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Undoing: Social Suffering and the Politics of Remorse in the New South Africa

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As a very small girl "in training" for my First Confession in preparation for First Communion, I was impressed by the story a nun told to our catechism class. It was about an old woman who went to her priest asking forgiveness for a sin of gossip that had harmed the reputation of a neighbor. The priest accepted the woman's expression of remorse, gave her "conditional" absolution, told her to mend her ways, and gave her the following penance. He ordered the old woman to climb the belfry of the parish church, where she was to cut a small hole in a feather pillow and then shake the feathers loose onto the streets below. Then she was told to go about the village collecting the feathers until she had enough to sew back into the pillow. "But Father," the woman protested, "That would be impossible!" To which the good priest sadly replied: "Yes, and so, too, is it impossible to *undo* the damage caused by malicious acts."

These were wise words, but counterintuitive to the received wisdoms of the day. For the romance with remorse and with reparation, memory, and healing – of the individual and the social body – has emerged as a master narrative of the late twentieth century, as individuals and entire nations struggle to overcome the legacies of suffering ranging from rape and domestic violence (see Winkler 1995; Herman 1994) to collective atrocities of state-sponsored dirty wars and ethnic cleansings (Weschler 1990; Suarez-Orozco 1987; Boraine, Levy, and Scheffer 1994).

The psychologies of remorse, guilt, catharsis, and closure compete today with the theologies of reconciliation, forgiveness, and redemption in another version of what Philippe Rieff (1966) called the triumph of the therapeutic. Michael Ignatieff has hit upon an appropriate generative metaphor for looking at the present contexts of national recovery: *getting over.* The words conjure up biblical images of safe passage, of reaching the other side, and, finally, of *overcoming*. Just what needs to be "gotten over" if South Africa and South Africans are to get safely to the other side? Is reconciliation possible without some kind of powerful, transcendental faith? Surely, as many have argued, a first step in the politics of reconciliation and forgiveness is knowledge seeking, learning exactly what happened to whom, by whom, and why.

"I sometimes wonder," said Fr. Lapsley,

> who that man or woman was who typed my name on the envelope that was supposed to kill me. I wonder, what did they tell their spouses or children that night at suppertime about what they did in the office that day? Either they are so dehumanized that they don't care or else they have learned to live comfortably with their guilt.... I don't want vengeance, but I think that the names and faces of these people should be known.

The official vehicle to facilitate individual and collective "getting over" and liberating South Africa of the ghosts of its past is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In hundreds of

hearings around the country, more than 2,000 victims of apartheid-era brutality have told their stories to the independent Commission. A smaller number of perpetrators of the violence have come forward to confess the details of their attacks on civilians, in exchange for political amnesty.

Those seeking truth in South Africa today do not want the partial, indeterminate, shifting truths of the postmodern, which resemble the dissembling, always self-described "complex" truths and realities promoted by the old apartheid state. Instead, they desire the single, sweet, "objective" truth of the moralist and, with it, a restored sense of wholeness and a taste of justice. Yet, as Justice Albie Sachs has noted, South Africans are willing to settle for an agreed-upon, a "good enough" truth – a narrative that will at least place Black and white South Africans, Afrikaners and English-speakers, Xhosas and Zulus, ANC and PAC members on the same map rather than living in different nations across the road from each other.

There are, of course, many critics of the TRC process. Some worry about the focus on the exceptional, extreme, and gross acts of human rights violation, which runs the risk of obscuring, or worse, of normalizing the ordinary, daily, routine acts of apartheid's structural violence: the legal, medical, economic, bureaucratic, and commercial violations of human rights that alienated millions of South Africans from their property, their homes, their families, their labor, their citizenship, and even their own bodies.

Others worry about the dangers of "numbing" South Africans by exposure to televised images of the TRC's invented and routinized public ritual of feigned remorse and forced forgiveness. I recall a chilling scene evoked by anthropologist Michael Taussig when, a few years ago, he was visiting the capital of a South American country (which shall remain anonymous) during a period of official truth- and soul-searching. He was directed to a local municipal office where documents were being filed by those who had been tortured during the previous regime. Taussig described the petty bureaucrats as seated along a bench behind a very long table. In front of each official stood a long line of ordinary – and some very poor and barefooted – people waiting their turn to testify to the suffering they had endured. They were asked to do so following the official form and set formula of questions. Each petitioner was given three or four minutes to answer the questions: When were you abducted? Where were you taken? Were you beaten? Tortured? On which parts of your body? What tools were used? What questions were you asked? How did you reply? The officers might have been tax collectors. As such, the original torture was mimetically reproduced by a new structure of indifferent state interrogators.

Still others – most of the "ordinary" South African whites I have spoken to in malls and shopping centers, in tea rooms and in public gardens, in office buildings and in hospitals, in private homes and large farm estates – worry about "witch-hunting, scapegoating, and persecution." Indeed, it seems that a great many white people in South Africa still fail to get the point behind the TRC. So, time and again, I was told that if General Malan ordered these tortures or that massacre, it was because he *had* to do it for the national security. Those who were detained, tortured, and killed were not "innocent," after all, they were terrorists. In addition, I was reminded, there were border wars going on. Communists were poised to take over all of Southern Africa.

As for the "higher ups," their defenses are well fortified. Mr. Breytenbach, for example, a former Deputy Defense Minister who served within the old apartheid Secretary of Defense under Presidents Botha and De Klerk, is now comfortably retired on a government pension and living out his days as a recovering heart-transplant patient in a luxurious, well-tended, and secured gated community in Sun Valley, outside Cape Town. He remains unrepentant and willing to attribute the atrocities emerging daily through the TRC amnesty hearings to a "few bad apples" in the old security and defense forces. I asked Mr. Breytenbach his opinion of the TRC hearings:

S-H: *You were once in the Ministry of Defense. Do you think that your colleagues are getting a fair shake?*

B: Well, I don't think this [the TRC] is the right thing to do. Instead of reconciling us, it is making the divisions even bigger. The thing now is to join people together. Of course, I think, most people, even I (and I was chairman of my party in the Orange Free State and in the Secretary of Defense for more than seven years) were unaware of what was going on. I was positively shocked out of my mind to hear of the... well, let's just call them atrocities, and that

> sort of thing. It gives me goose bumps. I just can't believe it. Some of the people standing up there [before the TRC], I know them well. You would never have thought that such things went on. But I have a son in the police, and he was telling me going back all these years, "Dad, you must look at some of these characters on the far right, the AWB, and such." He said the police were infested with them. A person who is not white, well these guys had no respect for him and eventually they had no respect for life itself. So, what is coming out there, well, it shakes me out of my mind every time.

I asked Mr. Breytenbach if he watched the summary of the week's TRC proceedings produced by the SABC (South African Broadcasting Company) on Sunday nights. He replied.

> I watch it. I watch it with disgust, yah. But, you know, I sat in at all the top executive meetings of the Defense Force, which is where all the decisions were taken. There was Magnus Malan, myself, and the whole Defense Council, all the generals and brigadiers and so on, and I swear to you that *never, ever* were these sorts of things discussed. O.K. We said that we must try and achieve something in this area [i.e., torture] to get stability. But these characters went out and slaughtered people like cattle.
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> *Does that mean that discipline had broken down in the security forces?*
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> I wouldn't say that discipline had broken down so much as.... If you read that book, *The Sword and the Swastika*, you can see what the Germans did in the past war to the Jews. It was so sickening, you know, I walked around the house for a few days after I read it. It left such an impression on me. You just can't believe it. And there, too, you find the same thing as happened here. It all boils down to a few individuals, a few rotten apples, small people sitting in big jobs who suddenly think that they can play God. Chaps like these had taken it on their own to do things such as they have done and to thinking that they can just "remove" certain people. But nowhere and at no time were these things ever discussed or hinted at during the executive meetings.
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> *Do you believe that De Klerk and Botha did not know what was happening within their own forces?*
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> They must have known something. When I was a member of the Security Committee, we were five people – the President, Mr. Botha, General Malan, myself, Pik, and Bryon Deplussey, the Minister of Finance. They knew something because we kept asking for a lot of money for developing arms for the border wars and for the security problems at home. I think it was a case of people looking you in the eye and saying one thing while they go out and do another. As far as I am concerned, these people are in for the high jump and let them go. I don't care.
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> *So you are opposed to amnesty then?*
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> No, amnesty is a good thing. If a man has something on his chest, he can come out and confess it and ask amnesty for it. So, I agree with that.
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> *Since all these atrocities were carried out in secret, now that things are coming to the light, what will happen to these men's private lives? I mean, for example, to a son watching his father on TV before the TRC amnesty hearings. Will he say, "Dad, did you really do all those things?" What will it mean for those families?*
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> I don't know too much about that.... But some of these characters have just disappeared. They have walked out and left their wives and kids. I know of one specific case in the Orange Free State where neighbors had to take up a collection and pay for food and rent for a family who was deserted by someone who couldn't stand to face the music. Finally, this family was so poor they had to move in with someone else's family. So, I can only imagine... but, then, remember you get some of those women in the AWB [right wing] and you can't believe the things they still say. They are some of the worst ones. But I don't think there are very many of these real SS types. I have spoken to another girl whose husband was involved – who tortured and killed a lot of people – and she says that this

part is worse for her than death itself. Kids at school point out her children and they say, "Your Daddy did this and this." I often wonder how many of them have had mental problems around all this.

What were the biggest surprises for you?

[deep sigh] So many. What was going on at the Vlockplas, this de Kock chap. He's unbelievable, a real monster. Some of these characters had access to accounts abroad with millions of rands that they used to do their dirty work. How did they get those funds? But the Vlockplas goings-on, that really shocked me, and the Biko thing. And this other hearing, the Kondile case now going on. The burnings of the bodies and all that. It is terrible. One just doesn't know. But, again, I would go back to the Nazi era. Pretty much the same thing happened there. People lost all sense of humanity and engaged in cold-blooded murder. And, if you want to talk about atrocities, when I was stationed over there in Kenya, it was during the Mau Mau massacres. On my off time, I used to fly and I did some observations from the air. Once I found a small strip about half way up Mt. Kilimanjaro where you could land a small airplane. And from the air, I saw farmers and cattle and small babies slaughtered. You can't sleep for months after seeing something like that. And, if you go even today into KwaZulu-Natal, you will find similar massacres still going on. So, this whole thing is not clear-cut. Both sides [i.e. Blacks and whites] are to blame, and there is more to all this than politics. It's about power. They all want power. And total power corrupts totally.

Do you believe that forgiveness and reconciliation are possible in South Africa?

Yes, I am very optimistic. I have to be. I have a stake in this country. I have six adult children and they have nowhere else to go... But what really concerns me now is that the – let's call them the whites of the country, some, not all of them, but a great many, are beginning to think that there is no law and order in the country. When white people see these large numbers of so-called disadvantaged people marching down the street, breaking things, taking and stealing whatever they want, well, they become very negative. They think that there is no good policing any more. And they start to think, well, if *these people* can get away with this, so we can, too. But I try to warn them not to lower their standards, to become like the bad ones...

In this extraordinary narrative, Mr. Breytenbach manages to deny and assert his knowledge of, and responsibility for, state-level atrocities, to attribute blame above and below him, and to take comfort in the knowledge that the kinds of atrocities committed by the apartheid state are not unique to South Africa, but have taken place before (as in Nazi Germany) and in other parts of Africa (as in Kenya during the Mau Mau massacres). At the end his discourse, the *real* "bad guys" in this story turn out to be the "disadvantaged" Blacks who have no respect for law and order and who are corrupting the morals of white people.

Like most whites I have encountered since 1992, Mr. Breytenbach fails to recognize the enormous grace by which he and all white South Africans have been spared.

In light of the aberrant behaviors becoming known through the TRC amnesty hearings, one is inclined to feel that perhaps the "witch-hunting" metaphor is not such a bad trope. The apartheid state was filthy with "witches" at all levels of power and authority and a little "witch-hunting" could clear the air. Among its many horrors, the TRC has provided the world with unforgettable images of culture inverted and a world turned upside-down.

The political assassinations were carried out by trained hit squads, acting – we now know through confessions delivered before the TRC – on explicit orders. Suspected "terrorists" were abducted from their homes by police, blindfolded, kicked and beaten, and tortured in new, improved, and creative ways, some of them similar to the "toilet plunger rape" technique used by New York City police officer Volpe in his handling of a Black suspect. What has come out of the halting, uptight "confessions" are images of the white South African family picnic, the *braii* (barbecue) turned into a cannibalistic political ritual.

For example, at the TRC amnesty hearings in Pretoria in 1997 (TRC hearings; Feldman 1997) former policemen Hennie Gerber and Johan van

Eyk told how they abducted, blindfolded, tortured, and murdered a suspected PAC member, Samuel Kganakga. They took him to an isolated rural setting, kicked and beat him, tied him up and hung his body upside down, pulled his trousers down and applied electric shocks to his private parts. Later they built a fire under his head to "dry him out." While Kganaka's fat splattered and sizzled over the fire, Jack Mkoma, a private guard and police accomplice was sent out to fetch brandy, vodka, and cold cans of soda that were passed around among the men in a signifying cannibalistic ritual of apartheid Afrikaner brotherhood.

No wonder so many family members of those tortured and killed by the police state have rejected the TRC imposed duty to reconcile. "I am not ready to forgive," the mother of Sidizwe Kondile, another victim of a police-orchestrated *braii* murder, told me during a break in the TRC amnesty hearings for her son's murderers in Cape Town in February 1998. Father Michael Lapsley refers to "cheap theologies" of forgiveness and to his extreme discomfort with the idea of blanket amnesty, although he says that for the sake of the "greater good" of the country – and for the nation to be able to close a chapter on the past – he accepts the TRC's version of exchanging full disclosure for *conditional* amnesty. He has also often expressed his resentment of those who seem to demand that he extend an instantaneous, unconditional, "Christian" forgiveness toward his would-be assassins. Michael notes how often his speeches and lectures are misheard by those who come up to him afterwards and thank him for being "so forgiving" toward the people who sent him the bomb, although he has never once mentioned the word forgiveness (Worsnip 1996: 134).

Albie Sachs (cited in Boraine, Levy, and Scheffer 1994: 20–1; and see also Chapter 59) tells the story of his own failure to forgive when, soon after he returned from exile, he was enjoying a night out at a jazz bar on Cape Town's waterfront. His private enjoyment was interrupted by a young, white man in a jacket and tie who approached Sachs' table and in a thickly Afrikaner-accented English asked: "Are you Albie Sachs?"

Annoyed at the intrusion, Sachs replied brusquely, "I am."

"*Verskoon my*" – "Forgive me" – the man said in Afrikaans, his voice almost drowned out by the drummers. Albie Sachs said nothing.

Again, he repeated. "*Verskoon my.*"

Albie tossed off the request with a somewhat callous: "This lovely club is my forgiveness." Later he thought of things he might have said – "Don't ask me for forgiveness – I was a volunteer in the struggle. I chose my fate. What about the millions of Black South Africans who had no choice but to suffer and die under apartheid?" Still later, in an interview with him in 1998, Albie Sachs confided (personal communication): "What I probably should have done was embrace the young man and accepted his forgiveness. But I simply couldn't. Not then."

Witchcraft as Popular Justice

Allow me, then, to play devil's advocate in suggesting that witch-hunting might not only be a fitting metaphor for the collective recovery and healing of South Africa, but also to show the extent to which the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission has incorporated certain aspects of traditional practices of popular justice into its curiously hybrid formulas and rituals.

Confession is, of course, a central dynamic in all witchcraft-believing societies (see Jeffreys 1952), from the Navajo and Pueblo peoples of the American Southwest to highland New Guinea (Bercovitch 1989), to vast stretches of indigenous Africa (Douglas 1970), to the Bocage region of modern France (Favret-Sada 1980), and to rural western Ireland (Arensberg 1968). Conventional insight suggests that witch-hunts are aberrant and dysfunctional institutions based on the mobilization of "primitive" projections with the identified "witch," chosen as the surrogate ritual scapegoat who represents the group's worst collective nightmare. The processes of fact-finding, guilt determination, the ritualized expressions of remorse, and the demand for immediate, though often symbolic, reparation strike liberal, bourgeois sensibilities as weak, irrational, and unjust.

Yet a great many anthropologists (beginning with Monica Wilson 1951) working on the ground with witch-believing societies have challenged the Western stereotype by showing the positive uses of witchcraft in restoring health to troubled communities. [...]

In South Africa, the power of traditional Zulu medicine (see Berglund 1989; Ngubane 1977) resides in a *sangomas'* (healer's) skill in identifying

the social tensions, "hard feelings," and antisocial hostilities that can congeal into sickness, misfortune, and death in the community. "Witches" are asked to identify themselves, to come forward and to "speak out" their "bottled up" envy, hatred, and guilt. A great many "witches" do indeed come forward. From their perspective, confessions are said to be a means of "emptying themselves" of the burden of evil and restoring feelings of lightness and emptiness that signify balance, health, and good relations.

Rarely, however, do such public confessions result in amnesty, of course, and even the most repentant "witches" can be punished by fines, forced labor, and public floggings, not to mention the miscarriages of popular justice that can result in outbreaks of indiscriminate witch-hunting hysterias and witchburnings, such as the much publicized spate of recent witch-hunts in Venda (see Minnaar et al. 1992), the Northern Transvaal (see Niehaus 1997), and in Soweto (see Ashforth 1996; Keller 1994) in the early 1990s. Yet these incidents are anomalies, while the more common and judicious applications of "counter-sorcery" as a traditional form of popular justice are known to few outside the field of anthropology.

During the anti-apartheid struggle years, some of these older practices were transformed into newer institutions of popular justice, including the peoples' courts, security committees, and discipline committees put into place by "the comrades" in urban townships and squatter camps. Peoples' courts meted out a rough sort of popular, revolutionary justice. Apologies and fines were levied for lesser infractions. More serious offenses were punished through public spectacles in which the lash – and less often the infamous necklace – predominated. At times, suspected or confessed police collaborators were punished or even killed as "witches" (see Scheper-Hughes, Chapter 30). [...]

The strength of these institutions of popular justice is that they are immediate, public, collective, face-to-face, and relatively transparent. They are based on traditional notions of *ubuntu* (an ethos of humanism based on collective values), and the power of shame within a context of codes of personal honor and dignity. I once attended an outdoor court meeting on a Sunday morning in 1994, held under a large tree in the Chris Hani squatter camp. One of the petitioners to come before the community that morning had been accused by his neighbors of public drunkenness and disturbing the peace. The man sent a friend to represent him, explaining his absence due to a job he had to attend to that day. The friend was called to the front and read from a respectful letter of apology written by the man. The court of elder men and women listened attentively, conferred among themselves, and then gave their verdict: the offender could not be forgiven until he appeared in person. The written apology was appreciated, but the man would still have to appear in front of those whom he had offended. He would have to "face" them. Then the next case was heard. [...]

Elements of traditional and popular justice have made their way into the uniquely South African version of the late modern idea of the truth commission. Like traditional witch-hunting and the peoples' courts that proliferated during the anti-apartheid years, the TRC is not so terribly concerned with fact-finding and fact checking. It relies more on the power of the dramaturgic moment: public enactments of suffering, confession, remorse, and forgiveness. Written testimonies and formal legalistic petitions are part of the TRC record and process, but these are never completely acceptable without an *appearance* by the petitioners in symbolic face-to-face encounters with their victims and survivors. The TRC places a high premium on apologies offered in person by the perpetrators who are asked to give "eye contact" to those who were hurt and wronged. At the close of each amnesty hearing, the commissioners and trained "briefers" expedite a "closing" ritual by inviting the survivors to come forward and address their former tormentors, raising with them any final, unanswered questions.

And so, Dawie Ackerman, who lost his wife in the St. James Massacre, came forward to tell the young men who killed his wife how he had been made to step over dead bodies to get to his wife, still sitting bolt upright in her front row pew, and how all the while he was hoping against hope, that Marita might just be shell-shocked but still alive, until he had finally crossed that endless expanse and reached her. But just as he touches her back, her body rolls over and falls with a dull thud to the floor, her special Sunday clothes splattered with blood. Dawie continues, his composure now broken, his voice cracking and trembling with tears that have been, he said, a very long time – five years, in fact – in coming:

I've never cried since I lost my wife other than to have silent cries. I've never had an emotional outburst till now. When... when Mr. Makoma here [the young man who was 17 at the time he took part in the church attack] was testifying, he talked about his own tortures in prison, and that he was suicidal at times, but that he never once cried. I thought to myself – and I passed you [the TRC lawyer] a note – to please bring your cross-examination to an end. Because what are we doing here? The truth, yes. But then I looked at the way in which he, Makoma, answered you. All his anger. What on earth are we doing? And I thought that *he* cannot be reconciled.

Then, in a final and painfully wrenching scene Dawie Ackerman, now openly weeping, asked the three young applicants to turn their averted faces to look at him directly:

This is the first opportunity we have had to look each other in the eye while talking. I want to ask Mr. Makoma, who actually entered the church my... my wife... was sitting at the door when you came in. [Dawie weeps and the words seem to be dragged from the roots of his shaking body.] She was wearing a long blue coat. *Please, can you remember if you shot her?*

Makoma looks terrified, as if he is seeing Hamlet's father's ghost. He nervously bites his lower lip and slowly shakes his head. No, he cannot remember, either Marita or her long, blue coat. Nevertheless, all three young men apologize to Dawie. Makoma is the most affected:

We are truly sorry for what we have done. But it was not intentional. It was the situation in South Africa. Although people died, we did not do that out of our own will. It was the situation we were living under. And now we are asking you *please*, do forgive us.

Dawie Ackerman *did* give Mr. Makoma his forgiveness and he withdrew his formal, legal objection to the young men receiving amnesty from the state.

After the formal hearing, Ackerman and several other survivors, including Bishop Reteif, met behind closed doors in an arranged, private meeting with their attackers, each of whom walked around the table addressing each survivor in turn, shaking hands, and asking personal forgiveness. Paul Williams, who is partially paralyzed from a bullet lodged in the small of his back, said, "I have now forgiven the one who shot me, unconditionally. I looked him in the eye and actually had a chat with him. It was a good experience for me. I saw that we could each forgive the other."

Each forgive the other?, I asked.

You have to remember that I am a Coloured man and I know where these guys are coming from. I know how they were wronged and how even my own group [i.e., the mixed-race population] turned away from their suffering.

Brian Smart was most struck by the ages of the PAC militants:

They were only 17 years old, and I could relate to that. When I was 18, I was in the Air Force and sent to Cyprus in defense of the realm, if you like. The only difference between myself and them was that I was operating under a more controlled military order. So an incident like this [the massacre] would not have happened. But in their case, the command structure was very weak and they had the normal soldier's ability to kill, just as I had.

Mary Powers chimed in to say,

I have been thinking about their parents, how it must have been so hard, you know, they were children. And maybe they had gone a way they didn't want them to go. Maybe they pleaded with them, but there were stronger forces at work. Or, maybe, they supported them. I don't know. But I am a mother, too, and I just feel for the parents.

Bishop Reteif, who was not in the church until moments after the attack took place and who subsequently suffered a great deal of pastoral survivor guilt (*Shepherd, why were you not keeping watch over your flocks by night?*), originally opposed the TRC and the granting of amnesty to "terrorists." His initial response to the massacre was to heroize the clergy and congregation and to criminalize the youth, seen hardly as people, but as "instruments" of other evil forces. After the hearings, the bishop is contrite about the "blindness" of his church to the suffering caused by the apartheid state. Moreover, after actually meeting the young men, he felt for the first time since the attack that he could carry on with his normal life. He said:

Something like a weight has been lifted from my heart, something that would be hard for you to understand if you had not been a part of the TRC process yourself. Now, I finally understand why it [the TRC] was necessary to bring about healing in the end.

Young Makoma, serving a more than 20-year sentence for his part in the massacre, returned to Polsmor prison to await the result of his amnesty petition. The other two PAC applicants returned to the Defense Forces, where they have been serving as soldiers since 1994, their trials pending the results of their amnesty pleas. (The Amnesty Committee of the TRC granted amnesty on June 11, 1998, to all three of the PAC "operatives" in the St. James Massacre.) Although Dawie Ackerman, Bishop Reteif, and other church members seem to have experienced a real catharsis through the TRC process, young Makoma has yet to find any such emotional relief. During a SABC media-arranged prison visit between Makoma and Dawie Ackerman's daughter, Leisel, the young man was asked how he felt, upon seeing the graphic police photos at his amnesty hearing "of all the people and all the blood." He replied to the girl whose mother he had killed in the attack:

> Yah, I remember that O.K. And I had feelings then. It was bad. But no matter how I feel now, at this moment, that what I did was bad, there is nothing which I can do. The people are dead. How I feel cannot change anything.

As a strong and disciplined PAC militant, Makoma still feels that all these emotional performances are unseemly and just a little bit beside the point.

Remorse and Changes in Spirit

Albie Sachs (personal communication, 1998) expressed the wish that there could be more "felt emotion" by the perpetrators of political violence. He referred to those who seem unmoved by the TRC process, who (like P. W. Botha and Winnie Mandela) have refused the new history, and who remain frozen in the past. The TRC process has, in fact, opened up new emotional spaces where conversations and actions that were once impossible, even unthinkable, are now happening. The unlikely encounters between perpetrators and victims, who are beginning to empathize with each other's situation, is an extraordinary case in point. Soon after Makoma's arrest in 1993, the first time a church member (a divinity student) approached, he chased the young man out of his cell, saying that he would send his "comrades" out to get him. Less than five years later, Makoma was both gracious and apologetic toward his visitors. After their arranged meeting, Leisel Ackerman was even able to wonder, "Will we ever see each other again? Could we possibly become friends?"

I think of the ordinary Afrikaner couple who, with very concerned looks on their faces, approached me one day on the steps of St. George's Cathedral in Cape Town (Archbishop Tutu's church). "Where could they find the bishop?" they asked.

"Oh, he's a very busy man," I said. "I'm sure he's not here now." They both looked crestfallen. "Well, what did you want to see him about?"

"We want to confess to the Truth Commission. We did not treat Black people very well and now we want to make a fresh start."

I explained that the TRC was a very formal process "with lawyers and official papers" meant for murderers and torturers, not for ordinary people who could have behaved better. Yet the real effects of the TRC will perhaps be felt in small ripple effects like these and, hopefully, in various community circles where people, like this couple, might be able to meet with others to talk about just what happened to them, how they behaved, and how to set the record straight. This is what some of the churches and, in particular. Father Lapsley's "Healing the Memories" forums are doing. At least some of these healing retreats are reserved for those who were neither victims nor perpetrators, but people who, all the same, were hurt, diminished, traumatized, and/or compromised by the apartheid state and the violent struggle against it. After the formal TRC has disbanded and all the counselors return to business as usual, what will be needed still are a multitude of little TRCs, community based, for ordinary citizens who had to live through extraordinary times.

Redemption

So I close with the story of Hennie's redemption. Hennie is an acquaintance, an Afrikaner and a private security guard in Cape Town. During the year we first spent in South Africa in 1993, Hennie frequently dropped by our house to visit. I feared that either he was spying on us or that he had a special fondness for one of our adult daughters. We tolerated his visits as patiently as we could. He seemed honestly curious and

well-intentioned. I ran into Hennie in the streets of Cape Town during a spontaneous celebration of South Africa's having won the All-Africa Soccer Cup in February 1996. Hennie was very excited, almost emotionally overwrought, and he didn't know quite how to explain to me the magnitude and significance of that magical moment. "Did you see the game?" he asked. I did, I said, on a big screen in a packed bar.

"*Both* goals?"

"Yes, indeed."

"And did you see our President [Nelson Mandela] right there out on the field?"

"Yes."

"Can you possibly know what this means for us?" Without waiting for an answer, Hennie told me:

It means we are not 100% bad. It means God is willing to forgive us. That He would give to us – of all people! – such great heroes! It is a sign that we are going in a good way now. We are not hated any more. Oh, how can I explain this? It's like before we were Fat Elvis: sick, disgusting, ugly. Now we are like skinny Elvis: young, handsome, healthy. In the New South Africa, we have all been reborn.

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