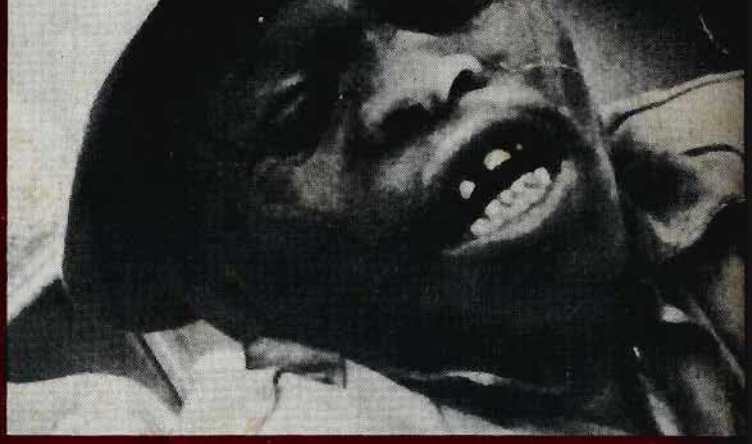
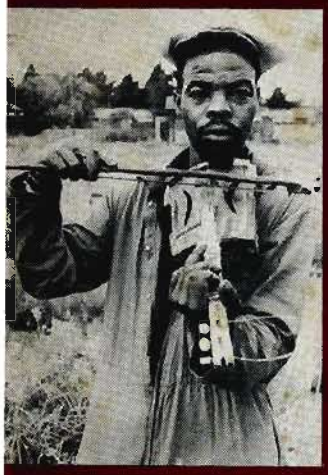


Coming Your Way in This Issue

S.A. writing from Orlando West, Botswana, Sibasa, Windhoek, Kwa Thema, Katlehong, Johannesburg, Mabopane East, Alexandra, Lenasia, Piet Retief, Jabavu, Claremont, Pretoria, Rockville, Evaton, Durban, Pimville, Diepkloof, Tladi, Hammanskraal, Kimberley / all stations!

Staffrider

Vol.1 No.3 July/August 1978



Riding Staff / This Issue

Matshoba, Mzamane, Tlali, Essop, Saunders, Bayajula, Phalanndwa, Mutloatse, Cullinan, Johennesse, Thubela, Rumney, CYA, Ndlazi, Livingstone, Patel, Mkhize, Wilhelm, 'a Motana, Sole, Skeef, Uys, Gwala and many more!

The next issue of the literary magazine *Inspan* will be appearing shortly. If you would like to contribute critical creative material send in to:
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Soweto Speaking / The Miriam Tlali Interviews No. 5 / Rev. Tsolo

Ex-priest (Rev.) Tsolo of the African Methodist Church sits basking in the sun outside the house of one of his daughters in Molapo. He remembers his experiences while a young priest in the remote parts of the mountainous Quthing in Lesotho, before an accident which changed his life; his horse slipped and he was thrown over a precipice. This happened in the forties. He has since been living with his daughter in Soweto. He estimates his age to be about 98. He was, together with others, kept in a camp by the British 'to protect them from the Boers' during the Anglo-Boer war. Among the souvenirs he kept from the 'camp' is an old tin opener and a strong leather and steel purse with circular steel openings where the 'Kruger' coins used to be kept. He used to speak Afrikaans very well, having worked in the Free State as a boy for many years. 'I don't know what happened to my 'Se-Buru' (Dutch). 'I cannot speak it any more,' he says, looking up and smiling.

'I used to be a priest. I used to work for God. Some of the things I experienced would make you have bad dreams at night. Can you believe it when I say because of my faith I used to cross a river by walking on the back of a huge "water-snake" (noha ea metsi)?' *(I smile incredulously and try to conceal my disbelief).*

'What, a "water-snake"?'

'Yes, yes a water-snake. That's what I said.'

'Where was that? Did you experience that in your sleep or what?'

'Oh. So you think I was dreaming, eh? That's what I hate about you "matsoelopele" (Moderns). Everything you cannot understand is nothing but a dream, a dream.' *(He shifts as if he is about to leave.)*

'No, no, please don't stop. Tell me about it.' *(He points to his stiff leg.)*

'It was years, many years before I became like this. Before my leg got injured. Do you know where Quthing is?'

'Yes. Somewhere in Lesotho.'

'Yes, in Quthing. We used to go out preaching. There were two of us. A certain young man and I. We were the only two ordained priests of our church in that whole district. This A.M.E. Church you see comes from very far. We went through very difficult times. The people were advised against joining it. It was very difficult to persuade the chiefs to give us stands for our church. You had to be either "mo-Fora" (belong to the Paris Missionary Society), "mo-Roma" (Roman Catholic) or "mo-Chache" (Church of England) — only churches led by white people. "Black" churches were persecuted. After a long time we were given a small plot and the conference built a thatched roof church and a priest was stationed there to serve the few converts. *(Pause.)* Oh, but the place was *bad.* But first the two of us lived in caves. We were very very poor. We had nothing but we were real priests. Not these who only bury you if you pay your dues. Between us, we had one old Bible, one jacket, one "bipi" (bib), one "bone-collar" (dog-collar). *(I stifle an urge to laugh out loud.)*

'How was that? How could the two of you have only one of those things? Didn't you both go out preaching?'

'We did, but we had to go out one at a time because we only had one of those things. We had spent a long time combing the whole mountain area preaching. There was nowhere where we could get those items. We had very little contact with the big circuit which was at Bloemfontein. There was also no money to travel there and the letters were very, very slow. After writing a letter or sending a message you had to wait many months before you got a reply. One had to remain in the cave while the other went out doing God's work. I had managed to go to conference at one time and it was there that the presiding elder had passed on to me those articles. They were not easily obtainable at the time.'

'When was that about, can you remember?' *(He thinks for a while)*

'It was before the "Fourteen" War. I was still a young man. I was not even married yet . . . We lived in caves, my child, *in caves.* We were wanderers. One of us would use the collar above the bib covering only the front of the chest and the worn jacket. No shirt or this thing you wear inside the shirt. This . . .'

'Vest?' *(He nods gratefully)*

'Yes, *vest.*' *(We both laugh.)*

'Just the bare back. People would assume that the back was covered of course and not realise that there was nothing there, only the skin.'

'And trousers, did you have any?'

'Yes. We had our old heavily-patched khaki pants. They had patches of all colours all over, but they were alright. We only used those on Sundays because we were saving them. During the week we wore "litsheha" (stertriems), and the usual Basotho "mekhahla" (leather blankets) over them. Every male person wore these so it wasn't funny or surprising.' *(I laugh.)*

'Quthing was a really difficult place. *Difficult.* And the priests used to run away from it. The main thing was the hunger. You know how I was sent there? We were at the Annual Conference and it had been some time that the place was without a priest. Then when Bishop asked why the place was so difficult, Rev. Tantsi . . . Not this Tantsi who was in Pretoria, his elder brother the big Tantsi. Yes, that one. He stood up and told Bishop that there was only one man who could get that place right. When the Bishop asked "Who's that?" he pointed at me and said: "Tsolo". Then Bishop asked me to stand up so that everybody could see me. He asked me: "Are you willing to go and preach the word of God in Quthing, Reverend Tsolo?" And I answered: "Yes my Lord Bishop. I am willing". Everybody in the hall shook their heads. "Do you think you will be able to put the place in order, my Brother?" And I answered boldly: "I shall do my best, My Lord. I have no choice. I was called to do the work of God and I agreed." Then the Bishop thanked me and said: "God be with you and bless you my Brother in Christ." *(After a long pause, he shakes his head)*

'When I got there, there was a scorched gown hanging on a nail on the wall in the rondavel next to the church. The rondavel was the mission house. "He-e-e-e . . ." The priest who had been there before me had even forgotten it in the flight to disappear from the place. *(We laugh)*

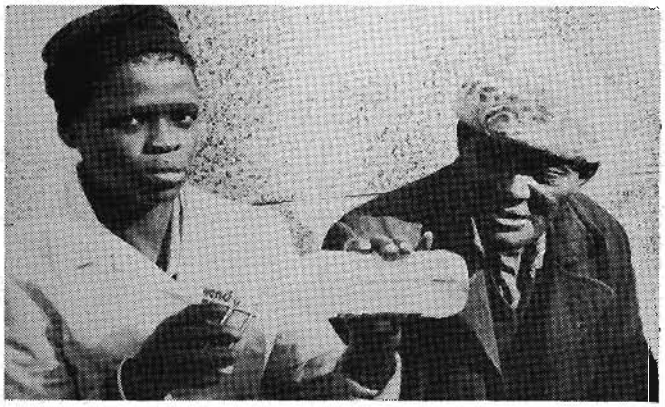
'There was an old woman nearby who used to send her grandsons to bring me some "seqhaqhabola" (ground soured mealie porridge — soft) and "maqebekoane" (dumpling). She did not belong to our church but she sympathised because her brother had once been a preacher in the church. The small congregation would attend service on Sunday, and it would end there. They would not bother to give the usual priest's "sapoto" (support). I wondered why until the boys — the old woman's grandsons — divulged the secret to me one night. They said that it had been decided at the beerhouses and other meeting places that since *I* was bold enough to go there, the people would see to it that I starve to death. We were not being paid stipends like priests of other churches; every priest had to depend on his congregation to feed him. So they carried out their pledge.'

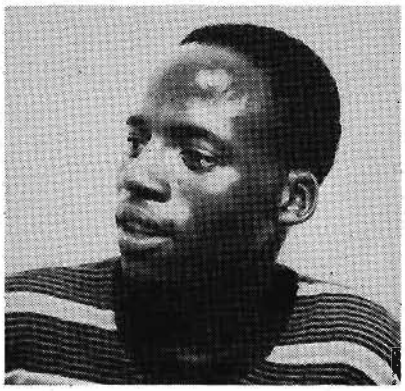
'But *why*? If they were church members, then how did they expect the church to stand?'

'My child, the place was *bad, bad.* They hated me. The old woman I spoke of would bring me food at night when it was dark, or she would send her children. She later complained that she was doing it at a great risk to herself, children, property and flock. Then I asked her to stop because I pitied her. She had been very kind to me for all that time. I stayed without food. I only drank black coffee which I had with me in a little sack. I drank it until it made me sick sometimes. I think it is alright, but it has to be supported by something in the stomach. Later, one day, I wandered away from the mission-house, in the direction of the house of one of the women of our church with the hope of getting some food. From a distance, I could see her stoking fire below a big "drie-voet" iron pot. She must have seen me approach because the next moment when I looked that way she had vanished. I got to the pot which was full of simmering "setoto" (a corn brew of malt soft porridge). I took a mug nearby and scooped a few times some of the pink porridge and drank it. I did not bother to find out where the woman was. That "forage" sustained me until the end of the week. I was determined to make them see that I was not going to give in so easily. I prepared a sermon for them. And they *came* to church, perhaps to hear whether I would tell them I was leaving. They were *many* that day.'

'But why did they hate you *so* much?'

'My child, there are places where this drinking of liquor can drive people to do most horrible deeds indeed. Quthing was such a place. It was like Sodom and Gomorah. They used to drink heavily — men, women and children alike. They would swear, murder and steal. Adultery and concubinage were very common. And now I used to remonstrate against such practices. Every Sunday I preached disuasive sermons and they did not like it. That Sunday I preached and said: "I've noticed that you are determined to starve me, my children. I even went over to another house and without the owner's permission, drank some of her 'beer' soft porridge. I did that to get strength to be here today. Let me tell you this. I have been a priest for many years. It is not hunger





The World of **Pat Seboko**, roving photographer

Soweto Speaking No. 5 / Rev. Tsolo

which will make me leave this work of God. You *will* perhaps be able to make me starve to death. But when I lie dead, you will still have my corpse to dispose of, in spite of your hatred of me. You will have to touch my corpse and bury it. If you do not do that, my corpse will smell. It will *stink* on your nostrils until you bury it. Otherwise you will never make me leave my work. I was not given this gift by you. God gave it to me. I shall read you from the Holy Bible — Revelation Chapter 3 verse 11: "Boloka seo u nang le sona, e mobe a tle a se ke a u amoha moqhaka oa hao" — *Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.* I *screamed.* At the top of my voice. Loudly; I repeated the verse again and again, *screaming. Shouting!* And they *fell.* Sobbing women came towards the pulpit covering their faces and crying. Others swooned as I shouted. Some men also came and knelt near me and prayed unashamedly. Those who were shy to cry before women walked out of the church and wiped the tears off their faces outside. My child, I tell you it was a real scene. Then we all knelt and prayed together.

From that day on, I never knew starvation. That is what faith does. Shortly afterwards, the chief, who was a non-believer and a drunkard became seriously ill and from his sick-bed he called out at night: "Go and call me Tsolo... Call me Reverend Tsolo to come and pray for me!" And I did. When he was well again, he stopped drinking. He never accepted the Christian religion, he despised it because he claimed it would make us 'soft'. But he advised those who wanted to accept this faith to join *our* church — the "Black" church. *(It was time to go. I reminded the Reverend that he had not told me how he crossed 'Sengu' (The Orange river) on the back of the water-snake)*

'Oh, *that.* You know, all the time I thought I was walking on shiny pebbles which lay at an angle across the river. I did not see that they were actually shiny hard scales on the skin of a huge snake. It was only after I had crossed and was standing on the opposite bank that I heard the voices of men who were standing near a small skiff. They had apparently been standing there holding their breaths and looking at me walking in front of my horse and leading the way on what I thought was soil. They pointed at the part I had walked on and I heard the sound of a strong torrent of water flowing and the colossal creature below sinking slowly.'

Soweto Speaking No. 6 / A 'great lady' of Soweto / Mrs B. Makau

She greeted me with a broad smile when I entered her house.

'I took that magazine with me to the Dube Club. They liked it very much and they wanted to know how much it costs and I did not know. I forgot to find out from you. They agreed with me when I said: "These writers know about us. They really know what they are talking about. They *know* Soweto, and they know what we want." They're *so* mad about it. Even Maria read it.'

'Is it. I am very happy to hear that. And now I want *you* to tell me about yourself.'

'Me! what do you want to know about me that you don't already know?'

'Just talk. About yourself, your work and so on . . . you know. Anything. You are such a busy bee.' *(We laugh.)*

'Well, if you must say something about the clubs in which I work, then it is only fair that Maria should know about it and take part, isn't it?'

'Of course, I shall make it a point to go and see her. But she is also so busy. Never sits down. In the meantime, tell me about yourself.'

'Well, as you know, besides looking after my brother-in-law, I go to the small club we started at the Tshiawelo Centre on Tuesdays and then to the one at Dube on Wednesdays.

Yes. *(Pause)* As you know, besides doing housework, our women usually find that they have absolutely nothing to do at home. So Maria and I felt that the women should be helped to do something for themselves. Especially because some of them are out of work and there are also those who have never been able to work because they always have small children at home. Also those who are keen to learn something, can help themselves to earn some money. So we thought of having a small club, last year in March. We started with seven women at Maria's place. It is not a branch of the "YY". We call it the "Soweto Women's Thrift Club". We are both founders — Maria and I. The women come on Tuesdays at eleven in the morning, up to about four in the afternoon. Once they come, then they find they want to stay on. It becomes difficult to disperse. They're happy to learn together. Maria teaches them how to sew. They first learn how to take measurements. They bring their own pieces of materials. First they learn how to cut patterns using paper before they cut the materials. They bring their own paper (brown or newspaper because brown paper is usually scarce and expensive). If a woman wants to cut for her child, for herself or any other member of her family, she must know how to take measurements. Then Maria helps her to cut the material and shows her where to stitch it up. We have no machines. We're hoping to get help soon. Maria helps them pin together the different parts and they go home and stitch them, then they bring them the following week. Ellen will perhaps get people to help us. You know Ellen of course. *(I nod several times)*... She said we must prepare a list of what we need so that some kind people may help us. Also for our Dube branch. At Dube it's better because we have electricity and we have two old "Singer" machines. There's also a stove and we teach them cooking and canning. The women also learn what to do with left-over foods like porridge and so on and so forth. I think it is very good. They learn how to save.' *(Pause)*

'And the home at Dube. Didn't I hear you say you are busy there sometimes?'

'Oh yes. The Orlando Home. Yes. I pledged myself to be on the fund-raising Committee. It was started by the Committee of Ten. You know that I like fund-raising. *(I nod).* "Ma-Shuping — you know her well, of course. Yes: she and I have to do some work together soon. We have collected a lot of jumble from different sources.

'The Orlando Home. ... You know, I didn't know about that place until Ellen came to tell us about it. It's good for people to know what others are doing. I think if you must write about that club, Ellen must know about it. We're really trying hard to do our best for those poor children at that home. It has been *so* long in existence and we know very little about it. It's *terrible!*... The Committee of Ten really saved it. They were saying it must be closed down. How can we close it down? We appealed for help and they said it must be closed; they refused to give us any assistance. They have *so* many places. It's for these children who are deserted and lost. They call it an orphan's home. It's *not* that. It's for the deserted kids. They're picked up from the streets. Even *their* children do that. One was picked up last week in the subway at Orlando Station — a nice little thing; clean and neatly wrapped up. Next to it was a small spare dress, a napkin and a vest... Shame.'

'At least the poor mother cared, shame.'

'Yes. Shame. *(Pause)* It is for such cases. What can be done about them? *(Pause)* But that *Home*... It's *horrible!* The *building*... Even this poor house of mine is better. We have been promised help by people like Gordon Waddell and others. Perhaps it will improve. It's heart-breaking to see those kids. You know, we went there one Sunday to give them a party on Mother's Day. When it was time to go, at about 3 o'clock, they looked at us appealingly and asked: "Mama, Mama are we not going?"... "Mama, Mama when are you taking us home?" — Shame. They called all of us "Mama" and they wanted to go with us. When you see our own kids at home, the ones who are being well-looked-after but do not appreciate what we do for them, then you realise there are other children not as fortunate as they are, and you wonder. If only they knew how lucky they are! *(Pause. Then she smiles.)*

'They liked that heading of yours — "Staffrider"... It is frustration which makes our children climb on top of moving trains, isn't it?... Will you always call it that?... Yes; it's frustration. Have you heard how the prices of things are going up soon? *(I nod)*... Food, everything is going up. We don't know what will happen to us because we still have these growing young ones in our homes. *(She shakes her head and points at her grandchildren) (Pause. Then she remembers)*

'Did you say the sale of the magazine was stopped, why?'

'They said some parts of it were "offensive" and so on. The parts on sex especially... You know.' *(She shakes her head).*

'Man, honestly I don't see what all the fuss is about... These stories and articles on relationships between men and women. What is the use? I really think these matters should be talked about freely. Even in the homes. Our children read *big* things about sex and what not and what not; "intercoursing" and so on and so forth. You find that the children have *big* things that they're hiding and reading in secret. They buy them or borrow them from one another, hide them away in nooks and crevices everywhere and you suddenly pounce on them unexpectedly. I think it is the "colour-line" business mostly. *(Pause)* Ja. The only thing that must be worrying them must be this so-called "colour-line crossing" of theirs. But what's the use? If they just left people alone, even *that* I think would be no problem. People would behave themselves. They wouldn't need to be watched all the time. They wouldn't be bothering.'

Sitha *a story by* Mbulelo Vizikhungo Mzamane

Just how I happened to fall for the paraffin one, week in and week out, still puzzles me. I just never approved of Sitha's weekly disappearance. I loathed Slakes, the fellow who always hijacked her. I simply couldn't understand why she preferred him to her other boyfriend, Martin, who didn't land her in the same trouble. But come Friday and I became an accessory, as it were, after the fact.

When my father was transferred from Brakpan to Johannesburg, my mother remained with relatives in Brakpan, in order to be near the Far East Rand Non-European Hospital where she worked. She only came home when she was day-off. My father worked over the vast parish of Moroka, which has since been divided into four parishes. The main church in Senaoana, where he also had his office, was a good distance from home. When he was not in his office, he was doing parish visits, on a bicycle. Most of the time, therefore, we were left to our devices. Being the eldest among us, my cousin, Sitha, became the mistress of the house. We enjoyed so much freedom that, on the few occasions when I did go to school, it was only because I had a rock group there which practised daily, after school hours.

On Fridays, when Sitha returned from school, she made fire and placed the pots on the stove. Then she instructed my sisters, who remained playing outside, to watch over the pots — which meant we often ate charcoal-flavoured food for supper. She vanished into the bathroom to wash, as though she hadn't washed in the morning before going to school, and emerged with shiny legs and a face masked in Butone. I have a passion for music, and duly resented being dragged from under my pile of records to accompany her to the shops.

'Sabelo, get the paraffin container ready, we're going to the shops,' she'd say.

We bought our groceries from Khanyile's General Dealers. Tat' uKhanyile, the proprietor, was our church warden. We were more than just important customers, we behaved like virtual shareholders. We helped Bhut' Phumo, who ran the shop, supervise the lady who baked fatcakes at the back of the store; we checked to see if customers had collected in sufficient numbers in the shop and, if they had, served them ourselves, shovelling malted toffees and 'sharps' into our pockets as we did so. When we were sent to buy anything, we behaved as at a self-service supermarket and then paid or kept the money, as our fancy dictated. Sitha considered herself above the racket and so let us steal whatever we'd been sent to buy, while she retained the money.

On Fridays, when we went to buy paraffin, I left Sitha on the verandah of the shop, overlooking the Moroka West taxi rank, sauntered in, bade my time, filled up the tin with paraffin and then came out. Invariably, I'd find Slakes already with her.

Slakes belonged to a group which appropriately called itself The Black Swine. They wore black and white 'fung kong' shoes, rustler suits and black skullcaps with elongated tailpieces, rather like the devil's tail. They ruled with an iron hand over White City, which had the only high school, serving more than ten townships. That put all of us, from Naledi to Mofolo, who attended school at Mohloling, under the merciful rule of the Black Swine. For the girls, salvation lay in falling in love. Just how much part free will played and how much intimidation in Sitha's case, just to what extent she became Slake's willing victim, I can't tell. There were many girls in her position. My own girl-friend, Puni, from whom I'd had to part, used to argue that she had no alternative. I couldn't believe that when I caught her putting her hand, voluntarily, round Kali's shoulders — when he wasn't wielding any knife blade that I could see. She told me that it was all flattery, that she had to make the affair look authentic, for the safety of us both. I thought differently. I rather thought my safety lay in breaking with her, if I didn't want my jaws socked. However, since the boys had virtually nothing to offer the Black Swine, not even some token resistance, our fate was more or less sealed. We paid sixpence, every Monday, as a protection fee. As the Black Swine had no system of accounting, one had to pay this fee as often as it was demanded, which was on every school day and sometimes twice a day. Occasionally Slakes rescued me, but most of the time his shifty eyes just passed me over.

'Take it home,' Sitha would say. 'I won't be long.'

I'd take the paraffin home.

She'd disappear until Sunday evening when she came back to get her gym-dress pressed, in readiness for school. I couldn't understand why she took so much trouble over her gyms, since she wasn't a regular at school. I was only prevented from reporting the matter to my father by the fact that I wasn't such a model of attendance either.

My father is very long-suffering. But when he gets angry, you thank your ancestors you aren't on the receiving end. He never fails to point out that even our Lord wasn't averse to using the whip, and applies the maxim himself with apostolic zeal. In Sitha's case, he first tried every possible method to reform her. He pleaded with her and sometimes adopted a very menacing tone; he begged her to show some consideration for his public image; he appealed to her not to jeopardise her own future; he reasoned with her, threatened her, but all to no avail.

One Friday afternoon he returned home much earlier than usual. We'd already left for the shops. He changed into his great overcoat, although the evening temperature in December was very high, and followed us. I bumped into him, on my way back home, at the corner near the Nazarene church.

'Where's she?' he asked.

'Tata?' I still have the habit of pretending deafness and incomprehension whenever I'm at a loss for an answer. I expected my father to repeat his question, instead of which he fixed me with an unnerving stare. I hated to betray Sitha. 'I left her talking to some friends.'

'Where?'

'Outside Khanyile's.'

'What friends?'

'Some gentlemen . . .'

He didn't wait for my reply. I knocked into a small boy, pushing a tyre, as I craned my neck to catch my father's disappearing figure. He vanished into a thick crowd around the taxi rank. I knew then that Sitha had had it.

He mingled with the crowd but kept a close watch on the couple, holding hands on the stoep, outside the shop. In due course, Sitha and Slakes took a taxi. My father also got into an empty one and ordered the driver to tail the one in which Sitha and Slakes were travelling.

I can only fill in the rest from my father's report: at the cross-roads in White City the taxi in front stopped, and the one behind drove a few blocks on. With his coat collar raised to the level of his ears, my father followed them to a house in White City. Since he only wanted to find out where they were going, he turned at the gate of the house they'd entered and went for the police.

They were in bed when he returned in the black maria, accompanied by about ten policemen from the Moroka police station. They had little trouble in persuading Slakes to open the door. In fact, he had hoped to satisfy their enquiries at the door, so that he approached the door with only a blanket round his body. The police squadron barged in, my father at the tail end.

What followed was, strictly speaking, illegal — but the police realized just how necessary it was for my father to let off steam a bit and so they let it continue for a while. From under his greatcoat he produced a sjambok. One of my father's few boasts is the expert way in which he used to fight with sticks as a boy, looking after cattle in the Transkei. I once witnessed his expertise in Brakpan the day he thrashed Don, who was regarded by all who knew him as the boss of the township. Don was an indiscriminate bully who thrived on the cautious nature of township folk. He could close any function, be it a stockvel or a church bazaar, by merely telling everybody to leave the premises. But my father had never heard of Don before their encounter at a party to celebrate the Christening of a daughter of one of my father's parish-joiners. Don descended on the gathering like a Philistine and demanded liquor. When he was told that there was none, he ordered the host to close the party. My father was so furious that he slipped into one of the bedrooms, unobserved, and returned with a stick. He gave Don a beating which remained the talk of the township long after we'd left Brakpan. The thrashing Slakes received that evening left him with welts the size of hose-pipes. No doubt worse damage would have been done if, at a certain stage, the police had not thought it fit to intervene. When he decided to turn to Sitha, the police again threw themselves between them.

Sitha and Slakes were marched into the black maria in their birthday suits, with only their blankets round them. Dad carried her clothes in a bundle, under his armpits. They drove them to the police station, where the police went through the motions of taking statements. After more intimidation, they were released and told they'd hear from the police as soon as a day had been fixed for their trial. There was to be no trial but the whole show was calculated to act as a repellant, which it did. Slakes was released and told to make himself scarce. The police drove Sitha and my father home.

By some peculiar township telegraphic system, the following morning the story was all over the township. For days afterwards, Slakes elicited giggles wherever he appeared. His swaggering walk had lost a

'Near Elkah Stadium we bumped into a gang of Black Swine. It was all so unexpected that there was no turning back . . .'

bit of its former bounce, I noticed.

We became a complete family again, from Friday to Friday. Even my mother eventually transferred from Far East to Baragwanath Hospital.

At this time, the happiest man was undoubtedly Martin.

Martin had matriculated at Lovedale Institution. He worked as a dispatch clerk at some factory in Doornfontein. He wanted to become a lawyer and was studying for a diploma, by correspondence, under the University of South Africa. He also taught Sunday school, sang in the church choir and was generally every parent's idea of a decent young man. Naturally, he was as suited to his environment as a specialist surgeon who suddenly finds he has to exchange positions with a village butcher.

On Saturday afternoons we attended church choir practices; my mother, Sitha and I. We even formed a double quartet with some close family friends and met on alternate Sundays, when my mother was afternoon-off. Martin who simply had no respect for pitch, tune or time, was in it from the beginning. He never missed a practice. His enthusiasm made up for his tone-deafness and assured him a permanent place in the choir. Just how the grown-ups tolerated him, I couldn't understand. We'd never have considered him, even during a crisis or for comical effects, in my pop group.

My family is sharply divided into two: those who can sing and those who can't. The latter group is invariably more critical than those who can sing. Their ears are paradoxically more faultless, and their taste more cultivated. They try to hide their inability to correct any false notes they hear by producing equally off-key guffaws. They were always present at our practices because Martin's singing gave them no end of amusement. They were untiring in their efforts to provide us with new songs, especially those with very complicated transitions. My only good memories of these practices lie in the consolatory fact that, barring the non-musical members of my family, we never actually performed in public.

These choral occasions also gave scope to amorous encounters between Martin and Sitha. To be able to check your girlfriend, as they say, at her home, before her parents, is no mean achievement. That sort of thing does not occur commonly outside our white suburbs. It is not customary, but where it occurs it is the measure of the boyfriend's acceptability.

Many a squabble between families has arisen over the issue of children in love. My younger brother, Soso, once created strained relations between my family and Qwathis, who had several daughters, because every time he went to check, he rained such stones over their roof, to summon his girl out, that one evening, unable to bear it any longer, Tat' uQwathi came out in person and chased him right to the doorsteps of our house. I was once punched red in the face by an outraged parent who found me and his daughter locked in a tight embrace, in his sitting room. It's always best to grab your girl and disappear with her, into the bushes. You dare not risk even taking her out for a walk, in a township teeming with Black Swine.

In a way, I envied Martin, who actually had supper with us every Sunday. Not that I really care much for that kind of affair. It may have class but it lacks adventure. Besides, the other family always imagines it has a permanent claim on you, a thing which makes it very difficult to break the silver cup. Still it is something to boast about when you are actually admitted to her home.

After Sunday practices, Sitha and Martin would go out for a walk. They usually went to watch soccer or to the library which was converted to a hall over weekends for ballroom dancing. They seldom strayed far from home. He always brought her back dead on time for supper.

On Sunday afternoon they invited me to accompany them to Baragwanath, to visit a sick aunt of Martin's. At Moroka West we waited in vain for a taxi and eventually decided to try Moroka Central. Near Elkah Stadium we bumped into a gang of Black Swine. It was all so unexpected there was no turning back. They simply emerged around the corner, Slakes among them.

They fortunately let us pass, unmolested, but Slakes stayed Sitha behind.

Martin had bought some fruit for his aunt which he and Sitha had been carrying in a paper-bag between them. The paper-bag remained with Sitha.

We walked up the steep hill to the taxi rank in silence, occasionally glancing back to see if Sitha was following.

At the taxi rank I met a schoolmate, Mafa, and we began to chat about all sorts of irrelevant matters. Half an hour later, Mafa decided to proceed on his way to the football ground, to watch a soccer derby between the local rivals, Moroka Swallows and the Desert Rats. I wanted to accompany Mafa to the match but Martin pleaded with me to remain with him.

An hour passed, still no Sitha!

'It's almost past visiting time,' Martin said. 'We could at least drop the fruit at the hospital. Will you go and see if she'll give us the paper-bag?'

One of Boswell's famous acts was popping his head in and out of a live lion's mouth. But the circus king fell victim of his own pranks. He was eaten alive by one of his own lions. I've a very well-developed survival instinct. I'm as mad as my neighbour, no worse, and equally sensitive to danger. Martin's suggestion fell on deaf ears.

We stood at the rank watching and never for a moment letting them out of sight.

Slakes decided to sit on the grass near the road. After a while Sitha followed his example.

Excited voices rose from the nearby soccer pitch.

Slakes and Sitha eventually stood up and, hand in hand, decided to walk in the direction we'd come. That did it.

'I'm going to the ground,' I said.

'Let's get the fruit,' Martin said.

I looked him up and down and wondered where he was born.

'It's well past the visiting hour,' I said. 'Please, Sabelo, my *swaar*, what shall we say when we get home?'

'I'm not going home, at least not just yet. We can go home, after the match. She'll be home by then.'

I walked resolutely across the street. Martin followed me.

The match was in the second half. My side was trailing Desert Rats by an odd goal. It was a very stiff match. Gloom enveloped the Swallows camp, until Rhee got the ball near the centre line. He dribbled past two opponents and passed the ball to Aarah who heeled it to Differ. Differ unleashed a cannonball from outside the eighteens which left the opposing goalkeeper as flat-footed as a duck. From then it was us all the way. In the dying stages of the game, Carlton intercepted a loose ball and dished it to the evergreen Differ who was standing unmarked inside the opponent's eighteens. Baboon, Desert Rats running back, charged in and brought Differ down with a tackle that would have been discouraged even in rugby. The referee unhesitatingly awarded a penalty. Desert Rats disputed his decision. Chaos broke loose. Supporters of both teams swarmed onto the field. Martin forgot himself and rushed in with the rest, muttering something about 'infringement' and 'constitution'. The referee blew his whistle to signal the end of the match. The last we saw of him, he was running for dear life in the direction of Moroka police station, with three youths, brandishing glittering blades, in hot pursuit.

The players went to change into their clothes at one corner of the field. We clustered round them, indulging in a post-mortem of the match, as liberal with advice as only spectators can be.

Martin was explaining the league's constitution to someone who seemed to pay very little attention to him.

Soon everybody began to trickle away. Martin and I were among the last to leave.

It was almost dark when we got back home, now trooping as solemnly as tragedians.

'What shall we say?' Martin asked, when we reached the gate.

'Say we left her dancing at the library and went to the football ground.'

'But we can't say that. We should have gone straight to the police and not procrastinated. Suppose something happens to her? This chap could be hauled in for forcible abduction and possible seduction.'

Dam the fellow with his long words and his law!

'Better say we left her at the library, if we're asked, that is.'

Someone opened the door and terminated our argument.

'Thought I recognized your voices. Come in. Supper's almost ready. Mom was beginning to worry about your whereabouts.' Sitha held the door for us and shut it after us.

When we had mixed fruit for dessert, I didn't ask where the fruit had come from. I ate with an appetite which astonished my mother.

'You should take him out more often,' she told Martin.

I didn't choke at the remarks which followed either.

'Oh! don't think we're ungrateful,' she continued. 'Thanks a lot for the fruit.'

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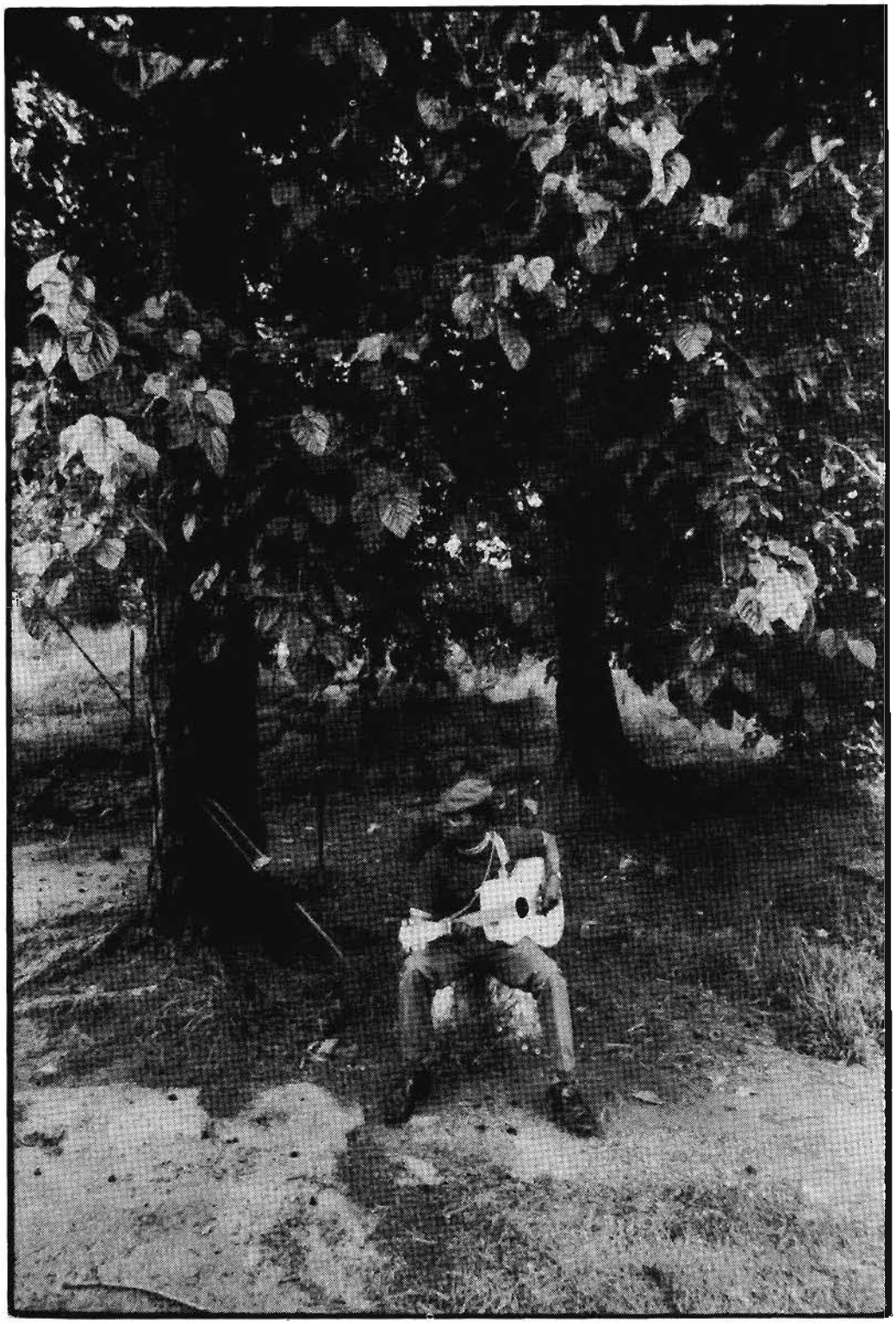

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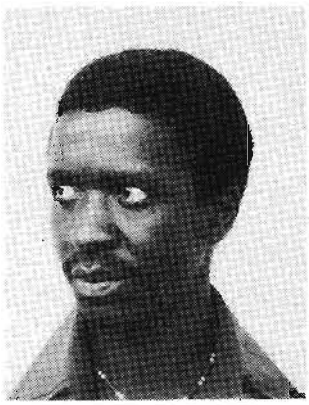

In This World, My Sister / Nthambeleni Phalanndwa

It all started in the church
We looked each other in the eyes
Your devastating smile
Yes, it made me forget reality
My mind a radio
Playing two stations at a time
And I listened to both
The faint voice of the preacher
And the sweet loud voice
Conveyed by your smile.

The preacher continued to talk
While I sat there
Like a fly to be swallowed by a frog
So innocently in love
And people started to sing
While from another world
I heard them faintly from afar.

We became correspondents for a year
Me writing sweet letters to you
You writing sweeter ones in return
And we were happy and grateful
For that was friendship
Pure and undiluted
But even so
Visit each other we could not
I had no money
And you had no time.

Correspondence continued
Until you had to ask
As I continued to write
Calling you darling sometimes
Without calling it a spade
Then I poured it all out
All I felt at the church
The first time we met
And in reply you said:
'The best evidence
of our love
Is not a long letter
Or something big
It is the little things
That we do day by day
that best say
I LOVE YOU.'

On that Saturday you came
where I used to dwell
All day long
We sat on the bricks
We caressed, kissed and cried

For it was sweet
With veins like copper conductors
In which flew electrons of love
Mouths serving as a switch
And the circuit was complete
Both benumbed
We sat there
And forgot
That we had no chair

In the evening when I cooked
You sat on those bricks
Unconcerned,
Loving me

After we had eaten
You congratulated me
On the delicious food I cooked
And it was night.
After reading you some poems
You asked for water
To wash your face and feet
I looked at your bare torso
And saw your pointed breasts so proud.

We got between the blankets
Two on the floor
And one on us
Again
You never complained.

For a month you went on leave
You neither wrote nor came
You later wrote to tell why
It was due to heavy rains
That left the people homeless and starving.

II

My dear J,

These things do happen in the lives of men
That sons and daughters
Are separated from their parents
Husbands separated from their wives
And during such times
We sit down
Balance our heads between our hands
Look into the skies
We see the future bleak

We feel our legs go lame
Our hearts dead within our bodies
Fear-stricken people
Living in deadly fear of a knock on the door
For who knows
You may be the next
To leave your next of kin.

But this, I will not discuss
Lest I bring down
The wrath of heaven and earth on my head
I leave it as a legend
For fathers to tell their children one day.

Only memories fill my mind now
I am empty of love
Hate is what I see
Written all over people's faces
Carving furrows that make them look like scarecrows.

The dead are dead my sister
We cannot ask them questions
The living must answer
They must tell us all we want to know
They must tell us now
For in this world my sister
No more
No more can I go on seeking
Justice, fairness and truth
These things do not exist

I tried to walk
And stopped along the way
The signboard was dumb
I didn't know which road to take
I just stood and gazed
But the signboard did not tell
Only in my memories of the past
I saw a man playing an accordion in church.

But there in church
The congregation waited and hoped
But the priest did not come
And there at school
Students to write exams within a fortnight
With half of the syllabus still undone
Waited for their history teacher with hope
But the teacher did not come.

I want to suggest
That we go into the bushy mountains
And see if baboons are caged
Let's go to the seas
And see if fishes no longer swim
Perhaps we shall understand
That the change has come
Through the will of

GOD
THE SON
AND THE HOLY GHOST

You gods of Africa
And you my father I do not blame you
But you never told me
That the sun rises and sets
That flowers bloom and wither
That this world grows thorny trees
That prick the feet
I have been burnt
I now dread the fire
My heart wails
It keeps on bleeding
The wounds are deep
Big gashes left there
By the broken pieces of . . .

At least
Beyond the distant horizon
The sun still shines
THERE
NOW
I want to go THERE
NOW
Go quietly THERE
NOW
Speak to nobody
Address the winds
Greet my friends the immortal boulders
Mortal beings can force you to hate
And hate and hate . . .

But when you have an aim in life
It is like travelling in a tunnel
The darkness worries you not
The little light at the other end
Is comfort enough to kill your bitterness

Right now
I bid you farewell my sister
People do meet and part
Children get born
Some die young . . . these are fortunate
But on the thoroughfare of life
Let's both go our separate ways
I want to toddle out of this limbo
Up until I cross the Limpopo
Alone.

Then I will start my march
Until I cross the River Congo
And if not dead with fatigue
I will reach Cameroon
To meet Mbella Sonne Dipoko
I want to meet him and ask
If he knows what they do in the veld.

Then I will continue my march
Until my destination is reached
And here
I want to talk to Cyprian Ekwensi
Have lunch with Chinua Achebe
And I will ask them
If they know the veld
I want to tell them
That there
Baboons do eat mealies during the night
Then they will write
And the world shall know
What is happening in the veld
And on their advice
I will settle down
And learn at Ibadan

No more turning back
I have seen enough of the veld
Where our lives are not our own.

Bayajula Group, Kwa Thema

Madi Phala / *Fly Away Virginity*

Bayajula Group, Kwa Thema

Madi Phala / *Untitled* 'There's so much to tell about my paintings. But I fear that explaining them in writing will condition me.'

Bayajula Group, Kwa Thema

Nhlanhla Xaba / *Risen From The Dead*

'Some years after many mineworkers had died in a subsidence, a hand reached out from the entombed dead, full of riches to be distributed among the living. They are coming with lights to find this legacy from the dead.'

Bayajula Group, Kwa Thema

Nhlanhla Xaba / The Destruction of Leprosy

Bayajula Group, Kwa Thema

Fikile Zulu/*Untitled*

Bayajula Group, Kwa Thema

Sam Nhlengetwa / *The Musicians*

Bayajula Group, Kwa Thema

Bonisile Joshua Motaung / When Darkness Descends

The night has come —
Home-bound all roads:
Trains constipated with life
Like a python after a heavy meal,
Move down the rail hissing and screeching.
The streets, like a river in flood,
Are pregnant with vehicles.

When darkness descends,
Havoc and rapine is let loose
Desire in the mind ascends
And like an epidemic, spreads with ease.
Dagger blades sharpen in the dark
And death keeps waiting in the park
For vengeance has a score to settle
With the man who stole his cattle.

When darkness descends
Bats yawn, greeting the night,
Owls hoot and scream like
An ambulance siren.
The lights have gone down.
At the dark end of the street
Klu Klux Klansmen keep caucus.
Killers lie lurking for the innocent.
Rapists sigh heavily, the hammer
between their thighs waiting for its turn
On the anvil.

When darkness descends
Men like chameleons change,
Nuns in trade with witches
Fathers seducing daughters
Brides and grooms turning adulterers
Reformers becoming informers
Sheep wearing wolf skins
And friends becoming foes
Their joys turning woes.

Waxing and waning encroaches the moon:
Life is nestled in its womb,
And for a while murder is entombed.
The night is dying, survivors kneel to pray,
And dawn creeps in like a cat for its prey.
The atmosphere is polluted with sorrow.
Like the aftermath of Sharpeville,
Deeds await the revelation of the morrow.

Khaba Mkhize / Claremont, Natal / A Poem

THIS UNDISCRIMINATING DISCRIMINATION

This morning my boss sent me somewhere,
Where, somewhere, I found a twentyish lady,
Rapping and rattling her typewriting machine,
Which was gagged the moment I greeted her.
Responded she did, efficiency she proved.

Forgive me saying it aloud but her efficiency was fragile
For she smashed it in one single sentence
When she told her boss to 'Hang on a second,
I am attending to this boy' . . . So she said it.
I wanted to laugh aloud, but she had my Boss's phone number.

She did not blink, not for a second, not once,
She said it so easily and in a matter-of-fact tone,
She looked so innocently guilty, like a puppy toddler,
She appeared so programmed to this absurdity,
Truly and dearly, she needed some de-brainwashing!

I pitied her distortion of fundamental facts:
To her, all black men are black boys,
To her, maturity belongs to whites only,
To her, growth is banned — for blacks only,
To her, real boys in real life are piccaninis,
To her, Age is for the present voters only,
To her, I was a boy despite my inflated age.

Yes, I repeat: I pitied her so much, this Miss Jones
It was definitely not a fault of her making;
Her parents together with her environmental upbringing,
Her parish minister and cultural minister, all of them
Never taught her humble human manners.

I wished to educate her in the humblest of manners
But Alas! What of my job and my skin . . . Steady boy;
By virtue of my black skin I must keep mum.
Who am I to teach an ignorant white messis!
No listen boy: You're a man! She was a girlie;
White as she was she is entitled to the truth.

Call Me Not A Man *a story by* Mtutuzeli Matshoba

For neither am I a man in the eyes of the law,
Nor am I a man in the eyes of my fellow man.

By dodging, lying, resisting where it is possible, bolting when I'm already cornered, parting with invaluable money, sometimes calling my sisters into the game to get amorous with my captors, allowing myself to be slapped on my mouth in front of my womenfolk and getting sworn at with my mother's private parts, that component of me which is man has died a countless times in one lifetime. Only a shell of me remains to tell you of the other man's plight, which is in fact my own. For what is suffered by another man in view of my eyes is suffered also by me. The grief he knows is a grief that I know. Out of the same bitter cup do we drink. To the same chain-gang do we belong.

Friday has always been their chosen day to go plundering, although nowadays they come only occasionally, maybe once in a month. Perhaps they have found better pastures elsewhere, where their prey is more predictable than at Mzimhlope, the place which has seen the tragic demise of three of their accomplices who had taken the game a bit too far by entering the hostel on the northern side of our location and fleecing the people right in the midst of their disgusting labour camps. Immediately after this there was a notable abatement in the frequency of their visits to both the location and the adjacent hostel. However the lull was only short-lived, lasting only until the storm had died down, because the memory tarnishes quickly in the locations, especially the memory of death. We were beginning to emit sighs of relief and to mutter 'good riddance' when they suddenly reappeared and made their presence in our lives felt once again. June, Seventy-six had put them out of the picture for the next year, after which they were scarcely seen. Like a recurring pestilence they refuse to vanish absolutely from the scene.

A person who has spent some time in Soweto will doubtless have guessed by now that the characters I am referring to are none other than some of the so-called police reservists who roam our dirty streets at weekends, robbing every timid, unsuspecting person, while masquerading as peace officers to maintain law and order in the community. There are no greater thieves than these men of the law, men of justice, peace officers and volunteer public protectors in the whole of the slum complex because, unlike others in the same trade of living off the sweat of their victims, they steal out in the open, in front of everybody's eyes. Of course nothing could be done about it because they go out on their pillaging exploits under the banners of the law, and to rise in protest against them is analogous to defiance of the powers that be.

So, on this Friday too we were standing on top of the station bridge at Mzimhlope. It was about five in the afternoon and the sun hung over the western horizon of spectacularly identical coalsmoke-puffing rooftops like a gigantic, glowing red ball which dyed the foamy clouds with the crimson sheen of its rays. The commuter trains coming in from the city paused below us every two or three minutes to regurgitate their infinite human cargo, the greater part of whom were hostel-dwellers, who hurried up Mohale Street to cook their meagre suppers on primus stoves. The last train we had seen would now be leaving Phefeni, the third station from Mzimhlope. The next train had just emerged from the bridge this side of New Canada, junction to East and West Soweto. The last group of the hostel people from the train now leaving Phefeni had just turned the bend at Mohale Street where it intersects with Elliot. The two hundred metre stretch to Elliot was therefore relatively empty, and people coming towards the station could be clearly made out.

As the wheels of the train from New Canada squealed on the iron tracks and it came to a jerking stop, four men, two in overalls and the others in duster-coats, materialised around the Mohale Street bend. There was no doubt who they were, from the way they filled the whole width of the street and walked as if they owned everything and everybody in their sight. When they came to the grannies selling vegetables, fruit and fried mealies along the ragged, unpaved sides of the street, they grabbed what they fancied and munched gluttonously the rest of the way towards us. Again nothing could be done about it, because the poverty-stricken vendors were not licensed to scrape together some crumbs to ease the gnawing stomachs of their fatherless grandchildren at home, which left them wide open for plunder by the indifferent 'reserves'.

'Awu! The Hellions,' remarked Mandla next to me. 'Let's get away from here, my friend.'

He was right. They reminded one of the old western film; but I was not moving from where I was simply because the reservists were coming down the street like a bunch of villains. One other thing I knew was that the railway constable who was on guard duty that Friday at the station did not allow the persecution of the people on his premises. I wanted to have my laugh when they were chased off the station.

'Don't worry about them. Just wait and see how they're going to be chased away by this copper. He won't allow them on the station,' I answered.

They split into twos when they arrived below us. Two of them, a tall chap with a face corroded by skin-lightening cream and wearing a yellow golf cap on his shaven head, and another stubby, shabbily dressed, middle aged man with a bald frontal lobe and a drunk face, chewing at a cooked sheep's foot that he had taken from one of the grannies, climbed the stairs on our right hand side. The younger man took the flight in fours. The other two chose to waylay their unsuspecting victims on the street corner at the base of the left hand staircase. The first wave of the people who had alighted from the train was in the middle of the bridge when the second man reached the top of the stairs.

Maybe they knew the two reservists by sight, maybe they just smelt cop in the smoggy air, or it being a Friday, they were alert for such possibilities. Three to four of the approaching human wall turned suddenly in their tracks and ran for their dear freedom into the mass behind them. The others were caught unawares by this unexpected movement and they staggered in all directions trying to regain balance. In a split second there was commotion on the station, as if a wild cat had found its way into a fowlrun. Two of those who had not been quick enough were grabbed by their sleeves, and their passes demanded. While they were producing their books the wolves went over their pockets, supposedly feeling for dangerous weapons, dagga and other illegal possessions that might be concealed in the clothes, but really to ascertain whether they had caught the right people for their iniquitous purposes. They were paging through the booklets when the Railway policeman appeared.

'Wha-? Don't you fools know that you're not supposed to do that shit here? Get off! Get off and do that away from Railway property. Fuck off!' He screamed at the two reservists so furiously that the veins threatened to burst in his neck.

'Arrest the dogs, baba! Give them a chance also to taste jail!' Mandla shouted.

'Ja,' I said to Mandla, 'You bet, they've never been where they are so prepared to send others.'

The other people joined in and we jeered the cowards off the station. They descended the stairs with their tails tucked between their legs and joined their companions below the station. Some of the commuters who had been alerted by the uproar returned to the platform to wait there until the reservists had gone before they would dare venture out of the station.

We remained where we had been and watched the persecution from above. I doubted if they even read the passes (if they could), or whether the victims knew if their books were right or out of order. Most likely the poor hunted men believed what they were told by the licensed thieves. The latter demanded the books, after first judging their prey to be weak propositions, flicked through the pages, put the passes into their own pockets, without which the owners could not continue on their way, and told the dumbfounded hostel men to stand aside while they accosted other victims. Within a very short while there was a group of confused men to one side of the street, screaming at their hostel mates to go to room so and so and tell so and so that they had been arrested at the station, and to bring money quickly to release them. Few of those who were being sent heard the messages since they were only too eager to leave the danger zone. Those who had money shook hands with their captors, received their books back and ran up Mohale Street. If they were unlucky they came upon another 'roadblock' three hundred metres up the street and the process would be repeated. Woe unto them who had paid their last money to the first extortionists, for this did not matter. The police station was their next stopover before the Bantu Commissioners, and thence their final destination, Modder Bee Prison, where they provided the farmers with ready cheap labour until they had served their terms for breaking the law. The terms vary from a few days to two years for 'loaferskap' (idleness); which is in fact mere unemployment, for which the unfortunate men were not to blame. The whole arrangement stinks of forced labour.

The large 'kwela-kwela' swayed down Mohale Street at a breakneck speed. The multitudes scattered out of its way and hung onto the sagging fences until it had passed. To be out of sight of the people on the station bridge, it skidded and swerved into the second side street from the station. More reservists poured out of it and went immediately to their dirty job with great zeal. The chain-gang which had been lined

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along the fence of the house nearest the station was kicked and shoved to the kwela-kwela, into which the victims were bundled under a rain of fists and boots, all of them scrambling to go in at the same time through the small door. The driver of the kwela-kwela, the only uniformed constable among the group, clanged the door shut and secured it with the locking lever. He went to stand authoritatively near one of the vendors, took a small avocado pear, peeled it and put it whole into a gargantuan mouth, spitting out the large stone later. He did not have to take the trouble of accosting anyone himself. His gangsters would all give him a lion's share of whatever they made, and moreover, buy him some beers and brandy. He kept adjusting his polished belt over his potbelly as the .38 police special in its leather holster kept it down. He probably preferred to wear his gun unconventionally, cowboy style.

A boy of about seventeen years of age was caught with a knife in his pocket, a dangerous weapon. They slapped him a few times and let him stand handcuffed against the concrete wall of the station. Ten minutes later his well-rounded sister alighted from the train to find her younger brother among the prisoners. As she was inquiring from him why he had been arrested and reprimanded him for carrying a knife, one of the younger reservists came to stand next to her and started pawing her. She let him carry on, and three minutes later her brother was free. The reservist was beaming all over the face, glad to have won himself a beautiful woman in the course of his duties and little knowing that he had been given the wrong address. Some of our black sisters are at times compelled to go all the way to save their menfolk, and as always, nothing can be done about it.

There was a man coming down Mohale Street, conspicuous amidst the crowd because of the bag and baggage that was loaded on his overall-clad frame. On his right shoulder was a large suitcase with a grey blanket strapped to it with flaxen strings. From his left hand hung a bulging cardboard box, only a few inches from the ground, and tilting him to that side. He walked with the bounce of someone used to walking in gumboots or on uneven ground. There was the urgency of someone who had a long way to travel in his gait. It was doubtless a 'goduka' (migrant labourer) on his way home to his family after many months of work in the city. It might even have been years since he visited the countryside.

He did not see the hidden kwela-kwela, which might have forewarned him of the danger that was lurking at the station. Only when he had stumbled into two reservists, who stepped into his way and ordered him to put down his baggage, did he perhaps remember that it was Friday and raid-day. A baffled expression sprang into his face as he realised what he had walked into. He frantically went through the pockets of his overalls. The worried countenance deepened on his dark face. He tried again to make sure, but he did not find what he was looking for. The men who had stopped him pulled him to one side, each holding him tightly with the sleeve of his overall. He obeyed meekly like a tame animal. They let him lift his arms while they searched him all over the body. Finding nothing hidden on him, they demanded the inevitable book, although they had seen that he did not have it. He gesticulated with his hands as he explained what had caused him not to be carrying his pass with him. From a few feet above them I could barely hear what was said.

"Strue, madoda,' he said imploringly, 'I made a mistake. I luggaged the pass with my trunk. It was in a jacket that I forgot to search before I packed it into the trunk.'

'How do we know that you're not lying?' asked one of the reservists in a querulous voice.

'I'm not lying, mfowethu. I swear by my mother, that's what happened,' explained the frightened man.

The second reservist had a more evil and uncompromising attitude. 'That was your own stupidity, mister. Because of it you're going to jail now; no more to your wife.'

'Oh, my brother. Put yourself in my shoes. I've not been home to my people for two years now. It's the first chance I have to go and see my twin daughters who were born while I've been here. Feel for another poor black man, please, my good brother. Forgive me only for this once.'

'What? Forgive you? And don't give us that slush about your children. We've also got our own families, for whom we are at work right now, at this very moment,' the obstinate one replied roughly.

'But, mfo. Wouldn't you make a mistake too?'

That was a question the cornered man should not have asked. The reply this time was a resounding slap on the face. 'You think I'm stupid like you, huh? Bind this man Mazibuko, put the bloody irons on the dog.'

'The anger in the man's voice was faked, the fury of a coward trying to instil fear in a person who happened to be at his mercy.'

'No, man. Let me talk to the poor bloke. Perhaps he can do something for us in exchange for the favour of letting him proceed on his way home,' the less volatile man suggested, and pulled the hostel man away from the rest of the arrested people.

'Ja. Speak to him yourself, Mazibuko. I can't bear talking to rural fools like him. I'll kill him with my bare hands if he thinks that I've come to play here in Johannesburg!' The anger in the man's voice was faked, the fury of a coward trying to instil fear in a person who happened to be at his mercy. I doubted if he could face up to a mouse. He accosted two boys and ran his hands over their sides, but he did not ask for their passes.

'You see, my friend, you're really in trouble. I'm the only one who can help you. This man who arrested you is not in his best mood today. How much have you got on you? Maybe if you give something he'll let you go. You know what wonders money can do for you. I'll plead for you; but only if I show him something can he understand.' The reservist explained the only way out of the predicament for the trapped man, in a smooth voice that sounded rotten through and through with corruption, the sole purpose for which he had joined the 'force'.

'I haven't got a cent in my pocket. I bought provisions, presents for the people at home and the ticket with all the money they gave me at work. Look, nkosi, I have only the ticket and the papers with which I'm going to draw my money when I arrive at home.' He took out his papers, pulled the overall off his shoulders and lowered it to his thighs so that the brown trousers he wore underneath were out in the open. He turned the dirty pockets inside out. 'There's nothing else in my pockets except these, mister, honestly.'

'Man!'

'Yessir?'

'You want to go home to your wife and children?'

'Yes, *please*, good man of my people. Give me a break.'

'Then why do you show me these damn papers? They will feed your own children, but not mine. When you get to your home you're going to draw your money and your kids will be scratching their tummies and dozing after a hectic meal, while I lose my job for letting you go and my own children join the dogs to scavenge the trashbins. You're mad, mos.' He turned to his mate. 'Hey, Baloyi. Your man says he hasn't got anything, but he's going to his family which he hasn't seen for two years.'

'I told you to put the irons on him. He's probably carrying a little fortune in his underpants. Maybe he's shy to take it out in front of the people. It'll come out at the police station, either at the charge office or in the cells when the small boys shake him down.'

'Come on, you. Your hands, maan!'

The other man pulled his arms away from the manacles. His voice rose desperately, 'Awu my people. You mean you're really arresting me? Forgive me! I pray do.'

A struggle ensued between the two men.

'You're resisting arrest? You —,' and a stream of foul vitriolic words concerning the anatomy of the hostel man's mother gushed out of the reservist's mouth.

'I'm not, I'm not! But, please listen!' The hostel man heaved and broke loose from the reservist's grip. The latter was only a limp of fat with nothing underneath. He staggered three steps back and flopped on his rump. When he bounced back to his feet, unexpectedly fast for his bulk, his eyes were blazing murder. His companions came running from their own posts and swarmed upon the defenceless man like a pack of hyenas upon a carcase. The other people who had been marooned on the bridge saw a chance to go past thile the wolves were still preoccupied. They ran down the stairs and up Mohale like racehorses. Two other young men who were handcuffed together took advantage of the diversion and bolted down the first street in tandem, taking their bracelets with them. They ran awkwardly with their arms bound together, but both were young and fit and they did their best in the circumstances.

We could not stand the sickening beating that the other man was receiving any more.

'Hey! Hey. Sies maan. Stop beating the man like that. Arrest him if you want to arrest him. You're killing him, dogs!' we protested loudly from the station. An angry crowd was gathering.

'Stop it or we'll stop you from doing anything else forever!' someone shouted.

The psychopaths broke their rugger scrum and allowed us to see their gruesome handiwork. The man was groaning at the base of the fence, across the street where the dirt had gathered. He twisted painfully to a sitting position. His face was covered with dirt and blood from where the manacles that were slipped over the knuckles had found their marks, and his features

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were grotesquely distorted. In spite of that, the fat man was not satisfied. He bent and gathered the whimpering man's wrists with the intention of fastening them to the fence with the handcuffs.

'Hey, hey, hey, Satan! Let him go. Can't you see that you've hurt that man enough?'

The tension was building up to explosion point and the uniformed policeman sensed it.

'Let him go boys. Forgive him. Let him go,' he said, shooting nervous glances in all directions.

Then the beaten-up man did the most unexpected and heartrending thing. He knelt before the one ordering his release and held his dust covered hands with the palms together in the prayer position and still kneeling he said, 'Thank you very much, my lord. God bless you. Now I can go and see my twins and my people at home.'

He would have done it. Only it never occured in his mind at that moment of thanksgiving to kiss the red gleaming boots of the policeman.

The miserable man beat the dust off his clothes as best he could, gathered his two parcels and clambered on the stairs, trying to grin his 'thanks' to the crowd that had raised its voice of protest on his behalf. The policeman decided to call it a day. The other unfortunates were shepherded to the waiting kwela-kwela.

I tried to imagine how the man would explain his lumps to his wife. In the eye of my mind I saw him throwing his twins into the air and gathering them again and again as he played with them.

'There's still a long way to cover, my friend,' I heard Mandla saying into my ear.

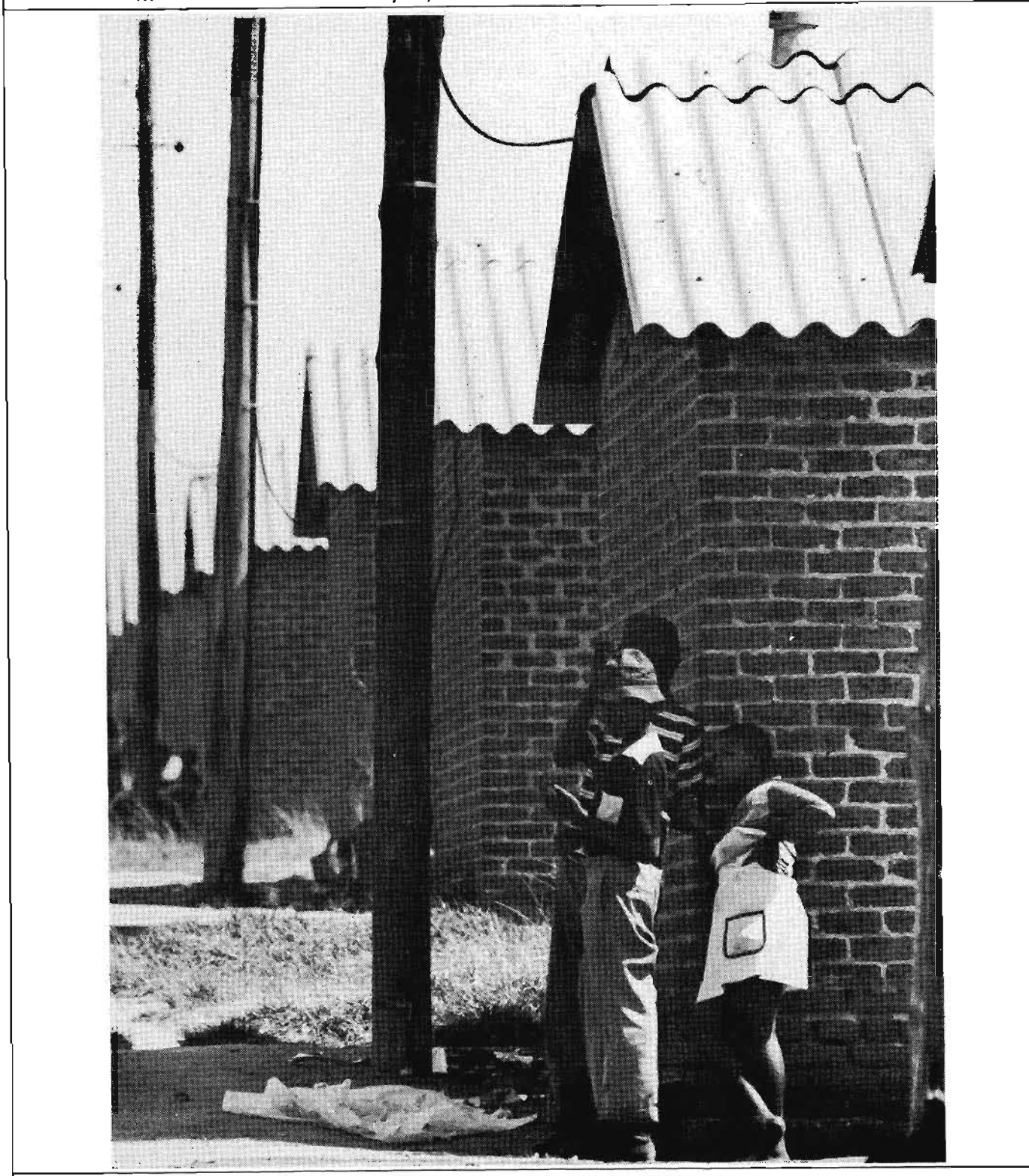
'Before?' I asked.

'Before we reach hell. Ha, ha, ha! Maybe there we'll be men.'

'Ha, we've long been there. We've long been in hell.'

'Before we get out then.'

Mtutuzeli Matshoba's story *My Friend, The Outcast* appeared in *Staffrider* No. 2



Ralph Ndawo

Fhazel Johennesse / Four Poems

A YOUNG MAN'S THOUGHTS BEFORE JUNE THE 16th

Tomorrow I travel on a road
That winds to the top of the hill
I take with me only the sweet
Memories of my youth
My heart aches for my mother
For Friday nights with friends
Around a table with the broad belch of beer
I ask only for a sad song
Sung by a woman with downturned eyes
And strummed by an old man with
A broken brow
O sing my sad song sing for me
For sunset is drenched with red.

BRA BIZZA DINK ACCORDING CHANGE

Well gents
Julle moet vestaan dat
Ons het by die lanie gegaan
Om te sê how long?
Ons weetie om te sê ons is dik
Van die apartheid style
Hy het ons só gekyk en hy weetie
Well you see we are changing slowly
Maar nê man ons kan mossie forever wag
En ek wat Bra bizza is vertel jou jack
Ons sal wag tot Piet kom
Nou jy maak uit
As die lanie nie change nie
Dan moet ons van self change
Genuine jack
Die change lê by ons
Nie by die lanie nie.

A SOLDIER ON THE BORDER

I have been here too long now
Out here where there is nothing
But flat land and grass and trees
Too useful to terrorists and Cubans
I tire of this army life this tasteless food
These uniform days and messages of vasbyt
And I miss my sweetheart whom I left
Crying on the station platform

I miss my mother my home my father
I miss going to work
I miss the city because all
I do now is write letters
Tune in to Radio Highveld
Shine my boots shoot kaffirs and clean my gun.

A RAINY AFTERNOON

Outside children scream and curse
As they play while overhead
Clouds rumble while they gather
I pause in my reading and listen
To the demented baying of hounds
In the distance and I wonder if he
Kicks at them or simply swears at the owners
Inside here I stare at the page
And the words jump and float about
I shake my head and try to concentrate
But the words lose interest in me
So instead I close the book and
Watch the outside world
Melt and dribble on the window pane
As the first drops of rain fall.

Johannesburg

Jane *the first of two stories by* Reg Rumney

Jessis! Daai's 'n lekker stukkie kont, ou maat,' the thick-set joller with the T-shirt bearing the slogan *Tembe Tigers* almost hissed. Before he could lower the binoculars his friend lying at the crest of the sand-dune next to him laughingly elbowed him aside and snatched them away.

'Ja, you right my china,' he leered. Through the binoculars the naked, suntan-oiled body of the woman they were aimed at seemed near enough to touch. Young, beautiful rather than merely pretty, well-proportioned, slim. Her breasts, glistening as she lay unself-consciously on her back, still showed an appetising roundness in spite of being slightly flattened by gravity.

The sun and a longing for solitude had brought Jane to the bay that month. The sun had drawn her there two previous holidays — not the scenery, lush as it was, or the sea.

This time there was an additional reason, one of those silly human complications — a young 'poet' who had chosen to fall in love with her, in the face of all the negative evidence she'd provided.

The bloodshot eyes of Lange were fixed on her pubic hair. She looked jewish. He'd never screwed a jewess. It was supposed to bring seven years of good luck. Anyway, this chickie he could see had class.

And in Johannesburg an emaciated, vegetarian, university student and writer of verse pored over what he had just written, wondering how he could pinpoint what was so unsatisfying about it. Or what was so unsatisfying about *himself*. At times of doubt like this he contemplated switching to homosexuality. Not that he had exactly exhausted the possibilities of heterosexuality. But there were other things wrong. He smoked too much — cigarettes and grass. He drank too much coffee. Didn't eat well. He thought about going back to eating meat.

Jane lay in a hollow among the sand-dunes, remote enough she thought to avoid voyeuristic eyes, occasionally leaping up and running at full tilt over the high dunes and down into the warm green sea. She would stay sunbathing till the sun had passed its noon peak and became too hot to bear. Then she would return to the campsite and her frugal health-food lunch.

Steven slouched in the single chair and said aloud to the walls of his darkened room: 'I have fucked up my life.' On his desk and on the floor were littered like fallen leaves the drafts of bad, unfinished poems. He knew he should either be working on his courses or outside in the open air enjoying himself. He couldn't generate the energy.

When she arrived at the clearing where her small tent was pitched Jane prepared her midday meal in the methodical way she did most things and after eating it and carefully washing the cooking utensils and packing them away, sat down in the shade to read. All this according to the routine she'd formed since her arrival at the bay.

Steve thought: why, in spite of the fact that her iciness outdoes a glacier's, can't I bring myself to hate her, even a little?

Jane noticed out of the corner of her eye someone standing behind one of the nearby bushes. She decided to ignore this, though it nettled her. She had especially chosen this time of year to come to the bay, before the holiday season proper began and the place was crammed with young South African males on the make.

But there were quite a few there already, and they pestered her continually. Somehow they couldn't stomach the idea of a woman being alone — particularly at a camping site it seemed. She had fobbed most of them off by telling them she was married and was waiting for her husband to arrive. But even having to tell this innocuous lie irritated her. It underlined all the stupid assumptions in this society about women.

Most of them had taken the brush-off pleasantly enough. Still their sexual aggressiveness could be frightening — almost. The previous night someone, no doubt in drunken high spirits, had pulled down her tent. Luckily she'd been sleeping in her car because of the cold.

But she wouldn't allow herself, merely because she was a woman, to be frightened.

'Howsit.'

Calmly, she looked up straight into the eyes of a short, powerfully built man, about 23 years old, whose slogan T-shirt and tattooed arms betrayed his class as effectively as his accent. His friend, tall, thin with long, lank, greasy hair and bad skin, stood a short distance away, grinning stupidly.

'You here alone?' He spoke again, trying to be friendly, but the defensive tone of his voice made the question harsh, and the smile that accompanied it seemed over-intimate, as well as exposing his crooked, stained teeth.

She forced herself not to recoil, answering with a deliberate seriousness that she didn't mean to be, but was interpreted as, hostile:

'I'm waiting for my husband to join me.'

Teens hesitated for a moment.

'Well, like, maybe you could come over to our tent tonight. Having a sort of a party. A few drinks, you know? Hey, Lange?'

Lange, still grinning, nodded.

'No thanks, no . . . I think I'll get an early night tonight.'

Slowly, Teens got to his feet.

'Well, maybe some other night then?'

'No I don't think so. My husband will be here quite soon.' She managed a half-hearted smile.

'Ja. Okay then.' He stood up, hesitating between trying to continue the conversation and just giving up. The uncompromising way she now stared at him, waiting for him to leave, made him uncomfortable.

'Come, Lange, let's go.' Stuck-up bitch, he thought.

Steve tried to polish the sonnet he'd written:

It was like losing what I'd never had.
I knew there'd be a poem in it somewhere —
if only that. So much you loved the sun
we envied it your embrace. You were youth.

In you gathered our political truth.
As well you had some habits of a nun
fired the heart as your body fired to sear
heat desire in the mind. I tried, comrade,

Love (in spite of your well-managed affairs
will you end someone's dotty aunt?). You were
cold. All mind, you had no youth, much like our
politics, fell short of human desire

The sun dessicates your skin. Sour and sad
the fuck-up. This is the poem, and it's bad.

Somewhere, something was wrong with it. He left it in disgust, lay down on his bed to rest for a while. He lit a cigarette, and watched the grey smoke uncoil from the glowing tip, into two or three broad strands that moved in slow opposing curves, interweaving, before mingling with the air and dispersing.

Jane read the whole afternoon, deciding to leave off swimming until her usual sunset dip. She wouldn't have to go far. Nobody went to the beach at night.

As he took a deep pull from the gallon jar of Lieberstein, the chain Teens wore on his wrist clinked against the glass. Lange took the pips and seeds out of an arm of dagga. Already Teens was drunk. 'Stuck-up,' he muttered, 'stuck-up bitch.'

The only key to her character and personality, Steve decided, was the fact that she'd been raped while still a young girl. By a gang. It explained a lot — too much, almost. How much did any one incident affect anyone's life?

Grateful for the coolness of the evening, Jane stripped. The wind, which in the day drove the sand to sting and blind, had subsided to a soft, intermittent breeze playing over her skin.

There was a picture-postcard sunset; the ovoid sun, double its normal size, hung at the rim of the horizon and tinged the tips of the wavelets blood red.

She sprinted along the beach and down into the receding tide and swam towards the sun and then in large circles until all colour drained from the sky and it was definitely night.

Steve, alone in his room, drinking brandy neat from a half-jack, had discovered what was wrong with the poem. Aside from the skill lacking, he felt, it was an attempt to pre-empt life in some way, to control with words what couldn't be manipulated so. If he had the talent, he thought, there was so much he wanted to say. About failure, for instance, and how people create their own tragedies, about the insufficiencies of words . . . but.

I'll burn my books, he thought.

Exhilaration surged through Jane's body mixed with the delicious tiredness of physical effort as she rose from the water and walked up onto the beach to her clothes, and she did not at first notice the two figures separate from the moonshadows cast by the dunes and come towards her.

Steve took the sheet of lined foolscap paper on which he had written the sonnet and with malicious neatness folded it into a paper aeroplane. He watched its fanciful acrobatics, after he'd launched it from the window of his flat, and saw it fly some distance till a gust of wind blew it onto a corrugated iron roof where it stayed until successive days of intense sunlight had faded the ink to nothing and rain reduced it to pulp.

Reg Rumney is a journalist on the *Financial Mail*. His poems have appeared in earlier issues of *Staffrider*.

Johannesburg

Reg Rumney / The Fall of a Man of Property

Marcus was falling with ever-gathering momentum down into a vast and infinite emptiness. He struggled, twisting and flailing in free-fall, against the monstrous updraft that ripped the breath from his mouth, aware, however, that his stuggles were useless. There was no bottom, and no end to his fall . . .

He woke, gasping, relieved. But as he shook himself awake and the familiar white plasticised walls came into focus all his fear flooded back.

* * *

Perhaps the worst of it was his indifference, the apathy that was beginning to block all coherent thought. So difficult to move, even, he felt as he sprawled across the floor of the lift. Should he try for the millionth time ringing the alarm bell, pushing the 'door open' button, pushing any and all of the buttons, randomly, desperately, in an attempt to get the doors to open?

And what if they did?

Could he be sure he wouldn't find merely blackness outside? Or the wall of the lift shaft rushing upwards at a speed too great to gauge?

* * *

Marcus Harvey stepped into the empty lift at exactly 5.30 p.m. — he looked at his watch, reckoning there would be enough time to have a drink, miss the rush-hour and arrive at his Parkhust home by, say, 6.30. He pushed the button for the ground floor. The doors closed, the lift descended. 9 . . . 8 . . . 7 . . . 6 . . . 5 . . . 4 . . . 3 . . . 2 . . . 1 . . . G. The row of numerals lit up successively till G, but the doors didn't open. Curious, he thought, it feels as though it's still going down. This lift doesn't go to the basement garage. Does it? G stayed lit. Must be stuck. He tried pushing the 'door open' button. Nothing. Then he tried prising the doors open, imagining they might be jammed slightly, needing only a shove for them to slide open. Again, nothing. He waited for a few minutes before pushing the alarm button, not wanting to risk embarrassment should the doors open suddenly. He was annoyed. He would be late for dinner. When he did finally press the button to activate the alarm bell, and continued pressing it for some time, there was no sound or response. A wave of anger came to him like a rush of blood to the head. 'Shit,' he said.

* * *

He ran his fingers over his face. Stubble. How long had he been in the lift? According to his watch 12 hours. It seemed much longer.

* * *

When Marcus Harvey stepped into the lift from the 9th floor of the building owned by the Glen Anal Corporation in which he was an executive with an ill-defined post, he was not entirely a happy man. Once, on leaving his office with the prospect of driving home on the M1 in the silent luxury of his Jaguar — a shade too luxurious, he realized — he would be filled with a feeling of decent well-being after a day's office politicking smoothly achieved. Even the building itself, the property group's headquarters and one of its major assets, he left with a reassuring backward glance at its substantiality. Now, however, the recession had struck and the heady days of the property boom were like the recollection of another life. As for the group, it was up shit creek without a paddle. And the odds were that he himself would soon join the ranks of the executive unemployed.

He woke, slowly. Yes, there was still that feeling of descent . . . was there? Could he be sure he wasn't merely stuck in a 'normally' malfuctioning lift? He would have to pull himself together. Where could the lift go after dropping to the basement but up? Grabbing the chrome hand-rail he dragged himself to his feet. No, it still felt as if the lift was dropping. But he was enervated by thrist and hunger, and he couldn't be certain of anything any more.

* * *

M. Harvey B.Com (Wits), aged 29, looked down at the rumpled trousers of his brown Pierre Cardin suit. Thank God, he thought, there are no mirrors in this lift.

* * *

Hunched up in the corner, Marcus rubbed his eyes. The bright concealed neon lighting made anything like real sleep impossible. And the floor, cold, hard, in spite of being rubber carpeted, didn't help. What time was it? He looked at his watch: 4 o'clock. But that meant nothing. He wasn't sure what day it was.

* * *

He pushed the 'door open' button. The doors stayed shut. Dammit, he'd be late for supper. His wife would ply him with questions, insinuate. His wife. She was an attractive asset to his life, a perfect gem. Or so he had considered when he married her. Later the full meaning of that cliche had become manifest: bright, hard, cold. Ruthless, too, when it came to *her* children. Still, she was so afraid of endangering their future that she dared not interfere with his job and its demands on the common life. So he was allowed sufficient freedom to have an occasional mistress. Like Brenda from Accounts. She was soft, pliable. A real peach. And he thought of how you peel the rough skin off a peach to reveal the white, juicy flesh beneath.

* * *

He dreamt again. He was a phantom, bodiless and invisible, searching the rooms of his new Moorish-style house, literally walking through the walls, for the children. Room after room, he searched, but he couldn't find them. And then he came to the main bedroom.

In the faint light stealing in from the street he could see two forms on the bed and he knew that — Christ — one was his wife and emanating from her was the distinctive moan whose intimacy he imagined only he knew. The other, moving slowly above her, back muscles tensing and untensing beneath a black skin the highlights of which glinted silver in the soft light was . . . O God . . . He reached for the heavy black onyx ashtray on the dressing table, *his* ashtray, *his* dressing table, but his hand passed clean through it. And the figures on the bed gained their writhing climax.

* * *

Marcus lay on the floor of the lift, face down, awake but with his eyes closed. He felt the downwards movement of the lift and listened to the quiet, almost inaudible sound of one of the neon tubes humming. He had little strength to force himself to get up, and even less reason.

And the lift went down.

Johannesburg

Poems / Patrick Cullinan, Peter Wilhelm, Cherry Clayton

AT FORTY-SIX

Fake, the Cape Dutch house
Is older now and ripe,
As old as me at forty-six.
The poplars scratch the white-washed walls.
A cold, blue, winter heaven.

The flower-beds, unloosed,
Creep with sorrel. A rose-bush dies.

The lawns are indiscreet,
Askew with maple leaves.

There are too many dogs.

Under gum-trees in the compound:
Maraba-raba.
The children lurch, are drunk maybe.

Two witches chanting Japanese
Exorcised a ghost last night:
A dominating woman,
My mother.
Whoosh! She went up the chimney.

It was at tea-time someone said:
'It makes your blood run cold.'

Patrick Cullinan.

TO THE MEN WHO KILLED IRENE GREY

What's death's power? Huge.
So many seize it.
Day by night they jump
down the male precipitate walls
to break the chalice.

Each exalted death frees
human honey, makes chains:
the dead are huge.
(Blessed Christ lead the children
beyond the bloody stairs' end.)

Irene leapt from Highpoint
where so many stairs end.
She broke on the stones of eyes.
All her love became fleet
while pigs ate her picture
in the filthy street.

Peter Wilhelm

TODAY'S THE BIRTHDAY OF A BIRD

Today's the birthday of a bird:
the trees are ushering light
down smoking breakfast lanes.
The uxorious farmer coughs
his morning farm alive,
cooks bacon at a fat fire
ceremoniously with servants.

Today's the birthday of a bird:
the children are yawning their eyes
to waken whelps' yelps
of joy and surprise at a hey-
ho-day and all the animals
produce much abundance
for the birthday of a bird.

Peter Wilhelm

WHEN I SAW YOU LAST

When I saw you last your eyes,
Once wet with love or grief,
Were calm. You said:
'I do not cry now, cry out.'

Your hands lay folded, shut,
Like a book upon your lap, discreet.

Then you praised indifference,
Calling it 'the triumph of serenity.'

Patrick Cullinan.

PORT ALFRED ASYLUM

This is apartheid run mad:
the asylum that used to be white
is now for the patient black.
The HNP is right:
crazy blacks are taking over
and fighting back.

In my holiday shorts and tan
I am met by raucous caws
of wild applause. I feel
neither white nor black
but a handsome brown
with a tendency to peel.
I feel like a crazy clown.

This is politics for the mad:
the white nurse complains
they will not listen to black
nurses. They know that black
is bad and power is white
and right. There's insight.
Or is it insane?

This is thereapy for the mad:
they plait mats and knit toys
for little white girls and boys.
They sit in the sun and jeer
and long to be patted
like the fat woolly bears
and the lambs they knit.
But that's not fit. No time
for a tear
here. The nurse
is brisk and busy.

Jokes for the insane:
once one escaped and
ran down the main road
naked. No-one was raped.
A little girl gaped:
Mommy that man's not nice
he has no clothes. And
he has an ugly bum.
Others pointed and some-
one called the police.

But mainly they blunder
through gardens with
barrows and dung. They cultivate.
later as we leave we see
a fanatical black in fanatical
white playing tennis
against himself. He serves
and runs. Then serves some more.
God knows who keeps the score.

Cherry Clayton

YOU FORESAW THE FALL

Tribute to King Shaka, assassinated 28 September 1928.

I stand by your statue
And admire the gigantic
Frame of your body
And wish to have seen you in life —
Your face, your broad shoulders.

My own face awash
I blame Dingaan and Mpande
Who plotted your assassination
And crushed the Zulu Empire
In their craving for Power.

Slashed the Zulu Nation
Slashed your Zulu pride
Bled you of your self-respect
Made you feel drained of your power
Your prophetic gifts and leadership.

Now I know
It's old as time
That Africa destroys her heroes.
I look at your statue
Deep enough to see
Your face of loyalty and honour,
That you foresaw the fall
Of your empire.
I am dry, wishing your life to return
And touch the soil and her Black people
Yet to fight
And yet to conquer
And yet to live
And yet to rule.

Len Morgan

SOMETIMES/NOW

sometimes
watch the grey ash
falling unceremoniously
from the reality of its existence
sometimes
the butt-end of the boomskuif
precipitously hangs onto
the edge of my cliff-like lips
now
watch the solvent spiralling staircase
of pungent blue smoke
highrising against the skyline
of a dream perhaps not a dream

in a haze of prison grey
a squadron of bats
in bomber-like formation
intimidates
a demonstration of youth
with raised antennae

Sometimes
fairies are found hanging
from a cloud
Sometimes
fairies are found falling
from a window
Sometimes
fairies are found stumbling
down the stairs

now
watch the solvent spiralling staircase
of pungent blue smoke
highrising against the skyline
smeared with blood

in a haze of prison grey
a black bird
in a cage lies dead,
a crucifix with a
clenched fist

Essop Patel

KLEURLINGBUURT

Bruin gevlekte beton, stukkies,
brokkies geel papiervlenters in sloot en trap.
gelag, mesgeflits;
wyse droë vyeboom wat jaarliks vrug
swaar, groen en vars.
Bruin gelate, vuil kaalvoetjies,
gespeel, ou motors, gedjol —
vaag verdwyn,
verwyder vlaktewaards

Leeg, vensterloos, deurgebreekte spookstraat,
windgesis, sonbebak, reëndeurweek,
verwaarloos; bespook deur gister se geluk.

Histeriese intrek, wit maskers;
ryk motors, brons lampe, hekies, potplante;
glinsternuut herbou, herleefte herberg.

Blanke jeugdom, tjekboek verhewe,
langbebaard, styfbebroek, ongeklee.
Soggens Sondag saam drinkend,
probleme besprekend, probleme vermyend;
'n landstoekoms verlore in weelde;
vae herinnerings van gister se beelde,
van bruin gesigte, vuil hande;
gespeel, geen motors, geluk —
ver verwyder, verdwyn vlaktewaards.

Pieter-Dirk Uys

ON PASSING A BUILDING SITE IN RONDEBOSCH

There's nothing like a wolf whistle
for defrosting the frozen matron's heart.
By sliding her eyes
around the wide brim
of her hat,
she can just see
he's coloured.

E. M. Macphail

Mark Lavender

Katlehong

Letsaba Thubela / I, Teacher, Humble Servant / a novel in progress

CHAPTER ONE

In ones, in pairs, in dragoons they trickled in the sweltering sun toward the township hall where they were to hold their meeting, having been summoned quasi officially by the Bantu Education Department.

Near the hall they stood clustered and uninspired, wondering what the meeting was all about. Gossip went the rounds that this was an important day, a very important day in their professional lives. Suprising, however, was the fact that the majority of them did not bat an eyelid when they heard this wondrous gossip.

'Teachers, whew! What an apathetic lot!' — an innocent observer might be tempted to remark.

Not so, bystander, not so fast. Remember, these are professional people. They have every right to know what is going to be discussed before they get to any meeting affecting their professional lives.

The few lucky ones who have an easy access to their principals' secrets made a hell of an issue of the occasion. They were the ones who sanctimoniously moved from one group of people to another, spreading their kingdom-come gossip, also adding their own spruce and unfounded remarks so as to glorify themselves and let the whole affair appear as if it was of their own making.

Opportunists also had a field day. Knowingly, they preyed on batty and otherwise gullible colleagues to cash in on the glory of being in the forefront of the news of the day.

Steadily the number of teachers attending the meeting increased. In thirty minutes, about five hundred teachers had gathered near the hall. It appeared as if not even one of those teaching in the Morung North Circuit under the inspectorship of the Bantu Education Department's Chief Inspector H. Karel von Graan and his two assistant inspectors, Ndlovu and Lesiba, was absent.

Such meetings are not to be missed by teachers. This is a standing rule yet nobody knows why. Whether it is a standing order or not nobody knows. Who, if it is a standing order, legalised and promulgated it, nobody knows. Whether it is the whimsical command of an imperious official, nobody can tell. Suffice it to say that, on this day, every teacher on his or her two feet attended, just as they do, without question, whenever they are summoned at however short a notice.

Gleaming sedans belonging to the pseudo big-shots and the real big-shots of the teaching fraternity began gliding in. Stuffy big-shots wearing artificially imperturbable countenances emerged from them followed by their over-zealous lackeys who imagined themselves the real big-shots. As always happens, the latest group of arrivals clustered in their own groups and mumbled incoherently in conspiratorial undertones.

'I resent this master — servant relationship,' remarked one assistant teacher to another. 'You might think we were not all teachers. This thing of principals holding themselves aloof is not right. After all there is no special school for principals. We have been trained in the same institutions, experienced the same difficulties and written the same examinations. I really don't see what's so important about them.' He waited expectantly for confirmation of the line he was taking.

The other, short, in a crumpled suit and greying at the temples, regarded him sharply. Then with a faint smile of resignation common to the defeated men of this world, he replied:

'Etiquette... etiquette my boy.' He continued in a detached monotone — 'If it were you. What would you do? For that matter, I don't think you talk shop with your father and his friends, or do you?' He suddenly glared.

The young man was flustered for a second but then, as if propelled by a new thought, he shot back forcefully:

'That is exactly what I mean. This is not a gathering of sons and fathers, or of daughters and mothers for that matter. This is a gathering of professional people. We have come together as professionals and so we must converse as professionals. Yes, converse as professionals, equals!'

'You seem to know too much for your own good young man — go tell them that!' — retorted the wrinkle-faced man resignedly and turned away.

He may not have known it, but by turning away from the young man he did himself a favour, for the young man almost apologised out of pity. Yes, pity, the worst thing that can happen to any man. Shameful pity, worse than death itself.

'I heard your little confrontation with the codger. You really gave it to him. Grabbed him by the scruff of his neck and hauled him toward the light. High time someone did it with the rest of them too.' A voice had materialised next to the musing young man. It was the voice of another young man about his own age.

He regarded the other steadily, smiled apologetically and moved away looking above the heads of the gathered people making as if he wanted someone to whom he wished to speak urgently.

Presently a nondescript decrepit white sedan bearing the legendary G. G. number plates screeched to a halt and gave rise to a flurry of pseudo harbingers. Who appoints these bums forerunners, nobody knows. The fact that they are unmindful of making nincompoops of themselves is not lost on anyone observing them objectively every time a Bantu Education Department official appears.

Four of them were at the door of the car even before the white official could turn the ignition key off.

'How embarrassing,' muttered one young lady gloomily, to no-one in particular.

'Gentlemen, gentlemen! Ladies and gentlemen, your ears please!' The tallest of the harbingers, taking advantage of his height, held himself erect and as if addressing school children continued parsimoniously:

'The inspector has now arrived. We shall all get into the hall and wait for him quietly.'

There was a murmur here and there because the last words of the lackey truly hurt. Without flinching under the hostile scowls, he pivoted in his still-erect position and addressed himself to the inspector:

'Dag, meneer.'

'The swine,' someone in the anonymity of the multitude hissed, in an undertone yet high enough to be heard within a considerable radius. 'Who the hell does he think he is! Fancy him telling us to keep quiet.'

Around the anonymous one there now arose a somewhat louder murmur of concurrence, yet without a sign of resistance they all meekly trooped into the hall.

As is to be expected, some of the lowly harbingers were already in the hall. As always, they were there not for any worthy end but for the express purpose of making the meek sheep as uncomfortable as possible.

'This way gentlemen, this way ladies,' they wailed sadistically. They were here, there, everywhere, telling people where to sit and where not to sit. Crump-backed they moved along the aisles, blocking, pointing, glaring and commanding.

'How embarrassing,' the young lady muttered absent-mindedly to herself.

After all this jostling and pushing there was quietness at last. Though many seats remained empty as this vast hall could accomodate over two thousand people, the lowly slave-drivers remained standing with smirks of contentment etching their sweating faces.

'Why all this trouble, why don't those guys take seats, they sure look tired,' someone remarked in mock concern.

'Principals!' said someone in disgust, 'I suppose this tomfoolery and languishing on the walls like nincompoops is all they could do better than anyone else.'

'How embarrassing,' for the umpteenth time they heard the young lady mutter absent-mindedly.

Five hundred heads usually represent a large assemblage of people. But the five hundred gathered on this day looked like a speck of dust in the vast auditorium.

It is not suprising, for this nonpareil in the packaging of people like pilchards was effected and executed by experts with long service in the Department of Bantu Education. The experts who are otherwise, the ineffectual zealots languishing around the auditorium walls.

It is usually true that a small audience is uninspiring and dull and a large audience easy to sway and therefore inspiring. In *this*, and many other such meetings between the officials of the Bantu Education Department and the teachers, however, the opposite holds true, for a number of reasons gifted to officials by experience. Somehow, this experience has rubbed off on their lackeys and they in turn, whether by instinct or extra-sensory perception, seem to know what is expected of them whenever a meeting is to take place.

On the stage of the auditorium four tables were joined together in a straight line. Their tops were covered with clean, white tablecloths. On top of these tables were a few water tumblers and glasses and a spread of ashtrays. No microphone was visible as, thanks to the diligence of the slave drivers, none would be necessary, with everybody within hearing. Behind these tables were five chairs. Seated on them were two teachers to the left of the white official, in the middle, and his two assistants to the right. To the people watching them, it seemed as if the officials were briefing their hosts on what was to take place and how.

Unexpectedly a cough went up in the wings back stage and an apparition beat a hasty retreat right back into the inner recess.

Katlehong

'Seems someone has been robbed of the chance of sitting next to whitey at the holy altar. I'm sure the guy feels sore about it. Otherwise, why is the guy hanging about back there. Someone has got to make way for him. Maybe tally will do, a guy so tall needs no chair anyway.' A chorus of sniggers went up.

'How embarrassing,' the young lady said, more vehemently now.

'Order, order please!' The tall lackey was indeed on his feet.

'Who is this over-stuffed braggart anyway?' asked someone.

'Oh, him,' answered a bespectacled young lady, 'he is Mr Moloi, our principal. He is also the Chairman of the Board of Principals in our township, and chairman of the whole Circuit if I'm not mistaken.' She spoke with undisguised reverence.

'Beadledom. That's good for him anyway, I suppose,' complained a bitter voice.

'He *is* the Master of Ceremonies for today,' said the bespectacled young lady defensively.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' pealed the master of ceremonies. 'I am happy to introduce to you our honourable guests . . .' He went on to introduce them all.

'After our honourable inspector, Mr Von Graan, has said what he has come to say to us, you will be free to ask any questions without fear. I *hope*, inspector,' — more self-effacing clap-trap, to the benefit and delight of his guests and then, 'I am your humble servant,' he concluded, 'and I shall do everything in my power to ensure the smooth running of this meeting.'

'Great words, honorific words — but I call it contrite poppy-cock, self-effacing poppy-cock,' said someone. 'The gutless lick-spittle ninny!'

'I hand over to you, Mr Inspector,' said the master of ceremonies, and he sat down.

The inspector rose to thunderous applause and proceeded to speak in Afrikaans:

'Mr Master of Ceremonies, my colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you all.' He switched into English and spoke in a clipped Germanic accent.

'Without waste of time I'll come to the point, and you may ask any questions you like when I am through.' He paused. 'It has come to the notice of the honourable minister of Bantu Education that a lot of dissatisfaction is being shown in the teaching profession by some unscrupulous elements determined to use the teacher and the child alike to further their own political ends.' He paused a second to gauge the reaction of his audience. No-one moved or betrayed any emotion. He went on:

'As I have said, some people are behind this dissatisfaction in the teaching profession. I shudder to think who those people are.'

'You! only you, mister herrenvolk,' whispered a young man absentmindedly. The elderly lady seated next to him did not seem to hear him whispering. It occurred to him that she was either deaf or entranced by the inspector's words.

'As the representative of the honourable minister of Bantu Education,' continued the inspector, 'I took it upon myself to look into the matter and offer my services and my advice to you.' He paused, then: 'You should remember, ladies and gentlemen, that you are responsible adults in whose care and trust the blameless lives of little boys and girls have been placed.'

'Blatant blackmail,' thought the young man to himself.

'Like you, I am also dedicated to one cause, and that cause is the education of the Bantu child. I find it distressing, not to say disgusting, that any outsider can come and tell me that a cause I've dedicated all my life to is inferior. Inferior, inferior . . .' The inspector was warming to his subject.

'Who said Bantu Education is inferior?' he glowered.

'Blatant intimidation,' commented the young man in the safe privacy of his thoughts. 'I say so, Dr Verwoerd said so and the whole world says so. Screw you if *you* don't.'

'I ask you, ladies and gentlemen, Is Bantu Education Inferior? I say no, it is not. It is my contention that many of you seated right here went through your schooling under this very Bantu Education. Now, ladies and gentlemen, come to your senses. Is it possible that you could be here talking to me as an equal if what you were taught and what you are teaching is an inferior type of education?'

'Quite easy,' contradicted the young man relentlessly, albeit to himself and his own fantasies only. 'A farm jackanapes inflicting himself on his meek subjects, stuffing them full of silly propaganda — if that's what you call meeting on an equal footing.'

'When we have teachers, professors and many other eminent men in all fields of learning! Mind you, most of these people have been taught through the system of Bantu Education. Can we, then, honestly say that Bantu Education is inferior? Look at it. Bantu Education has even produced university lecturers, lecturing presently in white universities.'

There was a little hushed acknowledgement from the audience.

'A positive response at last,' thought the inspector complacently.

'Ugh . . . trash,' complained the young man to himself. 'These so called lecturers . . . they lecture in nothing but African languages in which whites can't lecture anyway. What's worse, they are not even regarded as lecturers by these white institutions. They are simply 'professional assistants' what ever that may mean!'

'What's wrong my boy?' the elderly woman seated next to the young man asked concernedly.

'Nothing, maam,' mumbled the young man, and looked away.

The Inspector had resumed his monologue.

'Ladies and gentlemen, we should not allow communist-inspired inciters to ruin our lives. We should remember that a communistic path leads in only one direction . . . the Armageddon.' He paused very briefly. 'Even in the communist countries themselves you cannot find a doctor trained through an inferior system of education. How then, do you believe the communists when they tell you that your doctors are products of an inferior type of education? Yes, ladies and gentlmen. We have qualified Bantu doctors that can doctor me or you at any time under any circumstances. Do you think that I can allow myself to be touched by an inferior? A doctor I really know to be inferior?'

For the second time the inspector struck the positively responsive chord.

'Ah, Eureka!' — wailed the boy, seething with rage and contempt. 'I've got it . . . an ace up his sleeve . . . bloody devious devil. How can these people be taken in by such arrant nonsense! I bet my neck this guy has come to the end of his rantings and wham! he lays down his ace with aplomb. The damn swines . . . swallowed the whole tosh hook line and sinker . . . But I wager him one, he'll soon meet me in question time, and I'll damn well floor him. He'll rue the moment he ever thought of coming here.'

'Think about it and you'll see the truth of the whole matter as I see it,' concluded the inspector to thundering applause.

The Master of Ceremonies was already on his feet before the inspector could settle himself properly.

'Ladies and gentlemen, you will agree with me when I say you need a breather just as much as the inspector needs it. There'll be a fifteen minute recess before we resume with our questions and answers. Thank you.' He sat down to converse with the inspector and his assistants.

There was a highly audible creaking of chairs as people rose to leave the auditorium for respite. Only a few people remained behind. Among them, the young private heckler sat by himself taking down copious notes from the memoranda left lying around by the people who had just vacated their seats.

Moloto 'aMoloto / Messages in Quotes

'Benevolent people never last, and a great number of people on this planet earth are usually malevolent. Who knows whether their aim is to last long?'

* * *

'A resolution unanimously adopted is anonymously so; should a man fall a victim thereof, he has nobody to blame but himself and anonymous. However, should he become a hero thereby, he should thank nobody but himself and the same anonymous.'

* * *

'There are two types of tendentious "class bunkers" on the campus. Some do the bunking in absentia by remaining in their rooms to swot, while some do the bunking in presentia by dozing in the class. Of the two I prefer the former; of course, the lecturer obviously prefers the latter.'

* * *

'Academic achievement is just like any economic asset; while perpetual transactions are necessary for the maintenance of the latter, constant reading is a necessity for the former otherwise it will eventually be totally written off through passage of time and be followed by inevitable academic insolvency.'

* * *

'A courtroom is a place where the laws made by parliamentary laymen during the absence of civilian laymen are interpreted by expert jurists in the presence of those civilian laymen while the parliamentary laymen are absent and thus unable to witness what ambiguous, vexatious and vague laws they have made.'

* * *

'The struggle is nothing else but an attempt to let those who are outside iron bars be behind them and those who are behind iron bars be outside them for the benefit of cunning as well as wise politicians.'

* * *

'Hang, but don't kill, because there is only one monopolist with a licence to do so, and to find out who he is, combine the first word in this quote with the last one, then you have got the man.'

* * *

'The future is like a mirage, the nearer you come to it, the farther it goes, hence nobody can reach it before his grave.'

Mabopane East

Nape 'a Motana / Five Poems

ANOTHER BLACK BOY

At a stokvel carnival
  he became a parasitic dot
His biological father
  is an ideological target
  now tethered at a mud 'n thatch.

His spinster-mother boarded
  the sardine-train
when the sky whispered dew.

I fancied he needed
  steel from sleep
But his eyes were vertical —
  glimpsing the nascent sun.

When next-door kids of matai-tai
  face the future with ablaze eyes
He groans under a Lanko carton
  walking: 5plus5 plus5plus5 plus 5
    to swarming Tembisa station
    and squats with Indian eyes
      behind 2 apple-pyramids
      and sings a ditty for dough!
      Hai zokwa apol! Hai zokwa apol!!

EXILE

1
 food left like vapour
 far we are to savour;
  the calabash brim
    boasts a dim
   face; a blood-brother:
   musical with brawny hunger.

   the climate not near mild
    adrenalin wields wild
    energy; gargantuan cloud
      roves to rain
on mountain soils loud
motherland, pawned by pain.

2
 crafty wood-spoon
 saturates the sun & moon
 but clouds are flat on rays
 we borrow cat-eyes for dusky days.

3
 the creamy cow
   crazes the milker's brow —
   an animating rainbow pales
   the smoke-kissed pail fails.

THE PICK-POCKET

In a coughing Kasi-train
Our lungs savour air —
  sprinkled with sweat perfumes etc.
Gazing at me he sees bread:
  The syringe spits
  Supersensitive fingers
    Schooled by poverty
      blackness
        or
      green courage
    anaesthetize me —
my pockets yield the Caesarian way.

My brow-babe
Now drowns in shebeen depths
Home is hell as I
  inhume bones in excuses –
    weak as dough!

MAHLALELA

Bubbling babalaaz
Dammit! Jee-wuz!
Ssiss! This bloddy cock —
time! I won't budge. Fock!

I'm faken discharged
for stuffing my biceps —
always flattened 5 times
  ad infinitum.

& you brand me mahlalela
  a good-for-nutting fella
Don't think me dom
  I'm solid wisdom.

I'd rather war than thrust a spade
  Ek deslike die julate
    Too bloody much
    That bloody Dutch
fugs me around like a bare boy
My stamina is niggardly to toy.

Blackening my blue overall
    for sweet bugoroll?
    No! Minus a cocoon
    I'm non-allergic to a spoon
    Wifey wields a pulsating purse
    She's lobola-labled to nurse.

Hella madjita let's slug Keg
  and polish with a fag
Let's revel in sweat-beads! Hell! —
fire may drain the well!

Nape 'a Motana published a selection of poems in *Staffrider* No. 1. With Risimati j'Mathonsi and others he is at present helping to launch Kwenza Creative Society. Interested writers, artists, musicians and supporters can get in touch with Kwenza by writing to P.O. Box 41, Pretoria 0001.

GROWING

In the preworld I could
dance on a spider-bridge
A rivulet dried up in me
  all photophobia.

Now on earth
I bite breasts
I eat the sun
The sun eats darkness
Darkness eats its heart.

Lush on earth, my eyes
store vim to dim downhill
The sea swallows the sun or
The sun steals the night or
The night chews sleep and
My sole & soul flirt with virgin morn
as I take biceps to baas.

Clouds of my brow
  spit mirage for marriage
My wife is a stethoscope
My wife is a knife
  for curves and strings.
  The stove puffs
  She laughs
  Coal eats its blackness
  Hunger dies a calabash death.

Night dies for my rebirth
When darkness is solar cud
My starched biceps
  reincarnate yesterday.

Thabo Mooke / Hammanskraal

THE THOUGHT OF DYING

It came to my mind like the east winds to my face when they begin to blow
I am no braver than any man, nor a funk either,
Yet the thought of dying did not quiver painfully in my heart.

I thought, 'To die is not to be destined to the grave
Where my body will rot and smell, becoming a festival of worms,
But a one-way journey in my mind; I shall not be able to tell it all.'

The thought of dying brought moisture to my eyes,
While I watched my daughter playing jauntily with her hospital kit.
She was young, intelligent and as soft to my eyes as the light of the moon.
Then the thought of dying quivered painfully in my heart.
I have told my daughter about many events on the journeys I have taken,
But from the long one-way journey in my mind
I won't return to tell it all.

Ahmed Essop / Film, *a story*

Nothing, since the time of the beard controversy, had shaken Muslims as much as the imminent release of the film 'The Prophet' on the Johannesburg cinema circuit. Though the film had received early publicity, it had not yet been seen by anyone, not even by Hermes Films, the syndicate that had bought it in America. The film was to arrive shortly by Pan American jet from Hollywood. The anger of devout Muslims was aroused and I found myself, working as a free lance journalist at the time, in the thick of the issue. A day did not pass without individuals and representatives of religious groups urging me to inform not only the cinema syndicate but the 'entire world' that the film was 'sacriligeous' and 'blasphemous' and that its screening would 'not be tolerated'.

The directors of Hermes Films approached the religious objections to the film in a secular way and stated that the decision to release the film or not could only be taken, in the rational order of things, after the film had been seen and that they would invite Muslim religious organizations to a preview. The response only served to leaven the anger of Muslims and the Islamic Academy convened a Muslim Council to deal with the matter. The Muslim Council, after a day of deliberation, decided to detail their objections in a letter to Hermes Films and gave a copy to the press. The pith of the letter read:

'You the directors of Hermes Films have invited us to sin by seeing the film. How can we, believers in the sacred Law of the Almighty, sit down with you in a den of iniquity — you will agree that cinemas are places where scenes of revelry, nudity and lewd acts are screened daily — and view something that blasphemes our Prophet Mohammed? Tractors will not pull us there, never mind oxen.

'Lest you are ignorant of the Law of Islam on picture-making, let us apprise you that all pictures of animate objects are banned, whether of pencil, paint, crayon or celluloid. Our Prophet said: "Every picture-maker will be in the fire of Hell". Our Prophet had foreseen the time when picture-makers, and the hosts of godless others involved in the film industry, including your good selves, would want to corrupt the virtuous people of the earth and placed a strong unequivocal injunction against pictures. It is even reported by his contemporaries that he said: "Angels do not enter a house in which there is a dog or a picture." So do not presume to tell us that it is rational to see something before it can be condemned. We don't have to see something that is damned from the beginning.

'You will now appreciate your own temerity in asking us to sin by viewing the film. Anyone involved with this film will be consigned to the fires of Hell even if he is an angel in every other respect.'

I went to interview Mr Winters of Hermes Films on the reaction of his syndicate to the letter. He was a big man, pale in complexion, with bronze hair cut in a fringe over his forehead. He was sitting behind a walnut-wood desk in his office on the eighteenth floor of Twentieth Century Centre.

'You will appreciate,' he said, leaning forward, with his grey eyes twinkling under bushy brows, 'that my company operates strictly on a financial basis and that all other issues are irrelevant. The film has been bought for a hundred thousand rands and we intend to release it for screening.'

'You do not think the objections have any validity?'

'None. The film, we are informed, is historically true.'

'Are you certain there is nothing offensive?'

'Nothing. The Prophet is portrayed as a hero.

I recorded his statements in my notebook and prepared to leave.

'By the way,' he said, coming with me to the door, 'you can state in your report that cinemas are very democratic places and that no one is compelled to go to them.'

The press report of the interview outraged Muslim conscience. The film became the topic of conversation and the theme of every sermon at every mosque. The Muslim Council was summoned again and this time an aggressive tone was added to its deliberations. The Council finally decided on the types of action to be taken against the cinema syndicate if they carried out their intention to release the film: protest resolutions would be adopted by Muslim groups throughout the country and telegrams sent to the syndicate; international Muslim organizations and all Muslim governments would be urged to lodge strong protests; demonstrations would be held. As the issue was now beginning to look grave and required daily attention, an Action Committee of five men headed by Molvi Haroon was elected.

One incident marred the unanimity of the proceedings of the Muslim Council. A Mr Mohammed proposed a resolution that a telegram should be sent to the Prime Minister urging him to ban the film under the Censorship Act. Molvi Haroon immediately objected and pointing a warning index finger at Mr Mohammed said: 'The entire matter has nothing to do with politics.' Mr Mohammed retorted: 'Molvi Haroon, you should not think I am one of your pupils.' Molvi Haroon replied: 'I wish you had been, for you would then have experienced how I deal with those who are insolent.' Mr Mohammed countered with: 'You think I am an inhabitant of Lilliput!' Fortunately for Mr Mohammed, Molvi Haroon, who had not heard of that country, could not savour the innuendo and the dispute ended.

The upshot of the meeting was that Hermes Films found themselves receiving an avalanche of letter, telegrams, cablegrams and protest resolutions. I telephoned Mr Winters and asked him if there was any change in his company's attitude and he replied curtly: 'My company is not prepared to communicate with fanatics. Our intention to release the movie still stands.'

The Action Committee responded: 'We are determined to eliminate this plot of the enemies of Islam. We shall reduce to ashes Twentieth Century Centre and any cinema screening the film even if it means human sacrifice on our part.'

I telephoned Mr Winters and asked him what his company intended doing. He informed me that a meeting of the directors would take place the next day and if I came up immediately after the meeting he would give me their reply. I went the next day and while I was being whisked in the lift to the eighteenth floor it occurred to me that this would perhaps be the last time I came there as, on the next day, if Hermes Films did not capitulate, the building would be gutted by fire. I waited in the reception room — among ferns, cyclamens and begonias — for the crucial decision.

When Mr Winters entered the room looking crestfallen I knew his company had capitulated. He told me: 'My company is prepared to settle the dispute. We don't want to give Muslims the trouble of setting fire to Twentieth Century Centre and we don't want to be held responsible for giving them the opportunity of committing suicide. They can have the film for a hundred thousand rands and hold a ceremonial burning if they wish.'

On being informed of the decision the Action Committee replied briefly: 'We regret we are unable to accept the offer of Hermes Films as it is too expensive.'

It seemed that the whole issue would now enter the doldrums of the bargaining table and the promise of the fire-cracker fuse fizzle out, since Hermes Films made no further overture. Then the film was advertised for screening at the Pantheon Cinema and the fuse flared up again.

The Action Committee hurriedly summoned a plenary session of the Muslim Council to decide on collective action. The meeting began on a stormy note when Mr Mohammed suggested that the Council in organizing resistance seek the assistance of political groups. 'The film is an insult to people who are not white. Our fight against the film is a fight for freedom.' Pandemonium broke out. A dozen voices accused Mr Mohammed of introducing politics into religion. An Action Committee member shouted: 'At the last meeting you wanted the film banned and now you talk of freedom. You are nothing but an opportunist trying to take over the Council' 'You're a liar!' Mr Mohammed roared and rushed forward to grapple with the speaker. But he fell over a chair as several men attempted to intercept him. Mr Mohammed's fall has the effect of calming everyone's tempers and Molvi Haroon went on to harangue the meeting. 'The Prophet says in the Koran: 'Verily, the life of this world is but play, amusement, mutual pride and the accumulation of wealth and sons." Now is politics not part of the life of this world? Is politics not amusement, mutual pride and the accumulation of wealth? Ibn Abbas reported . . .' Mr Mohammed jumped up from his seat and shouted: 'Why leave your five sons out?' There was pandemonium again.

The meeting ended with a declaration that trumpeted a call to arms:

'We Muslims proclaim to the enemies of Islam that the choice is between the film and our lives. Either we live and the film dies, or the film lives and we perish. The accursed progeny of Satan are operating an international conspiracy to discredit our Prophet.

'Will Muslims rise in a Jihad to defend the honour of our Prophet? The first answer has already been given by our protests. We shall finally answer with our blood which will dye the surface of the earth red.

'We call on all Muslims to join us in a march on the Pantheon for the purpose of incinerating the cinema and its owner.

'May Allah continue to guide us.'

On a Monday afternoon I went to Red

Square where the demonstrators gathered. There were about a thousand men from all over the country. Some were dressed in white robes, some in Arab garb with burnouses, some sported embroidered silk turbans. They were all bearded. Molvi Haroon, looking very distinguished in a saffron-coloured turban, would lead the procession into the heart of the city and personally light the flame that would set the cinema ablaze. The Action Committee rallied the men — two standards with green flags emblazoned with the Islamic moon and star were raised aloft — and the demonstrators were about to set out when the security police arrived.

An officer came up to Molvi Haroon and a few others who were standing apart and asked them courteously if they would permit him to read a proclamation.

'What proclamation?' Molvi Haroon asked.

'Let me read it then you will all know at once.'

The Action Committee conferred together and decided that no harm would be done by allowing the proclamation to be read. In any case they were not involved in politics. The officer motioned with his hands to everyone to come closer and read: 'You are hereby informed on this the 10th day of March, 19-, at 2.13 p.m. by me, Captain Martinus Paulus Reichman, that in terms of the Riotous Assemblies Act of 19- no meetings of persons for the purpose of public demonstrations may be held.'

When the Captain had finished Molvi Haroon smiled at him and told him with an ironic look in his eyes: 'This is a religious gathering.'

'Are you trying to tell me that you are holding a religious gathering in Red Square on a Monday afternoon? I am giving you and your people exactly fifteen minutes to disperse, otherwise my men will charge.'

The Action Committee held a quick meeting and then Molvi Haroon addressed the demonstrators, who all sat down on the ground, in Urdu. He told them that the infidels were trying to lure them into politics but they would not succeed. There was a conspiratorial crusade against Muslims, but their eventual triumph was as certain as the triumph of Saladin. Nothing would ever deter them from setting fire to the Pantheon Cinema and its owner. They should all find their way in ones and twos, using devious routes, into the city centre and gather outside the cinema.

The demonstrators felt dispirited. The appearance of the police, with guns in shining holsters, the menace of the truncheons and batons swinging playfully in their hands, was enough to cow the boldest, and many of them, instead of finding their way to the cinema found their way home. They were law-abiding citizens and did not want to get involved in politics (anything involving the security police was political). However, the Action Committee and ten others reached the Pantheon. I had preceded them in my car and waited for them to arrive. They gathered outside the cinema, a huge granite structure with a red neon sign flashing above its five entrance doors: 'The Prophet'. Around massive pillars were posters in glass show cases advertising the film.

The group found themselves jostled by the pedestrians and by the people entering the cinema, and by those examining the posters. Several curious onlookers gathered to stare at the men in white robes and with ferocious beards. Some people congratulated them and expressed the hope that their presence would make the film a success (they thought that the group's presence was a gimmick by the owner of the cinema to attract the attention of the public). Others wanted to know where they came from and if they were real Arab sheiks. Children holding their mothers' hands shouted: 'Mummy! Look at their beards! Mummy! Look at their beards!' The noise of the city exploded all around them and they began to feel lost. After a while a doorkeeper in maroon uniform with gilt buttons and yellow braid, seeing the men standing for too long a period, came up to them and told them to move on as they were obstructing the pavement which had become unusually crowded with people trying to enter the cinema.

'And by the way,' he said, 'this cinema is for Europeans only.' The group looked at the infidel in contempt and said nothing. The doorkeeper went away, shrugging his shoulders. He came back in a short while, looking upset.

'The manager wants to know if you are Arabs or other Easterners?'

No one replied. Molvi Haroon smiled faintly.

'I say,' he shouted, 'don't you understand English? Are you Arabs or Indians or some other race?'

No one answered. More people began to gather.

I was standing near the group, so he turned to me.

'Can you tell me who these people are?'

'I can't tell,' I said, preferring to keep my professional neutrality.

He addressed the group again.

'I say the manager wants to know. If you are Indians he knows the law. If you are Arabs he doesn't and will 'phone the lawyer to find out. Will one of you speak?'

They gave the man a stony look.

'Speak! Speak!'

Throwing up his hands in frustration he went into the cinema. Soon he returned with the manager. More people had gathered around to witness the entertaining incident that was developing. The manager approached the group.

'Gentlemen, could you please identify yourselves.'

The group stood like statues. They were not going to talk to a man who was part of an anti-Islamic conspiracy.

'The darned whatever-they-are just want to make trouble,' the doorkeeper said irascibly.

'Not so fast, Valentino,' the manager said gently, turning to the spectators.

'Can anyone help please. Who are these gentlemen? What do they want?'

No one ventured an explanation. Besides, the men looked so fierce, with hatred smouldering in their eyes, like ancient Assyrian warriors, that they were afraid to question them. But a lady, dressed in bottle-green slacks, with a string of beads around her neck, said to the manager:

'Why do you want to interfere with them?'

'I am not interfering. I am only trying to be helpful.'

'They don't need any help. Go back into your cinema. I am sure they don't want to enter your Whites-only cinema.'

'You black bitch!' the doorkeeper shouted. 'Who are you to tell us?'

'Quiet Valentino!' the manager said.

The lady who was tall and lithe took a step towards the doorkeeper and dextrously smacked him across the face. 'Don't speak to me in that way,' she said.

'Bitch!' he screamed, lunging at her, but several people got in his way and the manager thrust his hand accidentally into his face. The doorkeeper swore and tried to kick the lady, but instead kicked someone else who kicked back at him.

'Stop! Stop!' the manager pleaded desperately. 'It is only a small matter.'

People came running across from the opposite pavement. Cars came to a standstill and began hooting. The demonstrators found themselves pushed back towards the entrance doors of the cinema. People began to take sides. Some were for the lady, others for the doorkeeper. Tempers began to flare. The manager went on appealing for calm but nobody seemed to be listening to him. A fist bludgeoned the doorkeeper's face, scuffles broke out and suddenly everyone was fighting.

The police arrived and several gun shots were fired into the air. The reaction was almost immediate — the fighting stopped as though Doomsday had come. The police charged and the rioters ran helter-skelter, seeking refuge in shops, restaurants, pharmacies, hairdressers' salons and in the cinema.

I was standing beside the demonstrators who were huddled together in a niche in the porch of the Pantheon Cinema, unable to move because of the press of people, when the manager succeeded in making his way where we were.

'Gentlemen, come with me, please. I don't want you to be hurt.'

Molvi Haroon and his group were so shocked and bewildered by the tumult they had caused and the sudden arrival of the police that when the manager appeared, urging them to go with him, they felt that a saviour had come to lead them to a place of safety.

'This way, gentlemen,' the manager said, taking Molvi Haroon's hand, pushing others out of the way, leading them into the building. I followed. He shepherded us through an inner door and giving us over to usherettes with torches quickly disappeared.

The auditorium was thickly carpeted and overhead faint stars were shining in an indigo sky. We sank into plush velvet seats. On the panoramic screen a procession of Arab horsemen was approaching a desert city. It was met at the entrance gate by the chieftain who led the way to his palace where riders dismounted. They entered a splendid room where a feast lay spread. While the handsome 'Prophet' and his party were feating, flutes began to play and dancing girls in diaphanous jade silk glided in among the guests . . .

Mpumalanga, Natal

Mafika Pascal Gwala

THERE IS . . .
(after Victor Casàus)

Undeniably there is.

There is a truth
with rings wider than a poet's eye

There is a battling nature
Now threatened by pollution
and sprawling cities

There is, continually
nature's freedom
despite the moon landings
despite the heart transplants

There is, with all the odds against
a will to watch a child grow
Even if it is in a littered street
Or in a shack where rain pours
as water through a sieve

There is a laughter
brimful with the turbulence of man

There is a hope
fanned by endless zeal
decisive against the spectre
of Sharpeville
hardened by the tears of Soweto

There is a thunder path
that stretches into jungle heights
where wolves whine and howl
where camouflage is nature's flak guns
where the dream of Pierre Mulele
has revived

There is cause to stand
and utter words hurtful
to those who skulk
in the wilderness of lies
and bias

For there to be
For there to be facts 'other than'
is our human asset.

Mafika Pascal Gwala's first book of poems, *Jol' iinkomo* was published by Ad. Donker in 1977. Gwala lives in Mpumalanga, Hammarsdale, Natal, which is also the base of poet Nkathazo ka Mnyayiza.

Work by the Mpumalanga group will appear in future issues of *Staffrider*.

Tembisa, Soweto

Moyale Segale, Edmund Sonny Molaudzi /Poems

HOW CAN I

How can I sing songs of love when my love is not accepted?
How can I chant of beauty when beauty is no more?
How can I deceive myself that what I guzzle is purified?
How can I pretend that life is taboo?
How can I devoutly genuflect in anticipation
that roasted pigeons from nowhere will descend into my mouth?
What is that detente chat about when I am shunned and slain?

How can I force down the gullet what I regard as debris?
How is it possible that one go hungry in the midst of so much plenty?
How can I rejoice when I know not where my family is?
How can I vaunt a democracy that makes me an underdog?
How can I venture to curb crisis when crisis is me?
What is that conference table about when Rome is ablaze?

Moyale Segale

BOTHO

Bana ba Lebowa
Rutang botho:
Kgomarelang botho
Bapedi ratang lerato,
Bapedi ratang botho.
Botho ke go
Rata batho bohle,
Botho ke go nyaka
Botho bohle.
Botho ke go thušana
Botho ke go
Kwelana bohloko;
Botho ga bo nyatše
Motho
Botho ga bo hloge
Motho
Botho ke lerato;
Lerato ke go
Natefelwa ke batho
Ba bangwe.
Lerato ke yena
Modimo le badimo
Ba rena.

Edmund Sonny Molaudzi

Kimberley / Noorie Cassim

DOES THIS EXIST?

A land of honey
none yearns for money
A sky so blue
yet rain falls too —
its people are happy and gay
as love lingers on all day—
Does this exist?
Dare I persist
in my search for this land?

Piet Retief / Gerhard van Wyngaard

BLOEDBROERS
vir Themba

Kom ons hou 'n multi-raciał kop-aan-kop botsing
met die brug oor paulpietersburg se pad
at 80 mpu (ek sal afkrap)
(jy kan gaan rapporteer)

of:

hierdie poem moet ons om ons nekke dra
soos 'n dosie valiums

Alexandra

Poems/Jackie wa Seroke, Salthiel Billy Lengwati, Israel Izzy Moloto

OUR POINTS OF VIEW

I goofed.
You can't do anything right.
She said nothing about that.

I am argumentative.
You are belligerent.
She enjoys a lively discussion.

I am a creature of many moods.
You are temperamental.
Mama, she is real cool.

I have a healthy sense of self-esteem.
Who do you think you are, anyway.
She is not conceited.

I am unavoidably detained.
You have no consideration for other people.
She is inexcusably late.

I am 'me'.
You are 'you'.
She is Azania.

Jackie waSeroke

ALEXANDRA

Dear late Alex
I remember how
You were during those heydays
I remember all the children
You brought up
Children with different ideas
Yes, professors of different ideas.

Dear late Alex
I remember how old age
Began creeping into your body
I remember all those first pains
You experienced then, but
No doctor could heal you, instead
Prescribed operation as the answer.

Dear late Alex
I remember how the sejeso
Was planted out of your belly
I remember all the diseases you
Suffered from, yes Diepkloof
Meadowlands, Tembisa, Klipspruit.

Dear late Alex
I remember how unexpectedly
You were buried
I remember seeing your tombstone.

Dear late Alex
I'll remember you always,
Though your body is long buried
but worms now feed themselves
on your decomposition reminding
me of you every night.

Oh! Dear mother Alex
Will these worms ever vanish
and let you rest in peace?

Yes mother Alex, I'll pray
Day and night to have
another you.

Salthiel Billy M. Lengwati

AT THE GRAVEYARD

Sea of faces in black clothes,
Faces facing downwards,
In order to show respect.

Parson: 'Weep not for his death
For he died like a hero.
Everyone who kills you
destroys only your flesh
not your soul.
I mourn for his families.

'Wet not the soil of Africa,
The son of Africa is no more.
The cup in which he used to drink
will be untouched forever.
The path in which he used to
walk, will be empty forever.

'May the Lord bless you.
Daughters and sons of Africa
Weep not for his death.
For death is a necessary end.
May the Lord be with your
suppressed feelings,
Now and forever more,
Amen.'

Israel Izzy Moloto

S. J. Masinga / Homestead, Germiston

NANG'UMHLOLA

Ngentatha kusa bhalule,
Ngabona umhlolo bhalule,
Ngentatha kusa kuyinjabulo.

Kwakhanya kwazwakhala udumo,
Kwakhala igqude bhalule,
Kwakhanyisa emhlabeni.

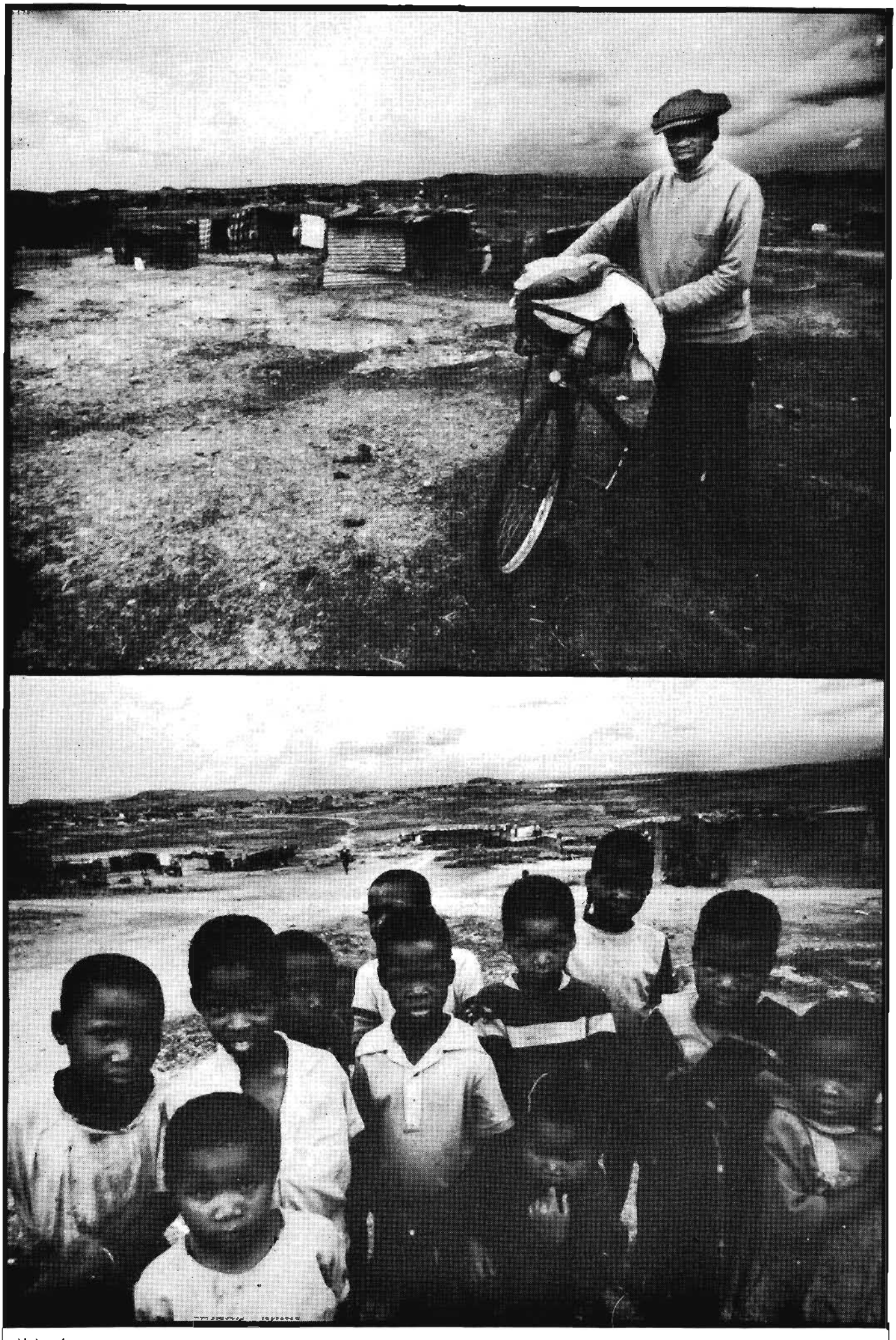
Vela langa loku lunga
Abantu nezinyamazane,
Balinde ukukhanya kwakho.

Wena ongazwani no mbetha,
Nxa uvela umbetha udle umhlaba,
Vuleka mhlaba uphuze amanzi.

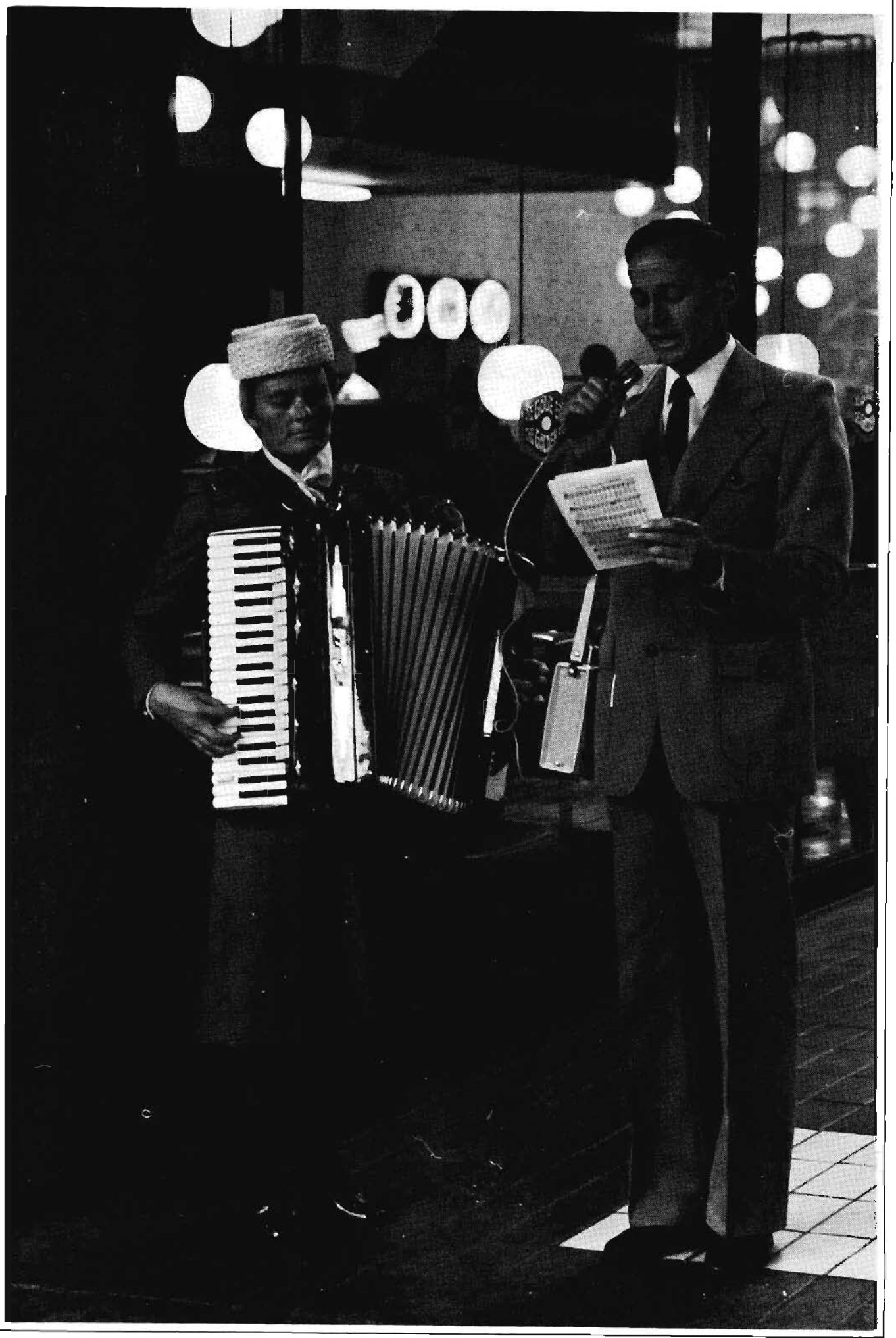
Ungumthwali wemisebenzi yethu,
Uku yo bikela omkhulu,
Makwenzekhe okuka Tixo.

Bheka amafu amanhle,
Ayakwambeza wena ongalinganiswa,
Akusibekela sikufune lapha ukhona,

Ngubani onokuqonda okwaphezulu,
Ngumdali owenze konke,
Makadunyiswe uTixo.



Helen Aron



Mark Lavender

Walter Saunders / E-Papers / *a story*

Outside the house there was a sign. FREE SAND. As simple as that. And you'd be surprised how many people took advantage of the offer. Personally I couldn't be bothered: what would I have done with it anyway? When I went to the house it was always for a different reason.

I never climbed those steps without feeling a little ill-at-ease. Even insecure. And the reason baffled me. I have asked myself questions about it many times. There was no reason to feel like that. Why should walking up a flight of steps, which was the same as countless other flights of steps, have produced a feeling of fear?

It's not as if the steps themselves were dangerous, though they were in a state of disrepair and several were loose. Nor did the front wall of the house lean over unduly. Enough perhaps to disconcert a person unaccustomed to such buildings (and, of course, to this building in particular). But I had known the place for many years; in fact, as long as I could remember. During that time the angle at which the wall leaned over had increased only very slightly. No cause for alarm. Certainly. What I am getting at is this: neither the steps nor the overhanging gabled wall was responsible for the terror that I felt whenever I trod that rickety way.

Suppose you were a passenger on a bus that has got out of control going down a steep hill. Suppose, too, that you were the sole inmate — no fellow-passengers to distract you with their screams — and suppose you look and see there is no driver (this makes you think for a moment that you are the victim of some criminal joke and of course you'd be wrong for there is no evidence to suggest that the bus has been set off deliberately).

I wonder if this conveys something of the horror I felt as I walked up those steps? Yet I see my comparison is defective in one respect. The bus, I mean. You must regard it all as something happening in a dream. That'll convey the feeling properly and I'll tell you why. In my experience, when you go through an ominous dream like that, before the disaster actually occurs you become aware that you are dreaming. So you relax and give way to the uncontrollable forces around you.

CRASH! You wake up. A little shaken, perhaps. In a cold sweat, as they say, though I can never fathom what the saying means. But none the worse for it really. Above all, greatly relieved that it was a dream.

Well, that was exactly how I felt while climbing those steps. Three-quarters of the way up, the feeling of terror would give way to a feeling of relief, the placid acceptance of the inevitability of the 'disaster' actually superseding the disaster itself.

At the top of the steps there was a brown door with frosted panels and a brass knocker which you didn't have to strike. You simply pushed the door and it groaned a little as it came unstuck. Then it swung open onto a dingy passage.

There was a rack in which spades were kept for people who came for free sand. Some new, some old, but all usable. The owner of the house was too proud to lend strangers ill-conditioned spades.

It was part of the watchman's task to supervise the removal of the free sand. He had to see that the donees conducted themselves in as orderly a fashion as can be expected from that type of person. They were not to fight or even play in the pits while waiting their turn. Noone was to go away with more than he could carry — and you'd be surprised how many people tried to.

Nor was this all. The sand had to be carefully sifted before it could be removed. Any stones, pieces of brick, roots, bits of wood, buried books, newspapers, tins etc., that the owner of the property might find useful, had to be placed on a pile to one side. The watchman, who regarded his job as important and did not try to conceal the fact, was conscientious and very irritable. He would not tolerate foolishness of any sort. Moreover he expected the sand-fetchers to know all the rules before they got there. He had enough work to do without explaining things to simpletons.

As O looked at K-V's glasses an extraordinary thing seemed to be happening to them: the rims seemed to expand and contract, expand, contract. This distracted him so completely that he stopped listening to what K-V was saying. Fortunately K-V, who spoke passionately whenever he had an audience, brought his fist down on the table to emphasise a point. The crash startled O back to reality. He had the presence of mind to nod his head as though in agreement with K-V.

The passage seemed endless. The walls were grey with dust and here and there the peeling wallpaper hung in long strips. Spiders busied themselves in the corners and even spun their webs from one side of the passage to the other.

Once I took A to see the house. We had not advanced more than three yeards into the gloom of the passage when the poor lass found herself entangled in a web. She spread her hands to part it, when there, not six inches from her eyes, she saw the busy worker itself. No larger than most house spiders, I suppose, but in her feminine mind it was magnified out of all proportion. She screamed and fled. Going at that speed I don't know how she did not slip on the looser steps and go headlong down into one of the yawning pits below the steps, but luck was with her. For my own part I did not dare throw caution to the winds and, in following her down the steps, I went only a little faster than usual. Consequently, by the time I reached the bottom she was already out of sight.

What a relief! Well, if the spider had frightened her so, what would she have done if she'd seen the rest?

I don't want the last statement to mislead you. I don't want you to think you're on the ghost train or that I'm conducting you on a tour through a hall of horrors. It is not so at all. There was nothing really frightening about the house. What I was trying to say was that anyone who was capable of being frightened, or distracted, by a little thing like a spider would find herself quite out of place in the main parts of the house. Well, to begin with, what about boredom?

The passage was long, because of the enormous number of spades, and it led gloomily to a door at the far end. The fanlight above the door was so covered with black dust that to the casual observer it looked more like a board than a pane of glass. Indeed I myself had made the mistake of thinking that it was a board until one evening when a certain event prompted me to look at it more carefully.

On that occasion I was about to open the door (from the inside, that is) when I heard angry voices and the sound of feet on the steps outside. The door was flung open with great violence. I was carried with it and forced against the wall. There, jammed between door and wall (while angry people stamped past and away down the passage) the only part of my body I could move was my head and I could only move it upwards. In doing so I discovered that what I had always thought was a board was in fact a fanlight.

In the blackened pane I saw what appeared to be two ghostly figures. After a moment of suspense I realised they were simply reflections of two people standing in the passage, Mr and Mrs Wood, who lived in the house. I can't think why they were standing there. Anyway, I was forced to come out from behind the door and greet them rather sheepishly before going out.

I seldom did any more than greet Mr and Mrs Wood, but once, when they were together, she stopped me and we had rather an interesting conversation.

'What do you do for a living?'

'I work in an office.'

'Oh, where?'

'Boyle & Boyle. Containerization office.'

'Well I never, do you like the work? Is it interesting?'

'Oh, fairly.'

'I would never have thought of you working in a containerization office. Why don't you take up some kind of profession? You could be a lawyer or a doctor. You look far more like a doctor than a containerization clerk.'

'What? D'you think so? Really?'

'Yes. Doesn't he, Harold?' She turned to her husband as she asked him, then she turned again and searched me with her eyes. I felt entirely within her power, drained, like a wrung-out towel. I regretted having said so much about myself. 'Doesn't he, Harold?'

'Doesn't he what? Oh, perhaps. If he has the spark, the go-ahead. It's the only way to get on.'

'Why don't you come and see us one day? Come for tea. No milk, of course. I'll ask Harold to put a note under your door.'

When O gave notice at Boyle & Boyle (an action he later retracted) the Chief Clerk, Chris Anderson, called him in to his office.

'I'd like to ask you a question. Why d'you want to leave?'

'Because the job is so boring. I'm bored stiff. Mr Anderson.'

'Boredom is what you make of things. One can find amusement and great joy wherever one is and whatever one does.'

'Even digging holes?'

'Even digging holes. If I had to dig holes, I'd find it fascinating. I'd study all the different colours in the earth as I dug down: the red-brown, the grey-brown, the seasand pale, the grey-blue and the black. Those are just a few of the shades I'd have in mind to look out for, before I'd even begun digging. Certainly I'd never be bored, for, apart from the exciting shades, there'd also be stones, some small, some large. Though, of course, there's more to digging holes than mere sand and stones. There are things that get buried. Chance burials, I suppose you might call them. I mean things like old rags and papers. Books, too, and shoes, if you get to them before the white ants. Now *they*, as you know, are great tunnellers, and I'm

Pretoria

absolutely certain they derive their own antlike joy from the simple act of digging. D'you know, they say the whole city would collapse in ten years (or is it thirty?) if everyone left it, because of white ants. Just think of it, in ten or thirty years, the complete monarch of all you survey.'

'But those ants never see the light, they never survey anything,' muttered O, making no attempt to see the Chief Clerk's point-of-view. He was, as you have gathered, hopelessly immature and the Chief Clerk (a much maligned man in certain quarters) had the sense to go on ignoring him.

'Digging, then, is a highly-skilled, I might almost say a nutritious activity. Down, up turn, SLOOSH! Through your back the elixir goes and you can feel its elation-producing properties. It's simply a question of attitudes.'

He went on to remind O, with a certain amount of sarcasm, that at the house, as I have already described, there was plenty of opportunity for digging. The house, in fact, might be fairly described as a utopian situation with FREE DIGGING FOR ALL. Well, not really for all, but certainly all those who engaged in digging there did so free of charge. And as for shades, let me say proudly that the sand at the house was famous for its shades. Why do you think the watchman had to keep all those people away who came clamouring for a chance to dig? He used to drive them off with a spade or an old oar. You should have seen his eyes then! As big as mill-wheels. The crowd quickly drew back, gibbering.

You see, while officially the media spoke of digging as free for all, it was in effect a privilege. Only the chosen few could dig. If you'd allowed all those yelling, starving, ill-smelling ruffians to dig without any sort of control, they'd have taken over the whole property and kept all the digging to themselves. And they'd certainly have done something destructive, like burning down the house. Besides, if literally anybody had been allowed to dig, it would have stopped being a worthwhile occupation. Who then would have cared to philosophize about sand and rags and stones?

Anyway you first had to apply. There was a special box-like room next to the gate, without windows and with barely even a door. By 'barely a door' I don't mean there was actually no door but (how can I explain?) well, one had the feeling when one was inside filling in and signing forms, that there was no door. The wooden box (you couldn't really call it a room) was very dusty and always stifling hot, flyridden, dirty. All it contained was a wooden counter and a few open shelves on which the files were placed, the top ones always black with dust.

At last we'd reached the river; the fog hung black
Around us but those instruments don't lie:
We lay in water without a ripple, dark and thick
As tar, and though it seemed the curtain lifted,
Revealing massive trees or buildings, it was
All seeming — there was nothing there.
Nothing to see or measure, it turned out.

A clerk sat on a high stool behind the counter in the wooden box. He was small, ridiculously small for his pinstripe shirt. Braces. Head grey to balding. Horn-rimmed glasses. Withdrawn lips. A great lantern jaw. Some say he was a friend of the watchman, even a brother or half-brother. Certainly that sort of nepotism was not improbable. Others say he worked in the box under sufferance and that he longed to join those digging in the pits. All I know is that he was bitter and resentful and not the least helpful to those filling in forms, though I believe he was an absolute expert when it came to filing them away.

First, let me tell you something about the forms themselves. They were all shapes and sizes: oblong, round, rectangular, star-shaped etc. They were of different thicknesses of paper, cardboard, wood and even metal. The metal forms were the most peculiar shape and were perforated with thousands of tiny holes in order to facilitate engraving (there was an expert who came once a week to do the job).

Unlike the metal forms, which were a uniform unburnished grey, the non-metallic forms were a variety of colours: red-brown, grey-brown, seasand pale etc., all in accordance with statutory requirements. I can't possibly describe the ins and outs of all the forms but I can describe some. (In spite of my connections, even I had to fill in countless forms.)

Let me start with the so-called 'blank' forms. These simply had the number and the date at the top, together with the official declaration of love for the Chairman and Secretary of Family Committee. They were used for private letter-writing, a by-no-means simple procedure. You first had to ask the clerk for the Letter-Writing Compendium, in which all 1,436 possible letters were to be found. The clerk always grumbled when asked for the book and if he was in a particularly vile temper he would simply say, 'It's been lost,' or, 'Not today, you know I never hand it out on such-and-such a day, come next week.' Or something like that. Meanwhile you'd been queueing for hours for nothing! And of course there was no guarantee that he'd let you have the Compendium when you asked for it the following week. Why should he? After all, he was a privileged person, making just and reasonable use of his privileges. In fact, they say he'd sometimes deliberately tell you a day when he knew (though you didn't) that the wooden box would not be open. Well, whether that is true or not I can't say, but certainly it was the kind of senseless malice that flowed from him like water from a tap.

While I'm about it, I might as well give you an example of the kind of letter you were permitted to use, should the occasion arise. Here is one included under the title World Famous Letters:

Garraway's, twelve o'clock. Dear Mrs B. — Chops and Tomata sauce. Yours, PICKWICK.

This letter was given the grading Highly Recommended.

So much, then, for private letters. Though, of course, one didn't normally go to the wooden box simply to write such letters. Far more frequent were the occasions on which one needed to fill in forms for official reasons, such as, for example, the digging up and carrying away of free sand from the house.

When one finally got to the 'door' of the wooden box, the first thing one had to do was to pull the bell-rope three times. Not that the bell rang; at most it emitted a sort of growl, or, more correctly, the place where the bell had been emitted this growl (i.e. the rusted pulley, hinges etc.) for the bell itself had long since been removed. And quite rightly too; can you imagine all those people constantly clanging the bell, day in and day out, whenever the wooden box was open, or whenever they thought it should be open?

You might wonder whether, when one had dutifully pulled the rope in the required manner, one's fellow-citizens would look upon one and nod approvingly, but far from it. They would continue to stand emotionlessly in the queue and those who were fortunate enough to be carrying brown paper bags would continue to look into them every now and then. But the moment anyone forgot to pull the bell-rope, or only pulled it twice, or even (quite stupidly) once, the moment that happened there was almost a riot. Such rancour, such abuse, as you have never heard. The clerk would put his baleful head around the door and that in itself was sometimes sufficient to silence the mob, but in any case the strong-arm-of-the-law was always at hand to restore order. The defaulter would be bundled off amid the imprecations of the indignant crowd, who would stamp on his feet, pull his hair and tear at his coat-sleeves as he was hurried past. Some would even take advantage of this unofficially permitted licence to rip off his buttons, which were in very short supply at the time. And if he happened to be carrying a brown paper bag, you can imagine what happened to that: snatched away, its contents would be held up triumphantly by those who were fortunate enough to gain possession of them: here an empty match-box, there a piece of wire, here the stub of a pencil, there a faded carrot. Such happy possessions, yet so soon to be swept away by the promptly investigating F.P.

Meanwhile, however stupid he was, the defaulter knew that he could expect one of two possible modes of action. He would either be taken immediately to F.P.H.Q. in an F.P. van, formally charged under Act So-and-So of Such-and-Such, and sentenced there and then to a minimum stifle Outside, or else he would be packed off home, which would mean a follow-up at any time of the day or night and a full, extremely painful probe before Family Committee. Then the endless examinations, his name on the proscribed list and all privileges withdrawn, including the privilege of sand.

(I must apologise for the long digression and for the lies I wrote about Family Committee and Family Prop. These institutions are not nearly as bad as some people make out. After all, as the Chief Clerk at B & B. so often used to say, life is mainly a matter of adjustments and if Family Committee sees that you're making the effort there won't ever be any need for Family Prop. to intervene.)

Now I must go back to A, who fled from the house and was fortunate not to slip on one of those loose steps. I did not see her again for some time and then it was under unpleasant and yet, I believe, ultimately rewarding circumstances.

You see, one of my self-improving duties at the time was working part-time for Family Prop. Sometimes it was in the evenings, sometimes late at night, sometimes in the tender hours before dawn. The telephone would ring and a voice would say, 'Are you ready?' That was all. I knew what I had to do.

First a bath in tepid water, rubbing myself all over with a wonder chemical called pepil that removed even the faintest traces of human odour. Then the black tights with the frontal triangle neatly cut away, then the F.P. singlet with its simple but splendid embossed insignia, the long black gloves, the black cape, the amphibious slip-on boots. Finally the tight-fitting hood with its small, horn-like eartips.

Proudly clad, I'd wait at the corner of E — Road and Gopher

Lane. Soon the F.P. van would appear and I'd take my place next to my similarly-clad fellows, joining in the merriment and laughter as the van roared and screeched its way to the first destination of the night.

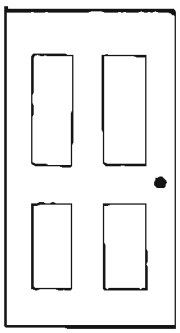
It was on such a mission that I came upon A for the first time for many months. Because I'd liked her, I saw to it that she'd be singled out from the other arrestees for a bit of special treatment. That way I could be sure that Family Committee would take up her case. Badly-mauled beauties were usually passed on to F.C. for improvement and those with the right attitudes often ended up doing very well. Certainly it was the best, if not the only way of rescuing her from herself and, who knows, even now she may be rising in the scales, just like the rest of us, for which I do honestly believe that a large share of the credit is due to me. Though, at the time when she was arrested, she hadn't the least idea who I was in my F.P. gear. True, she recognised my voice when I said to her, 'Why did you run away?' but all she said was, 'So you're one of them? I'm not surprised.'

Not very promising, I must admit, but, between them, F.P. and F.C. work wonders. And as the Chief Clerk used to say, 'While there's life, there's hope.'

What was confirmed for me at the time was the fact that A simply wouldn't have fitted into life at the house.

There were a number of doors leading off the passage in the house. Some were boarded up, the words 'Don't enter' smeared crudely on them with paint. Others had been turned into bookshelves on which were piled old newspapers, magazines, out-of-date telephone directories, copies of the Family Prop. Gazette, used exercise books etc. There were loose pages here and there and of course everything was covered with dust.

However, one or two doors could be opened. Let me tell you about my favourite one. Well, no, I can hardly call it favourite, that would give the wrong impression. And yet, no. Favourite? Yes, it was my favourite door. Apart from anything else, it was a very respectable door. It looked like this:



Now I don't want to give the impression that I actually held conversations with the door but it was as if I held such conversations. And they always went something like this:

'Well, get on with it.'

'On with . . .?'

'Open me, tear out my guts.'

'I didn't mean . . .'

'To invade my privacy? Hack out my privates? Pass right through me, as though I did not exist, as though I had no soul?'

And so on.

Disturbing, yes. Productive of violent feelings of guilt, perhaps. But hardly *boring*, wouldn't you agree?

A couldn't see it. 'You're a bit dippy, you know, gone in the head. It's charming, I like it, but I don't always feel SAFE.' And she would look upon my favourite door (you understand that 'favourite' is a euphemism, the door filled me with utter dread); anyway she would look upon that hated door as though it were any other door. It might well have been boarded up and turned into a bookshelf for all she cared. She would open it with a wrench and a jerk, she was not averse to slamming it with all her might, her teeth gritted in the intense anger of frustration, while I stood with my head bowed. Or she would hurl hairbrushes, books and even pots at me, there, in the presence of the door. I would try to smile but at heart I felt deeply humiliated.

'So she didn't run away from the house after all? Why the cock-and-bull story about her being in danger of slipping on the loose steps? What is the truth?'

What is the truth!

'No, frankly, I don't consider the spider story to be a good one at all. I'm not saying she didn't run out of the house and back down the steps, although that, too, is by no means certain; what I'm saying is that, if she did, it was for a different reason. Might it have been that you started to make indecent advances, or suggestions, that she didn't like?'

But there again, you see, you miss the point completely: there were virtually no suggestions that A wouldn't have liked. The fact is, at that particular stage, O wouldn't have made advances to a fly.

Now you throw up your hands in sheer exasperation: 'What the devil has O got to do with it? It is you I am asking about, you and A.'

Look, I'm going to approach the whole matter from a different angle, then perhaps you'll understand. There *was* boredom. It's useless for the Chief Clerk at Boyle & Boyle to philosophize it out of existence. There were, for example, those terrible, interminable State Sanctity Days, when the deep green trees scarcely moved and we all lay on our separate beds in our separate cells, thinking of the heat and our rutting blood. Skeletons in the cupboards! Coir mats on the floor! An indian mynah, perhaps, breaking the stillness with its ugly, rasping call. And the greens of the seasonless vegetation (you could see it from every window of the house) meant nothing, *nothing*.

Even Family Prop. did only emergency work on Sanctity Days. And Family Committee? That was the day when Chairman and Secretary combined official duties with a full, devotionary life at home. First breakfast with the children, the Chairman giving thanks in solemn tones, all eyes bent down. (Chairman and Secretary had a large family; you often saw them on the box and there were, of course, the recurring photographs in the F.P.G. People used to say, 'What a lovely family! And what privileges!')

After breakfast they would go to State Sancity Parade. All in their Sanctity best. You can imagine them (can't you?) in a long line: first Papa (the Chairman) stalking along with extreme dignity, his black hat raised to every important passer-by, then replaced on that balding cranium as though it were eggshell china, his broad and hairy belly hanging forward in gracious bull-like folds, his often unfairly abused john thomas swinging devoutly between his legs like a smokeless censer, and those stalwart legs, horrent as the belly, finely decorated with seasand-pale suspenders, which held up his socks in creaseless majesty.

Then one notices an extraordinary thing: the Chairman is wearing only one shoe. This detracts a little from the dignity of his walk, but only a little; he bears himself proudly and stiffly along, full of Sanctity, an example to all of one who (apart from that shoe) has never put a foot wrong.

Next Mama, Family Committee's Mrs Chairman and Secretary. Now what a splendid sight she is, too, in her black hat, the veil modestly down, her black gloves drawn up to her elbows, her stockings giving shape to her elephantine thighs and her elegant shoes bravely buttressing her heroic frame. Her monumental breasts plunge but the right nipple carries demurely plugged upon it the State Medallion for Dutiful Motherhood, while her fearful, heavily powdered sporran seems to launch her forward with each stride.

Then the children, with their little black Sanctity books and shiny new shoes, each at a different stage of growth. H, the football-playing son-and-heir, head of school, convener of school initiation pits, chairman of school secret liaison committee with F.P. Because of his size, his nickname at school was 'Donkey' until F.P. found out and put a stop to it, employing brutal but salutary repressive measures. From H there were various gradations coming down to Bobo, the youngest, with his round tummy and charming little glandiform projection like a rococo putti. As for the girls, they ranged from the bespectacled, lumpenbreasted L (carrying, as it were, the full promise of Mama) to the freckled C, still as uninteresting as a maypole, but whose hand-knitted white cotton socks drew applause from many a passer-by.

So they sailed on to Sanctity Parade and back again. For them Sanctity Day was a triumphal day, crowning the old week and giving glorious promise to the new.

But not for the recalcitrant O; he was determined to keep out of things, to swim at all costs against the stream, to sit (or lie) back and complain about boredom, while the whole world passed him by. I can't tell you how much this used to anger me. So much so that some of my Family Prop. friends and I used to pay him unofficial visits on Sanctity Day, bursting into his room in our black gear at the crack of dawn and terrifying the life out of him. When we'd upturned his bed, torn his pictures from the walls, scattered his clothes, books and private papers to the four winds and generally roughed him up, we'd then, at a pre-arranged signal, disappear as suddenly as we'd come, always remembering to leave a copy of the F.P. Gazette behind.

The F.P.G. contained all sorts of match-winning slogans etc. as well as advice on how to live happy and happier lives. As it was necessary to say the same things, i.e. to plant them firmly in the minds of all readers, it only used to come out once a week. In fact, in the end it was found to be neither necessary nor desirable to change the contents at all, so what F.P. did was simply to change the colour of the front page: one week it would be brown, the next grey-brown, the next seasand-pale etc. And, let me tell you, every Sanctity

morning there were long queues outside the kiosks, waiting for the latest issue.

To tell the truth, I don't believe O ever read the F.P.G., not even one of the copies we left behind in his room and which you'd expect, in his chastened mood, he'd avidly devour. Or, if he did read it, he read it lazily, without the spiritual eagerness that was necessary. (Here I begin to sound like the Chief Clerk, who knew the F.P.G. off by heart; not, he claimed, because he'd learnt it parrot-fashion, but because he'd read it so many times and always with a fresh, enquiring mind. Yes, the Chief Clerk was a remarkable man. But more about him later, poor chap.)

So much then for the spiritually sterile O and our despairing efforts to knock some sense into him. What was particularly dreary was that, knowing him so intimately, I couldn't get any pleasure out of it when the others went to work on him and he writhed and screamed. In fact it made me sick. When they attached the gonad-finders, it was as though they attached them to me. I found I had to leave the room and wait in the passage until it was all over. And how contemptuously they would look at me when they saw me withdrawing, though fortunately they were usually far too preoccupied with their task even to look up.

It was on one such occasion, as I waited in the passage (still those screams and groans came through the walls as though they were made of paper), that an extraordinary thing happened. I became aware of a squeaking sound coming from the far end of the passage. I walked towards it and discovered it was a kid of two or three riding a bright red tricycle backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards. Now this was disturbing because, as you know, the use of primary colours, particularly red (unless toned down with ceremonial brown), is forbidden. Its presence there, on a kid's trike, was evidence of an evil influence: O's, I correctly surmised, and that of other back-sliders, too, no doubt (the house was full of them). The thought of this made it possible for me to endure his screams with greater equanimity, even a little pleasure.

The problem was: how to root out the evil. The kid had seen me so I was already in a sense seriously compromised, just by being there in the presence of that trike. To make matters worse he rather annoyingly rode it right up against my legs.

'Brrrrm! Brrrrm!' he said, continuing to push against me. 'Peep! Peep! Out my way.' His boldness was astonishing when you consider that most adults would cringe with fear at the sight of my black gear. But not this little beggar.

I was just about to give both kid and trike a hefty kick into next week when the door opened and out came a woman with long dark hair wearing a tatty night-dress. She saw me with horror (that restored my self-respect) then she quickly rushed forward, picked up kid and trike and rushed back into the room, looking round at me beseechingly as she did so and as she shut the door.

By now I no longer noticed the hoarse groans uttered by O; I simply put a shoulder to the door, gave it one good shove, wrenching the lock from the socket as I did so.

What a miserable, poky room it was! Untidy too. Clearly she was a bit of a slut. Anyway she was sitting on the dirty sheets and you could see she was scared stiff, holding the ill-bred runt of a child in her arms. And at last the penny dropped for the little monster and he began to bawl and scream in the way he should have done in the first place instead of pushing his bloody trike against my knee (painfully, too; how would you have liked it?) So I simply grabbed him from her and hurled him like a filthy bundle against the wall. He lay still. And before she could say anything I was screwing her there on the bed.

And let me tell you, after a while she began to enjoy it. Well, she stopped moaning and pulling ugly faces. Especially when I said to her, 'Don't get het-up about the kid, it's just a bit stunned, that's all.' Which was true; already its legs were beginning to move.

I suppose you had jumped to conclusions that I'd killed it: bloody brains battered out and all that crap? Who do you think I am, Napoleon or something? You make me sick. It's people like you that go round spreading lies about F.P. Listen, the kid was fine and so was she. Her name was Mavis, by the way. She came to appreciate the things I did for her. For example, I arranged through friends at F.P. to have her broken door mended FREE OF CHARGE and I myself personally repainted the kid's trike one of the regulation colours — ceremonial brown, I think it was, a colour he turned out to absolutely love.

And he wasn't such a bad kid either, whatever you might think. We got on well together and I remember one day on the beach when I actually saved his life. He was on the rocks with his Ma (in her bikini with a bit of sun she was a stunner) when he slipped and fell into the sea and I jumped down and pulled the little beggar out, cutting myself rather badly on those rocks in the process.

Naturally I wasn't able to protect Mavis forever, especially after I'd put in a report about the house. In the end they were bound to find out about the original colour of the trike. In fact there were any number of things they'd been able to pick her up for, just like anybody else. What happened to her in the end I don't really know but we had a good time for two or three weeks and she was definitely appreciative. It goes to show how bad beginnings can have good ends. And then bad again.

I know even less about the kid. Put into an F.C. institution, I expect. Now they're good. Tough, but good. So I don't think you need to worry about him.

* * * * *

Just in case you're starting to get some funny ideas let me give you an example of the sort of thing we're up against. Here is a letter that came into my hands in the course of my duties. Needless to say, it was not taken from the Letter Writing Compendium. Nor was it written on the specified form. In fact it was written on the front and back of a large old-fashioned envelope with the stub of a pencil:

2.45 a.m.

Three hours I lay awake
'And could not win thee, Sleep, by any stealth —
So do not let me wear tonight away —
Without thee, what is all the morning's wealth?'

What a lot to do when I got back — men out with torches (6 men) & about 10-12 people very concerned. You know what I managed to do at long last? CRY. Truly, when you've reached rock bottom, CRYING like that AT LAST is one step back again. And I do feel I must keep sane. This is the first time I've lain awake *really* unable to sleep FOR AGES. It's a bit frightening. Feel wretchedly sick too. Pam had phoned George — 'Was I home yet?' So I had a glorious drive back with Aubrey — 70 all the way — plus you — plus 4 gins or 5 on an empty stomach — PLUS — eventually — an admirable rehearsal. Under stress one does strange & wonderful things. The question is — how long oh Lord 'ere the tenuous thread SNAPS. I suppose this letter is an attempt to exorcise my insomniaspook!

'On looking (back) at C. Homer' — I am sorry (1) re tumescence & (2) no whiskyansodas in you. One day we'll have it OUR way! (if W. Barkis is still willin'.)

Good morning. I must now either be sick or fry an egg. Love — Angela. Looks like your writing!

Timmy Timmy and the trike that's it there wasn't any space for him so on Santy Days I used to tell him go and ride in the passage so I can get some sleep then this Santy Day I don't know why I felt there was something wrong and when I opened the door and saw one of them there horrible in black except for his j.t. and I knew the colour of the trike was wrong it was such a lovely colour anyway I quickly picked up Timmy and the trike and carried him back to the room then this F.P. broke the door I was very scared he said you've got an object painted an impure colour you're under arrest and I said to myself there's just a chance and I looked at him appealing and slowly took my nighty off I could see what it did to him right away of course and I got more courage and said to him go on take that thing off your head and he did he was so handsome and I sent Timmy out to ride in the passage again and he put his arms round me and started kissing and going quite mad then suddenly it went flat like a tyre he couldn't do anything and I remember he said something about this friend of his screaming I don't know what it was they all have some excuse when they can't he was very upset I felt sorry for him I said never mind we'll try again later and we did but it didn't work it was a shame such a handsome big strong man.

After that I used to see him sometimes in the street he wasn't really F.P. just nights I think because in the day he had this job a clerk or something near the place I worked once or twice we had coffee he was very nice really we should have tried again then there was the time I took Timmy to U — — Beach and we met him on the rocks and shared our lunch he was very nice with Timmy then he went for a dip and got caught in the backwash and the life-savers had to pull him out he was exhausted and very beautiful lying on the sand I said they could bring him to my room in the house but F.P. took care of him and I've never seen him since.

(Deposition taken from recording by Confinee 024937GL under drug q37 after Truth Adjustment Category 4 (10-20%) and splicing-in of additional material.)

One day Chris Anderson, the Chief Clerk at Boyle & Boyle, got drunk during office hours.

The first we knew that anything was wrong was when he called June into his office (that treacherous one-way-glass box).

There was something different, shady, about his voice. Anyway in she went and (according to her) before she had said more than a few words he was making indecent suggestions and trying to run his hand up her leg. Not that there was anything unusual about that in

Pretoria

itself; he often did that sort of thing when he had one of the girls there on her own and June was quite capable of handling the situation. What was different this time was the fact that his necktie was loose, his hair untidy and his breath had that tell-tale stench about it. But that wasn't all: there was the smell of something having been burnt (a pile of papers in the watepaper basket). In fact his whole office was in a mess — something unusual for that meticulous Chief Clerk.

Well, to cut a long story short, suddenly out she came, slamming the door and swearing like a trooper (June was quite a one with her tongue when anyone needled her) 'Enjoy your private f. . .' No, I don't remember exactly what she said, but she certainly tore a strip off him. Then, jabbering a few brief remarks to the typist who sat next to her, she quickly packed her things in her handbag and left the office.

Everyone sat dead still. Speechless. You see, the Chief Clerk had top connections (or so he said) and one had to indulge his whims a little, especially the girls. Certainly you couldn't go round using language like that to him, if you wanted to feel safe.

Well, as I say, we sat a moment or two in deathly hush. Then we became aware of a horrible sort of groaning from inside the glass box and the words, 'Help me!' or something like that. Then the whole of the box shook as he bumped against it, making for the door, and out he came, groaning and roaring, 'Where's that bitch? I'll have her put away for life!'

His pants were hanging half-down and everywhere from his waist down was blood. I don't remember much about it after that because, d'you know, a funny thing happened: at the sight of him I passed clean out.

O only saw June once again. He was having drinks with the boys in the Belv when Alec Lee, one of the older clerks, came in with her. After a few rounds even the quiet ones began to loosen up and when the heat was on the talk went something like this: 'Don't be so melodramatic,' said June. 'It was just a joke. Old Chris and I agreed to it before. A pot of paint — that powder stuff you can wash off — and that was it. We certainly gave the office a fright!'

'D'you mean you got hold of *red* paint? Don't give us that.'

'No, June, you can't get away with it so easily. How d'you account for the fact that none of us have seen Chris Anderson since?'

'Ya, they took him away and that was the last we saw of him. F.P. Hospital Branch. They told us all to pack up and go. Free half-day.'

'While they cleared up the mess.'

'And the next day not a trace.'

'Not a trace.'

'Just a new Chief Clerk installed.'

'Grokler.'

'Yes.'

'And, June, how d'you account for the fact that Pete saw an F.P. stimulator lying there in the glass box before the F.P. came?'

'An F.P. stimulator? What's that? Alec, dearie, what are you talking about?'

'Don't pretend to be so innocent.'

'I don't know anything about it; it was a joke, I tell you.'

'Yes, a delayed-action joke.'

'What d'you mean?'

'After a set time the action changes and a razor gets to work and off it comes. Like a guillotine. They call it adjustment G, aren't I right? Aren't I right, little Juny?' (Alec was getting really nasty now.)

'It was a joke.'

'Then why did you push off? Why didn't you stay to watch the fun?'

'And what about the pile of burnt papers? What was cooking there?'

Bill Singer had been pretty quiet up till this point. Now he lifted his head from its rather slug-like torpor and said in his slow, shuffling voice, 'It's all, it's all, let me say something, confusing and contra, contradictory. I suggest you blokes dry up about it. Look here, we want to live clean lives. Happy, comfortable. None of this kind of thing. The F.P. must have had something on Chris —'

'Or they wanted to treat the office to a bit of terror, which they're entitled to by law,' said Rolly Martin, who'd also kept out of the argument once he'd seen the way things were going.

At this point June said she wanted to powder her nose and off she went, swinging her playgirl hips.

'They must've had their reasons.'

'Anyway Chris Anderson was a bastard.'

'Always preaching. Holier than thou.'

'And touching up the girls behind the one-way glass.'

'And what about the burnt papers?'

'He must've been up to something.'

'And drunk! That wasn't like the Chief Clerk. He used to have a few with us, right here in the Belv, but never in office hours.'

'Never.'

'Where's June?'

'Powder-her-nose. She'll be back.'

'She won't be back,' said Rolly Martin. 'You guys with your big yackity-yack. You don't care about Bill and me. We've got wives and kids, we don't want any F.P. coming round. Not so, Bill?'

'So.'

'Let's leave the yackers. And if there's any trouble we'll know who to thank.'

'Ah, don't exaggerate, Rolly, we just asked her a couple of questions.'

'Questions? It sounded like a bloody interrogation to me. And if there's one thing you don't interrogate it's F.P., you leave that to them, it's their job. Well, so long.'

Off they went, Bill Singer and Rolly Martin, and, d'you know, they must have been picked up right outside the Belv. Or very near. Because neither of them got home.

I don't know what happened to Bill but when Rolly came back about six years later you could hardly recognise him. Thin as a rake. Hair white as white. Meanwhile he'd lost his house, his kids were in F.C. institutions and his wife had pushed off somewhere. I tell you he came back to nothing. What's more he couldn't get a clerical job of any kind: one look at his card and the tattoo mark on his left ear and that was that as far as he was concerned. Well, I mean, it was understandable: after six years Outside his brain was bound to have gone a bit and you can't have people like that holding down responsible jobs, quite apart from other considerations.

Once someone pointed him out to me, sweeping the streets (I wouldn't have recognised him myself). Of course there was no sense in going up to him and saying hello. What would people have thought? Besides he didn't seem to recognise me either. He came past with that wide broom, sweeping the filth in the gutters, his eyes looking dead ahead. Such blank dead-ahead eyes, it was quite frightening.

He couldn't have lasted long. In all events I never saw him again.

One last thing, O has gone to a room in the bottom part of the house. It's damp and bare and the ceiling is collapsing towards one corner where he has his bed, old mattress and blanket for winter. Next to the bed are two soap-boxes, one nailed on top of the other, as a makeshift, though permanent cupboard. There he keeps his few possessions: books, yes, though he seldom reads; a few odd papers and a candle stuck in a tin candlestick with a box of matches in the dish. There are no pictures on the walls, nothing to relieve the bareness, except the remains of an ant-eaten board, stuck up near the ceiling by the previous occupant. It bears an inscription in gothic letters that you can just make out:

East West Home's Best.

O simply hasn't bothered to take it down. He would have to borrow the watchman's ladder to do so and he and the watchman aren't on speaking terms. He just lies on his bed for hours on end, looking up at the board with intense hatred.

There is also a rickety chair and on the floor in one corner are a few bricks and planks. He once intended turning them into a bookshelf but he hasn't got round to it yet. The planks just lie there collecting dust. And spiders. His room is full of them. They even stretch their webs from wall to wall instead of busying themselves decently in the corners. Every now and then O has a raging clean-up, scattering webs and spiders to the windless air, their fragile bodies crunched up here and there, so small in terror and in death.

Walter Saunders was formerly joint-editor of *Ophir* (with Peter Horn) and *Quarry* (with Lionel Abrahams). His book of verse, *Faces, Masks, Animae* is one of the collections in the 'four-in-one' volume *Bateleur Poets 1975*. He also edited *Reminiscences of a Rand Pioneer* (Renault Courtney Acutt) published by Ravan Press last year.

Creative Youth Association, Diepkloof, Soweto

Poems / Rakau Elias Mphulo, A. M. Gamede, Darkie Moteane, Hanyane Shikwambana

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

The room I detest
Bears a small window
Reflecting few of the sun's rays . . .

Being in that room —
Like an unborn baby
No-one to talk to
No-one to share sadness with . . .

So long a time in solitude
A mist of thoughts lingering in the mind
Sailing without reaching their destination . . .

The unfriendly contorted face appears
Eyes contracted with hatred
Wanting information, boasting!
Casting reflections consistent with my colour . .

Content, he leaves me,
My teeth clamped together in pain
Pains piercing the heart . . .

When the pains gradually abate
An inevitable enemy comes, hunger!
The stomach sounds like a mine explosion
Groaning and moaning,
Lips dry as desert ground . . .

When will it cease to exist,
This room in which the breath of human life is lost?

Rakau Elias Mphulo

LOVE

Our neighbours hate us like hunger
They exhale air dappled with hatred
Making our hopes limp
Hatred in their hearts has muffled love
Our love hits the stone wall of immunity
In our neighbours' hearts.

Let our love down into our neighbours' minds
There exorcising the dappled shadow of hatred.

Rakau Elias Mphulo

HOWDAH

High hot howdah
low speedy life
comfortable am I
giving him the signs
down and up Afrika
on safari
eating sorghum
eating wheat meal
galloping Roque
I am no circus man
Oh howdah
high hot howdah

Hanyane Shikwambana

FREEDOM

My heart cries for Freedom
My soul longs for justice and equality
I fight for these with a passion
That is in all our hearts.

We need more than politicians
We need statesmanship
A new dimension
Of thinking and living
To remake the world.

The new men:
Men who have conquered
Fear, greed and bitterness
In their own lives
And are able to give clarity
Where other men are blinded
By their passion.

But man needs power:
The great power in the atomic
Age is still God the Almighty
At work in a man's heart.

We must build a new world
A hate-free, fear-free and greed-free world —
That is the goal
for a real revolutionary.

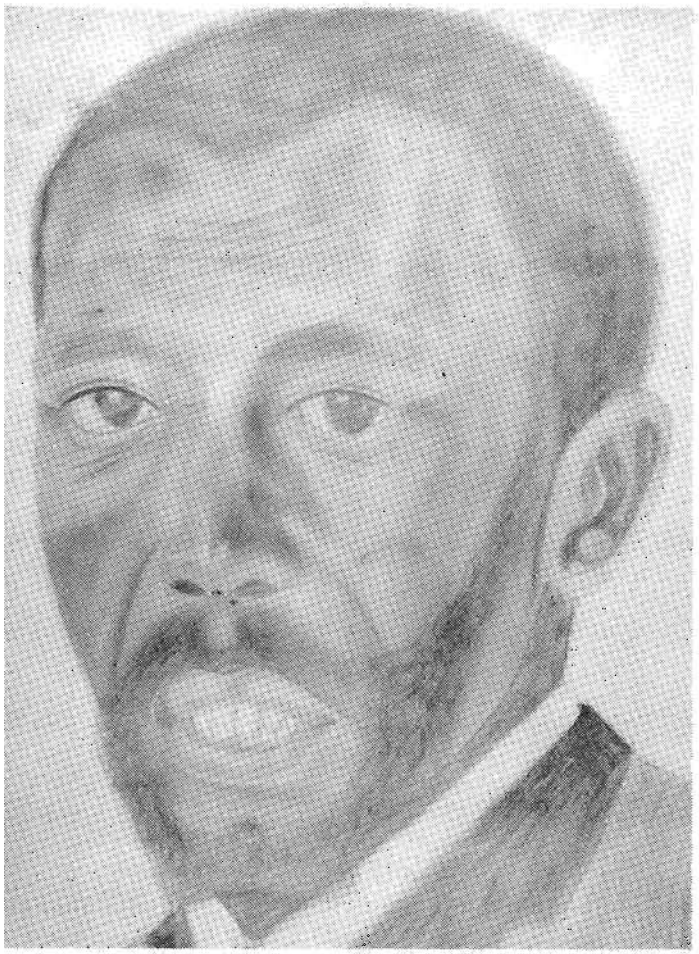
A. M. Gamede

FIRST SIGHT

Sitting under the tree
lonely with a background of
a cool summerday seeing flowers
symbolising beauty and love
roses and carnations incarnating me
the admiration of flowers merged
into a black beautiful lass

Falling asleep before proposal was not an easy journey
I journeyed in the dreams of my beloved flower
customs and laws barred her beauty to come my way
when exile crept into this beautiful flower
I could imagine the train training my love away
tears fell and watered my blankets.

Darkie Moteane



'TIS MAN

Not only a cow
But a black one
with its horn to blow
throughout its thorny way . . .

I do not know this man
But 'tis a man like my cousin
Smiling with anger after the blow
And his lips bulging with hatred
The grass on his face greying
A seed-like ear with strained muscles
A pensive forehead foreseeing the menace
Eying the devil without funk
Heading to the truth of what I am.

MYSELF MY MUSIC MY COUNTRY

Myself
My music
My country
All know the truth
Framed by nature's colour
Visible even in the darkest dark.

No man but myself
No music but my heartbeat
No country but my soil's sanctuary
Knows the truth of God's creation.

Myself
My music
My country
All know the truth.

DEPRESSION

Those sounds,
Surmise the place.
Those rhythms divulging our deity
they burst and beam homeward
Warbling but not weaving the song

Weave Miriam
There is the loom
The very same old baby cries for click song
Let the others in exile join the industrious song.

Matsemela Cain Manaka / Three Poems and a portrait of a cousin

Diepkloof

Voices / *a poem by* Sipho Zungu

A sweet voice reached my ears
It was the voice of a lady
A very young lady
She sang of love
And of hope
And she made me feel sad.

The sweetness of the voice sharpened
It sharpened as I approached
I came close to the voice
I came very close
At last I felt the lady who sang
An arm's length away
The voice kept on
The voice was heard
The lady not seen

I could not see her
Between us a brick wall stood
Firm as a pyramid
Thick as the stones Pharaohs used for the making of the pyramids
and an iron gate, locked
But the voice kept on
The lady I did not see

I pictured the lady
As a fairy
No — as a fairy's child
Or as a madonna
She could have been a fairy
A fairy's child
And a madonna
All at once
Her voice kept on
But I could not see her

She sang so beautifully
It was certain she was a beauty
The voice still rings in my ears
But still I have not seen her
But the voice I heard
Oh! That wall
If it was not for it
I could have seen her

I did not have a key
To open the steel gate and heavy door
That robbed me of seeing the madonna
But I heard the sweet voice

The lady had a sister
A sister
Also behind locked gates
And a door
Ton-heavy that door was
I heard their voices
They spoke in loud voices
They shouted as they spoke
But they did not scream
Yet they did not see one another
Not that they were blind
But I heard their voices

They were far
Far — but not from me
They were not close to each other
But one heard the other
And the other heard the one
For they had sweet loud voices
And I heard their voices

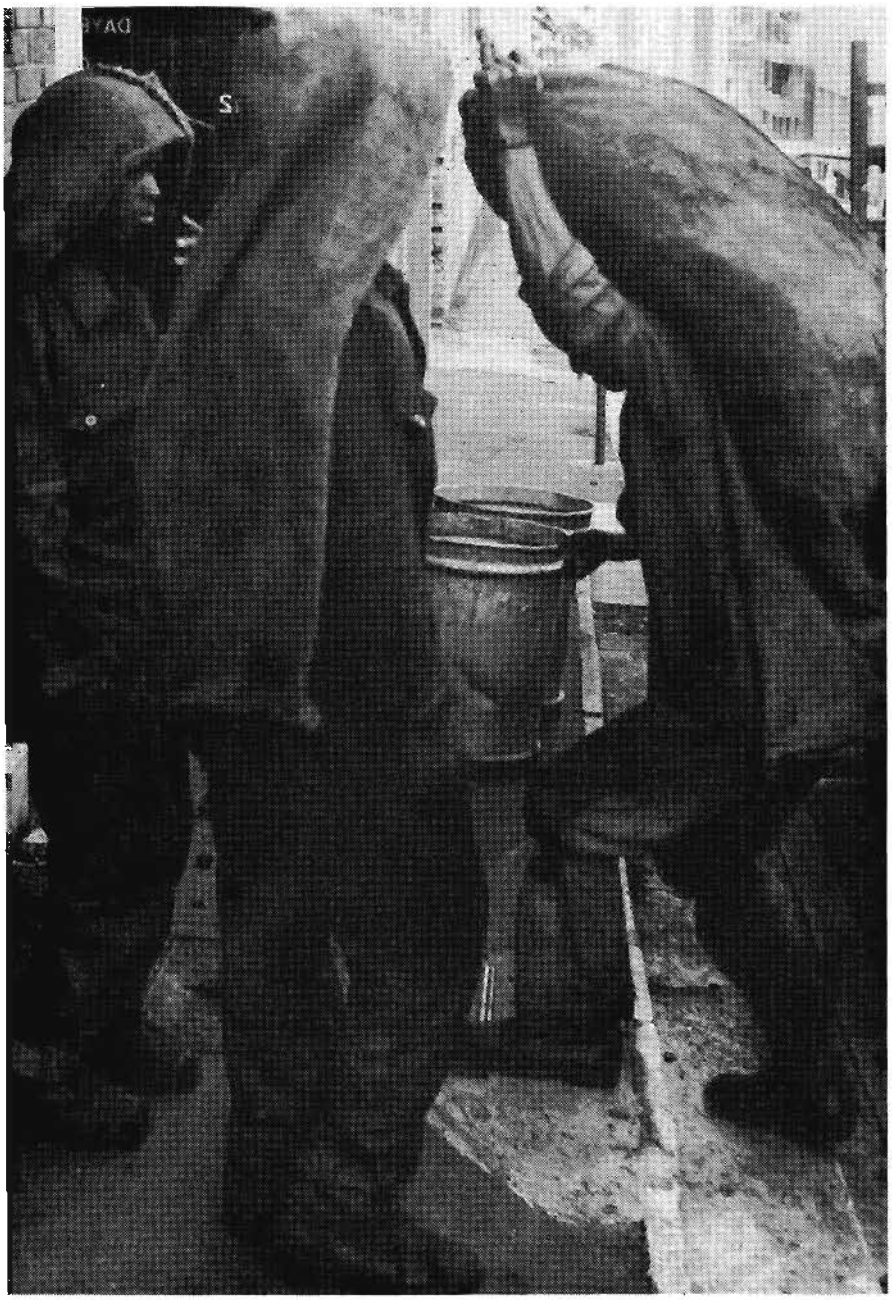
I heard them well
Better than they could each other
I was closer to them
Closer than they were to one another
I kept hearing their voices
In speech they had no privacy
Not at all in speech
Except when they spoke to themselves
And one does not speak to oneself

I spoke to one of the sisters
Her voice was music
Her story pathetic
Pathetic to me
Probably to you too
But not to them
Them, the . . . yes them

For months
Many months
They had not seen a familiar face
Let alone that of a person they knew
Let alone that of a friend
That of their parents
And of themselves
They had never seen each other
Not that they are blind
But they heard each other
And I heard their voices

The poor ladies were waiting
And their parents were worried
They were waiting to be charged
Or perhaps released
Their parents — worried
Worried about their health
Their being
Their everything
They had reason to be
But they did not know
That I heard the voices
And was so taken

They hoped for the best
And they sang songs of hope
I heard their voices
Their parents did not
And I wish they had
But I heard the voices



Mark Lavender

Eugene Skeef / Three Poems

AFRIKA: MY SONG OF THE EARTH

I am the earth . . .

I am the earth
baked beneath the bold baobab
I am wet
with the sweat
of the first travail
I thrust stones
to stand over me
guarding my warm acquiescence
I heave each blade of grass
its wanted height
freely to whisk the wisdom drawn
I am the earth
even to the very core
where I rumble with genesis
and flame with eternity
I have been excavated
to erect shelters
for wasps to share
I am taken in my silence
to mould false saviours and saints
while the wasp's nest
still bears a home
I am the earth
I am drunk with the rain
I am nourished with the sun
I am caressed with the wind
I rove with the moon
I rage with the sea
I am the earth
the pebbles in the gourd
of the grown shepherd
I dance with the warrior
and cavort with the goat
I am the mud
for the hog to wade
I knead with the mother
and chant with the father
I am the earth
the swelled breast
of the coy virgin singing
the swollen womb
of the proud mother waiting
I surge with the groin
and grow with the child
I hunt with the lion
and bleed with the duiker
I am the earth
I am removed
with the pain of a rooted tree
to carve a drum
to invoke the deity
I am the earth
the bed for the final ritual . . .

I am the earth . . .

STRICTLY FOR OFAYS

For now we play
At flinging stone pawns
While lions roar their caged gallantry
All this a scheme

Fragments of a weathered fortress
Reveal frivolous lizards
Their hoary underbellies
Whoring with the cocked sun
All this a scheme
Of a pale barbarity

See the pot-bellied consorts
With conspirant mint-smiles
(O august mask of sacred rites
Though displaced
In the discomfort
Of the aspirated T.B.-cough
You sense a cloud of indignities
From the curator's salved cigar)

All this a scheme
Of a pale barbarity
As old as the flung stones
But surely not as unyielding

JUNE 16

(for all souls raised in Soweto and other dungeons)

Sing a song
Of children gone
Sunflower flute songs
Are smiles of suns
Heaven and earth
Are shorn of all glory
Only the sun can smile

Sing a song
Of children gone
Those African gems
Those eternal starlings
Slain reeds whistle
Their gushing melodies
While resilient rushes stay
Their pithless strength
They too shall be woven
Into recumbent dinner mats
The pale fingers
Of a silent craft
Have eyes of a staining blood
On their jiving tips
These too must be woven
At their own requiem
Sing a song
Of children gone

Sing a song
Of children gone
Angels are the progeny of wrath
See the dark fire immured
Within their frenzied flapping wings
All bugles muted
Only Hell's altar
Hath the music
For their immolation
Sing a song
Of children gone

Durban

Poems / Douglas Livingstone, John Eppel, M. Ursula Hurley

GIOVANNI JACOPO MEDITATES

(on David Herbert Lawrence as Feminist)

I have the greatest Sympathy with the WLM,
The Women's Liberation Movement, rather.
WLM sounds like a defunct Capitalist Railway System,
Or an odious Co-operative Supermarket
Run by the Wrangling Lady Members
Of one of those greasy little Banana-Republics.

The *real* WLM, now:
I am all for equal Rights for Women,
Equal Pay for equal Work for equal Women.
But, Ms, you could go too far.
You fight against, but adore being led.
You exhaust me so. You really exhaust me.
You could go, or maybe you have come, too far.

Women as Sex-Objects, now:
Don't tell me you object to being Sex-Objects —
(Pardon me while I pause to masticate an Olive,
To relive a loin-thickening Memory:
Meaty Hands at the Rosebushes waving Secateurs
Menacingly over all those little Pricks).
Gentian & secretive & redolent
Is the Fig you nurse,
All pubic & hairy & excellent,
Like an Earth-Mother
(Pardon me: the Pip — there!)
Whom I adore.

No, it is not your high-pitched Accents!
No, it is not your low-pitched Inflections!
But Fixations like the Extra-Uterine Bit.
(Whoever heard of a Woman
With a Womb on her Sleeve, or in her Sling-Bag?)

I would cast no Stone at a Sex-Object,
Nor pause even to amputate her Arms
(& who, today, would dare tamper
With a Sex-Object, except myself?)

There are Salvias, & there is Saliva:
The Flower & the Spit.
Politics are sorts of efflorescent Sputa
Even Politics of the Male-Female Sort,
While Sex-Objects have their own Appropriateness.
They represent the Fitness of Things.

Now comes a Stirring, a stealthy Blurring,
A burgeoning Subversion of the hitherto
Stupidly All-Male Universe.
Sex-Objects are not only our Out,
They are our In. (I must shout it or I must spit).

No, I will take my Chance:
I will wreathe, writhe, wrestle & remonstrate with
Every Lady of Life that comes my Way.
I will anoint her, recapture with her, salivating the while,
The Life-Giving, the Life-Taking, the momentous Moment.

You will recognise me by the Figleaf in my Lapel.

Douglas Livingstone

NOVEMBER

I remember the spunk trees were out that night,
you could have cut the air with a cliché.
It was breath-warm. Out of the moonlight
flung bats in all directions. The girl lay
on her back writhing towards November.
Frogs practising scales against the drone
of a filter plant were off-keyed by the
massed choir of mosquitoes, the telephone
ringing. A cadenza of crickets
ended the movement, and I remember
lightning behind the quarry, watched it flit
across the world like a giant insect. Her
eyes were shut, her mouth relaxed in a moan
of November rain. I ran for the phone.

John Eppel

SOUTH AFRICAN BLUE

I'm feeling blue today
I'm Paul Newman.
I'm the victorian Christ half-profile
that hangs in my sister's lounge.
I'm a baboon's arse.
I'm welkin
Billy Budd
Baby blue.
I'm the sea in a postcard.
Gainsborough painted me.
I'm like veins.
When I die
I want to be stuffed
God help them
If they give me brown eyes.

John Eppel

IN A PARK

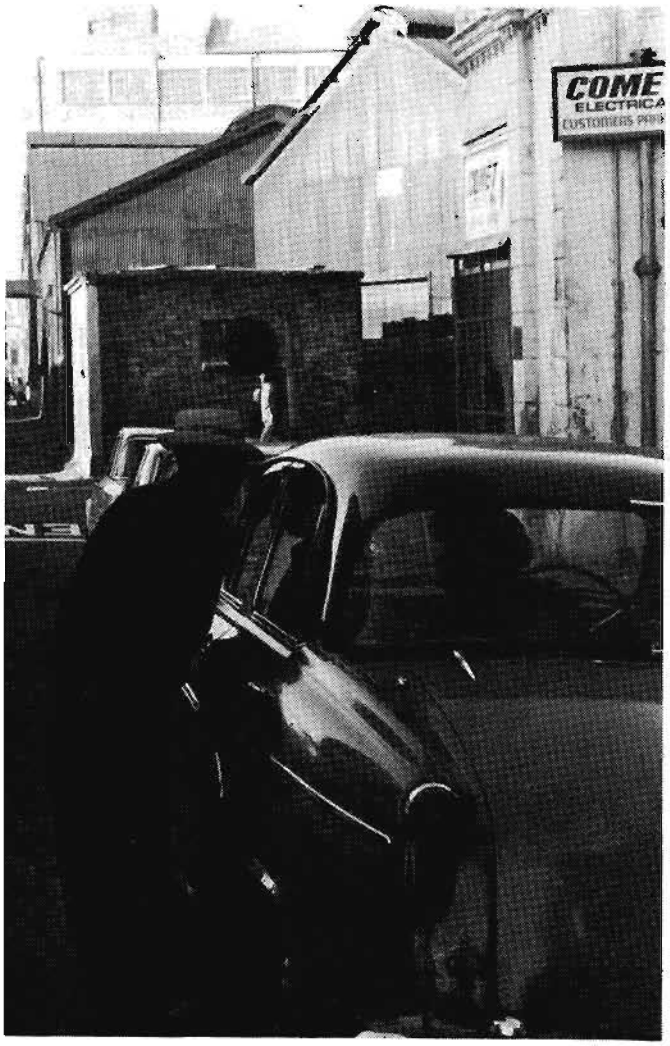
This Park keeps for citizen amusement
an aged Maribou Stork. Fenced, scrawny,
it stalks drooling a slow slime down
a hideous shrivelled-skin crop.

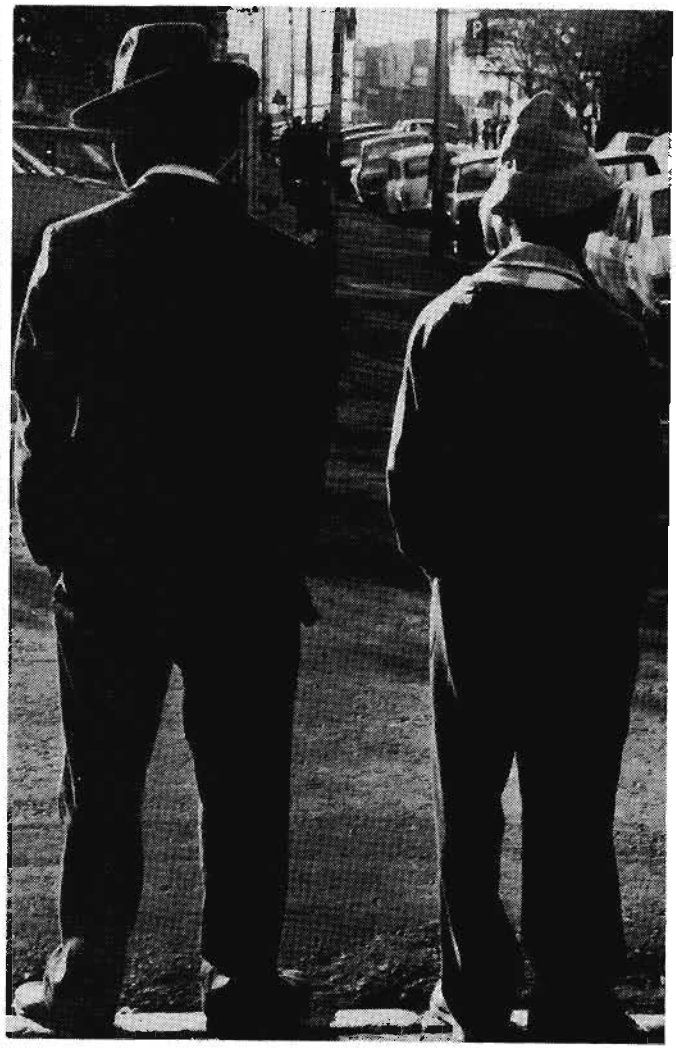
Pausing now and then, it stands
hitch-legged and with fixed beady eyes
rumbles, before pop-eyed children,
the imponderables it hoards.

Legacy of trash, trauma of ugliness —
stages recoil as when, surprised from
lifted stone the great black scorpion
breeds fear, erects an evil tail.
Either way the mind scuttles
to Reason's edge; adult, referenced
beyond whorls of light: yet, upon
the spin of child gaze, spirals
of wonder resolve our baneful age.

The Maribou, with ancient blink,
shifts away along the fence picking
old fruit, wasted, carelessly flung, waiting
the sweeper's pile unpublic in the morning.

M. Ursula Hurley





Mark Lavender

Mashadi Mashabela, Fanyana Mokaleng / Jabavu / Poems

THIS LIFE THAT I LOOK AT

This life that
I look at
And the people
that make it.
This life that
... I love
and hate
...or avoid.
I look at it
its loneliness,
its lust,
its folly.
A constant graph
of ups
and downs.
with no definite lines,
nor any definite shape.
I sit at the edge of its light...
... at the edge of its time.
Surrounded by a bit of hope...
... or despair.
Fighting to find
a reason to live.

Mashadi Mashabela

HAPPINESS

Happiness
Is the moving picture
Which a certain percentage
Of us failed to see
Because of bitter experiences
In this just and right world...

Fanyana Mokaleng

Mandla Ndlazi / Three Poems

THE BATTLE OF ISANDHLWANA*
January 22, 1897

Isandhlwana!
Let me tell you bwana,
Is a mountain shaped
More like a hut
And close to my heart.

It was spot-lit
In the dark continent
When the sun's pair of scissors
Cut the dawn of that day
When right triumphed over might.

It is more like a hut
And close to my heart
Whenever I walk in the heat
Of man's endless greed.

It is more like a hut
The walls of my pride
The seat of my wisdom
The base of my freedom.

It is more like a hut
Like a song in my heart
With lines of a lesson
To guide its heritage
Into history's next page.

* The Zulu word *isandhlwana* means *more like a hut*

A VISIT TO ISANDHLAWANA
July 15 1978

Wings of concern carried me
To the solemn monument
Where I bowed on my knee
Just a moment the other day
And spoke to my ancestors.

The gaping mountain craned
Over the memories
And silent graves
Of a British mistake.

My shudder pulsed from there
Reaching callous clouds that gather
To darken the counsel of peace

And I heard a bull bellow
As it pawed the dust
Shattering the thoughtful silence
Of rolling rock-strewn plains,
And a vulture flapped across
The film set readied to re-enact
A folly that's familiar.

HOW LONG

In the Gibson Kente vision
enraged singers found their reason
to blast a burial bomb that day —
its echoes and dust still in the air.

For long, in words from a stage,
they'd questioned the tactics and time
to fight a Jim Crow regulation
maiming the minds of young Azanians.

'Help that black child in the street!
make him read and write
make his future bright, O Lord,'
they prayed.

Ah, bureaucrat, shuffling feet!
you heard those voices in the pit
quickly answered by the coughing guns
in the smoking streets of the ghetto.

They were enraged to rescue
a generation from damnation;
to save its inquiring lips
from coffins stout with corpses.

Their fear was mirrored
in that day's blood of strife
that left a question hanging
when those children were burried.

Under the weeping grey skies
millions of mourners wore the willow
and shot anger through power fists
to a 'copter above their heads.

Pimville, Soweto

Mothobi Mutloatse / The Motherly Embrace

He had a complex, but some people thought he was boastful and conceited. Maybe pompous too. Yet Samoele Sejanaga had a problem. Deep down inside he was shy and a hell of a stammerer. On the other hand, he was a brilliant, promising high school student bent on taking a degree in urban politics (as opposed to civics). If such a course did not exist in the land of the Matebelekwane he would create one for himself.

He was far-sighted. He could see that his country was going to need men who could see into the future and lead the Matebelekwanes to the land of milk and honey without much blood being spilled. Only sweat. Samoele believed that with the right tools, he could be the chosen one. He could feel it in his bones. The spirit of political awareness was in him like a plague, which he just could not shake off lightly — if at all. And so, it soon came to pass that Samoele, being a stammerer, had to express his devilishly excellent ideas in some form other than the spoken word. He knew well that he would convince nobody with mere utterances — what was far more effective, he thought to himself, was the simple written word. Simple words written in a simple manner for simple people — not intellectuals. He had come to regard intellectuals as frauds, people hiding their cowardice behind colourful speech and semantics. He cared little nor had any respect for loquacious people — especially flambouyant ones. And his own father was one of them — the scourge of Matebelekwane land, the middle class. The class that refused to acknowledge its past, its heritage in order to avoid the tag 'barbarians'.

Little by little, painstakingly too, Samoele began to put down his thoughts in writing. Jumble scattered thoughts. But thought-provoking too. Thoughts like: 'Who am I?' 'Why am I like this and not like that?' 'Why should I settle for less when this land originally was mine?' 'Can a nation remain silent and dead forever?' 'If I was not made in the image of God, then for peace's sake, whose image am I?' 'If peace fails to bring peace, can war then bring it non-violently?' 'Is it true that the guilty are not only afraid but also violent?' 'If I do not speak up now, while bleeding from thousands of needles that prick my wounded soul, I never will — even in hell, because hell hath no fury like a scared stoic.'

All these things occupied Samoele's mind nightly and daily as if he had been assigned this task by God — just like Moses. In school, Samoele's work began to deteriorate owing to lack of concentration.

Two stories by Mothobi Mutloatse — *The Night Of A Million Spears* and *Don't Be Vague - Insist On human Rights* - appeared in *Staffrider No. 2*, and an extract from a play in *Staffrider No. 1*.

Instead of replying to questions on the history of Matebelekwane during half-yearly examinations, Samoele drew pictures of the personalities he most admired. All of them political prisoners in some secluded castle in a dense forest. His history master was astounded, for he had underestimated the boy's political integrity perhaps because the boy rarely involved himself in discussions in the classroom. Since the teacher was one of those queer characters found in Matebelekwane only, he took leave to canvass for the boy's recognition — as a political upstart — from the security branch. That same night, the boy was picked up by three hefty men and taken away for routine questioning, after the house had been half-ransacked for firearms. Presumably. And banned literature like autobiographies of heads of state in other countries because such books were deemed undesirable. As bad as smut. Was the boy's mother not hysterical! What she called the three visitors might have been mentioned, but because this writer is not an admirer of porn her words have been omitted.

The boy's father could only gape in wonder without even a sound or a sigh coming out of his mouth. He had thought that such things would never happen to him or his family as they were law-abiding Christians. One could just see him aging overnight. He even began to have nightmares while behind his desk, in his own office, at work. A week later, without a word about the whereabouts of his only son, Rre Sejanaga had a nervous breakdown and was admitted to the local hospital while in a coma from which he never recovered. Ma-Sejanaga went from half-mad to absolutely mad. She thought of murder, spilling somebody's blood, no matter whose. Meanwhile, was blood also being spilled in an interrogation room — with Samoele as the stubborn detainee who would not speak? Imagine, Samoele refusing to speak, when he so much wanted to be able to speak — coherently, that is.

For hours Samoele was grilled and grilled, until he almost roasted in his icy nakedness — when a call came through the intercom that a woman was running amok in the charge room, demanding to see her son there and then or else she would kill herself by swallowing poison. A few minutes later, Samoele was taken to his mother whose eyes were big and murderous. He screamed; for the first time in his life, Samoele screamed. It was something like 'I am free!' which he screamed, running into his mother's waiting arms. He had reached his Canaan! The loving mother embraced her son. With an okapi knife which had been hidden in her bra. Samoele would stammer no more.

Them Unemployed / a poem by Sechaba Maepe

What's the long, long, queue at the pass office?
The murmurings, like cows digesting dung;
The humming like the sound of bees?
The shouts like roaring lions?
The yells like the jackals at night?
The hisses like those of snakes?
Unwashed faces,
Uncombed hair,
Old, dirty rags called clothes?
The smell of hashish,
Saliva on the floor;
Ragamuffins, criminals,
Hobos staggering and tottering about
the enclosures,
and gentlemen in ties? —
Them unemployed in a scramble for Jobs!!!

The council officer shouts:
'Experienced scooter driver'
'Where?'
Ask the stranded, would-be workers:
'Tulisa-Park in Steeldale!'
'How much pay?'
Fifteen Rands a week.
Some lucky guy grabs the job.

He shouts again ('Too little pay,' they all complain) —
'Scullery!!'
'Where?'
'In Greenside!'
At thirteen rands a week,
Food and quarters —
'You'll meet plenty pretty girls!' he jests,
Joking to poor, miserable souls.

Beware of rejecting those jobs, boy —
Or you'll be charged for *loaferskap* —
The clause for 'loafers': imprisonment,
Two years, no fine!
But at least I'm Black and beautiful!!!
GOD BLESS THEM DARKIES!!!!

When I Die / A Poem by Boitumelo

When I die . . .
Moan not
Mourn not
Frown not.

When I die . . .
Say not the good sayings
Speak not in many tongues
Sing not the praises.

When I die . . .
Blame no one
Charge no one
Sue no one.

When I die . . .
Call no sangoma
Call no surgeon
Call no priest.

When I die . . .
Place no wreaths
Place no bouquets
Place no notes.

When I die . . .
Play the guitar tune
Blow the horn
Play the flute.

When I die . . .
Read prose
Read extracts
Read stories.

When I die . . .
Call my friends to the graveside
She talks with me
He sees me.

When I die . . .
Spread no posters with my name
Bother yourself not to hate
Love not to distrust

When I die . . .
Never think of me at your daily meal
Never fast to please me
Never rest to help me.

When I die . . .
I rot to the soil
The soil that is me
I that am the seed.

When I die . . .
Thank the first artist
to create
Thank Nature
to support
Thank the life
to be
Thank the man
to care
Thank the woman
to bear
Thank me
to take
Thank the first Artist
to destroy . . .

Kelwyn Sole / Two Poems written in Kanye, Botswana

PHARING GORGE
The Place of Execution)

I

I have foreknown this
where the light tumbles now like a recalcitrant child
on the murderous tattered rug of man's will
shielded only by an insect's hum
and these quiet stones rise overhead
the desert turns made beautiful
by rain and wind:
far across the gorge a lake flows with new power
and bream lift in its mirror, fitfully

water which spreads such powerful thirst
to every corner of my village
waking in human hearts fresh pride,
fresh song
our jagged mass of laughter and despair
brown huts sticking up as hair
from the head's hill.

Today this deep and joyful reluctance
at the edge of a choice whether again to see
can find so few words to express
that the lake will turn to sand again
before I learn to speak
on the crags where society continually purifies
in the blood of the criminals and wizards
which we all are:
even as this morning of clarity among the rocks
allows a returned softness
the eyes of the earth emphatic with awareness
a countenance of angry thorns dazzled to reconciliation
with each other
by unctuous clouds in its tiny pools.

No water will stay in my hands, the sun
eats and breathes the flesh of former brothers scattered, unmapped, intangible
where cleverness means less than the brief pressure
of life upon life
killing and kissing at every moment.

Place your death down.
I speak simply for those who die for monumental causes
but can never believe them, endless rows
of toothless hags pounding washing with a stone.

II

If you consider this place carefully
you will see no fat mother but a naked void
sprinkled with the effluvia of foreign intrusion
coca-cola bottles, empty batteries,
the skin lightener she ruins her bad dreams
with. What is there to fill in here?
For once let us be truthful
and focus the sharp glass of our birth
on this fact. Wordsworth is dead,
his hard skull leering among European daffodils,
Eliot, Rimbaud, and all the rest of the clocks
as Senghor soon will be with his symbols and easy exits:
so many mouths building a staircase of a snake
with its tail in its mouth.

So let the angels come,
poor righteous fools, and seek to formulate
their reasons for polite existence in our formlessness:
they are alien pinpoints of charity written in dust,
scribbled waters, a sky bleeding menstrual rains
on their guns and capital . . .

They are right or wrong for all I know,
Those whose words are the pith and pips of sympathy
hiding a glut of power and more words.

With hurt and anger now
I will be traitor to all my soul's rabid policemen
as I watch everything I love descend into war and stupidity
and the terrible purposefulness of reptiles, watching
the rational apologies of a governmental beast
and poetic metooism of its liberators,
the choice between death and death.

I wipe my legs free of ticks
and recognise the only person I am even here, myself,
A partial thing of fluid and pink gristle and imagination
often enough wrong to be contented.

And the spider spins silently

whose weaver's task is more difficult, perhaps,
than the praise singer knows.

POEM

There is an impalpable humming in my belly;
it ticks and ticks over,
like a machine. All day long
tongues flick around me, lizard-like,
mine the busiest.

I chase the cat which stalks
the chickens in the yard. Perhaps
they both think I am God
as I am, strangely. Their bodies swarm
on my eyes with the rest of this sad village,
anchored, dusty, its dying people
pregnant with silence and cheap wine.

The limbs of my own race
have become disordered. War
follows us wherever we may go,
even to those places we seek rest.
Mud crumbles in our steel fingers,
and flesh too.

Blood drips from the tap
which I switch off, helplessly,
in this crumbling house.

Yesterday, Yesterday, Now

A member of the Crossroads community looks back at a life on the move and explains how there came a time to make a stand. Mr A. told his story in an interview contributed to *Staffrider*.

I am a family man. I have my family staying with me here. We have nine children. And as it is I have to feed this whole family. I try by all means to bring up these children and to educate them. From the meagre salary that I get, I try to stretch it. And apart from the children staying with me there is the extended family of two children in the country. The little salary that I get definitely does not extend to the needs all over, but I do my best to reach every need.

As far as schooling goes, I went as far as Std. 8. The reason that I could not go further than that is this: that as early as I reached St. 6 I parted from both my parents, both in the same year. Throughout the struggle to survive I managed to complete Std. 7 and 8 on my own. So the main reason that I left school was because of lack of means. Nobody was supporting me. It was clear to me that if I tried to look for means to further my own schooling my brothers and sisters would suffer, suffer from nothing to eat because even at this time I was like a parent to them. The death of my parents made me a parent. I had to seek work. I started to seek work in the Transvaal, in the mine compounds of Nigel at Maryvale Mine Compound. It was 1945. I worked there for 6 months. I went home. I then left Maryvale in 1950 and went over to Randfontein, in the compound of Venterspost. There I worked at a railway station. And then I became a policeman on the mines. There I worked for a year. I then left the compounds in the Transvaal. I came to Cape Town. I came in 1951. When I came here I worked for the dairies, joining for the passbook: the Welcome Traders Dairy. Joining for a pass meant that I did not qualify to be in the Cape, coming from the Transvaal. I had to work in various places to qualify. At this dairy where I started working, I was registered to be a legal worker in Cape Town. I worked there for a year and left for health reasons, because when you work as a milkman you go out whatever the weather to work. You cannot say, no, I can't go. I had health problems and so I left that job. And then I went to work at Wingfield. There I worked for ten months. I left on my own. I worked for this firm and then that, and then I started regular employment when I worked for Christian and Neilson. I started in 1952. There I worked for 12 years. I worked as a timekeeper, for all those years. I then left in 1966 and worked for Murray and Stewarts. After 9 months I left to work for Fraser & Chalmers. I again worked as a time-keeper. I then resigned from Fraser & Chalmers and worked for Grinaker, at that place by the vlei, at the time of the earthquake. I worked there for a year and then I joined R. H. Morris, in 1971, April, doing the same work that I have always done. My salary is R45,00 per week. The reason I left Murray and Stewart was because I was bitter about the low salary. I was getting R60,00 per month. I worked at Fraser & Chalmers but there the job ended. It was finished. At Grinaker the work also ended, the job we set out to do was completed. The reason I moved from one job to another is this: when you are working in one place you look at your piece of bread, but while you get that piece of bread and time passes, then it becomes a small piece of bread — and that is the essence of our life.

In 1950 when I came to Cape Town we stayed in Kensington, because there there was a settlement just like Crossroads. There I stayed with my uncle: '51, '52, '53 and then I parted from my uncle because of the conditions of my work, as my work used to take me to places like Walvis Bay in South West Africa. And then my uncle went over to stay here in Guguletu. When I had returned from S.W.A. they had already left. That is how I came to stay at the zones. Even then my name was just on the books but I wasn't actually staying there because in 1959 my family came to join me. Then we had to move from one place to another as sub-tenants. We started at Langa, at Sigcau Avenue for three months. Then we were not compatible with the owner of the house. We went to Moshesh Avenue. There I stayed for five months. There we also had problems with the owner of the house and so went over to Harlem Avenue. All the places I mention are in Langa. There we stayed for two months. We left there for Papu Square where I built myself a pondokkie. There we stayed for 7 months. I went home for a while and my family remained in the pondok. When I came back that pondokkie had been demolished by the Council. It was illegal to have one.

When I came to Crossroads the committee was already in operation. Because I am a person who does not like to stay in darkness I searched for light and then I found that there were some people who had organised themselves into a committee, a committee elected by the residents of Crossroads. I can say the functions of the Committee include, inter alia, ordering the life of the community, maintaining peace and settling disputes when they occur. An example: where husband and wife come into conflict in one house, some of the Committee members go there to restore peace. — On being called upon to come, say by the head of the family. The Committee members then call the couple together and discuss with them the problem and try to solve it. At all times they are reminded about the special nature of our living here at Crossroads, that at all times we must conduct ourselves properly because after all we know the law of community, 'umthetho ubuntu', because all we lack is accommodation. Our minds are fully developed because in the places from which we come we are used to living according to law without anyone guiding us. Therefore there is no reason for us to behave wildly at this our hiding place. The Committee looks after the welfare of the community in general: you know that, as in the townships, we have the home guards, people who patrol the area looking for thieves and robbers, especially, starting from Friday evenings, protecting people who come late from work. They go around the area because there are thieves and robbers even in our ranks, and those coming from outside. All such tasks are the responsibility of the home guards. The Committee not only serves as a broad eye, because wherever anything unusual happens you as a Committee member must attend to it. You yourself as an individual try to solve it but when you see it is above you, you take it to the Committee. This also includes the function of building schools. We started the schools from humble beginnings, being helped by ministers of religion, who were sympathetic and made a contribution, and by certain organisations, that help communities like our community here at Crossroads. I can mention in particular the Urban Foundation, and some other organisations that I cannot mention by name. The names of these organisations are known by the ministers who've helped us. The ministers supplied us with some building materials and that is how we moved the school from where it was to where it is, that is Noxolo. Here at Crossroads we have two schools: Noxolo and Sizamile. They have been built by the people themselves. The reason for the existence of two schools is because of the growth of the community, the expansion of the area. The community is quite large and even the two schools are not sufficient. We were aiming at having three or even four schools but the Council is refusing. The Council says that two schools are sufficient. As a result many children cannot go to school for lack of accommodation. Noxolo starts from Sub. A to Std. III and has four teachers. The total number of children is 252. In paying for the salaries of the teachers we are being helped by the organisations that I have mentioned already. The children pay fees at the rate of R1,00 per child. These school fees are supplemented by the other organisations to pay teachers and help in the running of the school.

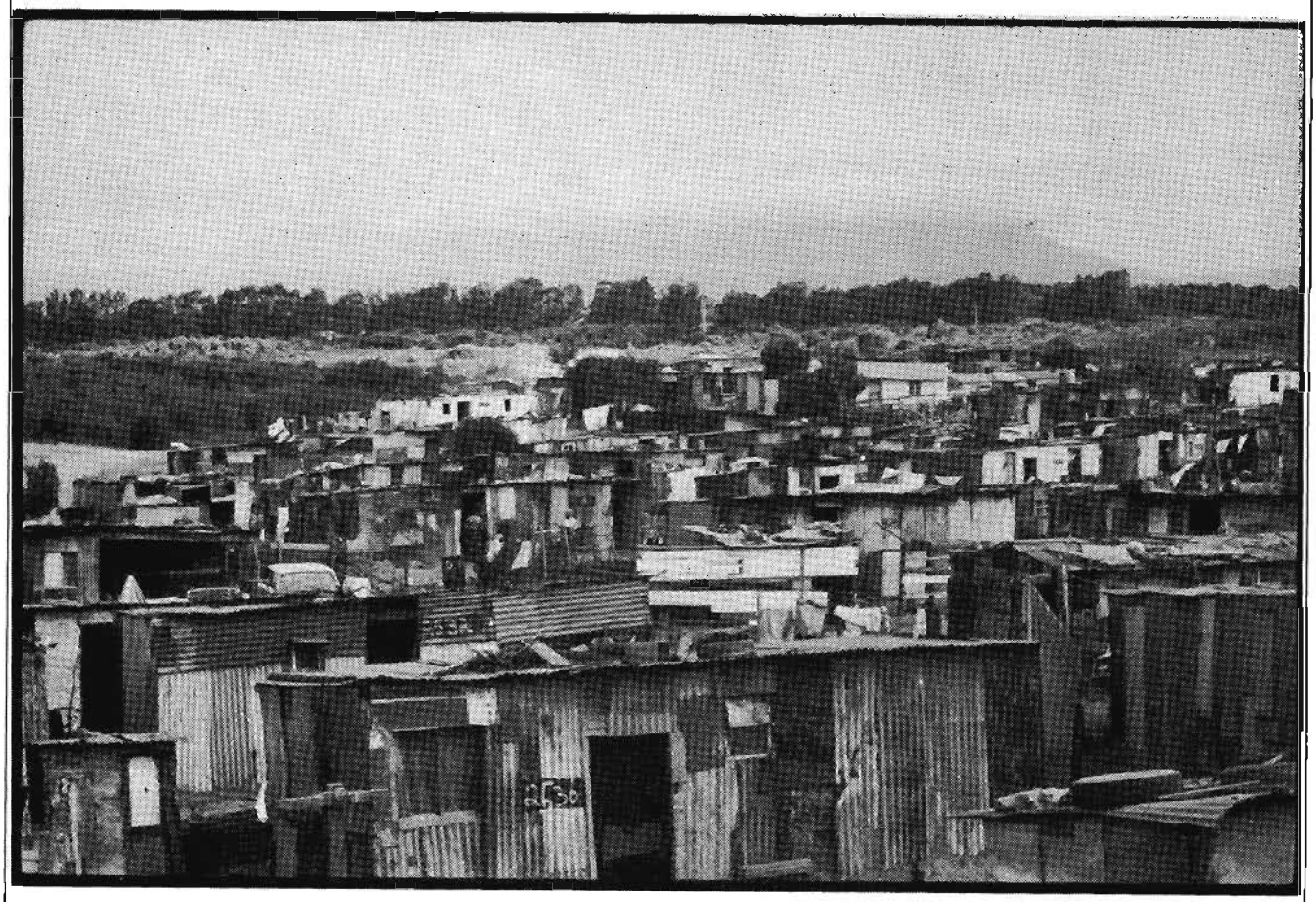
When I came to Cape Town, to find work was one of my greatest expectations. That is why I came. In order to support my home. As I said earlier on I was left parentless at an early age, having younger brothers and sisters as dependants. In my working experience I have noticed mainly two things: that if as a worker you fix your mind on remaining a worker you get pinned down to that; whereas if you have broad aims of becoming an independent, self-reliant person, your mind moves away from being perpetually dependent on work. You aspire to become independent. From my experience of being a worker all the time I view the people who earn an independent living as being open-minded. They are definitely different from an employee or from one who is employed. One who is employed is like a plant that germinates under a big rock because in growing such a plant follows the direction of the rock under which it grows. It cannot grow upwards. It must follow the direction of the rock, and the rock bends it. Or it's like a wheelbarrow, which, even when it is going on a downward slope cannot go on its own, but has to be lifted up. Whereas the independent person knows that his survival is in his mind and hands, and that if he fails the family which looks up to him will starve because he has brought nothing. The brave and the courageous one will survive because he works with a non-aggrieved

Yesterday, Yesterday, Now / Mr A, Crossroads

heart, that is with a happy heart. I must say that it is a painful experience to be employed because the word 'employed' is like a bit on a horse because a horse cannot then go where it wants to go. Such is the life of the person who is employed, *under* employment. He cannot go where he wants to go. If your salary is fixed at R50,00 a month, it stands there. Whereas if you are a person of independent means you do not keep looking up at this fixed income. If you earn, say, R20,00 a week and the following week nothing, the third week you might treble your weekly income in one day. That is why I am impressed by a person who earns an independent living, because such a person is like a plant which has been planted in soil which has been worked upon, or well looked after. A soil that is well-looked after usually produces a good harvest, good fruit. It has been worked with different fertilizers. That is why I make a distinction between an employed person and a person of independent living. Even if they were to run the same race the one who is independent will go forward because his mind is broad. He is not instructed. He instructs himself that now he must jump in this direction or in that direction. Whereas with the employed he is told, 'You must stand here, John!' So he does not conduct views on the employed and the independent person.

In relating one day of my life to you I could do it in many ways. For these reasons: at times in one's life one experiences days of pain and frustration. You also experience days of smoothness. For example: if you leave your house, say at 6 a.m., if you go to work at that time, and as you reach your work you happen to clash with your employer, for one reason or another, the whole of that summer's day you, as a worker, are worried about tomorrow. You wonder, as this man is cross, how will he end my day — because at the end of your working time he may come with all your belongings and say to you 'Here are your wages, foolish worker.' This is the parting between you and your employer. That whole day is a bad day for you. Whereas, if, as you arrive at work one morning your honourable master tells you: 'James, I've made an increase for you,' the whole of that summer's day your heart is floating in fat. That is how I put the day which you ask me about, in these two ways.

Modderdam / Twenty Thousand Gone / Photographs by Jimi Matthews



Modderdam / Twenty Thousand Gone / Photographs by Jimi Matthews

Evaton

Stanley Mhlongo / The Teenage Kingpin of Phefeni

You find men writhing like snakes, in postures as though pulverised by the vibes coming from a hot disco session.

This is your assumption as you see men frantically twisting their bodies as if compelled by some mystic force: this marauding hurricane they won't give in to at the beloved stadium mecca by the name of Orlando.

Hearsays and rumours are exchanged at this Orlando Pirates versus Kaizer Chiefs derby which is fraught with enthusiasm, not a matter of rarity then, as Argentina and Holland were about to exchange 'blows' in the World Cup final.

You see household sentinels of the calibre of Pedro 'Platform 17' Di Scuilli, Phil 'Shaluza' Venter and Johannes 'Yster' Khomane of Orlando Pirates: it is then that you receive word of this TEENAGE KINGPIN OF PHEFENI who has just hit Orlando, demolishing illusions, fooling the above-mentioned trio and leaving them turned inside out. Bamboozling the ever alert 'Platform 17', 'Shaluza' Venter, 'Yster' Khomane and ultimately Patson 'Kamuzu' Banda, is Nelson 'Teenage' Dladla — on his way to score the equalising goal in their one-all draw with Pirates recently. Never known to be big-headed, as cool as a cucumber with the figure and necessary statistics to impress any modelling agency, Dladla shattered the illusion that Chiefs had already been whipped by Pirates by equalising in the late stages of the game.

From a throw-in the immaculate ball juggler popular as Zachariah 'Computer' Lamola and Jan 'Malombo' Lichaba enjoyed some beautiful interchanges with the ball. Sweeping into Pirates territory Chris 'Rollaway' Ndlovu did his bit — before putting Dladla through, who bobby — weaved 'Yster' Khomane off his back.

Leaving Oscar 'Jazzman' Dhlamini in his sleep sprawled on the turf, with Pedro di Scuilli and Venter a fraction too late, Dladla slipped past, curving a ring around Patson 'Kamuzu' Banda, and was through to score, putting the teams at one all.

Nelson 'Teenage' Dladla matures in every game like good wine and he is likely to end right up there at the pinnacle in the multiracial N.P.S.L. this year.

He is the TEENAGE KINGPIN OF THE PHEFENI BOYS (KAIZER CHIEFS) and now we all know why — because when he desires to, Teenage can leave men writhing like snakes as he spreads his magic to bamboozle even the best of the so-called great sentinels.

Football fan Stanley Mhlongo would like to see a regular football page in *Staffrider*. Any takers?

Ralph Ndawo

Xolile Mavuso reviews *Petals of Blood* by Ngugi wa Thiong'o

(Heinemann African Writers Series)

The book is in four parts, without the parts differing from one another.

The drama unfolds in a little farming village called Ilmorog. Four people find themselves caught in a web of capitalism and deadly exploitation. The transition from Old Ilmorog to New Ilmorog makes such a devastating impact on their lives that jealousy, greed and hatred become the order of the day. There is Munira the headmaster of a flourishing primary school; Karega, a teacher turned trade unionist and a rebel at heart; Wanja, attractive and a prostitute; Abdulla the shopkeeper who has had a heroic past as a guerilla fighter in the wake of the struggle for the independence of Kenya.

The struggle of the underprivileged few against the suppressive government machinery, presented in the form of the so-called civil servants and MPs is implicitly and explicitly dealt with by the author. The story reaches its climax with the death of the directors of a local brewery, presumably murdered, whom Karega chooses to name blood-suckers, traitors and 'fence sitters'. As the rains fall and make flowers grow with petals of blood, what fruits will they bear?

This book, with its lyrical description, painfully probes the breakdown that had come with the colonial period. Ngugi's genius is such that he defies all attempts at classification and his demand to be read is imperative.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 39 years old, head of the Department of Literature at Nairobi University, a former instructor at Northwestern University, was taken away on the night of 31 December 1977 and on January 12 he was detained under public security regulations. The police gave no reason for their action. They would not even let him make a list of the books they confiscated from his home. Under Kenyan law they can hold him indefinitely. He has not been heard from.

In an interview in the *Sunday Nation*, six months before his arrest, Ngugi said that he had no fear that his writings would get him into trouble with the authorities: '... because I do believe that criticism of our social institutions and structure is a very healthy thing. If writers don't do this anywhere in the world they would be failing in their duty.'

***Petals of Blood* is now banned in South Africa.**

Lionel Abrahams reviews *The Real Life of Domingos Xavier* by José Luandino Vieira

(Heinemann African Writers Series)

This 84 page 'novel of Angola' had to wait many years to be published, chiefly for political reasons.

It is set in 1960 when the Movement that would become known as the MPLA was gathering energy for its militant phase, and the story really concerns the proliferation of revolutionary feelings among the oppressed people of Angola.

It focusses on the fate of an obscure young tractor driver working at a dam site who is hauled in by the police one night because they believe he knows the identity and whereabouts of certain activists. In prison they systematically smash his body in their attempts to extract his information, but he withstands it all and dies smiling.

Meanwhile the girl-wife from whose side he was snatched seeks him from prison, sometimes carrying her baby with her on purpose to increase the force of her appeal for attention from the officials she encounters.

Simultaneously the long tentacles of the Movement, extending over far distances and through several strata of the society, are gathering together the pieces of Domingos Xavier's story, by a painful process of watching, enquiring and passing messages from contact to contact. The motivation for this effort is not spelled out and appears to be more a matter of pure intelligence work, keeping in touch with what is happening, than related to any hope of rescuing Xavier or helping his wife.

It is after his death, when the story of his agony and resistance is about to become a legend of the Movement, that one of the leaders declares Domingos Xavier's 'real life' to have begun. This is the end of the novel, but at this point sympathy is strained. It seems presumptuous of the politician to deny reality to the individual life of a martyr in order to increase the political usefulness of his death.

Vieira's approach is lyrical and in some respects the writing is brilliant. His novel is certainly informative, and had it been a touch less transparently didactic politically, it might have been a good deal more persuasive.

Robert N. St. Clair reviews *The Black Interpreters* by Nadine Gordimer

(Ravan Press)

When the study of literature is approached on an international level, several interesting and insightful facts readily emerge. The political establishment within a nation, for example, tend to select people in their own image as heroes and those of their enemies as the villains. They create a form of social reality which is consistent with their own and even structure events of time and space which reflect their own interpretation of their surroundings. Other viewpoints are known to exist, but they are not given serious consideration. This is why in every nation throughout the world there is an underground literature which presents the world view of the counter-culture, their values, and their belief systems. Perhaps this is the most important discovery to come out of the comparative study of literature. Most literary scholars remain unaware of this fact. They do not normally see how a national literature is intrinsically related to the power structure and its concern for a positive public image. Political scientists, on the other hand, have known about this phenomenon for many decades. They refer to it as the legitimation of knowledge and consider it to be a natural form of accommodation within society. What is significant about this book by Nadine Gordimer is that she has transcended the mundane concerns of the literary critic and has acquired a wisdom for comparative literature. This is evident in her attempt to present a body of literature from the perspective of the author and his or her own social construction of reality with its different set of values and traditional beliefs.

Another insightful area of concern in this work by Gordimer can be found in her treatment of the various themes which have emerged in the literature of Africa and Europe. There are five common themes which she has classified within African literature. The first, The-Countryman-Comes-To-Town, deals with the impact of the white man's town and civilization upon the African. The second theme is The-Return-Of-The-Been-To. It describes the return of the African who has been abroad and who may have received a European education. It relates his difficulty in adjusting to the problems of traditional African village life upon his return. The-Ancestors-Versus-The-Missionary involves the conflict of the tribal pattern of village life with the imposition of Christianity and this constitutes the third theme. Many recent novels, Gordimer notes, express concern with a traditional way of life. This concern for The-Way-It-Was-Back-Home is theme number four. The final classification and perhaps the most significant from the point of view of national literature is Let-My-People-Go. This theme is about the political struggle for independence from the white man's rule. As can be expected, these various themes are more dominant in some countries than in others. The quest for political independence and its expression in poetry and fiction, for example, can be found in the literature of South Africa.

The various writers discussed by Gordimer provide a panorama of pan-African literature. The negritude movement, for instance, grew out of the Caribbean and created a new consciousness in the writings about Africa. These writings have blossomed forth in Nigeria where Flora Nwapa, Chinua Achebe and Wole Soyinka have been the outstanding interpreters of their heritage. These writings are equalled in greatness of expression in other countries as well. In Cameroon, for example, there are the works of Mbella Sonne Dipoko; in South Africa there are the proletarian themes of Ezekiel Mphahlele; and, in Kenya the novels of James Ngugi reflect a concern for a mythical past. These detailed discussions of African novelists and their writings is very informative. For one who is new to the literary traditions of Africa, they are enlightening.

Poetry in South Africa, Gordimer notes, is similar to the *skaz* genre of Czarist Russia. Poems in this tradition are not meant to entertain. They are a new medium for political expression. They can hide one's ideology from the uninitiated and at the same time provide a clear picture for social action to those who are most sensitive to the hidden messages. The various poems which Gordimer introduces and discusses in this work reflect a common theme of resentment against apartheid. They are poems about conflicts over values and beliefs which have been imposed upon them by the establishment. Of particular interests are those poems which relate these conflicts from the point of view of the child in a state of innocence. It is the child, after all, who has not yet been tainted by the abuse of power and the deision of linguistic labels. Hence, it is in these poems that the greatest emotional impact can be found.

The Mofolo-Plomer Prize, 1979 / Time To Start Writing?

The Prize

Named after two distinguished South African writers, the prize is offered for a novel or a collection of short stories by a Southern African writer. Entries must be in English. The prize is R500, donated by Nadine Gordimer, the founder of the award, and three Johannesburg publishers, Ad. Donker, Bataleur Press and Ravan Press. The intention is to encourage writers not yet established in terms of published books. There is no age-limit.

Past Winners

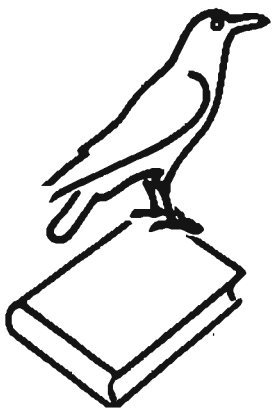
The prize for work submitted in 1976 went jointly to Mbulelo Mzamane and Peter Wilhelm, for *My Cousin Comes to Jo'burg* (stories) and *An Island Full of Grass* (novel) respectively. J. M. Coetzee's *In the Heart of the Country* (novel) took the 1977 prize. The 1978 prize is now in the hands of the judges. Previous judges were Adam Small, Alan Paton, (1976); André Brink and Peter Strauss, (1977).

What to Do

Entries should be submitted (two copies, type-written or duplicated from typescripts) to:

The Mofolo-Plomer
Prize Committee,
c/o Ravan Press
Box 31910
Braamfontein
2017

To qualify for the 1979 prize entries should be received by 31 May, 1979.



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'It's fiercely satirical, moving remorselessly from accurate journalistic description to vision, then blurring the two.' — Robert Greig, *Star*

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What is P.E.N.? In short it's a world association of writers — 10 000 approximately — and stands for the *ideal of one humanity* living in peace *in one world.* Members pledge themselves to do their utmost to dispel race, class, and national hatreds.

P.E.N. is opposed to any form of suppression of freedom of expression, and opposes arbitrary censorship in time of peace.

Membership is open to all writers, editors, translators who subscribe to these aims, regardless of nationality, race, colour or religion.

Recently a group of writers met to establish a P.E.N. centre which was then accredited at the Annual Congress of P.E.N. in Stockholm. The new centre aims to establish better communication between writers and groups of writers in Southern Africa, and to defend their rights in the spirit of the charter.

At the inaugural meeting on 12 August the following executive was elected: Chairman: Mothobi Mutloatse; Secretary: Mike Kirkwood; Assistant Secretary; Peter Wilhelm; Treasurer: Ahmed Essop. A large executive committee representing writers' groups near and far is envisaged. A full list will be published when elections have been completed. The following executive committee members have already been elected: Miriam Tlali, Nadine Gordimer, Sipho Sepamla, Lionel Abrahams, Ingoapele Madingoane.

More P.E.N. news in future issues of *Staffrider.*

Membership Form /

To be posted to Southern African PEN Centre Johannesburg P.O. Box 32483, Braamfontein, 2017.

I am a writer and would like to be a member of the Johannesburg P.E.N. International Centre. I enclose the annual membership fee of R3,00.

Name: .....

Address: .....

Telephone: ..... Writers' Group (if any): .....

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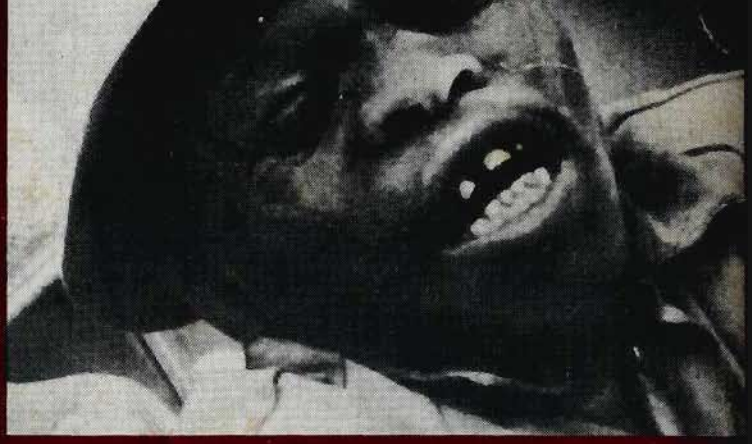

Coming Your Way in This Issue

S.A. writing from Orlando West, Botswana, Sibasa, Windhoek, Kwa Thema, Katlehong, Johannesburg, Mabopane East, Alexandra, Lenasia, Piet Retief, Jabavu, Claremont, Pretoria, Rockville, Evaton, Durban, Pimville, Diepkloof, Tladi, Hammanskraal, Kimberley / all stations!