Staffrider

Vol. 1 No. 1 March 1978

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About Staffrider

A staffrider is, let's face it, a *skelm* of sorts. Like Hermes or Mercury — the messenger of the gods in classical mythology — he is almost certainly as light-fingered as he is fleet-footed. A skilful entertainer, a bringer of messages, a useful person but . . . slightly disreputable. Our censors may not like him, but they should consider putting up with him. A whole new literature is knocking at the door, and if our society is to change without falling apart it needs all the messages it can get — the bad as well as the good.

Like him or not, he is part of the present phase of our common history, riding 'staff' on the fast and dangerous trains of our late seventies. He is part of the idiom of this time. He appears on page 30 of our first issue thanks to artist William 'Cheeks' Legoale of the Creative Youth Association, Diepkloof.

The magazine which bears his name has been established by RAVAN Press in an attempt to respond, as publishers, to the great surge of creative activity which has been one of the more hopeful signs of recent times.

The new writing has altered the scope and function of literature in South Africa in ways we have still to discover. The aim of this magazine is not to impose 'standards' but to provide a regular meeting place for the new writers and their readers, a forum which will help to shape the future of our literature.

A feature of much of the new writing is its 'direct line' to the community in which the writer lives. This is a two-way line. The writer is attempting to voice the community's experience ('This is how it is') and his immediate audience is the community ('Am I right?') Community drama, 'say' poetry, an oral literature backed and often inspired by music: this is the heart of the new writing, and the signs are that prose forms are re-emerging in a new mould.

It is for this reason that the work appearing in STAFFRIDER flies the flag of its community. We know that there are many groups of writers in Southern Africa whom we haven't been able to reach, and we would welcome their contributions. We hope that the work appearing in the magazine will be selected and edited as far as possible by the groups themselves. The magazine is prepared for publication by RAVAN Press but has no editor or editorial board in the usual sense.

This is our policy: to encourage and give strength to a new literature based on communities, and to establish important lines of communication between these writers, their communities, and the general public. At the same time we welcome writers who write and publish essentially as 'unattached' individuals, yet find the STAFFRIDER environment congenial.

Soweto Speaking
to Miriam Tlali

photo by **Ralph Ndawo**

This column, which will be a regular feature in STAFFRIDER, began in two ways. One way was Miriam Tlali's book MURIEL AT METROPOLITAN, based on her own experiences while working at an 'HP' radio store. After the book's appearance Miriam Tlali was approached by many people who had 'a story to tell, but how do I tell it?'

The other way was an American book which broke new ground in the history of publishing. Studs Terkel, the book's editor, criss-crossed America for three years interviewing working people — from midwife to gravedigger — to find out how they felt about their jobs and about themselves. The book was a bestseller and of great interest to sociologists. But more than this it was a new kind of book which turned 'everyman' into an author.

This column is a logical extension of Miriam Tlali's own work (her story, SOWETO HIJACK appears in this issue) and at the same time it is an invitation to all our readers to speak of their lives. Miriam Tlali can be contacted through STAFFRIDER, 105 Corbett Place, De Korte/Bertha Street corner, Braamfontein. Telephone 724-4033.

We are also hoping that other writers and writers' groups will follow the lead given in SOWETO SPEAKING.

There's a lot one could do in this work of mine. Lots of money. Who doesn't need money, Sis? Everybody wants money. We are not like people in the farms who can sit in the shades for some months and wait for crops to grow and ripen. Here, if you sit in the shade you die. There's rent, food and other things. Do you know how many lose their houses and get thrown out for failing to pay? *(He pinches his eyes and smiles)* O-ho-ho! You go round the townships in Soweto and you'll really see what is happening. People land in the streets. Starving people. People are crying everywhere. The black-jacks don't care. They come and do their work. They throw everything into the street. And rent is going up, up, up all the time. A few months pass and the insect-like thing, what do you call it? Yes, helicopter throws papers and the children run and grab them. Rent is going up, rent is going up. Where will it all end? *(Shakes his head).*

Mr X.
Unlicensed fresh produce and poultry vendor.
11.2.78

When I got my pension, I was sorry. I really felt afraid at what I thought would happen. I felt finished. I had nothing saved, but I had worked all my life, non-stop. I've seen many old people move about picking pieces of paper in the streets. I was afraid of being without work. No pay, nothing every week? I was lucky. My children consoled and comforted me. But one cannot put all your trust in what children promise. Very soon they forget. I knew I would not be able to just sit and do nothing. I would have to go on with something. Maybe selling old used beer bottles and cold drink tins and beer tins, something. With my pension money I bought this Mazda van you see. I paid the deposit three years ago and I am not sorry. It has already paid for itself and I have finished all the credit. The trouble is, you try to do something and everybody starts doing it also. Like the tins. I started a partnership with a friend of mine in Evaton. He knew where they throw away many tins from the workers in these building places. You know, anywhere where men are working in big groups on contract. You know they drink a lot and they throw away the tins and bottles. That friend of mine was the collector. He's got a cart and two horses. He sells wood to the shebeens in the location and they give him tinfuls of 'moroko' (the roughage and remnants from sifted and strained home-made beer). He then sells the 'moroko' to farmers for feed-

'I go for vegetables very early in the morning. Five in the morning I am gone. Ha. Ho. There is no sleeping. You must be wake up.'

ing cattle and horses. I used to fetch these tins from Evaton and bring them to Industria. We made money. Better than sitting down. We worked and worked. When they advised us to hit them flat, we packed many on to the van. We worked and our children could eat. It gave us life. But then, everybody started doing what we were doing. Women and men would come carrying tins in sacks on their heads. The 'dres' (queue) would be *long*. You don't know whether they sleep there or not. You come at 5 in the morning, the 'dres' is long. You come at half-past 4 the 'dres' is long. You come at 4 o'clock still they are already there. Sitting . . . (*We laugh*) They sit like this (*He shuts his eyes, his chin digging into his breast-bone. His lips parted, he snores loudly. I laugh, his barefoot grand-children kicking a ball on the gravel nearby also giggle and imitate their grand-father*).

They sit patiently waiting; with blankets wrapped over their heads. Everybody wants to be first when the gates are opened at 8 and the weighing starts.

(*I remark: It must have been paying you a lot of money. All that sleeping outside in the open at night and waiting. How much did they pay? — He produces a piece of paper*)

What about the vegetables?

— There is a lot of money there. But you have to be 'wake-up'. You must know where to go to. I have been dealing with the boers for a long time. I get to the farm and I shout: 'Moro Baas!' from a long way. I remove my cap and I smile broadly and wave to the 'baas'. If the missus is also there, I know I am lucky. Everything will be alright. I shout: 'Moro Nonnie, moro Au Missus!' Women are the same all over. They have soft hearts. (*I frown and he notices it*) Yes, Yes Ausisi. Even the Boer women. You'll hear her say 'Aubaas daar's skepsel'. Then the baas asks what do I want and I shout: 'Beetroot and mielies, "my baas"!' Then he calls his African workers to go with me to that part of the farm where they have started picking from. I help them rip off the mielies. I wear my gum boots ready, the ones my son bought for me from the mine compound in Phalaborwa. They are very good. They keep my feet nice and dry. But you know what it is. It is still very early in the morning and the 'serame' (dew) is still hanging in the grass and the mielie stalks and vegetable leaves. My knees get wet and my arms too, but I am a man and I know I am working. Making food for the children. It gives life. The children can eat. Yes Ausisi, after you have sold them you are happy. You have something in your pocket. Same with the 'merogo' (Leafy vegetables like beetroot and spinach).

When I get home, I wash off the soil from the beetroot or sometimes carrots when I get them. The kids help me. I go for them very early in the morning. Five in the morning, I am gone. 'Ha ho khomo ea boroko' (There's no 'sleep-ox': Lit. translation). You must be 'wake-up', 'wake-up'. I am used to working hard. My old baas can tell you. He used to say it, too. 'When I want good work, I know I must call 'X' He is my best boy, 'X'.

Which old Baas?

— At United Tobacco (U.T.C.) where I used to work. I started there in 1929 Ausisi. (He smiles and looks at me) You were not yet born then. You know, I have been driving over *45 years, forty-five years* and no accident! How do you like that?

Where did you drive to all that time?

— All over. German Wes, Kimberley, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Cape Town, Durban, Griqua, Messina, Beit Bridge, Rhodesia, Lorenco Marques, Kolony (Cape), Beira, everywhere. *(He points with his fore-finger in all directions).*

And you drove a car to all those places?

— Yes. I drive. Ausisi. I don't play. Sometimes the salesman, the white man I am taking to these places also drives, and I sit at the back and sleep a bit. But *I* am the driver and he is only a salesman. He is selling. It is my work. He only gives me help to rest. You know Ausisi, all this 'nonsons' about 'parteit' is all . . . (curses). People are people. He gets lonely and we talk, talk oh, a lot of things.

What?

— Everything. Mostly about women. *(We laugh).* Women. Just like all men everywhere. He tells me about his girl-friends and asks me whether I have any besides my wife. He asks a lot of questions. Questions like 'How do you do it? How many times in one night . . . all that' (*We laugh*)

Sometimes when we get to a filling station, he sees a nice woman passing like that one passing there. (*He points at a girl*) He asks: 'Don't you think she's nice, man. Don't you want to invite her for the night?' They like our women. That white salesman was very good. We were just like brothers. He still comes to see me sometimes. But now since the fightings in 1976 he has not come. He is afraid. But he does not forget to send me a nice tie or handkerchiefs at Christmas. You know, Ausisi, one time I was very cold and sick. I was just shaking like this *(he shows how he shook)* in the car. He drove all the way from Vereeniging — we were from Port Elizabeth — straight to Soweto. When we got home in Mapetla my wife was surprised to see me escorted by him, covered in the white man's overcoat, over my head like a bride.

(*We laugh loudly*)

I used to like travelling with that Baas of mine. But he liked women. Sometimes when we leave Johannesburg, he tells me: 'When we get to Kimberley man, we will rest for two days. But we must be there tonight not too late, we *must*'. When I laugh and ask why, he says: 'I got a woman there. Just make sure we get to so and so hotel tonight eh?' And I laugh and step on the 'fat' (accelerator). Then when we get there 'parteit' starts again. He goes into the nice part of the hotel, and I go to the servants' quarters. Sometimes it is cold and there is no fire in those rooms. All a lot of sh . . . man!

(*I laugh. A long pause. He serves customers who want mielies*)

But it was nice Ausisi. Going everywhere, meeting many people and seeing how they live. Did you know there are people who eat skins?

(*I shake my head: 'No'*)

I also didn't know that such a thing happened. (*I wince and he repeats*) Yes, skins, skins. With the hair still on them and all that. They say it is healthy. We went to another part of Swaziland. The people there are still keeping the old habits of eating. They just cook the head of an ox and the trotters just as they are. Skin and all, just like that. And they eat it when cooked. I didn't believe my eyes. They eat it and they enjoy it!

(*More customers come* 'There's a lot of business'. *I remark*)

Not now. It used to be really good. You know, you have to watch out for police all the time. See their 'kwela-kwela' from a long way. When they appear, you'll see all those women sitting there roasting mielies on the 'mbaulas' (braziers) scattering in all directions. Then I just get into the van and drive away and the kids jump quickly into the back and cover up the mielies or whatever I am selling with those sacks (*He points to a bundle of hessian bags next to the mound of green mealies*).

They (the police) are very, very cruel. They don't care. They take the mealies or whatever they get and turn over the braziers so that no selling and roasting can go on. They see it is useless chasing the sellers. Hei! Ausisi, these women can run, you know? They never know where they vanished to. They see it is useless. When they catch one, they still can't prove *she* was selling or which 'mbaula' belongs to which one of them. So they just turn everything upside-down. Just now, they are really mad. They don't want to see anyone selling. You know what the fine is when they catch you?

(*I shake my head*)

Hundred Rands! And they want it 'catch' (cash) if not, you're *in*. That is what the sergeant told me. Just now I am looking for a shop. Don't you know of someone who has a shop to hire? I want someone with a licence to help me. We have it tough these days. It's really bad, bad, bad. It's just 'ncha-ncha' (*Smacks his tongue loudly against his teeth, using an exclamation*

Soweto Speaking

meaning 'just managing').

It worries me a lot. We used to do a lot of work. (*He shakes his head*) They always think of some way to get in your way. These Europeans. There's no way of running away from them. I spoke to one coloured policeman to get the sergeant-in-charge at the police-station and he took me right to him. You have to work your way *in* all the time. *This* thing. (*He rubs his right thumb several times against the fore-finger*) *This* thing is the only thing which works. *Money*. 'Bagolo ba re "chelete e bula dikgoro"' (the old say 'money opens entrances'). I gave some, but it still didn't work.

How now?

— It's the law, the sergeant kept saying. They (the police) are only helping to clear up the townships. It's actually the health inspectors and the T.P.A. who must do it. He said: 'Even if I allow you to sell man, you'll still be caught and fined. Just try and get a shop. The inspectors also patrol the whole Soweto — not only my men. I'm sorry for you, but I can't help you unless you get a licence and a shop. That's the *law* man'. But anyway the coloured said they would always warn me if they are going to do 'raids' on the hawkers. He said I could sell freely *after* 3 in the afternoon — at that time the ones who raid knock off and the whole Soweto is 'free'. But by then, how much have you lost? Too much money. But anyway I stick to that advice. I don't want to pay R100,00. How long does it take to make hundred Rands? For a poor struggling man like myself?

Don't you get a pension every month?

— I do. But it is not enough. I still have two children to clothe, feed and 'teach' (educate). All the other six are already working. Four are married. You know what it is. When they grow older and they work, they buy clothes and 'look' (concentrate) at themselves. They don't help you every time. Sometimes they buy you a shirt or a jersey, or they bring you something for the house. You can't force them. They also have their own credits. I'll be happy if I can find a place to sell vegetables and fruits. Even if I must stand on the pavement in front of a shop, I don't mind. Shop rentals are *so* high. I know how to talk to the Boers. I grew up in the farms where we used to be thrashed to do work. I know them. I have many boer friends. You know, there's a kind one in a farm in Zuurbekom who always gives me eggs. Big size eggs cheap, cheap, cheap. He also sells me fowls. He smiles when he sees me and says 'X', I like you because I can trust you. When you don't have cash I give you eggs and I know you will come back and pay me. Everybody is *so* 'skelm'.

(*We laugh*)

— Yes, Ausisi. In this work you have to be *a man*. You've got to trust yourself. You see that thing wrapped in newspapers behind my seat there? I've got a long heavy crow-bar. I keep it for 'our children'.

(*He smiles and looks at me*)

— The ones who hate waking up in the morning, knocking at a white man's door and saying 'Moro baas!' The ones who wait for Friday and then they rob us. Once I had a nasty experience. They *got* me. I was selling near Kwezi station. I started very early that Friday before others arrived. I was the only one. They came in a group. One came from the front and the others came from my back. I didn't know what to do. But I was brave and I shouted 'What do you want?' They did not answer. The one in front drew a knife from his trouser pocket. A long ugly thing. When I stepped back, the ones behind me grabbed my hands tight behind my back and I couldn't do anything. I tried to kick one, and luckily I got him on the face and he fell back. His knife fell down and I shouted like a woman. Don't laugh Ausisi, there was nothing I could do. They searched my pockets and took all the money I had. The whole Seventeen Rands. By the time people from the train came to see what was wrong, they were gone. From that day I am always ready. I am always on the look-out who comes near me. You can always see who is full of 'nonsons'. You have to be a man, here, a man . . .

photo by **Ralph Ndawo**

Mrs Leah Koae, Dressmaker 21.1.78

I started with my sewing long ago at the age of 12. I did not even know you then. I had great interest in sewing. When my mother was gone, I would take the machine and try my hand at it. I would thread it, and in the process break many of her needles. Later, when I grew older, I started practising by sewing for my younger sisters. When I completed at High School (J.C.), I went to a school where we were taught weaving by machine, weaving blankets, rugs and so on. Well, I did not like it much. (That was in Natal.) I came back to Johannesburg where I found work in a factory — a clothing factory. First I worked in the office doing clerical work. But in my heart I felt I still wanted to sew. You know what it is when one likes to do a thing.

I would be sent to take something into the sewing-room, and when I saw girls sitting at their machines, busy, I would feel the urge to join them. Even the sound of the machines would make me wonder when *I* would be able to tread on my own machine and sew like them.

I went to a white woman I knew and asked her to teach me sewing by an electric traddle machine. She did. And I have been sewing ever since.

'One day I sat down and thought seriously to myself and said, no. No, I can't work so hard for another person.'

You know what made me go for that tuition? Pay. Weekly pay. You would have to work very, very hard and sew many, many garments per day — but when you get your pay, it would not be worth the amount of labour you put into your work. It was *so* little! One day I sat down and thought seriously to myself and said, *no.* No, I can't work so hard for another person.

I went and bought my own machine. And I stayed at home and worked at home.

— What machine is it, Singer?

— No. Hostess.

— Oh.

And I am still using it even now. All these years. I have been using it sewing for you and your children, haven't I? Yes. I see now that I am still alive like all the other people who go to work every morning. That machine gives me a livelihood. I am still managing with that very machine. I buy food and I pay rent. Now, if you want to see some of the things that I sew with that machine, I'll show you.

And the lady goes into her bedroom to fetch completed garments she has waiting for her customers to collect. Then one of her customers, Freda enters. 'Mampe, Leah's daughter, myself, and Freda are seated round the table as Mrs Koae comes from the bedroom with the clothes hanging neatly on hangers. I fit one of the dresses (a yellow one). They all look at me.

'MAMPE: 'Mé Masoli hasn't got a waistline like *that*!

LEAH: No. She hasn't got a waistline like that. Her waist is like a white woman's. What is bad is that she has got *horns. (She indicates bulging hips. Laughter. I fit another, and I turn round)*

'MAMPE: That is mother's.

FREDA: I thought it would just fit her perfectly, but now it's too big.

LEAH: Hawu phela! Hawu phela! Hawu Phela! As for her backside, it looks like her own dress. But it's too big. She's not actually *this* size, she's bigger. She is slimming. If she were not, this dress would fit her perfectly.

FREDA: And she has put it on over a lot of other clothes.

LEAH: And she has even got 'afternoons'! *(Laughter. We look at other garments)*

LEAH: That one is waiting for a 'bo' (a bow). The owner keeps on saying it must wait for a 'bo'. That's what she calls it. I don't know what the 'bo' is all about! *(Laughter)* What kind of pattern do you want for your warm material, Freda?

FREDA: Just sew it man, maybe it will be alright. Sew it 'out of your mind'.

We look at another dress, and a skirt. I remark

ME: Oh, but that skirt is beautiful. What do you call that material?

FREDA: But the waist is very big. The owner must be having a very big tummy. And the shoulders on that dress are very huge. *(She indicates the size with her hands. We laugh.)*

LEAH: They belong to the same woman.

FREDA: Then she must be like the woman who acts in the play we have been staging. If you can see how big she is, you'll be surprised.

ME: But she must be a good actress, isn't she?

FREDA: Yes. She acts extremely well. When she walks, you find her walking like this. *(Holding her arms away from her body, and swinging. Loud laughter.)* But she acts well in the play. When we perform before an audience, they are held spellbound. When we go and show it to whites at such places as the Carlton Centre, they just stare agape. And she *eats.* She's *so* big. I usually tell her that 'you should be married to Leabua *(Laughter),* or Mangope, or any of these wealthy people'. *(Loud laughter)*

ME: What play is it?

FREDA: It's a drama.

ME: Yes, what's it called?

LEAH: *Tell* us. I shall not be there to see it. Perhaps because . . .

FREDA: I shall invite you when next we show it. It's something . . .

'MAMPE: What's it called, 'Knights'?

FREDA: No, not 'Knights'.

'MAMPE: 'The Beautiful Flowers', 'The Beautiful Rose' . . . It's shown by our Church Choir. Anglican.

LEAH: What's it about? Tell me because I won't be there. Just make 'mabal'ankoe' (a short precis).

LEAH: Did you say Anglican? My younger brother's son is in that play then. He sings in the Church Choir there. The one with a 'Bee-bop' haircut. He likes to have his hair like this. *(Holds her hands over her fore-head)*

FREDA: Is he tall?

LEAH: No, not so tall. He likes to have his hair like this *(Repeats).*

FREDA: Not so tall. It must be him, then. We specialise in the money. We just stand at the door and collect the money. *(Laughter)*

ME: I find you here everytime I come here. Why? *(I ask Freda)*

LEAH: It's because you love me. All of you.

FREDA: Even if she speaks badly about me a hundred times, it does not matter. I shall never stop coming.

LEAH: Freda, Freda shame the devil and speak the truth. It's because of what you saw in me. When you brought your second material here for me to sew. It was because you saw what I did with your first one.

FREDA: You say I must speak the truth. I shall never be fed up with you.

LEAH: It's because you say I never sew for you. Why do you say that? *(Freda looks at me appealingly.)*

FREDA: Please do not take my voice with the tape recorder, Please. I beg you. People will be *shocked!*

Laughter, and customer leaves.

ME: *(Looking at the dresses)* But this is a very big one, man. How do you get it like that? With a pattern or not?

LEAH: You see, this one is a 48 Bust, but the pattern is a 38. I'm able to make it into any size required.

ME: You also sew costumes and other garments like wedding-gowns and so on. What about children?

LEAH: Yes, I sew for children. In fact when I first started, I used to sew for children only. I find it now too strenuous. It would kill me. I prefer sewing for adults and older girls now. We did not do much sewing for children these last 2 years.

ME: Why?

LEAH: Because the kids are no longer dressing up for Xmas. They changed since the unrests year before last. They no longer celebrate Christmas. They move in their old clothes. No dressing up or anything. You know, don't you?

ME: Yes.

LEAH: You see now. This is only a jacket, no skirt. The owner sent this old jacket. She wanted me to sew one exactly like this, this sun-scorched one. *(We both laugh)*

You see. It looks like it was soaked in javel. Look at it. She wants the pattern to be exactly like this.

ME: You are busy aren't you?

LEAH: Very busy. But you know, I do not sew as much as I used to. Ever since I had this accident on my knee when I fell just outside there. I tore a muscle in my knee. I fell just next to the back stoep. I have been taking some sewing just to keep going because I'm still exercising my knee lest I strain it. You know what it is when you have a horse and you are in the habit of riding it. *(Laughter)* I have been riding my horse in spite of everything. You see, this is my own dress.

Lifts out a beautiful lemon dress from the many.

I had this material for a long time and it wasn't out. Just the other day, I decided to sew myself a dress out of it.

— Oh. It's beautiful. They say a doctor doesn't treat himself, but you seem to do it well. *(We laugh)*

— Yes, that's what they say, but you see, I want to look nice so that people don't say: 'Look at her. She sews dresses but doesn't she look awful!' They must see that while I make others look nice I also don't forget my own looks. I want to sew many dresses for myself and be beautiful. *(Laughter)*

— But that looks very nice. Flowing. It doesn't seem to cling or crease. What material is this?

— A kind of Barathea. You know, these cloths of nowadays, they have what they call polyester. They are made for busy people like ourselves. You just wash and wear. No ironing.

— You must be having a lot of money by now, doing so much sewing.

— Where do I get it from? Everybody wants money. Even working people. They all want money. Where do I get it from? I don't have it!

— But you have many people coming to you.

Soweto Speaking

— Yes. But you know, it's not everyone who pays. Some I *avoid* doing any sewing for. Especially those who come here and leave their garments lying here for months after I've taken the trouble of sewing them. Even you, being my friend, if you leave your completed clothes here and not collect them, I just refuse to take any more materials from you. Some are really bad payers. It takes a lot of patience to deal with people. *(I nod)*

But now I want to sell ready-made garments. I want to buy materials from a wholesale and sew clothes and sell them to people.

— Yes, but how will you walk around with your sore knee?

— No, I won't move about. I'll just sew them and put them away. I'll show them to those who come like *you* now. I won't go out of here. This will be a shop. What I realise is that it pays just as well, if not better. Sitting at home here is better in that I don't have to worry about clothes. I just wear my old apron or overall. I don't have to change clothing all the time. When I work in town, I have to take whatever money I earn back to town. There's the train, the bus and the food. I eat my mealie-pap here, that's all. I don't even have to buy stockings. Do you realise how easily stockings ladder? And you have to buy others everytime.

Later, when I grow older and tired of sewing, I hope to start my own school for for sewing. I would like to teach learners cutting and designing garments. I have a learner here. A nursing Sister in fact. She has been coming for some weeks now, and she is coming on alright. She tried to do sewing through sewing machine companies in town (SEWKNIT). They paid R4,00 per week. And after some weeks she could still not cut a small child's dress. She says these instructors are just not serious. They are now too successful and there are too many who are keen to learn. They have grown aloof and treat people with contempt. As if you beg when in fact you pay your own money for them to teach you.

Mrs Sebenzile Lekoto
Market Researcher

The lady speaks well, sometimes in Sotho, and sometimes in English

We carry out research. Market research. We go to all houses, or we may arrange to contact groups of people. We find out what they think about the products we research. Just now I was doing research on cigarettes. We speak to smokers: especially *Hunter* smokers. Find out what they think about *Hunter* cigarettes. What they like about it, or, if they don't like it they must say why. We want to find out what the *faults* are in *Hunter* cigarettes.

— Is it only *Hunter* cigarettes you want to find out about?

— No. Also *Boxer* tobacco. We want to know why they prefer *Boxer* to other brands, if they do. We're trying to get weak points.

— What is the aim. Why are you doing all that?

— Well . . . well . . . we must know.

— Yes. Why?

— So that they must improve the cigarettes or tobacco.

— Oh.

She is relieved to be able to go on without my questions

— Sometimes we travel to other places like Transkei, Swaziland and so on. We go in groups and we enjoy it very much. We have to work hard.

— It must be very interesting. Travelling and speaking to people, I mean.

— Yes, it is. Very much. But sometimes they become suspicious. They ask: "Why are you asking me all these questions. You want to put me into trouble? You want me to go to gaol? Why are you asking me to sign my name?" But you go on anyway. They're always suspicious. They think everybody is a spy. *We laugh.*

— Who pays. For your travelling expenses?

— The Firm pays. We leave for Transkei by plane and when we get to the airport there, there's a car waiting to take us to the hotel. Holiday Inn. We stay there for a week or two weeks doing research. We speak to many people. Men and women. You know Xhosas are heavy tobacco smokers — men and women alike. *We laugh.*

We talk to them and ask them what they feel are the good points in *Boxer* or bad ones if they have. The supervisor is there with us, she examines our work all the time, makes sure everything is in order and ready to be submitted for checking. After that period we come back to Soweto and carry on the work here. We go from house to house and interview people.

We also do research about big shops, and bazaars. O.K., Greatermans, Checkers, Pick 'n Pay etc., all of them. We find out why a person prefers buying where she usually buys. If she likes going to O.K. instead of Greatermans, then she must tell us why. If they prefer Checkers to Greatermans and O.K. then she must say why. Maybe she says she likes to shop at Pick 'n Pay stores or so, then she must say why. Sometimes you find one who looks at you and say 'it's none of your business!' *We laugh loudly.*

But now I'm going to leave them.

— Why?

— It's a waste of time. I can't work for nothing.

— How's that?

— They expect people to work for nothing. Like now for example. We haven't had our pay since before Boxing Day last year! It's nearly two months now. It always happens. They pay when they *feel* like it. Some girls have to wait for three months before they get anything. I was lucky in that I used to accompany the supervisor. I used to get my cheque every month because I used to accompany the supervisor. I used to get it every month even if it was usually late in the month. I pitied the other girls. They really suffered. How can you wait three months before you are paid? I can't go on — it's useless. I'll just stop going to them and look for another job. I can't be bothered. I met some of the girls and they told me they never got their balances. They were only paid for part of the work they did.

Two weeks pass. On 7.2.78. I go again to Mrs Lekoto's house. She opens the door and she looks happy and all dressed up. She has a plastic bag with books in it in her hand. I ask her to sit down a bit and talk to me before she goes.

— You look very smart and happy. Where are you off to?

— I *am* happy. I've got another job. Registered and everything.

— Oh. Where?

— Another Research Firm.

— That was fast.

— Yes. I was lucky. These are their papers and books. I better interview *you*. We can interview one another. *We both laugh.*

Mrs Lekoto sits facing me and smiling across the table.

— Do you mind if I ask you to tell me what you think about insecticides? How many have you used? What kinds — Doom, Pyagra, Kill-All . . .? *I wave to her to stop.*

— Wait, wait, I'm first. *And we laugh.*

— Now what are your plans? What are you going to do in the future? *(and she rattles on about her plans).*

— First I'll take my youngest son to boarding school. Anyway outside. In Soweto there's no hope. What shall we do? Children have to *learn* something. But not Bantu Education. We must just do the best under the hopeless conditions. Children have been going to these . . . everywhere except in Soweto. They just move along. They have to do something. Everywhere, Mafeking, Rustenburg, Pretoria, BophuthaTswana. They just go on. What can be done? Personally I do not see what the wisdom of it is. Taking children from one Bantu Education to another Bantu Education. What's the use sending your child to a Bantu Education boarding school? That is what is happening. Pointless!

And we both shake our heads. Her beautiful daughter brings in some tea on a tray. She smiles.

— This is my daughter, Erica. She completed Nursery School Teacher training course last year.

— Oh. And now, what is she doing?

— Nothing.

— Are there no nursery schools?

— They are many but there are no posts. The old teachers stay on and on. They cling to their posts. The younger ones never get any jobs. You only get a post if your mother is also a teacher at the nursery school. Otherwise, nothing!

Magawulana

Story from a novel in progress by **K.F.S. NTULI**

'Now, now, now, mfaana!', boomed Magawulana. 'That is no way to behave in a train when you haven't got a ticket in the first place! You are calling out for trouble to come to us now, jy sien? You can't go about playing in corridors and poking your head out of windows jy sien?'

Liso came into the compartment again. Anything which Magawulana said, had to be right. He knew so much! He still wondered how Magawulana had known that if you put some money in that machine at the Park Station back in Johannesburg, pressed a certain knob and waited, cigarettes would come out.

'Don't move about so much mfaana! You are disturbing my ears. I think I hear something. Listen mfaana!'

They both listened and could hear far-off the now familiar 'clank' of the ticket-examiner's doings on the handrail.

'Tickets! All tickets please!'

'Did you hear that?' asked Magawulana. 'Dive mfaana!'

He and Liso both dived under the seats and remained there, unmoving. The ticket-examiner and his companion arrived at the compartment. The terrified Liso lay still under the seat, afraid even to breathe.

'Nobody in here John huh?'

'My, but the place is dirty ou Koos', said the other man to the portly ticket-examiner.

'Ja, it smells like a rubbish-bin in here. I'll have to get it cleaned in Bloemfontein. Those guys back in Vereeniging don't know their job. They don't know what they are paid for.'

'It's funny ou Koos, don't you think?'

'What's funny if people do not know what they are paid for? You amaze me John!'

'No, that's not what I mean Koos man. Don't you see what I see? Can't you see that the place is as clean as any of the other compartments we have been to? There's no refuse, nothing. But there's this smell!'

Koos apparently noticed it now.

'Ja, you've got a point there ou Johnnie. Ag, but it's nothing man, must be the bodies of the people who were last in this compartment!' And they both laughed at this and moved on.

Liso thought he would die of fright. He waited until the sound of trouble had died away, then he emerged from under the seat.

'He's gone Magawulana. You can come out.'

'You say "he's gone". You speak of one trouble when there were two! Haa, mfaana! You don't know what life is about, I can see. Life is about trouble jy sien? And you must never mistake two troubles for one mfaana! When there are two troubles there are four eyes and four ears! That is why you must never make mistakes jy sien?'

Liso could have eaten his head for having made the mistake. He had grown to respect Magawulana during the journey and he did not want the man to have a low opinion of him. Magawulana had helped him so much. He had left Johannesburg without hope of shelter or food. But Magawulana had promised him shelter, even if he was not certain about the food. He remembered how his legs had grown weary and his feet sore. The way to the city from Soweto had been long and tiresome and with the added hazard of on-coming traffic, it had become almost inconquerable.

The young boy of fourteen had almost given up. The lights of the cars rushing towards him were blinding, and some of the cars did not dip their lights even when there were cars going towards the city. Liso knew this was wrong. It had to be wrong. As he understood it, you had to show your respect for the other driver by dipping your lights, otherwise, how could the other driver see where he was going? He considered it a miracle that the city-bound drivers did not run into him. But it was unfair, he thought. Some of them were blinding him. He who was not even driving a car! Maybe it was okay for the drivers for they could ram into each other's cars as a warning perhaps? Steel did not feel pain. But he could not go and ram his body into a car now, could he? His body was too tiny for that. Magawulana interrupted his thoughts.

'Are you ready to dive again mfaana? Trouble might come back again and we would have to give it a double-treatment game number two.'

Liso was rudely brought back to the present. He had been lost in thought; had even forgotten where he was and the danger that could be brought by that. One had to be quick in the business of diving under the seats if one did not have a ticket. You could not afford to be sluggish like the old men. Yes, young boys could not afford to be like old men. You had to be 'sharp'. He particularly remembered Baba Ntombela at the corner of their street in the township they were leaving behind. Baba Ntombela would lumber past in the afternoon when they were kicking a tennis ball in the street imitating their soccer heroes at the Orlando Stadium. When the ball came like lightning towards Baba Ntombela, it was all the old man could do to blink his eyes and use language which the school and the church did not allow the boys to employ. The ball would then hit the old man right in-between the eyes or in the centre of where it hurt the most. The old man was not sharp enough. Of course, such incidents invariably brought trouble, but it was trouble of a different nature. One could get off with a few harsh words or, for him, a dose of 'Tshisa'. But now, if Magawulana's statements were anything to go by, the trouble they faced could even involve going to jail. He had heard about the place and although he did not know much about it, he knew enough to be determined to avoid paying a visit to it.

The train passed a particularly bare strip of veld. Nature was showing another side of her beautiful face. The scenery was changing now. The misty, majestic mountain ranges were now giving way to the flat, parched vastness of the Free State, punctuated by the occasional koppie. A buck darted out of a thicket, where it had been enjoying some relief from the crucifying heat of the sun. Startled by the train, it had bounded into the distance, hesitated, and stopped to watch the great steelmonster. Nose twitching, long ears straining to catch every sound, it had seemed to look directly at Liso and Magawulana as they rushed by. Probably lost it's mother, thought Liso. It had been the same with him. Darting and jumping ceaselessly on the long road from Soweto. Just when he had felt he could go no more, whatever happened to him, a delivery truck had ground to a halt next to him. Untrusting at first, for many times had he heard the tale of children being stolen and sold to women who could not have their own, he had retreated into the darkness and security of the roadside. Blinded by the truck's lights, every limb in his body now growing numb, he had cried out in the pitiful and conscience-awakening voice that only a distressed fourteen year-old possesses. The driver, remembering his own son in Germiston and feeling for this young bundle of sorrow as any father would, determinedly coaxed the young boy to come to him.

'Never stop on the road for anybody you do not know for you might be letting yourself into trouble; the corpse lying across the road might suddenly jump into life; look after your own interests, everybody will look after theirs; be wary of the stranger, young or old, in the hours of darkness.'

This, the township code, did not apply here. Of one accord, driver and boy alike, seemed to agree: this one is to be trusted. Liso, with strength born anew, body and mind revivified, jumped onto the back of the truck and for the next hour, Johannesburg came nearer and nearer until the driver dropped him at the Park Station. He was taking the truck back to his place of work to be locked up for the night and the station being nearest to this place, he could not but drop the boy there, wish him the best of luck, tell the boy not to despair, restrain himself from asking any probing questions and be on his way. Liso had stood there watching the truck until it had disappeared into the distance.

'God bless you', he had said aloud.

'From the mouths of babes . . .'

* * * * *

'Only practical experience can give these qualities to any man, and experience was what Magawulana certainly had.'

Magawulana had materialised from the night, as if from nowhere and confronted the boy with

'Who are you mfaana? You who dares to come to this place when the police are so sharp tonight?'

The manner in which the question was put had been calculated to dispel whatever fears the boy might have had, almost like the good shepherd saying:

'Fear not my flock, nothing can harm you for I am watching over you.'

The boy had instantly warmed to this character of the back-streets. Liso felt instinctively that only good could come from this man. He of the checked woollen cap, the faded denim trousers, the canvas shoes which showed the toes and the shirt the original colour of which was now impossible to tell, due to long use and its state of cleanliness. He of the red, fearful, jumping eyes. The one who knew how to get onto trains without a ticket; he who could discourse for hours upon the virtues of keeping your eyes open. The one who would give you the best advice on how to avoid trouble. He introduced himself as Magawulana. Whether it was the first name or the surname you did not know, and you instinctively knew you were not supposed to ask. This one knew how to bruise the law and how to avoid its consequential retaliation. He was the maestro; Machiavelli reborn. He was truly master of any situation. You knew he would captain the ship; you knew where your place was with him. In any situation you had to take the back seat and he would drive, for, you see, difficult situations were his speciality. Only practical experience can give these qualities to any man, and experience was what Magawulana certainly had. As he told Liso later, he had just escaped from a Johannesburg jail. Why he had been arrested in the first place, Liso never knew. Magawulana would not tell. He and a companion had devised an ingenious way of gaining freedom. His companion was an accomplished ventriloquist. They had noticed, as the months went by, that the guard's vigilant eyes were always watching everything. But in the morning, when one of them went to empty the bucket provided for their convenience during the night, the barred door leading to their cell, and the one leading outside and to freedom, were temporarily left open. On noticing this, Magawulana had seen the possibility of escape to be there. His only hope lay in those few minutes when the doors were open. He had approached his cell-mate so that they could discuss this possibility. Wary of Magawulana at first, the man would not say anything. All he did was to agree with whatever Magawulana had said. Disheartened at this, Magawulana had retreated into a corner of their cell and had enclosed himself in a private impenetrable shell for days afterwards, brooding and in a black mood. His cell-mate finally decided that his proposition had been a genuine one, and skilfully manoevred Magawulana into an amiable mood again. He thereafter informed Magawulana that he had also been considering the possibility. He had a plan already formulated. He would throw his voice and pretend he was the Sergeant calling the guard from the other side of the kitchen. It would then depend on the guard's sense of duty and his reverence for rank and authority. The guard might first lock the doors, however urgent the Sergeant's call sounded, or he might simply rush away in response to the call of authority. They weighed the pros and cons and, on Magawulana's prompting, finally decided that it was at least worth a try. They would probably get extra time for attempting to escape from custody, if they failed. To Magawulana, this did not matter much, what was more important was his freedom.

When the day came, Magawulana stationed himself just inside the doorway, waiting anxiously to hear the 'sergeant's' voice and watching the guard's reaction. It had been arranged that his cell-mate would see to the bucket today, so as to enable him to throw his voice down the passage. The 'sergeant's' voice, when it came, startled even Magawulana. Although he had been aware of what was going to take place, he was, nevertheless, surprised. It all seemed so realistic, he was in two minds whether it was his mate or actually the sergeant on duty calling:

'Constable Khumalo, are you there?'

The authoritative voice boomed and echoed in the cells. Constable Khumalo had been transferred to Johannesburg from a small station in the Karoo where nothing akin to what Magawulana and his mate were planning, ever happened. His friends in the Karoo had warned him to be careful and to keep a sharp look-out for the tsotsis in Egoli. As luck would have it, nothing had happened in the six months the constable had spent in Johannesburg. He was beginning to think that his friends were unduly anxious about Egoli. Police Constable Khumalo had been lulled into a sense of misguided confidence in the establishment in general and in its inmates in particular. Johannesburg was not what the prophets of doom had said it would be. When the voice sounded, he immediately darted in its direction, in answer to the call of his superior, without further thought. That was his undoing. Many things had happened all at once. Magawulana had darted past the two doors and into the yard. His cell-mate was already on the way to the gates. The constable, seeing what was happening, attempted to pursue the two. On doing this, he noticed that the other prisoners were on the verge of seizing the opportunity presented by the two. Khumalo thought it fit to lock the barred doors, raising the alarm at the same time. The people who make films should have been there to gain first-hand information on what actually transpires during a jail-break. It is a pity that they were not, for the cinema can never hope to reproduce it. It was spectacular. The whole area was now alive with activity. Magawulana and his cell-mate safely made their way to the gates only to be intercepted by a police van just coming into the yard. They immediately changed direction and raced towards the toolshed. Three warning shots were fired from the van. Of one accord, Magawulana and his friend dived under the thick hedge and into the street. Constable Khumalo was now close behind them. Cars were racing towards the scene from all directions. Policemen spilled out of the cars. Even as Magawulana watched, Khumalo drew his revolver and fired, wounding his companion in the leg, who kept on running desperately, for the love of dear freedom. Two more shots, which went astray, were fired from the prison itself. Police dogs were unleashed and were just coming in on the fun. One particular robust fellow worried Magawulana in the region of his legs and it was all he could do to avoid being thrown to the ground, for the dogs were trained to do just that. Magawulana's friend was now losing a great deal of blood and a great deal of his hope and confidence went with it.

They raced round a street corner. The two were now ahead of their pursuers. The policemen temporarily lost sight of the fugitives but everybody had confidence in the four Alsatians. At that moment, an historic moment in the lives of Magawulana and his friend, Lady Luck chose to smile on the two. Magawulana still maintains that his ancestors had been guarding over him and in a moment of dire need, they had risen to the occasion, obliging beings that they are. A bus was in the process of departing from a stop in front of them. Without hesitation, the two had leapt onto the bus even as the automatic doors closed. Their khaki prison clothes had attracted attention, but luck being on their side, there was no policeman on the bus. They had no money on their persons, but the driver, for the benefit of his passengers (should anyone of them have an inspector of the bus company as a friend) pretended not to see them. He was also an exconvict, a fact which would have cost him his job should it have been publicised, but something for which he bore the law a burning grudge. He still felt that the stretch he had done in jail had been unjustified and uncalled for. This type of man enjoys any opportunity of denting the pride of the law if the resultant reprisals are not going to be directed at him. When the pursuers rounded the corner, a few seconds after the bus had departed, it took two seconds for the sergeant to decide that the two were probably in the bus. Three squad cars in the area were requested by radio to try and locate the bus and to secure the recapture of the two. The four dogs were relentlessly pursuing the vehicle which was taking their prize away and they would not respond to their trainer's command to come back. The squad cars were closing in on the area and a van was fetched from the prison to chase after the bus. The machinery of law was now set in full

motion.

Precious moments were lost when the squad cars stopped a second bus. After a futile search for two khaki-clad convicts they then raced after the one carrying the very important people. The dogs pursuing the bus were now tiring and the distance between them and their prize was widening by the minute. When they finally lost hope and gave up, it was with immense reluctance, for they would have dearly loved to have secured their prize. Magawulana's friend had by now been bleeding profusely. Standing by the door, he of the jumping eyes had surveyed their fellow passengers. One elderly man had particularly displeased him. He had seemed extremely unreliable. The man was wearing a dark jacket, white nylon shirt and a tie of the shiny, narrow variety. Bespectacled face sweating, head balding, he had been carrying a brown briefcase on his thighs. Probably one of those people who would tell you about insurance and how you had to look after your future, Magawulana had decided, and had then dismissed the man from his mind. The other passengers consisted entirely of factory workers going home, housemaids going on errands into the city and job-seekers. These passengers were the type who never tell you about the suspicious-looking character they saw on the bus, train, or taxi unless there is the risk of their own freedom being restricted to the specific confines of a certain building and its grounds. 'Hayi khona bafo! Except for that school-teacher-type over there, we are quite safe here', Magawulana had told his friend.

Magawulana's friend knew the route the bus would take for he had worked for two weeks in one of the factories in this part of the city. He had advised that they should alight at the next stop because their clothes would attract undesired attention in Market Street. Also, if they remained too long in the bus, there was the danger that they might alight into the waiting hands of trouble; the hands of the law. They had left the bus and had raced blindly into a surburban yard as the squad cars screeched to a halt in front of the bus. The policemen had not even bothered to search the bus because the trail of blood from Magawulana's friend's leg provided a faithful account of the movements of the two escapees. The escapees had, on the other hand, been forced to scale a fence and jump into a neighbouring yard because a dog in the first one had apparently not favoured their company. People were on the streets, watching. Having lost sight of the convicts for the moment, they had turned their attention to the policemen. The sky was now overcast and it was warm; soft drops of rain were starting to fall. Numb from the pain and the loss of blood taking its toll, Magawulana's cell-mate of a few minutes ago was now in a state of near-panic. Magawulana had to half-urge, half-drag him on the way to anticipated freedom. If only they could get to Papa Mdala, thought Magawulana. But Papa Mdala, the old man they knew would certainly help them, was far away from the suburb. The situation had by now become a game of hide-and-seek with the policemen. They would scale one fence after another in an effort to get further and further away from their pursuers. Some of the onlookers, mostly housemaids and a few gardeners, made signs with their hands to inform the two of the movements of the policemen and this made the task all the more difficult for the law. This enabled the two to remain unseen by the prying eyes of the policemen and to gain the advantage of increasing the distance between themselves and their pursuers. The policemen's only guide now was the trail of blood. Re-inforcements were arriving by the minute and the whole area would soon be cordoned off. Then mercifully, the storm that had been building up had broken. The trail of blood had then become a thing of the past.

It was then that Magawulana actually decided that they would make it. The boys in blue were now in a state of perplexity. There was this overpowering sense of defeat about the whole thing. These two desperate men had succeeded in eluding them for the past quarter of an hour until nature had taken a hand in the matter. Water was now coming down in torrents which reduced visibility to within four or five metres. The occasional streaks of lightning did help the police, but for a limited time only, because the two would have gone like snakes by the time anyone reached the spot at which they were last sighted. Someone then remembered that he was carrying a torch and he immediately switched it on. Several other beams of light then sprang out of the darkness, bathing the area in artificial whiteness.

Magawulana knew that one of them could decide to shoot at any moment. But he of the jumping eyes could do nothing about the danger brought about by the torches. At that moment they were temporarily secure behind the cover of a fallen tree trunk. To their left, out of the line of vision of their pursuers, Magawulana saw a beckoning hand and a face looking grimly out of a window. He prodded his friend in the shoulder, pointed in the direction of the beckoning hand, and they both set off towards the house of promise, the rain drenching them in a matter of seconds. A figure clad in blue and white opened the door for them and they were ushered inside with great urgency. The housemaid went out by the back door, leaving them shivering in the passage and returned with two of the gardener's overalls. These she handed to them explaining that the master of the house was at work in the city and would not be back until late in the afternoon. The madam had gone to fetch the children from school and would not be back until it stopped raining for she was terrified of lightning.

The middle-aged woman then disappeared into the kitchen to enable them to change into the overalls. After they had thanked her and after she had wished them all the luck in the world, they set off to find Papa Mdala in the city. Magawulana desperately hoped that the kind lady would be able to explain away the two overalls. Leaving the house was an exceptionally easy matter because the police were looking for two khaki-clad convicts. They walked the full length of the street unchallenged. Magawulana noticed that the numerous men, who were trouble itself, were now setting up a loudhailer apparatus. Well, they could bawl themselves blue in the face, thought he. He only hoped that no bright policeman would think of stopping them and asking them to produce their reference books.

'If we should be arrested for failing to produce that would mean trouble for us bafo', said Magawulana. His friend agreed with him but, there being no alternative, they set off on their way to the city, to Papa Mdala and freedom.

Papa Mdala worked as a mechanic at a garage in the city. He lived in a beautiful house in the posh Dube Township. To be able to build that house, he had long realised, would demand a lot of money. Three years ago he had decided to establish a now-flourishing business; the business of providing asylum to people who had landed in trouble with the law. He had then been able, within a year, to build himself this impressive house and trade in his old dusty Ford for a new car. A remarkable man of sixty, he had never indulged in any of the superfluous luxuries which are so readily available to the affluent. Everybody was talking about getting a colour-set when television came, but not Papa Mdala. This man was a financial wizard who had very little to show for it; an expert legal adviser who had never studied law and had never been to a court of law except as the accused; a human who's who, who knew everybody who was worth knowing in Johannesburg and who knew quite a number of people who were not of any importance; a person who never forgot a friend including those he had known as a boy in the old Sophiatown. He was, above all, a jack of all trades, and master of several.

When Magawulana and his friend arrived at the garage, the old man had instantly recognised the symptoms. These two were obviously in trouble. He ushered them to the back of the garage where his car was parked, opened the boot, checked to see if no one was looking, got the two inside and shut the lid. The boot, thanks to the old man's foresight, was not sealed off from the car-cab, thereby making it possible for two people to remain in it without suffocating. As soon as the lid closed, Magawulana's friend passed out. He then started vomiting his last meal on Magawulana who could do nothing to avoid this. Moreover, he had to see that his friend's head was propped up against the spare wheel to make sure that he did not choke on what was coming out of his mouth.

The old man, forehead deeply furrowed by what was going on in his mind, stood beside the car for a few minutes. These two could not have any friends in the townships who could pay the high fee that he charged. They could not belong to any of the gangs in the townships. They had no character. There was only one possibility. The newly-revived Msomi-gang. This, the old man

Plessislaer, Natal

also discounted. These two did not have the identifying tattoos. They must, of necessity, be smallfry who had heard of him. He was becoming slack these days. Small-fry were not supposed to know about him. The question now was whether to take the risk and harbour these two. Papa Mdala had been in trouble himself with the law. Twice he had been in serious trouble, involving armed robbery the first time and an accessory charge on the second occasion. He finally decided to take the risk. He knew there would be roadblocks on all the roads leading to the townships. An oil-blackened hand scratching amongst his greying hair, the old man decided to do all he could for the two young men.

'Hini wena cabanga? What makes you think so much that you can waste ten minutes standing around?' Papa Mdala was startled by the voice and he moved as if catapulted into the workshop. Time seemed to fly, and it was time to go home before the old man had an opportunity to decide on the best line of action.

Magawulana felt the car moving. His friend had not stirred since they had got into the car, but he could do nothing about it. As the hours ticked by, Magawulana had, for the first time in many years, prayed to the 'uThixo uBawo wethu oseZulwini' to spare his friend. To let him die now that freedom was imminent did not make sense to Magawulana nor would it, he felt sure, to Papa Mdala. The stiffness in his limbs was something he had, perforce, learned to contend with. What bothered him was the stench of the foul-smelling food which seemed to dominate everything in the dark, confined space.

They were stopped once, but fortunately for them, Papa Mdala's uncle's daughter's son, by a man who had never been identified and a relationship which is regarded by the township people as being very close indeed, was among the policemen. He gave the car nothing more than a fleeting glance and waved it on. How could he do anything else? The old man had been one of the group who had gone to negotiate the 'lobola' and the marriage of the eldest daughter in the family of the Mdumbes of Hammanskraal for this very young man, not more than two moons ago. Magawulana's friend had a fever. He was laid on a bed in the cellar and left to rest. The old man's herbs would do the rest. The old man had bought several of the evening newspapers. They were all screaming about the jailbreak. Reading the paper, Magawulana could not help but feel that he was some sort of a hero. The story, in most of the papers was given as inaccurately as was possible in the circumstances, with an eye to the sales on the newsstands. What was left of the truth had been blown out of all proportion.

They had enjoyed Papa Mdala's hospitality for three days. Magawulana's friend had by then been feeling strong enough to move again. It had been agreed that they would separate, Magawulana going to the Transkei, which was his homeland, and his friend to Nongoma, KwaZulu. They would leave on the following night each going his own way. Magawulana knew that he would miss his friend but he knew that there was no place for sentiment under the conditions. But his friend had died unexpectedly that same evening and he and Papa Mdala had buried him in the garden during the night. A short prayer was made by the old man. Magawulana could not believe that the man who had been sitting on the bed near his, down in the cellar, only a few hours ago, chatting away about what he would do when the heat wore off, was now no more. He of the jumping eyes had been deeply affected by the loss. Whatever shred of feeling that was left in him, had cried out against the eternally irreversible. Papa Mdala had used, first, soothing words and had told of how these things usually happened and how Magawulana had to look after his own safety now. When this did not seem to help, the old man had then resorted to harsh tactics, reminding the young man that this was a 'plek van manne dié'. This world was not for babies. Why did Magawulana come to Egoli if he was such a kid then? Deep inside Magawulana ashes were smouldering. What would rekindle the fire, he did not know. But the ashes were there all the same . . .

The old man had then taken Magawulana to the Park Station on the following day to try his luck on the trains going to 'emakhaya'. Papa Mdala had said

'Good luck young man. If you get into trouble remember that I'm there. But see that you don't bring a lot of trouble to the house of Mdala. Hayi khona!'

The final parting was something which Magawulana preferred to forget. He had turned his mind on the ordeal ahead. None of the papers, he remembered, had left out the 'believed violent' clause in their reports. It would be difficult mfo! Then, just when he had thought all was lost, when he had not a single friend in the world, he had met Liso, the young umfaan who did not know where he was going. He had invited the boy to go with him. Liso had eagerly agreed. An alternative, the young boy had not.

Mpumalanga, Natal

Nkathazo kaMnyayiza: Two Poems

FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

Broken
rusty
and hanging gates
fallen leaves on unswept yards
where mangy dogs stretch out their empty beings
and where fowls peck fruitlessly at unwashed dishes
I saw him the old man on an old bench seated
leaning his old back against the crumbling mud walls
thoughts far off man's reach and sight
and like the setting sun
he gave way to the dying embers of life
and slowly he slouched in to bed
with a dry and an empty stomach
to await another empty day or death.

WHEN WILL IT END

africa
land of my forefathers
you've been made a land of

anarchy
fascism
riots
iconoclasm
coup d'états
and agonism

when will it end

Mandla Ndlazi: Three Poems

COO, MY LOVE.

Your coo is conducive
Wanderer of the woods
I've smoked the pensive
Pipe of your mean mood.

Up in that tree I see
Whispering green leaves
Wipe tears in your eyes
And tremble as your coo woos
The day's weak eye.

I won't bless the day
Before it is over
Bickering with bigots may
Go on forever.

Take my word and look
At their horizon's tail.
Wing away and coo.
O, flag that message
To the crusading masses!

You're scratching your nose
In trying to tell me more and
One of your feathers drops me a note
That spells me the trend.

O, like the four seasons
I'll reach my mecca:
Since I'm free to reason
My lot is not a beggar's.

Cut with your speed
Through the gales of an ill wind
Your platform is another tree
The masses under your wing.

FACE

Your wrinkled face
Is a map of your case —
Your struggle for a place
Denied you under the sun
At the grin of a gun.

The system's cobwebs
Pulled in your eyes
Played in your mind
To the last beat of your heart.

You're the last of the moderates
Who've been waiting for a messiah —
A message so accurate
In measures of today's bitterness.

CHANGE

I saw a racist's snake coil
In the heat of condemnation
A follower not to foil
White conspired intentions
In the grass roots of evil.

Suddenly it tormentingly twisted its tail
In the tale of its attempts to change
The colour of the skin it shed,
But to shed is not to change
And to change is not to shed.

In this political heat wave
In sunny Azania's face
Will it change or die defamed
A scoundrel of deepest dye?

Rockville

Soweto Hijack!

a story of our times
by Miriam Tlali

It was the morning after we were released from gaol. The Tuesday morning of the 27th of September. While I sat alone looking at the piece of paper which was handed to me just before I went through the prison gates of Meadowlands Police Station. We were informed by the lawyer who had come to defend us — all ninety-two of us — that the case against us was remanded to a later date.

There was a knock at the front door and I started. My heart pounded hard, and I realised that it would take me a long time to adjust myself to a normal existence; to living without fear.

I opened the door and a kind smiling neighbour walked in holding in her hand a dishful of steaming hot soured brown 'mabele' porridge porridge which she knew I liked very much.

— Masoli, my dear, I'm very happy to see you. We did not know that you were detained. We were not aware that people had been arrested; we only learnt about it on Saturday. And we did not know that you were one of those unfortunate ninety-two. Anyway, thanks God you are back and out of that horrible place! How do you feel? We were shocked to hear that Bishop Tutu's wife was one of those beaten up.

And the good lady sat down smiling and looking at me. She winced when I turned and slipped off the gown from my body to show her the bruises on my back, rump and right fore-arm. She opened her eyes wider and wondered why she had not noticed my black left eyelid over which I had smeared some of my cold cream.

— Oh Lord! If God does not answer! she exclaimed, Why, how did it happen?

She sat there agape, listening to the story of the night at the Zenzele Y.W.C.A. in Dube when the buses which were to have transported the Soweto mourners to attend the funeral of Mr Steve Biko in Kingwilliamstown were stopped and 'hijacked'.

— It was already dark when I walked in followed by my husband carrying my two bags.

— So you were both attending the funeral?

— No. He was merely seeing me off. He took me to Dube by van. His intention was really to see that I had boarded the bus safely and then return.

— Of course you would not leave the house alone. Then?

— Later, people were asked to pay attention and respond to their names which were called out from a list by some young men on the stage. There were very many people; the hall was full to capacity. But they were very orderly, you know. No singing or jumping around or anything like that. They were just sitting and chatting quietly. They called out the names according to the order of registration — those who had registered early were called out first and so on. As they walked up to the side entrance, they were ushered out into the waiting buses. It must have been after eight when they started calling out the passengers. It was while the third bus was being loaded that we noticed some delay. I remembered some who were sitting near us becoming impatient and asking why it was taking longer to fill the third bus. Apparently, something outside was responsible for the delay.

— What happened, shooting?

— A woman sitting near the window overlooking the side stoep and the courtyard tried to open the curtain, presumably to get some fresh air, suddenly drew shut the heavy linen drapery and shouted: 'A pink face. A soldier with a gun looked straight into my face'. Someone further away asked: 'What do *they* want here now?' I looked around and saw that everybody was worried. Another asked: 'Can't they stay away from us? They practically *live* with us in Soweto!' Yet another asked: 'What has happened to their "Apartheid"? They're *always* with us wherever we are!'

— Then?

— Then there was some scuffing of feet near the big main door. Those standing on the entrance porch and along the narrow passage where the people were seated, surged inwards, as if moving away from some approaching onslaught. Then I felt the familiar smell on my nostrils. 'Tear-gas!' someone shouted, 'They've shot in tear-gas!' A flying cylindrical object soared above our heads towards the stage where the youths who were reading out the names were standing flanked on all sides by waiting people. There was panic. People jumping around in all directions, with heavy concentration on the entrances and exit points. There was now no doubt about the presence of gas as it had filled all the space in the hall. I gasped for breath, choking hot fumes spreading into my chest, eyes, nostrils and throat. 'Break the windows!' someone screamed, and many scrambled in the direction of the windows. Youths were leaping wildly over struggling women. The heavy bakelite chair which my husband rammed over the windowpane seemed ineffective. By then the crowd which had conglomerated in the main entrance had lessened. I looked through my burning eyes and all I knew was that come what may, I *had* to get some fresh air. Only the powerful surge from behind me enabled me to work my way through the gasping, coughing women who were kneeling on the floor. I was transported by the moving stream with my feet hardly touching the wooden floor.

'A flying cylindrical object soared above our heads towards the stage where the youths who were reading out the names were standing . . .'

Outside there was shooting, and smoke thickened the misty night air until it looked like smog. Dark figures were scurrying in all directions, disappearing into the shadows of the houses on the other side of the tarred road beyond the open space. They were scampering away from the array of bullets which was following them, gunshots rattling from all sides as I stood there breathing deeply. I knelt down rubbing my eyes and trying to mumble my last prayer. I knew that the moment had come and it would soon be over with me. A shot would soon tear through my body and end all the agony.

'Daar's 'n vrou!' Someone nearby shouted in Afrikaans.

The voice was that of a white man and I looked through the hot tears and saw him pointing with one arm in my direction, the other arm was gripping a gun. The daze swept through my head and made me feel as if I was swivelling in a merry-go-round, the burning slimy sputum flowing in an endless stream into the gravel pavement. A short distance away, a figure moved towards me with a gun pointed at me. I raised my hand not knowing why and looked into something resembling the face of a black man dressed in camouflage uniform. He stumbled over the body of a man and kicked it, turning it slowly over so that it lay prostrate with the face turned towards the sky, and the arms spread out. The policeman looked at me.

'Get in there, Quick!' he ordered.

And I struggled to get on my feet with great effort. He urged me on by hitting me hard across my buttocks with the butt of the gun. The bag slung over my shoulder dangled heavily below my diaphragm as I moved, half-crawling on all four limbs towards the wide open door of the 'kwela-kwela'. I held on to the step below the door with all my strength, with the aim of propelling myself on to it. Before I could do that I was sent catapulting on my stomach over the dusty steel floor of the police-van by a push from behind. While I sat on the bunk wondering what would happen next, a girl of about twelve was hurled into the van from outside, and she quickly scrambled from the floor into my open arms. She sat next to me, holding on to me and crying.

— Are they not going to kill us? She kept asking.

— I don't know. I answered.

Some of the fumes from the burning tear-gas had now worn off and I tried to think. They are the law, I thought, holding on hopelessly to some ray of hope, and the law *must* or at least *should* protect us.

* * * * *

Rockville

Except for the sound of one or two shots echoing in the thick air, the noise had died down, leaving the anxious voices of white soldiers calling out, giving orders. There were many black and white soldiers-cum-police, all armed, moving around the big yard and in the adjoining streets. I peeped through the circular hole with its meshed wire and saw our cream Leyland panel-van still standing where Stephen had parked it. I wondered what could have happened to him. He should not have accompanied me to Dube, I thought regretfully. It is bad enough for one member of the family to land in the hands of the police or to . . . I shuddered as I thought of the body which was lying on the ground, still and irresponsive to the kick of the heavy boot of the black policeman. What could have happened to him?

The little girl held on to me. We were alone in the van and I tried to think of something reassuring to say to her and calm her. Then there were approaching quick footsteps and someone climbed on to the step below the open kwela-kwela door. He whistled, banging hard against the body of the van with his fist, and the vehicle roared into gear and started off, moving up towards the robots and turned right, passing the long chain of brightly-illuminated buses which were to take the people of Soweto to Kingwilliamstown. The whole yard now looked deserted and all was

'The girl next to me shivered, cupping her ears with her hands, and hid her face on my lap.'

quiet. The van took a fast turn round the block and lower down in the street, it stood still in the middle of the road. Both the driver and the policeman on the outside step alighted hurriedly, wielding guns, and ran into the yards. The little girl and I were again left alone in the van. We stood up and moved towards the open door and looked out. She turned her tear-stained face up to mine and asked: 'Should we not jump out?' I hesitated and we stood there. I am familiar with the whole of Dube township, but at that moment I looked into a neighbourhood I could not recognise. Everything seemed to be unreal and confusing. I tried to think clearly. There were the strange unfamiliar houses on both sides. Some had lights shining through slits in the heavily-curtained large windows and others were dark. How long would it take me to cover the distance from the van to the houses before a gunshot stopped me? 'No', I said emphatically, holding her back, 'there could be more policemen hiding in the shadows.' As if to confirm my fears, a warning shot rattled across the street in the direction of the houses to our left. I say 'warning shot' because a bullet whistled as it hit a high window-pane in one of the dark houses. There was movement in the shadows below and a policeman dashed towards the movement shouting 'Stop, stop!' Then there were sounds of eager footsteps audible as we retreated away from the door on to the bunk with a thud. A sharp pain on my backside reminded me of the blow from the gun butt, and I turned and adjusted my sitting position in such a manner that I would not suffer greater discomfort. The girl next to me shivered, cupping her ears with her hands, and hid her face on my lap.

* * * * *

You. You, the people of Soweto! What do you think you are? Just who do you think you are anyway?

The loud voice of the black camouflage-uniformed policeman-cum-soldier was shouting, audible and clear, above the cries and screams of agony in the 'kwela-kwela'.

It was hot, and the weight of one of the policemen resting over my back facing the door of the van was unbearable. I stood at an angle moaning from the pains in my arm, rump and spine which were aggravated by the heavy weight of the young policeman, rubbing incessantly against my whole back with his backside as he strained his muscles administering fierce blows with his baton indiscriminately to his right and left on the backs, faces, limbs of the cowering people. We were packed like sardines. He was shouting and cursing as the crouching bewildered passengers dodged the blows and dug their faces into each other's bodies, men and boys crossing their arms above their heads to dodge the blows. The women whined and screamed loudly.

— Who do you think you are? You, the people of Soweto? We can hardly rest. No day off, no leave because of you! Just who do you think you are anyway?

The loud voice of the 'inquisitor' rose, shouting above the screams and wails of the women. It rose above the roaring noise of the engine and friction of the tyres against the tarred road as the van sped along — along a road to I-could-not-guess-where. It banged and joggled along, its body swaying from one side to another.

— You. The people of Soweto! Who do you think you are?

I half-turned my head to catch a glimpse of the persistent questioner. Between the swaying quivering bodies of the many people behind me, it was possible to get brief eye-shots of him. He was obviously enjoying his privileged position. The hellish journey was providing an excellent opportunity for him. He was once and for all going to give the people of Soweto a good telling-off and without mincing his words. I could get short glances of him because his head was high, near the roof of the vehicle. I wondered whether he was not standing on crouching human bodies. His camouflage cap was pulled well over his forehead so that the brim concealed most of his face. Only the thick shiny lips showing a set of pure-white teeth and the strong lower jaw were visible. His pink tongue kept rubbing over the lips as he spoke and it maintained a fresh coat of saliva over them. He fixed his stare into the sweating face of a fully-grown man. The policeman held in his hand a revolver with its mouth pointing into the man's terrified, blinking face.

— I can shoot you *now*, *now* and there's *nothing* you or anyone can do to me!

I turned and faced away. I 'faced my front' as we used to be ordered when we were in our sub-standards. I flinched away from the overwhelming need to scream at the top of my voice. I tried to mind my own business and pretend not to be part of the horrific scene. I closed my eyes and attempted a few words of prayer. I wanted to pray that all that I was witnessing around me should prove to be a dream, a nightmare from which some sympathetic person would soon rouse me. It was all in vain. I realised that all that was happening was no dream but a shocking reality.

— Haw, haw, haw!

The heckler's young colleague next to me on my left roared with laughter in a thick gravel voice. He was standing with one of his steel-soled shoes over my left foot, and the tarsus bones felt close to breaking. If only the weight of the baton-flashing young policeman behind me and the steel sole of the one next to me were removed, I would be prepared to journey into the hell we were undoubtedly bound for with no fuss at all. I would wait for the inevitable without even raising a finger, I thought as I stood there in agony, sweating and suffering. I rested my tired abdomen over the body of the child below me and could only hope that she would not suffocate to death. She only peeped once, looked at me and whispered: 'Ma (mother), please tell them you were with me. Tell them you were from work and that I am your child. Please!' I nodded to her pleading, disjointed phrases but I knew that no one would believe that I was 'from work' at that hour of night. The child dived under the sling-bag hanging over my groin . . . The pain over my left foot was unbearable. I fearfully turned an eyeball in the direction of the policeman without turning my head for fear of offending him and inviting blows. I wondered why he was not lashing out like his other colleagues.

I could try to speak to him, entreat him to lift his steel heel just a small fraction. After all he at least seemed to be slapping someone in front of him only. He must be merely *pretending* to be doing what the others are doing, I consoled myself . . . Just a small fraction, I'd beg him, I kept thinking, trying to work myself to a point where I would be brave enough to speak to him . . . The pain was more than I could bear. I sweated profusely, flapping my eyelashes hard to make the sweat and the tears roll down. My heart beat powerfully like a hammer. I stifled my voice so as not to scream . . . It seemed to me that the louder one howled the harder they hit you. The yells, especially from the women and girls behind me suggested that . . . I wished I could pass out. At least I wouldn't actually stand there at that awkward angle, over the groaning, deeply-breathing human forms under me, with my back-bone about to

break into two or more pieces, and my foot about to be crushed into pulp. I tried to think how it had come about that I should be where I was, standing like that, over so many people, facing the rear end of the van, and I could not piece my thoughts together.

Oh, the piercing pain in my left foot! . . . If only I could make him move the steel thing just a bit . . . I turned my eyeballs left again to steal a small glance at him . . . Perhaps if I saw his face I would be able to judge whether it would be 'safe' even to *beg* him. I was apprehensive. What was being done by these people seemed to me to be unreal. Human beings could not possibly do this to other human beings — especially of the same flesh, colour and blood. If anyone had related to me all that was happening to us then, I would have called him or her a liar. Such things cannot possibly happen to people — not even in Soweto! They could happen in hell, yes, but not anywhere on this earth. What wrong had we done anyway?

He seemed to be twisting someone's arm and 'slapping' him or her. I stole another peek and saw the tear-stained face of a teenage girl in between his beating arms. He struck at the girl's already bleeding hand. I winced and looked away. Perhaps if I begged him to lift up his foot a bit it would distract him from concentrating on the poor girl, I thought. My God! Whose daughter was it, I asked myself. It could have been my very own, I thought, all the nerves in my abdomen curling up into a painful knot. I could not bear the sight. The poor girl turned her eyes to me, and in them was a look no mother could mistake. It was a challenge, an appeal from a child, a female, to its mother. What could I do anyway? I turned my head and looked squarely into the man's face. Although his cap was also pulled quite low, he was much taller than I was. He towered above me and I could see his eyes under the brim. He could not have been much older than my own son; I could swear to that, I thought. He clenched his teeth and was about to strike again when I begged:

— My son, please . . . Your foot is resting on my . . .

— Shut up you! I'm not your son! Stand that way!

He shouted, striking me with the back of his open hand and I could feel his fingertips touching my eyeball. He pushed me with his elbow so that for some moments I lay over the crouched bodies in front of me and below me. They groaned and wriggled like worms as my body rested wholly and heavily on them. He looked at me furiously and cried:

— You! You are the very people who are making these children do what they are doing! *You* are the ones!

I rose slowly and painfully. I held back the flush of tears which came flooding into my eyes and looked in his direction again. Because of the force with which he had jerked me away from him, his body up to the knees had become visible. And what I saw shocked me so that I was momentarily dumb-founded. The poor girl had been struggling with the strong arms of the policeman. He was trying to pull down the zip in the front of the pair of jeans the girl was wearing. For a short while, they were locked in a tussle and when his hand broke loose, his fist went flying towards the girl's face, hitting her on the eye so that her eyelid started swelling immediately. I looked at him, but my eyes were attracted to the open fly of his trousers. His naked male organ was protruding rigidly, and at right angles to his body!

* * * * *

The police van gurgled to a jerky halt in front of a big gate, and I breathed a sigh of relief because it appeared that we had at last reached our destination. I did not know on which part of this troubled world it was but we had *arrived*. We had come to the end of what had been like an endless hazardous journey.

Although it was not yet eleven, it had been like ages since we were seated calmly in the beautiful spacious Y.M.C.A. hall in Dube, looking forward to a time when we would join the Biko family in Kingwilliamstown, mourning with them in their sad loss of their beloved relation — a truly worthy son of this soil.

The gruesome period of beating, cursing and worse seemed to have ceased and we wondered what would come next. We were almost humanely ordered out of the vehicle. I had realised that the number of people who were loaded into the 'kwela-kwela' was great — but not to the extent of what was now evident before me.

'Two-by-two!' the elderly-looking black policeman wielding a baton in his hand called out, pointing towards the entrance, out of which a strong electric light shot a broad beam which pierced the dark surroundings.

— Two-by-two; 'njengamapilisi'! (Like pills)

The policeman re-iterated the order, and we jumped out in as quick a manner as we could manage.

— Where are we?

The little girl next to me asked, whispering and looking about for signs of anything she could recognise.

— Which police station is this; is it Soweto or what?

— I don't know.

I replied softly, shaking my head and adjusting the strap of the sling-bag. I looked before me in disbelief. How could that 'kwela-kwela' take in so many people? I looked around to see whether there were other vehicles nearby but realised that ours was the only one. I tried to count the pairs.

— Stop gazing about. Move!

I stopped counting and faced ahead of me, limping on one foot. We slowly filed into the charge office.

* * * * *

The large room into which we were herded was full to capacity, leaving only a small space next to the long wooden counter and about two metres between us and our former 'assailants'. They seemed to have been joined by many more armed camouflage policemen, both black and white. They leaned against walls staring at us under the caps, relaxed and some smiling obviously satisfied with what they had accomplished. Except for a few stalwart youths and men who kept directing accusing and challenging scornful stares at them, we had been thoroughly quelled. 'Cowards!' one of the youths mumbled, dabbing his wet brow. 'Ba ne ba re ntsitse papa' (They had wrung the 'porridge' — starch — out of us). Just like you do to a new cloth which is hard and stiff and refuses to lie down flat. Our spirits had been dampened, perhaps, but they were still in our aching bodies. Unlike our hero (Steve Biko) whom we were mourning, we were still alive. Thanks God. I felt worn and haggard all over. I could only hope that the bones in my left foot were still whole. Except for the swelling and a twinge of pain where my stocking clung to a clot of blood, it felt alright. I had expected to see a splinter of bone sticking out. The upper lid of my left eye was heavy and sore. I kept wondering what sight I presented to those who were looking at me. This must have been the feeling of everyone who had been beaten. All around were movements of arms towards parts which had been hurt. Hands were holding pieces of tissues, handkerchiefs, torn pieces of clothing, gaping wounds on eyes, foreheads, skulls, necks, ears — everywhere where the human body can be struck. There was blood everywhere — on our clothes, shoes, some dripping on to the floor. There were gasps of horror from the girls and women when a teenage girl was dragged into the space between us and the policemen.

I sat down on the floor to ease my back and swollen sore foot. One of the adult men who were with us in the van must have noticed my agony because in spite of the looks of disgust from our black 'guards', he removed his grey tweed overcoat, spread it on the floor and pressed down my shoulder gently urging me to lie down on the coat. It was only when he eased my sling-bag under my head that I was aware of the dizziness and throb in my temples. I looked at the partially-concealed faces of the black policemen expecting reproach, and then thanked him. The whites, who had made no attempt to cover their countenances, merely stared at us and said nothing. I must have looked like a sight for sore eyes — for them to be indifferent to what must have been like an act of chivalry by one 'prisoner' to another! I had never been in prison before. Throughout all my life, I had tried by all means to avoid any confrontation with the police. For a so-called second class citizen who had lived all my life in the city of Johannesburg I had really been fortunate enough to have achieved that unique distinction in a place where it was almost impossible not to be a criminal. I had obeyed almost all the laws of this Republic. All the many unjust laws I had often felt that I was under no moral obligation to honour. Yet there I was.

I stopped thinking about myself and indulging in a lot of self-pity. I was uneasy. There was the poor girl lying inertly near me. I kept wondering whether she was still breathing or not. I kept my eyes fixed on her chest. I dared not reach out and touch her. After a while, I realised that she *was* breathing. She drew deep irregular gushes of air through her open blood-stained mouth, her bloody tongue and teeth showing through her thick lips. She kept her eyes shut below the swollen bruised fore-head.

I looked at the smiling contented black policemen and I asked myself whether they were the same ones who were with us in the

'kwela-kwela'. They avoided our eyes. They cannot face us in the bright lights of the charge office, I thought. I felt certain that they would never live to face anyone squarely in the face again. Somehow I pitied them . . . What had we done to deserve that kind of treatment anyway, what wrong had we done?

* * * * *

There seemed to be some disagreement and uncertainty on the other side of the counter between the black sergeant-in-charge and the white official.

— What is the charge?

The white policeman had asked the sergeant and we all listened attentively. I struggled to my feet aided by some of the people nearby. We were now going to be formally charged, and if it was at all possible for us to return to our homes and nurse our wounds in the care of our loved ones and not in that squalid abominable place we would not hesitate to leave.

— Disturbance.

The black sergeant replied. And we looked at each other. Some whispered 'whom did we disturb?' There was shuffling of feet among us, some shaking their heads.

— Those who want to pay admission of guilt can do so and pay. Then they will be free to go.

The black police official added this with all the authority the law permitted him.

— How much?

Someone in our midst asked.

— Ten Rand. Those who want to pay can give their names and addresses to my assistant here. The men must produce their passes; the women need not.

There was mumbling and movement as pockets were searched and purses opened. Those of us who had lost all their belongings stood still, others with their arms folded. Some of us who had some money to spare, offered to pay for the others. It was sad when we realised that even if it was not the desire of anyone of us to go free whilst others would remain, many were still not going to be able to leave. Most of us did not know each other but we had suffered together, and our plight had propagated a latent spirit of unity — something the people of Soweto have had to learn through their long history of endurance.

Later, after further 'secret' consultations between the officials, we were referred to another section of the police station. We moved towards that other block and the little girl who was with me in the van moved closer to me again. She said softly: 'This is Meadowlands. They are leading us to the cells. Many of our school-mates were detained here. I know'. We moved on, some of us still clutching the R10 notes in our hands. We had filled in the forms but nothing was said about handing in the money.

The thick, heavily-bolted wooden door was opened and we filed in and stood in a semi-circle, facing another long counter with a pink-faced burly official leaning against it, his shirt-sleeves rolled up to his biceps.

— How much are you?

It was a parenthetical question and we stared at him without saying anything. Did he really expect us to have an answer to that, we wondered. He must have been able to read the boredom in our worn expressions.

— How much are you?

He repeated, smiling and starting to count, eyeing us like a number of fishes caught in a net, and nodding his blonde head to every count, his eyes gliding over our heads and indifferent to our long suffering. Some of the black policemen moved in carrying the wounded girl who had fainted. He looked at her and asked:

— What's wrong with her?

Nobody answered him. He resumed his counting. His eyes lingered on the little girl beside me and he pointed at her.

— You should not have taken *her*. She's too small man.

He said to his black subordinates. He asked the child:

— How old are you?

— Twelve.

And he shook his head.

— Alright. They can go in. Open the gates.

The heavy lock on the thick wrought-iron gate behind us crackled and a black guard stood opening the door with one arm and standing aside. We were led into the big prison yard and the cells. The menfolk were directed in the opposite direction. To the teenage school girls with us it seemed to be familiar ground. We followed the guard without uttering a word.

A pile of dark-grey soiled 'donkey' blankets was brought in by another guard and dumped in the centre of what we referred to as Cell 2 amongst ourselves. It was to be our living-quarters for that whole weekend: half of us. The other half were housed in the identical cell next-door. We spread the 'donkey' blankets on the shiny cement floor reluctantly but at that moment all we needed was to be left alone and to have somewhere to 'rest'.

The heavy prison door clanged mercilessly behind us and the hollow sound echoed through the high almost empty house of detention.

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We were awakened by the haunting music of freedom songs. The 'captive' children had arisen from the hard concrete gaol floor undaunted, defiant and as resilient as ever. Their songs of hope, assurance and determination resounded through the sombre prison surroundings. They nursed their wounds and sang of the heroes of Africa. Their young vigorous bodies appeared to have drawn more enthusiasm from their very weakened state. They rose in the early morning before the sun's rays filled the spacious prison yard. As soon as the heavy iron doors were opened, they emerged and stamped the rough concrete floor with their feet. They were going to fight on without flinching in spite of the hippos, the teargas, the bullets, the detentions, the bannings and the shackles . . . until Azania is free!

The floor inside the cell where we were lying seemed to quaver as the bare young feet thundered on the cement floor outside. They declared:

'Thina silulutsha,
Singeke sibulalwe
Ngama-Bunu — Sililutsha!'('We are the youth,
We shall never be destroyed
By the Boers — We are the youth!')

I listened, suppressing the strong urge to go out into the yard. With the exception of the ones who had sustained bad injuries and were still groaning with pain, Cell 2 was nearly vacant.

Attempting to rise would mean using most of the muscles in my body which were now very sore. Any effort to move would also inevitably disturb the two on either side of me. On my left was a schoolgirl who had introduced herself as Mpho from Phefeni, and on my right was a woman of my own age, Mabel. She owned a house in Dube and she knew many of the residents of Moroka who were my neighbours.

After twisting and turning in an effort to find the most agreeable positions in which to lie, Mpho and I had decided that we would face the same way simultaneously so that we would cause each other as little discomfort as possible. Mabel could only lie on her back as the whole anterior portion of her body from the chest down to her knees was very badly bruised. She was also feeling very feverish.

With the assistance of some of the people around, we finally got up. I squeezed my swollen toes into the left shoe and hobbled out into the confined sunny space and the music. The deafening thumping and ululating were now in earnest as the eager voices chanted the Xhosa war song to which they added their own words.

The loud singing and stampeding were reduced by the clang of the majestic gate. The matron opened the door to the long-term prisoners who were carrying the utensils containing the breakfast. Then the music stopped and we satisfied our curiosity about the prison food. Some tasted the different items of the menu — soft porridge, tea or coffee (cold) , stale bread. The majority refused even to touch it. 'We'd rather starve' they remarked, 'what if they should give us poison?' There was laughter all around.

I had mentioned earlier that when we entered Cell 2 on the previous night, it was 'nearly' empty. There was, in the far end, a grey bundle rolled up tightly. The bundle was in fact Lydia, its sole occupant, a girl who had apparently been involved in what she claimed had been a frame-up in a robbery case and a subsequent shooting with the police. She had been remanded in custody. Lydia had been there for nearly four months when we arrived. From her we learnt a lot about life in that prison . . . No, even if the threadbare 'donkey' blankets were soiled and sometimes blood-stained, she had not seen any bedbugs or lice. No, there was never hot water in the taps and basins in the shower-room. No, you were not supplied with any soap, you had to provide your own. Yes, the prison food was always the same — hot sometimes lukewarm tasteless mealie-pap porridge in the morning with a cold beverage which tastes like tea at other times and like coffee on other days. Yes, the sugar content was

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always insufficient in the 'tea'. If you wanted additional sugar you could ask the long-term prisoners to give you some, or you could send one of the guards to buy you some. No, milk cartons were never allowed inside. If anyone brought you milk, it was always poured into tins. No, she never eats prison food — has food brought from home daily by relations who also do her washing at home and supply her with clean clothes.

For lunch, there was always hot mealie-meal pap (stiff) in aluminium pots and the watery brown soup with some vegetables in it; also stale bread. Yes, cold 'tea' in a tin was provided with every meal. Yes, the food is brought in whether you eat it or not. For supper, there was the thick brown bean soup and mealie-meal pap (stiff). Yes, we could all contribute some money and ask some of the guards to go and buy us some food 'outside'. Yes, they are very cruel and hard to begin with, but they are also human and black, and they sometimes sympathise — to which some remarked: 'Of course, they also want a free Azania. They are in chains.' *(Laughter).* No, there is no meat, even on Sundays, but there is sometimes samp.

In reply to my twelve-year-old companion, Lydia said . . . Yes, Sophie, the little girl's cousin who had been detained since the August unrest of '76 was still there but she was in solitary confinement in Cell 1 next-door . . . Yes, some of the boys from Rockville who had been arrested after the June riots were still there. Yes, even if they are not allowed visitors, the guards sometimes sympathise and allow them to peep through the doors. Yes, they all looked well and healthy, but they were all homesick. No, they were not allowed to read any newspapers, not even the 'World'.

* * * * *

We all took turns and went into the small shower-room to do our washing-up. Those who had completed their ablutions, attended to the contributions and made decisions as to what to buy for our meals. Those who had 'lost' all their possessions and purses would also be provided for. 'After-all we are all one family', we all agreed.

We were all happy to see that the girl who had been dragged into the charge office on the previous night was now fully conscious. She had been cared for by Flora, the girl with the pink night-dress.

I at once admired Flora's courage, more-so because of her willingness to help. She seemed to be born for nursing others. I was not surprised to learn later that she was in fact a nurse employed in Dr Motlana's surgery. She floated around in the unfamiliar surroundings of the prison on her bare feet, like they were her consulting rooms. She was indeed a Florence Nightingale.

Flora was very resourceful and she did a lot of improvising. She had started early doing a lot of 'first aid' work. She ignored her own cuts and bruises and attended to others. Those who were fortunate enough to be able to hold on to their handbags, were only too willing to offer ointments such as vaseline, and glycerine. Some even had pain killing tablets and powders. These were distributed to those who needed them most.

* * * * *

It was long after breakfast. The regular warder accompanied by one of his associates walked into the yard wielding the inevitable bunch of enormous keys. We were all summoned into our respective cells *to be counted.* After the counting, the keeper asked:

— Do you have any complaints?

He had invited a barrage of questions and requests.

— Of course we have!
— What's wrong?
— Can't you see?
— What?

And we looked at him rather wide-eyed. Some clicking their tongues in disgust. One growled angrily:

— What do you mean what, What about our bags?
— Bags?
— Yes, bags. What about them; Where are they?

Another one muttered:

— We want our injuries attended to, we want a doctor!
— We shall see to that.

The warder retorted, rather taken aback.

— You will see to what, when?

asked yet another. The door slammed behind him as he followed his companion, scuttling out unceremoniously, smiling and leaving without offering satisfactory answers.

— The scoundrel. He's a brute!

Lydia remarked,

walks in here at night when we are asleep and fondles us.

Everyone looked at her surprised, others laughing and shaking their heads in despair. Someone asked:

— At night, when you are alone, then what do you do?
— What shall we do? We chase him away and threaten to report him.

The sun was hot outside where some sat in the shade against the wall plaiting each other and teaching each other new 'freedom' tunes. Most preferred to either sit leaning against the walls inside, or lying down. One of the keepers brought in a number of about 1 1/2 inch thick rectangular strips of coarse woollen matting. These we welcomed very much as we arranged them on the cold smooth cement floor, and they served as mattresses.

— Has anyone got a razor blade?

Flora asked, peeping at the door from the next cell.

— What are you going to do with a razor blade, cut somebody's throat?
— No, replied the energetic girl, smiling.

She was already busy. For those who had wounds in their skulls she would clean up the affected parts which were caked with dust, clotted blood and hair. Then she would shave off the surrounding hair. Those who had spare doeks passed them over to her to make slings to support broken or swollen arms.

— Where's that woman?

The cell-mates chatted away leisurely.

— Who, the matron?
— Do they refer to her as the matron? Isn't a matron a dignified professional nurse, a most senior nurse in a hospital or something?
— Well she's also a senior, a prison senior.

Replied the one next to her sarcastically.

— I'll be damned if I must come and be a watch-dog for the Boers!
— Where do they get all the scum from? asked another.
— I wonder who supplies them with all these . . . Matanzima, Mangope, who?
— They couldn't be from Soweto?
— Imagine having a prison warder for a neighbour?

Later, the smiling 'polite' woman warder walked in accompanied by a tall policeman in plain clothes, wearing an all-weather overcoat and holding in his hand a note-book and pencil. The woman announced:

— Any of you who would like to inform relatives at home that you are being kept here may send this man.

The impression we got was that for once we were being given 'V.I.P' treatment', that that was a deviation from normal procedure. Many gave names and addresses without hesitating, and the man wrote them down fast. Many agreed that he looked intelligent and 'different'. We thanked him, and just before he turned to go someone remembered and asked:

— What about our luggages?
— Luggages?
— Yes, our bags. We left them in the hall, Y.W.C.A., Dube. Some remained in the buses when we jumped out. Can't you help us? What's going to happen to them?
— Something *should* be done about them. Perhaps they posted policemen to look after them. I'll go and see.
— Please do help us, and . . . thanks.

The woman remained behind and explained:

— I've just been told by the sergeant-in-charge that those of you who would like to have medical attention will be taken to a doctor this evening.

After they had left and locked us in the yard, leaving the two cells open, most of us moved freely in and out of the cells and exercised our stiff muscles. Later, Mabel

'The sun was hot outside where some sat plaiting each other and teaching each other new "freedom" tunes'

'Some only hide their heads under the blankets and forget their buttocks outside! Haw, haw, haw!'

and I and several others went into Cell 2 and 'relaxed' on the 'stools' we had made from bundles of rolled gaol blankets. We engaged in some talking while others remained outside in the yard.

Mabel, cuddled between Mpho and myself in 'our' corner asked:

— Why did you not send the policeman, how will your husband know where you are?

— I don't know where he is. We were together in the hall. How do I know whether he too, has been detained, at another prison? And why did you not give your address?

— I was reluctant. I do not like policemen frequenting my home. Everybody will panic. We have already had too many visits from these people.

We both laughed. I had the feeling that Mabel was not being honest and I did not want to pry. We listened to the tête a tête around us . . .

— That policeman, he seems to understand, to sympathise. That's why I thought that he'll at least *do* something about our leather bags and parcels.

— Our valuables, monies, provisions!

— They'll eat like hungry pigs!

— All those cakes, chickens, fruits etc.

— My purse, all that money, my beautiful mohair rug!

— My expensive pair of platform shoes and sandals!

— Ours remained at that poor woman's house.

— Shame. She must have had most of her furniture smashed.

— What about her beautiful cut-glass sets and crockery which were in that big display cabinet?

— What happened, did they break it?

I asked. They looked at me, surprised.

— Where were you? Didn't they rake you out of one of the houses?

— No. I was the first to be shoved into the 'kwela-kwela'. They found me in a dazed state outside the Y.W.C.A. hall. What happened Did they break her display cabinet?

— It came down like a rain cloud! They were turning everything upside-down looking for hiding people all over. And there were many of us in that woman's house. Shame. She had opened her house to us, and she only got trouble.

We listened, sometimes laughing and at other times not. They were always reverting to the hellish journey in the 'kwela-kwela'.

— Didn't you hear that 'braggard' of a soldier telling his colleagues 'fancy, these Soweto people, they all lie on top of each other. I picked up the blankets and there they were, pretending to be fast asleep, still fully-clad, in their dresses and trousers. All ten of them in one bed. Imagine. When they find the owner of the house sleeping on his or her bed, they don't ask. They just climb in on top of whoever they find and pull the blankets over their heads, still in their shoes and everything. Some only hide their heads under the blankets and forget their big buttocks outside! Haw, haw, haw!' And they laughed, making fun and beating us.

— And these children already know their tactics. As soon as something happens, they come searching and turning nearby houses upside-down.

— Yes. We know them. When you dash into a house and find them doing dishwashing, you remove your school uniform fast and grab and wear whatever garment you find. Then you join those in the house and do whatever housework you can. Just keep yourself busy. When they come asking questions, they can see you have been in the house and not at a meeting or protest march.

There was laughter.

— Didn't you hear him, the braggard, saying: 'I find another one sitting on a chair. When I told him to get out and go into the van, he claimed it was his house. Fancy, how can the owner of a house sit on a chair fully-dressed in his best Sunday suit, sitting, with his necktie, everything on a chair instead of relaxing in bed at ten at night? And when I asked him why he was sitting there in a pitch-black house, he tells me that that is his business!' And his colleague standing near us added: 'And I bet if you ask him to produce a permit for that house of his he won't know where to look for it'.

Then I remembered Flora moving in her pink nightie and bare feet and asked:

— Now how did Flora manage to save her nightie and lose her shoes; she also lost her bag, did she not?

They all laughed, looking at me curiously. One explained:

— Don't you know? Flora dashed into a house and found the pink nightie lying there. She quickly undressed and slipped the nightie on. Her bags, shoes and everything remained in that house. She's one of those who were dragged out of bed. She doesn't even know whose nightie that is!

It was so funny. We all laughed loudly.

— These children know the soldiers and police. They are busy with them day in and day out nowadays, and they are giving them a run for their fat pay-cheques.

— Can't you see what they do when they get into these 'kwela-kwelas'. They work their way underneath. You won't even see their heads.

— Did you perhaps have the time to see what was happening where I was? That soldier or policeman who was sitting next to me pulled me down and made me sit near him. He kept asking me many questions. What's your name? Where do you live? Don't you want to come and pay me a visit at the Protea Barracks?' I said 'yes' to everything. I gave him a wrong address and all false names and he believed me. I don't even remember what I was saying. I was frightened lest he attack me. I made a hundred-and-one promises. I said I was merely accompanying friends to King-williamstown and he smiled saying I am a sensible girl. He even pulled out of his jacket his pay cheque and showed it to me. He said:

'Look. How much is this?' I looked and said seventeen rand purposely ignoring the first number. He shouted, disgusted: 'Can't you see it's R217? I'll slap you! How can *I* earn so little money?' They're so stupid.

— Yes. They must be from the bundus, from the mountains. That other one kept asking 'Why are you tramping on my 'Flosheim' shoes, do you know how much 'Flosheims' cost? Will you buy them?' Fancy, boasting to us about shoes in a police van.

— They hijacked our buses and they always accuse us of hijacking PUTCO buses and forcing them to transport student mourners during funerals.

— These children, they're so brave; they are not afraid of being in gaol. If I were a child and any one put me in a place like this I would faint, I'm sure.

— No. They don't care.

I said, remembering the little girl who had clung to me. I searched with my eyes for her. She was in Cell 1. While all the tête a tête was in progress, she was moving about from one group to another looking into their faces and asking: 'How much are you; How much are you?' To the amusement of everyone. Mabel, to whom I had related the shocking incident in the 'kwela-kwela' remarked:

— And shame that poor girl, she must still be in a state of shock. She has been so quiet. She has bruises and a very swollen black eye. It was fortunate that she was not wearing a dress but a pair of jeans.

— I think it was a blessing that the distance between Dube Hall and Meadowlands was not longer. Many of us would have been raped.

One answered.

— And the men with us could not even fight them. What could they do against such gun-wielding thugs?

— And did they hit them! Everytime one dared to look, he got a good clubbing on his face or skull and blood flowed.

— And some have really bad injuries.

How they cursed and swore!'You, you people of Soweto. You can afford to attend the funeral of a man miles away in the Cape when you can hardly attend the funeral of a person next door to you?' He kept asking and looking around and striking.

— What does he know about Soweto when he is a mere 'magoduka' (one who is passing). He's here on 'join', on his master's service. They spend most of their lives in the police barracks for fear of being recognised in the streets of Soweto.

— Didn't you hear him say: 'We can kill all

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of you here and there's nothing you can do to us. Who'll speak for you? I have someone to speak for me. Nothing will happen to us!'

— Shame. They really think they can beat up all the people of Soweto into a lot of frightened creatures. A lot of docile dummies without senses or feelings.

— And to think that they are poor black stooges born of a poor black woman just like myself. What reward do they think they will reap anyway? Even if they shot thousands as he boasted to us. Even if they had killed all the men and raped us all, there would be more thousands standing up against injustices, and fighting for their rights.

* * * * *

It must have been the depressing feeling of loneliness or anxiety or the downright fear of the unknown. The same shattering experience as when you suddenly realise that you are all alone in the world. That you are unwanted and deserted. You lack something solid to hold on to; a foothold. Like seeing familiar faces around you; like being in your home, with your loved ones — the desire to belong. Or it must have been that sitting and witnessing the smiles on the faces of those who responded to the call. From early in the afternoon the messenger had been moving in and out through the big steel shutter peeping at the doors of the cells calling names of those whose relatives had come to claim us. Some had brought with them some provisions in the forms of foodstuffs and fruits. Because we were not allowed to see visitors, some were summoned to the counter to be given messages that they had been traced and that they could rest and be contented in the knowledge that they are loved and missed; that they are not 'alone'.

The 'sympathetic' plain-clothes policeman must have moved very, very fast informing anxious relations at the homes of those who had given their names and addresses. Mabel and I sat huddled together. Our common feeling of desolation worsened as the hours dragged on. We whispered our fears to each other.

Mabel spoke about her eighteen-year-old son. He had been missing since the June 16th riots. All efforts to trace him in the hospitals, mortuaries and prisons had been fruitless and the poor woman had known no peace ever since. Then, she said, one day there appeared a ray of light, some hope. The Special Branch police came to her home some three months prior to this, bringing her the 'happy' news that her son had been traced — he was in Botswana, they said, and he was safe and sound. Mabel mentioned however, that what she could not understand was why the youth had never written to her to allay her fear. She added sadly: 'I have been preparing myself for a journey to Botswana to go and see him, and, if possible, persuade him to return. For the whole year that he had not been located, I could not look at his clothes or anything that belonged to him. I asked my fifteen-year-old daughter to pack his clothes right at the bottom of my kist so that I shall not come across them. I cannot describe to you adequately enough just what I have gone through. And now there's this — landing in gaol for no reason at all. If it was illegal to attend this funeral of our dear brother then why did they not say so? Why did they 'trap' us and waylay us in the shadows? Look at us. I'm blue all over — Why? I shudder to think what it would mean to my other children to know that I'm also behind bars. And just now they are alone at home. My husband is a traveller. He left with his employers for Windhoek two months ago. That's why I didn't send the police messenger to my house. It's better for them to believe that I haven't returned from Kingwilliamstown yet'.

I was filled with compassion for the dear woman. I did not want to tell her that I have known of people who, after extensive search everywhere for their children have been given the assurance that they are alive and well in one of the former Protectorates, and they have dashed there hopefully only to have their hopes shattered when they cannot find them, and they return more miserable than when they left. I preferred rather to speak about *my* own apprehension. I whispered to her: 'I really do not know what to think. I do not know where my husband is. As I told you, the last time I saw him — in a haze — was when he was trying to smash the window-pane. I do not know whether he succeeded or not. He could have jumped out to safety; or he could have been arrested like us and perhaps been detained at another police-station. Or . . .' I dared not mention my worst fears and the haunting sight of the man whom the armed police-man stumbled against on the pavement at Dube. 'There was so much shooting', I sighed.

It is true what our people say — 'Boroko ke sera' (sleep is an enemy). It catches you unawares. I do not know when I fell asleep or when we stopped talking. I was wakened from a nasty nightmare by the loud bang of the massive steel door. The police, with torches in their hands were ushering in five women who were each getting their ration of two 'donkey' blankets.

— I have just had a terrible dream.

I gasped, feeling for Mabel's arm. She raised her head to look over the rows of grey bundles on the floor to see the 'newcomers'.

— What was the dream?

— It was as if I had been wondering what had happened to my husband for days or even weeks when he suddenly appeared. When I asked him where he had been, he pointed at his right arm without uttering a word. It was while I was still stunned and staring at the limp lifeless right arm hanging torpid against his body that I was roused by the loud clang of the cell-door.

At that time, in my house at Moroka, Stephen had returned from a day-long search and had not been able to trace me. He lay exhausted on the settee after a sleepless night. The knuckles of his right hand were still bleeding from the cuts he had sustained. He and several others had spent the night crouching behind a 2-foot-high wall of a stoep at a house near the Y.W.C.A. Centre. Just a stone-throw away, armed black and white policemen and camouflage soldiers were patrolling up and down the street and the hiding escapees held their breath throughout, not daring to cough or speak. They stooped listening to the sound of the heavy police boots on the gravel pavements. He still had in his hand, the brown ladies' shoe which he had picked up in the scramble mistaking it for mine, just before he leapt out of the hall through the broken window-pane and crawled to 'safety'!

He woke up early on Sunday morning to resume the search, and through the aid of friends who telephoned all police-stations in Soweto he was able to locate me.

* * * * *

It was early on Sunday morning. I started and my heart beat fast when the policeman appeared at the door and yelled: 'Miriam ... Miriam from Rockville!'

Yet I was happy to answer the call — I had been claimed. I belong! My heart called out from the dark wilderness of utter loss and uncertainty I had been silently groping in. I limped out of the cell towards the 'reception' room.

My hands trembled unsteadily as I gratefully reached out to receive the beautiful apples and oranges from the policeman, and watched as he poured the wholesome fresh milk from the carton into the aluminium platter. I thanked him. It did not matter whether I could not see my 'tracer' — I also belong! My heart kept calling out.

Just before I disappeared back into the yard of detention, I turned and looked back, holding the dishful of milk and fruit in my hands. I asked:

— Who brought these? Who traced me?

And the policeman produced a piece of brown paper from his coat pocket and showed it to me. I read the name scrawled rather unintelligibly across: 'STIVIN' — it read in capital letters. It was enough. Stephen was alive and safe.

* * * * *

It was after lunch-time on Sunday the 25th of September, the day on which we had hoped to be in Kingwilliamstown, attending the funeral of Steve Biko.

Mma-Frans — one of the five women 'prisoners' who were brought in just before midnight on the previous night, seemed to be still in the partial state of intoxication in which she had been when she was escorted in still quarrelling with the guards. If she was not arguing with the other three as to whose 'skaal' (scale) of 'magasman' (a home-made beer concoction) it was they were found drinking in the shebeen, then she was talking of Frans, her husband. Hence the girls called her Mma-Frans (mother of Frans). Frans' family had paid 'lobolo' for her while she was still a small girl in the valley of a thousand hills in Natal. Later, way back in the forties, he had fetched her and brought her to Johannesburg.

Mma-Frans was so completely uninhibited in all her actions. Throughout all the early hours of the morning before the

doors were opened, she would rise from the floor, lifting up her skirts and proceed towards the floor-level latrine on the right-hand corner of the cell and execute all her 'private business' — which she performed rather too frequently — in full view of whoever was looking. Then she would pull the chain mercilessly, as if ringing a bell.

She seemed oblivious of our presence. After the cell-doors were flung open, and while her other companions demanded from us the explanation of why we were so many of us behind bars, and they noticed the striking incongruity with the 'kind' of inmates they usually encountered within those walls, Mma-Frans remained seated and unconcerned, with her palm cupping in its centre the inevitable little mound of snuff which she occasionally glanced at with the tenderness of a mother eyeing her infant . . . She continued to sniff out the black powder from the palm and wipe off the ensuing flow of tears from her eyes with the back of her other hand as if she was under obligation to carry on the whole procedure.

Occasionally, the amused young cell-mates turned to her for the necessary distraction from our plight. They would ask her:

— Why are you not singing with us, Mma-Frans?

— Why are you worried about me?

She replied, coughing first, to clear her phlegmatic chest.

I'm tired of fighting the Boers. I've done my bit.

— What have you done?

— I once pulled my troublesome white employer by her long hair and walked out of her kitchen for good. I'm now satisfied sitting at home and selling my 'magasman'.

— But even then you can't avoid them. You're not free of them. They still walk into your shebeens and arrest you, don't they?

— You can attend to that while I look on.

And they laughed loudly. Her expert description of 'Number 4' (the notorious prison situated on the hill just above Johannesburg's General Hospital) immediately suggested that Mma-Frans was in fact a hardened frequent inhabitant of that place. She was already preparing her less conversant associates and all of us for what we could expect 'on Monday when they transfer us'. She warned us:

— You're not a fully-grown person if you haven't been to No. 4 yet — you're a *child*. You haven't even *come* to Johannesburg yet — you've only just peeped!

The fifth woman who had been with them, was obviously not arrested for the same reason as the other four. She was quiet and she listened sympathetically when we explained how we had landed in gaol. Here was a sad case. She had been arrested in the Nancefield Men's Hostel, where she had gone to inform her husband of the death of her 10-year-old son who had been ill in Baragwanath Hospital. Although she had been living in Mapetla with her married son and daughter-in-law and her other children, her husband had never given up his tenancy at the hostel and he only went to visit the family occasionally, preferring to be at the hostel because there was very little comfort at the Mapetla house which was registered in the son's name. Besides, it was less dangerous to travel to the hostel when he knocked off at work which was usually very late at night. Anticipating this, the dear middle-aged lady had taken with her their marriage certificate and the telegram the family had received from Baragwanath Hospital informing them of the child's death. She still had these documents and she showed them to us. 'They would not accept my explanation even when I showed them these papers. They said they were tired of women who worked their way into the men's hostels and slept there. If I had not forced my way in, my husband would not have known about the death. It would have taken days. And arrangements had to be made for the funeral'. She sat quietly, mourning the death of her son. She later assisted us in sweeping and clearing up the prison yard in preparation for the 'burial ceremony' which we were going to hold right there from two o'clock in the afternoon.

* * * * *

'You're not a fully grown person if you haven't been to No. 4 yet — you're a CHILD'

A tall girl was chosen to lead us in the ceremony, which role she carried out ably and without any hesitation. It was a sad moment. We sat on the blankets we had spread on the floor and listened as she called on another girl to stand up and render a brief obituary on the deceased hero. She was herself a freedom fighter, and had been a co-worker and close friend of Mr Steve Biko. She therefore had first-hand knowledge of his activities and sacrifices in working for the liberation of all the oppressed peoples of Azania. We sang the freedom songs the late Biko himself liked very much, with Sophie's voice taking the lead. When Sophie's eyes filled with tears as she sang, most of us broke down. She appealed afterwards for determination and bravery. She said: 'My dear sisters, it is not that I am lacking in courage when I shed tears like this. It is because I am happy when I realise that although many of us are confined in this place, away from our parents and our loved ones, it is not in vain. I am glad to see that the spirit is still very much alive; that the determination to fight on is stronger than ever before, especially outside these premises'.

The tall girl announced:

— The hour is now three in the afternoon. In Kingwilliamstown, the body of our dear brother is about to be laid to rest, it is about to be lowered into the cold earth. Although we failed to be with the other mourners in body, in spirit we are with them. At this stage, we shall ask one of our mothers to lead us in prayer.

The dear lady who had lost her 10-year-old stood up to pray:

— Let us all stand up and face towards the East, where our grace will come from. Let us all pray in our hearts, in silence, for the soul of our dear departed brother.

And we all stood up and obeyed the call. After observing a few minutes of silence, she prayed and we all sang a hymn.

— We shall ask yet another one of our mothers here with us to please pray for us.

The young chair-person said, her eyes looking at me appealingly. I was uneasy. I had never prayed loudly in front of an audience since I was a child and we were forced to pray before admiring visitors, mainly because we had to avoid my mother's threatening stick. I remembered that I was now a mother and had to summon up courage. The Basotho say: 'Mm'a-ngoana o tsoara thipa ka bohaleng' (The child's mother holds the knife on the sharp edge). I did not know what to say. I tried to imagine how Ntate (my step-father) would do it. I remembered the book of Daniel in the Bible, which he often quoted when he prayed for our exiled, our banished and our political prisoners. Daniel praying to his God in his bedroom with the window open towards the land of his birth, praying and clinging faithfully to his beliefs.

There was no dodging the task, and I took the plunge. I imitated Ntata: 'Oh God grant unto the mighty ones — those with power, those who rule over us — the wisdom to be able to read and understand *the writing on the wall*'. Amen.

In the adjoining male cells, the astonished prison warders were witnessing the 'actual funeral' of the Black Consciousness hero. The whole programme consisted of condolences. Telegram messages of consolation and solidarity were presented by well-known and international 'personalities and celebrities, representatives of many states and countries.' These were done while the 'body' of the martyr lay in state in a 'casket' draped in the black T-shirts of the B.P.C. movement and the black African prints blouses. The guards beheld speechless, the whole unbelievable heroic enactment.

As if by some telepathic transmission, when the voices of the detained females rose towards the blue skies above, singing the hymn: 'Senzeni na; senze'ni na? (What have we done; what have we done?) the same hymn was repeated simultaneously on the other side by the male detainees.

* * * * *

There was food in abundance. Good tasty food, because it was prepared by our loved ones, and we were 'happy'. We sat in the two cells and ate our supper. We enjoyed the African traditional way of partaking in a communal meal, eating from the same receptacle. We all sat and sang freedom

Rockville

songs afterwards and prepared ourselves for what was likely to be our fateful hour. Judging from recent trends and developments, it was clear that we could be facing a long spell in gaol, we *could* languish in detention like so many others. Yet we were brave. We had all our people — the people of Soweto — behind us, 'with us'. And that was all the moral support we needed. The following day was Monday the 25th of September and we were to appear in court. We had made our decision. We were not going to pay any fines or admission of guilt monies. We were going to serve whatever terms of imprisonment we would be condemned to face. What we knew was that we were innocent. As one of us asked:

— Why should we continue to pour monies (hard-earned monies) into the coffers of a government like this? It is already thriving on our sweat and blood.

Sophie, on the other hand was sure that we would be brought before the court and discharged. She felt that the police had accomplished their real aim which was to stop us from getting to Kingwilliamstown.

— After all what is this 'Disturbance' business? They're just fumbling. As you say, they didn't even know *themselves* what charge it was they could lay against you.

* * * * *

We woke up early on the following day and as soon as the heavy doors clanged open, we went on with the usual washing-up. We bade Lydia and Sophie 'good-bye'. One of us handed over to Sophie the money we had collected for her among ourselves. She was thankful and rather sad in her solitude.

We were transported to the Meadowlands Courts in several 'kwela-kwelas'. On our arrival, we were summoned into a big courtyard where the men were already assembled. We joined them in singing freedom songs. 'Amandla Ngawetu!' they shouted loudly when they saw us approaching. A white lawyer addressed us. He informed us that he had been instructed by a firm of attorneys (Messrs. Chetty & Co.) to represent us. Also, we learnt, it was very likely that the case would be remanded to a later date. In that case, bail would be sought by the firm and paid for all ninety-two of us. A young man asked the lawyer anxiously:

— Actually, what is the charge against us, 'Disturbance'?

— No.

The lawyer replied, smiling:

The charge has been changed to 'Stone-throwing and Violence'.

There was loud simultaneous talking as all expressed consternation at the absurdity of it all.

— Imagine!

Mabel exclaimed, looking at me and laughing.

Where would we pick up stones from in a hall. Besides, can you imagine me throwing stones at anyone? What utter nonsense!

Anyway, we were assured by the kind determined lawyer, the case would be fought tooth and nail and he was certain we would win. We faced the future with confidence. Against the loud background of our freedom songs, we each filed out of the majestic gates of the Meadowlands police-station into the free air and the open arms of our loved ones — the people of Soweto — who were already there in their hundreds, waiting to receive us and nurse us back to health.

* * * * *

The case *was* remanded to October the 6th and on that date we were to appear before a magistrate in Court Six, Protea.

I did not recognise most of the faces I saw on that morning. They were all so different and beautiful. Adorned in stunning Afro styles, and their hair plaited beautifully in different designs, the women looked breath-taking. And the men looked great in their dignified carefree Azanian look! It was not surprising to witness the look of awe or fear; and sometimes even admiration from even the gun-wielding camouflage soldiers, retreating into the passages between the buildings and the shades under the trees and peeping below their caps.

We learnt from our counsel that the case against us had been 'withdrawn'. We were disgusted, and expressed our discontent. Who would not be? We all felt that the case should have been heard in court and our 'guilt' proved by the state.

— Just think of how we suffered. And our losses!

One woman remarked. An angry youth demanded an explanation from the lawyer. He observed emphatically:

— We refuse to accept that. What about the psychological, the immeasurable spiritual torture we have been through? Such traumatic experiences! If this Republic is the democratic state it claims to be, then we are not going to be steam-rolled and then dismissed so lightly!

The lawyer nodded his head:

— Yes. We shall certainly consider laying a claim on the grounds that the arrests were unlawful.

* * * * *

As we left the grounds of the Protea Prison, the young girl who had been with us in the van on the night of horror, was waiting and smiling. She had brought her mother to come and meet me. She took my hand and introduced me to her.

— My dear, God bless you for saving my daughter. She told us the whole ghastly story. Thanks for having saved her. Think what might have happened if you had not interrupted. My husband also wanted to come and thank you personally but he had to go and fetch our son from the University of the North. They have been on strike there and we were instructed to get them out as soon as possible. We are in so much trouble in this land of ours'

'Against the loud background of our freedom songs, we filed out of the majestic gates of the Meadowlands police-station into the free air and the open arms of our loved ones — the people of Soweto — who were already there in their hundreds, waiting to receive us and nurse us back to health.'

Oupa Thando Mthimkulu: Four Poems

I am black, 25, living in Soweto and unmarried. In 1971 at high school (Naledi) I began to write poems, writing in English, Zulu, and a little bit of South Sotho. I write existential poems — not political, please. My poetry sometimes makes me land in police hands and I am taken to task for my writing. Sometimes in life one has no option but to do and perish. If life gives you a lot of sheep you will be a shepherd, if it gives you sweet chords you can't help being a singer. If life decides to give me scribbling I will be a scribbler. Here is my poetry. I would like my people to enjoy it and be entertained. For too long my poetry has been rejected for not being pure Oxford English. I fear I am not an English student but only a drop-out student of theology. Scribbling has been my chief interest, and reading — especially the Bible. Since my childhood and when I was in detention between 1976 and 1977 I did a lot of Bible reading. The Bible is highly poetic and my best poetry book.

BARAGWANATH HOSPITAL

Speak Baragwanath speak
How many souls did you swallow
Who were intentionally killed
Who genuinely and sincerely died
How many arrived satisfactorily dead
Come Bara, tell us the real tale
Of your patients — what do you have to say?

Are they really gone forever
Did they all have inquests
Did they all claim indemnities
How many won their cases
Baragwanath hospital, big one
Are you hospitable enough
To testify to us all?

LIKE A WHEEL

This thing is like a wheel
It turns
Today it's me
Tomorrow it's you

Today I'm hungry
Tomorrow it's you
Today I'm homeless
Tomorrow it's you

Today I'm in prison
Tomorrow it's you

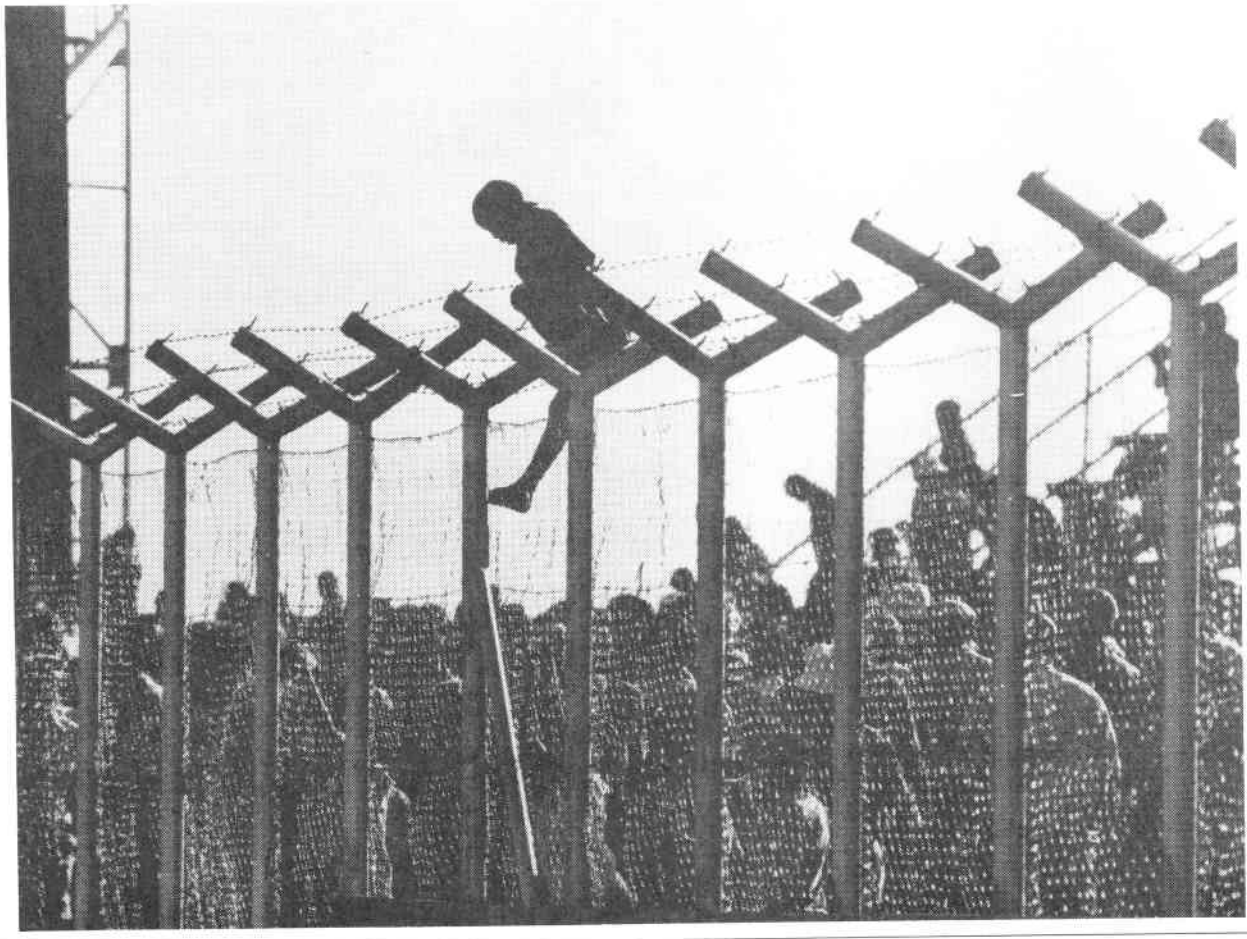
This thing is like a wheel

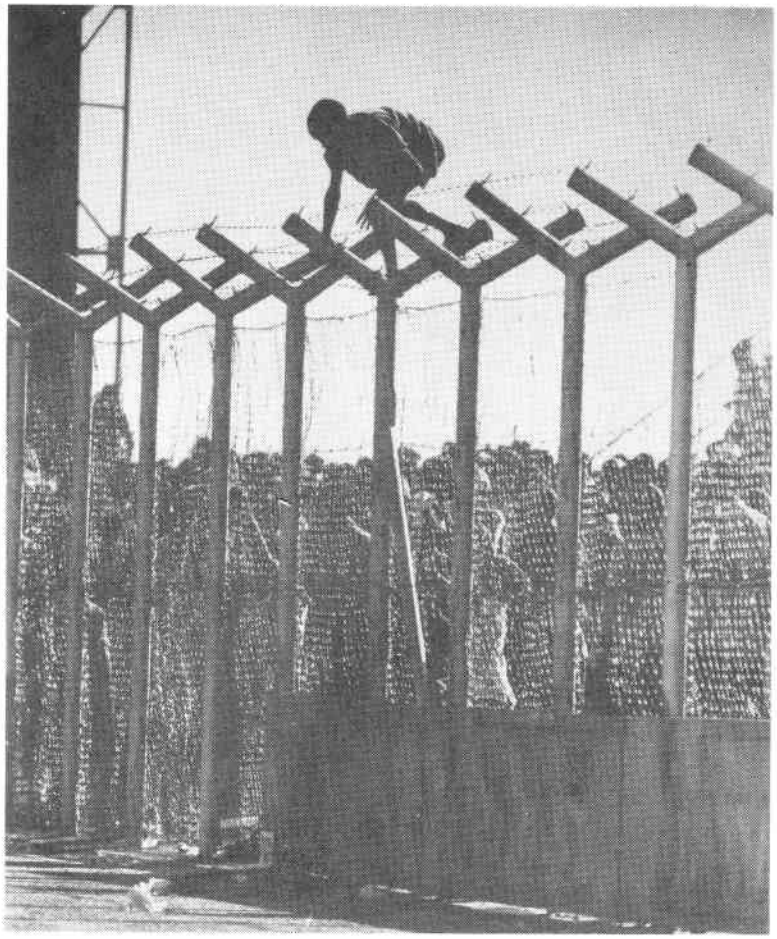
LET JUSTICE BE FAIR

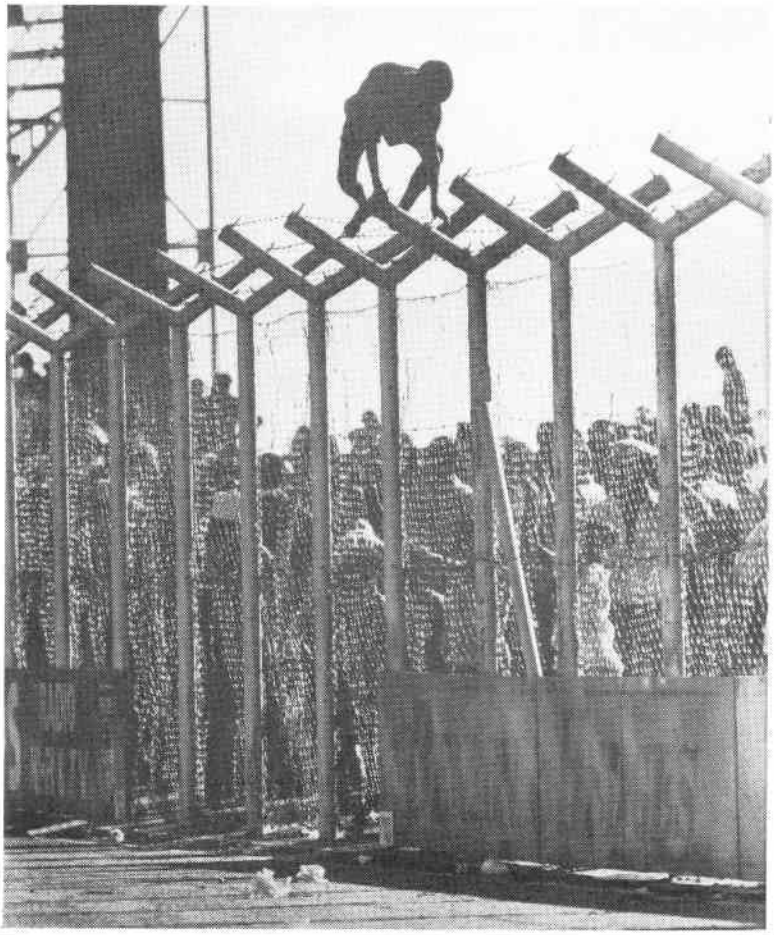
Let justice be fair
And innocence be impeccable
Let grass be green
And trees be tall
Sugar be sweet, honey not bitter
Let the sun shine
The moon always reflect
But what is wrong
Something is . . .
Let justice be fair
Let justice be real fair

NINETEEN SEVENTY-SIX

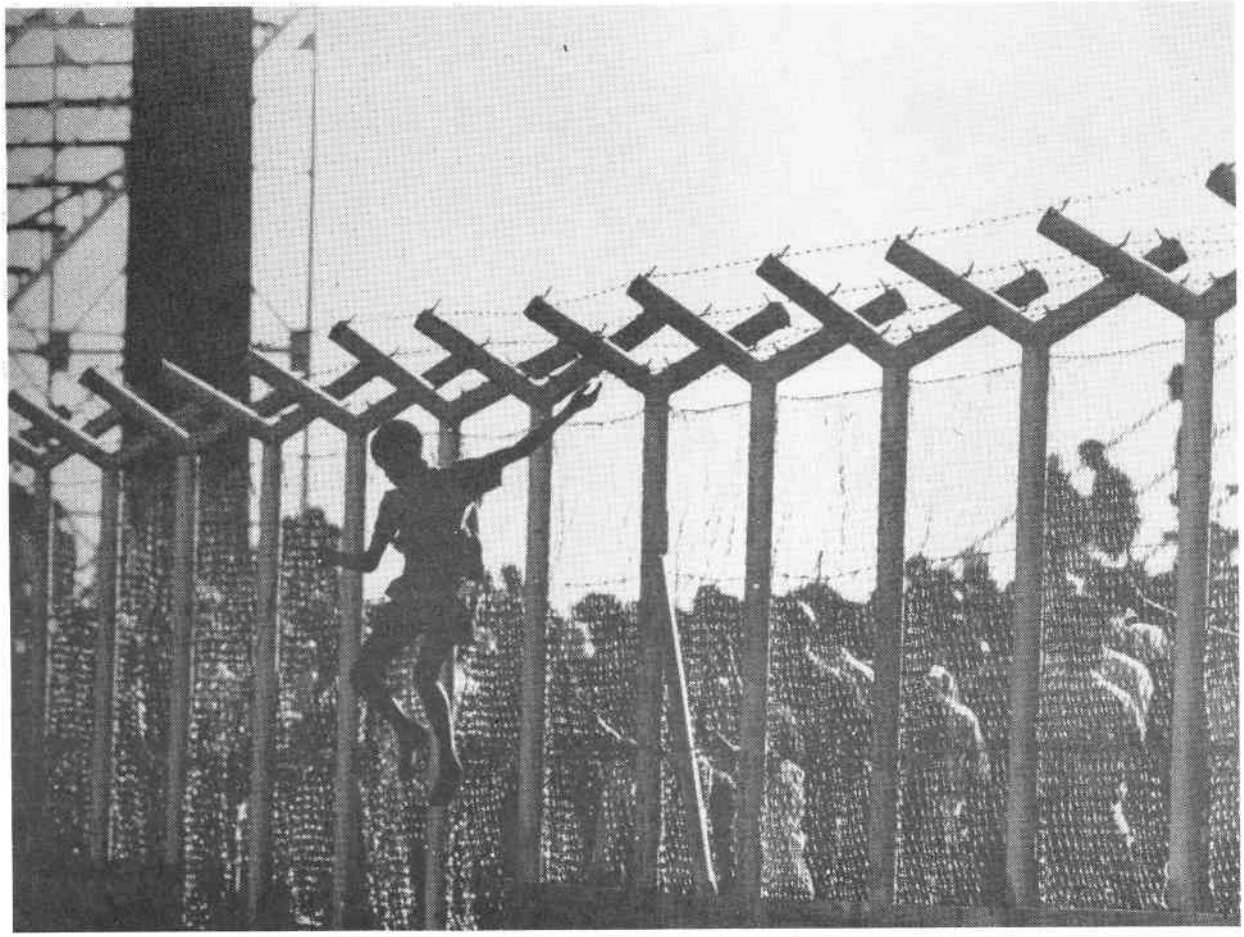
Go nineteen seventy-six
We need you no more
Never come again
We ache inside.
Good friends we have
Lost.
Nineteen seventy-six
You stand accused
Of deaths
Imprisonments
Exiles
And detentions.
You lost the battle
You were not revolutionary
Enough
We do not boast about you
Year of fire, year of ash.







Photos by Ralph Ndawo



Mike Nicol: Three Poems

'He proceeds with intelligence and craft to make a verse which perfectly conveys the growing sense of loss made tolerable only by occasional spasms of aggression to which increasing numbers of thinking South Africans are prone.'

— Christopher Hope in his introduction to Nicol's AMONG THE SOUVENIRS, to be published this month by Ravan Press.

URBAN RENEWAL, FOURTEENTH STREET

Once there was brisk business:
fat white women haggled
the price of cloth
in the Indian's dingy shop;
and the fahfee man
did his grinning rounds.

Over Pageview
washing sagged from balconies,
kids ran in the street
and on winter mornings
the air was too thick to breathe.

It took armed police with dogs
to close it down.

For weeks the shops
stood barred, windows smashed.
Grass grew in the pavements.

Then today I watched
the demolisher's iron ball
punch holes into lounges and bedrooms,
kitchens and bathrooms:
slowly bulldozing clear
a suburb
that should never have been there.

Soon the building will start:
new houses, flowering gardens,
husbands washing cars,
children flying kites in the street,
the sound of radios in the afternoon.
It will become a suburb of praised policy.

IHLA DO SAL

It is 3am on Ihla Do Sal.
Not a light announces our
coming like aliens from
a black sky. We hurry across
the runway, mocked
intimately by a strange
breeze from a strange sea
that pulls at my jacket;
lifts a lady's skirt.

Here is nowhere. The future
waits in narrow houses,
up foreign streets,
seeing the first snows fall,
knowing with a sore despair
the power we stood for;
the guilt we couldn't ease.

Behind us are the suburbs
we spent our lives in,
and friends left to their
hard destiny on a balcony
with a view. Houses where
children laughed, rooms we
loved in when first light
broke behind blue curtains.

But on this island,
claimed by the Portuguese,
invaded by rough waves,
we are beyond the currents
of our time: the empty politics
and the growing noise.

Official voices summon us
to grey European skies
while, somewhere, far
to the south, the sky darkens
over the discordant cities.

AT THE WINDOW

Seeing you deeply asleep
In the night's dead hours
I slip from bed to stand
At the window. So young
And beautiful you lie:
Soft breasts rising, an arm
Thrown out towards my empty
Side. But there's nothing
Gentle here. A bitterness
And anger crowds my love
As watching you so carelessly
Asleep the pain of coming
Years weighs heavily in.
Outside half a moon gleams
From a sultry sky and
Lightning glares suddenly
Behind huge clouds.
The streets are still;
And yet, out there on some
Rutted track what violence
Is done will grip our lives.
What place has love? What
Meaning and what promise
In these suspicious days?
When, in the grim light
At dawn, innocent men
Are torn from their wives
And inexplicable deaths
Occur in prison cells.
Still you lie; and still
The fingers of this country
Knot about the heart. Once
Were days in distant capitals
When walking beneath old trees
We knew a love without anxiety.
Will they return? Appearing
Like islands through fog:
The home of cold exiles
Holding one another while
The wind sweeps tall cliffs.

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Van *a story by* Peter Wilhelm

Van der Merwe came home late. It was 10 p.m. and he had been drinking brandy because it had been a difficult day at work and he needed to relax, have a few pots with the boys afterwards. As always he had changed back into civilian clothes at his station near Rockville, leaving his camouflage uniform neatly folded in his locker. But he brought his side pistol home with him; you had to be careful. Some of the black cops had been killed by non-police calibre bullets. But then, they lived in Soweto. He did not. He lived in Mayfair, and he and the boys had been potting at the Mayfair Hotel.

He stopped at the Tram Terminus café before going home, to buy a pack of Texan and drink a raspberry Groovy, hoping it would kill some of the brandy smell he was giving off. Costa made his usual joke about 'Police Van' and Van said fuck off and went home in his Chev.

He knew Beth would be watching television. She stayed up late until the epilogue, every night after putting the kids to sleep. That fucking television set. It was costing him thirty rand a bladdy month to keep up and now it was time to pay the licence fee again.

'Sorry I'm late,' he grunted as he entered his house in 8th Avenue. To get to the front door he had to climb a short, steep flight of stairs next to a big palm tree. But he was fit; he was only twenty-eight; they made him do exercises every day.

Beth just ignored him, watching the television. He went to the kitchen. The cow hadn't made him supper, so he opened a tin of beans and viennas. Then he switched on the pan and put bacon fat in it and when it melted he scooped some of the beans and viennas into the pan and let them get warm, making sure they didn't burn.

There was no bladdy bread left so Van had to have his meal on Pro-Vita, which somehow robbed the beans and viennas of their full taste. You had to chew the Pro-Vita and it was a different consistency from the beans and viennas.

He sat at the table sucking his teeth. Then he lit up a Texan and made a cup of black Frisco coffee into which he poured a few tots of Richelieu, brandy matured in the old-age tradition or something — he couldn't remember how the ad went. He had seen it last week when Beth made him take her to a bladdy revival of 'Gone With The Wind' at the local bughouse.

He was half way through his Texan when he remembered. 'Hey, Beth,' he shouted, 'did you get a paper?' Beth was supposed to get the late edition 'Star' from Costa's café every day so that he could read the crime reports and also the racing reports that helped him fill in his jackpot forms. He had won R50 one month.

On the television screen the South African flag was fluttering and they were playing the national anthem, so obviously it was close-down time. Jesus. Close-down at 10 p.m. or whatever it was. You'd think they could show a flick or something. Not everybody wants to go to bed at 10 p.m. He had read in the paper that in America they had shown 'Gone With The Wind' on television; so why didn't they do that here? Then he wouldn't have to go and waste money on tickets for that shit old film.

'You've been drinking again you bastard,' said Beth, coming into the kitchen with the paper. But she wasn't really cross, so perhaps he would get off lightly.

'Look,' he said truculently, 'I've been working bladdy hard all day, so what's wrong with a bit of relaxation after work, I ask you?'

'You call that relaxation? I call that getting bladdy drunk like a pig. We'd be broke if it wasn't for all this overtime you do these days.'

Beth was in her twenties, but looked sick of life. There was the three kids, of course, to keep her busy. But that wasn't much, considered Van. He had been part of a large family, twelve kids just like in a Van der Merwe joke. Anyway, they had decided to stop at three and Beth had gone on the Pill. So in a way he was saving her all that drudgery if they had gone on and on having kids like that Minister Botha wanted everybody to do, so patriotic, so that the whites would outnumber the blacks. But of course Van knew that there was only one way of keeping down the black population.

He read the newspaper and found his news on page three. The headline read: 'Police bullets kill 13-year-old boy'.

Well. Bullshit. That fucking terrorist had been twenty at least. Anyway.

The story went on: 'The youth, a high school student at Mzimhlope Secondary, has been identified as Isaac Nelson Mandela Mhlaba. A friend, who would not identify himself to the 'Star' alleged that Isaac had been involved in the formation of the banned Soweto Students' Representative Council in the wake of the June 16 upheavals. Mr Mhlaba was said to have been approached in the past by security policemen who warned him to cease his activities.

'Isaac's father, Mr Solomon Koalane Mhlaba, 88, said he was heart-broken by the death. He had lost three other sons in the riots and was now childless. He did not know how he was going to break the news to his aged wife. Isaac's father also said that his son had told him that he had been visited at Mzimhlope Secondary by security policemen who had allegedly intimidated him.

'Isaac was, according to eye-witnesses, standing near a railway intersection at about 7.30 a.m. this morning when policemen in riot control uniform approached him. He apparently ran away and police fired, leaving his body beside the tracks. Mr Solomon Mhlaba was informed of the death by Isaac's schoolfriends, and says he has not been officially informed by the police either of the death or of what may have occasioned it.

'However, the Divisional Commissioner of Police in Soweto has confirmed that a youth was shot dead this morning resisting arrest. According to the Commissioner, a threatening crowd had gathered around Isaac and police feared they would be stoned if they remained in the vicinity.'

Beth said, startling Van: 'So what's so interesting in your bladdy paper that it keeps you from greeting me properly?'

'I'm sorry Beth; I've just had a bladdy hard day. Come over here!'

Surprisingly, she did. Van wondered why she was being so nice to him; maybe he would even get a screw tonight. But, of course, she must have a reason.

Sitting on his lap, Beth said: 'You know, Van, I don't mind you having a few pots now and again. It wouldn't be normal if you didn't. But you might pay me a bit more attention now and again.'

She was being very lovey-dovey and he knew, he just bladdy *knew,* that someone had been to see her while the kids were away in the park in the morning with the nanny. There had been that one time when he told her he would definitely only be back at eight and had come back at seven, and there had been a Lexington stompie in the seashell ashtray next to the bed. 'I was just so hard up for a smoke I borrowed one from a kaffirboy who was doing the garden next door,' Beth had explained when challenged by the stompie (she only smoked Rothmans: Lexington was much too strong for her: the *man's* brand). Well, she had been very lovey-dovey then too.

What could you do? He knew other blokes on the force whose wives screwed around. It was understandable in a way: their men were away for long hours in dangerous conditions, and when they came home they

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were sometimes too tired or too bladdy drunk to get it up, like it had said in that dirty book about American housewives they had confiscated the other day in that pornography case and which they had all read. Get it up: the American suburban housewife was always willing to drop her pants because her man was unable to get it up. Well, Van knew one thing: it was the same in South Africa. Just look at it: all those housewives in Houghton getting fucked by their garden boys. At least in Mayfair you could be sure it was a fucking rep or insurance salesman that was doing it and he was white.

It was strangely exciting to think about Beth screwing another man. In a way he felt like blurting out: Come on, tell me who it is and you can go right ahead. Just let me watch.

It was not as if he had been faithful to Beth. There were plenty of opportunities in the force; you got to meet a lot of prostitutes and masseuses and people like that, and after all they served a social function like wasn't it only just the other day someone in the paper had called for legal brothels? Well, when you really stopped to think about it: why not? Why not make all that whoring and screwing and sucking and all that legal, so that he, Van, and his mates in the force could get on with their proper job of combating crime and terrorism. Particularly the latter. Jesus Christ. Since June 16 there had been no end to this fucking terrorism.

Well, he sent Beth off to make the bed and herself nice and ready for him and sneaked into the bedroom where his two eldest sons were sleeping, Bennie and Johnnie. Sentimentally, he bent over their faintly snoring forms and caressed their hair, feeling the brandy strong in his stomach.

He loved them. He really loved them. He would do anything to protect their future. Thinking this, he drew his side pistol and rubbed his cheek gently with it, not quite knowing why. To his horror he found himself with an unwanted mental image: that of pointing the pistol at Bennie and shooting him between the eyes; then of moving on to Johnnie and doing the same to him; then of going into the baby girl Suzy's room and shooting her; and then of killing Beth, who would be screaming; and after that he could kill Ruth, the kaffirgirl who lived in the back yard. And, finally, he would shoot himself before the neighbours called the police.

Van went to the lavatory and was sick: he retched like a dying dog. Afterwards, sweating and cold, clammy, he sat on the lavatory seat wondering where the fuck thoughts like that came from. Was it the brandy? He had better lay off the bottle a bit. But it was so bladdy hard to relax these days, after working in the townships, day after day searching out and finding the ringleaders; dangerous work, work that had to be done even if his name was Van der Merwe and people make shitty jokes about 'Police Van' and all that other shit, all because of his name. Why couldn't people see he was a sincere, dedicated, even noble man? Why couldn't Beth keep her poes just for him?

He went to the bathroom, ignoring Beth's cat-like whimpers for him to come to bed. He knew that tonight he was not going to get it up, and that would make for bad trouble later on. But right now he had to wash his mouth out.

The light in the bathroom was very bright and when he looked at himself in the mirror he saw every imperfection of his ageing face. Because he was ageing. The work of the last few months had really got to him. His hair was thinning and his cheeks made his eyes bulge in a horrible fashion. He was ugly, really ugly; and as a teenager, not so long ago when you thought about it, he had been handsome and quite a hit with the girls. Especially Beth. Pity she went and got pregnant, but it was bound to happen, the way their parents let them stay out all hours and the way they screwed at the Dolphin Street swimming pool when they were supposed to be at some bladdy flick, 'Return of the Purple People Eater' or something like that.

And he was yellow; but perhaps that was from the drink. All the alkies they pulled in (who had their DTs in the cells while they sat with their cups of coffee and listened to them) had been yellow in colour, not white at all. Of course, no one was really white anyway. The whitest person he had ever seen was an albino and he was a kaffir really.

'For Christ's sake come to bed!' shouted Beth.

Van went to the kitchen and poured himself a half glass of Richelieu, filled with the rest of the glass with warm water and sat drinking it. At first it made him want to retch again, but once he got over that it was no trouble to drink the whole lot down in one go.

Fuck it, he thought, as he went to bed. A policeman's lot was not a happy one.

* * * * *

REG RUMNEY: Two Poems

SMALL CHANGE

Minutes are passing like the frames of a film strip
while a wind of glass travels
through the suburbs. In one of them you
sleep as deeply as if the sun might never again
set off the cheap alarm clock of birds.
And old age has taken the form of a meths-drinker
and creeps over our thresholds and slips
between our sheets. S/he leaves before morning,
before the illusion of light.

One day you'll discover the bourgeoisie (us)
never existed, no more than the laughter
we face our silences with.
Every day the cars drive to work out of habit,
and the fridges gorge themselves
and filaments of globes burn in vacuums.
Somewhere something shatters with the small sound
of loose change. A minute passes, a day, a year,
like a reflection caught
by the long window of a moving bus.

THE DEATH OF NARCISSUS

Okay, there is nothing but silence now.
Ovals of his sunglasses throw back
faces outside the window
which ripples at the touch of a wind,
the photographs burning with colour
are buried in the desk.
Their eyes were water or chrome
or glass or plastic.
Now in a mirror like a fish
a memory glides:
once above razored waves
querulous gulls hooked in air or
plummeted for offal
and his official papers next to his heart
he looked to where the blue would end.
With his fist he stars the mute glass,
in shards of his face
hears the blood-beat return,
the running of a far sea.

Mamelodi, Pretoria

Motshile Nthodi: Staffrider, a poem

Black boy
no recreation centre
no playing grounds
no money for lunch at school
not enough schoolbooks
No proper education
no money for school journeys

but
one Saturday morning
my father gave me
one shilling and six pennies

he said
my son
go and make enough
for a living

with eleven pennies
I bought a return ticket to town
the remaining seven for provision
good enough

I was one of those
carry-boys at the municipal market
caddy at the golf course
selling oranges and peanuts
illegally on the trains

money money money
that's not enough for a boy
what about entertainment

right
I am seventeen by now
waiting on a station platform
waiting for the conductor's
whistle of command
waiting for the train
to roll on its permanent rail

now steel wheels of an electric train
start playing a tune of
percussion and trombone
from the middle of the platform
pulling myself from the crowd
waiting for the tube to the north

like a bebop dancer
I turn around twice
and I open the window
push up the frame with my elbow
grab the frame between
the window and the door

listen to the improvisation
from my dirty oversize
canvas shoes
pha - - phapha - phapha -
pha - phapha - phapha -
phapha - phapha -

listen to the shouting
and whistles
from the audience in that tube
when I swing on the outer handle
and rest on the bottom stair

THAT'S THEATRE HEY

they see me once
but only once
I'm on top of the coach
lying eight inches under
the main power lines

ACROBATIC HEY

they see me once again
but only once
I'm under the coach
lying on a steel frame
next to the wheels

CIRCUS HEY

fifteen stations

stupids packed
sardines in the tube
phapha - pha -
poor black eyes on me
- phapha -
home station
- pha - phapha - phaphaphaphapha

WA SALA WENA

- phaphapha -
railway police chasing me
I jump the platform
the railway line
the fence
across the river
towards home
I'm safe

this is the Saturday programme
and till we meet again
thank you brothers and sisters,
thank you.

CYA, Diepkloof

Masilo Isaac Rabothata: Three Poems

THE MOVING GRAVES

Here I am thinking of owning tracks of knowledge
trying hard to recollect my thoughts
lonely in the greatest of companies — all round
smiling like the skull of my forefathers.

I see graves before me
People die and are graves
They are open and moving
They are the moving graves

The sun is cold inside me
A chill is in my frozen bones
There is a surprise in my hair
My blood shudders with fear.

O Camouflage, Camouflage
I wish to shut you out of my world!

WITH WHOM?

The sharp stillness breaks my ears
Noise keeps on bouncing all over the place
A noise of concern
A noise of instruction
It is a noise, very good.

I am alone with everyone.
Desk, move away from there! I say
Chalkboard, rub yourself!
My master wills your service.

Dear master, get yourself equipped!
Lessons, continue . . .

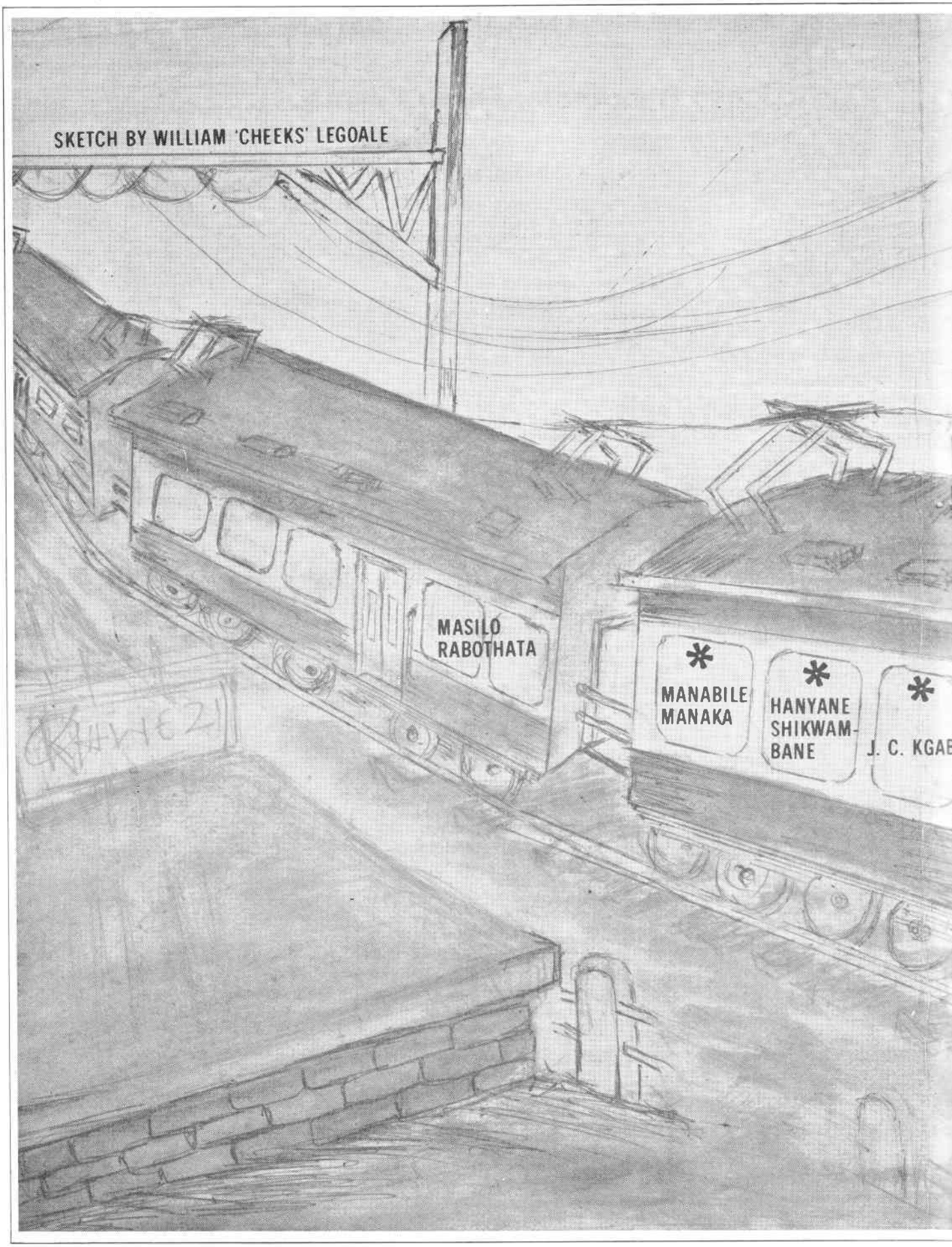
Windows, don't let in too much!
I have no use for some of that oxygen.
Dearest, lovable good books be ready,
Bell? Ring yourself!
Go on until my comrades meet me.

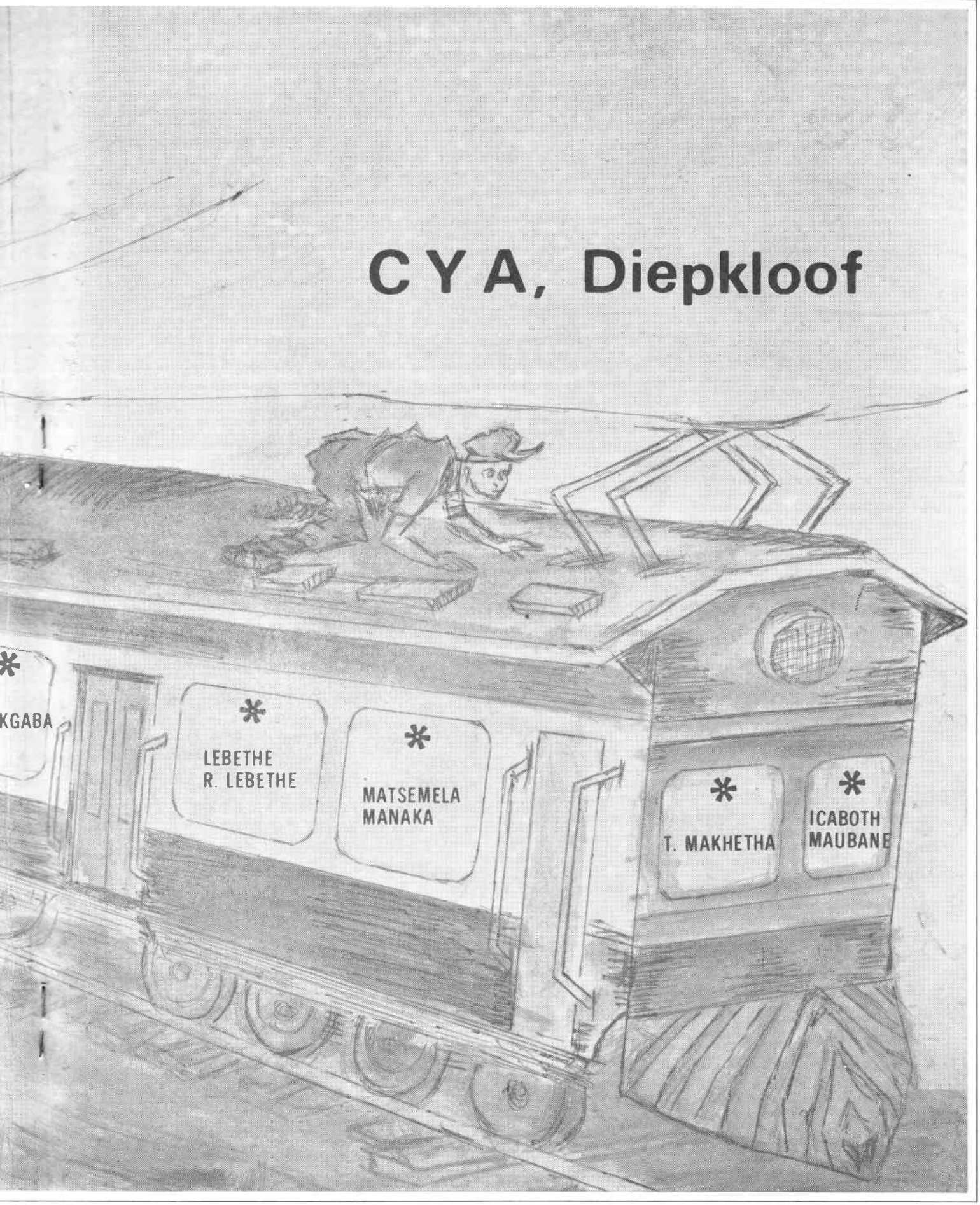
A LAMENT ON HER

(She is *mine,* I know she belongs to me)

My heart throbs with pain
My mind reels in the midst of shadows
Shadows of the unknown pain injector
Somebody bugs me
Somebody worries me
Somebody is persecuting my soul
I wish to know my oppressor's name.

Yeah, this is the time
When I must educate my dead soul
I will hide nothing from her
All that is in my heart I will tell her
And if I become a bore
Then may peace prevail between us!


SKETCH BY WILLIAM 'CHEEKS' LEGOALE
MASILO
RABOTHATA
MANABILE
MANAKA
HANYANE
SHIKWAM-
BANE
J. C. KGAE


CYA, Diepkloof
KGABA
LEBETHE
R. LEBETHE
MATSEMELA
MANAKA
T. MAKHETHA
ICABOTH
MAUBANE

CYA, Diepkloof, Soweto

As the name indicates, creativity is our task. Not a soul will reach a star without piercing through difficulties. We lived in difficult times of disorder but because of our ambitions to reach the star as black youths, CYA cadres came to existence. Madibane High School was used as the centre in early 1977. Only a handful of students were CYA members: they made a roll of about 60 members. Some of the members appeared when they had something to present. They could not be accomodated because of the inadequacy of space. The going was so tough that most of the members were preparing a coffin and a grave for CYA.

But only through the dedication and hard work of its now present leader, Matsemela Manaka, together with its chairman, Tledima Makhetha and its treasurer Richard Lebethe did the CYA survive. Their determination to educate the members and associates, to understand that CYA meant creativity and not schooling of any kind, made the group become what it is today, an art group of four categories, namely painting and sculpture, dramatic poetry (theatre), creative writing and music. They received no tuition in all these categories except music, which was taught for a while by Molefe Phetoe before he left for the USA. CYA continues to survive because of self-taught artists like Kay Hassan (painter) Oupa Mojatau (musician) Mitchell Paledi (musician) John Ledwaba (actor) and others who are also worth mentioning, like the actor, musician poet and comedian Itumeleng Siboni.

Dry, dry, dry, hard and dry, the CYA was hard and dry. The water of God is a special gift of one's constitution, frothed and poured out of the owners. Over and over, time and again members discovered what they could do without being taught. Talent flew all about and what remains now is that Africa Must Rise, Grab the Talent and Preserve it. For its survival CYA had poems, read aloud with action accompaniment, called *'The Horn'. The Horn* was originally a poem simply known as *Soweto* by Matsemela Manaka: it later developed into what it is today — a two-hour performance. Soweto people are crying with envy to see these original thoughts of theatre.

It is in this production that the face of CYA is shown to the people: a new development for Soweto theatre, — an art exhibition with music and dramatic poetry, indeed all forms of art are exhibited within *The Horn.* It could be compared with any of the professional plays in Soweto and around the reef. CYA members say they never enjoyed theatre until they saw the *Island* of John Kani, Winston Ntshona, and Athol Fugard — To those two brothers, they say courage, for nothing will separate the truth from justice and nothing will justify injustice. Black theatre must be just, for justice is our immediate thirst to be quenched. So whose skin will quench it if our own black skins do not endeavour?

CYA encourages creativity so much that it has frustrated people who wish us to be carbon copies of others outside the association. It's this awareness that we wish to bring to people. That every man is what he is and whatever he does to his mind, speech, appearance or talent, he shall remain what he is, and if he is what he is, then let him remain what he is. We hope to make everybody aware of the impossibility of being someone other than the man that is in him.

When you know who you are then you know where you are in reference to others around and on top of you. OUR MAIN WAR — TO BRING SELF AWARENESS TO OUR PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY ARTISTS. 'Let nothing separate creativity from the artist.'

Masilo Isaac Rabothata

Matsemela Cain Manaka: Four poems.

HOPE FOR YOUR RETURN

Lefifi Tladi
the lighthouse of poetry music
the dynamic dart of poetry
you could not dree but drift
your poems and music lived on
they never perished in the flames of your departure
they never drooped when you visited your brotherland
they never fell at the foot of your foe
the flames of your fire reared and raged on
your enemy could not douse only daze the blaze
the spirit of your poetry and music lived on in your fatherland
I believe you never fled but went searching for freedom
I hope to see you back in your fatherland
so sojourn and be back
this land is yours.

EARLY SUCCESS (for Nomvula Ndlazilwane)

Nomvula
you carried the day
in your early days
your piano faced it out
in the faces of Jazz pianists.
Young faces failed before your face.
The face of a black beautiful lass
Nomvula
let the rain of your music
nourish the roots of African jazz
let it rain until the end of time.

FOR VICTOR NDLAZILWANE

The voice that vibrated
the drum of my ear
with the blues of Africa
mbaqanga blues
to slug freedom
into my sluggardland
with the mort
pitched so high
so loud
so sweet
and harmonious
the voice so versatile
and so visible
voice for victory.

JAZZ IN GHETTOS

Dolefully
Dollar Brand dumped
Galvanizing fingers on piano chords
Ding dong sounds solaced
Mannenburg mushroomed in our lusts
Zakes Nkosi abide in our memories
Our kind of jazz lived on.

CYA, Diepkloof

Poems by

T. Makhetha

EXILE

This, a land not home
Calling but never shouting
This very strange land
Silhouetted in the Afrika dusk
Transparent through the ghetto smog
Glowing regal in its blackness
Its meadows green in our glazed eyes
Giving hope for the raising of our stock

This mysterious land
As our brothers get flung
Into the night of its soil
Clinging to the one ray of hope
Tears drop, and water
In the young the spirit of tomorrow
Till we all ask the question,
'Exile, whose land are you?'

THE NEW ANTHEM

In our thousands we sang
requiem to the dying system
as they have done to falling dynasties
all through the continent.

We were amazed for it was like a soldier
going down fighting
faced with a colossal dilemma:
to fall in the battlefield
or to die a cripple in parliament.

Nevertheless we marched in glory
Higher still we raised our banners
Spelling salvation in black and white.

The kids were flag carriers
For mascots we never loved those hippos
but only the sensitive Soweto dogs at night
history had been done justice
we had our certificates as mementos
of a companion we never really approved.

Hanyane Nelson Shikwambane

STRAY BULLET

She was anticipating
Nine months already
The baby she dreamt of
Inheritor of pride and wealth
To comfort her heart
Anti-people trigger was off
The bullet went astray
It pierced through the tummy
Stray bullet
Caesarean operation
Born still poor child
Stray bullet
Gather grief no more
Gather tears no more.

THE BITCH

Vicious bitch
you have eight whelps
but you were never pregnant.
Busy nursing them up with
poisonous, confusing, convincing milk,
your policy of weaning.
Puppy T weaned itself,
but rejected at S.P.C.A.
So now was puppy B.
Venomous bitch
we are dogtired of you,
malicious bitch
you dog in the manger.

CYA, Diepkloof

Lebethe R. Lebethe: Two Poems

WHEN I FELT THAT GOD DOES NOT LOVE THE POOR

The bullets were whizzing
The poor people were falling
The tension was tense
The atmosphere was dense
With man-made pollutants
Made by one man to destroy the other
That's the time I felt the feeling I was not supposed to feel.

The poor sought to pronounce their innocence
The innocence was in them and they sought
To be more innocent for they were born innocent
But proving their innocence was a sin
That's the time I felt that God does not love the poor.

A stengun roared in the west
A machine gun in the east
Pistols clicked from all angles
The air had a death touch
That's the time I wondered whether God was meant for us.

Minute after minute a soul was claimed.

It was then that I felt the feeling I was not supposed to feel
That's the time I doubted the person I was not supposed to doubt.
That's the time I felt that God is not meant for us,
That's the time I felt that God does not love the poor.

WHERE IS YOUR PRIDE?

Africa you are polluted in the morning when the sun rises
When the stars hide their faces from the curse imposed on you
Blushingly they bar themselves from seeing you sigh with sorrow
Gradually your humanity narrows

Africa you are polluted during the day when
the sun burns like fire
when machine-like labourers tire
Continually they are harrassed
And forcefully your purity is contaminated.

Africa you are polluted in the evening when the stars sparkle
When the moon together with the stars closely
watch you lick your sores
and try to quell your sorrows
Nervously you think of your boss
Gradually your purity disintegrates

Africa you are black
Do not shield yourself
We know that you are black
Be black and remain dark.

Tribute to Victor Ndlazilwane

by **Matsemela Cain Manaka**

As we live in the cocoon of our motherland we all know that death is after every life. The destination that no-one knows how to evade. Your blood belongs to the African soil.

Whenever western jazz chords rain in Africa, they will do us no malice, for you left us an African jazz vault to shelter us from this hemlock. The facade of African jazz chords is flickering within our optic nerves because of your sacred African jazz moods. The African sound, the sobriety you left, will assuage our smattering thoughts. Diddled we are, but what you left behind will make us pry into the roots of our inveigled sounds, raped sounds and rhythms of Africa.

Much cannot be said by these thoughts that bleed. These thoughts that only know the sound you advocated. Much about your life history would be inane within these thoughts. All I know is the sound that reverberated within my African stomach. Monk Montgomery wriggled in my thoughts. I knew you personally the day I met Monk during the Lovelace Watkins show at Orlando stadium. Those were days when I never even thought I would be able to handle a tenor sax, let alone percolate my voice out of the voice chords. You made my spirit obdurate, for nothing could obscure my vision of victory. My African dream.

All those boisterous chords that rung almost every second in my ears were immunised by your African rhythm of virtue. You secured me against a terrible circulation of the blood that was going to breed boils within my body. African rituals were blown from the mouth of your horn. The trump of your horn reminds most of us of what the late John Coltrane said about his insistent belief in the perfectibility of man in anything that he wants to attain. African art perfection percolated from your voice chords. Cadences in your rhythms were real voices for the voiceless black Africa. We could say more about black South Africans featuring at Newport Jazz Festival because of you and of course Philip Tabane with his unearthly sounds and rhythms of malombo. You both made me aware that my tradition is my black heritage. Who knows that jazz originated in my motherland? Music from slaves and for slaves. And slaves originated in Africa,

they were the American slaves later. As a result most people believe that jazz originated in America. It isn't so: it originated right here in Africa. Satchmo will tell you better in his grave.

Now who will bring more herbs to blacks in Africa? I think Dollar Brand and his African cadres will, and Dudu Phokwane will also join the search from where Victor left off. Not forgetting Victor Ntoni and his weird sound from the double bass. Will Temba Koyane, Barney Rachabane, Klippie Moeketsi, Zakes Nkosi, Duka Makasi, Peter Lehlogonolo Direko, Mankuhku and the others I cannot mention emerge to attend to these African throats, my African thirst?

To Nomvula and the Jazz Ministers I say, let nothing incarcerate your spirit. Despite the shadow that has overclouded your future hopes, you should fight for more water. These African roots need to imbibe more so as to grow into trees of Africa. Together with Victor you have dredged out the mud in our ears. Nomvula, let your rain rain as your father wished. I believe he wanted to bring more African trees into existence. Trees to bleed African sounds and rhythms. Do not scuttle, pursue your road to the end of time if time does end. Let nothing infiltrate the Jazz Ministers, we still need their African ministry, theology with rectitude. Your genre of music will live with CYA and your people who will spread its ministry.

The comma that turns into a full stop cannot be evaded, but let us make good use of words in our sentences before the full stop decides to insert itself. Victor, you are among those who have started the chapter, let Africa rise and complete the chapter of African Jazz Roots.

BLACK BEAUTIFUL MOTHER

Mother!
Mtho is crying
I am hungry . . .
We are off to the zoo
I wanna have shoe.

Mother
You gallantly carry all the burden
You Dear Black Beautiful Mother
hardened, under pressure from
Father who tainted with craven guile
Comes home drunk.

'Come here wife!
Food and I wanna sleep!'
Still life carries something
They kill your son
For whom you have laboured so much
Still life carries something
All night long you baby-sit
All night long you stay by the corpse.

Tears wash away your sorrows
While father drains his sorrows in hemlock.
When lurking darkness trudges in
To disturb the peace
You serve as our muse and rampart
Far away in the breezy mist
Where sweet music is substituted by rattling ornaments
Away in the untraceable realities of life
You try to forge the tempest's Requiem.

Sons and daughters fall
You spread the pall
Sad and slow you lead your pageant
Sad and slow you lay your beloved
Sad and slow you walk back
With eyes which speak of sadness
And try bringing back the beloved
By mere smiling and extension of your hands.

You Black Beautiful Mother
Home you stay
Food you set
Love you extend
Boldly and gallantly
You who have much to deplore
You move
You serve
You love.

MANABILE LISTER MANAKA

I WONDER

I marvel and wonder at various things
The fascination of moon and stars
I wonder how and I wonder why
The curiosity of a growing child
Why animals are tame and others wild
The admiration of father and son
Why mother is always the loved one

Why young couples walk hand in hand
The tears which appear at a worried eye
I wonder how and I wonder why
The terrible pain within a widowed bride
The excitement of children as they play and ride
The starved old lady counting her pension
The horrific tales we dislike to mention

Many thing astonish me now
I wonder why and I wonder how
Why the young gradually grow old
Why summer days are hot
and winter's are cold
The good days we remember, the bad we've known
I wonder how and I wonder why.

J.C. KGABA

BLACK BOY FROM THE GHETTO

Poverty, it is always said,
spawns ambition. If you are
a young black boy from a penniless family
a young black boy who played in the dirty
ruins sometimes stealing to fill your stomach
a young black boy who has the ambition
to get out of the ghetto, get out by and by
to find your worth in life,

Do not sit idly, do not be poor in spirit
it is time you learned
'The World was Made for Every Man'

Do not be defined by the colour of your skin
for the colour of your skin is no sin
it is time you were proud of being black.

Rise out of the ghetto, the world is a stage
and on it, be your own audience and critic!

Give the outside people a cry from the ghetto
let the cry be like the eruption of a volcano
Let the world know about the existence of
'The black boy from the ghetto'.

ICABOTH MAUBANE

J. M. Coetzee: Hero and Bad Mother in Epic, a poem

dusk seeps up the entrail of the seaborn nude
the vegetable sleeps in its circle
the bedroom drowses
the casino is swathed in tidal melancholia
the nude awaits the hero

mounting the entrail of the seaborn nude
toward the sleeping vegetable
toward the poisoned goose with its melancholy aftertaste
comes the naked philatelist of fiction

the philatelist climbs the entrail of the poisoned nude
who rules over the luck-swathed fiction
of castaway matriarch
punctual chimera
spider of solitude
the philatelist climbs the entrail of the nude
toward a bedroom where a sword drowses

the drowsy sword in the spare bedroom
of the casino in the tidal nude
awaits the philatelist of melancholia
through the symmetrical aftertaste of goose
the castaway philatelist gropes
he circles the poisoned casino
and enters the bedroom of the nude of solitude
where the sword of fiction drowses
the seaborn philatelist brandishes the sword of fiction

the nude feels the punctual sword in her entrail
is it the poisoned chimera she wonders
stirring in her entrail?
is it the symmetrical matriarch
the spare philatelist
the tidal goose from the castaway bedroom?
is it the bedpost of fiction
the aftertaste of solitude
the vegetable of melancholia?
is it the vegetable of melancholia mounting the entrail of the seaborn nude?
(what stirs in her entrail
is the punctual instrument of the drowsy philatelist)

in a drowsy circle near the punctual casino
in the tidal entrail of the lucky nude
waits the chimera of solitude
swathed in spare fiction
with castaway sword he beheads the chimera
the punctual philatelist vanquishes the chimera of solitude
and enters the symmetrical casino of fiction

the matriarch of melancholy sleeps in the tidal casino
the poisoned philatelist gropes through its symmetries
his search is perplexed
where is the seaborn matriarch?
without the seaborn matriarch where is the lucky fiction?

in the final symmetry of the casino of solitude
the poisoned vegetable mounts the sleeping matriarch

Cape Town

the philatelist arrives at the seaborn bedroom of the casino in the nude
as the spider mounts the symmetrical matriarch
the spare philatelist is filled with the melancholia of melancholia
upon the symmetrical matriarch he turns his castaway sword
and the tidal casino in the drowsing nude is filled with the fiction of solitude
the spare philatelist transfixes the punctual matriarch

the philatelist	the bedroom	the spider
the casino	MOONBURST	the goose
the matriarch	the sword	the fiction

past the sleeping vegetable and the poisoned goose
with its melancholy aftertaste
the castaway philatelist descends the entrail of the sleeping nude

but the nude of solitude is dreaming new dreams
the downfall of calligraphy she dreams
the documents of panic
the iron in the milk
the axes of sleep
the perfumes of the dead
the geography of caution
the crocodile of blood
the counterfeit footfall
the terrible tailor
the shadowy root
the feminine kingdom

Keith Gottschalk: Two Poems

PETITION TO MY INTERROGATORS

Baas,
when you come for me
two hours before dawn,
there will be no lightning or earthquakes,
nor even, in these busy times, an entry in the occurrences diary.

but
it might cause some trouble.

no Baas,
i don't mean trouble with the *confession.*
i'm sure that can be fixed up in the usual businesslike manner
— a few sleepless days & nights standing,
helpful coaching of fists, encouragement of boots, perhaps;
at most, a touch or two of electro-convulsive therapy
will tidy up any contradictory admissions (you can always
keep my cell light switched off to hold the power bills down).

so there will be no serious problems getting my signature
at the bottom of a blank affidavit form,
or, if you prefer, a voluntary self-written confession
to Terrorism, High Treason, Sabotage,
Eating my great-aunt, Inciting political strikes,
causing the Twentieth Century, desecrating the Sabbath,
or whatever Security and the State require that week.

no Baas,
that's not the trouble.
what i mean is: i don't want to inconvenience you
with the problem of garbage disposal
(i mean my post-mortem & inquest)

Cape Town

i could go on a hunger-strike,
but the socialists know i'm a bit of a glutton,
so the underground would never swallow that one.

perhaps i could be found hanged in my cell
but the liberals know i'm an atheist, with no afterlife to look forward to,
so amnesty international would sarcastically query a verdict of suicide.

naturally i could always fall from a tenth-floor windowsill
or down a staircase or two,
but my friends know i'm a member of the mountain climbers club,
so the press would never believe it.

of course, i could break my neck falling over a chair,
or hit my head against your office wall,
but my family always complained i was stiff-necked,
& my teachers all said i've got the thickest skull they'd ever seen,
so who would that convince?

if pressed, i could try to slip on a bar of soap,
but the board of jewish deputies is as frightfully touchy
about bars of soap as over tattooed lampshades,
so in these times of unusual diplomatic alliances
the foreign affairs ministry would not consider it very tactful.

lastly, i could attempt to die of a stroke
but having normal blood pressure & being a blood donor,
my doctor-father would never accept such a death certificate.

so perhaps Baas
(to save you all this inconvenience)
why not just leave me alone?

THE ASSASSINATION OF RICHARD TURNER

Events
have given us a new kind of political meeting
the funeral.

in these days
our leaders of the future
are all underground

the graveyards have become a sort of parliament
where our legislators-to-be
assemble by the quorum.

entire caucuses of corpses
lie in state underground
taking the people's march-past:

Hector Petersen
Iman Haron
Elija Loza
Joseph Mduli
Steve Biko

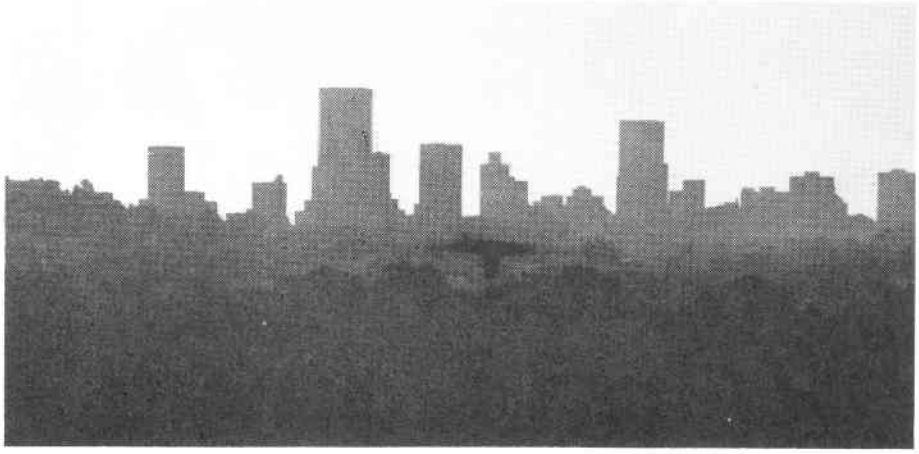
now we bury you, Richard Turner
you, whose banning order forbade you to meet Steve Biko
now join him

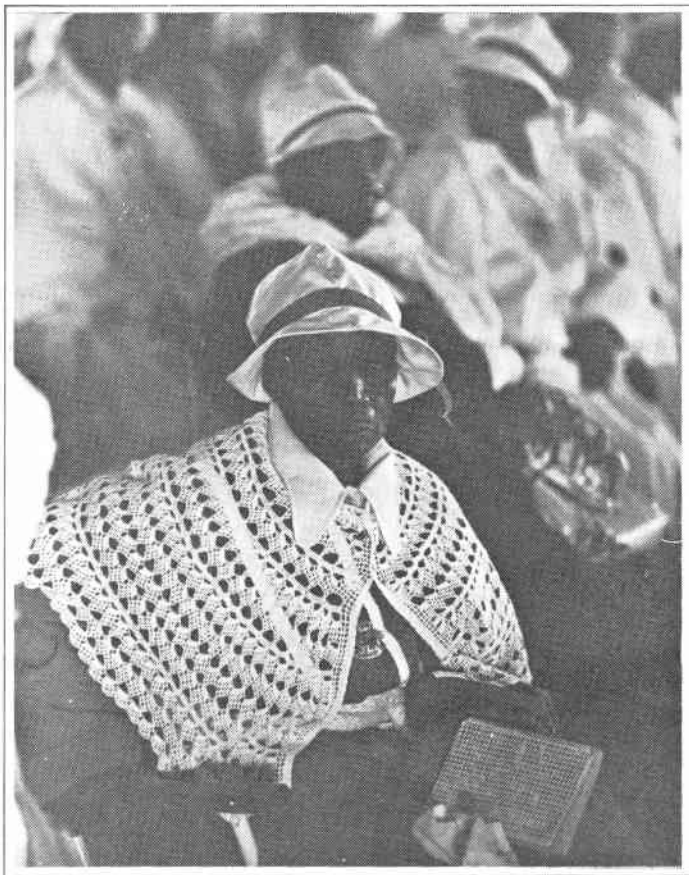
your five years
which had one month before expiring
have been extended permanently

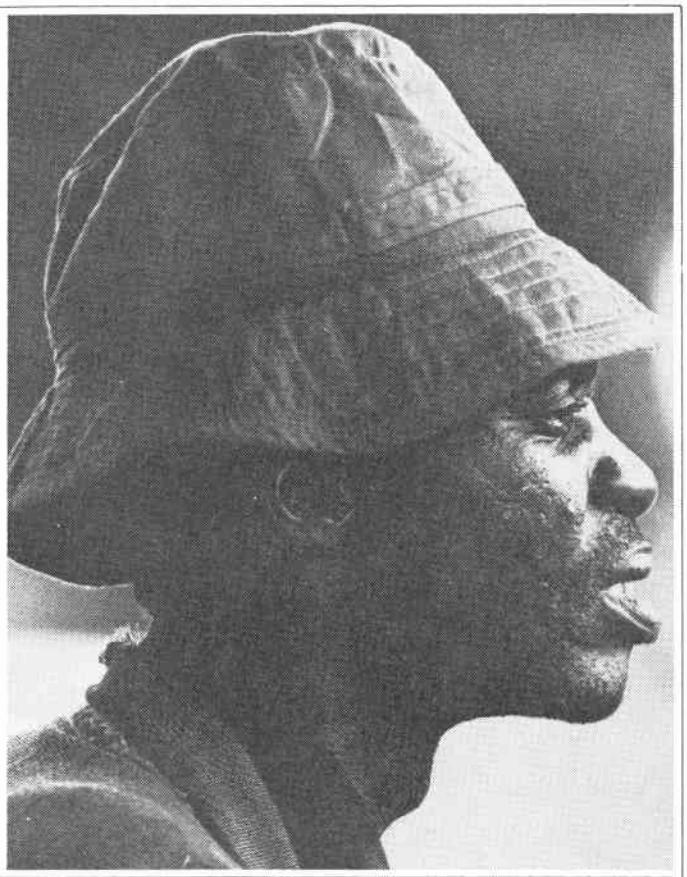
you
banned from politics
now banned from life

but as we bury you, Richard Turner,
know that your words live, your ideas
pulse through the needle's eye to all,
& that for every tombstone in every cemetery in our country
a thousand clenched fists are raised for freedom!

8 January, 1978







Photos by Ralph Ndawo

Pimville, Soweto

Mothobi Mutloatse: Ice-olation — extracts from a new play

From the Introduction

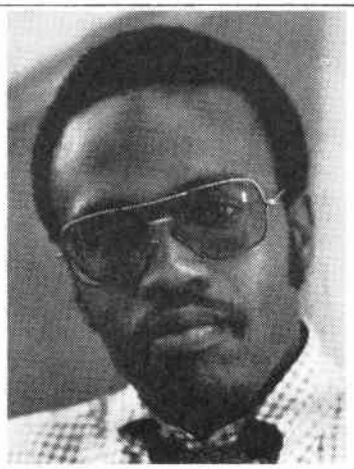
A documentary. An experimental play. A movielet within a narrative poem. A pictorial, graphic train of mostly indistinct tracks. Characters improvise roles depending on their own life experiences, or those of friends or close relations. The script is merely a guide, something to fall back on, not necessarily to cling to steadfastly. Of course, the Black man's situation changes from day to day — from bad to worse. In fact, at times the script may become unnecessary and obsolete if followed to the letter and not improved or improvised upon in relation to the day to day happenings. Here, it is the actors who call the tune, rather than a director (whose main duties, really, should be technical only).

Say, like film director Ingmar Bergman. Letting the participants tell the story themselves instead of being restricted to the thoughts of one man — an outsider (author) concerning the dramatic recreation of Black life. In this instance, two or more heads are far better than one.

Let the actors themselves tell you . . . about the effects of interrogation. That it leads to Ice-olation . . . in a mental asylum.

That's where we are right now:

A film is shown of a hospital aerial view — for Black mental patients. It is in the afternoon. Patients are sitting outside, smoking, singing and doing nothing. Staring at one another. Happily. Coldly. Lost. Wondering eyes wandering minds . . .



SCENE 4:

Women's section, the next morning. Kitchen. There are four inmates busy peeling potatoes and the like. Ntombi, Zoleka the 'sangoma', Ma-Ditapole, ex-hawker, and assistant nurse Umhle — always courteous, considerate and warm.

UMHLE: Girls, why are you so quiet this morning? Something wrong?
NTOMBI: If there wasn't do you think we would be —
ZOLEKA: *(snapping)* Ntombi! will you be quiet for a moment.
NTOMBI: What's wrong with YOU! Are you itchy?
UMHLE: Now stop it, Ntombi.
MA-DITAPOLE: Sometimes you get on my nerves too, Ntombi, do you know that?
NTOMBI: Do you think I care?
ZOLEKA: Sefebe sa ngwanyana.
NTOMBI: What was that?
UMHLE: Come, come, girls. Back to work.
NTOMBI: She insulted me.
ZOLEKA: What did I say exactly?
NTOMBI: Whatever you said, same to you — and your family.

Just there, Zoleka loses her temper and lunges at Ntombi, but Umhle, sitting between them, stops her in time.

UMHLE: Hold it, basadi *(pause)).* You cannot behave like this. You are adults.
ZOLEKA: I won't allow myself to be insulted by a slip of a girl like her! Ntombi the bitch . . .
UMHLE: Girls, girls, please —
MA-DITAPOLE: Ha-ha-heh-heh-hee-hee. Give it to her, Zoleka. She deserves all the expletives you can think of.
UMHLE: That's enough now! Be quiet all of you.
NTOMBI: You are a funny one, neh? One minute you are complaining of silence and the next minute you're demanding silence.
UMHLE: That's the last time you will talk back to me like that, Ntombi. Now you go and help the others in the store-room.
NTOMBI: But —
UMHLE: I'm not asking you.
NTOMBI: Why pick on me?
UMHLE: I have no time to argue with you any more. Just do as I say.
NTOMBI: You Zoleka, I'll get you my girl!

With that, she snorts and runs out but suddenly she stops midway, and bares her panties to the three other ladies at the same time tapping her bottom with a contempuous 'Ha! ha!'.

UMHLE: Tell me now , Zoleka, why did you snap at her like that?
ZOLEKA: She was making fun of something personal; something very serious; something touching.
UMHLE: What were you really thinking of? Someone very close?
ZOLEKA: Yes, yes.

Pause.

UMHLE: Who could that be?
ZOLEKA: My husband.
UMHLE: Your husband? You never told me you were once married.

Mothobi Mutloatse's stories and poems have appeared in various periodicals and newspapers. Formerly a **World** *journalist he now writes a regular column ('Mothobi Speaks') for* **The Voice.**

In **Ice-olation,** *from which we publish an extract, he develops the dramatic qualities already present in his other work.*

ZOLEKA: Nobody ever asked me *(pause).* Please, don't think I am being sarcastic but that is the truth: nobody has ever had a chat with me — nobody. And how it hurts. I have been crying from within — and how it hurts. I have been bleeding from within and how it hurts. I have been lonely for so long — and how it hurts. I have been deserted, dumped and dragged hither and thither endlessly — and how it hurts. I became a sangoma after I lost trace of my husband after he had disappeared, at least, that's what I was told, from the mine compound where he was staying. That was three years ago. I though I would find him in my new occupation — I was previously a nurse at Waterval in Martindale, Sophiatown. I went to the mountain, spent cold, icy days in rivers, alone with nature. It was sheer torture, but I endured all that so that I could find the light which would guide me to where my husband was. I tried and tried and tried but all was in vain. No trace of my husband. Nobody seemed to know where he was. It seemed as if he had never existed. The mine officials gave me the impression that they could not keep track with all the rock fall victims they were having daily. Thousands of thousands of faceless men. Maybe my man was among them. I refused totally to believe that. Something inside me told me that he was very much alive somewhere. Even as I am speaking now, I can feel it — I have this uncanny feeling he is not very far away — if only I could see him. Feel him, touch him. Kiss him. Love him. Obey him. Want him.

UMHLE: Any children?

ZOLEKA: Children? Yes, I love children. We had two — a boy and a girl.

UMHLE: You say 'had' — what happened to them?

ZOLEKA: *(nearly crying)* I don't know, Umhle. I really do not know. I wished to God I knew. It all happened so fast — I lost — in quotes — my husband, my children and my house. My children just disappeared — probably while I was away looking for their father. My lovely Dlomo and Thulandivile. Heaven only knows where they are; what they are doing now . . . And my handsome, quiet husband . . . Kemang. Paid one fifth of White miners' salaries — and yet doing all the dirty work . . .

Improvise: Play Hugh Masekela's poignant protest song, 'Gold', simultaneously with the showing of the lot of a Black miner — on slides — recruitment, going down a shaft; digging — and finally, a rock fall!

Curtain.

Same day, same time — men's section. Dormitory. There is only one inmate — sitting on his bed with both arms holding his head, worried to death.

INMATE: I have survived Coalbrook; I have survived Carletonville; I have escaped apartheid; I have even escaped myself. But there's one thing I have and can never escape — love. Love for my family. Love for my children. Love for my wife. Love for my Dlomo. Love for my Thula. Love for my Zoleka. Where can they be now? Dead? Oh no, no. They can't be? Do they think I am dead?

Improvise: Miriam Makeba's heart-rending song, 'Gauteng', is played together with the same slides used in the previous scene.

Curtain.

Same time, same day — boy's ward. Umhle is spoon-feeding a boy of about 13 with motogo.

UMHLE: After you've finished eating, will you tell me your name? You have been here for over a year now, and we still do not know your name. Why don't you want to talk — of course, you can, if you want to. Will you please let me be your friend? What shall I call you?

BOY: *(shrugging his shoulders indifferently)* Hmmm.

UMHLE: And what is that supposed to mean? *(Silence).*

UMHLE: Don't you like me? Must I go away?

BOY: MMMMNNN! *(shaking his head).*

UMHLE: Must I stay?

Boy nods.

UMHLE: Okay then, I will. Are we friends then?

Boy nods again.

UMHLE: You know my name?

Boy nods.

UMHLE: Do I know yours?

Boy looks away, then down at the floor.

UMHLE: Talk to me, I am your friend. *(pause)* I promise, I won't tell the others that you talked. Is that okay?

Boy lights up suddenly, as if reassured.

BOY: *(still shyly)* I like you . . . You are kind . . . You are like my mother.

UMHLE: *(truly moved)* Do I really remind you of your mother?

BOY: Yes, yes. But she is no longer alive.

UMHLE: Oh, I am sorry. I understand.

BOY: She did not die.

UMHLE: *(surprised)* She didn't die? What happened then?

BOY: She disappeared.

UMHLE: Disappeared?

BOY: Just like my father.

UMHLE: Your father too?

BOY: And my sister too.
UMHLE: Your sister — oh, this is too much.
BOY: And so I went to live in the alleys of Hillbrow with other dead-end kids. Until I was caught freezing on the pavement during the middle of the night by the police. And I was brought here because I refused to tell the authorities anything about myself.
UMHLE: Can you still remember the names of your father, your mother and sister?
BOY: I can. Even mine too.
UMHLE: And what is it?
BOY: Dlomo.
UMHLE: And your father's and . . .
DLOMO: My father's name is Kemang; Mother is Zoleka or Ma-Dlomo. My sister's name is Thulandivile.
UMHLE: Hold it! Did you say your Mama was Zoleka?
DLOMO: Yes, why?
UMHLE: And your sister Thulandivile?
DLOMO: Of course yes.
UMHLE: Those names begin to ring a bell now. They sound familiar . . . where have I heard them before?
DLOMO: I don't know.
UMHLE: I was thinking out loud, sorry. *(Pondering).*
DLOMO: Where could you have heard them, Nurse?
UMHLE: Where? That is the big question. It could not have been elsewhere since I spend nearly 24 hours daily here and seldom go out even on my day-offs, which I spend in my room. Yes! I think I've got it.
DLOMO: What? What have you got, Nurse.
UMHLE: There is a girl in this hospital who can only remember her name — Thulandivile, who was picked up at a shebeen by social workers and brought here. And also, there is a Zoleka I know and she could be the same one you've been talking about.
DLOMO: Not likely . . .
UMHLE: It is likely. What did your mother do — I mean, was she a teacher or something?
DLOMO: No, she was a nurse.
UMHLE: YEEEESSSSSSSS! You see, I was right.
DLOMO: W-what do you mean. I don't understand . . .
UMHLE: Not yet — you will later. I think I know where your mother and sister are.
DLOMO *(elated)* Really! Do you know where Mama is?
UMHLE: I think I am sure. Come with me' *(he does).*

Curtain.

The Artists' and Writers' Guild of SA is a non-racial group that seeks to protect the interests of writers and artists against the interference of the State or censorship. We promote new work. We circulate information by means of a quarterly Newsletter, and hold frequent readings.

Our address is 31 3rd Avenue, Parktown North, Johannesburg 2193. Membership is R3 a year.

At the moment, for example, we are interested in the following.

Are you a writer who has had dealings with a publisher? If so, do you feel there have been any irregularities in the drawing up of a proper contract, the payment of royalties, or in any other aspect of your professional relationship with your publisher? Has your work ever been pirated?

The Guild is investigating these and related matters with a view to drawing up some form of standard agreement between writers and publishers. We would appreciate it if any examples of bad dealing or bad faith which you have experienced, or know of, could be brought to our attention. Please write to the chairman, at the above address. There is no onus on you to join if you write in this respect.

artists' and writers' guild

THE MARRIAGE-PORTRAIT

'Johannes de Eyck fuit hic 1434'

1. The Banker Arnolfini

I place my palm round here for a sign of loyalty.
Why does my wife credit my action? Why does she credit me?

I know my own value
But cannot ever know
What power of validation other men find in me.

Why did the painter plant me like a winter fir :
My clothing hanging sombre, my complexion pale?—
Why did he frame my head
Against the velvet of my hat
As though to crown me with a solid sun?—
If not to show he knew that there was presence
Where I stood, and some surety.
How do I manifest this kind of warranty?

My eyelids are as fine as paper,
My lips are carved without colour;
I have my beauty,
I bleach with the sun —
Not sickly, but withdrawn
To save my strength, my sobriety.
Some things I understand very well.
Thus I maintain the world's density.

Some part of my great passion goes to watch
That these things round me lose nothing,
Not any jot of their substantiality.
I stand all these utilities' guarantee.

And you my wife I offer equal reality:
That you will never be less than now to me.

2. The Mirror

I am as round as a fish's eye;
The whole room is reflected in my pond.
All things that I can see
Are curved to pack them in.
The room's walls, the window, casements,
I bend to make the sides of a merchantman.
The colours are dark of what my hold contains.
I am as round as a fish's eye —
Only: mahogany, and warm.
I bend to make the ribbed sides of a fish;
And this is the fish that contains the coin.

3. The Wife

My husband thinks he holds me by the grasp
His stillness carries over all the objects in this room.
Wrong! No more, no less, but the fascination of that face
Could bind me to this contemplation of him,
This dance around his flame,
This childhood game to tease
A movement from his stillness.

You'll never know, my undiminished love,
Whether the movement of this hand in yours
Invites you or else tugs away
Into a world unknown to you, towards my womb.
Or whether my lap awaits you
Or withdraws into its own.

Still I could never lose my want
To move my fingers tracing out your eyes,
Your visible nostrils, your cleft chin.

Your hand is raised a pointed flame, the same
That marks the centre line runs down
Your features. Yet not the stillness of the flame
Is what I love,
But the incandescent rush of particles
Within the form.
I love your transience within this room.

Yet love I also need the way the shape persists.
I flicker. About me, space
Is dense or scattered, gathered round its nodes.

I move; and cast light and shadow. Keep your face real to me.
Your face with its thin and incorruptible flame.

4. The Dog

Between the two spouses I stand
Under the arch made by their hand in hand

Desire circles one to one
A cycle made for them alone

Yet in the circle of their desire I stand
Under the arch made by their hand in hand.

PETER STRAUSS

Shabbir Banoobhai: Two Poems

FOR FATIMA MEER
so much love . . .

they have taken you away
and left you untouched
they have locked you up
and set you free
they have silenced your voice
and proclaimed your message

i raked rock with my fingers
battered my head to bone
for a long time lay senseless
heart shocked to stone

then the words of the Quran
stirred within me
i breathed again
knowing you were safe

'Had We caused this Quran to descend
upon a mountain, verily (O Muhammad)
you would have seen it humbled,
torn apart by the fear of Allah.'

you too accepted the weight of the Quran
of undefiled, unconquerable truth
of many-faceted, all-encompassing, overwhelming love
for the whole of mankind

you too assumed, undaunted, that awesome trust
fulfilled steadfastly that formidable task
of being the eyes of a nation
the heart, the blood, the pulse of your fellow man

those who are trying to break you
would achieve success a million times greater
if they concentrated all their effort
on moving mere mountains

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it's only your imagination, only a dream
don't tremble so, my love
no, don't cry, don't think
just go back to sleep

i will stay with you, i promise
keep awake the whole night long
only, don't tremble so, my love
don't cry, don't think
just go back to sleep

the house is safe, the children, i
the dog's not barking, it's your imagination
the cat is curled beside the fire
don't tremble so, my love
don't cry, don't think
just go back to sleep

you must believe me, it's only a dream
there's no danger, now or ever
the earth is not ablaze, how can it be
i have never known a quieter, more beautiful night
don't tremble so, my love
don't cry, don't think
just go back to sleep

when you wake up tomorrow you will find
the earth not scarred, the church still there
the shops open, friends everywhere
there has been no disturbance, not even a fire
it was all your imagination, all a dream
come, don't tremble so, my love
don't cry, don't think
just go back to sleep

Widows' Talk *a story by* Gertrud Strauss

I think he recognised me that first time I saw him in the intensive care after half an hour or so. Though he never really opened his eyes and was breathing hard and kept on moving arms and legs in a restless way. Perhaps it was just the involuntary movement of his hand but I thought he pressed my fingers as though he wanted to say something. And perhaps I should have tried talking but I was just so numb inside and felt so awkward there seeing that the nurses were doing all the necessary things that all I could manage was to stand beside the bed and stroke his hands. For everybody to see of course, and I didn't like that so much, but there was no other way. If they had left him at home he would have died many hours before. As it was he was making heavy progress and I could see the irregular heartbeat on the visible dial of the monitor, sometimes fading away into a blurred nothing, then picking up again in a more unified zig zag motion, and the nurses all didn't seem to mind it in the least though this was the thing that got me all frightened and yet stirred me, moved me in a strange way. The electrical beep-beep of Quentin's life running out, the last record of it, the impact of it on a sheet of paper; I felt life was indeed a force that brought movement and change and transmitted itself to others. If only I could grasp some of it still — but no, one should let it slip. Quentin had always told me that he'd die of a coronary as his father and uncles had done, and that it was what he'd wish for himself anyway. And I didn't even know should we go to hospital and drag it all out on the breath of oxygen and the resuscitating wonders of the intensive care, but I was too shocked to go against James and too incapable of arguing that my point of view was not inhuman and cruel.

Really I thought he was dead when I found him on the bathroom floor. I stumbled out of bed because of the lump sound of a body falling and had that crack of a whip certain knowledge, something's happened, and when I saw him long and stretched out on the tiny floor space between the bath and the toilet and basin, I just knew, it's come, it's hit me, it's our day of fate, Quentin's death is a fact. I would not have to wait and worry and wonder when it would happen, the worst I had always feared had happened. And I felt shocked with the ice-cold suddenness of it and helpless with the heavy big body of the man on the floor and confused over telephone numbers and whom to ring.

When I got James and he asked me had I rung the doctor I said it was too late for that but he should do what he thought was right. And I was glad that I had been able to dish out those practical duties and necessities which threatened to strangle me already. I panicked all of a sudden that I might have missed the last moment of bringing Quentin back to life, didn't some people give the kiss of life and how was it done. When I came back to him I focused my attention on a little wound on the side of the head where the blood had coloured his grey hair. I don't think I wanted to take in more than that, but I fumbled around in the medicine chest for the mercurochrome and used some of it, shifting his head position while I was doing so and then I became aware of an inaudible kind of moan and thought perhaps he was alive still and there was even a point in my disinfecting his wound, and then the door bell rang and James and Heather were there with Dr Cohen. But before I let them in I still tried to pull up Quentin's pyjama pants over his buttocks though before I hadn't noticed they were down from his just having been to the toilet.

Of course the bodily functions of all kinds and sorts are the ones that the intensive care staff deal with, the whole time and without embarrassment, and one needn't worry they're used to the messiness of it and to all the freaks and stubbornnesses of the system. I wouldn't be the one who would be attending to Quentin in this way, that was not my task. My task was to do

nothing, to be in the way, at the most to stroke Quentin's hands and speak to him softly. But I couldn't stroke his cheeks with my hands or bring my face close without upsetting some plastic tubing, so I had to resign myself to staring at his face. And I studied every pore with great thoroughness, I hadn't looked at him with any similar attention ever since I was first in love with him. Why not, surely I ought to have done so more often, but I had contented myself with the warmth of his touch and the reassuring sound of his speech. But as for looking at him, I had usually just taken in the image in the manner of recognising it, not in the manner of deciphering it. Even his moods I never really deduced from his face, more from the slamming of a door, or the hastiness of his movements, and his determination about something from the way he ate with a certain elegant greediness. But now I could do nothing but look at him and even this I could not do in comfort while sitting on a chair; I had to stand else the bed would have been too high. No provisions made for the visitors, just for the nursing staff, where the human body has regressed to its infant state of helplessness. No divisions made between the sexes, or only slight ones of a closed curtain occasionally, and I could look over to the next bed where a grey woman my own age breathed her last eked out bit of life and across to two other beds as well with people in similar plight, suspended on the life sustaining machines, men or women, I don't know anymore.

I felt grateful in the end for the three times I still saw him, grateful to have had the chance to look at him still though I did so with an odd shyness, not wanting to push myself too much. There were some bruise marks on his brow on the side where I had used the mercurochrome, faint now from having been washed over, but still the visible sign that once I had felt he was my responsibility. The eyebrows were still remarkably bushy and dark, though with some grey hairs inbetween, and I liked looking at the hairs of his eyelids and the roots of his hair, where it still grew fairly low down on his brow. None of this seemed to mean anything, I just looked at it all and at the pattern of the tiny veins on his cheeks and at the open mouth, the sagging chin and the strange round-necked hospital shirt.

I know that while I saw his face with clarity I kept on thinking why don't I know what it means. Perhaps I don't feel enough, perhaps I'm flippant, I don't really care enough to be able to explain it all. His veins are his veins, his pores are his pores, the roots of his hair are the roots of his hair, his eyelids are shut and remain so over his eyes, and they stay closed and hide him from me. My look at him is strong and intense, like ammunition, but he doesn't take it in, it's only for me for my own sake that I do all this, stroking over his hand and going over his brow with my fingertips.

I wish I could be sure he took me in once while he was lying there, but it's just a vain wish for I know he was deeply unconscious. And he didn't come back at all before he died — peacefully they said — without the last undignified struggle some have. James came into the room I was sharing with Laura at 5 a.m. but I knew already what it was as I had heard the telephone ring and he whispered to me 'Dad's gone. Don't be too sad. He couldn't have lived. Let's tell Laura when she comes from school she has an important test today'.

Yes, life goes on and of course it's true enough what people say, it's painful to see it going on, the little tests for the schoolchildren with their unconcern for you as well as the commiseration and attention paid you in messages and massive flower arrangements. And the necessity to present oneself as the afflicted one when more than any loss one feels the shock still and is numbed to other humane feelings, almost as though one didn't care enough.

I came back to the house soon after the funeral and spent a whole year sorting out Quentin's possessions. I would have liked to have kept everything but then James insisted on my coming to the old age home

and I had to give Heather permission to give away most things that several times I had gone through and dealt with by storing in a new spot, in a different cupboard. The house was to be sold — I could see some sense in it all and had to fight with my feelings that here I was being eliminated gradually, that wilfully and maliciously my own children were turning against me, that I was made to shrink to evaporate. And then I started eating more and more, almost as though the chunks of nourishment I took in compensated for my lost position, my lost home, my useless life. With nobody left who could know my feelings well enough to act for me, nobody who'd speak audibly to me so I would understand, or walk with awareness of me close enough to see whether I'd lost my balance.

Others sometimes do these things for me, I must admit that, but when Quentin did them they were never a reminder that I was failing, he did them with the natural chivalry of his generation, not because of my defects, but because he treated his wife in that way. And I miss being close to him and benefiting from what he used to do for me. But those feelings I can bear with and I can tell myself again and again I must bear with, there is no other way.

But there are other times when I miss not having done for him what I might still have done. Trifling little lost opportunities when I did not show Quentin my full devotion and love; sterile times of existing next to each other oblivious of the joy of having someone close. Why couldn't one have lived with more intensity then, why couldn't I have spoken to him more intimately more often? The memories of him as a young handsome man wearing his white shirts with starched collars, come driving to see me on my father's banana farm, wearing a panama hat and sitting straight behind the steering wheel of his '36 Oldsmobile, why couldn't I have told him how I held this memory dear — when he was older I mean. When he could have looked back with me and enjoyed it in the same way? — Now the white shirt that in my memory stood for courtship and love has merged with the hospital garment he wore; and I have another memory, of the clash of the two images reaching my consciousness a while after the funeral.

I was sitting on the bed in Quentin's study busy with the light suit he had worn to the races so often. I sewed the button on that I had noticed was missing just before he died just in order to complete a task however purposeless it might appear. I tried getting my strong buttonhole cotton into the eye of the needle but couldn't very easily because my hand was unsteady and then I also noticed that my eyes were full of tears. Silly, I thought, do I want to cry now; I should have finished with crying but it came over me again like a convulsion and I just put my hands down and let it grip me. Outside the window there were a couple of Indian Mynahs making a terrible racket. I almost felt they were trying to harrass me, they were so cheeky and the male with a jumbled bit of twigs in his yellow beak hopped onto the top of the window and sort of looked down, in at me. Of course he was probably just trying to find the best place for a nest for his demanding lady love who gave a piercing shrill chirrup from the shrubs outside to egg him on, but I felt exposed to the male bird somehow, diminished in my serious sorrow, almost laughed at.

Of course, life will go on, whatever, of course all the coarseness of it and the routine repetitiveness of it can't stop just because Quentin has died, of course I must just let it go on too and I must tell myself that Quentin would not have wanted me to centre the rest of my life round his death. I told myself all this but all the same it was the hour when I first knew for certain what it felt like that Quentin had died, everything that had come before was shock and confusion and evasion. I found the shrill chirruping of the birds hard to bear with, I made up my mind to shoo them, but I couldn't do anything. I felt time for me had become frozen, everything else still passed me by like trees and leaves and telephone poles do when one's in a car or train. But one feels out of control of this happening outside one, unconnected with it.

While I sat transfixed to the spot, prisoner of my sadness, I looked down on my hand full of veins and wrinkles and my rings, the engagement ring a bit old fashioned with a cluster of little diamonds round a larger one in the middle, the plain golden wedding ring almost worn through now from housework. And I thought what's in a ring, it's just a ring and the memories attached to it seem planted and deliberate. I don't want to remember our engagement, all that. But involuntarily another memory crept up on me and dragged me into its stronghold. When Quentin took me for a ride in the Oldsmobile the first time and the water in the radiator started boiling up Taylor's Hill and we got out and went in search of water and Quentin got so hot that he unbuttoned his stiff collar which amused me for no other reason than that he had a big Adam's apple which I had never seen before, but made me shy too, perhaps because the black hair sticking out of his shirt with which his chest was obviously profusely covered looked very real and manly. And I liked the way he seemed to take for granted that I would bear him looking like this, I wouldn't put him into the position of feeling self-conscious.

And when we reached the water I took my shoes off and put my feet in, sitting on the side of the bank with my hands resting beside me on the little twigs and berries the syringa trees had shed at the turn of the season, and I looked at the refracted image of my toes under the water, quite thrilled by the coolness round my feet when I had to shift my awareness from my feet to my hands because he was covering the one closest to him with his. He is holding my hand, I said to myself, what must I do, — must I do as though I'm happy to allow it without taking much notice of it, must I move my hand away, must I look at him, and while I thought like this I heard him say suddenly: 'You're sad, you look shocked. Must I move away?' And I managed to shake my head though I couldn't speak and he pressed my hand more and squeezed dizzying floods of emotion into me which lamed and transfixed me to the spot. And next I heard him say: 'Tell me then why you look sad' and I struggled for quite a while and finally got it out with a bit of an artificial laugh, 'Perhaps I look sad because I'm happy'. And I looked at him then while he was still holding my hand and he gave a little nod with the head also not speaking anymore, just looking at me while stroking my hand.

And that was it — our moment of telling each other for the first time, and I can cherish the memory. But there's a snag to it too, because the memory goes a little further, Quentin looking at me with his intense dark eyes and I can think of the moment and breathe in deeply even while I do, but then Quentin closes his eyes not to shut me out but to feel his feelings to the full, the way one does sometimes, and that's where the other image takes over — the face in hospital, closed eyes, round necked hospital shirt. Heavy breathing. Me now stroking his hand. I can't get further with the other memory. It always stops there. Breaks off. Remains unfinished. And I go over the death again. Time and time again. In my memory store house where sadness goes hand in hand with happiness. And one can never be sure what one's facing up to.

The last day of his life was not very different from any other Saturdays that passed us by. — Quentin got up at seven and while he was shaving in the bathroom I got the breakfast ready, health food breakfast, no high cholesterol English breakfast he loved and was forbidden to eat. But if I'd known I would have cooked it once more for the last time. I got some milk out of the fridge to serve with his muesli but the skimmed milk was too little and I mixed some ordinary milk into it, thinking for once it wouldn't matter. So then I whistled our 'ready' sign, not wanting to shout from the kitchen, but Quentin didn't come immediately and I went in to the bathroom and saw him sitting on the closed seat of the toilet, dressed and combed and fully ready. It seemed a bit odd to me but I didn't like to say anything more than that breakfast was ready because whenever I said what was the matter he'd say it was my fussing that was the matter. I remember the look on his face which showed he was turned in on himself, at least momentarily so, though he responded to me quickly enough. Perhaps he knew what was coming, perhaps he felt something that morning, I don't know.

In the kitchen while eating his breakfast he said very little, just a remark or two about the horse he had in mind for a win. And I said what I always said, 'Don't for Heaven's sake give away our last penny, else we'll end up living in the poor house' and he said what he always said, 'You know lass, I'm really very careful'. And I laughed and related more to myself than to him the story of one of his financial defeats when he had staked all his savings on the one horse whose win he foresaw with such certainty that he was 'for once', as he would always say, prepared to disregard the laws of chance. And he listened in his accustomed manner, or didn't listen, I could never make out, and finally offered me a very fine house and all the different types of orchids for my hothouse, and a new sewing machine and air-conditioning if he should

'Here from my single bed I can let my arm drop over the side and it's almost as though Quentin never existed.'

win this time. And I said he could forget about it all, I didn't even want any of these things. Except for a few orchids perhaps, which I would choose myself seeing he was colour blind. But, rubbish, I didn't want orchids either because I knew he didn't usually win. And I couldn't exist on flimsy expectations, I was no optimist like him. I found it much more sensible to look the brute facts of life straight in the face. And he said I should go on doing that for us and he would hope for the bluebird of happiness, and between the two of us we'd get through somehow.

He got up after his breakfast and rinsed his own cup and plate, this being part of what he saw as helping with the household so that we would not need a full time servant, and then he got his stick to take Caesar for a walk to the tea room to buy the bread and milk and newspaper. As I was drying the dishes I looked out of the window at him and thought, he looks fine, he has lost a bit of weight, Dr Cohen will be pleased. We must remember the appointment.

And I went through the housework and had a tray with tea ready when he came back. And he sat down in his beloved Grafton Everest chair which he had tipped over in the shop to see how it was made underneath before buying it and he poured my tea for me and said he'd decided it was the last time that he was going to the races. And I said I hoped it was the last time that he'd tell me that because I knew he'd never give up his obsession. And we argued a little, but he insisted that he wanted to give up because it was all becoming a bit of a strain. He was getting old. I think for once he might have meant it. But I couldn't believe him not after thirty-nine years of marriage, and he went off as usual with no settlement between us.

But no matter either because in the evening when he came back he looked tired enough but had all the usual stories of how he'd just missed his luck, how next time he would know never to bet on a horse with no running experience. And I listened with my knitting needles stabbing into the stitches at great speed, because I had to listen, he loved his horses so much, but I had just about had my fill. I wish now for once I could have been totally sympathetic but of course death does not wait for the ideal moments in one's life, that is just how it is. It comes when one is just ordinarily human and argumentative and barely tolerant. And for the victim that may still be neither here nor there for what's gone before no longer matters — but for the bereaved one it matters indeed and what's more it causes one to remember in vivid detail the sorts of incidents I remember in our last day — matters not important enough for the memory — but illuminated retrospectively by the glare that spreads from the shock. I know we spent an ordinary Saturday evening with Caesar lying at Quentin's feet and Quentin talking to me about his horses but one little thing was different too, and I paid no attention to it at the time because I could not understand the portent. Caesar was very loath to go into the kitchen, he wagged his tail and wanted to follow Quentin into the bedroom. At last I quietened him down and mentioned to Quentin that the bed was the one place I was not going to share with anybody but him and we rolled up against each other and I fell asleep.

A little later I half woke up and felt sweaty and uncomfortable. Quentin was still lying facing me — I took this in somehow — because usually he turned his back to me after sleeping for half an hour or so to get more freedom for his limbs, more breath for his snoring, but he was still turned towards me, and I waited for the moment he would get the mattress into motion with his fairly heavy body but then fell asleep again and must have woken up a little when he got up for I took in the fact that he was not in bed instantaneously when I heard the thud in the bathroom.

And many times after he had died when I woke up at night the empty space in bed next to me caused sudden alarm, or memory of the alarm I felt, and it was just as well that I had to give up the doublebed when coming to the home here.

I know my feelings are all the same as others have experienced. People used to tell me all these details of the empty space in the double bed, of the delayed action of the grief, of the regrets one has, of the loneliness one feels, I can't say I didn't know, but somehow it helps very little to know. It's only when the actual body one has just tried lifting up from the floor, the warmth and the weight of it have been substituted by the night's dark empty space, that it comes home to one.

Here from my single bed I can let my arm drop over the side and it's almost as though Quentin never existed. As a spacial entity he has indeed stopped existing but the life he transmitted to me goes on in my bloodstream, the body that is me is Quentin too. And some of what is us may emerge again in generations after us. Though one should not stake one's hopes too highly on one's children. They are very seldom the ones who continue where one has left off. They are too close to begin with, so they have to be pushed into the current, and they get carried a long way off, and one should not mourn this. I must not expect too much from them I always tell myself and then fall into the routine mother lament again, my children have little regard for their mother. But if I think of them small, just out of the womb, fresh and beautiful in their ancient wrinkled skin, I feel as moved by life beginning as with life coming to an end. Quentin's last whisperings of heart-beat and combustion, the baby's first stretching of limbs and screams, these motions have streamed in on my life and have streamed out of it. And perhaps it's because I'm old and confused that there doesn't seem so much difference anymore between the beginning and the end.

I must live my death when it comes.

JOURNEYMAN

Somewhere I have not gladly come across
somewhere the grass is thorns
the trees have tusks and stand
openmouthed swaying at their chains
like circus-saddened elephants

The sun a pair of moons the seven stars
all glitter like shards from
the same shattered syringe
somewhere you could call it nowhere
really to be back gets as strange

DOUGLAS LIVINGSTONE

Ruth Keech: Mrs Ogle's Despair
– a poem and a case history.

1: Mrs Ogle's Despair

You ask anyone in the yard
all they will tell you is the same as I'm telling.
Who's to help me?
One Welfare says he's mad.
The other says he's just old-fashioned bad.
The Police?
'You'll have to wait,' they always say
'until he's really done the things
he keeps on threatening you he'll do.'
Then they all have their laugh
knowing they're needing to see me dead
to prove the way how I'm living.
The priest says *he* understands,
that God will know I'm doing my best.
But my best would be a different story,
no kneeling to Leonard.
It's only at night I feel so scared
that my different story will never begin.

'You've had a hard life, Mrs Ogle'
everyone says that.
But the hard life can't upset me anymore.
Nor Leonard. Nor any amount of his lady-friends.
I've got the hang of them now.
It's the easy life that beats me all the time.
'We've all got to battle' even he says that.
'Where's the life in you?' he wants to know.
He'd never believe it's the life in me
that tells me some days not to fight at all.

Like at the Home where they put me
on our birthdays each of us would stand
to get a golden wishbone with a bow.
The time when I got up I stood and stood.
'Sit down, Vera, sit down.'
They thought I'd lost my manners out of fright:
but I reckoned if I stood there long enough
that something new would have to begin.
Some days I still pretend there's other plans for me.
At night-time when I'm turning on the light
I say to myself it's tying me up to the posh hotels,
the big-shot dining-rooms, the jolly times,
But all I see is shadows of the kids
jumping up like spiders on the wall —
Battling with their books before he comes,
When all we do is play at duck and dive.

But to tell you the fact there have been times
when me and my life seemed one and the same.
The times I've been expecting one of *them*.
You'd see me, every second week I'd take
a slow walk to the Clinic up the hill
just so I'd hear the Sister tell me what I knew.
'You're doing fine. You'll make a perfect mother.'

The way she said the words you'd think
I'd won a prize at school.
One time I couldn't keep from telling Leonard that.
'A perfect mess is all I think you are!'
That's when he fixed electric wires round my head,
That's when he got his ruffian friends to prove
in Court he hadn't done a thing.
They sent me to the Mental then.
They said I got depressed.

It's how I feel now in the mornings when they're gone
and I'm standing out under the mango tree —
it's the only place you get a view of the sea
not where the sand is or the docks are
not where you could walk out like to swim
just where the water could cover your head —
and I start to think of this friend I had
who couldn't cope with her husband either.
Some days she'd tell me all the things he did
but then again she'd go into her room
she went and swallowed all the doctor's little pills.
That day she went and killed herself
but all she did was get away from *him*.

I tell myself one day I can clear off
when all the kids are finished up with school.
Nine years to go. So many Sunday afternoons
and all those long week-ends.
They wait for you like the end of the month —
Knock you down like the bills coming in.
The times when other people have their jokes.
But in nine years *will there be a Vera left to go?*
O, my thoughts are just no good to me anymore
You're welcome to the lot.'

Durban

2: Mrs Ogle's Case History

The above was an experience recounted to me by a client. It was similar to hundreds of others except that Mrs Ogle posed her question more precisely and her illustrations were more vivid. This drove me to tighten up her story into a poem. For some months I was left without a title until by chance I came upon Kierkegaard's essay 'The Sickness unto Death' which not only described our fundamental human condition but which I felt was illustrated — almost step by step — by Mrs Ogle's story. The title therefore fell into my lap.

Here follow the relevant excerpts of what he had to say. I have merely substituted feminine pronouns for the original masculine and all quotes are either from the Essay or the poem.

Kierkegaard analyses the forms of human despair in an ascending scale. He sees the lowest form of despair as 'that which sees itself as a consequence of something external and thinks that if that were changed there would be no need to despair' This represents an obscurity about one's own condition. Mrs Ogle's assessment of her situation is scarcely clouded by projection of this sort. By the time she tells her story she is more or less indifferent to the externals, for example as to whether Leonard is 'bad' or 'mad' or what exactly he and his lady-friends are up to.

Consequently she only briefly succumbs to what Kierkegaard sees as the characteristic weakness of this first stage of despair, the weakness of 'not willing to be herself, of toying with being another' as when

'Some days I still pretend there's other plans for me.
At night time when I'm turning on the light
I say to myself it's tying me up to the posh hotels,
the big-shot diningrooms, the jolly times'

More or less simultaneously it strikes her as ridiculous to want to be another.

'But all I see is shadows of the kids
jumping up like spiders on the wall'

Thus with great strength of mind she steadily 'maintains the relationship with herself'.

Mrs Ogle's despair is essentially not a despair of weakness at the lowest level but 'a despair *over* her weakness'. She has reached the second notch in Kierkegaard's scale; she has become aware that her Self is something essentially different from externalities and their effect on her. Nevertheless this demands a break with the immediacy which as a whole she cannot make . . .

'it's the easy life that beats me all the time.'

While marking time therefore 'in a state of incognito' she is faced with what Kierkegaard uncannily foresees — 'the good counsel and practical wisdom which urges her to put up with her fate . . . to accept whatever stability and talents she may have been given' as when

'The Priest says he understands,
that God will know I'm doing my best'

Mrs Ogle refuses to be tranquillised, is not willing to see herself in the task although she might 'adopt the trappings of conventional docility and probably does it well'

'the hard life can't upset me anymore
I've got the hang of it now'

'Aware of herself as a deed' she fears all the time that

'my real story may never begin'

and again

'so many Sunday afternoons
and all those long week-ends.
In nine years will there be a Vera left to go?'

Since 'in the interim a Self she would not be' can she be sure of becoming herself ever?

In this secondary state Kierkegaard sees physical suicide as the most imminent danger and indeed Mrs Ogle often looks at the sea and thinks of her friend who 'went . . . went' and

'that day she went and killed herself
but all she did was get away from *him*.'

Curtly she dismisses this way out.

Kierkegaard poses no logical progression for the despairer and Mrs Ogle intermittently reaches the third stage - 'the despair of defiance, demoniac despair'. Here the person 'wills despairingly to be herself. While rebelling against the whole of existence she actually sees herself as proof against its goodness. This proof she herself is and wills to be as a protest against this existence'. At this level there exists a passive stoicism which can be misinterpreted as indifference.

So with Mrs Ogle. Even as a child, on the occasion of her birthday (ludicrously misinterpreted by others as a time when 'she forgot her manners out of fright') she silently

'. . . stood and stood
I reckoned if I stood there long enough
that something new would have to begin.'

Later when Leonard asks her 'Where's the life in you?' she says

'he'd never believe its the life in me
that tells me some days not to fight at all'

Again in the final lines she throws her whole existence defiantly at us.

'my thoughts are just no good to me anymore.
You're welcome to the lot.'

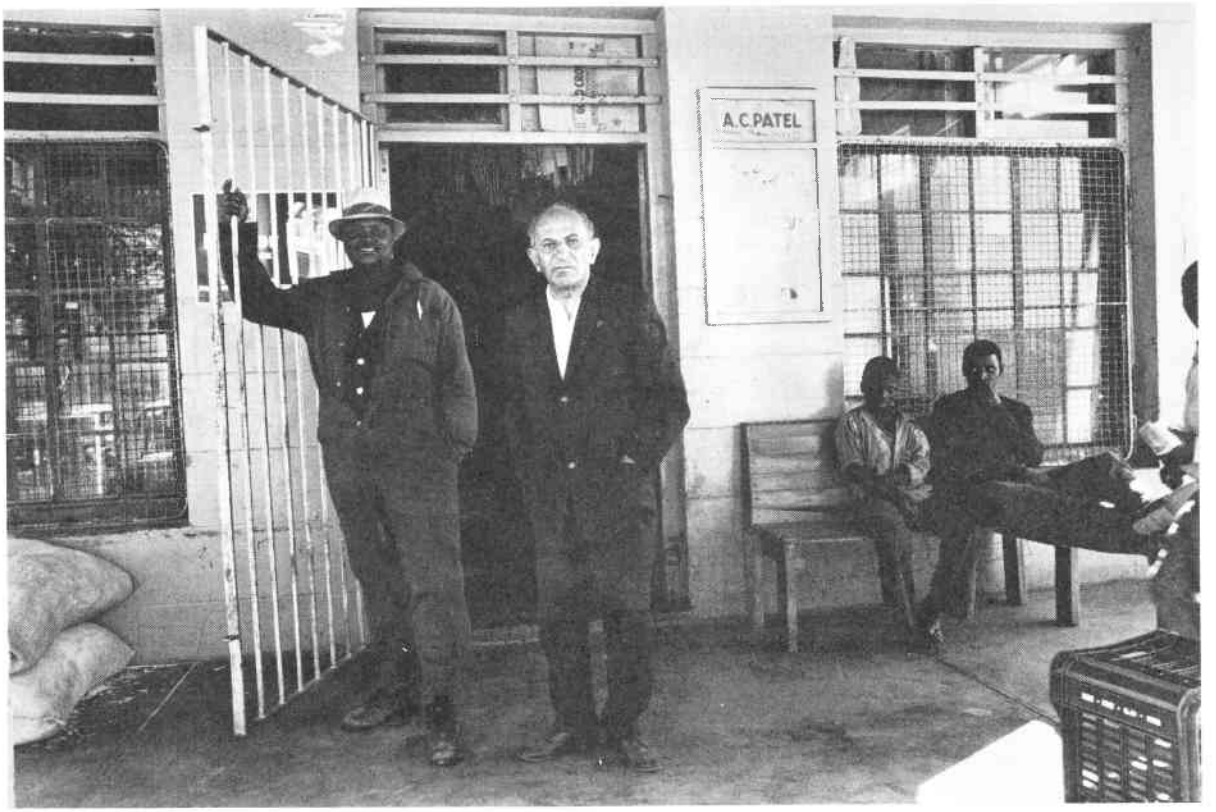
So she subsides from telling into being, 'not asking for comfort even since this would be the destruction of herself as an objection'.

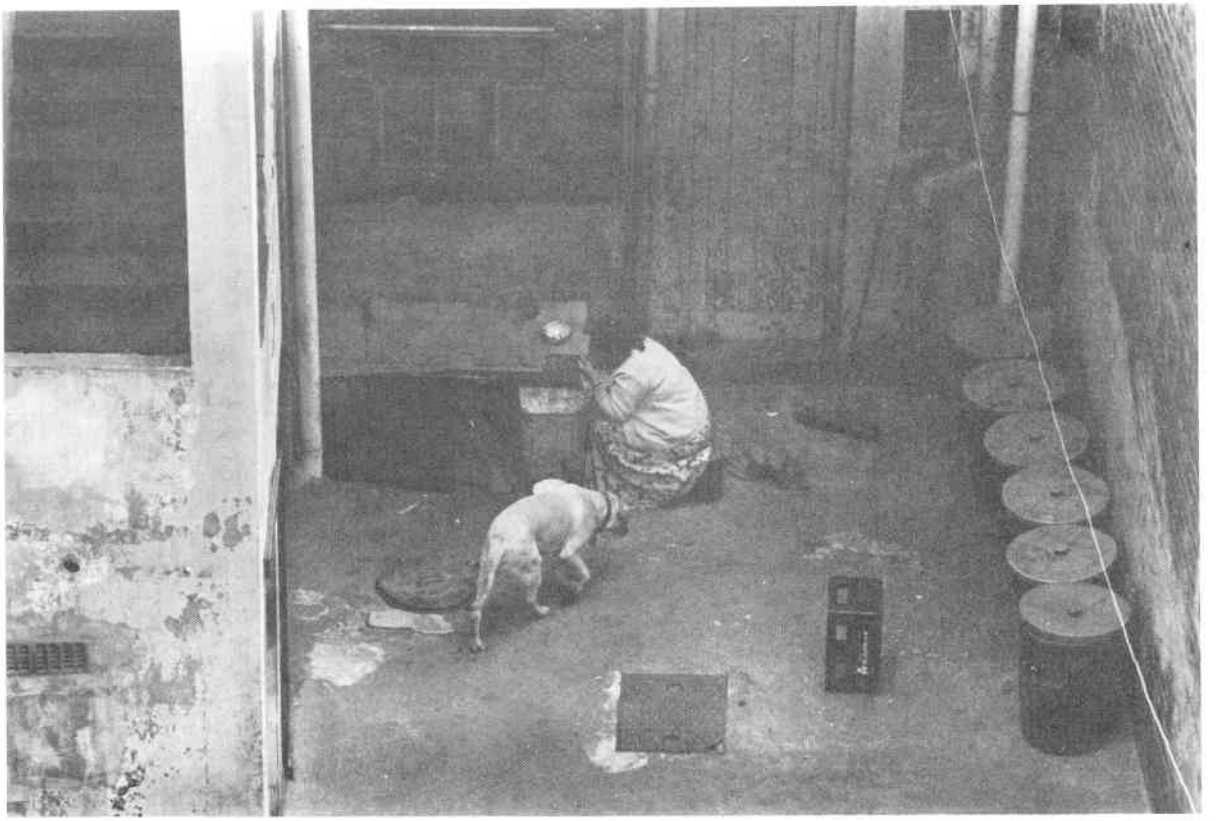
Ga-Rankuwa

OLD HOMES

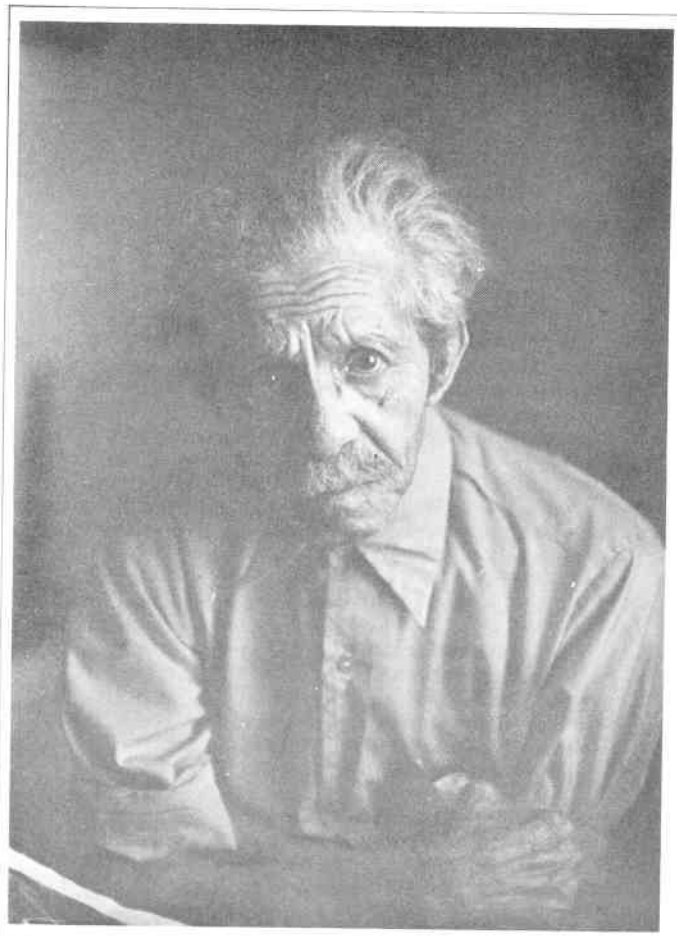
We pass where life was
the sun showing the place every morning,
Where every reflection of our eyes
is attracted to our ancestors,
their deeds destined to become memorials of today.
If only we could, unashamed, place those cornerstones again
to be our stepping stones,
discipline carried from mother's knee,
learned there, the family
and all to be the sand of the same
home, with all the branches again
of the same heart.
Why not the body of the land forever
like the ruins of Zimbabwe,
why not my rooigrond living on
the spirits of our ancestors buried there?
While false beliefs like glue
hold our new homes together . . .

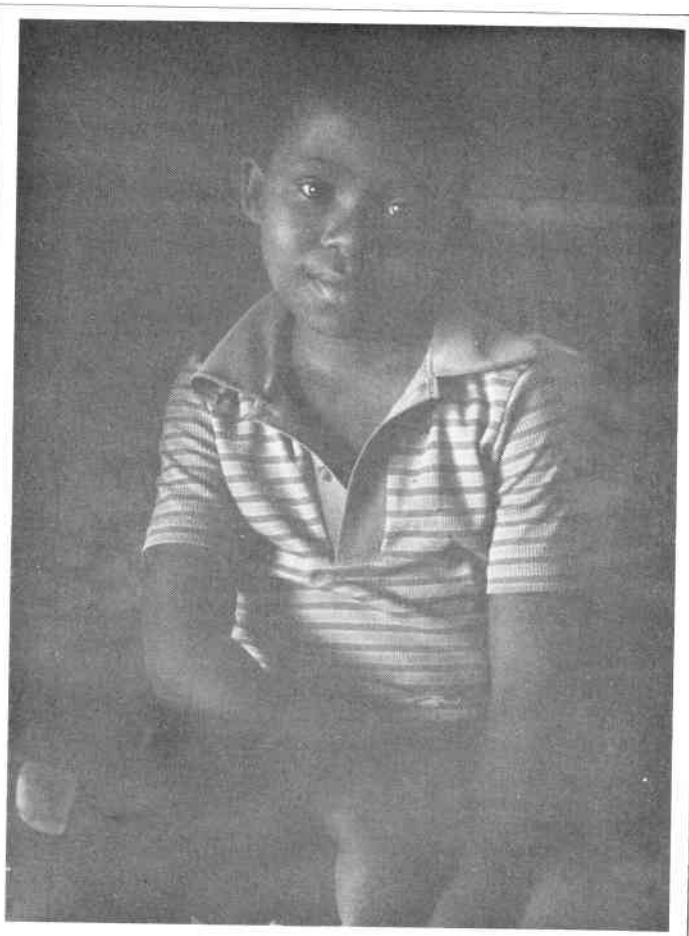
D. Mphusu,

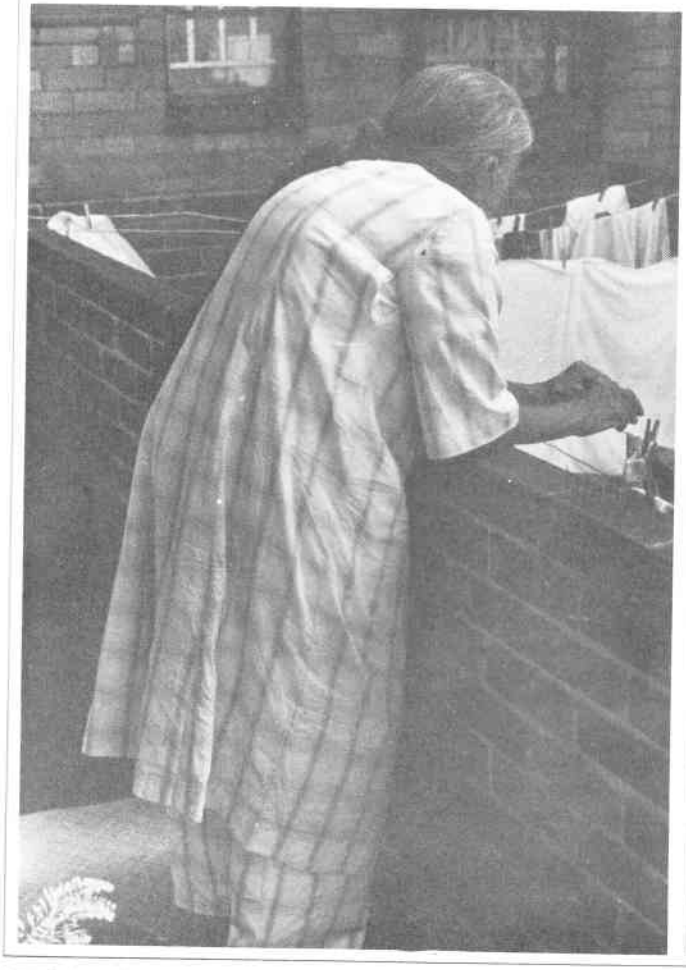


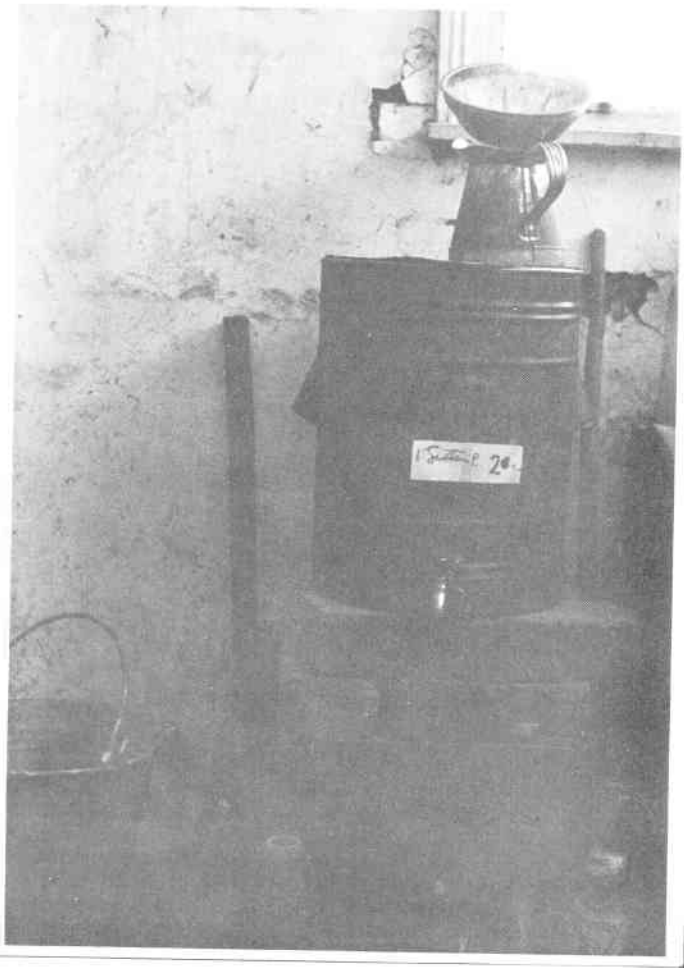


Photos by Omar Badsha









Nape 'a Motana: Five Poems

INTLAWULO

One bracelet
Makes no song.

Marimba's daughter
became my eye's dove.

Every moon
was like a spoon
to her budding body.

In the infernal passion
I wielded a juicy Kierie —
Helping her pulverise the stars
till the sun licked all.
She never saw
the moon again.

I now squat
under cloudy eyes
& cold click sounds
Uncle, please wear my heart
mouth and feet!
-Go, tell Lady Marimba:

I regret
my erotic dream and deed
my poetic sperms
now entombed by your daughter
my bony puberty that made
corpulent virginity aerial.

Tell them to zip
I quake for the Chief's whip!

Let them watch a dung dust
Father's kraal has swallowed a purgative
I say 'spears down!
NGI YA HLAULA.

VILLAGE FROM THE PORTION OF MY MIND
(Abstract painting by Thami ka Mnyele)

A livid wind sweeps
with monstrous brooms
Leaving 4 huts 4 cows
donkeyleg skeleton, a shrub
and frail dew-ridden cobwebs.

Moody colours are torpid
while entombed
Grey is more palpable
Cannibal rocks emerge
as the soil is airborne
to Cheiftainess Moon.

The sap of beings floats
like a creamcoat
Salty voices crawl
like witchwhispers
Seashells domesticate mixed bones
But the white-hearted sea
sifts 4 fleshy faces
glued to the pale-blue firmament
without shedding a single spark.
Tantalizing mama
evokes and fans fires-in-eyes
Hungering faces cry:
'Mama, nyanya!
'Mama, nyanya!'

But a cloud-chunk drizzles
and blazing hope fizzles.

TEMBISA AND BIRCHLEIGH
(Black Township & White Suburb)

Pitch-black monster in rags
snores near the suburb
where opulence pulsates.

Birchleigh, yellow peacock
spotted with red and green
struts with owls
and awaits twilight:
Black brawn hustles a sleepy civilization.

Birchleigh echoes hymns
Symphonies giggles maid-talks
In Tembisa mute gumba-gumbas spare
bomb-shells for Friday nite.

Sunrays boomerang above
sterile economic clouds
Here in Tembisa after diliza
stoves filter feeble smoke
Dizzy okapis sink in breadwinners
The knife of hunger carves cold
eyes and a stone-heart.

In Birchleigh's paradise
Old and young form love-chains —
Feed on a beauty born of Black pains.

Mabopane East, Pretoria

IT'S PAATI TO BE BLACK

Whizzing from Tembisa
We buzzed into Kempton Park
At the robot's blush
The taxi-driver melted silence
Mnci strue, it's paati to be black!

We saw municipal kwela-kwela —
Black-hungry gobbling
job-hungry Blacks.

From pussy-footing angels of death
to irons: perennially agape
and black-thirsty.

'Your dompas is dom to pass you
Your X-mas gift: 72 hours
to vanish to where your granny
watches your rotting placenta!'

Dumped back to rural homes
where: Children lick the flames
flames lick the air
Papa & Mama tossed to tussle in oral war
Stoic sky gazes with blank blue face
Men wear overalls till buttocks have eyes.

Hunger wields a cruel
dagger, tricking Life into a duel.

Soon they are back again
Arriving as bigger black battalions
with brows biceps brains
trudging the 'white' soil: phara-phara-phara!
And the kwela-kwela cop:
'These Bantus are like cheeky flies:
You ffr-ffr-ffrrr with Doom!'
And see them again!

The 'law' can't muzzle
the hunger whistle!

THEY TOOK HIM AWAY

Vultures snatched him to a bloody nest.—
Phrenetic hunt in his chest.

Children ask why why w-h-y . . .
And cry cry c-r-y . . .

But wasted salt brings
no father; gnawing thought stings.

On high floors groans gush blood
blood betrays death, death for mud.

THEY stole the baritone
Wifey eats her own head-bone

She squeezes a stony brow into the spoon
Children may nibble the pap-like moon.

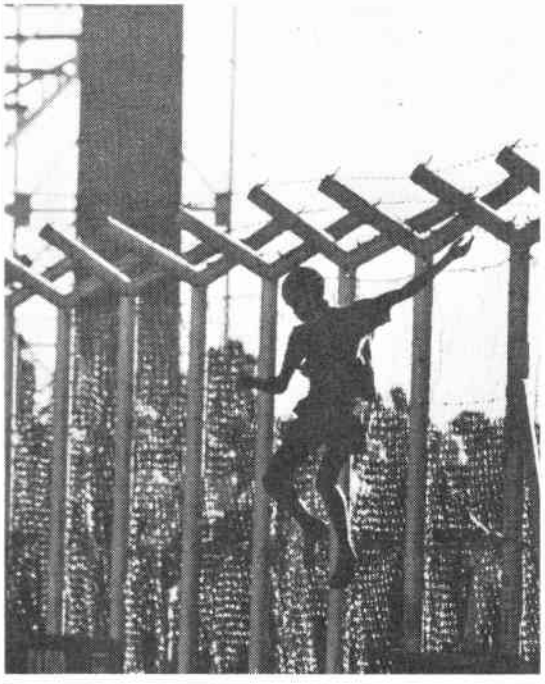
When on high floors papa is a pile
Mum & offsprings feel blue and spit bile

Vultures snatched him to the cruel nest
They dig dry dregs of his chest:

Nothing, They keep him till he breeds
good news: & soon he's wild like weeds.

Children ask why why w-h-y . . .
And cry cry c-r-y . . .

till one day THEY bring back the baritone —
He's all flat flesh; thin as a thigh-bone.



Ngikusongele

Ungenza kanjena,
Ungidlala umlabalaba,
Ungenza ucabhalele,
Phezu kwezigidi zemali engifulela ngayo,
Ngembethe amasaka nje inxayakho.
Yeka uthando olungaka,
Othandiwe ngalo yimina,
Ngingedwa zwi endaweni yakithi.
Angizigqaji ngikuvulela isifuba.

Namhla usuphunyula njengensipho,
Ukududana kwami nawe usukushaya indiva.
Wangishiya budengwane, wazika ungozika.
Ngahlamba esiswini samanzi,
Ngakusinga ezinzulwini zaso.
Uthe thushu ngajama kancane,
Ngazidela ngakuthi gxavu!
Wathi pulukutshu!
Ngasonga izandla.
Dinsi phansi imbeleko yesikhumba sembuzi emhlophe.
Lamanzi angidabula untu.
Nomphefumlo usukhuntelene.
Manje ungichuthe izimpiko,
Bengizophapha njengamasomi.

Ngaphinda ngakuthi gxavu!
Wancibilika njengeqhwa.
Anginakusho ukuthi hamba juba lami.
We! usuzethembisa ukuthi awubanjwa,
Ushaye phansi, utalagu kuphela olungabanjwa.
Wena usulele ekhanda lami.

Ngikutshelile,
Sekungawo amagame nkehli.
Awami amehlo zipopolo.
Ezami zindlebe yinomfi.
Obami buchopho uzibuthe.
Olwami unwele uphaphe lwentshe.
Owami umzimba ufasimba.
Ezami izinhlonzi iziqu zesizwe.
Obami ubuso isibuko samadlozi.
Esami isifuba isigwinya mazwi.
Ezami izandla zinduku zokugiya.
Owami umphefumlo ngumshayelo.
Olwami ulimi ishoba lesizwe.
Awami amathe yikhubalo lesizwe.
Esami isithunzi imbali yesizwe.
Elami igazi lamazolo ase-Afrika.
Esami isithandwa i-Afrika.
Ezami izinyembezi ziyizibuko.
Elami ithuna isifuba sesizwe.

Elami iphimbo liyinsimbi encencethayo,
Ebikezela izehlo nezintokozo,
Zangemva kweminyaka engenakulinganiswa.
Sengihaye inkondlo yosongo enesihlungu,
Semfezi.
Ngiphakamisa izandla zombili,
Ngithi unwele olude kuwena Mbokodo KaMagayisa. Mphemba!
Othe vosholo phezu kwesiqongo sentaba yasePitoli.
Othe ukuzamula kwami kukuhlaba umxhwele.
Ukuba kawushongo njalo ngabe sekuphinde esikaMabuyaze.

Ngu-L.B.Z.Buthelezi.

The Day A Leader Died *a story by* Aubrey Ngcobo

On the second day MaShezi was slowly getting over the shock of her son's death. She was thinking about the events of the last three weeks — the past three weeks of torture; the weeks whose end had brought her only grief; the weeks that had so changed the situation of the country and produced many overnight leaders, among them her only child — who was then lying in the mortuary. It was shattering to hear that he had died. Up to then she had never bothered to think about it. The students were in charge of everything. They were preparing for his burial. The students allowed no one to cry, but MaShezi had found it difficult to obey their rule.

She remembered all the meetings that had taken place in her house. She had been happy to have all those intellectuals in her house. There were teachers, doctors, lawyers and other educated men. She had been curious about what was being discussed there but had not dared ask. She had been afraid of the great people and afraid of whatever was being discussed out there. Her son, Ndabezinhle, had told her that they were going to form a students' movement that would represent all the students of all the schools in the country. To whom would it represent the students, she had asked. To the oppressors who were responsible for this worthless education they were receiving, he had replied.

Ndabezinhle had been elected president of the All Azanian Students' Movement. He had addressed crowds at railway stations and wherever many people gathered. Students had gathered in thousands to hear him talk. His picture had appeared in all local newspapers. Most of them called him 'a leader', the Son of Africa, a Shining Star of the ghetto.' Some had called him a puppet, a loudmouth with no brains and such things. Such publicity had scared her. The police were visiting her house and searching it.

On the second week the A.A.S.M. went into operation. The buses were boycotted, the students started a stay-away-from-work campaign. Ndabezinhle had been involved in all of it. The first day of the stay-away-from-work campaign had been hell for her. Ndabezinhle and his followers had come to every station and ordered everybody to go back home. Few did. Amongst them she. How could she work after hearing her son speaking such anti-Government words in front of the police!

Everybody was worried after hearing that the Technical College had been gutted with fire. She had known that Ndabe had something to do with it. From that day he had never slept at home. Students were demonstrating in the streets. Everyday she looked at them filing past her house. Ndabezinhle was no more to be seen walking in front. To say that she was worried is an understatement. She was getting thinner by the day. She was half out of her mind. One afternoon Mr Duma, the lawyer, came to her house and told her not to worry because her son was safe. It was easy for him to tell her not to worry: after all, it wasn't his own son who was in all this trouble, she had said to herself.

On the third day of the second week all hell broke loose in the streets. Police opened fire on the students who were hurling stones at the police. Any right-thinking person could see who would win. A machine gun with many bullets compared to a stone. A stone that had been thrown by a CHILD who was having enough trouble with the gas that was stinging his eyes. MaShezi had felt anger surge through her when she thought of what she heard on the air: 'The police had no alternative but to protect themselves from the threatening students'. As far as MaShezi was concerned there were a lot of alternatives. Why, they could have used rubber bullets or, better still, they could have got into their vans and left the 'threatening' students alone.

If they had done what MaShezi thought they ought to have done, then all this trouble might not have happened. Sgt. Ndondo, who lived in the same street as MaShezi, might not have been hanged with his own tie in the shop. She was very sorry for his son, Xolizwe. Every time Xolizwe thought of his father when he was amongst his friends he had to leave so that they would not see him cry. They would beat him for mourning a 'traitor'. Xolizwe hated his friends for what they had done to his father. He hated his father for the bullets he had fired. He hated the Minister of Justice for having bought these guns. He hated the Government that so oppressed them that they had to demonstrate. He hated himself for deceiving his friends by pretending that he liked them and betraying his dead father by not avenging him. Poor Xolizwe, he just did not know where he stood.

The police were never out of her house, looking for Ndabe. They held him responsible for all that had happened. Nobody bothered Ndabezinhle's 'brothers and sisters in the struggle', Dr. Modise, Mr Duma and many others. THEY didn't seem to worry themselves about Ndabezinhle. She was sure they had not bothered to THINK about her.

Every day the situation worsened. Almost every student in the country was demonstrating. Many other student leaders appeared on the A.A.S.M. Ndabezinhle might as well have never been there, for all the publicity he was getting from the Press. Shops and other businesses were looted and burnt. The students were held responsible.

MaShezi had heard one boy say the police had destroyed more property than the A.A.S.M. What was to prevent them? Nobody went to work and God knew how they were going to support their families. Ndabezinhle was supposed to be responsible for all this. But all he and his 'brothers and sisters' had planned was the establishment of the A.A.S.M. All the A.A.S.M. had planned had been a peaceful demonstration. A demonstration to achieve every parent and students' goal: FREE and COMPULSORY EDUCATION.

Very few people had bothered to express their sympathy personally to her. All they had done was to shout 'Amandla', sing a song and give the money to whoever was collecting out there. Nobody wanted it to be said unto him that he had not cared when the leader died. Some of them had never seen him. But they knew this was the correct thing to do.

There were a few who had shown real sympathy. There was also the girl. She remembered the girl from a photo she had once seen in Ndabe's bedroom one morning. She had kept silent about what she had seen, because it reminded her of the thing she would have given her right arm to forget — that Ndabe had been an illegitimate child. From the window-jumping episode it seemed he also wanted to father another illegitimate baby.

She dreaded to think of the many illegitimate children that would be born nine months later. Many students were living together then. Nobody opened his mouth. Who wanted to have a petrol bomb thrown at his house? After all, they were the leaders and they knew what was supposed to be done during the demonstrations — and they did it. But how could a truant-playing, dagga-smoking school girl become a leader?

That morning she had heard one boy say that Dr. Modise had 'skipped' to Britain, where his children attended private schools. They were never bothered by any inferior education system there. They had never been shot for singing and walking up and down streets there. In Britain Dr. Modise wouldn't have to

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bury any of his children. Here everybody would be reading about him, for the boys out there in the kitchen said he had left a report to the Press of how he and other intellectuals had 'planned it all'. He said he had had to flee to save his life from the police. But all the police had done was to search his house. Like they did to hers. No one had escaped because of THAT.

A tear rolled down her cheek when she tried to make a picture of Ndabe's death in her mind. He had been arrested at a friend's house. Some people said he had been mentally unbalanced then. He was reported to have hanged himself in his cell. The police said that hadn't been beyond him, since he was mad. Pity though they didn't take him to a mental hospital before questioning him, so as to assure themselves that whatever he would say, he would say in earnest. But from the state of his corpse one might have thought he had been run over by a truck, after being worked over by the Nazis.

She tried to think how the funeral would be. She was sure the students would turn up in thousands and perhaps two newspapermen would be present. It was going to be the first funeral of the victims of the demonstrations. And Ndabe had not been just another student, but the leader. Everybody wanted to be able to tell his kids about the leader's last journey. A journey to where no one knew. Some said he was fortunate because he would be re-united with his brothers and sisters from Sharpeville.

He would get a big welcome there. MaShezi could imagine him sitting beside Chief Luthuli. Some said he had been very fortunate indeed, since his had not been as violent as Ongkopotse Tiro's death. Then all would wait for the Judgement Day. On the Judgement Day the students would have to explain why they hanged Xolizwe's father. Sgt. Ndondo himself would have to explain why he had shot his 'own children'.

She was happy though, because she wouldn't have to cook any food for the mourners. No food was to be given after any funeral. That had been the order from A.A.S.M. Headquarters. Only liberation songs would be sung there. She was in full agreement with that. She could imagine all the speakers that would be there. Everybody would emphasize what a co-operative and brilliant student he had been. Which, of course, was right. He would be called a leader and a hero.

Then came the questions she had not been able to answer up to then. What is a leader? What is a hero? Is a leader the one who has been to jail and would face police machine-guns unflinchingly because he wanted to be allowed to get drunk wherever he wished? Is a hero the one who would die and earn a man, who was living lavishly because he was the product of the Educational System he said they should fight, all the credit?

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