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Stories

Poetry

Essays

Reviews

Mbulelo Mzamane: Cultivating a People's Voice

Stephen Gray: The Politics of Anthologies

Steve Hilton-Barber: In Good Photographic Faith

Santu Mofokeng: Labour Tenants



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Comment

Staffrider has found a new home. Taken over from Ravan Press, it is now the national journal of the Congress of South African Writers. This first edition published by COSAW, therefore, marks the beginning of a new leg in the journey of this publication. It is a journey directed towards furthering the development of indigenous literature and culture rooted in the principles and practices of democracy. This means that it will continue to uphold non-racist, non-sexist and non-elitist values while striving to establish a balance between wider cultural representation and accomplishment. These values are of course also central to the broader tasks of social and cultural reconstruction which presently confront South African society.

Accordingly, *Staffrider* will strive to provide a forum for all South African writing and culture which embodies the ethical values of freedom, social justice and human equality. Critically, it will uphold the view that there are various, languages and aesthetic traditions in South Africa. Although these traditions differ in their notions of literary and artistic beauty, the view upheld by this magazine is they are not in any way inherently inferior or superior to one another. Stephen Gray's response to attacks on his recently published *Penguin Book of Southern African Verse* is appropriate here. He asserts: 'There is no one "fixed" aesthetic in any culture; there are many, and they all have to be learned, and shared'. This willingness to share and contribute to change is a challenge confronting all writers, artists and critics resolved to contribute to the development of a democratic culture in South Africa.

The recognition of aesthetic diversity does not imply that all or any literary expressions and cultural activity should be uncritically endorsed. The critical scrutiny of the ethical and social values and the degree of formal accomplishment in literary and artistic works remains central to creativity. Unencumbered critical discussion is not only a prerequisite for democracy but also the most effective means to facilitate cultural change. The value of informed criticism is demonstrated in Mbulelo Mzamane's incisive evaluation of Pinier Shave's recently published overview of a segment of South African literature. Mzamane's critique underlines the need for a comprehensive and informed study of the literature produced by black South Africans. The superficial treatment it has received for so long from would-be critics and literary historians leaves much to be desired.

In the field of creative writing constructive criticism forms the basis of the workshop programmes, discussions and other literary activities organized by COSAW. *Staffrider* is now

able to participate in this process. It will strive to enhance these activities by publishing the work of emergent and established writers. It will provide a national forum for writers and artists to exchange views and engage in debate that will foster a democratic culture and freedom of expression. It is committed to playing a role in building a national writers' organization and contribute to the general development of South African culture. The integration of the journal into the activities of COSAW has evidently provided it with a firm base from which the tasks of literary and cultural change could be undertaken.

To ensure that writers throughout South Africa have access to the journal its editorial representation has been restructured to include regional contributing editors and distributors. The editors will collect, select and forward material by writers, photographers, artists and critics in the various regions and forward it to the national publications division in Johannesburg. Provision is also made for special regional editions appearing from time to time. This will enable the magazine to keep in touch with developments in all parts of South Africa. The regional distributors will assist with the distribution of the journal through formal and informal networks in their respective regions. This will ensure that the journal is available as widely as possible. These processes are in their initial stages and will require considerable co-ordination and co-operation between a relatively large number of people in different parts of the country.

The material in this edition directly engages some of the issues outlined above. Of particular significance is the statement by Steve Hilton-Barber on his controversial photo-essay which received the 1990 *Staffrider* Photographic Award. The saga surrounding his work which involved attempts to obliterate his photographic records and ended with the theft of his photographs from the Market Gallery points towards a society where much still remains to be done before freedom of expression and the right to criticism become common values. This edition also contains a host of new poets, story writers and artists.

The publication of new work by Dennis Brutus, who was recently denied a visa to visit South Africa, signals the imminent return and re-integration of one of the countries most accomplished poets into local literature. As the once exiled writers return and as their previously prohibited work becomes more readily available *Staffrider* looks forward to disseminating their writing.

Andries Walter Oliphant

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To Make a Grown Man Cry

Charles Thomas

Gavin was convinced that the woman standing motionless in the shadows was selling her favours. If she was, the idea was ridiculous. She was more than just an innocent woman, I

was a spinster, out for some air on this windless, pleasant evening.

'I'm positive she's on duty,' Gavin said, his teeth glinting. 'If we stick here long enough, we're sure to find out.'

We were sitting on the balcony of our foreshore hotel, sipping beers after a day's work, happy for this promise of a diversion. Cape Town had turned lifeless and boring for us who were down from Johannesburg for a marketing conference being held all week at this hotel. All the other delegates were locally-based and would dash off home at the end of each day, leaving Gavin and me stuck in with nothing to keep us amused. The woman across the road was therefore the only one left.

We downed our beers and ordered refills.

The balcony was nearly deserted, with only two or three other guests sitting silently in their corners. The sun set rapidly, plunging us into a darkness little better than the balcony's dim lamps. In the growing darkness, Gavin and I sat sipping beer, telling silly jokes and guffawing (but under our breath, as we wished to disturb that sleepy, sepulchral atmosphere) and casting occasional glances at the lady in the shadows across the way. Gavin drained his glass, then sipped and resolved to rise from his seat and pluck a rose from a nearby vase.

'Come,' he said, 'I think we should go talk to Ma'am there across the way. I wasn't sure if he was serious. 'And the rose?' I enquired.

He thrust it into his hair. Its bulging red head hung limply over his left ear.

'We'll give it to her as a sign of friendliness,' he said. I was hesitant.

'No,' I said. 'I think I'll just finish my drink and go'n watch TV.'

'Ag, come on. Let's go talk to her just for a bit. It can do no harm. I'm always ready to find out why women do this.'

'What if she thinks we're trying to pick her up?'

'Not likely. Ten to one she's streetwise, and will know the difference between "being-nice-behaviour" and "looking-for-a-screw-behaviour".'

'And we're sure ours, yours I mean, will be "being-nice-behaviour"?''

'Hey! come off it!' he said, laughing heartily, 'the last thing I need to do with me from Cape Town is a dose of Aids.'

'Well, she's still there,' I said, just barely discerning her shadow drenched half-lost under the oak tree across from the hotel.

When we reached the street, Gavin lit himself a cigarette, and suggested



casually saunter by'. Before I could approve or protest, he was already walking, and I had no choice but to follow, staying slightly behind him, knowing that whatever initiative was going to be exercised would have to come from him. As we drew level with her, I noticed that his pace remained unchanged, and assumed that he had no intention of stopping, after all. I glanced furtively across at her, and saw that her eyes were stony and unwavering; she was clearly intensely aware of us, but obviously trying to feign indifference. Something else struck me in that split second's glance: it was something about her face, something quite distinctive but simultaneously elusive.

Just past her, Gavin suddenly spun around on his heel, yanked the rose from his hair, and with a huge grin, offered it to her on a flat, sweaty palm.

'Excuse me, ma'am,' he said, 'my friend here wishes you to have this fresh, beautiful rose.'

A moment of cold silence followed, as she sternly fixed her eyes on Gavin. She glanced down contemptuously at the rose, which lay like a bloodied nose in his hand, then turned the full lightning force of her gaze onto me. I might have fled had she not suddenly broken into a smile, which brought a terrace of arched white teeth bursting into view.

'Ah, thank you,' she said, snatching the rose and deftly inserting it in her hair. 'Tell your friend I say "thank you".'

'Friend,' said Gavin, 'the lady says "thank you".'

'Tell her she's welcome,' I replied.

We were all smiling broadly. 'What's your names?' she asked.

'I'm Simon Peter,' said Gavin.

'And I suppose he's Jesus Christ?' she replied flicking her eyes in my direction.

We all laughed. 'Oh no,' said I, thoroughly taken up by this pleasant, witty person. 'I'm called The World, The Flesh, and the Devil. The nether Trinity. My poor dear departed mother had a sense of foreboding, not to mention humour.'

Neither of them liked my laboured wit; I could tell from their soured, embarrassed smiles. It nauseated me too.

'No, my name's Gavin, actually, and his's Chris. And yours?'

'Kathryn, with a K.'

'Kathryn. It's a lovely name. But I'm sure it's not your real name.'

'Do you have a cigarette for me, please?' Her tone indicated that she wished to drop the banter.

Both of us fumbled to offer her a cigarette. She took one of mine but lit it off a flame that Gavin made in the cup of his hands.

'What makes a pretty girl like you stand lonely and shivering in a dark, deserted place like this, Kathryn?' Gavin was also more serious now. He lit himself a cigarette amid a fog of smoke.

'Waiting for handsome guys like yourselves to come along and be nice to me,' she said with a smile, again revealing her dense profusion of teeth.

Again, I thought I detected something incongruent in her, but it was hard to be precise. I tried not to seem to be staring, and decided that it must be her long and angular nose.

'And how can we be nice to you?' Gavin asked.

I stiffened. If she was indeed a prostitute, then we were about to find out.

'Are you boys from around here?' she asked.

'No. We're sales managers for a Johannesburg-based firm, and are down here for a seminar. We're staying at the hotel and still have a couple of days here in your beautiful city.'

'Actually, it's a rather shitty city, if you're from the townships. Still, for those of us who are born-and-bred-Cape-tonians, it's home. So, welcome from Joeys! I shouldn't expect you to be nice to me; you're guests! I should be nice to you! Well, I'm sure I can show you a side of Cape Town you've never yet met - but which you'll never forget!'

We grunted looking at each other sceptically.

'Come now, guys. Let's not play games,' she said, frowning her brow. 'You surely can guess that I'm in the happiness business, so let's get down to brass tacks. For next to nothing I'm willing to give you the time of your life, no strings attached. Long before the memory's faded, I will have melted into the night, so don't worry about ghosts which might come haunting you back in Joey's.' She smiled self-satisfiedly, and thrust her hands deep into her pockets.

I was thunderstruck. Although it sounded contrived

Charles Thomas

and rehearsed, it was pretty sophisticated stuff. This person was busy defying my concept of whore - seedy, down-on-her-luck social outcast. By the way she spoke, you could tell that she has had some education. And then there was her fresh cleanness; the not unneat, not distasteful way she wore her clothes; her chirpy self-confidence... It occurred to me with a chill that, except for the nose, my seventeen-year-old Doreen back home would have made a similar impression. Whose daughter was this, I wondered.

'And what's next to nothing?' enquired Gavin.

A slight hesitation, and then she replied: 'Well, I would normally require a hundred apiece. But since there are two of you I'd be willing to settle for one-fifty.'

'One-fifty?' said Gavin. 'That's pretty steep. Seems like inflation's hit the happiness business too.'

They began to bargain.

I hoped, with a gulp, that Gavin was simply playing along, but his look of deadly earnestness alarmed me. Despite the boldest of my past fantasies, I had never really been in this kind of situation before. The prospect of lying down somewhere with this person within the next few minutes set me on edge.

They were quick in agreeing to the money side, and plunged straight into questions of venue.

'The hotel,' said Gavin.

'No,' she replied, 'they'll never let me in there.'

'But you'll go as a guest of ours.'

'No, that's out; I've brushed with them before. Look, not far from here there's a building site, and the watchman will lend us his hut, and ...'

'Forget it,' Gavin snapped.

'O.K. I've got the perfect place. A flat in Sea Point. We'll have to pay a small hiring fee, and we'll need a taxi to get there.'

'Sounds better,' Gavin responded. He was totally absorbed in the deal making.

She surprised both of us when she pulled a small transmitter from the breast of her anorak, and called up a taxi.

'Don't worry,' she assured us, 'I didn't have it on while we were talking. I keep it for security purposes. It's come in handy a couple of times in the past.'

Within a minute, a taxi had glided up, and when she went over to speak to the driver, I grabbed Gavin's wrist

and frantically whispered: 'Listen, are you crazy?'

'Don't worry, let's just see what happens.' He freed his wrist and made for the taxi.

'I don't even have any money,' I said.

'Don't worry, I think I've got enough.' He looked at me and started grinning. 'Come on, Mr Big Stuff, you're not scared, are you?'

I gnashed my teeth, more in frustration at my impotence than at Gavin's recklessness. I couldn't believe that we were getting into a car with a self-professed prostitute, to be taken to an unknown location in a strange city.

The backseat of the taxi was like the inner sleeve of a woollen jersey. It was warm, close and comfortable. I might have relaxed somewhat, but for the suspicion that Kathryn, who sat wedged between Gavin and myself, was trying to arouse me. She was gently, subtly rubbing her thigh against mine. I sat behind the driver, whose immobile head obscured my view of the direction we were taking. My misery was crowned by Gavin's and Kathryn's gaiety. Her head was on his shoulder, and his arm around her's. He was telling her some inane joke about crocodiles, and she had her face tilted upwards towards his. Her lower jaw was hanging open, exposing her teeth, as she smilingly waited for the punchline. When it came, she vibrated with laughter, and Gavin looked over at me as if to say: 'Hi! Look what a hit I am with her. Don't you just envy me?'

It wasn't long before we were out of the city centre, and cruising along some highway, with the sea and harbour gliding away on our right. We came, within minutes, into a residential area, where we were able to maintain our speed, since the road was a well-lit dual carriageway and not at all busy. Soon, a little blue board signalling 'Sea Point' flashed by, and we entered a bright, thickly built-up shopping area. The place was studded with pedestrians, cars and traffic lights and was unexpectedly lively, with many of the shops and restaurants open. Our car moved slowly in the heavy traffic, and I wondered how many of the people who looked in at us, knew what we were about.

In the close confines of the backseat, Kathryn had at no stage totally abandoned me, Gavin's feverish attentions notwithstanding. Her hand had found its way onto my knee, and was gently resting there for much of the trip. All the time she was chattering away, seeming to be in a high,

barely-controllable state of ecstasy. I suppose she just couldn't believe her luck. Imagine netting two!

We turned into a quiet sidestreet, and her mood suddenly became more sombre.

'Listen guys,' she said, with her eyes averted, 'we're bound to find some loose girls where we're going. When they see you, they're going to start drooling, and try to entice you away from me. Well, at least one of you, because, after all, why should I have two?'

We did not reply.

'Naturally, you're free to drop me, and...'

'We're with you, end of story,' Gavin interrupted abruptly.

'So, there are going to be other people where we're going?' I asked.

'Right,' she answered. She must have picked up the uneasiness in my voice, for she added: 'But don't worry. It's going to be great. This is a fine place, I promise you. It's not your ordinary, everyday brothel.' She spat the word out, as if it were a live insect on her tongue. 'It's clean and decent, and the bedroom has even got an en suite bathroom.'

'I was hoping there would be privacy, though.'

'Well, there will be privacy - but only in the bedroom. You can't expect privacy in the lounge, that's the waiting area.' Had she not been smiling as she said this, I might have felt admonished.

'How many girls use this place?'

'Here we are now. You'll see when we go in. And guys use it, too, by the way. She didn't pause for breath. 'The taxi will stop a little way off, and we can then simply walk back. But let's not dawdle, or the neighbours might get suspicious.'

Outside the taxi, the Sea Point night air was crisp and tangy, thick with salt and the sound of the sea. Emerging from the coffin-like comfort of the backseat was like rising from the dead: you felt your blood suddenly kick to life, and your muscles wanting to be flexed.

Gavin and I went and stood under a large horse chestnut, while Kathryn went round to the taxi driver's window, presumably to give instructions for picking us up later. Gavin was restless with excitement his eyes and teeth were literally glowing in the dark; he was clearly living through a high point in his life.

'Don't you think she's just the greatest, Chris? I wish we could take her home with us.' He giggled, softly. 'What a dish.'

'But very young,' I put in.

'Oh, but that doesn't matter. You don't screw the age.' He laughed. 'Are you saying you'd rather do it with an octogenarian, then?'

We looked at Kathryn's bending figure at the taxi window.

'Look at that bum,' said Gavin. 'Delicious-looking.' He chanted under his breath: 'Oh, come, Kathy, come. Fuck the taximan, and come, Kathy, come!'

As it happened, she came almost immediately, and without stopping, motioned for us to follow. The three of us set off up the road at a brisk march, while the taxi glided off in the opposite direction.

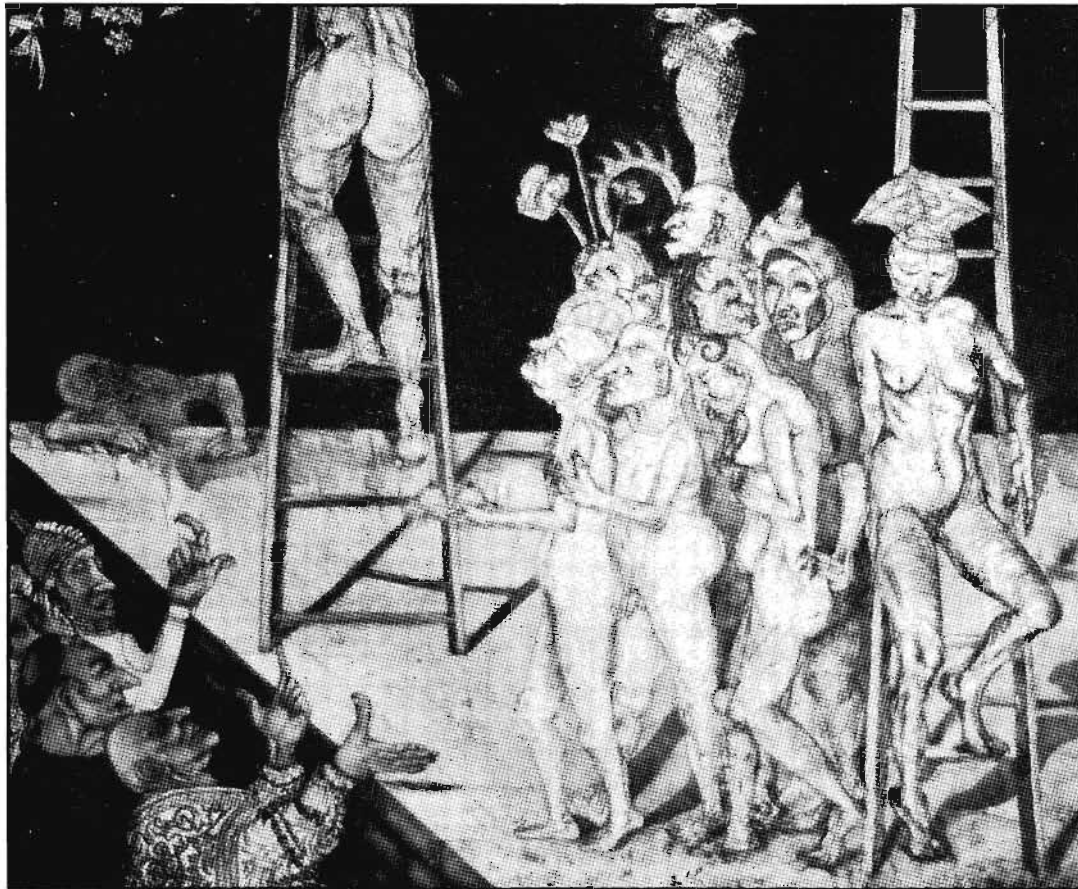
In a minute, we were at the entrance of a large pink-and-blue block of flats. Kathryn led us up the short strip of pathway, which was flanked on each side by tall, spiralling cypresses. We went through a double-door, and entered a well-lit foyer. There were potplants, neat rows of wooden letterboxes, and, alongside the lift door, a sanded trough for cigarette butts. We didn't take the lift, but made for the highly polished stairway, adjacent. Our footsteps rang as we climbed, up - up - up to as high as the fifth floor. What a slog. I was breathing hard, sweating, annoyed at the trouble this escapade was proving. I vainly searched for some pithy, caustic remark to direct at Kathryn who looked all too complacent up ahead.

'Shit, why didn't we take the lift?' said Gavin, his voice almost drowned by his heavy breathing.

'Shh. Not so much noise,' whispered Kathryn. 'We're almost there.'

Numerous doors had to be passed before we found ourselves at number 525. Kathryn knocked, and we all held our breath.

In a minute the door opened, and a tall, middle-aged woman, whose eyes instantly lit up at the sight of Kathryn, came into view. She was elegantly dressed in a full-length fawn kimono. At each of her earlobes sparkled what were probably diamond earrings. A heavy gold chain hung around her neck, matched by smaller versions, one on each wrist. I noticed that her hair had been carefully - maybe painstakingly - frizzed up into an Afro-style, a



The Dark Woods • Christine Dixie • (Etching)

neat, symmetrical sphere of a thousand curls. But, most curiously for me, there was a tiny tattoo of an ornate cross on her left forearm. Was that her only tattoo? I wondered if she might not well have one (less modest) in some forbidden place. It reminded me of the 'Lost Cause' tattoo I had caught a glimpse of many years ago. I was a schoolboy rugby player at the time. I saw it in the showers after a match. There, on the right buttock of one of the huge senior players, was the picture of a hare chasing a ball which was just disappearing into the player's anus. Underneath the tattoo appeared the inscription 'Lost Cause'.

The woman, whom Kathryn introduced as Millicent, hastily ushered us into the flat, talking to Kathryn all the time in a high-pitched, excited voice; where had she been hiding? Why was she so scarce? How good she looked. What beautiful friends she had...

We then found ourselves in a room. Was it the lounge? The non-private area? There were four other women. And music. It sounded like Stevie Wonder's 'Isn't She Lovely?'. Yes, the lyrical cadences were unmistakable. One of the women was on her feet in the middle of the room, swaying her hips and shoulders to the beat of Stevie Wonder. She had enormous busts, which, with her narrow hips, gave

her body a conical shape, accentuated by the high heels and tightfitting clothes she wore.

The three other women were all seated on the room's only couch. They all had jackets on, which told me that they would soon be leaving. That at least was my hope.

'Sit down,' said Kathryn, smiling hugely. Her teeth were brilliant. 'I'll be right back.'

She rushed out of the room with Millicent. Gavin made straight for the only vacant seat in the place, a low riempiesteel near the recordplayer. He dropped down with a satisfied sigh, and rested his elbows on his knees. At the same time, the three on the couch started shifting up in uneven peristalsis, for me to squeeze in alongside the fat one, whose hips and thighs were like inflated rubber dinghies.

I took an instant dislike to these women, who in every way seemed cheap and tasteless to me. Their clothes, their makeup, their scent, their smiles, all bore for me the mark of sickness. In fact, they all fitted my worst notions of 'whore': corrupt, unprincipled lust-merchants; so unlike Kathryn.

The one on her feet said 'Hi' to Gavin. 'Hi, I'm Gracie. You want to be with me. I can make your dreams come true.' Gavin's eyes twinkled merrily.

'I'm sure you can, Gracie, but I'm with Kathryn. Why don't you try him?' And he pointed a mischievous finger in my direction.

She slowly, calculatedly, turned and focused her eyes on me.

'You can't also be with Kathryn, love.'

'But I am.' It came out just a bit too quickly; the last thing I wanted was to come across as rattled.

'Well you needn't be,' she said. 'I'm here. I can take care of you just as well, if not better.'

'Yeah ... er, well ...' I cursed my indecision. 'Maybe next time.'

She said nothing, but looked at me in a dispassionate way for a few seconds, as if I were some weird object. Then she carried on dancing, while the rest of us watched her, and listened to Stevie Wonder.

Kathryn came back into the room and went over to talk to Gavin. She crouched down in front of him, so that her lips were separated from his by barely a centimetre. They spoke too softly for me to hear, but I was pretty sure they

were discussing the arrangements. It suddenly occurred to me that they would place me second in line, and the very thought angered me. I decided then and there that I had had enough.

When Kathryn stood up, Gracie made a sudden lunge at her, and snatched the rose from her hair.

'What gives, Kathy Babe? What's this in aid of?' Gracie said mockingly. Kathryn's eyes blazed.

'Mind your own business, bitch,' she shrieked through gritted teeth, and wrenched the flower back.

'My, my! We're touchy when we've got two, aren't we now?' said Gracie, who winked at the women on the couch, and continued dancing nonchalantly. A couple of thorns had come off in her fingers, but she simply flicked them off with her thumb. Kathryn stormed out of the room clutching her bedraggled rose in both hands.

After a little while, she was back, looking calm and relaxed, and went smiling up to Gavin. She took him up by the hand. He was in a state of high elation, and winked at me joyously as he followed her out. At almost the same time there was a knock at the door, and after checking, Millicent came to tell the women on the couch that their escorts had arrived. The women seemed excited with anticipation, and made a brief if noisy departure. The Stevie Wonder record had stopped by this time, and Gracie was no longer dancing. When the women left, she lit herself a cigarette, and followed Millicent to the kitchen I guessed.

Alone now, I felt relaxed, and lay with my head back against the couch, smoking. How, I wondered, would Gavin explain my presence in a Sea Point brothel if I suddenly died there of a heart attack? And what about Gavin? What if he caught some venereal disease or other? Imagine if he ended up all covered in scabs. It amazed me that he could get so carried away.

Millicent brought me a steaming cup of coffee.

'It might be some time before your turn comes, and coffee always makes waiting easier,' she explained.

As she bent to put the coffee down, her kimono fell slightly forward and I caught a glimpse of her cleavage. The unhurried way in which she straightened up and drew her collar, told me to be wary. Here was an attempt to achieve through subtlety and good taste what Gracie had failed to through downright crudeness. Or was I dreaming?

Charles Thomas

The disconcerting thing was that I could quite easily see myself yielding to Millicent's wiles ... It was with some regret that I watched her leave the room, knowing that she was naked beneath her kimono, and knowing that all I needed to do was to call her back ...

A minute or so later, Gracie was in the room again, seated on the floor over by the recordplayer. The studied way in which she browsed through a pile of seven singles was clear indication that her real target was me. I waited stiffly for the attack, which was not long in coming. As soon as she had selected a record and put it on to play, she was at my side, staring me in the eye.

'Nice record,' I said. 'What's it called?'

The slightest hint of a smile came to her face.

'It's by Tina Turner,' she answered. 'It's called "What's Love Got To Do With It?"'. She kept her eyes on mine, and whispered: 'You really won't be sorry with me.' And then, in one smooth movement, her back was on the couch, her knees crossed high and tight, and head nestling heavily in my lap.

'What's love but a secondhand emotion?' sang Tina Turner.

I wasn't going to get rude or cause embarrassment, but equally, I wasn't just going to sit there ...

I tried an approach that had often worked for me in a sales situation.

'Ah, you're so sweet,' I said in my sweetest voice. 'I really wish I could, but it's no use. I'm just not well enough tonight. Nor do I have any money with me, anyway. I just came along with my friend. I won't be going with Kathryn tonight. But, I'll still be in Cape Town for the rest of the week, and I'm definitely coming back here to look you up before I return to Jo'burg. Wow, that Tina Turner number's really something, isn't it?' And I started humming, and tapping my foot.

It worked. Within a few seconds, she was up and gone.

Selling my excuses to Kathryn turned out to be an easy exercise she just smiled cheerfully as I explained how I wasn't feeling too well, and how, in any case, I needed to get back to my hotel as soon as possible. 'So much preparation still needs to be done for tomorrow's seminar,' I lied, aware, however, that I should not embroider too much if I wanted to retain credibility.

She seemed just a bit too pleased not for me to suspect

that Gavin must have paid for my turn in advance.

As for Gavin, his sullen reticence since returning to the lounge was rather puzzling. I stared hard at him as he sat on the riempiestoel smoking, but he resolutely avoided my eyes.

'So, Mr Loverboy, did you show her how a true Transvaaler does it?' He did not smile, but clicked his tongue, and kept his gaze fixed on the carpet in front of him.

His exaggerated moroseness was in stark contrast to Kathryn's teethflashing jubilation. All the time we were waiting for the arrival of the taxi driver, she was chattering flippantly in a singsong voice. She and Gavin didn't once look at or speak to each other since their return. It seemed that his resentment and her frivolousness were feeding on and nourishing each other.

It was a relief to see the taxi driver when he arrived. He had also changed, and was much more voluble this time, excitedly explaining something to Kathryn about 'the fuckin' fuzz'. I gathered that the police were in the vicinity, and he didn't want to attract their attention; hence his lateness.

As to be expected, the streets of Sea Point were deserted at that late hour, and every sound you heard was clear and intimate. The sea sounded as if it were almost at our feet, a mere armstretch away, and I relished its lazy, dragging resonance. I felt immensely buoyed up, walking there beside Gavin, and wished I could vent my enchantment with Sea Point. But Gavin was doggedly uncommunicative, keeping his head low and hands in his pockets.

Ahead of us, Kathryn was walking with the taxi driver, keeping up a tight, private conversation with him. Neither of them looked around at Gavin and myself once. We were well and truly discarded. What an irony! The exploiters had become the exploited. Did Gavin's mood have something to do with premature rejection in the bedroom. Possibly? I couldn't wait to be alone with him.

In the taxi, Kathryn sat in front, and continued her conversation with the driver, but in subdued tones. Gavin shrunk back into the furthest corner of the backseat, and kept his hands over his eyes, while I hummed pieces of Tina Turner's 'What's Love Got To Do With It?'

Several minutes later, Gavin and I were standing on the pavement outside our hotel, watching the taxi speeding



The Dark Woods • Christine Dixie • (Etching)

off up Adderley Street under the dolful flash and twitter of the city lights. We watched till the taxi was out of sight. A little way off, something resembling a flower - a rose, perhaps? - came flying out of the taxi's passenger window. No matter. It should never have been given to her in the first place.

I turned to Gavin and sternly demanded: 'What the fuck's up with you?'

What followed was wholly unexpected. I watched aghast as he broke into tears - a coughing, choking wail that seemed to emanate from the floor of his stomach.

'Chris, you're not going to believe it. You're not going

to believe it. Oh!'

He slumped down on his haunches there on the pavement, with his hands over his eyes. I crouched down beside him, and put my arm around his quivering shoulder, and implored him to calm himself.

'Take it easy, my mate. What on earth's the matter?' I tried to conceal my alarm.

He calmed down somewhat then replied, amid sniffs and swallows.

'Chris, she's not a she. She's a bloody man.' The tears gushed out with renewed ferocity before he exclaimed: 'I was fucked by a man!'

Dennis Brutus

February Saturday

It is Saturday night over there
the summer smoulders down to shadow
the Saturday summer games are over
time to replay them, in success or failure
time to talk, to speculate, to dream:

flickers of hope, speculative murmurs
firefly in the dusk, trill like birdcalls
in the sudden twilight hush:

all human aspirations are valid
all can hum through the heart,
no pain, no desire, is trivial
when its urgent pang transfixes:

the young, energetic and ebullient,
the mature, mellowed in victory and defeat,
all reach beyond the darkening horizon
yearn to the crimson glimmer that holds
splendor and wonder and hope

Yes, Mandela

Yes, Mandela, some of us
we admit embarrassedly
wept to see you step free
so erectly, so elegantly
shrug off the prisoned years
a blanket cobwebbed of pain and grime:

behind, the island's seasand,
harsh, white and treacherous
ahead, jagged rocks and kranzes
bladed crevices of racism and deceit:

in the salt island air
you swung your hammer, grimly, stoic
facing the dim path of interminable years,
now, vision blurred with tears
we see you step out to our salutes
bearing our burden of hopes and fears
and impress your radiance
on the grey morning air

Night: The Gulf

Unmenacing light in the night sky
star bright, star light, distant star
serene and calm light in the dark
washing gently over my eyes,
my body, my mind like a balm:

suddenly I am shaken by sadness
pain washes tidally through to my eyes
images of men and women crouching in starlit dark
under the shadows of mutilating death
shape themselves in my mind's gloom
'Pity them! Pity them!' I cry:
they carry the flames of terror and fear,
they are blind to the peace of the desert stars.

The River

On a sudden,
 Sitting here in the sun,
 I remember my young years,
 A day in full spring,
 A day unshadowed by old fears,
 The sand soft under my bare soles,
 The road swinging in the slow curves,
 The air uneasy in the hot sun:
 It the only uneasy thing.
 All else still,
 Stone-still.
 And the shadows cold mauve under the wild trees,
 And I
 Walking,
 Shuffling in the hot sand,
 Dreaming a child's dreams.
 And then the long-dried riverbed:
 The stones stepping through the dead ford,
 The wild mint aromatic in the still air,
 Wild birds calling in the green reeds,
 The improbably still green reeds.
 The lorn, mystical cries.
 And I
 Walking,
 Shuffling in the dry sand,
 Longing for a water no longer there.
 Dreaming of its brightness on the hot stones,
 Dreaming a dream no longer a child's,
 A dream transcending the boundaries of my years.
 Yes, I knew a kind of sadness then,
 Like foam upon the waters of which I dreamed.
 But a sadness still,
 Foreshadowing of a sadness greater far.
 The sorrow rending me in my sitting now
 Remembering that long-dead yesteryear,
 A sorrowing for a youth forever gone?
 Never so!
 How sorrow for something ever mine,
 Forever mirrored in the inward eye?
 No!
 I sorrow for this walking in another road,

Walking, shuffling through the hot, dry sand
 And coming to a newer riverbed
 As dry, as still,
 As horribly the same.
 The hot stones stepping through the long-dead ford,
 The wild weeds bitter in the stormladen air.
 Sad voices crying in the melancholy reeds.
 So I cry, brother, cry:
 But not for water do I cry.
 No brightness of water has this bed ever borne:
 The brightness of blood was once channelled here.
 Blood, bright blood of those who were slain
 In a struggle for freedom we waged yesterday.
 Yesterday? Yesteryear?
 Old hearts know not time.
 More timeless our grieving than the grief of the young.
 So I cry here, my brother, I cry the day long,
 Waiting for the blood to flow once again,
 To water the reeds of our hope standing still.
 The reeds of our hope standing still.
 O my God! O my God!
 How blind the heart's eye
 To see and not to see
 That the reeds were still green,
 That I dug at their roots with a child's questing hand
 And found water, sweet water was still flowing there:
 The stream was not dead.
 It will never be dead.
 Water or blood,
 Feeding the reeds,
 The slender shafts of our spears,
 Waiting for the torrents that tomorrow will come:
 Deep underground our bright rivers run.

Tatamkulu Afrika



Hannah

Barbie Schreiner

If Hannah were to glance out of the bay window across the sprawling grounds, she might, for a fleeting instant, imagine herself back in the bitter winter she spent snowbound in Scotland with only Hubert for company. She only spoke of that holiday once with a sense of hopeless resignation to something that I couldn't guess, and she wouldn't say. From my study window next door, dandelion clocks cover the lawn with a mantle of white that seems out of place in the torpid heat. But Hannah's confusion is far older than a momentary vision of snow at Christmas in Pietermaritzburg - it is years since she last sighed at the cat's claw colonising the tennis court fence and even longer since I last saw her tugging the rough stems of bugweed from the cracks along the tramlines and under the net.

I can still remember the sweaty grip on my tennis racquet while she slammed the ball back at me from the far end, her provincial competition days evidently not far away. Those were the days in which she brought us iced lemon juice from the deep shadows of her kitchen, which we gulped in red-faced haste on the lawn under the pecan nut tree. Now it's not lemon juice that she drops blocks of ice into, and she no longer moves from the dark comfort of the kitchen.

With the wisdom of hindsight, it must have taken about thirty years that I can remember since the first inklings that she was beginning to withdraw from us all, although none of us recognised it at the time. First she gave up the world beyond the borders of her garden and mine. Was it over a period of weeks or longer? Time telescopes in one's memory. She stopped driving the car that Hubert had bought her and which stood on the concrete driveway, tyres slowly deflating and the battery running down. She caught the bus only when emergencies forced her to, like the day that Andrew was emulating the great Blondini on the verandah wall until his foot slipped and he was just a ten-year old boy, lying in the agapanthus with a broken elbow, and neither Hubert, nor I was in town to help.

She started ordering her groceries delivered to the house where she signed for them with her hair trapped in a scarf and her hands embedded in muddy gardening gloves.

Perhaps the sign that we should all have reacted to was when the garden - once her pride and joy, became, almost overnight, overwhelming. Was it just too big, or was it its rampant growth, its sub-tropical lust for life and sunshine that became too much for her already withering energy.

She seemed to stay at that point for years, pottering around the dim, comfortable interior of the old house, not even looking out over the long grass of the front lawn towards Hubert's glass-walled office block on the west side of town. Occasionally, usually when reminded by Connic, his secretary, (who was once heard to remark over

Romany Creams at tea that she felt really sorry for his wife. 'I mean, imagine making love to a bossy old stick like Mr Vongesau, he probably just sticks it in and moves it around and that's it. I bet you they don't do it any more. I wouldn't!') Hubert would phone Trevor's Garden Service to come and mow the lawn and at least until the next rains the garden would look conventionally suburban once more.

Was it some vision of a future too dark with possibilities that pushed Hannah backwards, hardly resisting, down the next step of her prison? Was it the same vision that stretched her chapped hands towards the Cuban white rum that Hubert imported at great expense and kept in the lounge cabinet to impress foreign businessmen with exotic tastes? Or was it around the time that Mandy chose to marry a man so like her father (not in looks, because Matthew was short and plump while Hubert at 6 foot 4 carried himself with a lean, sportsman's pride that belied his gathering age and whisky consumption) that even Philip, who couldn't be bothered to make it to the wedding, but who bumped into them at a Benson and Hedges Night Series cricket match, commented on it the next time he phoned Hannah.

Primo Levi, after several years on the brink of starvation or extermination in a Nazi concentration camp, said that the conviction that life has a purpose is rooted in every fibre of human beings, it is an indissoluble property of human substance. In the bitter winter of the camps, the sole purpose of life became to survive, with the cunning of rodents, until spring when the snow would have melted and there would be one less enemy for them to face.

A few days ago - it may have been a week, or even two, I lose track of time in this heat - over a glass of iced Liquifruit on the cracked crazy paving dotted with bruised and broken figs from the old Fecus under which I sit to look out over Pietermartizburg, Hubert told me that it was all over, that all Hannah and he were waiting for was the end. And I thought that what he was letting me know, politely, was the relief her death would bring - to him, if not to her. I thought of Primo Levi and it struck me with that slight breathlessness that always makes me sure I am right, that what she was doing was not waiting to die but conserving her energies to live through the winter of the late 20th century like a hibernating bear believing that

one day, no matter how long it takes, spring will come.

And when he had gone, taking his precise town planner's shoes back through the gate in the hedge and into their derelict garden, I wondered what her winter was, where it had started, and how long it would continue. Could she, after 30 years, still be hoping for spring, or was it just habit that kept her alive in her dark kitchen with a glass of rum in one hand and the other idly scooping sugar from the bowl and dribbling it back in again, and again.

This afternoon while I was pruning back the pink Banksia which had ceased threatening to engulf the car port and was well on the way to succeeding, I tried to think back for signals, clues to the mystery of Hannah's withdrawal. It seems to me that it all links in to Hubert, the only truly Victorian papa I have ever met. Between his authoritarianism, and the high-handed ways of his mother, Muriel, matriarch of an old Natal family, Hannah must have felt the anxiety of a pecan nut in a nutcracker's jaws, expecting, every day for years, that today the jaws would close.

'That child's anaemic,' Muriel would say, pointing a sculpted nail at Andrew who had the fair hair and pale eyes of Hannah's family. 'Beef broth, three times a day.'

'He's not really anaemic,' Hannah would reply faintly, hoping she didn't sound as guilty as Muriel always made her feel and staring at the lock of dark hair in the Victorian funeral brooch on Muriel's breast. 'He's just naturally pale, like me, I suppose.'

'Well,' Muriel had no need of brooches to hook her gaze onto and Hannah felt a flush starting to rise from the top of her sundress and up her neck. 'You're a poor, pale little thing yourself. Can't think what Hubert sees in you. Beef broth three times a day. That'll put colour in your cheeks. And you really must discipline that Alice. She's too cheeky for her own good. She'll never make a decent match if she doesn't learn to behave like a lady. I've never seen such a rough, dirty little tomboy. I found her trying to climb my avocado, and in her best frock too. She needs a good hiding.'

'I never hit my children. I don't think it's right,' Hannah would protest but it made no difference really because Hubert did, the flat side of a hairbrush on their backsides like his father had done to him and his father before him: no feminine squcamishness allowed. And

Barbie Schreiner

then, while one of her five children sobbed on her lap, Hannah would pour herself a cup of tea with shaking hands and phone her sister Sarah in Australia.

But there must have been little solace there since Sarah's lover was an angry man and Sarah spoke sometimes through the pain of bruised lips, swollen eyes or even cracked ribs. At least Hubert never hit Hannah, or if he did she never spoke of it and never carried the tell-tale bruises when I drank tea and rum with her in the silent kitchen. But not even a friend as close to Hannah as I used to be would know all that happened between the two of them in those empty rooms in the long hours after the children had left home. Perhaps part of the horror was that nothing happened, ever.

I went to visit her after Hubert was here for tea even though he told me not to bother with as much concern as one might evince for a moth in a pool of rainwater. She hardly looked at me when I entered, keeping her eyes fixed on the spot where I might have worn an ornate, Victorian brooch had I been the type. But even in the dim light of the kitchen with her once sun-tanned skin pale from lack of sunlight, her hair like uncombed cobwebs, and the smell of damp towels and spilt rum in the air, I remembered the quiet force that made her a tennis champion, her dogged determination that brought her title after title even against younger, fitter players with the best coaches money could buy.

The first time Hilda Markham beat her and the press said she was finished, Hubert patted her shoulder as if to say well that's all over, now you can get on with the real things of life like a normal woman, but I saw Hannah's eyes as she turned away from him and when she came

back the next year to beat Hilda in a desperate 4-6, 7-6, 6-4 win in the worst heat we had known for eleven years, and humidity that made manual labour dangerous, I was not surprised. Nor, I think, was Hubert, but nor was he truly pleased although his comments belied it.

When I got home and purged the claustrophobic smell of stale air from my skin with ten lengths of our small pool I wondered if perhaps Hubert hasn't got it all the wrong way round: perhaps he is not waiting for her to die at all. Perhaps it is Hannah who is waiting for his death; perhaps under the greasy sheath of her habitual house coat she is slowly growing wings, feathered arcs with the cheeky sheen of starlings, muscled by years of silence. Wings that one day she will stretch out until they fill the kitchen with the rustle of flight, crack the cobwebbed window panes and lift off the roof.

I will not be surprised, but when Hubert comes home from work I will describe to him a tornado that hit his house, how it tossed the roof aside with the carelessness of the elements and shattered the windows and he will run through the rubble calling Hannah, Hannah, Hannah. But he will never find her body trapped in the ruins of his house, and when he pretends to mourn her passing I will look up at the shadow that will pass between us and the sun like some enormous bird and I will smile.

I see the insidious cat's claw has stretched from the tennis court onto my precious yellow wood and a mulberry tree has sprouted on the base line and is bearing its first wine-red fruit. Perhaps tomorrow, before the sun gets too hot I will pick some and take them to Hannah, and we will drink rum and tea in silence and eat mulberries until our lips are purple from the juice.



*Benry Kayira***This is the door she went through**

This is the door she went through,
 On a Sunday as lonely as thoughts.
 As she trudged down the staircase,
 Slow as the pace of love,
 I marked the squeak of the foot-falls;
 And every single vibration
 Found its match in my heart.

She opened the door with care,
 Being in a halo of tolerant wear.
 But the wood,
 Being desecrated night and day
 By the licks of invidious moths,
 Gave way with a farewell crack;
 And that crack was a crack in my heart.

As I watched
 Through the crumbs of my mind,
 She fuzzed away, step at a time,
 Like the receding shadow of fortune;
 And every step she span
 Was a strand off my heart.

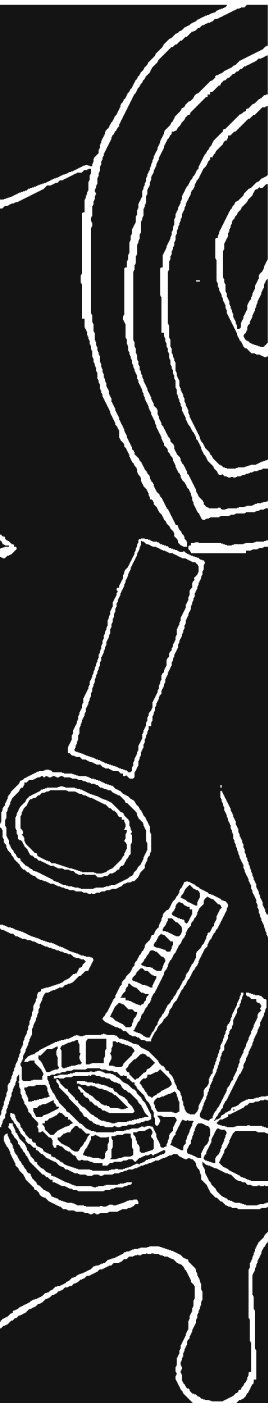
Now I'm standing by this door,
 Holding it the way she would have,
 And just floating, in the mists of mind;
 For this is the door she went through,
 And every moment that sulks in
 Is a moment for my heart.....

If I were a bird

If I were a bird,
 Even the smallest bird,
 I would sing a song of praise
 To celebrate the plummage,
 To fill the countryside
 With the uncelebrated love
 Of whispering nature.

If I were a bird,
 Even the smallest bird,
 I would fly higher and higher,
 Rising gradually
 Like a tendril in growth,
 Till I land
 On the faraway moon.

Then,
 A lonely speck
 In the milky brightness,
 I would turn my head
 To watch the abandoned ball,
 Mother Earth:
 Treasured memories,
 Deepening wounds-
 Man to man;
 Turning,
 Rolling
 In the pacc of eternity....



Five To One

Gaele Mogwe

The Village, now a suburb of the rapidly expanding city, was the old camping place of Her Majesty's representatives. Our house was typical of the era, with its large veranda and cool, shady

garden. Guava and other fruit trees grew as though they had never heard of drought. Huge jacarandas, syringas and eucalyptus trees stretched their gnarled, old boughs to greet guests as they entered the gate. It was rumoured that the area was haunted by ghosts of the old colonials, so far away from their homes. On occasions, I couldn't help myself imagining a shadowy figure in the uniform of the British Empire or a distraught young woman floating through the house in a mist of light chiffon.

My brother had slaughtered a cow and invited friends over for the afternoon. The old women sat on the cleanly swept, hard dirt surface of the courtyard, surveying the scene before them. They greeted me, slowly studying my face, their legs stretched straight out in front of them. I answered their ritual questions politely, waiting for their silence which would mean I could excuse myself from their careful scrutiny.

I wondered what they would prescribe for my ghosts.

Suddenly, our attention was diverted by a heavy drunk reeling firstly towards us, and then at right angles, away from us. He was laughing crudely and teasing a woman who stood under a tree in the shade.

'Don't you know that there are five women to every one man in this country? I've got four more to choose from if I don't want you!'

The woman appeared to ignore him. She leant against the tree quietly feeling the rough bark trunk with her long fingers. The strap of her dress had slipped carelessly off her shoulder. Then abruptly, she laughed loudly and coarsely. She lurched forward towards a group of younger women, flung out her hand in a wide semi-circle encompassing them all.

'Shut up!' she roared at the top of her slightly hoarse voice. 'You're all bitches anyway!'

The words glued to the air as if she had said them in slow motion. Some of the women giggled nervously. Others grinned. They may or may not have been gossiping about her. I didn't care, I didn't care that the old women were glaring at her with piercing disdain. I despised her. Why should she have come here uninvited in the first place?

There she stood, rubbing her breast as if she were in private, looking at me with her wilted face. I stood my ground staring back at her, hoping the agony I felt in my heart would not show. My face betrayed no other emotion than the hatred I wished display.

She turned away and walked over to the side of the house, obviously alone and

isolated.

I had to retreat. She couldn't see me now. I walked purposely into the house as if I had something to do in the kitchen and then made a quick detour to our bedroom. Locking the door, I breathed in deeply, relaxing in the solitude, controlling my tears. I had recently lost my friend. I wanted to blame this woman. Her presence dug deeply into my grief. The last time I had come anywhere near to feeling this anguish, this physical hurt cutting into my chest, was when my grandmother died. It was different then, I was young and she was old. I hadn't experienced any of the pain of her illness. I knew her as Granny, the granny she had always been and then I was told she had passed away.

I lay down, pulling a blanket free of the tightly made up bed. It was cold inside, the sunlight that streamed in through the lace curtain only served to highlight the small specks of dust floating crazily in the air. My friend had been killed, she didn't die. She was murdered although people don't seem to like to use the term murder when a husband kills a wife.

The last time I saw Thandi, she lay in a coffin, her slender body surrounded by pink satin. I refelt the shock of the fly walking irreverently over her once beautiful face, while her hands lay at her side unable to defend her from this last humiliation. I knew her unhappiness and her dreams as she knew mine and I loved her.

Thandi and Willy were the ideal couple. I think they were initially very happy together. She fell in love with him and viewed life from that perspective for a long time. She developed an incredible patience and largeness of spirit, taking almost total responsibility for the rearing of their three children and looking after their home. She continued working but it was difficult to reconcile this woman with the fiercely independent Thandi I had known before she got married.

Willy, I'm sure also fell in love but his lifestyle didn't change. He supported the family financially along with Thandi's help but that was all he gave. He spent all his leisure time away from home and wherever that was, he drank. She had been told a woman never asks where a man is, or has been and she abided by that unwritten law without really thinking about it.

During her last pregnancy she was hospitalised due to

exhaustion. Willy came home to find her gone and her mother looking after the children. He didn't visit her and when she came out he did nothing to help her. Thandi's mother stayed until three months after the baby was born.

It was the son Willy had been waiting for. They called him Boitumelo. Willy was happy.

After Boitumelo's birth, Thandi began talking to me of her frustration and loneliness. She felt the need to develop her potential which had been dormant for too long and enrolled in a course to study occupational health. She became involved in groups concerned with the lack of labour laws in the factory and place of work. I could see she was getting more satisfaction out of life but she was suffering at home. While she was used to Willy coming home late, now he often didn't come home at all. He was often drunk and aggressive and began harassing her over the smallest details. He enjoyed belittling her in front of people. She learnt to avoid confrontation with him for her own peace of mind and for the sake of the children. She diligently did everything he demanded of her, but he continued and the emotional harassment she was suffering became almost unbearable.

I sat in the church at her funeral service and listened to the various tributes that people paid her. The bass tones of the men's voices combined with the higher tones of the women's and rose in sad harmony. My gaze wandered from the floral wreaths on top of her coffin to the dry yellow grass outside. A young woman walked slowly by in the bright sun. I watched her from my shadowy hiding place as she drank guava juice from a hole she had chewed in the bottom of the plastic container. A thought raced through my brain. My husband could be having an affair with her. I turned my head away from the long glass windows, disgusted with myself. Did all women think this way and view each other as potential threats? Did we all live with this terrible suspicion gnawing away at our very being? Thandi didn't. She had confidence in herself and she never thought of questioning Willy's fidelity despite his behaviour. She believed his stories of falling asleep at parties. When he did come home after his nights out he always smelt of beer as if he had been drinking heavily. She had seen him fall into a drunken stupor resembling unconsciousness, many times before and in the oddest places.



Train Congestion
• Keith Sondiyazi •

She came to visit me one afternoon. She stood outside listening to my husband and I arguing, not knowing whether to knock or to run away. Neither of us heard her arrive. We were too busy screaming at each other in a tit-for-tat match. She was still riveted to the front door step when Harold, unable to contain his fury with me, roared out the door bumping into her. He greeted her as best he could and departed in a cloud of dust and forced acceleration. She entered meekly.

'Why didn't you tell me you were having problems?' I asked feeling embarrassed. We had hinted to each other about the difficulties we were having in marriage, but had never really discussed our relationships openly until that day.

'You know, everybody thinks we're the perfect couple,' she started '....but I've just discovered that Willy's been having an affair. She came to our house last night. His mistress came to my house. She yelled at me, telling me to let go of him, that he loved her. She began to sob... and the children were there. I hugged her not knowing what to do or say.'

Perhaps we thought that the problems would somehow

solve themselves. I think we were afraid of allowing the outside world to see the cracks in our relationships for fear of gossip or criticism. The cockroaches would crawl in as soon as they saw something to feed on. We laughed, cried and talked. We felt resentful as the realities of our suffering unravelled. We blamed men as we discussed the similarities in our experiences. They were afraid of our independence. We didn't discuss what we could do to change the situation other than running away from it.

Thandi felt angry and betrayed. She thought of how she had been a fool all those years to passively accept the life he had expected her to live. She told me how she had sat there listening to Willy's varied confessions, quietly hating him.

'He said he loved me and I was his whole world. He thought I was listening to him but I was silently swearing at him inside my head. I was calling him names I would never call him to his face. I imagined him kissing other women, caressing their bodies, their breasts and touching them where men like to touch women.' She continued sobbing. 'I have provided him with a home, a stop-over point, a base. I've cooked his meals, looked after his

children. He always had me there to parade in public when he needed a wife. I have always been there for sex when he wanted it. I have been a fool for twelve years. A real fool. I hate him! I can't live with him anymore.'

Despite everything I was surprised by her resolution. She was determined to go through with divorce. She spoke in a very calm and serious voice.

'I have lived alone with my children. Yes, they love him, but he is almost a figment of their imaginations. They don't know him. I'm the one who has looked after them all these years. Do you think they will be any less happier? Besides, do you really expect me to sacrifice the next thirty years of my life to almost certain misery. I have a chance to make a fresh start and I am going to take it.'

'We discussed the children and both sets of parents in detail. She refused to discuss the matter any further with his parents. Her mind was made up. All her parents could do was to try to comfort her. She was convinced that his parents only thought of how it would appear socially.

'They say a few words to him, but in their hearts they think that he is right and I am wrong. Why should I ask judgement from the very people who perpetuate this tradition. Our fathers and mothers live that way. *Monna ke phafana, o a amogelwana. Monna ke thoise, o a nama.* You know I can go on. Men have girlfriends and wives are expected to ignore it. I'm not going to fight the heavyweight of tradition on this one. I've been the meek and mild wife for ten years, no more!'

I couldn't help agreeing with her. She didn't think of giving Willy a chance to change by talking to him about the problems in their relationship. Neither did I.

One month later, they separated. Willy went to live with his mistress. Thandi lived in their house with the children for almost two years until Willy sold it without consulting her. The divorce was granted. She was awarded maintenance for the upkeep of the children and half the proceeds on the sale of the house. Moving to a flat didn't bother her. She was happy just to be free.

Six weeks after the divorce had been granted, Willy phoned Thandi at work to ask if she could pass by his house that evening to talk to her about maintenance. She agreed.

She never suspected that he would not be able to cope without her.

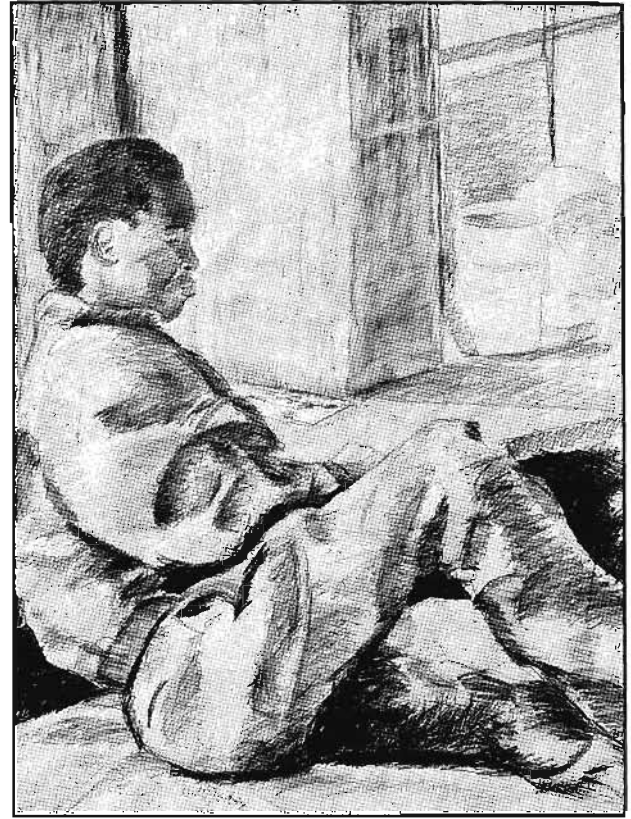


Figure • Keith Sondiyazi •

They had lived apart for two years but the legal finality of divorce affected Willy mentally. He snapped like a brittle twig. I don't know what was on his mind when he killed her. Perhaps, it was that if he couldn't have her, nobody else should.

He stabbed her many times, but he didn't touch her face. I saw holes in her body, small dark holes. There was one in the side of her left breast. Maybe it was the wound which killed her or maybe she bled to death. I don't know.

My eyes began to refocus on the lace curtain and a deep sadness filled me as I got up from the bed. It was painful to think of her two daughters and son left to grow up without her love. I was touched as if waking up from a nightmare.

There was a soft weeping coming from outside. I had completely forgotten that woman. Willy's mistress standing hunched between the fence and the side of the house. The hot day was cooling off in the haze of dusk. Most of the guests had left. I walked towards her and put my arms around her trembling shoulders, pulling her dress strap back into place. I hoped that the poor tormented ghost of my dear friend Thandi would not pay me a visit.

Poetry

The Heads Of The World

The heads of the world
compress to a single feature:
a mouth
rich with blood, spittle
and meat.

And a chain of hands,
black as the seams they split -
contracted to barren blankets,
the hunter's moon greyed with powdery dumps -
advances the future like a
Zambezi current.

And the heads of the world
show their grizzled lip, their leering lip.
Painted or twitching.
Strung, beaded, equatorial lip.
Savaged, open.
Bloody hands clamp bloody mouths:

Clear corpses, erect monuments, strangle subversion -
become the Rose of Africa.

For when the East India Company laid gardens
for scurvied sailors
and plotted out a Heerengracht,
did they see the leopard mantle of Chaka
and did they shake?
And the heads of the world
compress:
Encourage foreign investment,
build Cultural Palaces,
arm and strengthen The State.

In the flaking damp of concrete kraals,
spirit lamps flicker
where fires snarled.
And gold-dust chokes the wail
of widowed wives in the Baritustans.
Gold-dust requires
muscular, carbolised, lobotomised
streams from the bush to the compound

passing before the metal detectors,
into and out of the shafts.

Once the bone-harp of a yellow god
twanged across flamingo lakes,
offered sweet grass,
lush land for milk of cows.
And the heads of the world
would suck and hack the red meat,
rake the fire. And hooves would quicken

as the hard rain of summer
rolls black,
and earth swallows
the dust clouds of free-ranging beasts.

Hands clamp bloody mouths.
The nightingales of Dimbaza sing,
and the diminutive crosses of the infant dead
cannot bear the sky,
the whistle of women ferrying water.

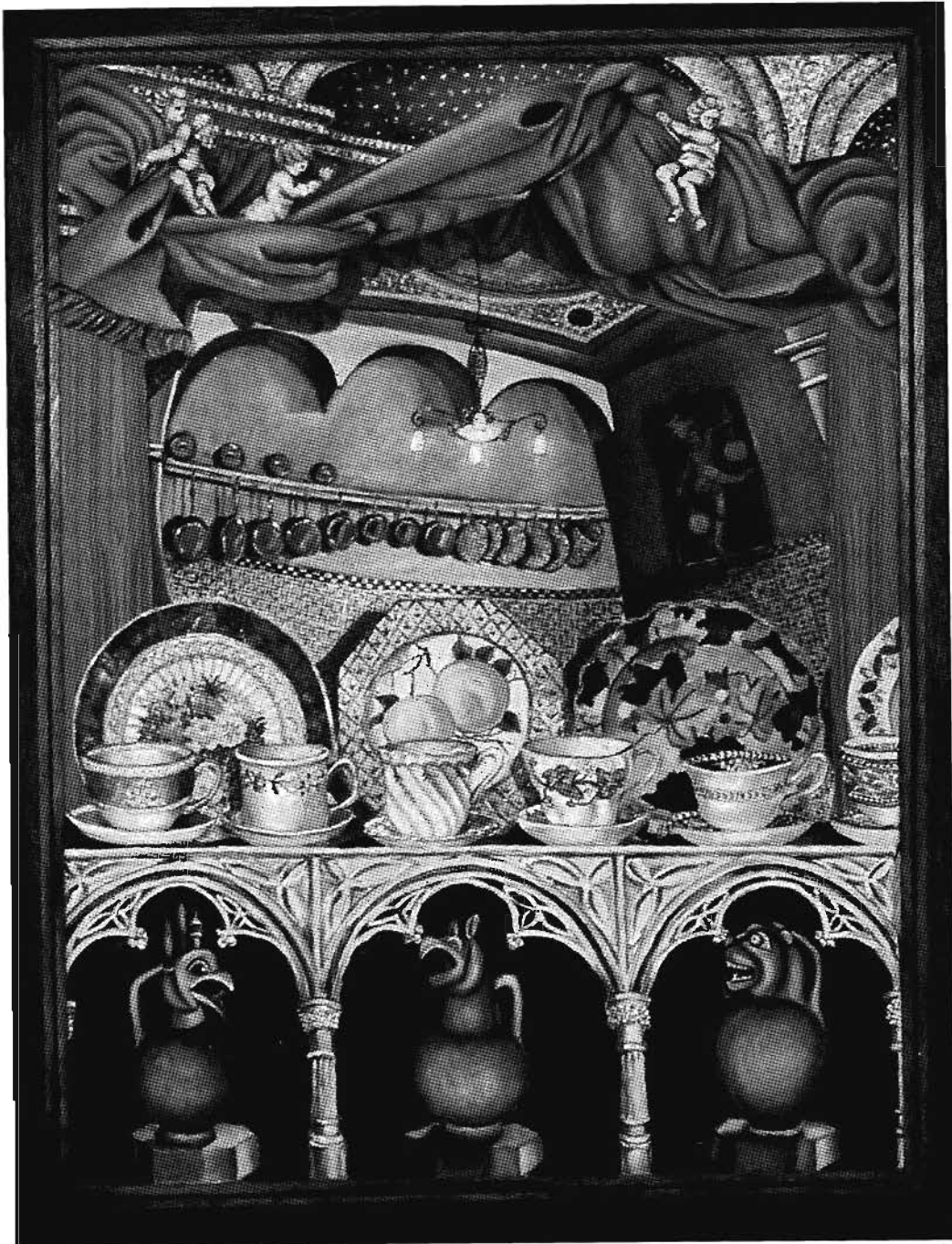
Clear corpses, erect monuments, steady inflation.
Become a mouth rich with
spittle and meat.
Remember the billowing of sacrificial smoke,
heifers running fat over the full-moon.
Remember the seasons, the chants
of Eternal Life.

And the heads of the world
compress to a single feature:
a mouth
grizzled, inflamed,
a fissure of the hare-lipped,

rich with blood and words:

our words, our mantle of drills.

Allan Kolski Horwitz



Illusions • Loren Hodes •



The Holy Man of Mhlatuzana

David Basckin

When the German Trappists first came to Natal, they established their monastery on a raw hill above the Mhlatuzana River. This was empty bush, owned by the

Natal Colonial and Land Company, agents for the Crown. The monks bought several thousand acres, at the upset price of two shillings an acre. Part of the new estate was the farm Zoetwater, while the remainder was called Klipfontein. Both names referred not only to the plentiful water that flowed in rivers, streams and runnels down every slope, but to the demarcations established by the State Surveyor of the former Boer Republic of Natalia.

The Boers were gone, the lands unworked, but the legalistic markings of their partial civilization remained as a foundation for the mercantile instincts of the British settlers.

On this basis, the Brothers blessed the fields, dammed the River, installed a water-mill, fired bricks in their own kilns, built a chapel, a church, a cathedral, a school, a monastery, a convent, a press for Zulu Bibles, an orphanage, a post office, a hospital, a presbytery, a tin-smithy, a forge, a stable, a piggery, a carpenter's shop, a bakery, a bindery, an asylum for the mad, a cemetery, an observatory, a dairy, a slaughtering shed and a honey house.

The Abbot of Marianhill, an unflinching man, was the bee-keeper. From a Zulu convert he learnt about the honey guide, a native bird that led honey hunters to the hives of wild bees. Using the patent bee-smoker he had brought with him from Bavaria, the Abbot calmed many an apiarian frenzy, looting the wild hives with a peaceful equanimity and a miraculous immunity to pain. While so involved one day, he became aware that he was not alone. There, partially obscured by a wild banana tree, stood a slight Indian man in dhoti and turban. In silence, the two men bowed to each other.

The Abbot was the first to speak. He greeted the other man, asked after his welfare, enquired of his family, stated his own business on earth, spoke briefly of Christ's Mother, opened his lidded basket and gave the Indian a piece of fresh honey comb. Noticing the bee-grubs suspended in their cells, the man politely refused the gift, explaining that as a Hindu, to him all life was sacred. Gravely, the Abbot examined the remainder of his comb and broke off a piece devoid of visible life. This the Indian accepted, with a grateful gesture of peace.

They parted, each going separate ways. The Indian walked through the forest of cycads and wild fig until he came to a clearing, on the banks of the Mhlatuzana River. There, on the beaten earth, was a small wood and iron house, with a double-pitch roof

and a verandah shading the battered door. The corrugated walls were pink, with the woodwork picked out in green. Some chickens scratched at the ground, while the man's wife squatted nearby, cultivating her moist bed of fenugreek and coriander. A stand of maize rustled on the edge of the clearing, just in front of the darkness cast by the dense mango grove. Scarlet bougainvillea flashed across the verandah roof. A drongo, black and fork tailed, creaked, squawked and chattered up high on the finial, the silhouetted spike of its vertical tongue bracketed by the fine curves of its beak.

The man told his wife that he had met God in the forest. God had given him a honey-comb. On his way back to the house, his path had been blocked by the rearing menace of a giant cobra. The hamadryad had spoken to him, in Sanskrit, a language he had once heard his father speak back in India before they came to Natal. The message was accompanied by a great roaring of sound which masked the exact meaning of the cobra's speech. It reared again, its hood erect, tongue fluttering, mouth agape. With a hiss it struck at the honey, sinking its great fangs into two virgin cells of the comb. There was a silence as the cobra sucked at the honey, slowly exchanging its venom for the sweetness. Sinking to the ground, it slithered away, its mottled body merging with the fallen leaves on the forest floor.

Inspired by the visitation, the man found a giant anthill near his house and round it, built a shrine. In time, the villagers from the Stockville Valley came there to pray, leaving behind them offerings of honey, of coconut, fresh betel and live poultry. The chickens were in lieu of money, a contribution from the Hindu smallholders towards the new priest's care and upkeep. He kept some of the fowls for eggs and sold the rest to his neighbours.

With the money from the chickens he draped the anthill in silk saris and light cotton scarves. The priest at the Vishnu temple near Verulam sold him a brass effigy of the Divinity, entwined in the coils of a brazen cobra. Stripped to a loin cloth, the priest slashed and burned the bush near the shrine, clearing a jagged circle forty yards or so in diameter. He pulled down the simple reed and bamboo screen, replacing it with a wood and iron structure of a similar design to his house.

The next year he paid a builder to erect a stucco dome

above the anthill. This he surmounted with a brass lingam, bought once more from the entrepreneurial priest at Verulam, to which the Muslim builder prudently attached a lightning conductor.

The shrine prospered, becoming a middle sized Temple drawing a regular congregation of devotees. The priest was the main focus, since, increasingly, he developed a reputation as a bringer of luck and an exorcist of small demons.

His family grew, and with it, the house on the banks of the Mhlatuzana. With each year's new child, he built on a new lean-to section to the original dwelling. These spiralled around the core, slowly enclosing the little house and blocking the light from the windows. Despite the darkness, the man and his wife retained their modest bedroom in the centre of the helix.

Decades passed by, and the man's wife died. They burnt her body on the banks of the River, the giant pyre fragrant with the posies of fenugreek and coriander that her children threw into the yellow flames. And with her death, the priest withdrew to his bedroom forever. There he read the sacred texts, spun cotton, meditated on the eternal and every few years or so, gave sage advice to his descendants. His eldest son took over the Temple. Since the shrine was the oldest Hindu holy place in the district, it became something of a tourist spot. Airconditioned buses from the city hotels visited the site, attracted by the occult promise of firewalking. Sweating foreigners, their shoes obediently left on the portico snapped colour stills or zoomed a few minutes of wobbly video while the bored drivers lolled in their seats, enjoying the cool of the refrigerated air.

His grandsons developed a giant scrapyard, filled with the rusting carcasses of dead motor cars. It did not take long for them to receive their first stolen car from the gangsters of Clairmont which in a few hours was reduced to its component parts each catalogued, priced and displayed for sale in their grimy stockroom.

His great-grandson, as handsome as a Bombay film star, went into politics, becoming the local Member of Parliament in the House of Delegates. His friends prospered from his patronage. One became the millionaire owner of a giant butchery chain; another made an overnight killing in real estate. A third tried to blackmail the MP with the



Portrait
• Keith Sondiyazi •

threat of exposure only to have his home and family burnt to death in a regrettable accident.

One day, in September, the sky blackened and a mighty wind began to howl. The rain fell in sheets, more than a hundred millimetres a day for the next five days. The Mhlatuzana, usually a placid if polluted river, swelled hideously and burst its banks. Bridges collapsed, the Temple was washed away, the scrapyard replaced overnight by a bland field of mud, with only the occasional motor car aerial breaking the lonely surface. The helical house empty save for the sage in its dark centre, became an island surrounded entirely by the mad swirls and eddies of the intransigent Mhlatuzana. The water tore at the avocado trees, plucked the mangoes from the orchard, sucked the overripe bananas from their skins, drowned the fowls and briefly flavoured itself with the tang of fenugreek and coriander. A military helicopter sum-

moned by the blubbing Member of Parliament attempted a rescue. But a hellish downdraft plummeted the winched airman to his screaming death, crushed and entangled in the thorns of the giant bougainvillea that spread like a flame across the roof of the drowning house.

As the shocked villagers watched, a wave came down the River engulfing the island in a tumult of brown foam, uprooted trees and the renaissance dead from a flooded graveyard.

Every year now, usually on the anniversary of the flood, the Holy Man is seen by one or other of the monks and nuns of the Marianhill cloister, as he lightly strolls across the surface of the turbid Mhlatuzana River. Dressed in a white dhoti, he bows courteously in their direction, his hands clasped in the gesture of peace. It's really quite easy when you know how, he jokes, bidding them not to be afraid.

Far from the Point of Production

The delivery boy packs with expertise;
eggs on the top, cans on the bottom.
He shakes a bag and sifts.

She has bought most of the 'specials':
tuna, paper towels, coffee filters,
oranges, chicken breasts.

This week was Andre's turn
but he's away on business.
He has taken five suits -
one for every thousand
he expects in commission.

The delivery boy watches the long, fine hand;
its single gold ring.
She checks the register,
signs a cheque.
Stacked on the counter,
the food is a jumble
of colour and figuration.

There is a mole the size of a small coin
at the side of her neck.
The hairs at the base
are long and fine and scented enough
for someone at his distance
to smell the perfume.

Soon he will see her
in the muted light of a hallway
wearing an Angora sweater.
She will be shoeless.
There will be a table and a cream telephone,
the babble of a television.

Then while giving him change,
she will brush his hand
and he will catch, for the first time,
the shaded blue of her eyes.

Allan Kolski Horwitz

Exile's Lament

If death is an alleviation
of deeper pain
Then I am not scared
of it

For I know what pain
separation can cause
Between me and my country
Between me and my love

I had always told you
That my mother was born
before the anger of your sad god
Struck with its ruthless venom

But now that death
stinks beneath my nose
I will be the first
to raise the agony of the
edging cutter
down the throat of your
savage god....

Moritso Makhunga



Die Swart Gevaar

B.M. Moeng

B.M. Moeng was born and grew up in the Transvaal bushveld, at Ruighoek, near the present-day Sun City. He went to Roodepoort in 1951 and stayed in a township people called Canaan. He now lives in Mtwalume. Here we publish two extracts from Die Swart Gevaar, a fictionalized biography.

Temporary Rooms in Canaan

I came to live with my sister in Roodepoort in 1951.

The location consisted of six rows of rooms, like military-style barracks, each row containing ten rooms. They

were neatly built of blue, oven-baked bricks and were evenly spaced. Nearby was a fenced and tree-lined graveyard.

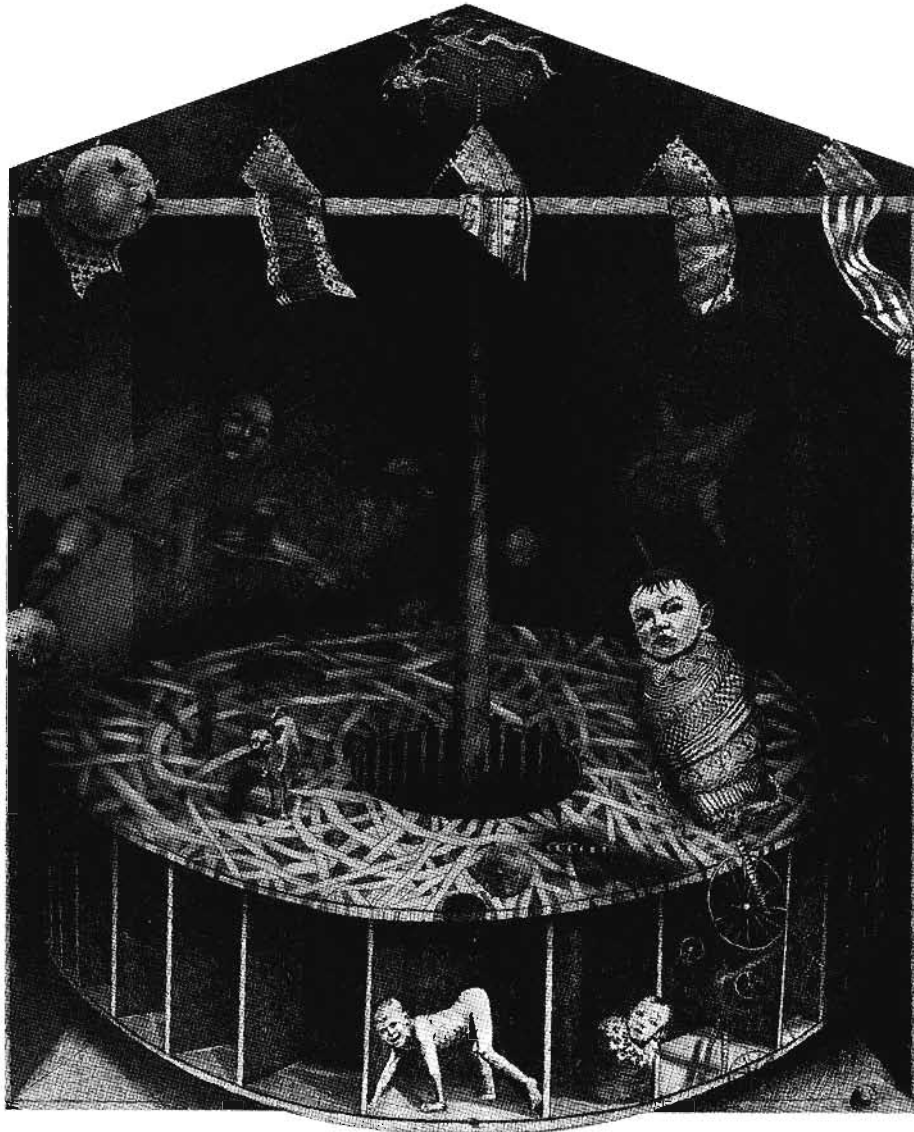
The location stood on a gentle rise, on barren, rocky land. There were no trees, but there was plenty of water to be drawn from taps outside. Sanitation was provided in the form of a bucket system. As for me, coming from Ruighoek, I did not like the system. Out in the country we went behind the bushes to relieve ourselves; I did not know why the white man saw fit to collect excrement in buckets like this!

The Roodepoort-Maraisburg municipality called this settlement T.R., which was short for Temporary Rooms. They didn't look Temporary to me: they looked as if they would stand until Doomsday.

For the people who moved from the old location to T.R., it was like the children of Israel moving out of Egypt into Canaan, and that is what they called the location: Canaan. As far as they were concerned, it was flowing with milk and honey. In the old location the people had had no rights of occupation; the landlords or standowners were a law unto themselves. In Canaan the people at least enjoyed the fruits of occupation.

My sister's room, Number 64T.R., was in the fourth row, room number four. This room was about 20 foot by 14, and divided by a curtain. On one side of the curtain was a bed and a wardrobe; on the other, a table and four chairs, and a coal-stove - a Welcome Dover No. 4. Seven of us lived in this room - my sister and brother-in-law, their four kids, and me - and we were an average family. My sister and her husband slept on the bed, with one little baby. The other children slept under the bed. I slept in front of the stove.

Despite the overcrowding, people were generally happy. There was peace and laughter. But in some rooms, there were more people than the rooms could hold. People couldn't resolve their problems. There were family clashes, which sometimes attracted public interest. I remember a particular family that had more clashes than the



The Golliwog's Cake Walk • Judy Woodsborne • (Etching)

rest of Canaan put together. I liked them a lot.

The old man of the household was known to everyone in Canaan simply as Oom Johnnie.

Oom Johnnie was about seventy years old. He was short, with a flat stomach and bow-legs. His skin was pitch black, and he had tribal markings on his face. He was always smiling, and his teeth were very white. He usually wore an old khaki shirt and patched striped trousers.

Oom Johnnie was originally from Nyasaland. In addition to his own language, he could speak Tswana and many

other dialects, but his tongue was not clear when he spoke them. He had left Nyasaland to live in the hostels of Jo'burg. Now he was old and could not go home.

He had married a Tswana woman and they had grown-up children. They stayed at Number 62T.R., two rooms away from us. In all, there were eight people staying at Number 62 (the room was the same size as my sister's): Oom Johnnie and the old woman; his son; his daughter, her husband, and their three kids.

Oom Johnnie was a funny man. He was a heavy smoker. He would roll his own cigarettes from brown

B.M. Moeng

paper and Horseshoe tobacco. I never saw him without a cigarette behind his ear. He carried one there day and night, and I suspected that he even slept with it there.

Oom Johnnie's son was a bricklayer. His son-in-law was a painter. Between them they made money! A bricklayer and a painter earned good money in those days. The son's name was Whitaker. Oom Johnnie could never pronounce his son's name properly, though, and called him Khutika - so I'll call him that too. The son-in-law, who was a coloured, was called Suurpap. Oom Johnnie loved them both, indeed he loved the whole family, and they all got on well most of the time.

Now Khutika and Suurpap got their pay every Friday. For those days, it was big money. Suurpap's wife would make home-brew, *shimiyane*. Khutika and Suurpap would buy *boerewors* and there would be a party. *Boerewors* and *shimiyane* and then war!

They would start fighting one another. Oom Johnnie and the old lady would get in between them as peace-makers. The daughter would join in on Suurpap's side and help him to fight her brother. The children would shriek. What a noise! Oom Johnnie would be shouting at Khutika

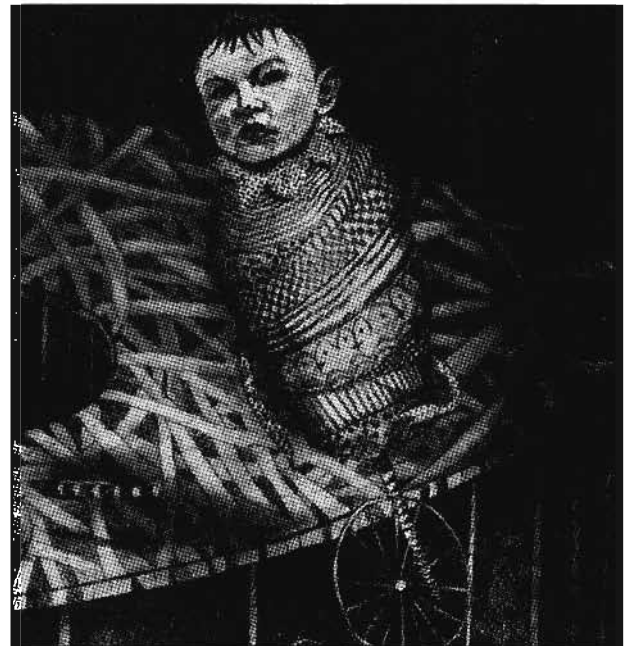
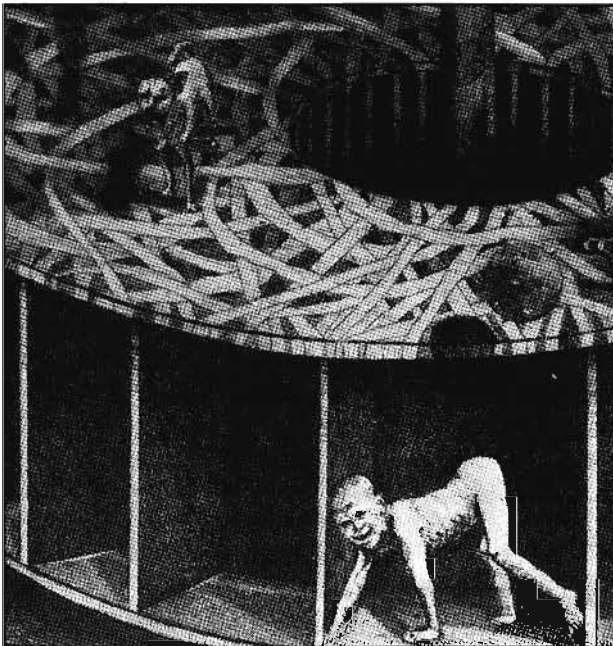
to keep quiet, the old lady would be shouting at Suurpap to do the same. And the children would cry for all the noise-makers to stop.

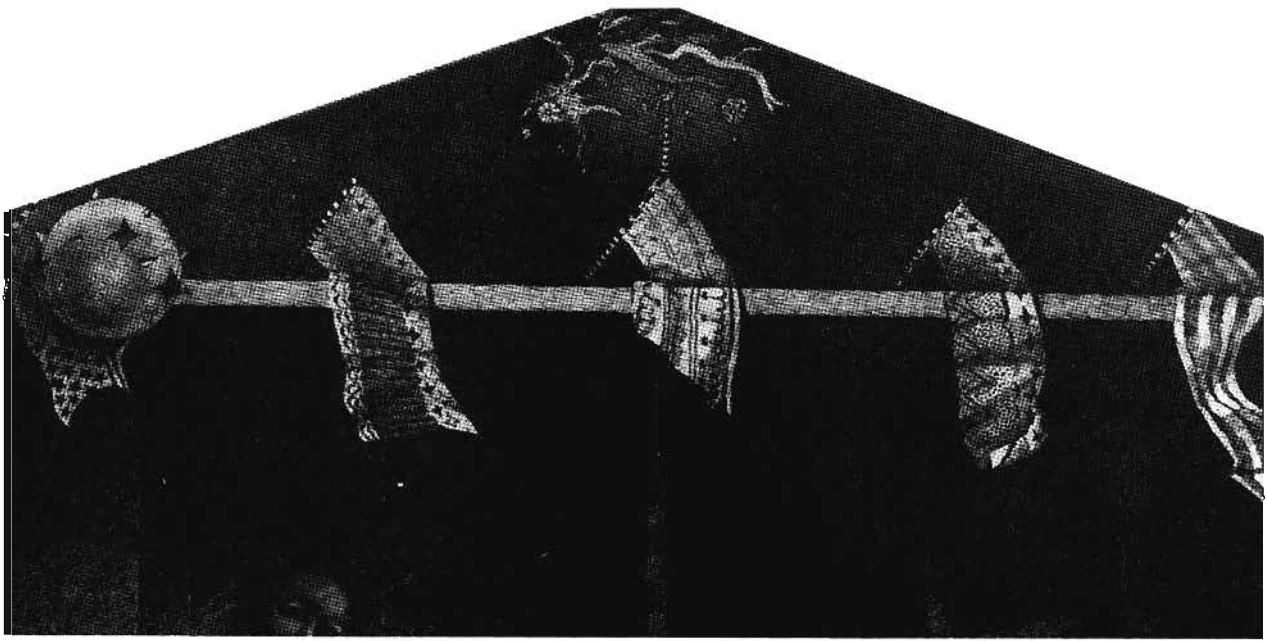
Eventually Khutika would be thrown out of the house. He would take half-bricks and throw them at his people. They would lock themselves in the room. Then the front window would be bombarded until all the panes were broken.

The following day would be Saturday. There would be peace again, despite Khutika's behaviour of the night before. Oom Johnnie would be happy.

But this happened every weekend. For four years I knew Oom Johnnie, and I knew the trouble he faced every weekend. At first the municipality repaired the window-panes, then they decided it was too much for them. Oom Johnnie had also had his fill. From then on the panes were patched with the paper from old cement bags.

Oom Johnnie could recite the names of all the railway stations from Johannesburg to his place in Nyasaland: he knew each and every one by heart. He was a jolly good fellow. If you ask Canaan people, they will still remember him.





The Escape

Near Witpoortjie there was a small mission farm. Behind that was a record company, and next to it some smallholdings belonging to Portuguese farmers. They supplied the town of Roodepoort with fresh vegetables. These farmers were a hard-working lot, and grew almost anything green and edible.

Most of the farmers lived a hand-to-mouth existence, but they were generous with their labourers and gave them place to build their own shacks on the smallholdings. These shacks were built out of any material available: old car bodies, sacking, corrugated iron. Some of the roofs were half of iron and half of grass. I went into these shacks many times, and they were horrible - especially in rainy weather.

But the labourers were happy to be there. They did not want to stay in the location. Here they had no rent to pay, neither did they pay for water. They worked according to no rules - from sunrise to sunset - and got on well with the farmers. I have heard and read many reports that the Portuguese were the most cruel of the whites who ever came out to Africa, but in my experience they were straightforward and fair in their dealings with their black workers.

Fernando da Silva was one of these smallholding farmers. His home was a shack by European standards. He was short, stout, and tough. He was a jocular fellow, and liked talking. His wife was also short and squat, and like him she had a round face. She always wore her hair in a bun.

Mrs Da Silva made a home-brew, and every Sunday she gave it to the labourers. That was part of her contribution to her husband's workforce. The people who worked for the Da Silvas said she made good wine. They called it wine, but she called it vino.

Da Silva's foreman was called Mokgwadi. He was from the Northern Transvaal and a Pedi by birth. He had been in Da Silva's service for more than thirty years. Da Silva used to bring a big jar of wine into Mokgwadi's hut every Sunday afternoon. The other workers would gather, and then there would be wine for each and every one, and dancing. The Pedis like to come together to dance and sing their folk-songs. Da Silva, his wife and their child would come along and join in the dancing. They had even learnt some Pedi steps, and had taught the workers Portuguese styles.

There were about six shacks on Da Silva's property, and in each of them lived two adults and about six children, some of whom were already grown up and working, and even had young children of their own. Mokgwadi himself had eight children, the youngest still crawling. So they formed quite a large community.

On Sundays Mokgwadi and his crowd would sing and dance in a big ring in front of their shacks. The women would often sit down with their children, clapping hands, while the men went into the ring and sang and danced. Mokgwadi was the leader; he had a bone of some sort which he blew now and then. Then it was as if the dancing men and women became possessed. Some of the other men blew the horns of goats or rams. One of the womenfolk, seeing her husband doing a good dance, would produce a

B.M. Moeng

police-whistle and blow. Then the women would get nearly hysterical and blow on anything they could find. The men would dance as if they were going into Doomsday. A cloud of red dust would go up into the air - you could see it from a long way off - but no one cared. A jug of home-brewed wine went round, and then it was dance, dance, dance until sunset.

One Sunday, when the weather was fine and warm, Mokgwadi decided to slaughter a nice fat pig for his family. He kept a few pigs behind his hut. As the fire was being prepared in the early afternoon, everybody was happy. They knew the pork would not be for sale - it would be there for the taking. Da Silva and his family came down with the wine, and there was drinking. Soon there would be pork frying on the red coals. So the people were looking at the wine jar and the pork ... and perhaps that was why nobody noticed a cloud of dust coming slowly but surely towards Da Silva's farm from the north.

While Mokgwadi was preparing his feast, many other people in the area had gathered at the football ground in Roodepoort West location, or were making their way there. The pitch was simply a piece of flat ground, bulldozed and levelled by graders. There was no grass on it, but it was rolled and watered after every match. There were no benches - some of the spectators brought their own, but most had to stand to watch the game. Despite these disadvantages, the ground was a very busy place on Sundays. Hundreds of people would gather to watch the games which would be in progress from early in the morning until sunset. This was the only football ground in the location, and it served several clubs. Even the boys from Randfontein and Krugersdorp came to play here, so there was always a big crowd.

On this particular Sunday, though, there were even more people than usual. Today the big rivals from Roodepoort Location were going to meet in head-on collision: 'The Motherwell' vs 'The Mighty Greens'. They drew big crowds whenever they clashed. There were hundreds and hundreds of people at the ground, men, women and children, excitedly waiting for the match of the year to start. Some of the crowd had come straight from church services; they were still dressed in their Sunday best and carrying Bibles and hymnals. Other religious sects were marked by their uniforms: khaki suits

with stars on their lapels, or long white coats with blue crosses on the back, or long red sarongs with large headdresses. Then, of course, there were also people in conventional dress. A few people who owned motor cars drove around the field hooting, while others stood on the running-boards and cheered. Meanwhile, two or three mule-drawn carts were bringing even more spectators to the match.

Mr Dobson, the location superintendent, chose this Sunday to mount a beer raid. Dobson had discovered that consumption in the municipal beerhalls was declining, a sure sign that illicit brewers were active in the location. This had to be stamped out. Dobson thus took several black constables - or blackjacks as the people called them - into the location, each carrying a long, thin iron rod with a sharpened end. The men would use these to prod around all over the yards searching for tins of beer hidden underground. Meanwhile, three mounted white policemen were despatched to the smallholdings to look for illegal brewing there.

At Mokgwadi's place the coals were almost ready, the wine was going round, somebody was playing a tune on a mouth-organ. Mokgwadi himself was slicing the pork. Nobody saw the cloud of dust, which warned that the police were approaching. Suddenly they were there.

Silence fell. Even the children who had been crying on their mothers' backs were suddenly quiet. Mokgwadi was squatting next to the pig, and when he looked back over his shoulder to discover the reason for this sudden hush, he came face to face with a horse. This horse practically picked Mokgwadi up by the collar of his shirt, while the people stood dumbstruck. Mokgwadi's dogs ran and hid behind the shacks. Children with wide, scared eyes clung to their mothers' backs. The wine in the jar became redder than blood. The fire kept roaring.

The eldest of the policemen dismounted, approached the jar of wine and kicked it over. It splashed over Mokgwadi and the meat. Then this policeman began pointing people out and they had to stand aside. Eventually there were fifteen of them - most of the men and women and some of the grown-up children, including two pregnant girls. The policeman looked them all over, and then shouted, 'Trespass! March to town!'

It was then that the realization of what was happening

hit the crowd like a lightning bolt. Mothers separated from their children began to cry. The youngsters who were to be left behind also started wailing. In a great cloud of churning dust, the policemen on horseback herded the trespassers out of the yard. The expectant mothers went in front, with their stomachs protruding, while the children clung to the skirts of their mothers, crying.

The two dogs came out from behind the shacks to lick the pig's blood on the grass.

Da Silva and his wife watched the people go from their kitchen window. No one knew how, but at some point in the confusion they had managed to sneak away and lock themselves in their house. They knew the regulations as well as anyone, and they knew the consequences of brewing illegal liquor and employing unregistered labourers. On top of all this, Da Silva himself was an illegal immigrant, so he kept as far away from the police as possible.

All in all, things were looking bad. As it turned out though, the episode came to an unexpected conclusion.

The three mounted policemen took the trespassers along a gravel road towards Roodepoort North police station. They passed by some shops and a butchery, and turned into the location. It happened that they had to pass by the football ground, where the great match was in progress.

Dobson and his constables had been busy in the location. Whenever they had found beer, they had emptied it into the streets in front of the offender. The streets of the location were flowing with beer, and the chickens, horses and pigs of the location were enjoying themselves. The offending brewers had been taken to the police station, where they had paid fines and had been released. A group of about thirty of these women, singing and dancing, made their way towards the football ground, and as luck would have it they arrived at the same time as the mounted

policemen and Mokgwadi's people.

The singing women - the arrested group with Mokgwadi - the crowd of football spectators. These three groups converged. Then, seizing the moment, Mokgwadi's people changed direction and walked straight into the football crowds. The women returning from the police station realized at once what was happening, and they began to make a great deal of noise and to mill around. The policemen saw their prisoners of a moment ago disappearing into the crowd and spurred their horses forward in an attempt to recapture them. But it was too late. The prisoners melted away before their eyes.

Now there was chaos, people screaming, the crowd surging. The horses panicked, but the policemen tried to force them in among the crowd, who in turn became angry. They grabbed the reins of the horses and pulled them this way and that. The horses panicked even more, and people began to hit at them. A young policeman drew his pistol, but it was struck from his hand and, like the prisoners themselves, vanished into the crowd. This was the last straw: the policemen fled, and the crowd shouted them off.

Some time later, when Mokgwadi and his people returned to Da Silva's place, they found that the coals were still hot. Da Silva and his wife came out of the house. They did not want to admit they had run away because they were afraid of the police, so they said they had gone into the house to fetch more wine at exactly the moment when the raid took place. Now, in fact, they did bring more wine, and the pork was put on the coals to roast.

Soon there was singing and dancing again, as the people celebrated their escape - but not before the gate to the farm had been locked. Even then, Da Silva kept looking at the gate rather than at the pork. But he told the people that it was better to be distracted, than to be caught unawares.



Brain Damage

Makhosi!
Help me, Makhosi
I think I have lost
My mind

My roots fade, my colour pales
Into oblivion, into white
Is that, Makhosi, right?
Me,
I think I am suffering from
Bantu Education:

I am the king of my Kind,
But I abide by the Bow,
His master's voice.
When I was

Discovered
I am told I did not know God
But, Makhosi, if you can
Throw your bones and ask
My Forefathers, they will all cry:
Tlatlamatjolo
Mvelinqangi
Qamata

So please
Mahkosi muti magic mix
And provide

Me with the potent of potions to
Enable me over the oceans and land to
Fly on a broomstick like a Witch to
England, Netherlands, France or Germany to

Discover
Them and their people, not
Through British Airways package deal, nor
Peter Stuyvesant.

M.P. Nhlapo

Return

He came back to life with a sickening thud.
He wasn't drunk anymore. He felt sick, cheap
and dirty. He never used to have problems
getting to sleep, but now he stays awake every
night wishing that memories could go away
and leave him alone.

Willie Tshaka

Boasting

On and on it goes
Swirling high and higher
The art of boasting:

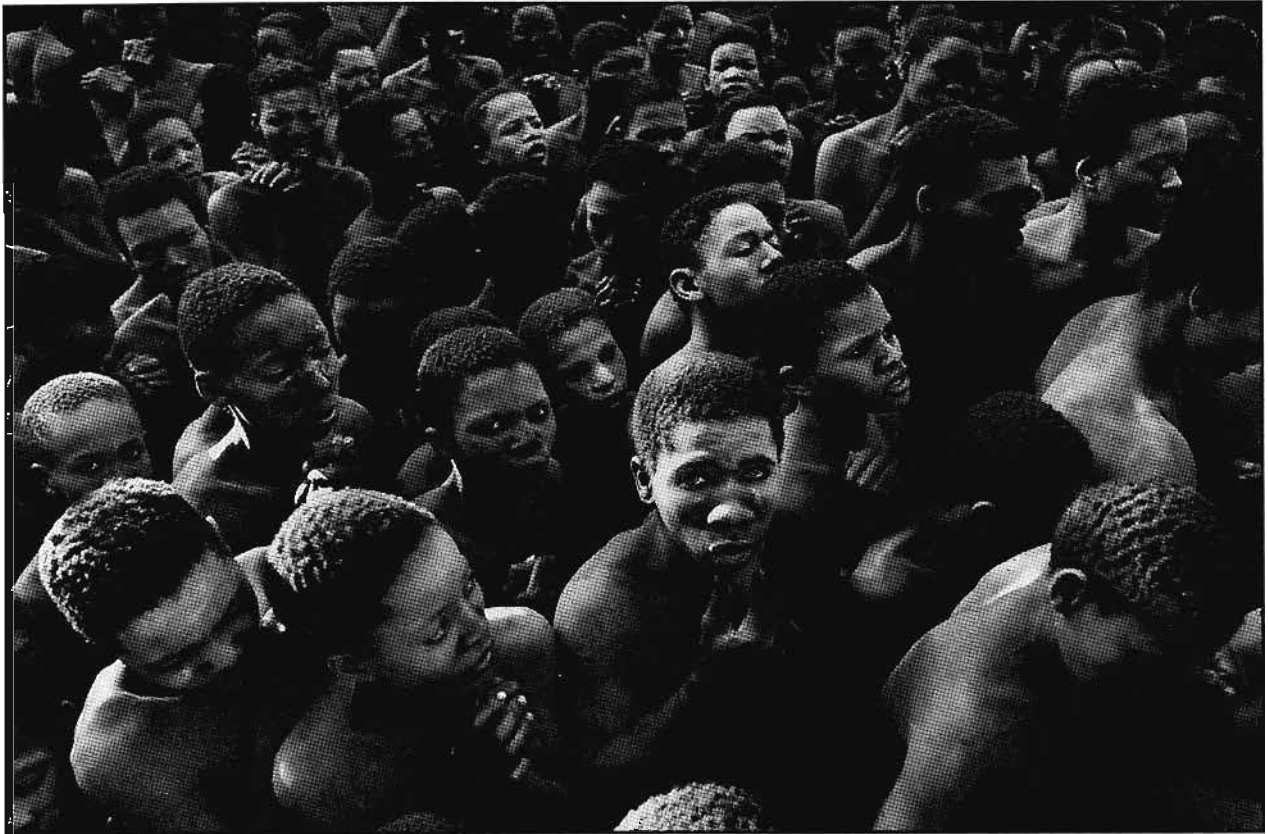
Boasting of beauty
Boasting of riches
Boasting of education
Boasting of knowing the best witchdoctors
Skills in philandering etc....

Whites boast of civilisation
They claim to have brought to Africa
Racial superiority upon Africans

Africans boast of a good lost heritage
Some keep fingers crossed and are angry
I'm the only one
Who has outgrown it all

I boast of working for meagre wages
Yet pay same prices for goods in the shops
Sales tax to the government I don't vote for
Just like millionaires
Chief of the Police
State President too
Indeed,
I've overcome greed

Lancelot Maseko



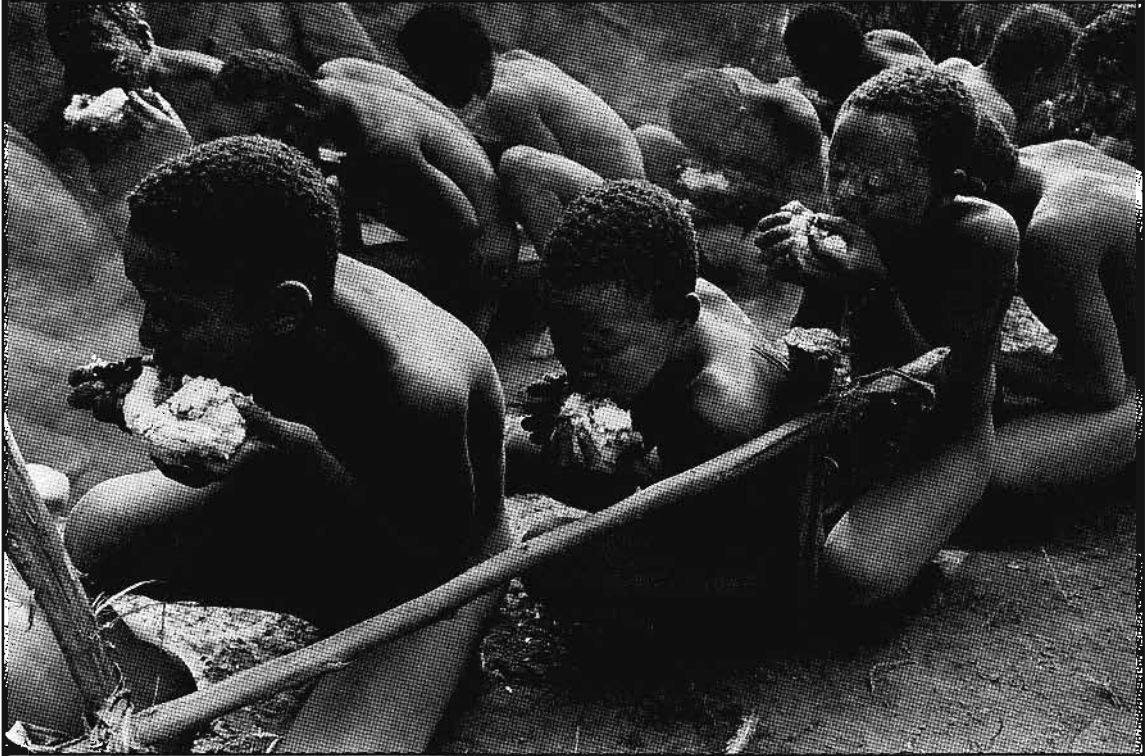
Above:
Two hundred initiates
• Steve Hilton-Barber •

Right: *Eating*
• Steve Hilton-Barber •

In Good Photographic Faith

Steve Hilton-Barber

*A presentation made during a debate on the
Staffrider Exhibition, The Market Theatre, December 1990*



My name is Steve Hilton-Barber and I was born in Tzaneen. I am a working photographer and have been active in journalism for five years. I have also been consistently involved in documenting the apartheid struggle and my work has been published widely in the progressive and international press. My work has also been featured in several books and exhibitions. Last year my essay on *Die Voëlvy Tour*, an alternative Afrikaans music tour, received a merit award in the *Staffrider Exhibition*. I was until this

year part of the Afrapix photographic collective which played a central photographic role in the struggle for a nonracial democratic South Africa.

Much has been written and debated on the role of the documentary photographer. Although I won't delve into academic discourse, I feel that it is essential here today to briefly outline my understanding of what my role is as a documentary photographer.

I have attempted as a documentary photographer to



Exhausted initiates sleep during the day

• Steve Hilton-Barber •

both honestly and accurately photograph different subject matter in their specific social contexts. Like many others in my field, I have attempted to act with integrity and with a with a sense of responsibility and sincerity. One of the most enduring problems faced by documentary photographers is that of the distance between themselves and their subjects. This is an issue which I continue to grapple with in my work.

For some time I have found it necessary to free myself from the dictates of the commercial news market and concentrate on documenting the South African society in more depth and with more compassion. Having said this, I am both saddened and concerned at the response to my essay on a Northern Sotho initiation ceremony. Before addressing my reasons for photographing this ceremony and all the criticisms levelled against myself and my work, I wish apologise to everyone that I have offended. It was never my intention to offend anyone. I sincerely hope that this debate will contribute to a greater understanding of both the ceremony itself and the problems faced by documentary photographers in this country.

It was my concern that this ritual should be documented,

not only to add to the growing photographic cultural heritage of our country, but to help educate, enlighten and broaden understanding of different cultural practices. I did not photograph the ritual, as someone suggested, in order to win 'R2 000 and some fame'. In fact, the photographs were taken some months before the *Staffrider Awards* were even advertised.

I have been accused of a number of things. But what concerns me most is the increasingly violent and intimidatory nature of these criticisms. Some of these criticisms have been tinged with a racist chauvinism that is not only disturbing in itself but can hardly bode well for the development of a progressive and critical culture in South Africa.

People should consult the Market Theatre's visitor's book so they may acquaint themselves with a few enlightened critiques of my work. Here are some examples and I quote: 'Go fuck your mother up her arse, you expose my culture' and 'show us your own secrets of white women making love to dogs and forget our culture', and 'Fuck off you white racist bastard', 'Go and get fucked you don't know what you are doing, expose your own culture and



Above and below: *Initiates prepare for the Mayiwayiwani Dance* • Steve Hilton-Barber •



let's see your foreskin with all the diseases' and 'Blacks are again pawns in the white propaganda chessboard' and finally 'Go back to Europe with your camera you bastard'.

This racist-sexist mishmash is clearly confused, emotional and resentful and some of these comments don't warrant reply. There is also an element here of 'misplaced embarrassment'. But I have come here to contribute to photographic debate and not to toilet-wall graffiti.

Others have, more seriously, accused me of the following: of violating all the ethics of ethnographic photography, of violating the sacredness of a ritual, of exploiting a racist attitude towards nakedness, of portraying the initiates as being barbaric, a spectacle, insensate objects, of sensational description. And others have accused me of portraying blacks as barbarians and animals and have confused nakedness with pornography. Some have even suggested that the photographs should not have been taken at all, that I as a white photographer had no right to document this ritual.

Let me address these criticisms one by one, although some of them overlap.

Firstly, the accusation that I have somehow violated the ethics of so-called ethnographic photography is a confused criticism. As I have already stated, I complied with the basic ethics of documentary photography. I had permission to photograph the ceremony and publish the photographs. I did not mislead, manipulate or deceive anyone at any stage. Both the initiates and the organisers knew exactly what I was doing. I attempted to document a situation in a way that would allow the situation to speak for itself. It seems as if nothing short of a major anthropological thesis would satisfy my academic accusers. But I am a documentary photographer and not a cultural anthropologist.

Clearly, my access to the ritual and my relationship to the principal of the school can be interpreted in many different ways. Some say I am a white opportunist who manipulated the racist power relations in our society in order to gain access. Ironically, this assumption is itself racist and paternalistic. It assumes that the principal of the school is a weak, subordinate man who is unable to control access to the initiation ceremony in the face of a powerful 'baas van die plaas'. It assumes that the only

way a 'white photographer' could gain access is by manipulating or bribing his way through people who lack integrity. I want to assure you that not only is the principal of the school a proud man of integrity but that I in no way exploited the power relations in our society in order to gain access. I want to remind the audience that if I had not been circumcised myself, not only would I not have been granted access to the ceremony but I would have respected that decision.

Secondly the notion that I have violated a sacred ritual seems to suggest that by photographing a traditional cultural practice one violates it. This is ludicrous. Did National Geographic violate the Ndebele initiation ceremony by photographing it? Do photographs of Jewish circumcisions violate that ritual? Do photographs violate Christian and Muslim religious practices?

I believe that my photographs violate nothing.

The criticism seems to suggest that the written word does not violate but the photograph does. I have not revealed anything that was not already known. The initiation ritual has existed for hundreds of years and countless publications and authors have dealt with the subject. I have merely given it a visual face.

These photographs have not suddenly emerged out of some secretive vacuum. On the contrary, the initiation ritual has been the subject of constructive criticism and debate during the last year. The ritual has not been treated as sacrosanct or above debate amongst traditional leaders and political organisations. Instead of defensively or aggressively shielding the ritual from the public eye, various leaders are prepared to investigate mechanisms, through education, consultation and consensus, in order to bring the ritual in line with modern medical standards. I can only hope that these photographs will contribute to the preservation of the initiation ritual in a medically safer form.

Thirdly, the view that I have exploited a racist attitude towards nakedness is equally absurd. Am I to be held responsible for the fact that white nakedness is censored? The censorship of white male nakedness is the repressive creation of Christian Nationalism. It is not my creation. The photographer does not determine either the censorship policy of the state or the editorial policy of the publication in which photographs are published.



Initiates return to their villages after being initiated • Steve Hilton-Barber •

In a related criticism my work has also been called pornographic. It seems as if some people have confused their own insecurity about nakedness with pornography. But pornography is designed to arouse sexual excitement in an audience. Documenting a ritual in which people are naked is in no way a perverse attempt to arouse sexual excitement. Nakedness is not pornography. I strongly disagree with the repressed, moral conservatism that believes that the portrayal of nakedness is unacceptable.

Fourth there is the criticism that I have sensationally portrayed the initiates as barbaric, insensate objects. My photographs are a factual documentation of a particular cultural practice and attempted to record this ritual as accurately as possible. This criticism involves the question of perception.

It is a question which relates to an individual's own feelings about the ritual and all its manifestations. I

cannot be held responsible for the fact that certain people might actually view the initiation ceremony as a barbaric practice. This says more about themselves and the way they view African culture than the photographs themselves. Unfortunately apartheid has created some very peculiar perceptions. The documentary photographer can only hope to help break down some of these misguided and negative perceptions.

Finally and most importantly should these photographs have been taken at all? Yes, definitely. I have recorded a ritual that is widely practiced throughout Africa and which is central to traditional African culture. It is part of the experience of millions of African men. Therefore, I feel this document is important.

But I would appreciate a criticism of my work that focusses on the standard of my photography and not on the colour of my skin.

Informer

Deep into the core of your heart
 How thrilled you feel
 When collecting name lists of your own brothers
 Matching them against faces
 Rands, cents
 Prison and death

Dine with the hyenas brother
 Toast to the chink of wine glasses
 And waffle endlessly to the ears of the death squad
 Till the voice box runs dry

Drink jive trip and spill brother
 Over the velvet cushions of special branch cars
 While tossing the vendetta virus in the air
 Faster than shares in the AIDS stock-exchange
 But forget-not the sharpness of time's axe
 It splits castles to ruins
 As it did up-north

Lancelot Maseko

Securitat

Once he was feared,
 Then he was defied.
 Now from a corner window
 Of the People's Palace he fires.
 Until the people caught him,
 He pleaded pointlessly,
 Hands in surrender.
 Fists strike his face.
 Shots fired.
 Gun at his head.
 His pleas for mercy,
 Die on a cry

Max Gebhardt

Garden of Stone

Cold and deserted it lay before me;
 The garden of stone, where flesh turned to bone,
 Where rows and rows of endless stone beds
 Were host of many unwilling heads.

As I strolled the garden that cool autumn day,
 Its well worn path winding an endless way,
 My eyes wandered sadly to the writing on a stone:
 'Rest peacefully little one, for you're not alone'.

And reluctantly my feet seemed to drag me on,
 The familiarity of the path urged them along,
 And with each step I took towards the place I sought,
 Waves of remembrance invaded my thoughts.

How could I possibly ever forget.
 How was I supposed to ever accept;
 The love that we shared, so beautifully rare
 Lay covered in dust and crowned with despair.

Today seemed different as I stood beside the grave;
 The sun shone brighter, the burden seemed lighter,
 For the writing on the stone had changed on its own:
 'You mourn for the dead, so dry the tears you shed,
 My body is gone, but our souls are one,
 So, depart forever from this garden of stone
 And hold out your hand, for you're not alone'.

Tracy Tylcoat

aftermath

after a storm
a street remains dry
with the pools of water, the
puddles of wet donga soil
invisible in the sun

the street looks deserted
like a thing from the ancient past
foreign to this world
it becomes a patriarch
something to be laughed at
eternally
men build houses of rock,
not of stone, women plant
strong corn
the chaff of yesteryears
mingled in the dust and ash

how tired our songs become now
how our feet drag
our hearts beat
and beat
like a dry tongue in an empty
mouth.

Mxolisi M Nyezwa

The Old Man Next Door

His head a cloudy sky
Face bird's view of ghetto streets at dusk
Sunset in his palms
He shone twin moons on me:
'mfan'ami, you youth are sometimes scattered coal,
other times Hiroshima'

in the morning

the sun an upturned bowl spilling dark into
the opened palms of my morning window i look
out on a man sweeping fear that oozes out of the pores
of the street into a dustbin.
i look out. my days are the soot of yesterday's smoke
that spiralled to heaven in the fires that raged. in the
morning i look out on the litter of these times. i look
out on unwilling sacrificial lambs that appeased the
hunger of a cannibal god. i look out on vultures
pecking their souls fleshless.

Lesego Rampolokeng

*Jabulane Banda***People of the Sand**

The illusive images explode
 When thought blossoms in disaster,
 swim along the great Okavango
 never to sink with the setting sun
 beaming and glowing red as veld fires.
 And by the day the azure sky,
 decorated by papyrus
 and the blue flowered water-lillies,
 We hear the symphony of birds song.
 In the far distance
 pall of sand cover naked bodies of San children
 we hear the song from the setinkane,
 vibrant with the rhythms of the nature
 from short fingers of these men
 who know no animal husbandry
 people who never fight nature
 but live it,
 dance it with gusto,
 Pray the moon and read the stars.
 Who of us know the essence of an eland?
 Haven't we heard
 Of the big musos nicoderously hunting muti
 from women and men they wish away,
 to uphold the plague of our time
 seeking to erase once and for all
 from the face of the earth
 the language laced with fantastic clicks
 the vestige of quintessential Bushman.

Looking into the Wilderness

When my eyes look
 deep in the middle
 of the wilderness
 I see huge birds,
 traversing the barren plains
 into the heart of the desert,
 where grass never grows tall,
 where one finds no wall,
 but barefeet children.
 forgotten non-existent people
 always warm, jubilant and kind
 suspicious of strangers in their midst.
 nomads,
 whose land the tall people usurped
 sending them into barren plains
 where the red earth scorches their soles
 but never dampens their loving souls.
 walking long distances in ostrich strides,
 women digging up roots
 to feed and heal their kind.
 These short and sharp men
 with bows, arrows and big behinds
 hunting the wild to keep going.
 Even when matters look dull and hard
 Singing children prancing and clapping
 while young maidens give birth in the bush.
 Alone.
 Hyenas looking on to snap their bite,
 Our laws driving them from pillar to pole
 Favouring holiday resorts and game reserves.
 And I get to know
 Man must have lost his sense of history.

The Politics of Anthologies

Stephen Gray

The recent reviews of my edition of *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse* by Michael Chapman (*Southern African Review of Books*, Oct.-Nov., 1989), Peter Strauss (*New Contrast*, 68) and Stephen Watson (*Times Literary Supplement*, 18 May, 1990), raise certain secret issues with regard to the making of anthologies in South Africa which perhaps are in need of discussion. The first is the remarkable way in which all three reviews share a staunchly held proprietorial claim on the field. This personal state is revealed by their devoting more space in their reviews to what poetry is not included in this particular anthology - to what should have been included rather than to what actually was. In other words, in their reviews they effectively offer their readers an alternative table of contents with the firm recommendation that their (imaginary) anthologies would have had a more justifiable claim on the public's attention. The (real) one in hand is thus shown up as inadequate, unrepresentative or even criminally fraudulent, and so forth.

This (mis)reading is further accompanied with gestures of dismissal (Chapman), exasperated outrage (Strauss) or - guess what? - plain old invective (Watson). Because feelings are now aroused, assaults on my own bona fides, intelligence, integrity (if any - these characteristics are held in suspicious doubt) need not be restrained. In short, instead of the renewed debate I wish to facilitate, I have as often as not experienced these petulant wipe-outs. This I can take, of course, although in the works I have edited I have always given fully detailed accounts of the procedures and principles followed (which is more than may be said for some editors), and *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse* is by no means an exception.

What is harder to take is that these three parties are also warning the general reader, who may not be conversant with the nature of South African literary politics, and who may be interested in acquiring *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse*, that he/she would be running

such a grave moral risk of becoming garbled/unpatriotic/misinformed, etc., tantamount to colluding with me in some vile plot to dispossess the true worthies, and unwittingly thwarting the coming to light of the true anthology that each represents (and of course is perfectly free to launch). The public, I feel, deserves better dealings than that, and need not be so insulted.

The public should also know if they haven't already suspected it from the tangled and miffed tone of the three reviews, that the three reviewers are hardly disinterested bystanders, as they pretend to be, deep into the regular critical duties of objective reporting and assessment. They are rather interested parties themselves.

Chapman is - plain-speaking now - a rival anthologist and, while surveying recent anthologies of South African English poetry in general, is not adverse in his review to putting in a good word or two for some of his own. He is sufficiently supple, though - holding the generalist view that he does - to allow some room for my principles of selection in the *Penguin Book* and accord some space to a summary of the results. As of course it is his right to disagree with my practice and conclusions, I can have no real argument with him.

But, as I shall reveal, his response is only apparently open, normal and healthy. Once news was out in local publishing circles that Penguin intended to produce two anthologies of Southern African work (*Stories* and *Verse*), Chapman's publisher, to whom he then acted as an adviser, immediately went into action to prevent, or at least at all costs to delay, Penguin getting a foothold in what he evidently felt was his market. Chapman himself in response hurried the vast *Paperbook of South African English Poetry* on to the shelves before any Penguin could supposedly usurp them. The story of this competition is far longer and more complicated than that, and includes lawyers' injunctions served on me as editor (twice), refusal to give permissions for Penguin books, sometimes

against the wishes of the authors involved, followed by exorbitant demands for rights etc. and so forth, any tactic seemed good enough to protract Penguin's re-entry into a market which it had largely created in the first place. In short, I do not feel Chapman - my good colleague and friend - can really claim the disinterestedness and authority he does, for he is (or was) actually as up to the neck in the dirty politics of an open market economy vis-a-vis anthology-making as any other editor.

So are Strauss and Watson not really the disinterested reviewers one hopes for, and which the public deserves. Both of them in their reviews, for example, list a number of other poets whose work is not included in *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse*, while omitting to mention the exclusion of their own work. From their general attitude I deduce a paradox: while slating the work for its exclusions, they nevertheless would have been content for samples of their poetry to have been included in it! Neither of them comes clean on this point, nor do they ask the actual question that must be asked (painful as it is, and much as I would have wished to avoid it): why is their work not included?

The answer is not at all as simple as saying that Peter Strauss has not produced a considerable poem since the publication of his *Bishop Bernward's Door* in 1983 and that, in my view (I may be terribly at fault), his career has not sustained its early promise, nor that Stephen Watson (again obviously in my view) has yet to produce a poem that is of sufficient interest. Obviously I also felt - I stress the inescapable element of personal assessment, bias if you like - Strauss's and Watson's own type of work was irrelevant to my very specific project and could serve no function there.

The same goes for the work of some other currently practising poets, whose names they list, and which they both more or less agree on calling fine representatives of some 'aesthetic school'. More about this so-called 'aesthetic school' anon, for here I must digress to leak a tale about the politics of anthologising that deeply implicates these

so-called aesthetes who, from their elected self-labelling, one would assume are so dedicated to standards of formal excellence (the dictionary says the pursuit of beauty!) that never a dirty trick, let alone the pursuit of blackmail, harassment, espionage, boycott action - oh, and also defamation - would be within their realm of interest, or even their capabilities. Yet this is the story to be told and it hinges - I must now reveal - on the name of Jack Cope,

whom Watson lists in the TLS as one very great example of the excluded. To the general reader this revelation is going to be an embarrassment, and to the novice poet who might still feel that poetry should give access to the sublime a disillusionment. In the business of anthology-making in South Africa, and probably elsewhere, I'm afraid that poetry is more inclined to reveal the bathos of twisted, dirty laundry than delectable moral truths. (Short story writers, by comparison, are a pleasure to work with - very pragmatic in their approaches.)

Jack Cope is a man for whom I have always had great respect and affection, as an editor and a promoter of South African writers in general and so forth. I have frequently followed his line in public (with modifications and with grateful acknowledgements), worked that he be honoured for his achievements, etc. and so forth. I am grateful to him, too, for his gen-

erous advice given over a long period (1960 to the mid-80s) and for his having given me a leg-up in publishing. But things began to 'go wrong' between Jack and me - to put it bluntly, I was all right to Jack if I remained obediently under his experienced thumb. But if I ever mildly debated, let alone contested his views, the penalty was exclusion from his sphere of control. I could moan about this; trivial, pointless. The point was that the ground-rules from his side were clear: pay allegiance to the 'Jack Cope school' that was, Cape based and aestheticist... or be without access to print. My response to this gentle tyranny was to move out of the Cape sphere physically, but to maintain my allegiance to *Contrast*, providing it with work from writers outside the Cape or

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Steven Gray

overseas, or translation and review material which I thought otherwise might not reach Jack in Onrust; in fact, rarely did... all of which was used. I am surprised that in the 'debts of gratitude' listed in the Editorial Notes to the first *New Contrast* this lengthy and sustained supportive effort is not mentioned... but, what the hell, I've never been 'into power-games'. Jack is, as the following shows.

In the years leading up to 1984 during which I had been compiling the revised anthology eventually published as *Modern South African Poetry* - featuring basically the poetry of the 70s and early 80s written by new South African poets with certain minimum (drastically low) qualifications, I thought to include examples of Jack's poetry in the spirit - as the introduction clearly says - of honouring him as an 'esteemed elder'. Since Jack had started publishing poetry in the 1940s and was still intermittently productive, this seemed an appropriate procedure. However, Jack complained about my choice and about the miserable payment, etc. He was the only one of 46 contributors to do so, and I knew some kind of warning light was on.

When I then requested permission from Jack for an important piece of his to be included in one of the volumes of the *Southern African Literature Series*, out of some two hundred replies I had to deal with, his was again the only one which was grudging and bad tempered. I realised that between Jack and me a scratchiness had developed which has less to do with payments, literary quality, etc., than with Jack being uncomfortable with what he perceived as my set of 'opposing' literary interests. He was unwilling perhaps to acknowledge that I was no longer the acquiescent and impressionable teenager he wished to keep in tow. Sad, inevitable, trivial... but it did mean that in his eyes I should not have autonomy - the right to make up my own mind, in collaboration with whomever, about the nature and destiny of South African literature in the publishing sphere - without some corrective - and to me meddling - intervention.

But wait... the open clash was still to come, and it

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came with all the inexorable horror of the Greek tragedy Jack so admires. The only way it could have been averted was for me to cease all activity - writing, reviewing and anthologising - in deference to Jack's will. That was what he wanted, of course, and for a long period I avoided any project that would 'tread on his toes'. Jack's toes stretch longer and further than I had imagined, however... I now see that he imagines them to tread on the entire terrain of

all South African letters - past, present and future - which he, like his foolish followers, erroneously feels may be possessed and bossed about as any one group's preserve. The 'aesthetic school' tends to get a bit steamed up about commissars of culture and cultural desks on the left trying to dictate and direct... well, I give you one of the right who trailblazed the phenomenon.

Then Penguin in London, through their expanding Johannesburg offices, had by 1982 asked me to submit proposals for a two-part project, *The Penguin Book of Southern African Stories/Verse*. I suggested that Jack Cope and Uys Krige, who were then both still active and alive and who, after all, had compiled the most successful *Penguin Book of South African Verse* for them in 1968, should be approached first to undertake the new *Verse* volume. But since Cope and Krige had never updated their selection, nor put in proposals for a revised

edition that would have kept it in print... their contract with Penguin was in the normal way considered lapsed. Anyone was free to tender for the new project; they had not. Penguin wanted a clean sweep; something less 'parochial' and 'staid', more 'daringly in tune' with the mixed ferment, widespread creativity and dubious prospects of the 80s. They also wanted a regional focus (Southern rather than South) which would include the larger geography opened by systems theory - and not on a mere token basis - which would minimise language, colour, class and gender barriers, etc. and so forth. Not wanting to be caught out by the advent of 'black' majority rule, they also felt that it should feature 'black' poetry prominently. Although I disagreed with them about simplistic categories

of 'black' and 'white', I did agree that, since at least 1960 'blacks' had produced more impressive poetry than 'whites', in Southern Africa as a whole, and I would reflect this. In effect, anything but the stockpile of accredited chestnuts of the narrow, inward-looking aestheticist Cape school was wanted, a school which as the 80s progressed seemed anyway to be willing itself into insignificance. I did keep reading the poets Strauss and Watson recommend, dutifully. Poem after poem, ill-made, inept, disengaged, so self-concerned as to exclude any reader bar family and fans... I begin to dread the descending quality of Haresnape's *Contrast*, of *Upstream*, *New Coin*, *Sesame*... amateurish in formal terms, so low in energy of content that most of it (in my opinion) should never have been published. This prevalence of incompetent 'poetry', I felt, was exerting such a drag effect on literary development that corporately it was becoming about as beautiful as the AWB... gun-toting, foul-mouthed, terminal.

If my condemnation is too sweeping, I apologise; but I do not apologise for having the right to say that the desperate and often reactionary views behind Chapman's, Strauss's and Watson's reviews - their holding action, trying to keep 'white' poetry on top - I do find inopportune and - yes, counterproductive. They are unwilling to face the innovative re-readings that the future demands. I'm afraid I find their cases of declining value, their prospects a well-merited extinction only.

But the point is to illustrate Jack Cope's role in the mobilisation and, I think, demise of his pet school. You will appreciate that having accepted the Penguin contracts I was doomed to the troublesome confrontation I would have preferred to avoid. I never dreamed of the ramifications it would have.

I stress that the two Penguin Books were jointly planned as integral halves of a whole. As space would be limited in even such capacious volumes, some basic decisions should be made at the outset about which writer should be featured where. In Cope's case I decided that his true genius rested in his sustained work in the short story (rather than in poetry; and that his activity as a fine translator over many years should not be neglected (particularly since one of the themes running through the two volumes was the writerly function of 'translating' across language-barriers, a characteristic of the system

which makes literature in South Africa different in kind from that of other systems, and which for sound humanistic reasons I wished to emphasise).

Thus I chose a story from Jack which fits to perfection in the *Stories* sequence, plus his translation of an Ingrid Jonker story, also wonderfully appropriate to the book's own inner logic... these, after all, being the only criteria of importance in the assembly of anthologies. I didn't think Jack could complain about any of that, since he was to contribute more pages to the *Stories* volume than any other of the 39 writers. Also, incidentally, I made a point of choosing a story of his which was then out of print so that the fee could be settled directly with him to his advantage, not having the top of it skimmed off by any publisher and payment delayed. Because I suspected Jack would not be satisfied without a wrangle, I arranged this through his agent, knowing she would act as moderator and go-between if the need arose. Jack came back through the agent that I could have just about any other story of his except the one I had chosen. I insisted that only that one would do (giving reasons). Eventually he gave way. You must also understand that Jack, having packed up and retired from Onrust to Hitchin, Herts., and resigned his editorship of *Contrast*, was then hardly publishing at all... We met in London when I was proofing the pages of the *Stories*, but I hesitated to ask if he was pleased to have at least one work of his out on the bookshelves in the U.K. again... Rather, the time was taken up by his (to me unpleasant) fulminations against other writers whom I respect and admire.

Jack was obviously building up steam for some full and glorious showdown. Here it is in sequence. The permissions for the *Verses* anthology were extensive and to be handled jointly by Penguin in London for contributors living out of Southern Africa and by me for residents (an arbitrary arrangement of no special significance). The cut-off date for the collection was the declaration of the State of Emergency in 1985, so nothing published thereafter was eligible: a decision which, in the light of the delays Jack set about engineering, I now regret. Some work that I would like to have included simply was not. Penguin and I had allowed the usual six to eight months for clearing, proofing and printing. Thanks to Jack and to the local publisher mentioned previously this procedure was to

Steven Gray

extend over an unbelievable three-and-a-half years!

So Jack was set on far more than being cussed; he was set on seeing that the work did not appear. He wrote to me telling me this, advising me to appoint a committee of poets and other experts to be nominated by him to vet the work, as he and Uys had done before. I replied that, although I saw his point, my 'committee' had already sat, but was of a different kind to the one he proposed - disinterested readers, both local and overseas. My 'experts' had also been extensive and of a different kind - representatives of the general public for whom the anthology was compiled in the first place, after all. I also told him I was beginning to resent what I construed as his tampering.

Well, the problem was that I had to remain on polite terms with Jack because I wished to use an Opperman translation he had made for his Penguin Book (again, by way of stressing a positive connection inherited from my forebears and paying tribute to a process which he had initiated and which was valuable to me). He had the rights to the translation of it (although not to the original, which had been cleared without difficulty by Tafelberg - who thereby indicated that they wished the work to appear...). Jack's first response to this was to multiply the fee offered him *ten-fold* and I was instructed to comply. I thought this manoeuvre a bit over the top, but recommended Penguin agree (just to avoid further trouble, and although on the roundabout and swings principle of book financing this meant a lot of other poets were going to get a lot less). The agreement was made. I refrained from comment, adding a cheerful note that Penguin London would come back to him for further permissions: I meant for Ingrid Jonker's work, over which Jack was sole trustee. Unfortunately Jack construed this to mean permission requests would be coming for his own poetry and, in case they weren't to be, he offered me all his new work. To this I reluctantly replied that the cut-off date had past, unpublished work was not eligible anyway, I had decided to feature him prominently in the *Stories* and so on.

Meanwhile Penguin London requested the originals

of the two Jonker poems I wished to use, which happened to be in superb translations (my opinion again) by Cherry Clayton, culled from a project of poets translating fellow poets which had been initiated in Johannesburg in the accumulation phase of the book as far back as 1978. While bumping up the fee considerably again, Jack replied that as executor of the works of Jonker his trust had decided only 'official' translations of her work might appear, by which he meant those done by himself and William Plomer in 1968, which for various complicated reasons the Johannesburg translators had felt inadequate.

Jack provided a revised translation of 'The Child who was Shot Dead by Soldiers in Nyanga', still jointly signed by himself and Plomer, which Plomer could hardly have approved since he had been dead since 1973. Thus I was compelled either to use a version I did not want or lose Jonker altogether. Since Jack absent-mindedly forgot about any 'official version' of the other poem, I took it that using the Clayton version of that would be acceptable... and it has since drawn notable praise.

By now Jack had willy-nilly accumulated some scattered bits of information about what was to be in, and what out, of *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse*, but not until advance copies were available was he to have anything like a full contents

(nor was he entitled to them). Normally the contents of an anthology or any other book are not made available to the public until it is published, and the editor-publisher relationship is confidential. The relationship between editor and contributor is an even more delicate one of trust, resting on tried-and-true bona fides - a trust that Jack decided he could not respect and would upset. My permissions request letter gave in considerable detail the scope, intention and even statistics of the forthcoming work, all of it in spirit and to the letter the truth. From these details Jack deliberately formed a skew picture of what the work was to be, and accordingly with a burst of energy set about skewing things further. I repeat - he had no right to do this... but who is to stop dear old venerable Don Quixote when he at last has a giant in his sites?

**Incompetent
poetry was
becoming
about as
beautiful as
the AWB
guntoting,
foulmouthed
and terminal**

Jack's charge was three-pronged. (a) He insisted that Penguin beware of using me as an editor for I was a known apartheid sympathiser (!!) and had never been the activist he had been through all the years (record enclosed). This character-assassination part of the campaign persisted logarithmically; once the Penguin copy-editor at a party in Cape Town picked up the news that did she know that I had edited *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse* in full, daily collusion with the South African police!!! Etc. and so forth. Damaging stuff.

(b) He wrote a lengthy single-spaced letter to me stating that if I did not relinquish control of the anthology or rework it along the lines enclosed... he personally would see to it that the 'unanimous' disapproval of all the 'Southern African poets' would be activated, i.e. all hell would break loose. I replied to this ultimatum that I still felt he was trespassing on my autonomy, he had wildly exaggerated his case (if any) and that as he aware he was using tactics of blackmail. I humbly asked him to desist.

And (c) he circularised as many South African poets he was still in contact with - a very small segment of the very large total community - to complete his data-assembly. If there was to be any ill feeling about who was to be in/out, Jack exacerbated this grievously, and one of the awful results is the Strauss-Watson reception.

As (a) and (c) always occurred behind my back, there was little I could do in my own defence... but I was subsequently gratified that on the score of (a) Penguin informed Jack that, whether or not I had a record of whatever, I had a good and professional record of anthology-making with them; they were sticking to their choice of me and what I had offered them. They had meanwhile called in their own adjudicators and had long decided to go ahead.

But Jack was still not to be mollified. So began a series of telephone calls to the Penguin editor in charge of the production of the work, which she characterised as persecution. Now, that was one tough lady on the London publishing scene, but Jack must go on record as the only

person in the business realm to have reduced her to tears. As Jack's hectoring occurred at the height of the Rushdie affair, when you practically had to have a urine-test to get inside Penguin's London security, and the sedate occupation of book-publishing had turned overnight into an arena of incredible terrorist violence, Jack's onslaught was... well, just too much.

I wrote to Jack, saying I thought his campaign had now taken on the overtones of a vendetta... to which he replied that he was sorry to hear that I rated him mean enough to be capable of any such thing. Nevertheless, by June 1988, the situation had become worse than a vendetta - it was declared war.

Collating the further results of (c) Jack still had insufficient evidence on the in/out question. However, this did not stop him from nominating three leading poets (Chris Hope, Mongane Serote and Douglas Livingstone) into doing his dirty work for him. He coerced them into writing to the head of Penguin, now, a letter of distrust in the project, citing all their reasons that since poets A through H (better-known names only) were not represented in the anthology, etc. and what is more. Since their information in most cases was incorrect, the letter was disregarded. I know for a fact that one of the three signatories had not signed it, although the letter said he had

(and so, thanks to Jack, his wishes were misrepresented). When I later confronted Chris with the letter, he had the good grace to say he was embarrassed. He volunteered an apology which I had not demanded.

But even that was not the end of this now sordid behind-the-scenes exercise of the politics of anthology-making. I cringe to remember the sudden letters I received from friends I'd not had a Christmas card from in a decade who, quite by chance, spontaneously, had batches of new poems for me see! I cringe to remember the late-night phone calls from one character I had not been in touch with for fifteen years who - wait for it - all of a sudden was 'compiling a bibliography of poets published in anthologies' - couldn't he/she just have a contents

**There is
no one fixed
'aesthetic'
in any
culture;
there
are many
and all have
to be
learned,
and shared**

Steven Gray

page, etc! I cringe to remember the poetry reading in Durban where none of my friends would even say a faint hello to me, let alone shake the editorial hand! Ah well, there goes the camaraderie that I thought linked all poets in one supra-individual literary endeavour. At the same occasion I met Patrick Cullinan. He held up his hand, said: 'I haven't a clue what you want to say, but I want you to know that I'll defend to the death your right to say it...'. One gentleman, and a democrat. I was more grateful to him than I can express, particularly since I realised much further ill will had been generated over the false information that his work was not to be included in the anthology (it was), nor even read by me.

Jack's next move was to circularise all the poets - there may be a few steps missing here, but as I say this all happened behind my back - yet again, this time with tear-off strips with which to bombard Penguin, informing them that since I had obtained their permission under false pretences - reasons given - their work was to be removed forthwith from the anthology. Those who had given permission chose to ignore this ploy down to the last man, so that I must conclude that some 120 poets were contented with the aims of the anthology and (by South African standards) its unprecedentedly handsome fees. I have also to record that the spectacle of those who had not been asked permission in the first place withdrawing it anyway on the standardised slips caused considerable bafflement at Penguin. By then, I assure you, South African poets in general were climbing their list of irksome hazards in leaps and bounds, almost as high as the Ayatollah Khomeini.

But Jack - steadfast of purpose, I'll give him that - had still not finished. Now he had changed his mind altogether about the Jonker permissions and on sober reflection considered the Opperman mere unworthy 'doggerel'. So this time it was a lawyer's injunction to stop the presses... until such time as the relevant pages were removed. Sabotage now. For good measure he gave as his reason that he now also considered Jonker's poetry 'third rate' - which, for a man who has spent a considerable part of his life defending her genius, is the ultimate betrayal.

The presses had already rolled, however... was Jack Cope aware of the expense in which it would involve Penguin to remove the low-quality pages, and every trace

of Dr Cope's name from the publication? They offered a compromise: that they would comply with his wishes in subsequent printings. (Meanwhile the control of the Jonker estate had in fact passed out of Jack's hands, so he was not empowered to insist as he did in that instance). Cope replied, through his lawyer, that because he felt it highly unlikely there would be any further printings this assurance was meaningless...

Which brings us up-to-date on this example of the politics involved in anthology-making in South Africa.

Except that, while Jack has now made his heroic last stand - is exposed for you - I am left to cope with a climate of ill will and unpleasantness that I am hard put to negotiate and resolve. I believe in *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse* and its trouble-free running mate, the volume of *Stories*: obviously I do, or I would not have devoted several years of my life as a researcher and several more as an anthologist to putting together books which, when all is said and done, will earn me only a little more in the future than they have already earned Jack Cope. Now that they are out in the market-place taking their chances, I no longer have to keep my silence, though.

So this: in sticking fast to his model of what South African literature is (or was), I feel Jack Cope has become outmoded. I also feel that in using the tactics he has to preserve that model intact, against all rational debate, against the very temper of the times, he has made himself a tragic end - an end of his own devising. If he stands for 'aesthetics', for 'individual values' in the South Africa of today that he left so long ago, then I have to say that his artistic credo does not seem to me to correlate with any equivalent behaviour, any very shining example in the real world. I abandoned the credo I inherited from him a long time ago for the very reason that I grew to find it fatally flawed - mean-spirited, self-serving, possessive, actually antithetical to poetic values. There is no one fixed 'aesthetic' in any culture; there are many, and they all have to be learned, and shared.

Which brings me back to the Chapman, Strauss and Watson responses. As reviewers their duty to the public was to offer a reading that reported back to them what actually was in their very hands - at least that. This they did not do. If they could not rise to that duty for whatever

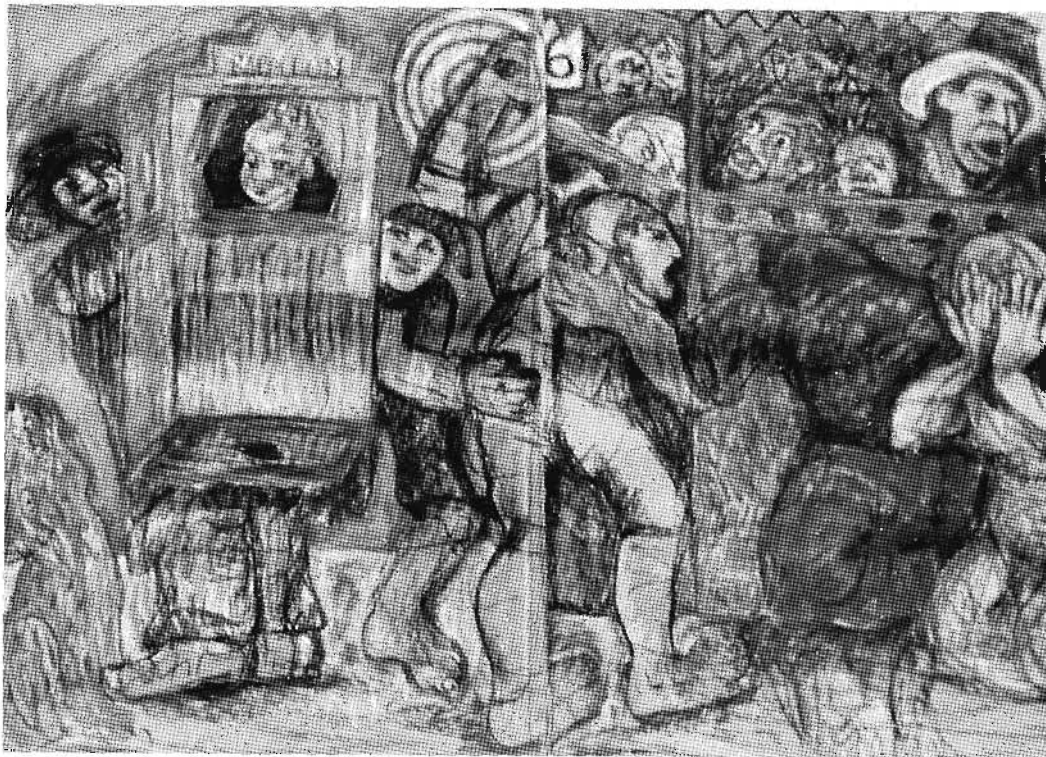
reason, they should have disqualified themselves. To continue as is - partisan, dissembling - is unprofessional. Other poet reviewers who were not hauled into the Cope affair - Andries Oliphant and Robert Greig, also alas excluded from *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse* - have found the work readable, in line with the way things are going... have gone. I do not think that outrage, invective, hysteria is an appropriate and intelligent response to what is evidently a far more real and threatening challenge than I had realised: those are the symptoms of being on the losing side (if indeed sides need to be taken at all) vaguely pitiful, vaguely sad.

Finally, is there any hope for the future of South African poetry? In the terms of their discourse, none at all, clearly. It is a dead-end: died long ago.

So I cast around to see if there weren't any other reviews of *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse*

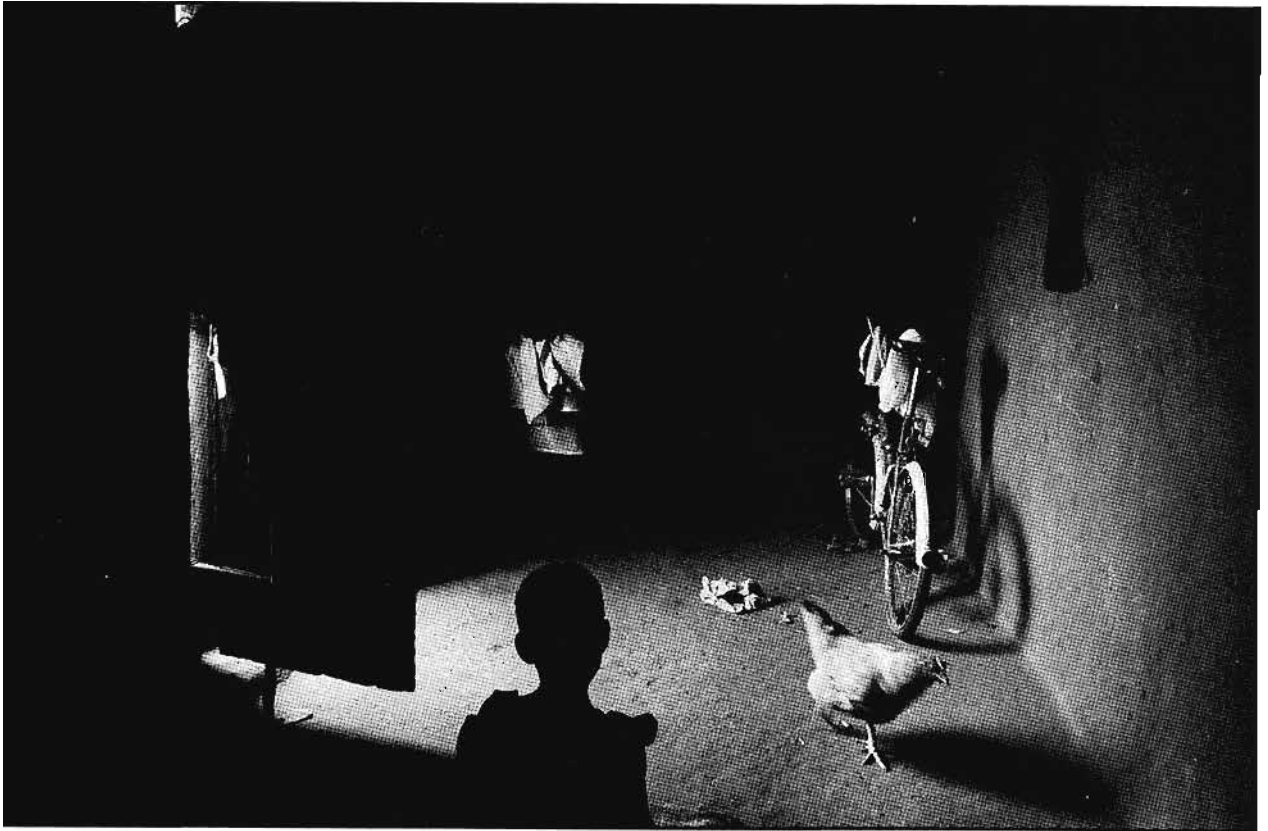
that, perhaps, signal a new engagement with what is an accomplished fact. One there is, from the *Cape Times* (7 Oct., 1989). The review is 6 cms. long... and it has more literals in it than the anthology in question - the one that is 402 tightly-packed pages long and contains the work of 120 poets and 55 translators. It is a very favourable notice, nevertheless - I am sure it will be enjoyed by each and every one of the contributors - and I must be grateful; doubly so, because it recurs in *City Late* (in Nov.-Dec., 1989).

But on careful reading I see that it is a review of - oh no - the wrong book. Guy Butler and Chris Mann's *A New Book of South African Verse in English* of 1979 is the one that contains Jeremy Taylor's 'Ag Pleez Daddy' (correct spelling). In *The Penguin Book of Southern African Verse*, I'm afraid - I know, I've checked over and over again - that's yet another item that got left out.



The Hit Squad Game • Gillian Solomon • (Pastel and charcoal on paper)

**Labour Tenants
South Western Transvaal**



Photographs
by
Santu Mofokeng

Previous page:
A family bedroom, Vaalrand
• Santu Mofokeng •

Below:
*Baby Fina Moss and her
cousin Kebuenj Mokgabi,
twelve years old, Vaalrand*
• Santu Mofokeng •

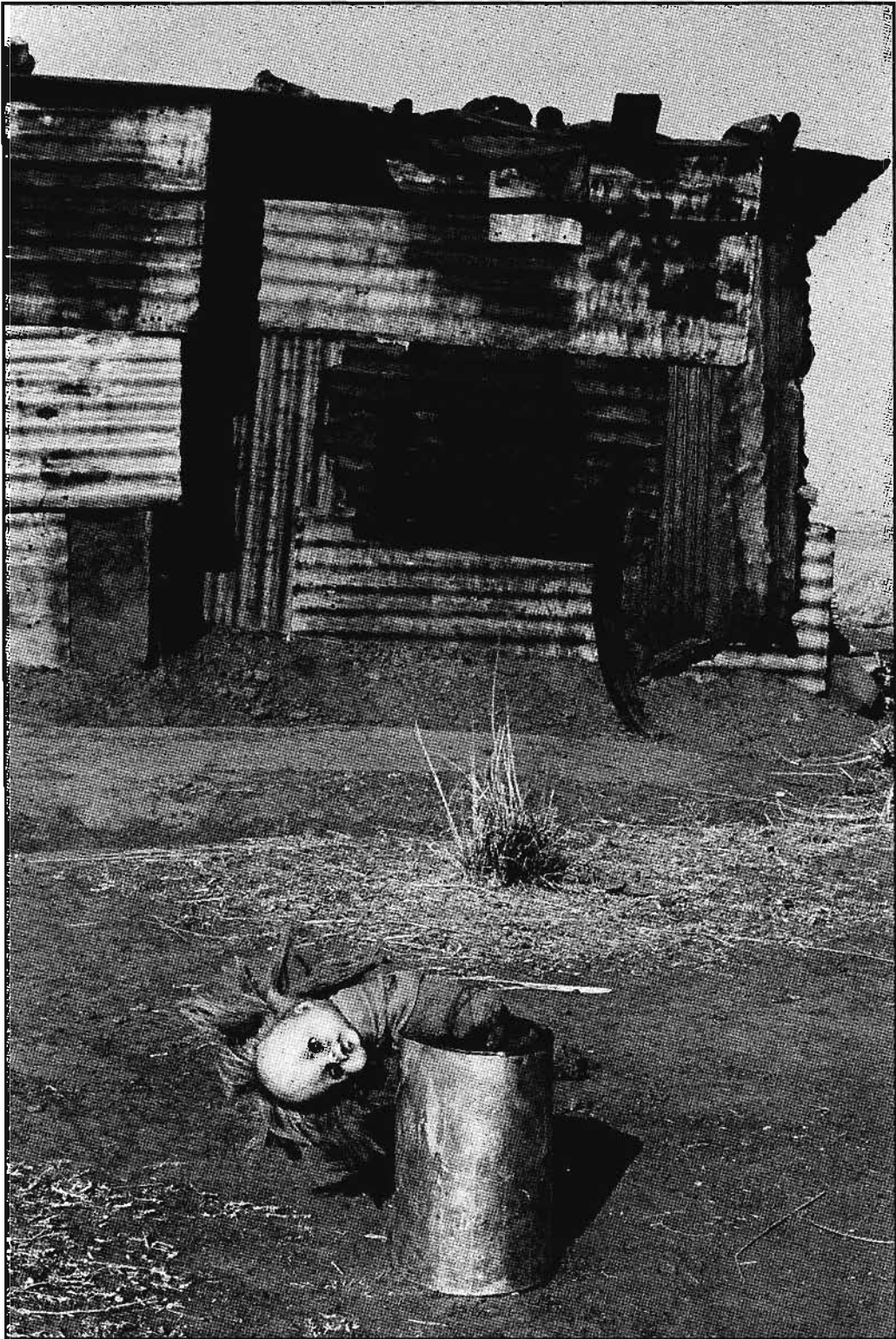


Above: *Paul Dintshi at the shebeen, Vaalrand*
• Santu Mofokeng •





Koelie Moss, Vaalrand • Santu Mofokeng •



Limbless doll, Klippan • Santu Mofokeng •

Poetry

The Fishing Hamlet

A grove of trees
shaped by a tortured past -
scarred and contorted -
guarded the entrance.

Crumpled stale news littered
the subways and sidewalks.

Foaming waves beached
the spills of oil tankers.

The Sunday quiet strolled through deserted streets
closed the toil and tills of shops and offices.

The sky bulged blue
with folds of wind creasing the dome.

Evening found a
bustling street offering its wares -
a strumpet flashing a red smile
or neon lights -
inviting custom....
and men paid for silver
and demanded gold.

Streets and alleys harboured
the tales of centuries gone by.
Time and neglect had ensnared the hamlet
in its cobwebs.

Tenants behind with the rent
huddled in gloomy talk.
Fog settled in alleys
and a bitter sediment of failure
clung to the taste.

Posturing wives held court
in cloistered abodes.

Testy times;
thorny strife;
terse words....

Foul weather clouded the mood....
People opened the throttle to their anger,
fought fires with tinder.

And the fish still not biting....

Words clotted to a silent acrimony.
A sobbing sky soaked the earth;
grumpy fisherman imbibed
to numb the tongue of their women
and a hurling wind lashed the seas.

A wad of sun
stoppered the leaky sky.
Spring visited the village unnoticed
and its happy fever infected few.

Hands pickled in ritual
toiled in monotony.

Yelping dogs in alleyways....
A little village flooded in clear moonlight...
Languorous sounds swam in the night air
like weeping springs unseen.
Limp handshakes slobbered
like wet kisses,
sealed boasts to be reneged.

Still, the boats went out
and slunk in
empty-handed....
and angry wives
and hungry children
drove them back
into the swelling tides....
Lighted lanterns played a bobbing game
as people patrolled the beach;
eyes casted over to where the
breakers broke with relentless fury....
and the sea still imprisoning
the trawlers
and mute waves breast-stroked to the shore.

Torpid hours dragged its feet;
 a salty breeze tousled hair
 and tossed waves beat the sea's might
 upon the ear.
 Pleading, votive prayers
 etched on haggard faces....
 and still the vigil continued.

The morning's stiff, plaited limbs
 unwound as from a love tangle
 and the scanned horizon
 blinked with the empty glare
 of broken bottles;
 mocked the begging stare
 and hope receded with
 the sheen of dawn
 before a harsh, blazing sun.
 Wall-eyed fear seeped into hearts
 as hot tears scalded numbed cheeks.

At home
 beds barren and cold...

A waterbrash of bitterness
 welled up inside many a chest
 as people dunked into memories.
 And still the crowd remained
 chained to the beach.

People burning....
 boiling lobsters
 in life's bubbling pot.
 All beggars in the bustling streets of life....

Gavin Kruger

the past as prologue

jan van riebeeck
 the sailor man
 did not found the cape colony
 in an empty land
 when he set foot
 on the sun-drenched
 shores of table bay
 the territories to the north and east
 had been occupied for centuries
 by the khoikhoi
 and for millions by
 san hunter-gatherers

as poets and minstrels have said
 the struggle is also a struggle
 of memory against forgetting

i suppose that
 under the ancient gaze of the sun
 and under the compound weight
 of rain and hail
 the mounds on the graves
 of shaka, sekhukuni, langalibalele, makana
 and bambata have sunk
 and many seasons
 have since then come to pass

and i suppose that
 even more seasons have come to pass
 under the stubborn gaze of the sun
 since john dube, pixley ka izaka seme
 solomon plaatje and other founding fathers
 were laid to rest
 on the breast
 of the earth our mother
 who alone gives perpetual rest

as the poets and minstrels have said
 there shall be no forgotten names
 and no blank pages in our history
 for the struggle is also a struggle
 of memory against forgetting

Poetry

today
so many many decades later
in the fog of the seasons' end
we rededicate ourselves
to our people's just struggle
for liberty
 and pay tribute to
 our proud lineage of
 leaders warriors and martyrs
 who unfurled the banner
 of struggle

today
we say yes once more
to the clarion call of freedom
and no to the chains of oppression
as we pay tribute to
the stalwarts of our struggle
 who picked up and sharpened
 bambata's fallen spear

today
we also pay tribute to
the memories of ivor jones, bill andrews, c.b. tyler,
colin wade, moses kotane, james la guma, solly sachs,
edwin mofutsanyana, j.b. marks, david bopape, yusuf
dadoo and moses mabhida
 many many of our people
 have tread this hard and narrow
 heel-breaking road to freedom -
 great was their courage
 and noble was their cause
 but
 the winding road goes on and on
 and the journey has yet to be completed

like i have said before
today we say yes once more
to the clarion call of our people
 we salute the brave and fearless comrades
 who criticized the unjust
 with the weapon

at wankie in nineteen-sixty-seven
great was their courage
and noble their cause

like we have said before
it is a long lean hard road
that leads from isandlwana
and on this road
with its petals and roses of blood
we have learnt to sharpen iron with iron
in a baptism of fire

like i have said before
we have long been on this
hard long and lean road of struggle
today
at this crisis point
as we move forward
guided by the lodestar
of revolutionary-theory-and-practice
we shall make another journey within
as we remember solomon mahlangu
with the mist of gunsmoke
in our eyes

today now that
the grass is singing
behind the rising sun
with the leaden tongue
of dumb bullets
in this year of uprising
 we pay tribute to all the
 unsung and unknown revolutionaries
 of our struggle
 who know the anonymity of sacrifice
 in the crucible of revolutionary practice
 where they have sharpened experience
 and theory against each other

like we have said before
more than a thousand seasons
have come to pass on this

hard and lean road
 and today
 pretoria's flag now carries
 one more colour
 the colour of blood -
 our blood

but like we have said before
 we shall now continue to answer
 blow with blow
 and bullet with bullet

and like we have said before
 we shall now pull from their sockets
 all those hands that bar our path
 to liberty
 and plant thorns on their owners' graves

and like we have said before
 today in the fog of the seasons' end
 we heirs to a rich and glorious past
 shall rededicate ourselves
 to fulfilling the ideals of all those
 resolute and steadfast comrades
 who have gone before us

and so
 we shall move forward
 at this crisis point
 to embrace the future
 knowing there is no easy
 road to freedom....

Dikobe wa Mogale

Yellow Ale

Half of my hearing has been stolen
 It is the half that hears a cry
 And feels sympathy.
 Half of my face is missing
 It is the half that was unwrinkled
 At school.
 Some of my reasons are running truant.
 Reasons I never got from
 Presidents, mayors, generals or cops.

It's as if life were a photograph
 Merely made of paper, plastic and light.
 You, in fatigues. Dogtag glowing
 Tanks made of second hand cars
 Bent rifles, burning rubber
 Cushions made of sand
 Bombs filled with sulphur
 Sleep that is interrupted
 Urinating on command
 Killing by demand.

So don't give me your contribution
 To science or law or art
 Because I might start to show you
 How things fall apart.
 How things fall apart.

And now, young soldier
 You might as well bath with me in ale
 Before your stature grows frail
 And your complexion grows pale
 You might as well bath with me
 In this yellow ale.

We had better share this garden
 Before our fathers blow it up.

Matthew Krouse

Cultivating a People's Voice in the Criticism of South African Literature

Mbulelo Vizikhungo Mzamane

A People's Voice: Black South African Writing in the Twentieth Century.
By Piniel Viriri Shava. London: Zed Press (Zed Cultural Studies) and Athens,
Ohio: Ohio University Press. 1989. 179 pages.

The most useful thing about Piniel Viriri Shava's *A People's Voice: Black South African Writing in the Twentieth Century* is its quite unintended demonstration of the need to cultivate an authentic people's voice in the criticism of South African literature.

The book provides a survey of twentieth century African literature in South Africa. Chapter One discusses Sol T. Plaatje's *Mhudi* and *Native Life in South Africa*, 'which expose the deprivation and oppression that follow colonial conquest and occupation'; as well as R.R.R. Dhlomo's *An African Tragedy*, Modikwe Dikobe's *Marabi Dance*, and Peter Abrahams's *Mine Boy*, which all examine 'the problems of urbanisation and proletarianisation which accompany the growth of industrialisation' (p.3). Chapter Two deals with writers of the *Drum* era in the 1950s and prison literature from the 1960s and early 1970s. Chapter Three examines literary responses to the Sharpeville crisis and its aftermath in the fiction of Richard Rive, Peter Abrahams, Alex La Guma, and Nadine Gordimer. Chapters Four and Five deal with poets of the Black Consciousness era and Chapter Six with dramatists mainly from the same period; 'while Chapter Seven, as the concluding chapter, examines writings published in the period after the Soweto uprising of 1976 to the present' (p.4).

Problems with the book begin with its introduction, in which the author claims that the work is:

A comprehensive attempt to analyse and synthesize a wide range of South African literature in the 20th century. The discussion takes into account the problems of earnestness, didacticism, exhortation

and, in some cases, partisanship that accompany committed writing. Hence, the book grapples with the conflict between literary values and political goals by consistently discussing the relationship between form and content. In this respect, it is probably one of the few extended critical works that employ this method. (p.4)

This is the same kind of over-kill found in the quotation attributed to Tim Couzens in the blurb: 'One of the first attempts to provide an overview of black South African writing in the twentieth century... Located in a political and historical context, it can be read as both an introduction and an in-depth study'. It takes an act of will to proceed beyond the blurb and the introduction, for the study is premised on such wobbly theoretical underpinnings as the following:

Black South African literature is a literature of protest. It protests against social, political, economic and military arrangements which deprive black people of civil rights and the free expression of their aspirations. As a result, this literature has tended to be overwhelmingly political and proletarian in outlook, and concerned with the problems of colour and class. This preoccupation with politics makes it incumbent upon black South African writers to address themselves to the subject in a manner that reveals commitment. By commitment I mean 'a matter of orientation, a matter of perceiving social realities and of making those perceptions available in works of art in order to help promote

understanding and preservation of, or change in, the society's values and norms'. (p.1)

Must African writers feel that they have not succeeded because someone does not like what they have to say or how they express themselves, because someone deems their literature 'overwhelmingly political in outlook, and concerned with the problems of race and class'? Who is overwhelmed, one wonders, and whose voice is calling the political and aesthetic shots here? Such shaky philosophical foundations extend to the definition of commitment on which Shava's thesis rests. It is so elastic as to be all-inclusive and non-distinctive. To say that every author is committed is tautologous. Moreover, one can be as committed to political conservatism as to radicalism, and to many other things besides. There are some South African writers who are committed to the eradication of apartheid just as there are others who are committed to upholding it. While it is true then to say that 'in the South African context, commitment is calculated to inculcate political understanding and to promote change' (p.1), it is equally true that others are committed to stalling change indefinitely or to even reversing the clock. Shava does not go beyond rehashing the most tired clichés on the subject. His work is devoid of fresh insight or originality. His discussion of Sol T. Plaatje, to which we shall return in a moment, illustrates some of the book's most glaring weaknesses, theoretically and methodologically; it also calls to question the author's reliability as an interpreter of the texts under discussion.

Now more than ever, it has become reductionist to categorise all African literature in South Africa as protest. Protest literature is writing by the racially oppressed addressed to readers from the ruling class in an attempt to solicit their sympathy and support against discriminatory laws and practices; while, in the context of South Africa, the 'liberal tradition' refers to literature written by whites appealing to Christian liberal, humanistic ideals in race

relations. However, such a distinction based on race blurs similarities between black and white writers who share the same ideological outlook, whether it is conservative, liberal, or progressive. South African writers such as Alex La Guma are not any more protest than Sembene Ousmane, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Pepeta, or, indeed, any of their revolutionary counterparts internationally, such as Bertolt Brecht. The internal audience of protest literature is predominantly white, so that in describing African literature from South Africa as protest the unspoken assumption is that each time an African writes the envisaged audience is non-African. As a concept, protest also gives the white minority, racist regime legitimacy which it does not possess.

We can illustrate the inadequacy of describing the unfolding culture of liberation in South Africa as protest in another way. When students, for example, protest against their university administration, we can infer from their actions that they recognise the legitimacy of the administration and its capacity to redress student grievances - even when they wish to oust their administration, there is always recognition accorded higher authority within the system to intervene

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and resolve their disputes. Protest springs from a feeling of being a ward: it is the activity of apprentices, and it is the action of subordinates who see themselves as such. It is both solicitous and moderate. It functions within the system, often with regard to due process, prescribed channels of communication, and respect for law and order. The end in view of protest action is reform, never revolution. Protest is a quest for accommodation, and not a struggle for empowerment. These same assumptions cannot be made for every South African writer.

In their collaborative studies Gwendoline Carter, Thomas Karis and others repeatedly refer in their discussion of South African extra-parliamentary politics to the progression from protest to challenge. The characteristics of such politics are revolution, not reform: derecognition of government legitimacy, in the manner of Nelson

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Mandela's and Toivo ja Toivo's addresses from the dock during their respective trials; and appeals to the racially oppressed themselves and their progressive allies for meaningful action against the apartheid regime, not excluding the military option. The literature that encompasses this shift is not protest and to categorise it as such limits our capacity to understand the springs of progressive literature from South Africa as well as its goals. At each phase in the history of struggle in South Africa, the aspirations of the liberation movement have been reflected in the unfolding culture of liberation, including literature. The exponents of liberation culture have long since broken beyond the confines of protest. The liberation movement is no longer a movement only mobilising to protest or oppose apartheid policies; it has become a movement working towards being a future government in a liberated South Africa. In its basics, nonetheless, Shava's thesis remains valid in that there is a symbiotic relationship between politics and literature in South Africa. This relationship can be expressed in the following terms: the revolutionary writer articulates the dreams of a people for a better life and the liberation movement fights to make their dreams a reality. That is the link Shava manages to establish from evidence accumulating steadily though unevenly.

The case of Plaatje points to other limitations in Shava's study, as the following statements illustrate:

Though *Mhudi* is not as openly committed as the 'skokiaan' literature, its portrayal of the arrival of the Boers and their subsequent clashes with blacks may be sufficient testimony of its political nature. (p. 7)

Plaatje is, therefore, a committed writer whose political beliefs are mainly communicated through a convincing foreshadowing technique. Though he does not deal directly with problems of industrialization and urbanization, his discussion of the effects of the 1913 Land Act foreshadows the concerns of what Jahn terms 'skokiaan' culture. (p. 14)

The qualificative clauses, introduced by 'though', in both excerpts convey the author's reservations about Plaatje

which we do not share. The most vital thing about Plaatje, which has been largely lost in South African literature and politics, is his concern for rural communities. It is, in fact, erroneous to think of rural themes or needs as being less pressing, less important than urban concerns. Like the neglect of women, a subject to which we shall return in due course, the marginalisation of rural communities has been costly in political as well as in human terms. Yet history repeatedly shows that the most successful struggles have been those in which the women or rural communities have played the most active roles: in the women's anti-pass campaigns of the 1910s in the Orange Free State and in the 1950s throughout the country; as well as the peasant revolts in Bahurutseland, Sekhukhuniland, and Pondoland. We see no need to apologise for Plaatje because he does not write about city life. Addressing the problems of sidelined people and forgotten constituents is not an indictment anyone should bring against Plaatje. His work is contemporary and deals with the most pressing issues of his time. His concerns are not less immediate, for being couched in historical terms, than the problems of industrialisation and urbanisation. *Mhudi* is more than history, reflecting 'attributes the Matabele share with Boers'; it does more than simply manifest 'the prophetic and cyclical nature of Plaatje's conception of history' (p. 12). To be sure, these are among the book's most incisive insights and Shava is correct to point out all these elements. However, the discussion is inconclusive and, in some respects, even ahistorical. Plaatje talks about the past as a way of talking about the present, in much the same way as Ngugi was to do several decades later. The most devastating colonial blow in South Africa, as in settler-colonial Kenya, was land dispossession, the novel's most central issue which also connects *Mhudi* with *Native Life in South Africa* and the 1913 Land Act. Plaatje examines how Africans were alienated from their land, partly through white treachery. But Plaatje also shows, just as Achebe was to argue later in *Things Fall Apart*, that Africans, too, brought certain doom upon themselves through internecine warfare which militated against united African opposition. At a more profound level, therefore, Plaatje's work is about the need among Africans to close ranks. To reverse African losses, he advocates the formation and consolidation of a Pan African front such as the South African Native

National Congress (later the African National Congress) founded in 1912, whose first General Secretary he became. The Congress had, in fact, been convened primarily over the issue of land. *Native Life in South Africa*, therefore, is written with a contemporary political, didactic purpose, and not to see its contemporary significance or radical point of departure is to miss the point.

The section on R.R.R. Dhlomo, Peter Abrahams, and Modikwe Dikobe is not without its own problems. According to Shava, early writings on the problems of industrialisation and urbanisation 'range from R.R.R. Dhlomo's mine stories of the 1920s through the 1930s, to Peter Abrahams's proletarian novels of the 1940s. Although published in 1973, Modikwe Dikobe's *Marabi Dance* belongs to the same period' (p. 15). We are not treated to Dhlomo's short stories, however, an omission which enables Shava to demonstrate his thesis that 'Dhlomo attributes the black man's problem to evil, in a Christian sense' (p. 15). This discussion is

further distorted by the exclusion of Dhlomo's Zulu novels, which is not to say that Shava's observations about Dhlomo's *An African Tragedy* as being little more than a Christian tract are incorrect. But how does one proceed to make general conclusions about an author on the basis of partial evidence? 'Dhlomo is certainly aware of the socio-economic forces that influence black behaviour,' Shava says, 'but his Christian background militates against him exposing and condemning them' (p. 19). Again, this is untrue from the evidence of either the short stories or the Zulu novels, as a discussion of one of his stories can show.

Dhlomo's story 'Juwawa', for example, depicts the exploitation of African mine workers and the evils of the migrant labour system. In their desperation, the mine workers craftily resort to covert resistance, employing every physical weapon and psychological ploy at their disposal. Constantly beaten by his white overseer, in the

worst manifestation imaginable of 'baaskap', 'a bitter flood of invective and hatred, born of a vicious desire for vengeance', wells in the heart of the African miner, Juwawa, the Shangaan - a member of an ethnic group looked down upon, even within the ranks of the dispossessed and exploited Africans. Dhlomo employs bitter irony to convey acrimony engendered by oppression and exploitation. He does not only portray the hard and miser-

able conditions under which Africans live and work but also suggests ways of fighting back, in anticipation by more than fifteen years of Peter Abrahams's work in similar vein. He depicts the working class, particularly the miners, as the most politically potent force among the underprivileged and oppressed, thus further anticipating the tremendous struggles in the 1980s of the National Union of Mineworkers, the strongest of the trade unions in the forefront of the struggle against apartheid capitalism. In his class analysis and consciousness, in an era mark-

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ed by militant trade unionism under the auspices of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union, Dhlomo is more revolutionary than many of his successors of the post-war era.¹

Shava overlooks such evidence that would invalidate or, at least, qualify his conclusions about Dhlomo's work in general. The fault lies with his method, typified in other parts of his book. He starts from foregone conclusions and tries to fit them like bottle tops on texts with the correct size mouth. His method is to exhibit information, usually the views that have been enunciated by some leading authority on the subject, like choice pieces of meat on a butcher's tray. His theoretical formulations do not always flow logically from the texts themselves.

A related problem, already touched upon, in dealing with an author such as Dhlomo, the bulk of whose work is in Zulu, lies with Shava's linguistic limitations. Dhlomo's most militant anti-colonial writing is in Zulu, in his

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biographies of the Zulu kings and in his journalism in *Ilanga lase Natal*, a Zulu/English newspaper he once edited. For Shava the language barrier stretches to other areas of his study. A single example will suffice. In discussing a song from *Survival*, a Workshop '71 production, Shava says that 'the cocky, defiant confidence and the use of black Americanisms such as 'man', 'my man', and 'brothers' in this song betray the influence of American Black Power' (p. 137). It is difficult to fathom why Shava ascribes the 'cocky, defiant confidence' of Africans in South Africa to the influence of Black Power in America. In addition, the disadvantages of not being conversant with the appropriate African language are manifest in attributing to black American influences linguistic features that could well have their origin in African languages. Besides, where do features of African-American English come from? 'Ndoda', 'ndodakithi', 'bafowethu' are Zulu equivalents respectively of the expressions cited; they are also common features of the English spoken by Africans in South Africa.

Shava gives no sense either of Peter Abrahams's stories from *Dark Testament* (1942) and his poetry from the 1930s. One can look here at the poetry to give a sense of what is lost. Abrahams is the precursor of the Black Consciousness poets in South Africa, alongside B.W. Vilakazi, A.C. Jordan, H.I.E. Dhlomo, J.J.R. Jolobe and others who wrote in the African languages. The tradition goes further back to the pioneers of protest such as Citashe and Mqhayi. Two recurring themes in Black Consciousness poetry appear in Abrahams's earliest poems, which appeared in the *Bantu World* of 21 March, 1936. The first of these is black pride, expressed in 'Black is Tabooed', a satiric poem about Africans who view whites as the standard: 'But white is the hue that to us is genteel/ The black one, of course, is tabooed'. The second recurring theme is the need for solidarity among the oppressed in their struggle for liberation, expressed in 'To the Last Man':

Hard pressed against the wall,
But, no we will not fall.
To face the foe,
And toe to toe
We stand, as men
Stand to the last man.

Shava's research may have been too rudimentary to uncover such issues, which fall within the scope of his book. There are other glaring omissions from the book. He leaves out H.I.E. Dhlomo, author of *The Girl Who Killed to Save* (Nongqause the Liberator) (1935), the first published play written in English by an African. H.I.E. Dhlomo also wrote *Valley of a Thousand Hills* (1941), an epic poem which expresses his sense of appreciation of both the beauty of nature and African culture. Thirty seven years were to pass before the publication of another epic poem written in English by an African, Mongane Serote's *Behold Mama, Flowers* (1978). After Ingoapele Madingoane's less distinguished epic, *Africa, My Beginning*, the African epic in English was immensely enriched from an unexpected source by the appearance of Mazisi Kunene's *Emperor Shaka the Great* (1979) and *Anthem of the Decades* (1981), both written originally in Zulu and translated by the author himself. Shava's history is silent on all these significant literary developments.

Chapter 2 ('From Sophiatown to Robben Island') reflects the shortcomings in existing scholarship, on which the author relies so heavily, as well as common prejudices in the field, many of which the author has internalised. In a book that deals with African literature and extra-parliamentary oppositional politics in South Africa, it is incomprehensible how an informed scholar could marginalise the accomplishment of writers of the District Six school of the 1950s. As a great centre of literary, artistic, musical and other cultural activity, District Six in the Western Cape was rivalled only by Sophiatown on the Witwatersrand, both of which have since been demolished under the Group Areas Act. While their contemporaries of the Sophiatown renaissance were primarily concerned with social issues and only indirectly with political affairs in the public arena, writers of the District Six school turned more directly to political subjects. In the 1950s they, and not their *skokiaan* counterparts of Sophiatown, were chiefly responsible for sustaining the protest tradition. Their work mirrors the political preoccupations of the 1950s, manifested in such crusades as the Defiance Campaign Against Unjust Laws, bus boycotts to protest increases in fares, potato boycotts against the use of African convict labour on white farms, and other civil and human rights campaigns. The short stories of Richard

Rive, James Matthews, Peter Clark, Alex La Guma, Bessie Head (associated only for a short while with the group) cannot be passed over in an informed assessment of the literature of the period.

Another unsatisfactory aspect of Shava's book is that his reading of some of the texts is suspect. To take some random examples, Ezekiel Mphahlele's 'A Point of Identity' is not so much about the 'opportunism' of Karel Almeida, 'a "coloured" who lives among blacks' (p. 32), as it is about the identity crisis often suffered by Africans of mixed ancestry. The phenomenon is common in a racially stratified society where the degree of lightness of one's skin confers status and privilege, as Frantz Fanon has explained in his classical studies of 'mulatto' mentality in European-settler countries and in the former colonies. Another case is Shava's reading of the autobiographies of Abrahams and Mphahlele as dealing with 'the strangeness and agony of growing up and working in a police state in the 1950s and early 1960s' (p. 3). But both authors were born before 1920, and Abrahams left South Africa in 1939 and Mphahlele in 1957 to return twenty years later. More perceptive are Shava's comments on Alex La Guma; it is a section that illustrates rare moments of profundity and lucidity in the book:

From *A Walk in the Night* through *The Stone Country* to *In the Fog of the Season's End*, he shows how the political consciousness of his heroes develops in stages. Each book marks a phase of development and a change in the strategy of grappling with the system. To that extent, La Guma's writings exhibit a definite progression in both the complexity of the political situation and black people's response to it. (p. 37)

Yet even if one suppresses the urge to ask where in the author's scheme *And a Threefold Cord* fits, Shava's failure is inexplicable to mention *Time of the Butcherbird* (1979), which would have served to further validate his thesis. Such an omission leads to inconclusiveness. In Chapter 3 ('Conflict or Surrender') his neglect of *Time of the Butcherbird* leads to generalisations such as the following: 'La Guma's portrayal of women as apolitical is by no means limited to *In the Fog*' (p. 61). The implication is that such male chauvinism and stereotyping are typical of La Guma. In *Time of the Butcherbird*, MaTau is the mainstay of the community and a political

firebrand of a woman. Shava's treatment of La Guma reveals another factor which lies at the root of these inaccuracies in interpretation. A critical work published in 1989 that speaks of *In the Fog of the Season's End* (1972) as La Guma's 'recent novel' (p. 46) must have been sorely in need of updating, on which the publishers (not reputed for shoddy work) should have insisted. Lack of a satisfactory organising principle is also at the crux of the problem of interpretation. This leads the author to make absurd statements such as 'Though published in 1973, Robben Island's lurid tales of the hero's confinement and torture belong to the 1960s' (p. 39), when the ordeal of political prisoners continues to the present. Why does the book belong to the 1960s anymore than to the 1970s? And where does *The Island* belong, a play from the 1970s devised by Athol Fugard in collaboration with the actors Winston Ntshona and John Kani, which Shava discusses in his chapter on writing from the 1950s and 1960s? All this adds to Shava's unreliability as a literary historian.

Another fault with Shava's work is that it does not go beyond bourgeois liberal, formalist criticism, as he intends. He quotes, for example, from a 'highly charged', 'lengthy political speech' by a doctor in La Guma's *In the Fog of the Season's End*:

If the community is given the opportunity of participating in making the law, then they have a moral obligation to obey it... But if the law is made for them, without their consent or participation, then it's a different matter... However, even under the circumstances prevailing in our country, I must ask myself, what does this law or that law defend, even if I did not help to make it. If the law punishes a crime, murder, rape, then I could bring myself to assist it. I would consider reporting a murder, a case of assault. But if the law defends injustice, prosecutes and persecutes those who fight injustice, then I am under no obligation to uphold it. They have actually given us an opportunity to pick and choose. Things happen in our country, Mister Beukes. Injustice prevails, and there are people who have the nerve enough to defy it. Perhaps I have been waiting for the opportunity to put my penny in the hat as well.

He then concludes that 'What Rowland Smith terms "naive rhetoric" is at its highest in this speech' (p. 62). Shava should have been locking horns with Rowland Smith at this stage, instead of paying him such undeserved homage. At the heart of Shava's uncritical attitude lies his veneration of Rowland Smith as his mentor. 'I should like to thank Dr Rowland Smith for sharing with me his knowledge of the field of study and for his invaluable corrections and comments', Shava writes in his acknowledgements. Such indebtedness to Smith weighs too heavily on Shava and stifles his originality. He echoes Smith in his mimic's voice, but imitation of thought is not thought.

La Guma's African readers, and others with the same political bent, will find nothing naive about so factual a speech, which carries echoes of Mandela's famous speech at his trial. One is reminded here of Alan Paton's criticism of John Khumalo for speaking out his political mind, in *Cry, the Beloved Country*. What does Shava think politicised Africans, in the circumstances of La Guma's characters, talk about, and in what terms, or with what tone? Who becomes the judge of realistic dialogue in such cases? Shava overreaches himself by presuming to decide on what should constitute an appropriate subject of discourse in such a case or to determine what should be the right tone, which is actually mild in the doctor's speech compared to what one hears in reality. The doctor is unwinding, and his language and tone ring true to the language and tone of letting off steam. The ethical dilemma he is expressing is real. African intellectuals discuss politics among themselves in such terms as the doctor employs. La Guma articulates their views faithfully, in tone and substance.

In writing about revolutionary novels, especially about the novel since Soweto, it is equally amazing that Shava should propound bourgeois liberal techniques, which espouse the epistemology of the individual over the collective ethic that marks the new form of the African

novel in South Africa. Are there immutable laws of the novel which no African writer must transgress? Why must Nadine Gordimer, whose discussion is largely irrelevant to the subject of the book anyhow, be held up as some yardstick for La Guma? The book's comparison of La Guma with Gordimer only serves to demonstrate Shava's failure to grasp the emergence of new literary forms that attempt to respond adequately to the evolving political situation in South Africa. There is little soundness in his method. After comparing Gordimer's orthodox and undeniably consummate skill in handling the short story medium with La Guma's style in *In the Fog of the Season's End*, Shava concludes: 'Without doubt Gordimer is a more accomplished writer than La Guma' (p. 68). How do you conclude from examining one novel by one writer and a short story by another that the one is better

than the other? Why not compare Gordimer and La Guma as short story writers, where they both excel, or as novelists, where both have their respective faults? 'With the exception of Mongane Serote's *To Every Birth its Blood*,' Shava writes, 'no significant novel by a black writer has appeared since Soweto' (p. 157). The fact of the matter is that within South Africa few novelists emerged before Soweto. The field has been increasing ever since, con-

tradicting even Ezekiel Mphahlele who used to believe that one could not write a novel under repressive conditions. The novel since Soweto is not just concerned with depicting the courageous acts of the youth but also with reflecting the upsurge of guerrilla activity and revolutionary action. We get from all these novels a comprehensive coverage of the nature, the character, and the essence of the revolt. The sum total of the picture adds up to a documentation of African experience in the period. The Soweto novel has a structural complexity which its immediate predecessor lacks and contains a number of modifications and innovations. Events in the novel jump into one another; the numerous characters fuse and separate; the time

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sequence varies with each episode and point of view, so that the work becomes loose and variegated. The political direction the events ultimately take and the development of the characters determine the structure of the novels. In other words, the Soweto novel is structurally situational. There are no s/heroes, in the classical sense, in these novels. Although we meet flesh and blood characters with real desires and distinctive eccentricities, their individualism is submerged beneath, or shines through, the collective predicament. The community as a whole is the s/hero of these novels. Collective concerns triumph over purely personal aspirations. Thus the social environment itself, in so far as it determines our being and consciousness, becomes the central protagonist in the unfolding events. Even if some of them fail, there are many earnest experiments in these novels which merit discussion on their own terms. They possess characteristics Shava cannot grasp without the aid of original research and independent thought. *A People's Voice* is a work of apprenticeship in this regard.

The title of the book gestures towards a people's voice, but the mode of discourse denies the people their authentic voice, on their own terms. In Chapters 3 ('Ideas Under Arrest') and 4 ('Black is Beautiful'), Shava's otherwise able interpretation of Black Consciousness poetry is marred by such denial of voice. There is a barrier he cannot knock down to reach the otherness of his subjects. He has so internalised the dominant mode of discourse in the West that his discussion comes dangerously close to an exercise in passing disparaging remarks on authors who depart from Western orthodoxy. Not only are his parameters fixed but also his ears are blocked. Just as music to the oppressed is noise to the oppressor, for the most part Shava cannot hear the music in the compositions of poets such as Mafika Gwala and Don Mattera. As always, there is little engagement in Shava's work with

mainstream critics, so that without much disputation he cites received opinion about the reasons for the dominance of poetry in the Black Consciousness era, when in the 1950s African literature in English had been almost exclusively prose fiction. Although he acknowledges that 'some of the poems written by these 'new' black poets were very direct statements of political anger and pain', he is still too intimidated by the authorities he cites such as Gordimer, as when he says: 'These writers realized that, for the anticipated literary revival to succeed, they had to adopt a non-militant style that would protect them from banning while at the same time allow them to criticize the injustices of the system' (p. 71).

There are, in fact, two theories that have been advanced to account for the popularity of poetry among writers of the Black Consciousness era. The first of these theories was originally advanced by Nadine Gordimer. She argued that, in the light of censorship after Sharpeville, 'black writers have had to turn for survival away from the explicit if not to the cryptic then to the implicit; and in their case they have turned to poetry'.¹ Their need for self-expression amidst repression, she argued, had led them to adopt a form of expression less vulnerable than the explicit medium of prose which had invited censorship upon the writing of their predecessors. That is the widespread judgement, now canonical, which Shava upholds.

The second, more credible theory was expressed by Richard Rive, who did not subscribe to the view that the reason poetry became a popular medium was that by its very nature it was cerebral and, therefore, more difficult for the censors to fathom. He pointed out that the poetry of some of the leading literary figures in the revival period, such as James Matthews, was straightforward, explicit, and more prosaic than poetic. Indeed, there were no T.S. Eliots and Christopher Okigbos among the poets of the new generation. 'What may have happened is that

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the person of the moment who started off the... wave was Oswald Mtshali, and Mtshali chose poetry, for whatever personal reasons,' Rive said. 'Because of his success with it, we have had a wave of poets writing.'² Siphso Sepamla, too, attributed the upsurge of poetry to the fact that many aspiring writers rubbed shoulders in the townships with Mtshali and Seroti, who had become successful as poets, and were seized by a desire to emulate them as the only role models they had. 'Those fellows were a great inspiration, because a lot of the people who are writing today saw them, talked to them; they know their experiences and they know how they translated their experiences into poetry,' he said. 'And I think what is being done today is an extension of what those guys started.'³ Certainly the situation is more complex than Shava makes it out to be.

From both poetry chapters I can further demonstrate Shava's lack of intimacy with the material and the book's over-reliance on secondary sources, from my own specific case. On at least two occasions, Shava cites my objections to Mtshali's *Sounds of a Cow-hide Drum* but, with one exception, Shava has not read my essays on the subject. He quotes instead - that is already twice removed - from Ursula Barnett's *A Vision of Order*:

Mtshali's cynical and sarcastic attitudes, his oblique and ironic use of vivid, suggestive similes and images, and the profound meaning that lies beneath the apparent simplicity of his poetry, all contribute towards their total effect. This technique, however, is said to have disgruntled younger, radical writers like Mbulelo Mzamane, who wanted to see 'revolutionary fire' in Mtshali's poetry. (p. 72) Taking his cue from this Shava writes:

While critics like Mbulelo Mzamane have attacked what they consider to be an over-emphasis on this Blake-like innocence and simplicity, they have overlooked the fact that what at first appears to be a poem celebrating innocence and the rapport between the shepherd and his environment becomes a biting critique of the system's inequality; this is entirely compatible with the indirect approach Mtshali sets out to adopt. (p. 73)

How can one tell what has been overlooked from essays one has not read? The objection raised in the essays

concerned the politics pertaining to the critical reception of texts in South Africa and white liberal patronage, which placed Mtshali as a role model for us all ahead of Mongane Wally Serote, Mafika Pascal Gwala, Mafika Mbuli, Njabulo Ndebele, Mandlenkosi Langa and others of the same period, better skilled in some important respects than Mtshali. Although Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim) had inaugurated the Black Consciousness poetic renaissance, there was no disputing the fact that Mtshali had given it an impetus it may otherwise never have received. His fame preceded his publication in book form; in 1970 he was listed in a directory of 1,100 important living poets in English by the St James Press, London. The success of his book, *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum*, which appeared the following year, enabled publishers to place more poetic works by black and white poets on the market. His book whetted the appetites of many South African readers for poetry and many bookshops had long waiting lists of customers who had ordered the book. It was reprinted six times in twelve months. 'Its unprecedented high sales - 16,000 in South Africa alone - established a record for it as the only book of poetry ever to have made a profit for its publisher,' Gillian Goldstein wrote.⁴

Mtshali's reception in the press was enthusiastic. Renoster publications claimed in the blurb of his book that his was 'the first sustained voice in the English poetry of this country for at least twenty years.' But, as Mphahlele pointed out in response to this claim, 'Could it be that Dennis Brutus and Mazisi Kunene's work is not considered the English poetry of this country?'⁵ In her foreword to Mtshali's collection, Nadine Gordimer wrote: 'Many people write poetry, but there are few poets in any generation, in any country. There is a new poet in Africa, and his name is Oswald Mtshali'. Responding to Gordimer's foreword, Tim Couzens wrote: 'Its over-laudatory tone is unfortunate and has been attacked by many South Africans. In the long run it can do Mtshali little good. For the truth is that Mtshali's poetry is marred by many faults, and patronization by the liberal elements of white (and rich) South Africa will not help to iron out these faults'.⁶ Reviews continued to pour in which found Mongane Serote lacking by comparison. In his review of *Yakhal' inkomo*, Stephen Gray wrote: '*Yakhal' inkomo* misses out

on the incisiveness of Mtshali's social criticism. And where Mtshali could just manage to lasso in a whole herd of images with a catch-all punchline, Serote ventures forth in a poem with no sense of direction, and the result is a run-away sprawl'.⁷

It was left to Tim Couzens once again to warn against the tendency of white publishers and reviewers to patronize certain African writers and to pontificate about literary developments in the African community. In his review of *Yakhal' inkomo*, Tim Couzens drew the following comparison between Serote and Mtshali:

The book has not been received nearly as well as Oswald Mtshali's *Sounds of a Cowhide Drum* published the previous year. The reviewers have not been very sympathetic but since they have often been liberal whites this may be a point in the book's favour. There could be two reasons contributing towards the failure of the book to sell as well as Mtshali's. The first is precisely the fact that Mtshali's book had already come out, liberal South Africa had made its fuss over a black writer, fashion must move to something else. The second is that some reviewers detected a note of black power in the poems and shied away. Serote's poems seem to me, however, to display a sharper intellect and a more complex poetic skill than Mtshali's writing.⁸

There are other inaccuracies in Shava's discussion of poets of the Black Consciousness era. He mistakes Don Mattera, banned since 1973 and inaccessible until the 1980s, for a poet who emerged after Soweto. 'For all its rage, 'What's in this Black Shit', he says about a poem by Serote, 'is devoid of the militant tone that characterises the work of poets such as Don Mattera and other new poets who wrote after the Soweto uprising' (p. 85). In addition, it is erroneous to say of James Matthews: 'One reason why Matthews's poetry is so assertive is the influence of Black Consciousness' (p. 86). Matthews was an influence on, not influenced by, Black Consciousness. Serote makes this point when he says: 'From around 1969-1974 a whole group of people started writing: the newspapers described us as 'a new wave of poetry',

whatever that means. At the head of this group was James Matthews, who set the standards of how we were going to deal with the things around us.'⁹ And then the omission of Siphso Sepamla from both poetry chapters is inexplicable. Shava does not seem to have heard, either, of Farouk Asvat, Essop Patel, Achmat Dangor and numerous others who emerged before 1976.

The division between the two poetry chapters is blurred. The first (Chapter 3), which is also the best chapter in the book, ends with a promise to discuss writers of the Soweto era in the next chapter. Instead, Shava continues with a discussion of Mtshali, Matthews, Mattera, and A.N.C. Kumalo (mistaken for a Black Consciousness poet, despite his initials that link him to the Congress or Charterist tradition). One also wonders whether Mazisi Kunene, in exile since 1960, is supposed to pass for a Black Consciousness poet too. Shava does not discuss a single poet to emerge after Soweto. Yet in contrast to the intimidation, apathy, stagnation, and pessimism which set in after Sharpeville, Soweto was followed by the biggest literary outburst South Africa had known. Many cultural groups of Black Consciousness persuasion emerged, the first of which was Medupe from Soweto, the forerunner of the new writers movement. Other groups mushroomed throughout the country: Mpumalanga Arts Ensemble, Malopoets, Bayajula Art Group, Creative Youth Association, Madi Group, Allah Poets and many others. Mike Kirkwood, who in March 1978 helped launch *Staffrider*, the mouthpiece of the new writers movement, described it in the following terms:

half-inchoate; very loosely structured: a core group of perhaps a thousand; intellectually diverse - from the highly educated to the newly literate; a prevailing collective identity which includes within it some vulnerable and alienated life experiences; a high degree of political commitment within the broad framework of black consciousness; needing urgently to set down collectively perceived key experiences of the oppressed; exulting in the discovery of a potentially new huge audience with whom the writers feel at one; occasionally looking over the shoulder at those readers in the 'dominant' culture the 'dominated' writers used to address.¹⁰

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The most celebrated, prolific, and representative poets of the new writers movement were Christopher van Wyk, Fazel Johenness, and Ingoapele Madingoane. In addition, the revival of prose fiction produced Mtutuzeli Matshoba. Shava tells us nothing about all this.

Typical of the whole experience actually, with its secondary and tertiary source flavour, is the following admission from Chapter 6 ('The People's Cause'): 'My discussion of musical plays, therefore, will not be based on texts but on summaries and articles written by journalists and literary scholars who either had the opportunity to carry out research inside South Africa, or saw the plays performed live, within or outside the country' (p. 125). This lack of personal familiarity with the material leads to such anomalous statements as the following: 'If Fugard's protest in *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* is criticized for being too soft, the protest in this song may also be criticized for being too shrill and authoritative' (p. 138). It is absurd, to say the least, that anyone should separate in this way the lyrics of a song from its music. At this level of discourse, we might as well criticise Handel's 'Hallelujah Chorus' for not saying much more than 'Hallelujah'. How does one object to a song for being 'too shrill and authoritative'? And to bring up an earlier issue, what is the right tone of protest, and who determines it? Shava's answers to such questions have the effect of repeatedly stifling the people's authentic voice, by appealing to the aesthetic sensibilities of people like himself. He presumes to pronounce on what tone would be acceptable, what tone to adopt to articulate their grievances. This is tantamount to saying that they are unreasonable really to speak in a 'shrill and authoritative' voice; they are no different from a lawyer who thinks that if s/he raises her/his voice s/he will prevail over the judge. But the people do not recognise the jurisdiction of the court over them! Shava does much better in putting forward the people's case in his discussion of the play-texts, but again we are left wondering whom he represents when he proceeds, as in the next chapter, to discuss Athol Fugard's *Master Harold... and the Boys* and *A Lesson for Aloes*. In fact, the very act of attributing to Fugard such plays as *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* and *The Island*, both written in collaboration with the actors Winston Ntshona and John Kani, is another manifestation of the manner in which Shava keeps denying the people their voice.

Chapter 7 ('Recent Trends in Black Writing') is the weakest even when we confine our observations to Njabulo Ndebele, whom he discusses in greater depth than the others and with some degree of perspicacity. 'When he consistently advocates heroic resistance, Njabulo Ndebele does not express belief in revolutionary politics,' Shava says. 'In *The Revolution of the Aged*, his protagonist condemns Soweto youths for revolutionary idealism and ill-timed action' (p. 149). To condemn the youth for revolutionary idealism and ill-timed action does not imply opposition to revolutionary politics. Quite the contrary, for to mount a successful revolution requires that those engaged in the struggle should cultivate just the qualities advocated in the poem: sober judgement, mature deliberation, and solid organisation. To produce the desired results youthful energy needs to be harnessed to tactics derived from experience. Blind rage is no substitute for strategy; the youth must eliminate their impetuosity. The point of Ndebele's poem is that revolution always builds on what has gone before, so that it is a mistake for the youth to dismiss the aged without finding out first what the elderly know and learning from their experience. The old man who speaks in Ndebele's poem is too feeble to act himself, but the youth need his wisdom. There is nothing 'gradualist' either in the approach Ndebele advocates. As a political term, 'gradualism' refers to the politics of British, French and other colonial regimes - South Africa being a special case of what others term settler-colonialism - who argued that their colonial subjects were not ready for self-government and needed further tutelage. The old man of Ndebele's poem advises the youth to strategise before embarking on any course of action, but he is all for revolution sooner rather than later, as he says in the last stanza of the poem, which Shava does not quote because it contradicts his interpretation:

now is the time
pluck the fruit
and feed the future with its ripeness.¹¹

'One can only conclude that, like his poem, 'The Revolution of the Aged,' Shava adds, 'Fools' is a story that deliberately sets out to celebrate passive, anti-revolutionary resistance' (p. 154). Neither in his poem nor short story

does Ndebele celebrate 'passive, anti-revolutionary resistance'. Ndebele explains his literary creed and intention in his criticism of the protest tradition, what he terms the literature of surface meanings, beyond which he has moved. On several occasions he has argued that we know oppression exists in South Africa. There is little creativity in literature that points out that fact as its sole objective. Writers should be more concerned with conveying the totality of human experience, which includes the creativity of the people: how they survive deprivation, severance, and loss; and how they transcend their oppressive situation. In 'Fools', as in Athol Fugard's *Master Harold... and the Boys* or in Andre Brink's *A Dry White Season*, we learn that the black person is the soul of the white person in South Africa and that the white people who deny the complementarity in such a symbiotic relationship consign their own souls to perdition. Such a revelation in the whipping episode at the end of the story constitutes the true revolutionary import of Ndebele's work. As a creative writer his task is to transform such experiences, ordinary or sordid as they may be, into tropes for our contemplation. He looks beyond the vicious cycle of oppression and protest in order to celebrate enduring human qualities. His work is thus truly transformational.¹²

The most telling indictment, though, against the book is its total neglect of women writers. Yet the tradition of literature by women writers in South Africa is unique and challenging: it constitutes the most impressive, most substantial body of literature by women writers in Africa. In the English language, Noni Jabavu blazed the trail through her autobiographical work, mingled with anthropological and feminist concerns: *Drawn in Colour: African Contrast* (1960) and *The Ochre People: Scenes from South African Life* (1963). In the sphere of autobiography, she was followed by the author of *A Window on Soweto* (1977), Joyce Sikakane, already known as a journalist and a poet. Autobiography, revitalised in the 1980s, has produced Winnie Mandela, Ellen Kuzwayo, Miriam Makeba, Caesarina Kona Makhoere, Sindiwe Magona, and Maggie Resha. Fatima Dike emerged in the

1970s as the first major woman playwright in English and was succeeded in the 1980s by Gcina Mhlope. In English prose fiction, Bessie Head, who died in exile in Botswana in 1986, occupies pride of place as the leading African female novelist. Her fiction reaches deep into her psyche to expose her trauma as an African woman of mixed ancestry, so scathed by rejection that for a time she lost her country, her sanity, her chance to teach and to earn a living, and her credibility as an immigrant. Between 1968 and 1986 she wrote four novels, a collection of short stories and several uncollected magazine stories, and a short history of Serowe in Botswana. Miriam Tlali emerged after Head with the publication of *Muriel Metropolitan* (1974), a novel based on her experiences as a clerktypist in a Johannesburg store, selling electrical wares, her second novel, appeared in 1980. Following in the footsteps of Gladys Thomas, poet and short story writer from Cape Town, Zoe Wicomb is a new African voice from Cape Town. Other women writers in African literature from South Africa

Shava's work does not go beyond bourgeois liberal, formalist criticism, as he intends

include Lauretta Ngcobo, Farida Karodia, Amelia House, Lindiwe Mabuza, Baleka Kgositsile, Rebecca Matlou, Christine Douts Qunta, Maud Motanyane, Nomavenda Mathiane, and Liseka Mda. A People's Voice turns out in the end to be no more than an African male voice choir.

What Piniel Shava's work accomplishes, though, is to bring together, in one readable volume, information from disparate sources. It also provides a valuable bibliography for beginners. His survey will be of some use to people coming to the subject for the first time. Otherwise it adds little to such more authoritative surveys as we already have by Es'kia Mphahlele, Vernie February, Ursula Barnett, Jacques Alvarez-Pereyre, and Jane Watts. The project is over-ambitious, an undertaking that proves to be way beyond the author's ability. A gesture here towards formalist textual criticism and a gesture there towards Marxist contextual interpretation, it ends up doing neither efficiently. And, in the final analysis, Shava achieves quite the opposite of what he sets out to do: he stifles the people's voice and points to the need for just such a voice.

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NOTES:

1. Nadine Gordimer, 'New Black Poetry in South Africa', in *Black Interpreters*, Johannesburg: Spro-Cas/Ravan, 1973, pp. 49-74 (p. 52).
2. 'Interview with Bernth Lindfors'. *Geneva Africa*, 18, no. 2 (1980), 45-64 (p. 63).
3. 'An Interview with Siphos Sepamla conducted by Stephen Gray on 21 June, 1977', *Contrast*, 11, no. 3 (October 1977), 88-93 (p. 92).
4. *Oswald Mbuviseni Mshali: South African Poet*, an annotated bibliography compiled by Gillian Goldstein. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, Department of Bibliography, Librarianship and Typography, 1974, p.i.
5. Ezekiel Mphahlele, *The African Image*, Second Edition, London: Faber, 1974.
6. Tim Couzens 'Appendix: South Africa' (Annual Bibliography of Commonwealth Literature 1971), *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 7, no. 2 (1972), 136-147 (p.138).
7. Stephen Gray, 'Review: *Yakhal' inkomo*, *Star Literary Supplement*, 9c, 8 December 1972.
8. Tim Couzens, 'Appendix: South Africa' (Annual Bibliography of Commonwealth Literature 1972), *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 8, no. 2 (1973), 147-157 (p. 148).
9. Mongane Wally Serote, 'Panel on Contemporary South African Poetry', *Issue*, 6, no. 1 (1976), 25-46 (p. 25).
10. Mike Kirkwood, Letter to M.V. Mzamane, 17 March 1980.
11. Njabulo Ndebele, 'The Revolution of the Aged', in *Ten Years of Staffrider*, 1978-1988, edited by Andries Oliphant and Ivan Vladislavic, Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1988, pp. 241-242.
12. See 'Turkish Tales and Some Thoughts on South African Fiction', *Staffrider*, 6, no. 1 (1984), 24-25, 42-48; 'Noma Award-Acceptance Speech', *Staffrider*, 6, no. 2 (1985), 39-40; 'The Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Some New Writings in South Africa', *Journal of African Studies*, 12, no.2 (1986), 143-157; 'The English Language and Social Change in South Africa', *The English Academy Review*, 4 (1987).

*Alexander Goulding***I Scream**

The gutter has humor
 And now I see Why
 While strolling the flat stones
 In a slow, fast-winding day
 I chanced and a friend
 Too see

Africana

Cry out her toil
 And in break of her pain
 Have ice-cream jangling
 A smooth wet reprise

And to mind

Eating this wage
 The toil of walking
 institute

A Rich Gift**My son**

You have as heritage
 The knowledge of this other
 Attribed character
 Absence present
 Overwhelming far

Consider son a moment then
 This other gift in

Music....

An entirety gift
 An expression met
 In expression one of many

By many son

Saying then
 That these are yet unseen....

Tall Trees

I have not come to pillage the fruits
that you hold out, on your unreachable crests,
to the people of the stars and the tribe of the winds,
nor to tear down the flowers I have never seen before,
meaning to wear them or hide some shame I overlook,
I who am a child of barren hills.

But it suddenly came to me in my last sleep
that always I was tethered in the lianas of the night
like the old pirogue of fables
in which all the days of my youth were passed,
from the shores of evening to the shores of dawn,
from the cape of the moon to the cape of the sun.

I've hauled myself out, and here at your heart I am,
mountain of plants!
Here I have come to question your absolute silence,
to seek for the place where the winds are hatched
before they reach us, their wings full of holes,
broken by the immense net of the deserts
and by the snares of inhabited towns.

What do I hear and see, tallest of trees?
Here are lost sounds to recover which are lost again,
like underground rivers
crossed by enormous blind birds
carried off by the rapid currents
to be engulfed in slime.

It's your breath, your breath so deep
and already as sore as an old man's
climbing the coast of his memories
descending the slope of his exhausted days.
Your breath, and the breath of innumerable birds,
and of your branches grazed by the whole
apocalyptic world.

But what may I see in your colourless night,
your night lasting longer than the death of virtuous men,
and the life of the wretched poor,
cave of leaves, out of which maybe one passage leads to
the shore

and another to the horizon's hell,
you like a rainbow binding the continents?

I see nothing but the sun sinking,
like a pig assegaied in the scrub of the sky,
pig of light taken in powerful nets
that you spring in your ripe fruit and tough flowers,
high up, down there, at the extreme limit
where the spirit of earth and the force of the tree meet.

But later, even though the days are numberless
as your succession of leaves already fallen to hell,
even though the sevenfold nights have thickened
the night of time more than seven times,
so that I may gather the flowering dawns
at the end of the broken stalks of dusk,
I will always keep the memory of your silence
and of your strange clarity.

They'll be like pebbles thrown on the sand,
collected by an old sailor
who carries them home, placing them besides the shell
of a balanced miniature pirogue
bought in a distant isle that only a dream inhabits,
but where huts line the sea.

Rather they'll be like unworked pieces of ebony,
of rosewood or some other precious stuff
that I will place on my table
where your memory will slowly carve them
into fetishes with glassy eyes,
silent fetishes between my books.

Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo

*Translated by Stephen Gray from: Presque-Songs in
Translations from the Night: Selected Poems*

A Well Traversed Landscape

Cecily Lockett

Interiors by Jennie Roberts, published by Carrefour Press 1990.

The landscape of the 'interior' which Jennie Roberts traverses in her first volume is unfortunately a well covered terrain and not even her undoubted technical skill can save this collection from producing a distinct sense of *deja vu* - even boredom. The poetic paradigm within which Jennie Roberts writes is that of post-war modernism - the world of alienation and personal crisis:

Who are you?
asks the woman
who stares at me
(The Looking Glass)

I belong nowhere;
am straining an inner ear
for the sound of unknown things

World is alien
Everything is separate
Everything has its own
unknowable being
(Vacuum)

As if to emphasize her location within the fractured modernist world evoked by T.S. Eliot, Roberts even borrows his well-worn metaphor 'fag-ends' in her poem 'Studio Skeleton':

As it is, she has the better deal;
hanging around the studio all day
uncompromisingly posed
she elicits sighs, a little inspiration;
and imperceptibly
drifts off with the fag-ends of endeavour.
Ageing, anonymous, but living
in her abstract kind of way.

In line with her modernist tendencies, Roberts is also deeply concerned with the problems of poetic creation, of the poet as a maker of artifacts. Yet again, this is a well-worn subject in poetry and the poems are distinctly tired: 'Chrysalis', for example offers nothing but a re-working of a standard romantic-symbolist metaphor for artistic creation. One of the better poems on this topic is 'Dragonflies', unoriginal in itself but with evidence of sensitive writing:

Dragonflies
over a dark pool
transcend the actuality
of movement in space,
weave in the sun
visions of ecstasy.

And everything,
every thing for the moment
is immaculate light.

The pool waits,
sweeps on the surface
images to and fro -

until dusk,
or the possible
fracture of singing wings.

Despite passages of inspired writing, 'Interiors' seems dated and uninteresting because its author generally refuses the challenges of the contemporary world, preferring to take refuge in the safer milieu of personal crisis rather than to confront the awkwardness of social processes. The blurb on the cover claims that Jennie Roberts focuses 'the feelings of isolation and closeness, dislocation or affirmation

that each of us experiences at some time in our lives'. The assumption is that 'all of us' are concerned with identity crises and aesthetic dilemmas and that 'all of us' are middle-class and white and that we do not contextualize our problems within a specific social structure. The flaw in Roberts's collection, as far as I am concerned, is that she fails to address problems of context such as race, class and gender, and as a result her poems are largely conservative products of an outmoded bourgeois humanism. Despite the perceived proclamations of Albie Sachs to the contrary, in South Africa we are still faced with problems of severe social exploitation that must inevitably shape our sense of personal identity. Roberts ignores these problems and they are elided in her work. Her poems are 'self-centred' not only in their subject matter but also in the sense that they never attempt to cross divides of race, class and gender. As a South African woman poet she never confronts the topic of her own gender identity. Her sense of alienation is one borrowed from, and articulated in, the poetic language of Anglo-American male poets. When she does write about women one senses that she writes, or judges, from an androcentric and class-based perspective. In a poem about an elderly woman, which she rather pejoratively - and without irony titles 'Harridan', she offers only a superior kind of pity for a woman, obviously of a lower class, who attempts to retain her youthful appearance:

How does she see herself?
 Old Jade
 with green hooded eyes.
 Sparse black spikes
 boldly fringe dark pools,
 seep a silent protest
 over sagged pink cheeks
 ('Young Peach'
 it says on the box).

 All the jangling brilliance
 that was
 is there.

In 'Miss What's-Her-Name' Robert's subject is again a lower class white woman, one who inhabits 'the gaunt public room/of a boarding house for third rate hotel'. This

woman is locked into her 'crumpled reality', a world which Roberts explains in terms of symbols and fairy tales rather than social and economic imprisonment:

Who locked the Princess in her tower?
 and the Princes
 who should have broken the spell:
 were they too human, too bold?

One finally, will carry her off
 when she tiptoes down,
 leaving in a numbered room
 a crumpled reality.

Similarly, in 'Housemaid' she offers a facile treatment of a complex subject: if the poem is contextualized in South Africa, the housemaid is a black woman. Jennie Roberts speaks as a white madam who 'knows' what black people think:

Like the shop on the corner
 her face is closed.
 Blinds are drawn down,
 windows reflect
 distant patches of sunlight
 fading behind bleak cumilli
 of the current climate

 though closed
 for the present
 she maintains her goodwill.

It is to be regretted that Carrefour Press, having taken the decision to promote a woman poet, should choose one whose work is marked by its lack of engagement with the challenging problems of being a woman and a poet in contemporary South Africa.



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