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The Ambiguity of Betrayal: Contesting Myths of Heroic Resistance in South Africa

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Abstract

Hegemonic practices of memorialization rely on narratives of heroic, morally untainted resistance, which cast traitors as the aberrant "other." This paper draws on Simone de Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and historical and sociological accounts of betrayal to trouble this binary and construct a framework for memorializing betrayal in its ambiguity—in relation to the everyday reality of tragic dilemmas that resisters face. I show how attentiveness to the ambiguity of betrayal can help rethink heroic resistance myths beyond the exclusionary logic pitting moral purity against the depravity of treason—and warn against the reproduction of systematic practices of othering in the new political order. The paper develops the political relevance of this theoretical exploration via the example of a South African novel, *The Texture of Shadows*, examining how its insights into the ambiguity of betrayal challenge the myths of heroic resistance in South Africa.

Keywords

heroic myths of resistance, ambiguity of betrayal, political memory, South Africa, *The Texture of Shadows*

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Introduction

Societies transitioning from violent pasts rely on myths of heroic resisters and aberrant traitors (Jensen 2010, 151; Leebaw 2019, 451). Cultivated through official memorialization institutions and practices, heroic myths of resistance work to affirm a sense of belonging and ensure the legitimacy of a new political order after state-sponsored violence. Traitors, in turn, represent a corrupting presence that needs to be excised from the boundaries of a new community (Lazzara 2011, 156; Lloyd 2011, 243). Too often, such demonizations of traitors are underpinned by an understanding of betrayal as an intentional, willful act—a result of moral deficiency or weakness—that misses the complexities of political action in contexts of pervasive oppression. What is unaccounted for is the ethical ambiguity of betrayal, which refers to the everyday reality of tragic dilemmas that resistance fighters need to negotiate under the extreme pressures of resistance action.

Myths of heroic resistance are politically dangerous because they perpetuate a pernicious "us" versus "them" logic of political interaction. Pitting the ideal of resisters' unconditional solidarity and commitment to a shared cause against morally aberrant traitors, they inscribe an exclusionary logic of solidarity into the fabric of a new political community. As we shall see, this exclusionary logic risks reproducing oppressive relationships in society and turning certain individuals or groups into disposable "others." One prominent example of such othering that I focus on throughout the paper is the way in which simplified denunciations of traitors are gendered, directed against the feminized other of heroic masculinity and reinforcing gender inequality.

This essay aims to challenge simplistic practices of memorializing betrayal and examine the ambiguity of betrayal as it arises from the complex circumstances of resistance. Thereby, I contribute to the growing political theory literature that has contested heroic resistance myths and delved into the complexities of resisting state-sponsored violence yet has not explored the difficult issue of betrayal (Kirkpatrick 2011; Leebaw 2019; Mihai 2019, 2022).

My alternative framework for memorializing betrayal in its ambiguity draws on Simone de Beauvoir's account of the ambiguity of resistant action in an oppressive world in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and sociological and historical accounts of betrayal. It comprises three key points. First, betrayal constitutes an inherent aspect of resistance activity that exposes the fragile nature of resisters' solidarity and poses difficult moral dilemmas about how to deal with actual or suspected traitors. Second, simplistic denunciations of traitors as the aberrant other of resistance rely on an untenable and exclusionary ideal of undivided unity that abstracts from concrete circumstances of betrayal and replicates the very logic of oppression that resisters have aimed to oppose.

Third, rather than attributing betrayal to individual base motives, practices of memorialization should be attentive to resisters' context-specific vulnerabilities and the conditions under which they can be coerced into betrayal.

This alternative framework helps us resist the reproduction of systematic practices of othering in the new order. Instead of trying to excise the corrupting presence of the traitor, to paraphrase Bonnie Honig, it uses the ambiguity of betrayal to think differently about belonging and community.[1] I suggest that attentiveness to the ambiguity of betrayal encourages us to reconsider the form of solidarity that is to ground a new political community beyond the exclusionary logic pitting moral purity against the depravity of treason. Acknowledging how our vulnerabilities shape our actions and commitments foregrounds the need to tackle hierarchies of inequality that enable some to construct their feminized/different others as disposable and safe to violate.

I develop these ideas further through engagement with the case of South Africa. South Africa represents a paradigmatic case, where ideals of heroic resistance have lent legitimacy to the rule of the African National Congress (ANC), the main liberation movement, and where accusations of treason continue to be used to disqualify political opponents and justify violence against marginalized groups (Dlamini 2015; Gqola 2016). I put the theoretical framework developed previously in conversation with the selected novel, *The Texture of Shadows*, by Mandla Langa. *The Texture of Shadows* is particularly relevant because it is representative of the recent literary turn in South Africa, which has contested ideals of heroic resistance and explored the ambiguity of betrayal within the anti-apartheid struggle (Pieterse 2019, 73).

In my turn to the novel, I rely on literature's ability to reveal the complexities of resistance and complicity that challenge the binary between heroic resisters and vile collaborators and that have tended to elude traditional transitional justice mechanisms (Danchev 2016; Mihai 2022). Following Williams's (1977) understanding of the critical potential of literary works, I approach the novel as a propitious site for tracing the "felt" changes in the hegemonic visions of resistance and for advancing competing narratives

1. In her book *Democracy and the Foreigner*, Honig switches the question that has dominated our thinking about foreignness in discussions about democracy and citizenship. Rather than treating foreignness as "a threat of corruption that must be kept out and contained" or, more generally, as "a problem in need of solution," she centers on the question of "how foreignness is used to figure and perhaps manage enduring problems in democratic theory" (Honig 2001, 1–2, 113). She concludes that foreignness may inspire us to relate to one another and our political institutions ambivalently rather than in Manichean categories of good and evil (Honig 2001, 121).

about betrayal in the liberation movement (133–35). I explore how the novel's insights into the ethical ambiguity of betrayal challenge the myths of heroic resistance and resist the reproduction of (gender, racial, and economic) inequality in the aftermath of struggle.

Before proceeding with the argument, three qualifications are necessary. First, I employ the common understanding of betrayal in resistance as denoting resisters' betraying important information or turning to work for the oppressive regime. At the same time, I show that the meaning of such acts of betrayal is politically constructed and contested (Ben-Yehuda 2001, 8). Second, resistance refers to organized collective struggles against oppression that involve a commitment to freedom and equality. I acknowledge that resistance practices are diverse, ranging from organized armed struggles to everyday, often concealed acts of defiance. However, for the purposes of this essay, I focus on examples of resistance that are most prone to be remembered in a heroic key and where the dilemmas of dealing with traitors arise most starkly. Third, my purpose is not to construct a typology of betrayal and determine the levels of moral responsibility involved in respective acts of treason. It is to problematize simplified denunciations of traitors as aberrant others.

The argument proceeds as follows. The first section delves into the challenges associated with memorializing betrayal in resistance. The second section explicates the alternative framework for examining the ambiguity of betrayal in resistance. The third section outlines the dangerous political implications of heroic myths of resistance in South Africa and turns to the recent literary production for competing narratives about betrayal in the anti-apartheid struggle. The fourth section shows how *The Texture of Shadows* develops the proposed framework for memorializing betrayal on the example of the South African anti-apartheid struggle.

Memorializing Betrayal in Resistance

Betrayal has been defined as an undermining of "a thick human relationship," violating trust and loyalty deemed essential to the maintenance of our bonds with relevant others and damaging the intersubjective fabric of human relations that bind us into a community (Margalit 2017, 2, 52–82; Thiranagama and Kelly 2010, 2). It is, therefore, unsurprising that the politically constructed and contested character of betrayal (Ben-Yehuda 2001, 125–26; Dlamini 2015, 10) is most evident in societies transitioning from violent pasts where the foundations of moral and political order need to be established anew. In these contexts, accusations of treason are inextricable from efforts to entrench

myths of heroic resistance, which work to affirm the boundaries of a new "we" after state-sponsored violence (Frisk 2019; Mihai 2019).

Successor elites construct heroic myths of resistance to affirm a "moral 'fresh start'" and secure their legitimacy to rule (Mihai 2022, 26). In this process, images of traitors as morally aberrant others of resistance are often used to delegitimize or silence opposition, either in internal resistance struggles or in the struggle against the old regime. Traitors and collaborators violate the ideals of morally untainted resistance; they constitute an aberration, "motivated by opportunism, venality, ideology and resentment, and acting more or less voluntarily" (Lloyd 2011, 243). As such, they serve as the perfect, past and present, enemy against which the new order must consolidate and protect itself.

Beyond immediate beneficiaries, communities tend to get invested in heroic myths because they help (re)establish a positive sense of a society's collective identity. Betrayal serves as a "sacrificial lamb" for a society's collective responsibility for violent pasts; traitors need to be expunged to "assuage the guilt of the whole community" and allow it to inhabit a new future (Lazzara 2011, 156; Lloyd 2011, 247). In the process, the politically constructed character of this process as well as the less savory aspects of resistance—including the pervasiveness and ambiguity of betrayal within resistance—are swept under the "historical carpet" (Mihai 2022, 26).

Embroiled in the political processes of consolidating a new order, myths of heroic resisters and aberrant traitors reflect various groups' unequal access to practices of meaning and memory making, which itself is indicative of the unequal distribution of power within a community (Mihai 2022, 26). In particular, denunciations of traitors as morally aberrant others are often couched in highly gendered and racialized language, targeting traditionally victimized or marginal groups (Grinchenko and Narvselius 2018, 21; Mihai 2022, 26). I outline how simplistic denunciations of treason are deeply implicated in and reinforce existing inequalities in more detail in the second section. Here, let it suffice to highlight that attentiveness to the neglected histories—and ambiguity—of betrayal within resistance entails vigilance against the unquestioned configurations of power.

Despite the hegemony of heroic myths of resistance, rival memories exposing the ambiguity of betrayal do appear and, even if they remain marginal, show that the process of condemning and identifying traitors is far from clear-cut and depends on one's standpoint in the conflict (Lloyd 2011, 239). For instance, resisters who have been denounced as informers have often felt betrayed by their organization for failing to consider the difficult circumstances of resistance and the fact that resistance leaders themselves

have made deals with the repressive regime (Lloyd 2011, 242–43). Double standards in judging betrayal and summary executions of suspected traitors have been perceived as forms of betrayal, too, often leading to profound disenchantment with the values of the resistance.

However, the practice of contesting reductive denunciations of traitors in political memory is a risky affair. Attempts to draw attention to the ambiguity of betrayal have been exploited by politically motivated efforts to exonerate collaborators. In France, memoirs less hostile to collaboration have depicted treason as "a minor error of judgement" compared to gross human rights violations committed by the resistance movement (Lloyd 2011, 247). While such memories challenge heroic myths of resistance, they also risk relativizing resistance activity to the point of rendering collaboration and betrayal into a matter of mere chance. Such efforts have similarly evaded a thorough examination of the ambiguity of betrayal to revel in "another kind of legend," the desire to unmask and dethrone the values of resistance altogether (Atack 1989, 232–35; Suleiman 2004, 63–65).

Moreover, efforts to challenge simplified understandings of betrayal within resistance are further complicated by the absence of reliable facts. The difficulty of establishing what actually happened is at least partly due to the fact that resistance activity relies on double agents, which makes it nearly impossible to distinguish between betrayal as a tactic and actual collaboration (Ben-Yehuda 2001, 72; Lloyd 2003, 38). In addition, stories of betrayal tend to reflect the vested interest of their narrators, which explains why histories of resistance are full of instances of deliberate manipulation of facts on the part of powerful actors (Lloyd 2011, 242–43). State counter-insurgency agents have been known to plant false stories about treason within resistance to discredit the resistance movement. Leaders of resistance movements, too, have concealed instances of betrayal within the highest ranks of a liberation movement for fear this would cause disillusionment and contest their right to rule. Thus, as Salem (2023) writes with regard to disappearance, betrayal could be said to be a political act "whose archive will always be incomplete, fragmented and unstable."

The political risks involved in exposing the ambiguity of betrayal, however, should not lead to a resigned acceptance of binary myths. The ease with which the difficulties of condemning and identifying traitors can be manipulated and misused renders a nuanced examination of the ambiguity of betrayal all the more necessary. Yet attempts to memorialize betrayal in its ambiguity must remain wary of the danger of relativizing resistance and account for the incompleteness of betrayal's archive.

An Alternative Framework for Memorializing Betrayal

In recent years, several political theorists contributing to the field of memory politics have exposed the troubling political implications of myths of heroic resistance. They have argued that association of resistance with heroic agency entrenches a binary logic, pitting "idealism against compromise, action against inaction, principled sacrifice or martyrdom against selfish opportunism" (Leebaw 2019, 473). This binary logic obscures the complexities of resisting organized atrocity—the difficult choices and situations that stem from resisters' embeddedness within the very conditions of systemic violence they are fighting to dismantle (Mrovlje 2017). Examples include the human rights violations committed in the service of freedom and justice; the ways in which the pursuit of moral goodness or self-sacrifice may backfire; and the ways that unheroic, compromised actions may constitute powerful avenues of resistance (Kirkpatrick 2011, 414–21; Leebaw 2019, 459–76; Mihai 2019; Mrovlje and Kirkpatrick 2020; Vogler 2020). A consideration of the complex experiences of resistance, these critics argue, can challenge the deeply entrenched patterns of complicity in systemic violence (Leebaw 2019, 475) and disclose "a richer—if less heroic—repertoire of political engagement" (Mihai 2019, 64).

While theorists have delved into the complexities of resistant action that challenge the binary between heroic resisters and vile collaborators, they have not examined the difficult issue of betrayal—arguably an aspect of resistance activity that most emblematically reveals the limits of heroic myths of resistance.

I inquire into the neglected issue of betrayal by drawing on Beauvoir's notion of the ambiguity of political (resistant) action. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Beauvoir defines ambiguity as a fundamental condition of human existence. Ambiguity refers to the fact that human beings are situated freedoms—both free, capable of acting in the world and transcending themselves toward not-yet-existent goals, and situated, deeply embedded in a given context, which acts as a powerful constraint upon their freedom and shapes what it is possible for them to do (de Beauvoir 1948, 7–9). In the context of resistance, this means that we are free to act in pursuit of freedom and resist oppression, but our actions are also deeply conditioned by oppressive structures that lie beyond any individual's control—to the point of upturning our deepest convictions and aspirations or necessitating that we resort to violence and ourselves become agents of oppression. Among the examples Beauvoir uses to illustrate this ambiguity is also the challenge of dealing with the

difficult issue of betrayal in the context of French Resistance during WWII, which makes her framework particularly well-suited for my purpose. I combine her account with an emerging literature in sociology and history, which has drawn attention to the ethical ambiguity of treason in contexts of violent conflict, including within resistance movements. From these sources, an alternative framework for memorializing betrayal can be constructed—one that accounts for the complexities of resistant action in contexts of state-sponsored persecution.[2] I discuss the three elements of this alternative framework in the text that follows.

First, betrayal represents an inherent aspect of resistance activity that confronts resisters with difficult moral dilemmas about how to deal with actual or suspected traitors. In contexts as diverse as the French Resistance during WWII, the military dictatorship in Argentina, and the South African anti-apartheid struggle, scholars have shown how betrayal is far from a relatively isolated occurrence, reducible to a handful of wicked traitors. Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes rely on practices of "inciting or forcing people to betray any form of opposition," systematically trying to erode individuals' commitment; induce feelings of loneliness, powerlessness, and hopelessness; and take advantage of their personal attachments or internal power struggles (Lloyd 2011, 243). Examples include telling the captured resisters that their comrades have betrayed them, threatening their loved ones, or spreading the word that they themselves have turned and are collaborating with the regime (First 1965, 124–25; "Testimony of Yazir Henry" 1996). Thus, the tragic dilemmas between incommensurable values and conflicting commitments—such as saving oneself or one's family and safeguarding one's comrades or the goals of the movement—constitute the very way of life of a resistance fighter (Actis et al. 2006, 27–58; Dlamini 2015; Lloyd 2011, 243–44).

Beauvoir's notion of the ambiguity of resistant action helps us approach this ever-present possibility of betrayal as arising from the fragile—and indeed ambiguous—nature of resisters' commitment and solidarity in conditions of pervasive systemic violence. The possibility of betrayal represents an inherent aspect of resistant activity due to the fact that each resister is both a free being committed to the ideals of the struggle *and* a body under the threat

2. I acknowledge that the question about how to memorialize betrayal in resistance is different from the question about how a resistance movement should deal with a suspected or actual traitor during conflict, and I do not aim to equate the two. What I am suggesting is that attentiveness to the complex experience of resistance can lead to a more nuanced practice of memorializing betrayal and encourage us to approach it in its ambiguity.

of torture, pain, and death; a member of the group *and* a private individual concerned for the well-being of his or her close ones and longing for normality, security, and the enjoyment of a family life; a group-being shaped by the values and ethos of the collective *and* a separate consciousness molded by a particular history, plagued by particular vulnerabilities, and shot through by a plurality of conflicting allegiances, including the desire for money, power, and prestige.

While the myths of heroic resistance flaunt the ideals of resisters' unconditional solidarity and commitment to the cause, resistance movements seem well aware of their fragility. Historically, this awareness ensued not only in the need to create strong bonds of comradeship and trust but also in forms of organization geared to minimizing or managing the dangers of betrayal (Gildea 2015, 24, 421; Lewin 2011, 47). One need only think of the "golden rule" to hold out under torture for at least 48 hours to allow one's comrades to escape; the cell structure where only the leader knew his or her superior; code names to hide the resisters' real identity and protect their close ones; the provision of cyanide capsules so that resisters could commit suicide if they were captured; or even cases where rank-and-file resistance fighters were *deliberately* given false information in the expectation that they would talk under torture (Gildea 2015, 169, 164; Lewin 2011, 68; Lloyd 2003, 38).

The fragility of resisters' solidarity and the ever-present possibility of betrayal raise difficult questions about how to deal with suspected traitors that do not feature within heroic resistance myths. When Beauvoir explored these questions in the context of the French resistance to Nazi occupation, she captured the dilemma as follows. On the one hand, resistance struggles depend crucially on trust among its members, and a refusal to kill a (potential) traitor may endanger a crucial mission or the very existence of the resistance movement. On the other hand, the suspected traitor is not just an existential threat but a concretely situated human being whose killing erodes the humanist ends of the resistance movement (de Beauvoir 1948, 149).

In Beauvoir's view, a resistance movement cannot always use pure means in relation to its own members. But her crucial point is that the choice regarding the use of violence against actual or suspected traitors must be grounded in a careful consideration of the concrete situation at hand, with a view to avoiding a greater evil and assuming the uncertainty and risk involved (de Beauvoir 1948, 155). For instance, if a "questionable individual" held in their hands the fate of the whole cell, it is "reasonable" to "sacrifice" them because not doing so "runs the risk of letting ten innocent [human beings] die" (de Beauvoir 1948, 149–50). But if the presumptions are "vague" and the danger is "uncertain," it seems easy enough to put the suspects in prison "to keep them from doing any harm" while waiting for

"a serious inquiry" (de Beauvoir 1948, 149). As Beauvoir emphasizes, the killing of a human being, for no matter how praiseworthy a goal, retains the value of sacrifice and exacts a cost that cannot be redeemed by reference to a greater good. Further, the uncertainty of facts surrounding a suspected betrayal means such choices should not be made "hastily or lightly" (de Beauvoir 1948, 150).

Second, systematic practices of othering and killing traitors—while stemming from the awareness of the ever-present danger of betrayal in resistance—replicate the very logic of oppression that resisters have aimed to oppose. Beauvoir's contextual engagement with the dilemmas of betrayal in resistance allows us to critique systematic practices of othering and killing traitors—such as the ones epitomized by Jean-Paul Sartre's notion of fraternity-terror. Sartre (2004) developed the notion of fraternity-terror to capture the coercive character of resisters' solidarity and mutual commitment to the cause in repressive conditions (439). Fraternity-terror refers to the dynamics by which the resisters' pledge of mutual commitment to each other and to the group turns into an "unmitigated release of violence against an individual member, should s/he become Other in betraying or abandoning the group" (de Warren 2015, 323). To swear allegiance, in Sartre's (2004) words, is to say: "you must kill me if I secede" (431).

Sartre's fraternity-terror explains how the resistance group's uncritical embrace of violence against suspected traitors stems from its efforts to persevere in the face of grave external threats. In the process of protecting itself against whatever endangers it from the outside, the group draws an existential demarcation between us and them. Traitors threaten the distinction between us and them "from within" and are persecuted "in the name of [their] own pledge" *as members of the group*, thereby often inviting more disgust and paranoia than the enemy force itself (de Warren 2015, 322–24; Sartre 2004, 438). In the process of the group's affirming its unity against external threats, in other words, betrayal is perceived as a violation of some fundamental, primordial norm key to the group's existence—as "an existential ontological catastrophe *against* which the group must re-substantialize itself" (de Warren 2015, 324).

Fraternity-terror shows how traitors come to be *politically constructed* as a morally contaminating presence. It allows us to appreciate that simplistic denunciations of traitors in myths of heroic resistance have an experiential basis in the extreme pressures of resistance. However, it also discloses the oppressive character of this practice. Mirroring the operation of heroic resistance myths, fraternity-terror construes the resisters' solidarity in the image of undivided unity, which solidifies itself in the act of

eliminating the transgressive "other" (Sartre 2004, 438–39). Thus, it reinforces the untenable binary between proper commitment and the unforgivable deviation from it.

Beauvoir's situated perspective deconstructs the necessity of fraternal terror by illuminating how it abstracts from the concrete circumstance and ambiguity of betrayal. It reveals that, in fraternity-terror, the choice regarding the use of violence against suspected traitors is no longer linked to a concrete situation at hand. It becomes a necessary response to the danger of betrayal, inherent in the resistance group's efforts to protect itself against dissolution in difficult circumstances of resistance. As Sartre (2004) himself recognizes, fraternity-terror posits the "deep fear of a dissolution of unity" as "the justification of any repressive violence" against the very possibility or suspicion of betrayal (582).[3] In contrast, Beauvoir's recognition of the fragile nature of the resisters' solidarity calls for a constant contestation of the group's ideal of unity, which is used to justify violence against traitors as a necessity of resistance. Specifically, her situated perspective draws attention to how simplistic denunciations of traitors—rather than answering to an actual existential threat—are shaped by an existing constellation of values and power inequalities that construct certain individuals or groups as seditious, disloyal, or treasonable (see also Ahmed 2014, 75–76).

Several feminist critics have observed how Sartre's notion of fraternity-terror itself is "masculine in gender" (Kuykendall 1996, 26). For Amorós (2007), the "patriarchal nature" of pledged groups stems from "a presupposed constitutive condition of the "oath," where "manliness" is the mark of "serious and solemn commitment" (120). This depiction of virtuous commitment in terms of "manly" characteristics casts its "others" in the image of feminized treacherousness or servility—a label that can be applied to women, "unmanly" men, or other non-normate (groups of) resisters.[4]

Examples of this gendered understanding of proper commitment and its other include discursive framings of female resisters as especially prone to treason—due to either their "weakness" or "seductiveness" arising from their

3. Sartre is not justifying or endorsing internal violence against traitors (La Caze 2007, 47). Nevertheless, his analysis constructs it as an inherent aspect of resistance that is necessary to create and maintain bonds among the members of the resistance group. Therefore, it cannot provide a critical perspective on fraternity-terror.
4. This mirrors Sartre's (2017) gendered understanding of resistance and collaboration in the context of Nazi occupation of France during WWII (58–59).

gender—which calls for strict regulation of appropriate forms of femininity and construes any deviation as disloyalty (Cosse 2014, 443–45).[5] Similarly, history abounds in cases where dangers of infiltration by enemy agents have led to a tightening of security measures, congealing the values of the resistance into an object of unconditional loyalty and denouncing any dissent or difference as an act of treason (Tessman 2005, 129–36). Attentiveness to the concrete circumstance and ambiguity of betrayal, then, shows how the practice of systematically justifying the repression of suspected individuals or groups risks reproducing relations of (economic, gender, and racial) inequality and betraying the ends of the resistance itself.

Third, betrayal cannot be reduced to a premeditated, willful act of consorting with the enemy that arises from individual base motives. Beauvoir's attentiveness to the fragility of resistance solidarity and the historical and sociological accounts of betrayal draw attention to the conditions under which people can be coerced into betrayal, including our inescapable embeddedness in relations of power and inequality and our ensuing vulnerability (Ben-Yehuda 2001, 109–16; Dlamini 2015, 10–12; Jensen 2010, 151). The understanding of betrayal in relation to the complexities of resistance struggle considers the limits of resisters' freedom in situations of impossibility. It draws attention to how their context-specific vulnerabilities, limited knowledge, and conflicting commitments shape their commitment in unpredictable ways and may condition a given act of treason. Particularly important here is the recognition of how oppression may affect individuals differently depending on their situation and how the burdens of resistance activity may be unequally distributed among the members of a resistance group. One need only think of the distinct burdens facing women resisters as the oppressors would systematically exploit their gender-specific vulnerabilities—such as their caring duties or oppressive ideas about women's bodies—in devising effective techniques of torture.[6]

This complex engagement with the ethical ambiguity of betrayal helps us distinguish between resisters who betray under severe torture and a threat of death (to themselves or to their loved ones) and those who commit treason under little or no threat or danger, or even for private gain (Ben-Yehuda 2001, 296). Similarly, it sheds light on the "grey zones" between unconditional commitment and full-blown betrayal (Grinchenko and Narvselius 2018, 16–17),

5. For a detailed engagement with the gendered representation of betrayal in resistance, see Mrovlje (2020).
6. Examples include using rape and other forms of sexual violence as an instrument of torture, torturing their loved ones in front of them, or threatening to harm their unborn baby (Actis et al. 2006; Jaffer 2003; Weitz 1995, 77).

allowing us to appreciate how resisters negotiated the remaining margin of freedom within a difficult situation.[7]

This alternative framework for memorializing betrayal, I argue, allows us to challenge simplistic denunciations of traitors, without however relativizing resistance, and resist the reproduction of othering in the new political order. In particular, the attentiveness to the conditions of betrayal and to the oppressive implications of fraternal terror shifts the focus away from the need to weed out the corrupting presence of the traitor. Instead, it makes visible the exclusionary logic of solidarity at work in simplified denunciations of traitors and encourages us to relate to others on grounds other than the binary categories of "us" and "them," saintly heroes and demonic traitors. It drives us to acknowledge how oppressive relations and our ensuing vulnerabilities shape our commitments and actions in different ways and to ground the bond of solidarity in the mutual recognition of our context-specific vulnerabilities. This bond of solidarity, in turn, enjoins us to work with each other to transform the resilient hierarchies of inequality that enable some to treat others as disposable objects.

In the remainder of the essay, I explore how this framework—and its implications for contesting the exclusionary patterns of political interaction in the new order—can be usefully employed and developed on the exemplary case of South Africa.

Myths of Heroic Resistance in South Africa

In South Africa, myths of heroic resistance tell the story of the liberation movement's courageous defeat of apartheid. The ANC leaders, in particular, have established themselves as saintly heroes, destined to rule the free and democratic South Africa—their heroism cast in images of virile masculinity, where the claiming of political freedom is associated with the assertion of manhood (Mihai 2022, 199). Treason and collaboration, in contrast, were depicted as symptoms of a disease that hinders the inevitable progress of history and that needs to be eliminated (Boswell 2013, 33–38; Gqola 2007, 113–20, 2016, 68–71; Unterhalter 2000). Infamously, Chris Hani, the leader of the armed wing of the ANC, condoned the use of "necklacing" against the "cancer" of the suspected traitors (Dlamini 2015, 13).[8] Justifications of

7. For instance, resisters may strategically reveal some less important information to gain their captors' trust and thus protect more crucial information about the core mission of their group or the whereabouts of resistance leaders.
8. The "necklace" was a common method of extrajudicial execution, used in the townships to punish those suspected of collaboration with the enemy. A tire would be placed around the victim's chest and arms, doused with petrol, and set on fire.

violence against so-called "enemy agents" also were prominent in the ANC submission before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (ANC 1996; TRC 1999, vol. 5, 262).

What the story obscures is the pervasiveness and ambiguity of betrayal within the liberation movement, including its senior structures (Dlamini 2015, 13). To be sure, testimonies of resistance fighters before the TRC exposed the ethical ambiguity of treason and the human rights abuses against suspected traitors. Yazir Henry, a member of the ANC underground, for instance, drew attention to the difficult circumstances of resistance that led to his betrayal and called on the ANC to assume responsibility for failing to provide for the safety of its cadres. A senior ANC operative Lita Mazibuko, in turn, related how she was falsely accused of betrayal and subjected to a terrifying ordeal of sexual abuse and rape—one of the ways, as we shall see, in which the oppressive gendered dynamics of heroic resistance myths was most clearly visible. Yet such testimonies remained unacknowledged or even faced active attempts at silencing ("Testimony of Ms Lita Nombango Mazibuko" 1997; "Testimony of Yazir Henry" 1996). The TRC (1999) recorded the pervasiveness of betrayal within resistance as well as the systematic pattern of abuse against those perceived to be enemy agents in its final report (vol. 2, 339–66). But its moral-legal framework could only approach traitors as victims of either apartheid or liberation movements' violence and failed to explore the ambiguity of betrayal (Dlamini 2015, 15–16).

The difficulty of examining betrayal in its ambiguity is compounded by the fragmentary nature of betrayal's archive. Not only do stories of betrayal lack "reliable narrators"; the official archive of the South African conflict is incomplete (Dlamini 2015, 2–3). The apartheid military and intelligence services often planted false stories of betrayal to discredit resisters or cover up their own violence but destroyed a significant amount of the state's security archive shortly before the transition in 1994 (Dlamini 2015, 2–3) The ANC, too, was selective when it came to unmasking traitors among the leaders of the liberation movement.[9] Thirty years after the official end of apartheid rule, as Dlamini (2015) writes, South Africans have yet to openly confront the

9. A well-known case concerns Peter Mokaba, charismatic leader of the South African Youth Congress and ANC underground operative, who turned out to be an apartheid agent. The ANC decided not to reveal Mokaba's betrayal to the public "as this would cause disillusionment among the youth" and posthumously conferred on him the Order of Luthuli, a prestigious South African award for contributions to the struggle for democracy (Evans in Dlamini 2015, 255).

silenced complicities of the struggle and disclose the many "stories [of betrayal]; that continue to refuse to be told" (255).[10]

Nevertheless, the issue of betrayal has gained a renewed urgency in South African politics. Given "the apparent ease with which many of yesterday's liberators have become today's looters," several political commentators have called for an examination of "the invisible links" between collaboration under apartheid and the corruption of the post-1994 era (Dlamini 2015, 258). However, the continued investment in myths of heroic resistance has prevented a full and open reckoning with the ambiguity of betrayal. Past secrets have gained "an afterlife" in the form of whispers about who the "real" collaborators were—whispers that do not contribute to a fuller understanding of the messy realities of betrayal but are used "to fight contemporary political battles" (Dlamini 2015, 250). Indeed, simplistic denunciations of traitors as the aberrant other of resistance persist in ideologically motivated practices of exclusion and silencing in the post-apartheid political culture (Akpome 2018, 106; Dlamini 2015, 250).

Cultivated through official memorialization institutions and rituals as well as historical and fictional representations, heroic myths of resistance are reflected in what Popescu (2019) has called "affective temporal structures" (34). Inspired by Raymond Williams's notion of "structures of feeling," affective temporal structures represent embodied, socially and politically shaped ways we assign meaning to events and imagine possible futures (Popescu 2019, 34–35). To understand dominant memories of betrayal in terms of affective temporal structures means that they do not resemble consciously formed, conceptually fixed worldviews (Williams 1977, 132) and that they cannot simply be disrupted through "awareness-raising" (Mihai 2019, 52).

Yet this does not mean they are immutable. For Williams, literary works represent especially propitious sites for tracing the "felt, rather than thought changes" in the established horizons of meaning (Barnard and van der Vlies 2019, 13; Popescu 2019, 35; Williams 1977, 133–35). This is because literature offers an experiential insight into our social and political lives that stirs rage, fear, empathy, and sorrow and can challenge established belief systems (Popescu 2019, 35; Williams 1977, 133). Moreover, artworks can register microscopic, minute shifts in existing horizons of meaning, shedding light on

10. No doubt, this hesitancy can sometimes be traced to an unwillingness to discover that previously trusted comrades had been implicated in the death of a loved one. When such revelations were exposed at the TRC hearings, they had a devastating impact on individuals, families, and communities (Dlamini 2015, 256–58).

emergent experiences, perceptions, and interests (Popescu 2019, 35) and how these are formed into "a new way of seeing ourselves and the world" (Williams 1969, 19).

This understanding of the critical potential of literary works enjoins us to engage with the recent South African literary production, which has dethroned the myths of heroic resistance and addressed the difficult issue of betrayal within the liberation movement (Pieterse 2019, 57–58, 61–62).[11] I contribute to this endeavor by a careful reading of Langa's *The Texture of Shadows*, reaping its experiential insights into the ethical ambiguity of betrayal in the anti-apartheid struggle.

Challenging Myths of Heroic Resistance in South Africa: *The Texture of Shadows*

The Texture of Shadows was inspired by the author's own experiences of the ethical ambiguity of betrayal in resistance, as well as of the ways in which the silenced complicities of the struggle continue to pervade the present. Mandla's younger brother, Benjamin Mandla, was executed after he was falsely accused of being an apartheid spy. It was later found that the murder was orchestrated by the apartheid regime; the MK commander who ordered the assassination was in fact a state agent (TRC Amnesty Committee 2000). Langa also argued for greater sensibility to the ambiguity of betrayal in response to politically motivated charges of treason in contemporary political debates: "It's a recklessness that does not take on board the fact that such accusations, in the past, led to lives being lost and reputations being totally destroyed" (Pather 2019).

In the following analysis, I briefly outline the plot of the narrative and then explore how the novel memorializes the ambiguity of betrayal in the South African anti-apartheid struggle. First, I delve into the novel's depiction of the difficult moral dilemmas posed by the ever-present danger of betrayal within the struggle. Second, I outline how the novel challenges heroic myths of resistance and simplistic denunciations of traitors by showing how they replicate the structural violence of the apartheid regime. Third, I focus on the novel's exploration of the conditions of betrayal and how it encourages us to resist systematic practices of othering in the aftermath of struggle.

11. Examples include both historical/autofictional accounts and works of fiction, such as Dlamini's (2015) *Askari*, Lewin's (2011) *Stones Against the Mirror*, Slovo's (2000) *Red Dust*, Afrika's (1994) *The Innocents*, Mhlongo's (2013) *Way Back Home*, and Wicomb's (2001) *David's Story*.

The Narrative Plot and Form

The Texture of Shadows is set in 1989, at the dawn of the democratic transition, just before Nelson Mandela's release and the unbanning of the anti-apartheid liberation movement. The plot follows a group of resistance army guerrillas who are sent to infiltrate South Africa from Botswana and deliver two mysterious trunks to the internal underground wing of the movement. The trunks are supposed to contain documents revealing the names of apartheid agents within the high-up structures of the resistance struggle. A parallel story depicts Chaplain Nerissa Rodrigues, a senior member of the resistance, tasked by the president of the ANC, Oliver Tambo, with the mission to uncover the abuses committed in the Quatro detention camp (also known as Camp 46) in Angola. The narrative plot proceeds as the resisters strive to protect the trunks and deliver them to Nerissa, playing a game of cat and mouse with both the apartheid counterinsurgency unit and the traitors within the movement who want to acquire the trunk assets for their own benefit.

The novel's insights into the ambiguity of betrayal are conveyed through a peculiar narrative structure. The story is told from multiple points of view, shifting between different locations and time periods. The linear flow of events is often interrupted to follow a character's stream of memories (Wessels 2017, 1041), showing how their present decisions are conditioned by their particular histories. Further, the characters use one or several *noms de guerre* in addition to their given names, which heightens the atmosphere of secrecy and unpredictability. Finally, we learn that the story before us is actually Nerissa's report to President Tambo and that it therefore represents her own reconstruction of events, which cannot lay claim to absolute certainty (Langa 2014, 1).

Dangers of Treason and the Dilemma of Dealing with Traitors

Throughout the narrative, the everyday reality and danger of betrayal forms the backdrop of the resisters' judgements and actions and exposes the fragility of their commitment and solidarity. They are plagued by suspicion and uncertainty from the moment they are tasked with the mission by General Palweni—an erstwhile hero of the revolution, who, we later learn, has sold out for financial gain. Django, one of the guerrillas, feels "secrecy has been compromised. And we're likely to have a very unwelcome welcoming committee on arrival" (Langa 2014, 22). Soon after the guerrillas cross the border, their suspicions are confirmed; they are ambushed by a group of askaris[12]

12. Askaris were resistance fighters who were turned and forced to work for the apartheid security forces, often sent on missions to kill their former comrades.

trained by the apartheid counterinsurgency expert, Colonel Jan Stander, and only five comrades survive. The atmosphere of distrust persists after the guerrillas are taken in by the internal structures of the movement and sheltered in the township house of the local healer, Ngobese, who works for the resistance. After another guerrilla is killed in the safehouse, the group becomes increasingly aware that the traitor must be one of their own. Privately, each speculates on the others' weaknesses, ulterior motives, character flaws, bodily infirmities, conflicting commitments, and private vulnerabilities, and how they could have led them to betray.

The novel vividly depicts the difficult choices and moral dilemmas that the resisters are confronted with in the face of the ever-present danger of betrayal. Muzi, another internal resistance leader and ex-prisoner, recalls how, at the age of sixteen, he was asked to participate in the killing of a resister, who had been captured and turned and agreed to testify against his former colleagues. His seniors in the movement tried to resolve the dilemma and lessen the cost of killing a traitor by offering an unambiguous moral justification: "It's hard to forgive someone who betrays a revolution. . . . We do not assassinate; we eliminate organisms that cause sickness to our society" (Langa 2014, 106–107). Even though their decision to kill the resister-turned-traitor is based on a careful consideration of the situation at hand—he is judged to be a clear and present danger to the group—Muzi recognizes their target in its humanity and sympathizes with the grief of those close to him (Langa 2014, 106–107). Confronted with the human cost of the assassination, he wonders whether the resistance movement is not "losing its revolutionary morality by adopting strategies that had earned the apartheid state international condemnation" (Langa 2014, 107).

However, Langa also shows the tragic fact that sometimes violence against traitors is unavoidable to preserve the safety of the resistance group. Even though Muzi is deeply troubled by the practice of killing traitors, he ponders whether there is always a place for moral considerations "in the red-hot moments of struggle when women and children [are] being killed and buried in shallow graves" (Langa 2014, 107). Similarly, Narissa, herself a hardened resister who had undergone severe torture without selling out, finds it hard to understand how certain individuals could betray the movement's cause of freedom and justice, even under extreme duress (Langa 2014, 224–25). As a Chaplain, she struggles with the view that all souls are "saveable" and that no trespass "necessitated a death sentence" (Langa 2014, 225, 365). For instance, she realizes that her decision to save from execution a particularly harmful askari was "a mistake": "[s]uch a specimen should have long been consigned into an incinerator" (Langa 2014, 342–43). It turns out that her desire to preserve human life in all circumstances cost the resistance many lives.

Challenging the Necessity of Fraternal Terror

Apart from depicting betrayal—and the dilemmas of responding to it—as an inherent aspect of resistance, the novel shows how the danger of betrayal in resistance can easily lead to an uncritical embrace of fraternity-terror. This is clearly voiced by Nozishada, the leader of Camp 46. Nozishada justifies the abuses in the camp as a necessity of war given the apartheid regime's cultivation of treason among resisters: "They recruit people inside prisons, who are serving time. They target vulnerable wretches who have a lot to lose. More than that, they hold people's families to ransom" (Langa 2014, 200). This understanding of the extreme pressures of resistance action does not translate into a greater attentiveness to the ambiguity of betrayal. It leads him to cast the unity of resistance in the image of heroic masculinity while systematically justifying the torture and killing of suspected "enemy agents" as the unworthy "other" of this ideal.

The novel contests the necessity of fraternal terror by exposing how it replicates the oppression of the apartheid regime, including its systematic practices of othering based on racial, economic, and gender inequality. When Nerissa comes to inspect the conditions in Camp 46 and stands facing "gaunt faces and skeletal limbs, holding on to prison bars," she asks: "Is this who we are? What have we become?" (Langa 2014, 217). Far from advancing the cause of the struggle, she notes, the systematic practices of torture and elimination of "traitors" amount to a sacrifice of the human values of the resistance "at the altar of expediency" (Langa 2014, 224). We can observe how Nozishada's ideals of heroic masculinity and undivided unity construct individuals as disloyal by exploiting their perceived weakness, difference, or marginal position and reinforcing existing inequalities. For instance, the label of "traitor" is applied also to a group of internal rebels, who disagreed with the military tactics of the ANC and demanded greater democracy in decision-making processes within the movement yet remained steadfast in their commitment to the struggle (Langa 2014, 33).

Moreover, Nozishada's torture of enemy agents preys on their context-specific vulnerabilities, such as their gender and racial identity. A particularly dreadful treatment is reserved for a white female askari, Jolene: "Sometimes she couldn't walk for days after they'd been through with her, fucking cunt, white bitch!" (Langa 2014, 219). The use of rape as a form of torture against a female traitor is not incidental. In her study of the pervasiveness of rape in South Africa, Pumla Gqola (2015) defines rape as "an extreme form of aggression and power" that is always gendered and enacted against the feminine (or someone constructed as feminine) and that seeks to "reign in, enforce submission, and punish defiance" (21). She traces the history of rape in South

Africa as an exercise of violent patriarchal power that has also been a core feature of the racist colonial rule (Gqola 2015, 21, 44). Enacting the desire "to break, humiliate and degrade another" (Gqola 2015, 134), Nozishada's treatment of Jolene clearly expresses the violence of the gendered othering at work in ideals of heroic masculinity and reproduces relations of patriarchal colonial power. While reversing apartheid's racial hierarchy of the violator and victim, it echoes the script used to justify apartheid violence as a necessary means of keeping Black people in the role of a subordinate other (Moffett 2006, 138).

Conditions of Betrayal

While *The Texture of Shadows* does not contain prescriptions on the "right" way of dealing with traitors, it draws attention to the conditions that force resisters into betrayal. We gain an experiential insight into the ambiguity of betrayal by following a first-person story of Sonto, a young female member of the internal resistance who turns out to be the traitor within the guerrilla unit. We learn she got caught in a relationship with an abusive boyfriend—none other than Nozishada, who is gathering a group of disaffected members of the People's Army and intends to lead them in a quest for a violent takeover of power. He takes advantage of Sonto's need for love and protection, manipulating her into his dependent, fearful, and obedient follower. He learns of her deepest fears and vulnerabilities—most of all her concern for the safety of her twelve-year-old sister, Thembani—which he uses to make her provide information about the men at Ngobese's house. As he couches his thinly veiled threat of rape: "These girls grow up so fast. Before you know it, a child has become a woman" (Langa 2014, 269).

Here we see that the violent patriarchal power that Gqola (2015) describes operates not only through acts of physical violation but also through the "manufacture of female fear" (78). The threat of rape, in Gqola's (2015) words, reminds women "that they are not safe and that their bodies are not entirely theirs" (79). It teaches women about masculine power and their vulnerability and is "an effective way to keep [them] in check" (Gqola 2015, 143, 79). It is this female fear that Nozishada's threat taps into when coercing Sonto's betrayal.

If Sonto's situation embodies the ambiguity of betrayal, Nozishada straddles the divide between good and evil, between heroic commitment and the treacherous transgression from the cause, in an even more uncomfortable manner. As he relates, he was a committed member of the resistance, full of youthful idealism, but then he was caught, tortured, and forced to work for the enemy. If he

refused, he was told, they would release the information that he sold out to his comrades and spread the rumor that his father was an apartheid agent all along. His idealism is further eroded at the sight of raising corruption within the movement, where the "fat cats" "were salting away huge sums of money and living high on the log" while letting foot soldiers like his father who devoted their whole lives to the struggle "eat out of garbage cans" (Langa 2014, 186).

These insights into the conditions of betrayal help us distinguish the coerced betrayal of Sonto and Nozishada from opportunistic betrayal, exemplified by General Palweni. Further, they draw attention to hierarchies of inequality that make it possible for some to treat others as helpless and dispensable objects. For instance, Sonto is disturbed not only by being put in a position "where she had to go against her convictions" but by "the fact that there must have been something about her . . . which had convinced someone that she was ripe for the picking" (Langa 2014, 309). That something, we intuit, was her falling prey to the discourse of heroic, virile masculinity embodied by Nozishada. When the guerrillas inquire about the motives that induced her to treason, she replies: "Nozishada was a man" (Langa 2014, 355). The novel thus refuses to absolve Sonto of all responsibility, yet it is also attentive to how her desire for the protection of a "strong man" is underpinned by widespread violence against women and rape culture in the townships. Any outing after nightfall, Sonto observes, would be "edged with menace" if the men in the neighborhood did not know who was the "owner of those exquisite legs" (Langa 2014, 153). Sonto's reliance on Nozishada's protection returns us to the coercive power of "female fear." It powerfully conveys the condition of women "living with the constant fear of violence" as well as how they are expected to adjust their behavior and curtail their movement in response (Gqola 2015, 15, 79, 87). This includes the lesson that women should not be out at night—or in public spaces more generally—without male protection (Gqola 2015, 86).

Nozishada's grievances, in turn, articulate the disenchantment of many resisters who have sacrificed their whole youth to fight apartheid, only to find themselves stuck in abject poverty and unemployment (Langa 2014, 295). Yet his resentment at the growing corruption within the movement leads him to misuse the generalized sense of despair at the growing economic inequality for personal gain, rendering everyone into an expendable instrument in his scheme "to reclaim all that belongs to me" (Langa 2014, 318). As he says when he tries to persuade Sonto to kill a boy, who, he believes, is weak and could betray his mission: "In a revolution, people kill. It's kill or be killed. . . . I am doing you a favour, teaching you how to kill. . . . We are in this together" (Langa 2014, 187).

The novel's inquiry into the murky dimensions of the struggle translates into a concern for the future of the country. Django wonders what kind of "riff-raff" would "masquerade as leaders in a liberated South Africa" (Langa 2014, 20). Nevertheless, the solution does not lie in discovering and pinning the blame on a handful of morally aberrant or weak traitors while upholding the vision of morally untainted anti-apartheid struggle. While the promise of a brighter future seems to rest on deciphering the incriminating list of documents pointing to the "real" traitors within the movement, it is noteworthy that the contents of the trunk remain a mystery. Rather, as Nerissa states in her concluding report to the president, the challenge confronting the liberators is to "face each other, our mirror images." (Langa 2014, 370). The liberators must account for and resist the "unaddressed impulses" to reproduce oppressive relationships that are "throbbing within our own ranks" and that threaten to spill over into the new political dispensation (Langa 2014, 370).

These unaddressed impulses include the ideals of heroic masculinity, which have entrenched patriarchal power relations and gender inequality within the resistance movement. Muzi's wife, Laura, for instance, relates how her husband "returned from prison a hero" while relegating her "from the status of a comrade and colleague" to one of "a housewife" (Langa 2014, 42). Laura further reflects on the double standards concerning betrayal in intimate relations: "her infidelity would consign her to Hell," but if it was Muzi "two-timing her, his hero status would shoot to stellar heights for, apart from being a hero of the revolution, he would have also proven himself to be a real man" (Langa 2014, 42).[13] Further, the novel foregrounds the need to challenge the structural injustices and growing inequalities within the liberation movement. As Gabriel's father surmises, the key is admitting, rather than trying to deny, our weaknesses "so that we can all pull together" (Langa 2014, 318). To tackle economic inequality, the resisters need to share the resources "as equally as possible" and build institutions "that will discourage greed" (Langa 2014, 318).

13. Apart from sexual violence and rape culture discussed previously, the reproduction of patriarchal power relations manifested itself in a range of issues, from erasing women's contribution to the struggle and silencing cases of sexual violence within the ANC to intimate violence and hierarchical relations in the private sphere. These are important issues that continue to plague contemporary South Africa but cannot be addressed at length in this paper. For relevant discussions, see Gqola 2015, 155–57; Mihai 2022; Moffett 2006; Mrovlje 2017; Unterhalter 2000; Yates, Gqola, and Ramphele 1998.

Conclusion

This essay sought to challenge myths of heroic resisters and aberrant traitors, with a specific focus on the case of South Africa. It proposed an alternative framework for memorializing betrayal—one that is attentive to the ambiguity of betrayal as it arises from the complex circumstances of resistance. The three key points of such an alternative framework are depicting the danger of betrayal—and the dilemmas of responding to it—as an inherent aspect of resistance; understanding how simplistic denunciations of traitors as the aberrant other of resistance replicate the logic of oppression that resisters have set to oppose; and paying attention to the conditions under which resisters can be coerced into betrayal.

I argued that such attentiveness to the ambiguity of betrayal helps us rethink the form of solidarity that is to ground a new political community beyond the exclusionary logic pitting moral purity against the depravity of treason. This rethinking is salient given how simplistic tropes of betrayal travel across time and space, constructing new categories of "others" that can be discredited or violated. One notable instance in South Africa concerns the work of the Hefer Commission, appointed by President Thabo Mbeki in 2003 to determine whether Bulelani Ngcuka—then national director of public persecutions—was an apartheid spy (Dlamini 2015, 253). The commission concluded there was no evidence to support this allegation—it turned out that the charges of Ngcuka's accusers were politically motivated. One of the accusers, Mac Maharaj, and the then-deputy-president Jacob Zuma were under investigation for corruption by Ngcuka's office. Many observers believed that the accusers sought to derail the corruption investigations "by calling Ngcuka's integrity and motives into question" (Dlamini 2015, 253; Marrian 2019).

In addition, violent groups involved in xenophobic attacks against "foreigners" in 2008 and 2015 have evoked the just anti-apartheid struggle lineage to construct "their 'others' as disposable"—legitimizing violence against socially and politically marginalized individuals or groups (Gqola 2016, 71). How easily appeals to heroic resistance produce "an Other that is safe to violate" also was plainly visible during the defamatory rhetoric surrounding the Jacob Zuma rape trial (Gqola 2015, 158, 2016, 71). As Gqola (2016) observes, once one side successfully triggers the association with the anti-apartheid struggle, its enemy "symbolically takes on the characteristics of the historic enemies of that struggle," such as the apartheid police and the traitors (71). Consequently, any violence against them is justified as "self-defence" in the service of "a just cause" (Gqola 2016, 71).

The relevance of inquiring into the ambiguity of betrayal then lies in exposing how the troubling ways of memorializing traitors in resistance contribute

to the reproduction of us-versus-them forms of political interaction post-liberation. This should not be taken to imply that simplified denunciations of traitors in the liberation movement are primarily responsible for the persistence of systematic practices of othering in the post-apartheid South Africa or that they alone can account for the xenophobic attacks on migrants and gender-based violence. Yet, as *The Texture of Shadows* showed, the desire to place the blame on a handful of weak or evil traitors and preserve an idealized vision of resistance as the basis of a new community risks replicating existing inequalities and makes possible new practices of exclusion in the present. Attentiveness to the ambiguity of betrayal, in contrast, encourages us to ground the bond of solidarity in the mutual recognition of our context-specific vulnerabilities and resist oppressive relationships that enable some to exclude, dominate, and violate others.

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