,

'The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as society itself, as a part of society, and *as a means of unification*... The unity of each is based on violent divisions. But when this contradiction emerges in the spectacle, it is itself contradicted by a reversal of its meaning: the division it presents is unitary, while the unity it presents is divided' (emphasis in original) (Debord 2002).

The language game of the narrative, of fairytale good and bad, is played in circuits of transnational activism, and it is the distance that allows the telescoped divisions to appear unified. In this game, the good can't be told apart. The only difference that can be told is between good and evil, between the oppressed and the oppressor, between a set of people who are coded as 'local', as belonging to a place, and an actor that belongs to none and all, a *World Bank*. It is, to use a term taken up both through feminist epistemology and subaltern studies, a strategic essentialism (Spivak 1985). The goals of this manoeuvre are nominally progressive – the articulating of a unified subaltern voice against capital (Sturgeon 1997). Yet in its performance here, a rather violent division is papered over.

Khan was, for instance, unimpressed by the call from Kennedy Road settlers to continue the dump. She attributed the origins of racial tension between Africans and Indians in the area to riots in 1949, in which Indian grocers were incorrectly blamed for food price rises. This injustice, according to Khan, persists. The Kennedy Road settlement has been given R200m to resettle - a sum of money that has not yet reached the community, due in no small part to the fact that the community does not want to be relocated to Verulam, as the government proposes. Verulam is on the very periphery of the eThekweni municipality, as far into the countryside as it's possible to get while still technically being in Durban. It is underserved by roads, and lacks employment opportunities, schools, healthcare facilities, and is far removed from the places

where the few lucky enough to find employment from the settlement work. Many in Kennedy Road find the decision to relocate them to this rural area functionally indistinguishable from the apartheid policy of creating Bantustans for Africans. Khan finds their desire to remain on the dump inexplicable:

‘Why these people would want to live on such a polluted hill...why don’t they just relocate to Verulam in the country and become organic vegetable farmers?’

Khan was offered compensation for her housing – R50,000 for the land, and R200,000 for the house on it. This is an order of magnitude below market value. She was unwilling to accept the offer: ‘if you’ve got a Mercedes,’ she says, ‘you want to have another Mercedes, not a Golf’, she explained.

Khan was at best dismissive of the Kennedy Road struggle, and her views on the Kennedy Road residents can be located within a history of views within Indian communities that see social problems caused not by apartheid or differential access to the means of productions, but because of ‘Africans’, with all the racism that such an explanation calls upon and perpetuates. This racism is papered over by the inclusion of Bisasar Road-through-Khan into global civil society. The closure of the dump is a kind of struggle that can be taken up and coded as acceptable within the circuits of global civil society, because it has the features of a concrete and time-bound ‘international civil society’ goal – the outcome is clear, the mechanisms for achieving it are fairly straightforward, and it is a ‘rich target’ for action. This goal orientation invites the complicity of ‘global civil society’ in the unification of the spectacle of Bisasar Road. That the struggle against the dump involves black (Indian) South Africans allows the metonymic suture of lower middle-class Indian and very poor working class African communities.¹³ The fact that Khan was unwell, and fighting a brave fight against cancer, gave urgency to the struggle. Yet the deaths from HIV/AIDS, diarrhoea and, ultimately, poverty within the Kennedy Road settlement¹⁴ are defocused by this unification. This is not to summon up a calculus of suffering, but to observe and remember the deaths that are written out of these stories, and to remember the institutions, South African and international financial, that provide their stage.

In setting up the problem like this, I ought to be wary of two landmines of my own manufacture. First, tempting though it is to counterpose Kennedy Road against Khan, the dynamics are more subtle, even if I don’t have enough in the stories I’ve so far told to be able to follow the complex flows of power within Kennedy Road, and don’t have enough of an understanding of Khan’s changing and multiple relations both to residents of Kennedy Road, and to those in Clare Estate and beyond. Second, while it might be tempting to code this battle along sociological fault-lines of race (Indian vs. African) or gender,

the importance of the interactions in and around Kennedy road lies precisely in the changes around social relations through race and gender that the Kennedy road rebellion has allowed.

It's clear that the slogans on Kennedy Road posters constitute a response to Sajida Khan inflected with sexism. 'Hlala Ngentombi' is a way of fixing and regulating the behaviour of Khan's body. This sexism isn't universal, though. Women from Kennedy Road were arrested as well as men, and in the celebrations after their release from prison, women spoke with as much 'airtime', and were accorded as much respect, as men. The elected deputy chair of the community association, Nonhlanhla Mzombe, is a woman, and in the community events which I attended, and through reports by others, it is clear that sexism is not as prevalent as outsiders suppose. This is not to write a fairytale of gender empowerment within the informal settlement, but to tell a tale against the pathologising of poor communities, and their activism, through the victimisation of poor women.¹⁵

The antagonism between Khan and members of the community is also racialised, but not straightforwardly. The Kennedy Road, quite correctly, identify the racism they experience from the police as coming from Indian police, and the forces that wish to close the dump as emanating from the Indian community in Clare Estate. Yet the descriptions of the Clare Estate Residents are racially coded in contradictory ways – the language is of 'Amandiya', not the more pejorative 'Amacoolie'. Zikode drew the lines between the people in houses and those living in shacks. The crowd responded with 'down with the shacks' – hardly a racialised chant, denouncing their own, rather than their wealthier neighbours' housing. Indians within the judiciary had been involved in their arrest and trial, but Indians had also been involved in their defence in court. One member of the Kennedy Road community volunteered that while it was 'the Indians who are against us', it was qualified with the observation that working class Indians are allies, and it is their shops, not the large chains, that most people in Kennedy Road prefer to patronise. This is a salutary reminder that the coding of racism in language and in action can be at odds, since racial praxis is always inflected by class, gender and, most broadly, culture.¹⁶

Moralling the story: Snivel society, violence and solidarity

Narrator: It is interesting to examine the moral issues at question here. The finality of stories such as these dictates...

(NARRATOR turns upstage and notices EVERYONE looking at him. THEY move towards him, as a group)

Sorry, I tell the story, I'm not part of it.

Little Red Ridinghood: That's right. (pulls out knife)

Witch: Not one of us!

Baker: You're always on the outside.

Narrator: (nervous) That's my role. You must understand, there must always be someone on the outside.

Steward: You are going to be on the inside now.

Narrator: You are making a big mistake.

Stepmother: Nonsense.

Narrator: You need an objective observer to pass the story along.

Witch: Some of us don't like the way you've been telling it.

(THEY grab him and begin to pull him upstage)

Narrator: If you drag me into this mess, you'll never know how your story ends. You'll be lost.

Baker: (to GROUP) Wait. He's the only one who knows the story.

Narrator: Do you think it will be fun when you have to tell it yourselves? Think of your baby.

Baker's Wife: Stop! He's right! Let him go!

Into the woods, Act II, Scene 2, (Sondheim 1999)

The tales told about the space of Kennedy Road, the omissions and the extraction, involve different language games. We can go a step further, though, because we know something already about the circuits in which these narratives circulate. There are modes of regulation within civil society, (Ehrenberg 1999; Keane 2003; Pithouse 2003; Hydén 1997; Kallick 1996; Shaw 1999; Marcussen 1996; Lemarchand 1992) and mechanisms through which 'civil society' authors a narrative of popular resistance against its chosen shibboleth. The narrative constitutes the problem in terms of some violation of natural or human justice, represents an aggrieved population to the body whose behaviour the narrative is designed to influence, and implies or demonstrates alternative outcomes, happy or unhappy endings, depending on the choices made by that body. This broad narrative encompasses civil society groups from the South African Communist Party to the Promise Keepers in the United States to, indeed, the Karnataka State Farmers Association. Central to every civil society the narrative, then, is the representation not just of an 'enemy' and its saviour, but of a population in peril. The relation between the intended audience of the narrative and this putative damsel in distress is one that we'll examine more deeply in the final section. But the creation of the 'affected population'¹⁷ is a structuring phenomenon that allows us to moor the language games within a linguistic process that we can speak of as a narratology (Todorov 1971; de Man 1973). To identify these phenomena as structured is not, of course, to commit to any particular form of structuralism. It is only to observe, and commit, to an interrogation of a particular feature of the stories that social movements tell (Polletta 1998), noting that this moment is a deeply political one.

The architecture of the social movement narrative does not belong, of course, exclusively to those people whose projects might be self-identified as progressive. I have written elsewhere of the creation of ‘snivel society’ (Patel 2005), through which attempts to create tame organisations, funding and positioning them so as to look very much like the ‘real thing’. Think about the toy maker Gepetto creating Pinocchio in the modernised version of the fairy story.¹⁸ Gepetto fervently wishes Pinocchio to become a real boy, but wherever he goes, people can, with a little inspection, tell how it is that Pinocchio’s strings are pulled. Perhaps the most transparent example comes from the World Bank’s funding of the ‘Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty’, which found it had to change its name to The International Land Coalition, being neither popular, nor explicitly aimed at eradicating hunger or poverty, but an organisation of land owners committed to ‘willing-buy, willing-seller’ land reform and, at most, poverty alleviation (Borras 2003). In this case, the organisation itself couldn’t successfully tell the narrative of suffering to the extent that it ceded the narrative before it unravelled.

Yet in conjuring the story of Pinocchio, I assume that there is a *real* version, just as Pinocchio aspires to be a real boy, where civil society is able to genuinely represent communities in distress. This assumption shouldn’t go unqualified. To say that civil society organisations are able successfully to spin this kind of representation is not to say that they then automatically represent the interests of those whose story they tell. Most civil society organisations, particularly those labelled as ‘NGOs’ in the schism between NGOs and social movements (Petras and Veltmeyer 2001; Pithouse 2004), need not in fact succeed in moving from the narrative to any concrete political action in support of the communities they represent. The narrative can instead exist in isolation from its actors, serving as a fundraising or legitimating tool (the audience of the narrative is, after all, different from the victims within the story). When civil society organisations are able to be successful in their narrations, I make a very thin claim: that they are able to maintain the integrity of the narrative. Any use to which the narrative is put, remains a further claim. Thus, under this metric of ‘fake’ and ‘real’ civil society, the fake can be rooted out simply through its inability successfully to represent a community in distress. ‘Real’ civil society can do this.

In the narrative about Bisasar Road, Kennedy Road and the story of the informal settlement around the edge of the dumpsite has been removed. In the narrative of the suffering of the Clare Estate community against the World Bank, tales of the informal settlement who are also part of Clare Estate, and the people within it who believe that there is employment to be derived from the World Bank’s involvement in the gas to power project, are a distraction at best from the more fairy tale story of good and evil.

With a quick visit to the site, this omission becomes egregious. The houses of the Kennedy Road settlement necklace the dump site. Nor, contra (Horton

2005), can it be argued that the residents of Kennedy Road lack agency or power. In recent protests, the coverage of which is beyond this paper, they have succeeded in meeting with ministerial representatives, in a bid to secure water, housing and toilets.



A protest against Yakoob Baig, on 14 September 2005. Over 3000 people, from across Durban, participated.

From afar, however, the (undisputed and intense) suffering of Khan and the middle class community is the one that becomes the object of solidarity. And it is through distance that the heart grows fonder. Without the complicating concerns of local politics, the battle against the Bank is easy. With those concerns, particularly when the alternative involves some sort of claim of false consciousness on the part

of the informal settlement residents, then the struggle becomes harder, particularly for those local activists whose own presuppositions about the informal settlement, are in a position to authorise tales about Kennedy Road. After Khan's death, for instance, Bond and Dada circulated a political obituary, one that positioned them as the memorykeepers of Khan's pure and unfettered environmental struggle, yet one that again failed to mention the shackdwellers living in the very place she based her life's work (Bond and Dada 2007). In an encomium, it is normal to cleave to the positive; the purpose of an elegy is to paint an unwrinkled picture for posterity, to serve as a guardian of memory. Perhaps Bond and Dada's piece wasn't the place to mention the tension between Khan and Kennedy Road residents. When the writing about Sajida Khan's struggle when she was still alive looked like a permanent epitaph, striving for a narrative finality. But when *every* piece of reporting about the dump is an encomium, when *every* document about the dump erases the people who work and live closest to it (and both Bond and Dada saw drafts of this paper in 2005 and are aware of the shackdweller struggles), then we ought to pause and think about what it means to respond to these reports with solidarity. Because that is what we are incited, at a distance, to do.

This isn't new, of course. When Fanon notes in the quote at the beginning of this chapter that the world came to know South Africa through Sharpeville, the knowledge that we in the world received was both an epitaph and an incitement to support. At some level, this shouldn't surprise us – all writing is, ultimately,

political. But if we know this about political documents, then we ought be at our most vigilant when we most want to believe them true. It is now, incidentally, when epistemology and desire are most tangled (see Sedgwick 1990 for more).

In Bond et al's reporting, it is possible to erase Kennedy Road because those reading tend not to be in South Africa, but much further away. Kennedy Road is erased through distance, but also through the trope of writing in which the audience is incited to stand *in solidarity with* the place they have come to know as Bisasar Road. Solidarity, in other words, has its epistemology. This is, at one level, a trivial point. To stand in solidarity with some entity, one comes to know that entity through particular institutions, with particular politics, receiving that knowledge in ways that construct us differently than, for example, the way we come to know a recipe or a computer program. We have already seen, though, that this solidarity can also have its aporias, in contexts where the audience, of people largely in the Global North, come to understand through solidarity those in the Global South. In her excellent 'Segregated Sisterhood: racism and the politics of American Feminism', Nancie Carraway (Caraway 1991) offers a politics of democratic solidarity as a means for white feminists to support, understand, and transform themselves in the understanding of feminists of colour. In this political project, solidarity becomes a mechanism for democratic praxis, and in theory it is to be celebrated. Yet in practice, the segregation of sisterhood of which Carraway writes is written in space is being written through power. With the far longer distances involved in 'global solidarity', the power of those arbitrating and translating the experiences of the Global South to the Global North becomes far greater. This is something to which transnational social movement studies, in its US political science variants, seem unconcerned, with understandings of solidarity within the social movement literature there (Smith, Chatfield, and Pagnucco 1997) and (Keck and Sikkink 1998), for example, being largely unproblematic. This is social movement politics under western eyes (Mohanty 1988). It is solidarity as an alibi for ignoring politics, *because* those politics become constituted as local, and through this, unified into a smoother narrative of good and evil (Pithouse 2004).

The question then, however, becomes this: what is it for a narrator not to ignore local politics? This inevitably asks questions about my positioning, and that of the 'local activists involved'. At the time the protests first took place, I was involved in research on landlessness, looking at the ways that different social movements approached lands rights issues – hence the interest in the Karnataka State Farmers' Association, which occupies a fraught position as a largely landed farmers group, with many members dependent on the continued employment and availability of landless labourers. At the time also, I was working in support of the Landless Peoples' Movement in South Africa, an organisation going through tremendous internal difficulties, beset by the state and hamstrung by its involvement with NGOs seeking to capture its issue,

and its ability to mobilise (Mngxitama 2005). I came, then, to the uprisings in Kennedy Road through an interest in finding a struggle for land in my own town, a town to which I was relatively new, and in which I was still beginning to feel at home. My engagement with the politics in Kennedy Road, then, were informed by my understanding not of the World Bank's designs on the space through the Kyoto Protocol, but by the World Bank's designs on rural land through its agrarian reform program (Borras 2003). I came, in other words, with a bare minimum of an understanding of the politics of place in Kennedy Road. Through facilitating favourable press coverage (Patel and Pithouse 2005), and with others facilitating access to lawyers, training people in Kennedy Road in the mechanics of conducting a legal protest, providing media contacts and resources for a sound system, t-shirts and materials for banners, etc, we were able to come to understand these politics a little better, through being invited to attend meetings and spend time with people from the settlement. And, indeed, not all 'local activists' did the same thing in Kennedy Road. Rehana Dada came to the community to shoot additional footage for a documentary, but has since moved on. Mandisi Majavu's attempts to write a story for Indymedia foundered. I myself left the country for two months between July and August 2005, and was in Durban for only a year more after that. As much as I would like to (and this paper is, at the end of the day, exactly about how much we would *all* like to) write the definitive and final narrative of Kennedy Road, I cannot. My attempt here has been not just to monkey-wrench a dominant narrative, but to ask how that narrative came to be. I am conscious that in my retelling of the story, I myself fall into the very same narrative slouching and misdirection that I write against. As one reviewer has pointed out, at the end of the story only one community gets to redeem their racism and sexism, one is struck still by the extent to which both racism and sexism are rife in South African society (though, I'm *still* inclined to think that there's less racism among shackdwellers than among the bourgeoisie).

This process is, of course, deeply Hegelian. The narrative of the dump was written in opposition to the World Bank, to the municipality, to the state. I write in opposition to this erasure. It is necessary for someone to write about my erasure of gender, race, and the academic politics at play in Durban around Kennedy Road shackdwellers. And so it will go. But, for my part, I'd like in the closing parts of this essay to look at an issue that adds a further dimension to the discussion of erasure and occlusion – a history of violence.

Concerning Violence

The state is, understandably, threatened by this interruption of 'local' politics in its narrative. The tale of Kennedy Road is a story of model citizens, of people

who have precisely done everything that the neoliberal ANC regime in South Africa has expected of them, and have been betrayed. They have participated in the multi-stakeholder consultations and have found validation in the possibility that their children will be able to go to university. Yet their response to betrayal has been different to the NGO community commonly associated with ‘global civil society’. When, for example, the World Bank calls for an extractive industry review commission, involves NGOs in the process, and then discovers that the recommendations involve scaling back its involvement in fossil fuels, the Bank ignores the review. When the municipality ignored Kennedy Road, for the last time, they took to the streets. They used violence.

This violence has been characterised by the state as immature and atavistic, running counter to the democratic project. Concerned by the nationwide outbreak of protest of which the Kennedy Road community were progenitors, former President Thabo Mbeki said ‘We must stop this business of people going into the street to demonstrate about lack of delivery. These are the things that the youth used to do in the struggle against apartheid.’¹⁹ Mbeki’s logic, clearly, is that the tactic of street protest is no longer necessary as the goal of the overthrow of apartheid has been achieved – its continued use being, at best, an inappropriate throwback. The understanding of those in Kennedy Road, as elsewhere, is rather different. The project of over-throwing apartheid is only partially complete. As Fanon notes, ‘national liberation... is always a violent phenomenon.’ (Fanon 1965). At the level of theory, violence is a moment where Fanon and Polanyi have a point of connection – the use of violence to change the terms of the debate, to disrupt the power of capital, can be seen as a mature level of political action.

The mutual incompatibility of Democracy and Capitalism is almost generally accepted to-day as the background of the social crisis of our time....Hitler’s Düsseldorf speech... proclaims the utter incompatibility of the principle of democratic equality in politics and of the principle of the private property of the means of production in economic life to be the main cause of the present crisis; for ‘Democracy in politics and Communism in economics are based on analogous principles.’ ... Basically there are two solutions: the extension of the democratic principle from politics to economics, or the abolition of the Democratic ‘political sphere’ altogether. ... After abolition of the democratic political sphere only economic life remains; Capitalism as organised in the different branches of industry becomes the whole of society. This is the Fascist solution. (Polanyi 1936).²⁰

Much has been made of Michael Burawoy’s fusion of Polanyi’s analysis of the ‘double movement’ – which supervenes on the movements of fascism and socialism in his earlier analysis – and Gramsci’s analytics, and the politics they

produce. I'm not about to dispute the analysis – I name it only to confess to a particular theoretical orientation, to own a lineage. This may seem like old hat, and my inner graduate-student is already yawning. But there's a dividend to this kind of enquiry – 'global civil society' are embedded in a class politics of their own, and produce their own often racialised poverty, justice and oppression, mimicking the very structures of domination they comfort themselves in opposing.

Fanon builds on this:

In the capitalist countries a multitude of moral teachers, counsellors, and 'bewilderers' separate the exploited from those in power. In the colonial countries, on the contrary, the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native to advise him by means of rifle butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure force. The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native (Fanon 1965).

If civil society organisations can be the bewilderers of the exploited in capitalist countries, in a post-apartheid capitalist context, there is both bewilderment and violence, both coercion and consent. Within post-apartheid South Africa, in other words, we see hegemony. In Kennedy Road there are both regular confrontations with the police, but in addition, through the mechanisms of local councillors and ANC ward meetings, communities of poor people awaiting 'service delivery' have been encouraged to adopt and understand the spirit of compromise.

Compromise is attractive to the nationalist bourgeoisie, who since they are not clearly aware of the possible consequences of the rising storm, are genuinely afraid of being swept away by this huge hurricane and never stop saying to the settlers: 'we are still capable of stopping the slaughter; the masses still have confidence in us; act quickly if you do not want to put everything in jeopardy.' One step more, and the leader of the nationalist party keeps his distance with regard to that violence. He loudly proclaims that he has nothing to do with these Mau-Mau, these terrorists, these throatslitters. At best, he shuts himself off in a no-man's-land between the terrorists and the settlers and willingly offers his services as go-between; that is to say, that as the settlers cannot discuss terms with these Mau-Mau, he himself will be quite willing to begin negotiations... Thus it is that the rear-guard of the national

struggle, that very party of people who have never ceased to be on the other side in the fight, find themselves somersaulted into the vanguard of negotiations and compromise - precisely because that party has taken very good care never to break contact with colonialism... (Fanon 1965).

The Kennedy Road community over its 15 years has had plenty of opportunity to evaluate and understand the shifting operation of the structures of compromise in local government. Every member of the community had been able to do this, men and women. When faced with the obvious indifference of the state to their claims to land, the poor rebelled. You could claim that this was spontaneous and emotive. But if you did this in order to belittle or sweep aside the response you'd be wrong – all politics are emotive. And the Kennedy Road 14 have no regrets about their actions. Indeed, at their victory celebrations, they claimed they would, and will, do it again. This embrace of protest, and if necessary of violence, makes the Kennedy Road protest a prickly and difficult insertion into the narrative of 'World Bank vs. community'. Yet their commitment to the transformation of their conditions represents not the upending of the post-apartheid project but, as Fanon suggests, its completion. The tactics to which they have been driven – they have spent years waiting and 'being bluffed' – draw disapproval from certain circuits of civil society at an international level. Certainly, the struggle, the tactics and the demand for livelihood – which those in support of the World Bank, within and outside the community capitalise upon – positions Kennedy Road residents awkwardly with respect to the narration of a poor community suffering at the hands of the Bank. But the struggles in Kennedy Road have, since they first emerged, spread across the country, referred to in Cape Town, learned from in Pietermaritzburg, cheered by informal settlers in Johannesburg. They are becoming inescapable. And they are increasingly doing violence to the standard narrative of Bisasar Road.

Conclusion

Into the woods, each time you go
 There's more to learn of what you know.
 Into the woods, but not too slow..
 Into the woods, it's nearing midnight...

Into the woods
 To mind the wolf,
 To heed the witch,
 To honor the giant,
 To mind,
 To heed,

To find,
To think,
To teach,
To join,
To go to the festival!

Into the woods
Into the woods
Into the woods
Then out of the woods...
And happy ever after!

(Sondheim 1999)

Let me begin to pull this together. I began this whole exercise wanting to know about solidarity and the Karnataka State Farmers Association, and its mythic politics within the domain of global civil society. The representation of place, of the actions of the Karnataka State Farmers Association as reported in circuits of email and European-language fact-sheets may yet occlude struggles that occur 'beneath the radar' of global civil society. In terms of what this means for standing in solidarity with a movement, this demands constant critical vigilance because of the dangers of Fanon's 'bewilderers'. This isn't an argument about viewing global civil society from afar, from the difference between what is represented internationally and what is represented locally – I'm trying to make a stronger argument – that what is international and what is local, what we consider to be the dividing lines between these two kinds of space, is policed by ideas like 'global civil society', and are policed, ultimately, by the class interests of activists in different sites, both near and far. These are important issues not only for those searching for South Africa, but searching for any social fact at all. Social movements research offers a way to interrogate far more than the resistance to neoliberalism. Every moment of research is an epistemological act, one that inevitably produces words that reach for a definitive status they can never achieve, which occlude and obfuscate even as they strive to clarify.²¹

We see this by seeing how the Kennedy Road community interrupted the idea of global civil society. They took to the streets 'under the radar' of global civil society. They used a mild form of violence, of self defence of their dignity, in order not to make their case, but to make their case heard. 'The leader of the nationalist party keeps his distance with regard to that violence' precisely because it is violence. Indeed, when 'the leader of the nationalist party keeps his distance', he does two things. First, he names and creates a form of violence which is read by its perpetrators. The modes of violence used by the Kennedy Road community could be interpreted as a form of non-violent resistance, a form of Gandhian satyagraha. But there's no Gandhi in Kennedy Road, at least not

the totemised Indian middle class version.²² The violence in Kennedy Road was read as violence by the state, and this was a definition which was also internalised by its participants through the very modes through which it was transacted both at the time and subsequently (through the disruption of traffic, altercations with police, incarceration, legal entanglements). This understanding of violence was one shared and indeed spawned by the state. Moreover, I want to suggest that when the state disavows itself of that violence, in backing away from the violence, it creates a space for other kinds of consciousness. In transgressing the state, one becomes partially free of it.

Independent of this argument, I want to suggest that this violence is more than just an outburst, but a sign of political maturity, a reasonable and valid reaction to 'global civil society'. When the citizens of Kennedy Road resorted to violence, they were engaging in a response to their situation which was effective and cognisant of the political parameters in play. A measure of this is the extent to which the government capitulated, at least in rhetoric, a week after the violence, by acknowledging the need for urban housing for poor people. Consultation had brought 15 years of 'bluffing' – now, after the violence, that is no longer possible.

This rejection of illusion has brought about a number of effects. It has certainly created a more empowered community. Today, the preschool crèche beneath the community hall is running again, not because of the largesse of the ANC or the Urban Foundation, but because the community has cleared it up, and volunteered to operate it, with individual donations coming from within Kennedy Road to operate it. This, of course, resembles a paradise of public-private partnership, where the state has fully retreated, successfully shirking its obligations to its citizens, and yet where the citizens still receive public goods. Yet the provision of the preschool education centre is better read as a mark of not only of the state's failure, but as a direct result of citizen's confrontation with state violence. The preschool exists in defiance of the state – the state has wished it away for years, after all. And resources within the community have also been mobilised in support of other struggles. When a recent demonstration in the predominantly Indian area of Chatsworth asked for support, the community paid from voluntary donations to pay for two taxis to take community members to the front lines. The aftermath of the violence has been to increase cross-racial organising in Durban among the poorest communities. It is violence in the service of tolerance and, indeed, solidarity.

The response from the government has, however, been tepid. At a march in 2005, the second against Baig, a memorandum was handed over, demanding an array of concessions not just for Kennedy Road, but for the coloured in Sydenham Heights, and an adjacent community in a separate electoral ward. At the debriefing afterwards, the community made it clear to its leaders that this was the last memorandum they would hand over. If concessions were not

immediately forthcoming, they would take to the streets, and illegally, in order to secure their demands.

This is an understanding of violence as politically articulate rather than rebarbative. It is not to licence all violence all the time by everyone. Partly, this is because the violence of neoliberalism has already licenced itself, and needs no support from me. Partly, this is because the psychotic violence of war also has its own mechanisms for justification that stand independently. But the kinds of violence in Kennedy Road that seem to have caused a change in political consciousness, these kinds of violence are ones that need to be fostered. The Kennedy Road community, after all, did not hang a judge, or set fire to a shack, or burn the dump. They stopped traffic and resisted arrest. Other forms of violence might become appropriate, and the challenge is to develop a hermeneutic of this kind of violence that does not moralise, and in so doing, reproduce the conservative tropes of global civil society. Market interventions which inform a certain vision of civil society are only made possible by violence, and it's a violence about which neoliberalism must necessarily be amnesiac, or brand those who resist it as terrorists (as with the Bisasar Road 14).

Fanon offers a vision of violent resistance that can, but might not necessarily lead to revolutionary humanism. For those outside, for us, it comes as a shock, as an interruption of our conception of what's at play in global civil society. But this violence is not, at the end of the day, for us. It is for the Kennedy Road community. It can be the beginning, if we believe Fanon, of a transformation into revolutionary consciousness for its perpetrators. The Kennedy Road community seems genuinely to have come up against, and moved beyond, certain understandings of race, prejudices that bedevil those who have not been brought face to face with the contradictions of face in daily life. We might be able to read this consciousness as a result of violence. If it is, perhaps we ought to be much more supportive of this kind of violence than we might ordinarily be inclined to be. Perhaps we need this violence to remind us that the world, and its civil societies, are far more powerful than we have been led to believe. And perhaps civil society can also belong, finally, to the third Nelson Mandela.

Notes

1. Anything that passes for insight in this paper, I owe to conversations with Richard Pithouse, Sharad Chari, Saadia Toor, Mark Hunter, Sajida Khan, S'bu Zikode, Rehana Dada, Lindsey Horton, Graham Erion, Muna Lakhani, Princess Nhlangulela, Nonhlanhla Mzombe and other residents of the Kennedy Road settlement and comments from Michael Dorsey, Larry Lohman, Toussaint Losier, Shereen Essof, and Daniel Moshenberg. I am also grateful to the South Asia Institute at the University of Texas at Austin for the chance to present this paper at their 'Globalization and Its Implications for Democracy in South Asia' conference. I am particularly grateful to

- Sharmila Rudrappa and Kamala Visweswaran for helpful feedback at that event, and for the incisive comments of two anonymous reviewers.
2. The script is available online, and well worth reading, at <http://intothw.tripod.com/script.htm>
 3. And there I go – using ‘global’ as if it were unproblematic, as if it were natural and, for our purposes, as if the networks that span it were not constituted by it, as if the media of international activism were not the message. McLuhan’s thought here remains valid – to say ‘the medium is the message...is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium – that is, of any extension of ourselves – result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology’ (McLuhan 1964).
 4. http://www.sinkswatch.org/pubs/CDM%20Report_English.pdf
 5. Durban Group, ‘Kyoto, what’s to celebrate?’ *Green Left Weekly* (23 Feb 2005), 06 Mar 2005, < <http://www.greenleft.org.au/back/2005/616/616p9b.htm> >.
 6. Indeed, in two separately observed incidents, even acute demands for help have been responded to lackadaisically – twice, fires have burned several shacks to the ground in Kennedy Road, and twice the emergency services have responded tardily and with a minimum of urgency. This is allegedly a common phenomenon with emergencies in informal settlements, to the extent that some parties in Durban are in the process of bringing suit against the metropolitan authorities.
 7. It is interesting to note that Baig has nowhere left to run. Last year, the National Party, the architects of apartheid, merged with the ANC, their differences now being largely cosmetic. Baig couldn’t join the National Party again even if he wanted to.
 8. The Greystone Brick Company turns out not to have been involved with this project, but this was the report which circulated at the time.
 9. At a later date, one beyond the purview of this paper, a legal protest was organised against Yakoob Baig. On the night before the march, I visited the Kennedy Road settlement. In the main entrance of the settlement was parked a large troop carrier, with men in combat fatigues leaning out, scaring the children, and chatting with the young women of the settlement. The carrier had arrived at around 5pm, when people were returning from work, and passing through the entrance of the settlement. It left by 9pm, by which time most people were in their homes, and there was no passing audience. If they were not members of the army, and if they had not been sent there by the government, there must be a large and well camouflaged paramilitary force operating in South Africa performing voluntary pre-emptive crowd control. When we hear talk of market forces, then, it is important to remember that those forces aren’t just price incentives and structures. Those forces are often armed forces deployed in particular ways.
 10. This was the first time that anyone familiar with the court could recall this particular magistrate releasing poor people without bail in over a year. Partly responsible for this was the calibre of legal counsel brought, but also their familiarity with the magistrate. At the front of court, the proceedings of the state rolled with high moment, but in chambers, when the Kennedy Road advocate, a personal friend of the judge, went to discuss the case, justice was apparently shaped over giggled stories and nostalgia. At the time of writing, the charges against the Kennedy Road 14 have been dismissed, the

- judge noting that the next time the police bring a case of public violence, they ought to be able to connect the people they have arrested to the crimes of which they are accused.
11. Pithouse's (2005) article was the first but perhaps not the most powerful reflection of the shackdwellers' lives in the mainstream media. As a result of this initial article, a number of other activists became involved with the Kennedy Road community, including a documentary film maker, Aoibheann O'Sullivan. Her movie, *Kennedy Road and the Councillor* (O'Sullivan 2005) was shown in shack settlements using some portable digital video projection equipment that Fazel Khan had been able to find, and it provided the first chance for many shackdwellers to see their daily resistance dignified with attention from the media, with many of the interviews and pieces to camera in Zulu (with English subtitles). It was as a result of this guerilla cinema that the Kennedy Road Development Committee was able to connect with other Development Committees to, ultimately, form Abahlali baseMjondolo.
 12. Strachan has apparently initiated a defamation suit against the Centre for Civil Society for aspersions cast against his character. Although I am unaware of the substance of the allegations, the University of KwaZulu-Natal is contesting the allegations, and the offending article is available online (Reddy 2004). I am also unaware what came of these proceedings.
 13. This is part of a broader trend in the partners chosen by international NGOs in Durban.
 14. Within three weeks of my first visit two people had died. And these are just the people whom I'd known about through brief conversation.
 15. In events after this paper was written, the community decided to send a man and a woman to a meeting in Cape Town. Two of the five spokespeople are women, and at a community screening of Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein's film, 'The Take', two women and no men were elected to speak for the community. Again, this is not to suggest that Kennedy Road is a zone of exemption from patriarchy, but to suggest that the prejudices with which the community is approached deserve close scrutiny.
 16. This signification is also not static. Through subsequent engagement with the struggles in Chatsworth, a predominantly Indian area, the residents of Kennedy Road have, at their own expense, arranged taxis (small minibuses) to transport representatives to support protests in Chatsworth. Again, this kind of arrangement beggars claims of racism and division between communities of the poor.
 17. This is a technical term from refugee studies.
 18. The liberal Italian historian and Gramsci's intellectual *bête noir*, Benedetto Croce, thought that 'the wood out of which Pinocchio is carved is humanity itself'.
 19. Thabo Mbeki, at a speech to councillors in Rustenburg, on 8 May, 2005, reported at http://www.news24.com/News24/South_Africa/Politics/0,,2-7-12_1701729,00.html.
 20. For all his analytical skill, Polanyi was not invulnerable to a bit of wishful thinking. He follows up his historic choice between Socialism and Fascism with this thought 'Neither the one nor the other has yet been realised. Russian Socialism is still in the dictatorial phase, although the tendency towards Democracy has become clearly discernible.'
 21. I am particularly grateful to two anonymous reviewers for insights into the broader repercussions, and weaknesses, of my argument.
 22. There is, perhaps, the Gandhi who experiments with truth, but this Gandhi hasn't become the canonical one.

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