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War in Worcester:

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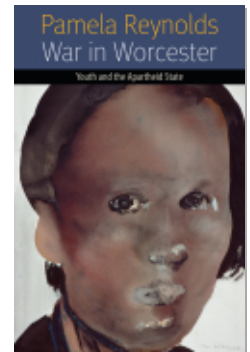
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THREE

Turning and Being Turned

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

— WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

The trope (from the Greek *tropos*, “turn”) in this chapter is of turning, doubling, in an encapsulated place where moves spiral around one another: a turning away, against; a doubling of pain; a ring of mountains hemming in the valley, the prison cells, the proscribed network of friends; the local fight. Betrayal shoots through the stories. It is enacted. It brushes, clears, maneuvers, undermines action. It surprises, being neither neat nor easily categorized. The chapter is about betrayal as an indicator of the nature of the context within which a stand was made. It is about protest under close surveillance against powerful odds, with minimal resources and dire consequences. It depicts the everyday nature of the lives of youth in revolt against the government, from the base of a small rural town. The chapter touches on a specific aspect of a state’s tactics in controlling revolt; on the character of youths’ resistance, their resources, the obstacles they faced, their experiences, and the consequences. The story of twins is told to reflect on issues of self-governance that entailed the holding of relationships under conditions

of deep crisis, when choice, blame, guilt, forgiveness, revenge, and fidelity were matters of daily concern. Their story is supplemented by incidents of betrayal experienced by others in the group and a glance at a summary of betrayal in the TRC's *Report* (2:555–582). The young, in accord with the aims of the liberation organizations, determined to cause the apartheid regime's demise. A great obstacle to the success of their endeavors, apart from the power of the state and the reach of its order, was betrayal—the treachery of another.

Scanlon writes about the importance of conditions in determining how we live in relation to one another (1998, 263). He emphasizes the need for a society to offer its members “the possibility of a satisfactory life within the law,” consisting of the provision of education, the dissemination of information about the law, and the maintenance of social and economic conditions (264). He testifies “to the value people set on the belief that their lives and institutions are justifiable to others. Of course one could say that what people care about . . . is that their institutions be just and their lives not be morally corrupt” (163). He makes the claim “that what is particularly moving about charges of injustice and immorality is their implication for our relations with others, our sense of justifiability to or estrangement from them” (163). Under apartheid, the people of Zwelethemba were fully aware of the injustice and immorality of the systems of control imposed on them. In their charges of injustice there is the sense of a failed accountability to those pressing the charge. A sense, too, that society or something equivalent owes them an account of why these things happen. In the sense of Scanlon's “estrangement,” there seemed to be a feeling that the world they lived in placed them in at least two moral universes.

Nana describes conditions in Worcester as the root of the rebellion:

In essence, our experiences of poverty in the townships militarized us. . . . We were ready to receive radical ideas about society. [The literature on apartheid had already described it] as an inhuman system, a heresy biblically. It was seen as a crime against humanity. It was seen as a Frankenstein, as [Archbishop Desmond] Tutu used to say. It was seen as a plague. It was seen like a cancer, a disease in society that had to be taken out. So, therefore, it was easy for us to act upon it. If apartheid is this thing that is not human, that is obstructing human beings from enjoying full human life, [then] this thing has got to be eliminated.

The young men in MAZE impressed me with their cognizance of the complexity of moral choices that their political engagement made them face. I cannot say who among them maintained full regard for the other: perhaps nobody did. I shall examine here the pervasiveness of forces that undermined loyalty and trust; the realization of the likelihood of betrayal; and the glue that nevertheless held many relationships and obligations fast.

Friendship, Trust, and Uneasy Relationships

I have described in chapter 2 the nature of the revolt in Zwelethemba given its geographic isolation and exposure to close surveillance by the security forces. As I see it, the young who had leadership at the local level thrust upon them drew on a combination of trust in others and self-reliance. In their need for protection and for the assistance of others, like all resistance fighters, they formulated terms to guide the conduct of relationships and an ethic of political behavior. Given the conditions in which they lived in Zwelethemba, there was little else on which they could depend. Both political action and safety called for the establishment of sets of relationships, based on political commitment, among peers (initially at school), within families, across the layers of local and national political leadership, among neighbors, and between the generations of old and new activists. While their revolt pitched activist youth into conflict with their elders to some extent, there was also a careful passing on of political attitudes, understandings, and commitment from generation to generation (see Ross and Reynolds 1999). Generational divisions and antagonisms existed alongside close interaction, deep care, and active support.

Each layer of leadership inducted candidates from among younger cohorts. From 1980 on, one layer after another was wiped off the scene—killed, imprisoned, maimed, chased into banishment or underground or into exile—and their juniors were pushed into the limelight or, rather, under the scrutiny of the security agents' gaze. Sometimes their apprenticeship was brief.

The young were stirred by the same fervor to eliminate apartheid as their elders had been, but, according to Nana, the 1980s were different:

The generation of the 1980s was similar to that of 1976 but, in terms of the context in which they conducted themselves, 1976 caught the regime off

guard. In 1980 we faced a regime, the apartheid regime, that was fully prepared to face us. So they mobilized the white people to fight against us. Some young people were conscripted into the army and sent into the townships. The troops came to settle in the townships in order to quell the uprising, so now the townships were battlegrounds. . . . We were the ones who had to bear the brunt of all that repression . . . and there was an increase of military activity on the part of the liberation movement. . . . So the young people had to take it on themselves to liberate the country because our parents had really seen it all before. In 1960, in 1976, they saw how the apartheid repressive machinery [worked], and it [was] quite brutal. We were naïve and, luckily, because we were naïve, we were more prepared to take greater risks than others. And also we were carefree because most of us had never had any family responsibility like having children and so forth. So we were rather like free radicals.

Xolile describes the young leaders as *opstookers* (those who stir up trouble), yet, in the process, they discovered themselves. They were, he said, called in to solve a wide variety of problems as if they had the wisdom of elders. They learned from their failures and successes, changing their patterns of behavior in the process. According to Xolile, most were too young to analyze the process and, on that basis, make decisions about how to act. There was an old guard in Zwelethemba from whom they learned, but the most effective leadership at that time was drawn from among the youth. Xolile says, “We learned to survive collectively.” Nana’s description of being young and politically active is evocative, funny, ironic, and searing:

Our lifestyles were hectic because some of us had to make many sacrifices really; for example, I was a sports person. I still love soccer even though I no longer play it. I used to play soccer. One had to make a sacrifice to stop playing soccer and involve oneself in the struggle, and therefore I was lost to soccer. We made a lot of sacrifices like losing ourselves, like our youth. You’re living that thing of having a carefree youthfulness, playing, and attending school and so forth. And also being a child again. You lost it in the heat of the struggle. You see, because you’re now meddling in national affairs in the adult world. And your experiences in the struggle transformed your consciousness. You were no longer [going] to be a child again: even if you went back home, your parents would notice a change in you. You [would be more] mature than the rest of your brothers and sisters who were not involved in the struggle. We became rebellious even [in front of] our parents.

And it was difficult for our parents to control us because now our eyes had been opened, and we had bigger responsibilities, and we were daredev-

ils. We were the ones who were fearless in treading the ground where our parents were afraid to tread. So now we [were] on a higher pedestal than our own parents. If they admonish you for doing something [you taunt them] as cowards. . . . Meanwhile your parents, out of concern, are trying to show you [that you must] be careful in your actions because they know the risks of involving themselves in the struggle. . . . There was no middle ground. There was no ground for bystanders. . . . And everyone—you [were] either with us or against us. So you had to join us. Our parents had to join us, or else we would label them lackeys of the system. And the consequences . . . were too harsh.

And sometimes we had to be very protective. When you get involved as an activist in struggle, you have to be extra careful. Trust no one. No one. Including your own parents. Even your friend. You [were] the best person to keep the secrets about yourself and your involvement in the struggle. . . . We feared the enemy, but, at the same time, we challenged the enemy. We realized that the enemy was shrewd and cunning. It could use the enormous resources it had at its disposal to convert those who were amongst you to be on the side of the enemy and to give information [about] you.

So in order to stop that from happening, you dare not tell your parents, nor your brothers and sisters because you did not want them to inform on you when you are in trouble, because the police will obviously go for your family in search of information about you. If they [family members] did not know your whereabouts, your activities in the struggle, they [would] not have anything to say to the police. It will be better for the revolution than to be betrayed by your own family. It was one way of protecting them.

But it was also a contradiction in terms. You expected them to protect you, but at the same time you did not trust them enough to give them information about yourself, thinking that you are protecting them. It was a very uneasy relationship. The struggle created an uneasy relationship between those youth who were involved in it and their parents. The gap widened. It lessened and closed if your parent was or [became] involved . . . and then you [could] confide in that person. But if your parents were not involved in the struggle it was difficult. So you [would] rather trust another person who was involved . . . than your own parent, even though your mother [would] tell you that, "I'm the one who will never betray you." You see. So it was a difficult kind of situation.

In Zwelethemba, as in many other places to which Africans were confined, the strain between moral demands and personal relations was great—

the strings were taut, and they could snap. Under the circumstances, dependence on friends was tempered by the possibility of betrayal. Sociability posed risks in such a context where the stakes of loyalty were very high and stark; harsh action could be taken against someone who was close to an activist, whatever her or his political position or level of information was. For example, the “fact” of being a member of an activist’s family exposed a mother to certain experiences, regardless of what she “knew.” The opposite of trust was suspicion, and when passions ran very high, sometimes summary justice was dispensed. Sometimes people were punished for failing to support the fight against the government (refusing to boycott shops or continuing to drink at *shebeens* [beer halls]) or for actively promoting the interests of the regime (performing duties as appointed town councilors or working as paid informers). Harm done by activists to others in their communities has been written about and was aired in the Commission’s hearings. Three people were “necklaced” in Zwelethemba (see chapter 2).

Here, though, I want to consider the nature of friendship under difficult conditions.

The young developed strong bonds as they entered politics, usually having been drawn in by classmates or slightly older boys at school. When leadership roles were assumed, the bonds were solidified, and trust was assumed to inform all interactions. Part of friendship was the nurturance of one another’s talents and skills in, for example, learning how to deflect passions that quickly spread among crowds. Many activists thought that in the second half of the 1980s the country was on the verge of chaos and that their role was to hold a line of clear action and intention within the community. They knew that it could be dangerous to prevent people in crowds from venting anger, so they learned to use songs and humor to capture attention and to divert anger, and they would call for certain speakers known for their abilities to hold a crowd. The task in many crowd situations was to direct or deflect anger rather than to lead, and in order to achieve that, quick responses and firm support for one another were essential.

As a young leader, one had, I was told, to try to maintain a clear level of consciousness in order to be able to guide the struggle on an everyday basis. One had to face the fear of failure and of envying those who seemed to be more popular or more successful in balancing the demands of politics and school. Revolution was not an escape but an enhancement of possibilities,

and, therefore, it required personal philosophical development to survive. The demands were difficult to meet. Signs of fatigue could quickly lead to failure. Idealism had to be matched with realism, pragmatism with ideology. The establishment of close links with others based on trust was a practical necessity. Familiarity with one another's weaknesses and strengths was accompanied by an intricate knowledge of the community.

There was opposition to leadership by the young from many angles. That, plus the concerted efforts of the security forces to break loyalty, undermine leadership, and craft complex nets of information collection (into which people were drawn or coerced as informers) ensured that trust was placed in few and, even then, cautiously. One of the men in our group is said by many others to have betrayed another member. Neither the one named as a betrayer nor the one said to have been betrayed talked about it. Indeed, eight of the fourteen are said to have been betrayed. I shall examine both what betrayal means under such conditions and young people's attitudes toward it.

In the interests of friendship and self-preservation, vigilance had to be maintained over one another's safety. When a colleague was thought to be in extreme danger, measures to protect, warn, and advise him or her were taken. Paulos was fanatically hated by the police, and vigilance on his behalf had to be shared. Some were told to go underground when the situation became too hot. Living within the law and acting against the law threw up paradoxical situations: for example, Edwin Rasmeni and his twin, Edward, were sent into hiding in Cape Town, but they had to return to Worcester to attend a court case relating to a previous charge and were arrested on a new charge when they appeared in court (their story is told below). Some of the leaders had, as one of the men politely phrased it, "social problems," by which I think he meant certain notions of grandiosity coupled with sexual indulgence and the consumption of beer in excess, which endangered them all.

A picture emerges of the young trying to sustain trust sufficient enough for the work of revolt. They had to live within the law while acting outside it. They had to balance their commitments to those among whom they lived in the ordinary ways of the everyday, knowing that it was through these others that the state attacked the resistance.

The security forces in Worcester were backed by a large state infrastructure of police, defense, and investigative machinery; vast resources; a legal

armature; and a panoply of clandestine support systems. They had a wide network of informers at international, national, and local levels, and they had infiltrated the top of the resistance organizations. They had the cooperation of people who lived in the same communities as did the young protesters, people who were directly in their employ, for example, police officers, or those who were somehow obliged to the official bureaucracy, as were, for example, employees of the municipality: some of them were labeled collaborators by the youth. Temporary policemen, called *Kitskonstables*, were deployed after a brief and rudimentary training. They and sometimes other groups were transported from one region to another to mete out punishment to local troublemakers and to tamp down local protest. In the Boland, where most Africans spoke Xhosa, Zulu speakers were brought in, and their harsh methods of dealing with protestors stirred deep anger. People arrayed on the side of “law and order” (as defined by the government) used a variety of techniques to obtain information from and to warn and terrify activists and their followers, family members, friends, neighbors, teachers, and mentors. It was all a matter of turning the screw.

Security force members attempted to defuse local protest by gathering information, frightening people enough to keep them from becoming involved, and breaking or silencing activists. Their rationale was clear—to protect a democratically elected, white, Christian government. The local police were hampered by five factors. It was not possible to kill all the young people who were protesting against their predicament, as there were rather too many of them, and, I was told, the official policy was not to have to dispose of bodies. Nor was it possible to imprison, torture, or turn all of them, if only because, as the leaders were undermined or sentenced, others took their places. Besides, there were legal niceties to obey, including the requirement that charges should be laid after someone had been held in custody for a certain time, preventing the indefinite detention of people without a legal hearing at which evidence had to be produced to sentence and incarcerate detainees formally (in practice, many ruses were used to keep people in detention and to falsify evidence). The need to obtain evidence presumably exaggerated the importance placed on catching people with banned literature in their possession or with lists of members in banned organizations or minutes of their meetings. It was an odd game that both sides seemed destined to play: the search for records and the compulsion to compile them. A game of war. The search was for proof, and the compulsion had to do with

the nature of the revolt, which depended on mass support and individual commitment, necessitating some of the paraphernalia of organization that bolstered identification, proved membership, and symbolized resistance. The players chased information and sought written evidence, even though they knew how deficient or ephemeral it probably was. (There is, perhaps, an irony in the effort and expense that officials of the apartheid regime expended in shredding thousands of documents before they were ousted.) The last of the five factors that hampered the local police was the existence of double agents, although the term seems too formal to apply to those who had access to information within the structures of local government, including the forces of law and order in Worcester who might have passed it on to local leaders. A few African members of the police who lived in Zweekhemba gave information to the young activists, even tipping them off about planned searches or raids. The activists named three whom they described as “good policemen.” Some prison wardens came to admire their charges, carried messages for them, and brought them newspapers and parcels from home. Finally, there were those who watched and listened and passed information about the police to activists but who were paid no regard by the police, perhaps because they assumed that those subservient to them (cleaners, builders, gardeners, messengers) neither saw nor heard nor talked.

I want to emphasize the local character of the conflict between the youth and the police. Both had their tentacles into and drew support from a sphere beyond their territory, but the fight was corralled in the circle of mountains that cossets the beautiful, fertile valley of the Breede River. The police and their colleagues had access to detailed information about the residents and could ensure that they were cautioned or punished at school or that they lost their jobs. The jailers and the jailed, like the torturers and the tortured, came to know each other only too well; they carried an awareness of the other that could impinge on their emotions as their paths crossed in the small town. The only time I ever heard Nana express deep enmity toward anyone was against a man who tortured many of the young in Worcester, including him.

If, under torture, someone gave another’s name to the police, in all likelihood the police already knew who was doing what at the various levels of organization and protest. Their most pressing search was for information about the few whom they suspected of belonging to secret cells of the lib-

eration forces and who may have had access to details about arms stores and resistance operations. In the search, many people were hurt and terrified despite not knowing anything. Others were shamed and humiliated after having given information that they feared had led to activists being harmed, whereas they actually had, perhaps, revealed little or nothing new. Information was understood in certain ways, deployed in certain ways, withheld in certain ways, and it was on all of this that betrayal hinged. There were intricate flows of information and misinformation between activists and security forces, with diverse members of the community, and even kin, caught in the middle—and betrayal played a complex part in this overwritten text of local information. Families were jeopardized by activists as much as the latter were made vulnerable by family.

The local police had no easy task. The young learned, if they did not already, to hate them. Nana drew on revolutionary ideology in describing the propaganda that was sometimes used to recruit new members for the cause:

And also it was the question of developing enough hatred for the system to want to change it. In the process of developing that hatred—because the system was manned (I don't know which word to use, because I have to be gender sensitive)—but the people who were servicing the apartheid administration, the police, the bureaucrats, really, had to be identified as people who were part of the problem. And we were seeing ourselves as part of the solution. And, therefore, in the process of building up a solid mass which can be dependable to make sure that the revolution succeeds, you had to have your own kind of propaganda, you see. So a discourse of revolution or some kind of way to . . . to . . . to build hegemony for the revolution project. So, in that sense, the energy had to be depersonified. When you saw the National Party you didn't see human beings. You saw people who were not worthy to be human, really. So you had to use words like "enemy." Enemy—when you see an enemy, you don't necessarily think twice before you act upon the enemy. So you have to produce a kind of discourse that will justify any kind of brutal action that you can take against the enemy. In military psychology you . . . you are taught to devalue a human being . . . that person is seen as an enemy, that is as not fully human, that is a problem, or that is an obstruction to the progress of humanity . . . in that sense you realize that if only this person can be eliminated, or if only this thing called an enemy can be eliminated, [then] freedom can be available, can be accessed in abundance. It is in that context that young people found it rather easy to [take up] arms.

Here Nana was talking about the Gugulethu Seven and therefore about people trained at a more sophisticated level than almost all the young of Zwelethemba. The irony was that the Gugulethu Seven were trained and armed by an *askari* (defined below) planted by the security forces as part of a trap being hatched to kill them and then claim that they were terrorists.

The situation of protesters in Zwelethemba (and in similar areas on the edges of small towns) was difficult in particular ways. They lived on a bare patch of land over which there was tight surveillance, and, given the restrictions of poverty and their relative isolation, they were rendered vulnerable. The senior leaders of their organizations were not at hand, and the borders, which offered escape into exile, were very far away. The young activists and leaders were aware that they might break under pressure and lose their sense of identity and self-worth.

The scene I have set is one of the exposure of the young to forces far greater than themselves, in which they depended for protection on the trust, loyalty, and care of family, friends, and neighbors. When a shelter shattered or their activities forced them to seek other protective cover, they were as vulnerable as hermit crabs scuttling across the sands in search of another shell in which to squat. In these circumstances, the replacement of trust, loyalty, and care with distrust, disloyalty, and carelessness (to be anticipated in the ordinary run of things) could have dire consequences, and betrayal took on particular connotations.

Four definitions of the verb are given in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (COD)*: “Betray v. tr. 1. place (a person, one’s country, etc.) in the hands or power of an enemy. 2. be disloyal to (another person, a person’s trust, etc.). 3. reveal voluntarily or treacherously; be evidence of (his shaking hands betrayed his fear). 4. lead astray or into error (. . . from Latin *tradere* ‘hand over’)” (*COD* 1995, 122). The possibility and likelihood of betraying or being betrayed in the above ways and in other ways was for many part of everyday life. Four other words aligned to a betrayer, stalked their days: collaborator (one who works jointly or cooperates traitorously with an enemy); *impimpi*, or informer (a person who informs against another); sellout (one who abandons principles, honorable aims, etc., for personal gain, or one who betrays); *askari* (one who has changed sides as a result of yielding to the efforts of the enemy to turn him or her into a traitor, usually after prolonged physical and psychological torture). According to

the *COD* (1995, 73) *askari* is, or was, an East African soldier or police officer (in Arabic, *askari* means soldier). The word “spy” was seldom used in Zwelethemba: its meaning was subsumed under informer, *askari*, or double agent. Betrayal was not a simple, single idea: it was kin to deception, collusion, compromise, complicity, infiltration, and so on. It could occur at many levels, from the betrayal of one’s parents, by inviting the violence of the security forces into one’s home as a consequence of one’s activism, to turning state witness against one’s comrades. The horrified imagination of the country was caught by the revelations of a man who had become an *askari* working for the clandestine security force unit that operated from Vlakplaas. My purpose is to focus attention on the everyday character of turning and being turned and of the consequent pain and loss that lasts, for many, every day, for the rest of their lives.

It is not entirely clear what counted as betrayal. Suspicion stuck to certain people. A close watch was kept for signs of turning, including behavior among peers, new spending patterns, or fresh patterns of behavior and movements. Betrayal under duress could be followed by threats of exposure, possibly spread by rumor; therefore the behavior of those released from detention was monitored. There were two aspects that attached to betrayal: one had to do with those who gave information and may, thereafter, have endured guilt, shame, humiliation; the other aspect was those affected by the revelations, who might as a result have endured imprisonment, torture, or other forms of suffering. Among the former, punishment may have followed, including rejection, a house burned down, or even necklacing; among the latter, those informed on may have already been identified, caught, exposed, or even “confessed.”

A Shadow of Pain

I have a sad tale to tell. It is a story of boys breaking into adulthood. Of sharing and intimacy; of doubling the pain. It is a story of betrayal. The tale from Zwelethemba concerns Xolile and the twins Edwin and Edward. The story was told to me by Xolile and Edwin.

Xolile (Maqoma) Dyabooi, born on October 12, 1965, was the fifth of seven children. His father came from the Transkei to Worcester in the

1950s. He had passed standard eight and had earned a junior certificate that, at the time, could have been expected to secure him better employment than selling fruit in exchange for bottles. Xolile's mother had a few years of education; she knitted jerseys to earn money. As a young boy, Xolile labored one summer on a fruit farm, but the work conditions made him so cross that he left after a fortnight. In 1983, one parent died, and in 1984 the other one died, leaving the family in dire poverty and Xolile bereft of support through terrible times; he refers to himself as an orphan.

I came to know Xolile well, as we often traveled together between Cape Town and Worcester. He has a warm, open, laughing manner and is a kind man with a dignified bearing. He very seldom speaks ill of anyone and is articulate about the ethical grounds relating to politics in accord with which he tries to behave and with regard to which he estimates the worth of others' actions, at least in reflecting on the fight to end apartheid. In talking of his past, he glosses over the details of his suffering. His childhood was spent in Zwelethemba, where he attended the local schools and, as a teenager, played for the neighborhood's soccer team until his political activities forced him to stop.

However, he had perfected the art of dissembling and disappearance. Try finding Xolile at an appointed spot, or watch in bewilderment as he dissolves into the smoky dusk of the streets of Zwelethemba. Try nailing him to a detailed narration of his own history, try keeping to a course already mapped.

The death in 1977 of Steve Biko, in police custody, stirred Xolile's political consciousness; he was then twelve years old. He read the newspapers his father bought and followed the issue around the establishment of advisory boards in the community. He became politically involved at school and, having passed standard eight, dropped out in 1985, during the tumult of the conflict. His elder brother was detained for a few days in 1980 in relation to the protest at the primary school. Xolile was soon involved with student politics and youth organizations. By 1985, he was wanted by the police for stirring uprisings at the high school, and he began to sleep in a different place every night.

He became one of the most prominent local leaders and much sought after by the police. A younger brother became embroiled in the struggle, too, and Xolile believes that he was caught and tortured having been mistaken

for Xolile; he feels guilty as a result. His brother is now fine, he says, and has secure employment in a national service. Xolile was detained twice and once imprisoned for two weeks in 1984, in Victor Verster Prison in Paarl. He had been detained for public disorder, beaten, and harshly treated—then released without being charged.

By 1986, Xolile was in danger, and he was told to go into hiding. He decided to leave for exile, and he traveled to the border region of Lesotho, then walked across the border high in the eastern mountains, arriving in an isolated district. From there he was unable to make contact with the ANC, so he made inquiries at a police station. He told the policemen that he had left South Africa to join the ANC in exile. They listened, then left him alone for a while; one policeman slipped back into the room to warn him that the local police chief was about to arrest him and hand him over to the South African police. He said, “Quick, leave now.” Xolile did. He walked across the mountains back into South Africa and then to his family home in the Transkei. In telling the story, he laughs at his predicament. His trousers had become so torn that they hung about his legs like a skirt. Near the village where his relatives live, a man in a truck stopped to give him a lift but was angry when he discovered that Xolile was a man. After some time, Xolile returned to Zwelethemba. In 1986, he again left home for exile, this time in a group that included Edward.

Edwin and Edward Rasmeni were fraternal twins. They were born of Xhosa parents—their father was a boilermaker, their mother a cleaner in a hotel. Their home was a nurturing one, and the boys had been taught to respect the authority of elders, including their parents, senior kinsmen, and teachers. Edwin is a fine-looking man of serious and gentle demeanor.

At the age of sixteen, the twins were drawn by older school leaders into protest against state oppression. Early one morning in October 1985, they were netted in a police sweep of troublemakers in the suburb. The police entered the twins’ home to arrest them, intruding with their customary brutality and disrespect, and dragged them off to the Worcester Charge Offices. Already the boys were carrying the guilt of having exposed their parents and siblings to a police invasion of their house and the accompanying gratuitous violence. At the Charge Office, they were led, one by one, into a room and ordered to tell the truth about their involvement in the burning down of a house in Zwelethemba. Each twin said that he had had nothing to do with

it. Each was a schoolboy, and neither was a leading political activist. Edwin recalls what followed:

We were both put in a cell. We were in the cell for three days. On the fourth day they took me to a car: Mr. ***, Mr. ***, and three or four others. They placed a hood over my head. I lost the way. They probably took me to Nek-kies [a spot beside the Breede River just outside Worcester]. We arrived. They asked me my name. I told them. I was told to sit on the ground. I was told to tell the truth and, if I did so, they would release me. I was asked who burnt the house and the man. I denied knowledge of it. They put steel behind my knees and handcuffed my arms beneath it. They placed nails on my neck, ankles, and hips for electric shocks and a tube over my head to cut my breathing. They shocked me. There was terrible pain. For about one and a half hours they shocked me and questioned me continuously. I pretended to faint. They left me. They tried to revive me. They took me to a car, they carried me as I was too weak. I was taken back to the cell. My brother asked me what it was about. They took him immediately. They did the same to him. They brought him back to me. It was terrible to see. We were left in the cells, and on Monday we appeared in the Magistrate's Court charged with murder and arson, with public violence. There were about thirty of us. We were charged and held until December. We were bailed out by our mother, both of us.

It is difficult to imagine the horror of their experience, especially as one of their torturers was a kinsman (he is discussed below). Having been tortured, the first twin was thrown, unable to walk, back into the cell where his brother waited—knowing that he sees you at your most vulnerable, to witness his horror at your state and to feel his fear at his own imminent torture; you knowing as you die into the pain of your body and your bewilderment exactly what is going to be done to him; he is returned in the utter humiliation of pain's excess to join you on the cold cement floor of the cell, where you are both left to recover sufficiently until the marks of torture are not visible to others. Then the release: to tell no one what has been done to you but knowing that the other, one's brother, knows the hell to which one can be sent. Neither was able to return to school. Edwin said, "Our lives had been turned upside down."

They continued to protest and were drawn closer to the leaders. In 1987, they were warned that their lives were in danger, so they left for Cape Town, where it was more difficult for the police to track them. The trial that re-

sulted from the arrest in 1985 was spread over two and a half years, and when they were forced to return to Worcester to attend a court session, the police arrested them. This time they were charged with having stoned someone's house. Again they were badly treated and held in prison for six weeks. The UDF paid their bail and for a lawyer to represent them in the first and second cases. They were acquitted on both charges.

On release, the brothers decided that they were easy targets in Zwelethemba, and their political activities were, therefore, severely curtailed; they resolved to leave for exile and continue their fight under the direct command of the Umkhonto we Sizwe. Two groups laid their plans for the journey to the Botswana border and, in October 1986, Edward left with the first group. Very few people knew of their plans, and they took care to change them as they drove north, but nevertheless they were arrested at the border post. During interrogation, it became clear that the interrogators had known of their every move. The activists knew who had sold them out. A bare-bones summary of the treatment meted out to them as they were hauled back down the length of South Africa was given in testimony by Xolile, at the Worcester TRC hearings.

Members of the group were held in various prisons in the Boland for six months. Legally, state prosecutors were obliged to procure evidence of the detainees' intentions to join a guerrilla army in a foreign state in order to sentence them. It was provided by persuading Edward and the driver to turn state witness at the trial—the character of the persuasion (torture) was illegal, but the complaints were set aside by the court. Those who were nailed by the evidence of the state witnesses never held it against them, although the evidence helped to condemn them to sentences of as many as seven years in prison. Xolile said about them, "We were not angry with them. We understood their conditions and the types of torture; even the torture was bad for us. We can feel the torture." He said about Edward, "He was young. They tortured him beyond endurance. He cannot be blamed. We saw at the trial that he had been driven mad." He added, "He was my neighbor: we grew up together like a family. . . . I know his person. He was very militant and he wanted . . . to fight back. After his first case [of torture and imprisonment] he was too terrified of the conditions [that would accompany] another sentence. He didn't think properly. He was determined to fight although he knew he couldn't stand the pain again. He was still too young."

About the driver, he said, "He had not been politically inducted. He is blameless." Xolile said that the driver, a man older than themselves, was an

ordinary man, not an activist, and therefore had been neither politicized nor prepared for the treatment he had to endure. Xolile was sentenced on the charge of terrorism to five years and six months imprisonment, of which he spent nearly three years in solitary confinement in Brandvlei Maximum Security Prison, near Worcester. Six months of the sentence was for contempt of court, for making statements in support of the ANC and for shouting slogans during the court proceedings:

During the trial [after months in solitary confinement and severe torture every day] I felt that [the courtroom] is the only place where we can continue our struggle; we had no option. But that was the reason why we made so many slogans, and we tried to convince the people during the proceedings that this is a political trial; they must continue with the struggle, and we will return sometime. So the people supported us [when] they saw that we had high spirits. And we tried to convey messages [so] that people must not lose hope and must try and organize and establish firm organizations.

The young men against whom Edward gave evidence said that when he was brought into court they saw that he had been driven mad. One of his co-accused said that when he was brought to court he “was acting like someone who was not well mentally.” On his release after the trial, Edward went home, but he behaved strangely. When his twin tried to reach out to him, Edward grew angry and turned from him. They had been very close and had made a pact to care for and protect each other. It is possible that Edward kept his pact with his brother and gave evidence against his comrades, in part because his interrogators had threatened to harm or kill his twin unless he became a state witness. (Many people gave evidence to the Commission of similar threats to kin during torture sessions.) Edwin learned that Edward had tried to kill himself several times in his prison cell. There was less than a year between his release from prison and his death. On December 12, 1988, Edward either jumped off or was thrown from a moving bus. Young men from the area, not his comrades in action, had accused him of being an *impimpi*, a sellout, as they were traveling together.

Edwin said that after his brother’s death he was filled with anger, a sense of isolation, depression, and the pain of the rejection that Edward had experienced on release from prison. “I feel constant sadness at the loss of my twin brother. I feel I will see him one day.” He speaks of his hatred of the

torturers and his initial desire to avenge the treatment of Edward. Desire for revenge dissipated with time, but he would like to see his twin's name on a monument to those who died while fighting to end apartheid and to have a tombstone placed on his grave. Edwin's own experience of torture left him with back pain, dizziness, and difficulty in concentrating. He was unable to continue far with his education, although he later returned to complete two years of school. For seven years he worked as a forklift driver at a local factory but was retrenched in 1999. It became very hard for him to maintain the small house he had bought. He has a wife and young children.

There are three kinds of betrayal in the story. One of a kinsman harming his nephews; another of betrayal from a comrade in arms who revealed the group's plans for going into exile, making it easy for the security forces to capture them at the border; and one of a young man in prison turning from a warrior against the state into a state witness. It is a story of pain and blame and guilt and shame. It is, too, a story of love and loyalty between two brothers and of forgiveness by those immediately harmed by the betrayal. Revenge may have been taken by young men who were followers, not leaders, in the struggle in Zwelethemba, when they threw Edward from the bus or caused him, in anguish, to throw himself out.

Edwin told me the story ten years after his brother's death. I had worked with him and his colleagues for two years, but we had not discussed the details of his pain. Nor had Edwin made a statement to the TRC, and the opportunity to do so had been foreclosed. However, Xolile (against whom Edward had testified in court) was insistent that his colleagues make statements and so qualify for reparations that he saw as only just, given all that they had sacrificed. I sought permission from the Commission to take statements and set about doing so. I sat one Saturday morning with Edwin and three others filling in the forms on the basis of which the Commission's staff would decide whether the testifier would be declared a "victim" and granted reparations. It was cold, so we took our chairs from the small room that a trade union in Zwelethemba had loaned to us and sat outside in the spring sunshine to continue our work. One of the questions in a section having to do with gross human rights violations (GHRV) in the Commission's form asks, "Where and when did you last see the perpetrator(s)?" Edwin replied, "One a few years ago, he is still in Worcester. And the other is watching us." A man stood fifty yards away watching us intently. He was the kinsman

who had tortured Edwin and Edward. Edwin will not speak to him. Another young man in the group sitting with me said that he, too, had been tortured by the one watching us.

The tale ends here with Xolile's account of his experience in prison and in the aftermath. The story of his journey to Botswana is told in chapter 2. From October 1986 to December 1990, Xolile was in police custody in a police station cell, then in a high-security prison. He spent up to three years in solitary confinement. In the first four months (he refers at different times to this spell of detention as having lasted for two, four, or six months) he was tortured every day of the working week, almost all day. The torture he endured, he said, included "the usual—suffocation, false execution, the helicopter, and so on." During that time, he lived in a state of terror. His parents had died and, prior to the court case, no one in the family knew where he was. His brother tried to find him in the police stations and through lawyers, but he could not. Xolile kept going by doing exercises and playing draughts with pebbles on the floor. He read the Bible so much that he "earned exemption from Hell." Xolile was sentenced to five and a half years of imprisonment (of which he served two years and eight months); he was sent to a maximum-security prison in the region where he gradually made friends with a few wardens, who smuggled out some messages to his colleagues and brought him the occasional piece of fruit or a newspaper. He heard of the national hunger strike among prisoners to protest against their conditions and demand release under the new terms following negotiation toward a change in South African politics, and he joined them in solidarity. He ate nothing for twenty-five to twenty-eight days and demanded access to education, better food, and a mattress instead of a mat. A lawyer persuaded him to stop the fast, promising that he would negotiate on his behalf. Conditions improved, and he was allowed to raise his fist in salute and say "Viva" when meeting other prisoners or visitors.

On release, Xolile felt disoriented. He was frustrated at being so far behind his friends in education. He enrolled in a school in Cape Town and completed the last two years of his schooling. From 1993 to 1996, he was lost. He was unable to study, although he had enrolled at UNISA, a distance-learning university, and wandered among friends, spending most of the time in a shack with his co-accused. He was so frustrated that he drank and contemplated suicide: "I was just lost." He received help from the

Trauma Centre for Victims of Violence and Torture at Cowley House, but it was not enough to really help. At the end of 1995, Xolile returned to Zwelethemba to look for a job. Miriam Moleleki (a resident of Zwelethemba who succored many of the young during the time of conflict) helped him, and so did the TRC process. He felt that his failure to secure employment, garner material goods, or find a respectable place in the community made people turn away from him. "I felt that I was neglected by the people around. . . . People just saw you then they saw you as nothing and walked past you." This perception soon passed: it is one common among fighters who return home. He did not feel that he was making progress; he still felt very weak. The rapidity of the process of negotiation bewildered him, and he felt excluded. All he could do was read big documents. He was no longer in touch with ANC leaders: "I was just doing my thing. . . . Conditions were harsh on the ground. Some of us were disillusioned. We had expected handouts; all I achieved was to be left in one of the history books. I did contribute. I see a difference in the community."

Years later, in the mid-1990s, he sat on a Peace Forum with two of his white torturers (whom he named). "They said nothing to me; I just greeted them. I felt blind. Dissatisfied. They shouldn't still be in the police force. It is distressing that they are given power. There should be a court case, and I would hope that they would get prison sentences." There was no lustration set in place in South Africa.

Paulos Mnyuka

Another member of our group, Paulos, told the four of us gathered outside to fill in the TRC forms that he had been betrayed by a kinsman. In August 1985, he and a fellow scholar had been harassed and pursued by police for three months, during a time of great unrest. They had been at the forefront in stirring trouble, and many young people had been detained. Some of their parents were angry with the two of them, because they had led their children in the protests and, while they were in the police cells, Paulos and his comrade remained free. In response to these accusations, the two handed themselves in at the police station. They were photographed, and Paulos said his given name and his surname the wrong way around, and, therefore, he

says, the police did not realize who he was. That night, they and fifty others were thrown into a dark cell with no windows, where they stayed for two days. They were interrogated. Paulos continued,

On the second day we were all about to be sent home and were being loaded into a police van and a special branch man noticed me being put in, too, and whispered to his colleagues, "That is the most wanted man." [The man who pointed him out was a relative.] My friend and I were off-loaded. In the afternoon we were taken to separate rooms. About seven or eight [security force men] were in the room. [The officer in charge] *** sat [listening to] the radio—there was a radio recording of a bomb blast in Pretoria. He said, "Hear?" He gave me a chair; they began to tie me with ropes—feet and arms—and black bands over my eyes and mouth. I was beaten, mostly by ***. I couldn't see the person in front of me, [but] could recognize his [the kinsman's] voice. Others beat me, too. *** beat me. And ***. All were white except a black, *** ***; he is my [relative]. I cannot speak to him. He still lives in Zwelethemba.

They took the panty hose from my mouth and said there would be a big problem if I told no truth. I said, "I know nothing." I was shown a list of student leaders with the signature of an informer. I was written [down] as the chair—I was the chair of the SRC and COSAS at the time. About seven names were written on the list. All were in the cell already.

They again covered his mouth and eyes and gave him electric shocks. They continued to interrogate and shock Paulos, and they increased the voltage until he was thrown to the floor and against the tables. He lost consciousness and regained it in the cell. The next day he was interrogated and beaten. *** and *** punched him until his tongue split and he could not eat for several days. He and his friend were put in a cell together; both were in terrible pain. Paulos said, "We couldn't talk to each other. We just cried if we looked at each other." Over a week later, they appeared in court charged with public violence and were denied bail. They were accused of having set on fire the Municipal Office Building in Zwelethemba. They were held in Worcester Prison with hardened criminals for two months. There were members of two gangs, and one set accused them of causing unnecessary trouble to the government and determined to place them under their authority in prison. They gave them female names. Fortunately, they were able to play one gang against the other largely through bribes of food parcels

brought to them by their families. Another kinsman sought his release and was able to secure it after paying bail of R500.

Paulos had been betrayed by a kinsman and a colleague (the informer who gave his name to the police). After his release from prison, the police harassed him, attempting to make him become an informer. Later in 1985, they visited his home and searched for incriminating documents. Paulos was not at home, but they sprayed teargas into his mother's face when she said he was not sleeping at home and that she did not know where he was. They called her a liar and a bitch. From then on she was never well. She was asthmatic, and the teargas affected her health and her eyes. She died in 1989.

In 1987, Paulos was unable to study full time for lack of money and because of police interference. He found employment cleaning and running messages for an institution in Worcester. The police pursued him there. One of the men who had tortured him and another officer visited him. Paulos said,

They spoke to me. "Paulos, we have no problems with you but understand that you are a leader. Cooperate with us." They showed me money in a briefcase. They took out cigarettes. I said, "I don't smoke." It was not true. And Bells [whiskey] and Klipdrift [brandy]. "I don't drink this. Only wine and not at work." They said they knew of Mother's suffering and they could make our lives luxurious: they could obtain a driver's license for me by eleven o'clock; an account at a furniture store; a bank account. *** said if I didn't cooperate I would be arrested. He gave me a telephone number, several, and a code-name. I said, "I will see what to do." They left. I went to Comrade . . . and told him I must get out of town. He said I must report to a lawyer. We called one. Serious harassment followed. I was even expelled from my job for being a communist. I was not. I had to leave the township in late August 1987 for Cape Town.

In 1999, three of the white men who tortured Paulos were still in the police or security forces in the town. His kinsman has retired.

I shall touch briefly on other acts of betrayal that caused great pain, loss, and distress to members of the group with whom I worked closely. Eight of the fourteen were betrayed in one way or another. Three were betrayed to the police while attempting to leave South Africa to join Umkhonto we Sizwe in exile, and the consequences for each included great brutality and

imprisonment (the experiences of two of them have been detailed here). Two were betrayed by kinsmen, another by a close friend, a third by a comrade, and yet another learned from his sister that the police had beaten her into agreeing to betray him: their trust in each other was damaged. Some of their stories are told elsewhere, for, as we have discovered, betrayal was wound into many aspects of the lives of political activists.

Betrayal was not, of course, particular to Worcester. It was pervasive in the land as a fear if not a fact. It became a major issue of contention in communities, and it caused widespread distress in the camps of the liberation forces in exile.

A Fine Mesh

A fine mesh of betrayal was insinuated, instigated by the security forces among friends and families and in communities. The regime's actions, tactics, and politics wreaked devastation and decay on some social institutions and relationships. The spread of mistrust helped to break or fracture social ties, to strain bonds and obligations, and to disturb structures of care, all of which played a crucial part in the undoing of some people's lives—for how can such wounds be easily healed? Betrayal is ambiguous in the way it operated in Zwelethemba: it was not clearly cut; it could not be known in advance (was the information one was about to give going to lead to a new police action?) or even in the moment. Sometimes, perhaps, its ramifications could be known only in retrospect, as they became clearer—the nature of the information given or extracted, its newness or value and the way it was actually used; the trauma of those broken, humiliated, shamed; the unfolding of multiple events into time, through and beyond the end of the regime. What kind of economy of power was this? Betrayal seems to have operated as a weapon aimed at inflicting wounds on the will to resist, damaging the conviction and strength of the resistance and belief in its capacity. That is why the security forces worked on those who had little to reveal.

What is remarkable is that once the fight to secure democratic representation ended, so few people took revenge on those they believed to have been informers and to have caused immeasurable pain and fearful consequences. The Commission states in its *Report* that by the end of the 1980s

paranoia existed regarding informers (2:581). The word “paranoia” suggests levels of anxiety and suspicion beyond reasons well grounded in fact: almost a misperception (*para*, “beyond”; *noia*, “perception”).

A particular ethical stance was required by those fighting for democracy under the conditions outlined above: one that asked what can be done, taking into account the question of frailty and given a set of circumstances in which there was an expectation that something could be done within impossible parameters. It called on the capacity of the spirit, a capacity that encompassed not holding one accountable for not being accountable (breaking under torture yet obliged to let others know as soon as possible). Accountability becomes absurd at some moment in turning and being turned. In this chapter, I have tried to depict the murky edges of betrayal, its infiltration into the everyday, its pervasiveness, its ties to lies and cynicism, and how it was wielded to destroy lives and integrity. Elaine Scarry in her fine book, *The Body in Pain* (1985), does not fully capture its veiled complexity and iteration through time. She emphasizes the relationship between torturer and tortured, but for the men of Zwelethemba, there were seldom fewer than four security force personnel present, and various officers participated in the physical exercise of torture. Thus the intimacy between torturer and tortured that Scarry discusses so well was not established. Other forms of intimacy between kin, for example, formed. Turning and being turned was part of the architecture of unmaking.

One question, to which I have no answer, is: what made it possible for the men to speak to me as they did? When is it possible to talk to the reception? Did the TRC offer that, satisfactorily? Did I? In terms of ethnography, when does engagement stop? The young placed themselves in the movement of history, and it remains to be seen how history records it. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “I am ashamed to see what a shallow village tale our so-called History is. . . . What does Rome know of rat and lizard?” (quoted in Cavell 2005, 258).

Coming to know what I know was difficult for me and for those with whom I established relationships. I know only a little about the difficulties some had in holding onto a secure sense of self after such experiences. Jacques Derrida, discussing the trouble of the archive, includes “the trouble of secrets, of plots, of clandestineness, of half-private, half-public conjurations, always at the unstable limit between public and private, between the

family, the society, and the State, between the family and an intimacy even more private than the family, between oneself and oneself” (1996, 90). I know about some of their failures and assume that few have untarnished images of themselves. By this I mean, in Stanley Cavell’s words, that we have come to understand “the dependence of the human self on society for its definition, but at the same time its transcendence of that definition, its infinite insecurity in maintaining its existence” (1988, 174). He talks of his having been taken aback that the human requires a “doubling back ceaselessly upon itself, and that the re-encounters with ourselves . . . hide themselves in their familiarity; as if we are surprised by the incessance of childhood” (1979, xiii). For so the young seemed to me to have been: dependent on family and peers and community for a definition of themselves, yet they reached beyond that definition and had to face the infinite insecurity of maintaining its existence before powerful antagonistic forces, including concerted efforts to crush identity and instigate betrayal.

Many people have lived beside those whom they know betrayed them, and they continue to live beside them. The issue of betrayal is the obverse of the issue of trust. Each of the young men depended on trust to achieve anything at all and to stay as safe as possible, but each lived with the consciousness that trust could easily be compromised—compromised by extreme suffering (emotional, physical, and psychological) and carefully wrought patterns of disinformation.

It is possible that “living beside” (despite betrayal) tells us something other than or more than the lack of revenge. Perhaps in this context of multiple structures of loyalty, obedience, and respect, there were disjunctions, conjunctions, and coincidences that stretched its meanings. Some structures (the apartheid state) were fought, and others (kinship, filial, and communal loyalty) glued or shredded responses. Despite the fact that many kinds of trust could be and were betrayed, a certain clarity in resistance held. In the tumult and chaos of conflict, state oppression, and social disorder, selves were constructed and reconstructed. The fashioning of identity and the reorganization of social forms, albeit embattled and weakened, occurred in the face of repression and terror, and morals were reworked, examined, and deployed even as attempts were made, or so it seemed, to bring about social dissolution.