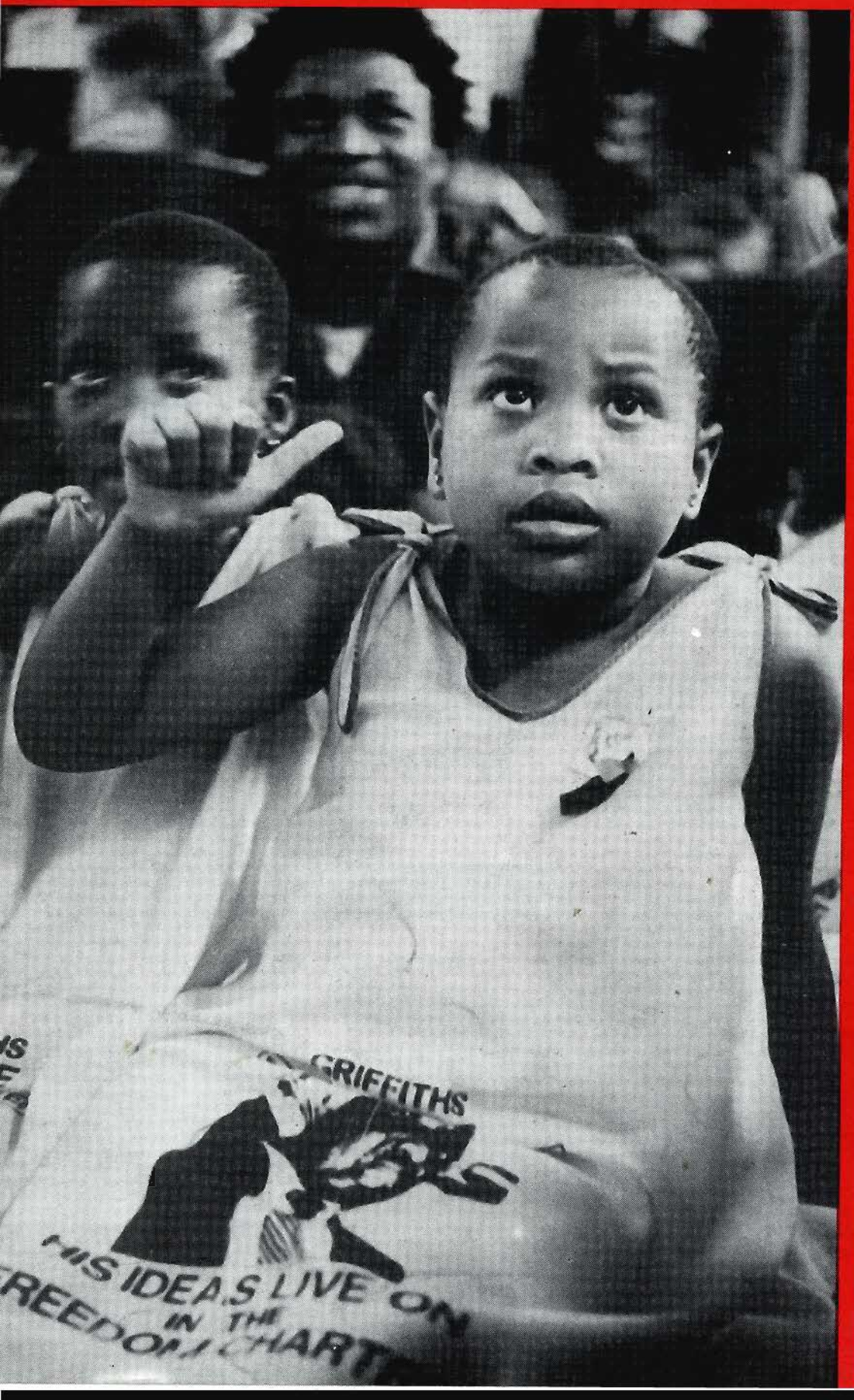
Staffrider

VOLUME 5 NUMBER 2 1982 R1.50(excl.GST)



PROFILE : GERARD SEKOTO

INSIDE :

NEW BOOKS FROM RAVAN

NEW BABYLON
Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886 – 1914
Volume One
by Charles van Onselen

This two-volume work sets out to portray some of the human consequences of the profound economic and political changes that transformed South Africa in the period between the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand and the outbreak of the First World War. In *New Babylon* Van Onselen writes about the liquor sellers, the prostitutes, and the cab drivers, introducing his study with an essay that sets the experiences of all these groups within the wider context which shaped the course of their lives.

R11.50

NEW NINEVEH
Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886 – 1914
Volume Two
by Charles van Onselen

In *New Nineveh*, Van Onselen is concerned with the domestic servants who serviced the needs of the white middle class, the Afrikaner workers struggling to maintain their livelihoods in a hostile environment, and the men who made up the 'Regiment of the Hills', the Witwatersrand's black lumpenproletarian army.

These two volumes chronicle the struggles of groups of people seeking to find a place of dignity and security within a capitalist world over which they had little control.

R11.50

NATIVE LIFE IN SOUTH AFRICA
by Sol T. Plaatje

Native Life in South Africa is one of South Africa's great political books. First published in 1916, it was first and foremost a response to the Natives' Land Act of 1913, and was written by one of the most gifted and influential writers and journalists of his generation. *Native Life* provides an account of the origins of this crucially important piece of legislation, and a devastating description of its immediate effects – Plaatje spent many weeks travelling in the countryside, and the most moving chapters in the book tell us what he saw. His book explores the wider political and historical context that produced policies of the kind embodied in the Land Act, and documents meticulously steps taken by South Africa's rulers to exclude black South Africans from the exercise of political power

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THE STRUGGLE FOR ZIMBABWE
The Chimurenga War
by Phyllis Johnson and David Martin

On the 21st December 1972, soon after the Salisbury Rotary Club heard Ian Smith again pronounce that Rhodesia had the 'happiest Africans in the world', a communique from Security Force Headquarters announced a guerilla attack on a remote farm that signalled the beginning of the war. Seven years later to the day the 'signing of the Lancaster House agreement brought a ceasefire and the end of 90 years of white rule.'

Now published in paperback, this best-selling book tells the story of that period.

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NOT WITHOUT HONOUR
Tribute to Beyers Naudé
ed. Peter Randall

This book is a tribute to Beyers Naudé, perhaps the best known Afrikaner rebel of his time, and to the contribution he has made to the wider South African community. It contains a biographical sketch of his life and work; an assessment of the Christian Institute which he led; a celebration by the Archbishop of Durban of Naudé's catholicity, and an evaluation of his significance for the 'English' churches in South Africa.

A testimony to Beyers Naudé's faith and courage, the book illustrates the importance of fearless christian witness in a repressive society.

R7.95

NONE BUT OURSELVES
Masses vs Media in the Making of Zimbabwe
by Julie Frederikse

'Julie Frederikse has written a unique commentary on the role of the media in the making of Zimbabwe. No equivalent to this richly documented book exists for other popular anti-colonial wars in Africa – the Algerian and Mau-Mau wars, for example – and Ms Frederikse provides us with insight not only into the war for black independence in what was Rhodesia, but also into the nature of anti-colonial struggles in general, a topic of burning relevance to all South Africans today.' – *The Star*, Belinda Bozzoli

R9.95

THEATRE AND SOCIETY IN AFRICA
by Mineke Schipper

Theatre in Africa is a part of the tradition of oral literature – 'total' performance which includes storytelling, music, drama, song and mimicry, and in which the audience is actively involved. Mineke Schipper shows that for modern African playwrights the oral tradition is still an important source of inspiration, even when they tackle contemporary themes such as the conflict of generations, corruption and westernization. This book – already published in French as well as in the original Dutch – is a concise introduction to a topic of interest to all students of the arts in Africa.

R6.95

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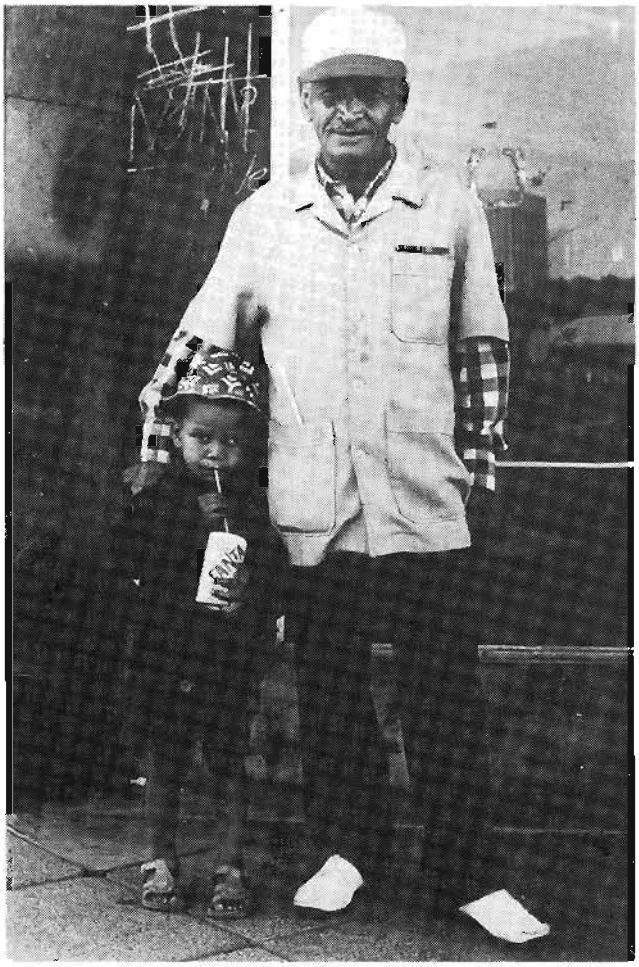

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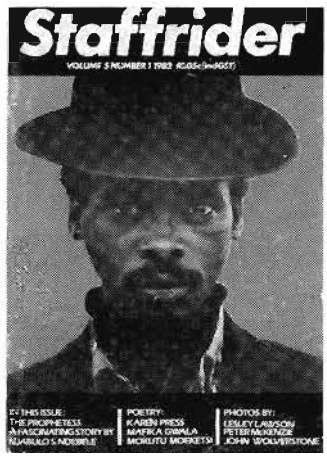

We failed to mention that the front cover photo in *Staffrider* Vol. 5 No. 1 was by John Wolverstone.

SORRY

Staffrider regrets that the interview with Don Mattera which we promised our readers, has been withdrawn by the interviewee.

Editor: Chris van Wyk
Front cover photograph: Jeeva Rajgopaul

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TO FLY

by Steve Jacobs

ABOVE a Boeing 737 belonging to the South African Airlines, meandered its plush, indolent way down to Cape Town's D.F. Malan Airport. Joel Gweba watched the white bird with the orange tail. It was beautiful. It shined in the sunlight like one of Manley Kuku's old Chev's after he had polished it when he came back from a journey up country and the car was covered in mud. It was beautiful; it was magic. Joel looked about him at the people on the dump. No one else seemed to have noticed the metal bird. Except for Harold Dube who complained about the bloody noise. These people, thought Joel, these people wouldn't know magic if they tripped over it.

'Look,' he said to Sarah. The little girl was busy scampering across the hill-top like a puppy. She had no shoes, but her feet were tough as leather. She wore a dirty dress gaily decorated with flowers; the dress, like most dresses on the dump, was tattered and skimpy.

'Look,' he said to Sarah. The little girl was busy scampering across the hill-top like a puppy. She had no shoes, but her feet were tough as leather. She wore a dirty dress gaily decorated with flowers; the dress, like most dresses on the dump, was tattered and skimpy.

'Where?' she asked, pulling up in mid-stride. 'What must I look at?' She gave a despairing glance at the rag doll she had been after. The caterpillar tractor was already tumbling that little bit of fluff and form down the hill-side. Hand on hips, she confronted the earnest boy who had caused her to lose her plaything.

'What must I look at?' she demanded when Joel did not answer. 'What?' She saw that there were tears in his eyes. Angrily, she stomped her little foot in the dust and turned to see what the next truck had brought. She had no time for crying. There was too much to cry about.

'Wait,' said Joel. 'Look up there. Look at the 'plane.'

'Ag nonsense. What's wrong with you? There's lots of 'planes. They come all the time.'

Joel reached down and pulled a piece of metal from the dirt. It could have come from an electrical appliance, from an old stove or a fridge. He considered it for a while and then offered it to her. She backed off distrustfully.

'That 'plane . . .' he pointed '. . . is just a lot of pieces like this.'

She squinted at him and put her hand to her mouth. Then she shook her head.

For ten years, the trucks had brought rubbish and soil to this spot of empty ground across the road from the airport. And for ten years, while tractors shaped the collected garbage into a large plateau, blacks from Nyanga, and Guguletu, and Crossroads had made their living from the refuse of Cape Town.

'Nay man. That's from a washing machine, or something like that. You telling lies.' And she spat scornfully

into the dirt. Joel was different from the others. To the ten year old Sarah, differences were intolerable. She dashed away before he could restrain her.

When Joel looked again, the airplane had gone. He threw the metal part away from him and watched it fly, but not fly. It clanged up noisily against one of the garbage trucks that littered the hill-top. The driver yelled and waved his fist at the boy. Joel swore eloquently in return.

For ten years, the trucks had brought rubbish and soil to this spot of empty ground across the road from the airport. And for ten years, while tractors shaped the collected garbage into a large plateau, blacks from Nyanga, and Guguletu, and Crossroads had made their living from the refuse of Cape Town. Officially, this was not allowed. But officialdom pretended not to notice, and those disinherited members of South African society were permitted the grace to live like rats in the garbage. The system, like a magician, took away with one hand, and fed secretly with the other. It was a degrading meal. Joel knew somehow, although no one had ever explained it to him, that something was wrong with a situation in which some people flew, while others grovelled in the muck. Sarah could not see it, although she and Joel were of the same age. Maybe realizations like this come only to certain people, and then irrespective of age.

Joel wanted to fly. He wanted so badly to fly that his desire was like a monumental tingling itch somewhere inside his chest. He could not reach to scratch it; it sometimes left him breathless and choking. He swore in frustrated anger at the black truck driver who helped to make the system work.

Harold Dube looked up from his labours and laughed hugely at Joel's outburst. Harold's self-appointed function was to chip cement off the borders of the waste bricks that he found. A neat stack of bricks stood like a wall beside him. Nasrudin would pay a few rand for the hoard.

'Hey kid, you tell him to fok off, the blerrie skollie,' shouted Harold and playfully lobbed a bit of cement in the direction of the lorry. The driver raised his fingers in a rude gesture and grinned. Then he drove his truck forward, close to the edge of the plateau, and tipped out its load. Immediately a horde of children and adolescents all as ragged and ragamuffinish as Sarah, converged on the pile, dismembering its neat, mound shape, and retrieved an assortment of torn clothes, cardboard, bits of metal, and

In a hierarchy of scavengers, Nasrudin was the primal scavenger and Joel hated him. The trader's coat was always spotlessly white; the only sullying came from reaching into his top pocket to get at the bundle of notes with which he paid his collectors.

one or two abandoned teddy-bears and toy dogs, all reeking and filthy. The driver gave the thumbs-up sign and turned his truck back toward the exit. On the cab door a notice said: 'Administration Board, Western Cape'. But the words meant nothing to Joel as he could not read. Already the next lorry was preparing to dump and behind it was another and another, like bullets ready to enter the chamber of a gun.

The noise of the machines rose and receded, as gears were engaged, as accelerators were depressed, as the activities of the Guguletu Refuse Dump were conducted. The hill shuddered underfoot as the caterpillar tractor ground by on its business of pushing the offal over the precipice. A few daring souls dashed across the face of the tractor's scoop, rescuing bits of what someone else had discarded, while a fair-sized crowd waited three meters below to recover the falling bounty.

Nasrudin was down there as well, negotiating deals. The Indian had a permit issued to him by the Bantu Administration Board to collect refuse. This he did, although not personally. The refuse was, in fact, brought to him, cleaned, bundled, and stacked by the people of the dump. In a hierarchy of scavengers, Nasrudin was the primal scavenger and Joel hated him. The trader's coat was always spotlessly white; the only sullying came from reaching into his top pocket to get at the bundle of notes with which he paid his collectors.

On and around the plateau hundreds of squalid people played or worked conscientiously, or just milled about with no apparent aim, waiting for something to happen. The old man with the squint sat in his usual corner, hammering nails from a chair leg. His barrow was full of wood. Despite the squint the old man's aim was unerring. Joel had often watched him work, secretly hoping he would miss the nail and hit his finger. But the old man never missed.

As Joel ran back over the plateau to find his mother he passed the old carpenter. Near to the old man the shell of a washing machine stood unattended; it was filled incongruously with loaves of bread wrapped in clear plastic and visible through the circular frontal opening. Joel was tempted to investigate more closely, but he knew that possessive eyes watched over the food, and that the possessors of those eyes were adept with a knife, and callous, even eager enough to use it. He avoided the trap and ran on.

After a while he came to a group of women sitting around a fire that had been made close to the place where the plateau began. A heavy plastic bag half-filled with sheep's trotters gaped obscenely at the boy. The women dipped into the bag randomly; they were cooking the woolly stumps on a grid that straddled the small fire. Joel's mother was amongst the group.

'Where did you get that?' asked Joel pointing at the plastic bag.

No one knew that she had slept with the butcher. How else did one get enough to eat? Not even her husband knew. She hid her affair well; he would not understand.

'It was a present from Gamat the butcher,' said Maria Gweba. She always smiled at the world. If you did not know her, you would not have guessed the heart-ache she had suffered. For, even though her breasts had nourished two children, only one survived. Anthony, the elder, had been shot dead by the police during the riots of 1976.

'He fancies you,' joked Althea Plaatjies, and nudged Maria with her elbow. Maria blushed and reached into the bag. She took out a leg and put it on the grid.

'Ag nee,' she protested, although it was true. No one knew that she had slept with the butcher. How else did one get enough to eat? Not even her husband knew. She hid her affair well; he would not understand.

The cooked and charred results of the braai were laid out in ordered rows on a blanket. Joel took one blackened stick and gnawed on the meat, spitting out the fluff.

'Did you see the man-bird?' he asked, using a word he had made up. Some of the women in the circle looked at him curiously. Maria shrugged. She knew that Joel was special; he thought of things that no one else thought about. Anthony had been like that as well. This was Maria's lot: to bring special children into the world. She wished that her children could have been ordinary. There was no place for special children on the Guguletu Refuse Dump.

From where the women had gathered it was possible to see the

road and the checkpoint through which one gained access to the dump. An occasional police van drove past. The police station was just down the road. Maria hated police more than anything else in the world. More than the skollies, the locations' delinquents. More than Gamat the butcher.

The black watchman of the dump had his headquarters in the narrow hut at the checkpoint. Armed with a knob-kierie, he usually patrolled the hill-top, keeping order, checking that only trucks with the necessary authorization offloaded. Once he had disarmed a skollie with a gun who was taking pot shots at Nasrudin during the course of an attempted robbery. He did not prevent the journalists from entering.

The rhythm of the dump was disturbed by the arrival of the journalists. They came in a yellow Volkswagen Beetle which was conspicuous from a distance. They were not supposed to be there. The old man with the squint stopped hammering, Harold Dube stopped chipping cement, the covern of women looked up from their cooking, and Thombo, the idiot, rolled his eyes in his head while a white fleck of spittle dropped from the corner of his mouth. He was agitated; he picked up the agitation of the people around him. For emotionally, Thombo was like a radio receiver; he could not generate any emotion for himself, yet he responded to the strong emotions of others. He could be very violent one moment, and weep like a baby the next. People thought that a very strong spirit lived in Thombo the idiot.

There were two journalists – a short dark one carrying a note-book and pen, and a taller one with a camera. They parked at a distance and walked slowly up to where the group of women sat. They spoke nonchalantly to each other as they walked.

'What do they want?' asked Althea Plaatjies suspiciously.

'They coming to make trouble, I know,' said Maria, and rearranged the scarf on her head. Joel went to sit behind his mother, like a chicken under the wing of its hen. He held the trotter like a club.

'Hello,' said the writer.

No one answered. Somebody clicked her tongue.

'What do you want?' asked Althea Plaatjies at last.

'I'm from a newspaper. I'm writing a story on the dump. Can I ask you some questions?'

'No questions. Leave us alone.'

'We're only interested in money,' said Maria, and everyone laughed. The man smiled and wrote in his book. When the one with the camera took photographs, the women hid their faces. Questions were dangerous. Photographs were dangerous. Men with pens and cameras and note-books only caused trouble.

'Give me two rand,' said Maria sarcastically as the men walked away, and again the women laughed.

For a moment, the white man and the black boy looked at each other, summed each other up across an abyss of culture, and situation, and age. Then, as the man began to feel uneasy under the scrutiny, the boy spoke.

Joel followed the men. They wandered about the hill-top, chatting, taking pictures, writing, while the small boy wearing the ill-fitting trousers and the plastic orange sun-shade kept an inquisitive discreet distance behind them. At one point Harold Dube sidled up to the writer and asked him for a cigarette, but the reporter did not smoke and Harold Dube came away dissatisfied. Then, the camera-man scrambled down to the bottom of the hill to take photographs of Nasrudin and the people below.

The small boy approached the writer. The boy's shirt had no buttons, his broken takkies had no laces. He stood right opposite the journalist and stared up into his eyes. The man, in surprise, stared back. For a moment, the white man and the black boy looked at each other, summed each other up across an abyss of culture, and situation, and age. Then, as the man began to feel uneasy under the scrutiny, the boy spoke.

'What's your name?' he demanded.

'Raymond Mullins,' said the journalist. 'What's yours?'

'Joel Gweba.'

'What do you think of all this?' asked Mullins indicating the activity on the plateau. Joel recognized in the journalist a thinly-veiled feeling of revulsion. Mullins understood, and Joel felt a sudden warmth for the man, a bond, a feeling he had never experienced before.

'I want to fly,' he said.

'To where?'

Joel pointed. 'A 'plane was rising, like a hope, sleek and polished above the tree-tops. The man nodded.

'Help me to fly,' implored the boy.

Mullins shrugged and started to turn away, uncomfortable in the face of the boy's aspirations. 'I can't. I'm just a writer,' he said. 'I can tell your story. That's all.'

A spasm of anger, of unfulfilled desire, of irrational hope suddenly

Thombo looked around wildly at the approaching journalist, tuned into the man's hysteria, and fled, running madly, leaping and falling and shouting mindless spittle-flecked nothings across the hill-top.

dashed, contorted Joel's face. Mullins recoiled, aghast at the hatred, almost feeling the boy's emotion as a physical force. Simultaneously he heard a cry – a startled, painful sound from the depths below the hill-top. A man stood at the edge of the precipice – a limp, tall, bare-footed man, staring stupidly at something below. Without thought Mullins found himself running, running to the place where the man stood dangling his long, loose, idiotic hands like a discharged slingshot.

'Louis!' Mullins shouted. He had dropped his pen and note-book. 'Louis!' But his companion did not answer. The watchman with the stick walked by blandly, as though he had not heard or seen a thing. Joel sat down in bewilderment, his anger spent, knowing he had caused something terrible to happen, but not sure what it was. Thombo looked around wildly at the approaching journalist, tuned into the man's hysteria, and fled, running madly, leaping and falling and shouting mindless spittle-flecked nothings across the hill-top.

'Louis,' said Mullins uselessly, as he looked down the slope at the body of his friend, and at the bloody rock that lay nearby.

'There must not be police,' said Maria Gweba to the group of women around the small cooking-fire. She was used to hiding things. 'No police.'

Althea Plaatjies and the others agreed.

The message flashed across the dump with the speed of a striking Cape cobra.

A cordon of people escorted the shocked and unprotesting Mullins down the embankment, out of sight, while the watchman temporarily kept the trucks at bay. Then the old squint man who hammered nails from chair legs came forward quietly, almost humbly. He was a craftsman, not a showman. In his hand he carried a knife. Already the Volkswagen was being stripped, expertly, and the pieces were being removed.

The refuse dump was uniquely equipped with the apparatus for making things, and people, disappear.

Joel sat in the dust of the plateau and looked at the Boeing that was just dissolving into a blue infinity. He did not try to hold back the tears that stained his grimy face. ●

Poems from

OH EARTH WAIT FOR ME
coming soon in Ravan's *Staffrider* series

TALKING OF SHARP THINGS
for Jack Mapanje & Lupenga Mphande

I think of the razor-sharp knife
slicing through the sweetness
of a ripe mango, thoroughly ravaging
the layers of life's plenitude, its juice
running over as barbed wire digs
into bonded arms: who relishes the flesh
What thirst does this blood quench?
I think of the great sorrows of flesh
Of the country with my face mapped
with bullet-holes, machete and knobkerrie –
scarred, bleeding, the arrow quivering
in its torn heart that still dances;
a heart that has vowed to sing always
Bleeding, how red the river waters,
Bleeding into the water-wells
where we all suckle at the distended breast.
My mirror shifts a little yet leaves its
edge which cuts my clear image on my land,
in the lines my inherited sweat collects.
We patch up the land with our gaping wounds;
I think of the adze that cuts a man out of wood,
Of spears cutting down a life built of labour
I talk of pain as sharp as a hunter's dagger
Though it does not bring respite to exile.
Unseen as it is, I still talk of pain
As if it were the sharp claws of the flag cock.
I think of thorns and those other thorns
A crown full of thorns and a king who is dying
of indulgence, and a rough tree that holds him;
And of the hands that have been torn
And the hands drained of all tenderness, hands
that cannot hug or fondle without throttling
And of the mouth that will never sing again
Without a splinter of rail threatening it
Without the edge of a *panga* guarding it
I think of other thorns lodged in the throats –
Now I talk of that which is double-pointed
And spares no one, even those who do not talk
I speak of them too and whatever spear got them,
And of Narcissus and sadist goading and laughing
His ribs split by a happiness lined with pain.
I must stop and wonder how the armless wind
whips stings pierces tears and escapes uncaught!
And of slogans that are launched like harpoons
And of the many who have perished under them
And of sharp jagged rocks hurled at the enemy
And of all those patriots shouting 'Stone him!
Stone him!' And the rushing, thrashing until what is
becomes only pulp cast into the rivers
insatiable as the mass graves dotted across the land.
I shall speak of betrayal too and the last supper
in which shrapnel is hidden and served or
the spring mattress with pointed knives in the foam
and of the man who took the woman violently
there and paid for it in his blood;
And of the land that suffers silently like sheep;
Of the strange wedge driven permanently between people
Hallelujah! Of the nails and the heavy hammers
pinning the flesh and its attendant sins to crucifix
and of the death drooping down the rough wood.
And then three cheers for the Party and threefold for
The Leader a snake in three-piece rich rags and a mouth
endowed with incisors and fangs and words that bite
and kill like the sharp tail of the whirlwind dancing
in our country, descending the mountains and gripping
the trees, uprooting them and sweeping the valleys.
I have to talk of this or that, of love perhaps,
and stumble or stammer on that forbidden word
or of a kiss whose fangs completely rip off the lovers' lips;
of massacres and mass axe murders and the sale of blood
to South Africa crossing apartheid's lines, always mysterious
deeds done in the deep nights, Chilobwe or something
And ramble sometimes as chaotic as the world;
I have to talk of Messiahs, their cathedrals and sword-like
spires that rend our pagan hearts as they convert them;
Perhaps of a blind root that burrows instinctively
And attempts desperately to reach the depths of our lives.
Maybe I must talk of the man who carries pain in himself
intimately
like a child that waits to be born, but refuses to die.
But now let me turn to a needle and its invisible thread
and the tattered body of my country that waits to be sewn.

FRIEND, AH YOU HAVE CHANGED!
A river never flows back into its source.

Ah, friend you have changed: neckless,
your smile is so plastic
your cheeks are blown-out balloons
and your once accordion ribs
are now drowned under mountains of fat;
your belly is a river in flood threatening your head,
your woollen three-piece exaggerates the cold.

Prisoner behind high concrete walls
wearing transparent crowns of broken glass,
guarded by sharp toothed bulldogs
whose barks pierce the spines of passersby
and spiked gates standing firmly vigilant
as you entertain company with imported spirits
bought with the people's tax money,
discussing your mischief, rallies where you fed
your audiences on false promises.

I am still where you left me, strapped ever to my hoe
in the dust, my fingers clutching the discarded rosary
praying for rain to grow enough for the Party.
put Boyi in school and pay the soaring hospital bills
while the priest claims his half for God Almighty
sending the eternal fire raging through my mind.

Though I am pushed near the edge
of your skyscraping platform to touch your shoe for salvation
you do not see me, your eyes rivetted on imaginary
enemies whom you vanquish with our chorus strung together.
The picture men will not notice me buried in this crowd
and the papers will print your shout clearly into news.

Ah friend, how you have changed.
You will never flow back here.

THE PATH OF THE HEART

for Alan

I

I want to touch again
the warm swollen pulse of song

the drummers' hard palms beat
out of the ancient cowhide drums.

I want to dance the no-space
with swollen bosomed whores

to the loud thuds of drums
grinding to throbbing Simanje manje

wires plucking the heart, setting
the dusty feet on fire with dance

and making blood pound through
our bodies like the Nkula waterfalls

generating a small fire
around which all the people will sit

warming themselves and softly
touching each other on their hearts.

We shall tell stories again
in the womb of a tropical evening,

singing again in unforced harmony
and drinking from the same gourd.

And I long to drink from shebeen
to shebeen in Makhetha, Ndirande,

passing Chibuku beer packets
from mouth to mouth freely

not caring if there are rotting teeth
without fear of Special Branch raids.

II

My country, if this separation is forever
then for heaven's sake, say so; already

my body forgets the warm caress
of your sun, though your rivers

still leap through me
like the flames of your lake

infiltrating your sacred light
into the thickets of my heart

and the sparks prolong my life
and I surrender myself to your fire.

III

My nostrils ache for the sizzling
smell of fish fried over a dried grass fire;

My nostrils itch for fish smoke
as the fire curls the skin off the flesh

and the dripping oils burst into flames
raising the offering to our ancestors.

IV

My feet hanker after the clinging caress
of fresh water swirling around them

like the silken shadow of an aged tree
where I will repose after all this wandering.

I know my heart will always take this path
Back to the land that waits like a lover.

Pikinini's Adventure

by Walt oyiSipho KwaMthetwa

Illustrated by Mzwakhe

PIKININI, a young man from the bundus, was employed by a sub-contractor called Nyambose & Sons Construction, at Ntuthuko Power Station. As an illiterate and unskilled person, he was working as a labourer and therefore earning a pittance.

'Yebo mfowethu,' responded Pikinini. He stared at the eyes of the stranger suspiciously, as he was told that if a man hides his feelings and intentions, look at his eyes, they tell the whole story.

It was dinner-time, the much dreaded Blue Monday was at least old. Pikinini searched and found a cool place near the big tyres which he adjusted and arranged in such a way that they formed a sort of an umbrella which sheltered him against the sharp burning rays of the midsummer sun. After meals, he laid down to take a nap.

'Yebo wethu,' said a voice from a person who was standing beside him and gazing at him with fire red eyes, just as he was about to be taken to dreamland. He slowly opened his left eye, then the right, lazily rose to sit straight up and leaned his back against the tyres.

'Yebo mfowethu,' responded Pikinini. He stared at the eyes of the stranger suspiciously, as he was told that if a man hides his feelings and intentions, look at his eyes, they tell the whole story.

'My name is Mangedla, odl'izimali zakhe and that man there,' pointing under a tree, a few metres away, 'is my friend, his name is Madrom.'

'Ngiyabonga, mine is Pikinini.'

Mangedla then waved, calling Madrom. Pikinini was then befriended by those two men of his age.

It was now chaile-time, everybody collected what belonged to them. Pikinini collected his skhafuthini too, and joined a long queue to be clocked off duty by the time clerk. Mangedla was behind him.

'Yaze yashaya Pikinini,' commented Mangedla. Pikinini just grinned and said nothing.

As the hostel, where they were accommodated, was not very far from the power station, it was easy for them to foot it home. When reaching the gate of the power station, Pikinini could not maintain the possibility of walking beside his companions. The dubula was too strong for him. The gate was too small for thousands of people to go through synchronously.

Pikinini was pushed in all directions until he found himself behind all the tired workers. He wandered behind them and at last found his way out and followed his route from the other different routes leading to different dormitories.

'There is room number 470. That is the room I was given,' he muttered to himself. He slowly opened the door and in he went. As it was his first day, he did not know his inmates.

'Gosh! jy qhebuka hierso ook my bla!' exclaimed Mangedla jubilantly upon seeing Pikinini. Pikinini just smiled and asked. 'Where's Madrom?'

'He stays next to our dormi but one,' he explained, taking off his boots that give him trouble, especially on rainy days because of the holes in the soles that let water in.

Pikinini took his towel, his toiletries and went to the shower. Mangedla and Madrom went to the hostel hall to start off with their rehearsals. They were very much involved in theatre. They found other actors taking exercises to warm themselves up. They joined in the exercises to loosen up the stiff muscles.

In the playground the Zulus were busy singing amahubo and practising their exciting traditional dance – indlamu. On the other side of the ground, the Bhaca's were also busy with their popular and eye-catching gum-boot dance.

From the shower, Pikinini went straight to his room, jumped onto his single bed and lay. He did not fall asleep nor was he comfortable, but lay there meditating. He was wondering mentally and extremely troubled spiritually. He lay there thinking about his family, home friends, and especially Ntombenhle, the woman he loved and probably wanted to marry after saving some pennies. He remembered the way they were evicted from Nyongo kraal after it was discovered that the soil contains iron ore. They were then resettled at Mzamo Village, where they erected their shacks. That vision was clear in his mind. It was as if he was seeing the superintendent moving around the Village in his VW registered G.G., decided that it was unhealthy to live in shacks, ordered them to demolish their shacks and build proper houses. They refused to do so.

The following day, the superintendent and his people bulldozed the shacks, damaging their properties, and arrested all the members of the Hlanganani People's Party which they declared unlawful for having influenced the people never to demolish their shacks. The building materials were later impounded. All the incidents

Mangedla and Madrom were urban people. They gradually learned to understand Pikinini. The trio came to be known as 'The Three Inseparables' to the other hostel dwellers. Their understanding and somewhat similar interests kept them together.

came to his mind chronologically in consecutive scenes as if he were watching a film where he was involved as an extra. He was collected from his thoughts by the entry of Mangedla, roughly hymning one of their songs. He was wet and shining with sweat. Mangedla took his towel, waslap and toiletries, and left for the shower. As everybody had gone to watch teevee in the dining hall, Pikinini was once more left alone.

Mangedla and Madrom were urban people. They gradually learned to understand Pikinini. The trio came to be known as 'The Three Inseparables' to the other hostel dwellers. Their understanding and somewhat similar interests kept them together.

Pikinini discovered that town life was totally different from farm life and found it educative. He also learned that town people have a wide general knowledge and were actively involved in social, religious and political aspects.

Six months later.

'How about accompanying us to a birthday celebration at Mzinoni Township?,' requested Madrom.

'To a birthday celebration! Yintoni leyonto?', Pikinini asked.

Pikinini prepared anxiously for the party which was to take place in three days' time. 'Ja on Friday gaan ek die skomplaas visit,' he muttered to himself and giggled aloud contentedly. He chose to wear his brown suit with white slanting stripes. The pipes of his trousers were shorter than his legs, in township lingo it was now a 'three quarter'.

'A party,' Madrom said, trying to elucidate. Pikinini, still amazed, simply gazed at him as if saying 'please explain in details, what do you actually mean?'

'Mangedla, who had been listening to the dialogue came to Pikinini's rescue. 'It's a sort of a stokvel Pikinini.'

'Oh kanti usho i stokvel!', Pikinini said, nodding to support the fact that he clearly understood. Initially, he did not want to accept the offer, but then realised that his friends would be disappointed if he refused, he then accepted the invitation. The fact that he was curious to see the much talked about Mzinoni Township contributed to his failure to refuse the invitation. His friends used to tell him interesting stories about Mzinonians and the happenings of the place every fortnight on their return from home.

Pikinini prepared anxiously for the party which was to take place in three days' time. 'Ja on Friday gaan ek die skomplaas visit,' he muttered to himself and giggled aloud contentedly. He chose to wear his brown suit with white slanting stripes. The pipes of his trousers were shorter than his legs, in township lingo it was now a 'three quarter'. He planned and arranged everything in an apple-pie order and was looking forward to that beautiful day to come.

The awaited day came. As transport was arranged a week in advance, they had no difficulty in getting to Mzinoni.

The Combi just collected the Three Inseparables and three other fun lovers.

For about ten minutes they travelled in silence. 'How many miles left before we reach that place?' Pikinini broke the silence. The people burst out laughing. Pikinini did not know whereabout the joke came from.

'Are you still dreaming nganamayela, Pikinini?' Madrom asked and went forth, 'today we speak in terms of kilometres and not of miles. We are using System International terms.'

Upon reaching the town, they first went to see the cashier of the Commercial Bottle Store, to get a bottle of the hot, the ever-dreaded Sputla, just to make themselves feel themselves. To their dismay, Pikinini refused to take in that intoxicating stuff. They then moved on to the township. They were using the road to Standerton which branches to Mzinoni Township, they could, therefore see clearly the Milan Park Shopping Centre.

It was in the afternoon that they reached the house where they would be keeping themselves grooving. The weather was highly favourable, there were clouds scattered evenly all over the sky and the sun was moderately hot. Pikinini and his friends went through a smaller nyanagate. There was an old man sitting near the gate with a skali of 'home brewed traditional beer before him. 'Zangen 'izin-sizwa,' the old man said in a hoarse voice, upon seeing the guys. Pikinini smiled at him and said 'Yebo Madala.' The old man smiled back showing his toothless gums that had turned blue-black owing to the snuff he stuffed into his mouth now and then.

With Madron leading them, they entered the house through a kitchen door and were directed to proceed to the tent where they met a lot of people in their Sunday bests. There were these guys who call themselves Ivy's (or are they Cats?) They were in their usual chimney-shaped, tight-fitting jeans. Some chicks in see-through dresses and botsotsos, some in typical traditional dresses and some dressed as responsible ladies. There were also Mapansula, Ma-Amerikane and what have you. It was just a mixture of different species It was marvellous. These people are discerned from one another by their way of dressing.

Pikinini was not used to such like occasions, especially when he had to see the colours of a woman's underwear. He was amazed and felt ashamed. They took their seats around a beautifully decorated table. Greetings and introductions took place.

'Ee . . . ladies and gentlemen this is our friend, Pikinini Thela,' Madrom introduced Pikinini to some of their male and female friends. Pikinini heard the tent shaking with a loud 'shine!' from the people around his table. While shakng hands with the people, Pikinini could see pleasure on their faces and quickly concluded that they were used to such occasions. People chatted and laughed happily. Pikinini perceived that he was welcome, that he was really wanted and that his presence was felt. However he was very shy, when that sexy, tiny lass winked at him, from the corner of the tent. He blushed just like a schoolboy would when speaking to a principal.

When everybody was settled, a well-dressed guy entered the tent from the house, having a piece of paper in his left hand. He was followed by people from the kitchen and other rooms. There was a beautiful lady amongst them. She went to the table that had no people around it, took her seat; two gentle guys followed her, took their seats sandwiching her. There was a big, beautifully decorated khekhe on that table before the lady.

'Brothers and sisters,' Bra Tom, the guy who came in leading the princess and the other family members, started to speak, (as he was the emcee) after the hi-fi set which churned titillating music, had been buttoned off. 'We have gathered today in this place in the name of Thulani Silalele who has come of age. I believe we have all come to say happy birthday to her. To show that we are all happy, let us all say happy birthday, loudly, very loudly.'

'Happy birthday!!!'

Pikinini heard the tent rattling.

People started singing 'happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you.' The song went on like that. Some singing in high soprano, others in low. Some singing a mixture of tenor and alto Other guys singing tenor and baritone alternately. The song was just a humorous hullabaloo. It was funny, it was beautiful.

Hereafter important guests were introduced and a lot of speeches followed. Pikinini was totally perplexed, he had never seen such a thing. People started helping themselves to sweeties on the tables such as sweets, cheese, peanuts and raisins and all kinds of chips and tasty snacks. Pikinini could see beer boxes in the room next to the tent. Being a tee-totaller, he was not happy but felt sorry for himself.

In the meantime, ladies wearing immaculate aprons started serving the people with good-looking and nice smelling food. People were having a noiseless and controlled conversation while eating that palatable food. The faint, sonorous voice of Otis Redding could be heard from the big speakers hanging on the opposite sides of the tent.

Initially, Pikinini was bashful to mix with these people and had to acclimatize himself to the situation.

Actually, he used to see a lot of people only when the chief of their clan had a ceremonial feast and those people used to be aggressive and noisy. He was surprised to see these people being able to control their conversation.

After that sumptuous meal, two cases of beer, one Black Label and the other Castle Lager were supplied to each table occupied by not more than eight people. Later two bottles of Sputla (the favourite drink of Magedla and Madrom) with some wine (Autumn Harvest only) were supplied.

Pikinini was really sorry. He scrutinized the people one by one and could see that they were all having a 'feel-at-home spirit'. After yet another short, pertinent speech from Tom, everyone, with the exception of Pikinini, started to help themselves to those bottles. After a few minutes, people noticed that Pikinini was not taking the stuff. It was Madrom who first ogled him, then all eyes followed. Pikinini who had his elbows rested on the table and his hands covering his face, perceived that he was being gazed upon. He reluctantly shifted his hands to either side of his cheeks and opened his eyes.

'Pikinini why don't you . . .?' Before Madrom could finish the sentence, Pikinini intervened abruptly and harshly like an actor treading a cue, defending himself by explaining that he was not a boozer.

'We are visited by a bishop today,' a guy next to their table came out with this mockery pointing at Pikinini. The people burst out laughing. 'No, he's an arch-bishop,' added another one who happened to be among the

While shaking hands with the people, Pikinini could see pleasure on their faces and quickly concluded that they were used to such occasions. People chatted and laughed happily. Pikinini perceived that he was welcome, that he was really wanted and that his presence was felt. However he was very shy, when that sexy, tiny lass winked at him, from the corner of the tent. He blushed just like a schoolboy would when speaking to a principal.

group of Mapansula. The people roared with laughter, not only laughing at the remark about Pikinini, but also because the manner in which the mockery was delivered was risible.

A loquacious lady next to him kept on fumigating him with smoke from her cigarette and remarked 'Lo mfundisi wants to pick-pocket us when we are hot.'

Pikinini felt humiliated and did not want to be humiliated further, he looked at the people, some still tittering and wiping tears accrued from laughing excessively.

A loquacious lady next to him kept on fumigating him with smoke from her cigarette and remarked 'Lo mfundisi wants to pick-pocket us when we are hot.'

Madrom could no longer condone the mockery and stopped them immediately. He then pleaded with Pikinini to drink only for that occasion, to obviate further derogatory remarks.

Pikinini yielded to the plea. He then forced himself to drink. The stuff was bitter, especially the beer. He tried Sputla yo, siyashisa and again siyababa. He mixed the stuff with Appletiser to mitigate it, much better, he poured it down his throat. The drinking went on like that until very late.

At mid-night everybody was leaving, so did Pikinini and his friends. Pikinini, a novice to the boozing profession was so drunk that he could not even walk, let alone speak. His two friends carried him like a heavy parcel to the Combi and were driven to Madrom's home where they all slept.

Pikinini could not forget the lovely day of the party. Since then, they attended every party in the township, be it a birthday party, a stokvel or whatever, they cared less. When they were not attending parties, they drank at shebeens like kwa Mooi Vrou, kwa Mfaz'omnyama, eMaswazini and so on. They only drank at weekends starting on Friday until very late on Sunday.

The trio regarded themselves as just ordinary drinkers but they were unaware that they were gradually becoming just ordinary drunkards.

Ultimately the much-dreaded Blue Monday was added to the drinking days, just to frighten away the troublesome babalaz, by sipping a few beers and sometimes a nip. Wednesday was also added to the drinking time-table to avoid feeling lousy and drowsy.

The trio regarded themselves as just ordinary drinkers but they were unaware that they were gradually becoming just ordinary drunkards.

The process went on like that until Pikinini's attendance at work became anomalous. He started to loaf on Mondays. If he happened to go to work, he would now and again disappear to town not very far, to get himself a bottle of beer or a long tom can. He could no longer stay without the stuff.

One Tuesday morning, Pikinini was called to the office by the Personnel Officer. The Personnel Officer was angry with him because he had not come to work the previous day. He hesitated a bit when he remembered how humiliating it was to be scolded in front of that tea-girl, nevertheless he went to the office.

'Take whatever rubbish belongs to you and fuck off. We don't keep people like you here,' the man said angrily throwing at him a brown envelope containing his severance pay.

He could not catch it, it hit him on the chest and fell. He slowly bent to pick it up, his eyes fixed on the furious man, so that he would be able to duck in case he lashed out. He opened the door hastily, went out and closed it behind him. ●

DON'T LEAVE ME

by Joseph Moladira

I had never known Africa until I sat down and let the dirge of my passing years echo through her valleys. It was terrible to find myself betrayed, by her on this degenerate earth. I am left naked in this chilly atmosphere of misfortune, suffering and discontentment.

Life flows like a river into the great sea of death. I have seen death and unnecessary bloodshed. My fear accumulates every instant until I imagine that I shall be finally absent. I sigh like a bereaved widow and shed lonely teardrops, but Africa seems not to hear.

I am perpetually being dragged into the dramatic arena of justice. There I suffer introspection. Lies are abominable, I know, but truth has become a piercing arrow to my heart. I deceive only to satisfy a corrupt judgement and protect my fading existence for I have no other shield.

I am separated from my parents like a chick from a hen. I wander hopelessly in the dry and arid portions of this land. I find no food to satisfy my hunger or water to quench my sizzling thirst. Here, it is clear, my descendants shall also dwell. Am I really deserted?

I stand out in the cold like a fish outside a pond. My dilapidated clothes are worn out scales under which I seek cover. This roofless ground is my home I seek shelter, I need cover, yet Africa merely proceeds.

Where can I go when Africa hastens?

The heart that ticks in my chest is that of a thief. The tongue I tangle in my mouth is that of a liar. My brains are a reservoir of trouble and mischief. I sink down in the bottomless pit of corruption and Africa floats on its surface like a waterfly.

I am looked upon with scorn. Africa, my people, take all this to be no threat to human life. The gap between them and me widens. All I can do is elevate my voice and cry to her, 'Don't leave me!' ●

POETRY

LADY OF AFRICA

I wanted to sketch you
as you worked
as you lived
as you loved.

I took out my paints
my pencils
my inks
my canvasses.

I opened my eyes
saw you painted
saw you sketched
saw you etched.

Not on canvas, but
on hills
on deserts
on towns.

Karoo, Tafelberg, Durban, Soweto;
khaki, tawny, sepia, dusk.

Lady of Africa
your portrait is living
in your gallery.

Kim Waite

CULTURE AND RESISTANCE

CYNTHIA KROSS

IT is probably a long time since Botswana's dusty capital has known such a sense of exhiliration. Over 600 people -- most of them South Africans — descended on the university for the five day Culture and Resistance Festival.

People who had not seen each other for years embraced fiercely. Over and over again you could hear the poignant phrase that crops up in the conversation of all exiles, sooner or later, as they ask about things 'at home'. It gives you a start to realize that even after two decades of exile South Africa has not stopped being home.

The festival was arranged to examine and propose suggestions for the role of artists in the creation of a democratic South Africa.

This was done through various seminars on particular aspects of the Arts, including dance, fine art, photography, poetry, novels and drama, in conjunction with exhibitions, film shows and dramatic presentations. Each seminar was led by a panel of artists who have achieved recognition in their own field: Robin Orlin, Malcolm Purkey, James Matthews Chris van Wyk, Nadine Gordimer, Charles Mungoshi and so on.

The special status that is accorded to the artist in western society was severely criticised. The term 'cultural worker' was offered as an alternative to the more prestigious 'artist'.

Many of the cultural workers themselves were eager to shed the mystical cloak of artistry. James Matthews denies emphatically that he writes poetry, insisting that he merely 'expresses feelings'. If you tempt him to 'express his feelings' on those who do call themselves poets, you will be treated to the unique Matthews brand of abuse.

Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) corrects anyone who calls him a musician or a pianist. He defines himself as 'the messenger boy' and recalls a saying of his that has become famous: 'I regard myself as a worker . . . my function is no less or more important than a street sweeper's or a doctor's.'

At the end of his concerts he solemnly joins the audience in their applause to show that all praise is due to Allah alone.

The seminars gave rise to some stimulating debates which were not always followed through. For example, the seminar on theatre suffered from people's unwillingness to analyse the alternative theatre that has been produced in South Africa since the 1950's. Important issues such as whether or not artists should be supported by their communities were raised but then fell flat.

Similarly in the poetry seminar when someone asked why there were so few women involved in poetry, the chairperson thought that this question should be reserved for a separate session at some later date.

The novel seminar was, in some ways, the most challenging. The novel was attacked and defended with equal vigour. Some of the questions raised were: Do workers have the necessary educational background and do they have the time to plough through 300 pages or so? The novel is historically a product of the middle class, can it be made to serve the workers and, — most insistent of all — does the novel tell the truth?

It was unfortunate that not many people, besides Ms Gordimer, appeared to know much about the post '76 renaissance which has given birth to novels like Miriam Tlali's *Amandla* and Mongane Serote's *To Every Birth Its Blood*.

It was easier to resolve the position and function of poetry, despite some of the audience's unhappy school recollections. Poetry is more easily composed on the evening tram than some other forms of literature. It is read at meetings and at the gravesides of martyrs.

The dominance that European poetry has enjoyed for so long in our schools and in the minds of our poets, was angrily denounced. People had it in for daffodils especially, probably justly so. What could be more foreign to African experience than a wild host of them waiting to inspire the solitary poet?

There was some sense of loss though. It was reminiscent of a poem by James Matthews in which he recalls his original poetic intentions to describe natural wonders. But after having seen the dark images of oppression he writes:

> 'i will never be able to write
> a poem about dawn, a bird or a bee.'

One of the exiles spoke about the feelings awoken in him by the glorious sunset he had witnessed on his landing in Botswana — the closest he had come to his home for twenty years. The point that emerged from this was that subjects of natural beauty should not be denied to poets. They will inevitably be imbued with a certain consciousness whether it is Wordsworthian wonder or the longing, bitterness and hope of the exile.

When Abdullah Ibrahim found himself trapped in a press conference he refused to clarify the political 'message' of his music. The spectacle of the journalists, each jostling in his or her own 'groove', as he put it, amused him. He would not be drawn into any of the 'grooves'.

'The human spirit recognises the quality that is injected through the music,' he said. He suggested that this contributes to the jidha (holy war) that is waged with the self. It is necessary for each individual to re-orientate himself before society as a whole can be transformed. 'After all', he maintained, 'it's no good shooting if you shoot in the wrong direction.'

It seems he does not have to be consciously aware of his duty to the people. 'I am the people,' he asserted.

The journalists continued to refer to the theme of the festival. Ibrahim said: 'After all the killings and everything . . . It's 1982 and we still have to tell the culture to resist!' Nevertheless, he added that he thought the Festival was a 'useful exercise'.

He seemed to be suggesting that the conscientised cultural worker may be sensitive to the troubles and hopes of the people without having to analyse them scientifically in the way that a sociologist might. If the cultural worker presents his or her perceptions effectively the individuals in the audience instinctively recognise and respond to them on different levels.

Certainly this was what happened in most of the practical demonstrations. There were some outstanding posters on display, as well as a collection of photographs (particularly those of Goldblatt) which captured some of the funny-cruel ironies of South Africa superbly.

The Fulani poets gave a passionate dramatic rendering of Don Mattera's *Azanian Love Song* – a powerful expression of despair and re-affirmation. Several dramas were produced by the Cape Community Arts Project, of which the most remarkable was a compelling mime which demonstrated the perversions of unlimited power.

The Junction Avenue Theatre Compnay staged their version of Modikwe Dikobe's *Marabi Dance*, a highly entertaining, but probing portrayal of Doornfontein slum life in the 1940's.

And there were the concerts of course:

Barry Gilder's rich satire; the Mpondo's burning rhythms; Abdullah Ibrahim's anguished relationship with his piano from which he draws such sweet, raw beauty; Hugh Masekela's jubilant trumpeting which made way, now and then, for the rest of the band, including old King Force Silgee's saxophone which won as much applause then as it did fifty years ago.

As we were leaving the concert hall I heard one of the audience, overcome by the experience, exclaim: 'Now, that was art!' ●

MOFOLO PLOMER PRIZE

The closing date for the 1983 Mofolo-Plomer Prize competition has been extended to 31st March 1983. That gives you a few more months to submit your manuscripts.

The sponsors of the Prize – which is worth R1000.00 – are publishers Ravan Press, David Philip and Ad Donker, and writer Nadine Gordimer.

The competition, began in 1976, is held annually and is awarded to a writer of promise whose reputation is not yet established.

Past recipients of the Prize include Mbulelo Mzamane and Peter Wilhelm (joint winners) John Coetzee, Achmat Dangor and this year's winner Rose Zwi.

The prize is awarded for prose fiction; a novel or collection of short stories, with a minimum length of 40.000 words. The names of the judges will be announced soon.

Send your entries, in duplicate, to Ravan Press, Mofolo-Plomer Prize, Box 31134 Braamfontein, 2017.

BOTSWANA FESTIVAL

Vicky Alhadeff Lesley Lawson Paul Weinberg

'King Force' Silgee

Crowd

Abdullah Ebrahim

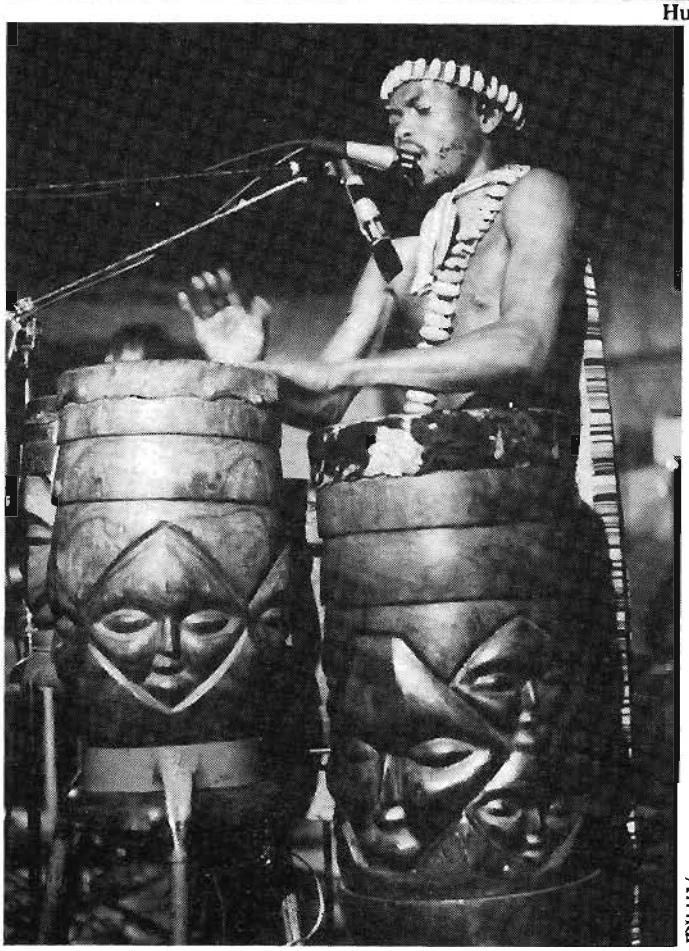
Abdullah Ebrahim

Afrika

BOTSWANA FESTIVAL

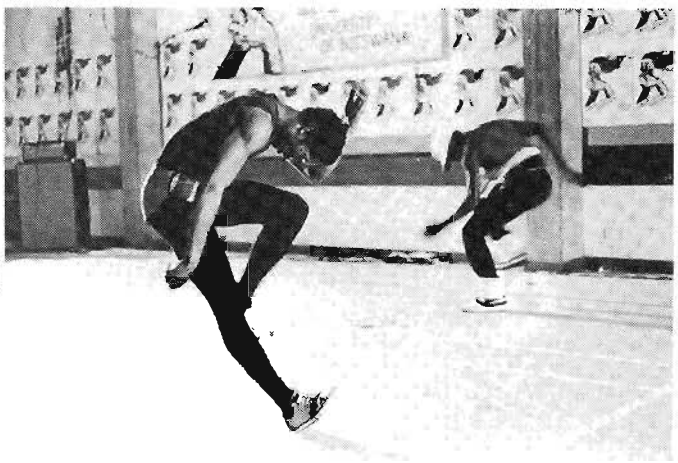
Vicky Alhadeff Lesley Lawson

Hugh Masekela



Afrika

Abdullah Ebrahim



Dancers

BOTSWANA FESTIVAL

Vicky Alhadeff Kevin Humphrey Lesley Lawson

Abdullah Ebrahim

Photographers

Dancers

BOTSWANA FESTIVAL

Vicky Alhadeff Lesley Lawson

Photographers

Mongane Serote

Peter McKenzie

Bringing The Struggle Into Focus

PETER McKENZIE

'We are people before we're photographers.'
– Duane Michaels

'I am part of all that I have touched and that has touched me.'
– Thomas Woolfe

This is the basic premise that this paper will follow. I believe that if we are going to become part of the struggle through photographic communication we must examine and realise the undeniable responsibility of all photographers in South Africa to using the medium to establish a democratic Azania. Our photographic seeing is the direct result of the factors that contribute to our being here. Our day to day experiences and our degree of sensitivity to these will determine the area we isolate in our viewfinder, the moment in time that we freeze forever.

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE

'Your child shares in your sense of indignity when you are stopped outside your yard and asked to produce your reference book. Your child shares in your sense of outrage and anger when people arrive in your house in the middle of th night and take you away, throw you into jail without trial, and for weeks, even months, refuse your wife the right to see you.

'As their cars drive off into the night with you, they leave behind seeds of hatred in the hearts of your small kids.'
– Percy Qoboza

This 'way of seeing' referred to in the introduction, holds true for the viewer too. We therefore realize the importance of examining this relationship with our viewers so that they can understand, interpret and perceive the images that we transmit to them in the process of communication. Culture supplies this relationship. To demonstrate this we can compare photographic communication to an iceberg where the tip of the iceberg represents the point and the submerged area the unstated unconscious cultural assumptions that make communications possible. Communication depends on the assumption that photographer and viewer share a common culture.

Photographic communication is possible in our multicultural society because we are united under oppression. The chances of being morally affected by photographs is better than ever before in our struggle because of the level of consciousness and awareness of the people. Evidences of the last drawing together of the laager are so evident that those who don't see them are those who choose to ignore them! Because of the high level of awareness and frequent acts of resistance in this country we will regard our culture at this stage in our struggle as a resistance culture. (We will later investigate the relevance of this resistance culture to communication in South Africa).

The poor history of committed photography in South Africa will reflect the refusal of most photographers to accept their responsibility to participate in the struggle.

'Whether he likes it or not the photographer is in the business of communication and it is useless to retreat into the romanticism of self-expression and technological wizardy. Useless, because to communicate takes us purely beyond personal and technical concerns and into phenomena that the communicator and his audiences share.' – Frank Webster

This shows the added responsibility of photographers in South Africa as oppression continually stifles the inherent creativity in us. No photographer can lay claim to any individual artistic merit in an oppressed society.

We must realize at this urgent stage of our struggle the importance of making a commitment to change through photographic communication i.e. we've got to take sides in the struggle as our commitment becomes very evident in our photographs.

Once we realize the importance of our resistance culture in photographic communication it becomes clear that we must examine the factors responsible for this culture so that we can successfully communicate on a level that the people are perceptive to.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION

We have already contended that the history of our struggle has moulded our resistance culture from which our present dominant beliefs and attitudes are derived. In order to become more effective in photographic communication we must examine the factors responsible for these beliefs and attitudes.

Factors Contributing To Present Political Awareness:

1. The history of the struggle has never before experienced such frequent acts of resistance. Strikes, guerilla warfare, boycotts and riots have been the experience of all South Africans, if not by direct involvement then by the atmosphere generated by these situations. The intensity of our struggle is proportional to the time it will take to achieve liberation!

2. Mounting economic pressure forces people to evaluate the factors responsible for this pressure. 'A hungry man is an angry man.' This is especially true in South Africa where basic commodities needed by the masses for survival are most severely hit by price increases.

3. When Namibia achieves its freedom we will be surrounded by countries whose peoples have successfully struggled for their liberation. We've seen the failure of racist regimes, we too shall overcome!

4. The Changed Concept Of Power In South Africa: In any society the culture of that society is strongly influenced by those in positions of power. If power is a strong constituent of culture we notice a peculiarity in our concept of power. Because of our experiences in recent years we see power as our ability to resist oppressive measures, e.g. after June '76 we recognise the efforts of the authorities to quell resistance not as power but as a

weakness. Drastic oppressive measures are blatant admissions of the inability to govern justly!

Through strikes, boycotts, riots and other acts of resistance we realized the power of a united effort, we also learnt to expect the worst from this racist regime and this has served to harden our resolve and make us firm in our struggle.

5. We are also aware of the changing role of religion in South Africa. Church leaders (and we're aware of their influence) are beginning to realize that the oppression we suffer in this country is directly contrary to the teachings of God. This realization has influenced the Church into serving the basic needs of those who are under its influence. Once this is fully realized we will have powerful allies in our persistence for justice.

EFFECTS OF UNIQUENESS ON PHOTOGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION

Once we've understood the present feelings and sensitivities of our intended viewers we can become explicit and direct in our photographic communication and the statements we make will be easily understood.

Lewis Hine, a pioneer in social documentation, said: 'There are two things I wanted to do with a camera, I wanted to show the things that had to be corrected, I wanted to show the things that had to be appreciated.' Social documentation can be regarded as having two aspects, negative aspects which we can call negative documentation and positive aspects or positive documentation.

Negative Documentation.

This type of documentation is to show the effects of injustice. They show the shocking conditions that people are forced to cope with, they show the faces of those who have given up in the face of overwhelming odds. These images are meant to awaken the sleeping consciences of those who haven't yet realized their oppression and the danger of non-commitment to change. There are those of our brothers who are so blinded by crumbs from the master's table, who even develop a sense of pride over their false securities. Because of the realistic tangibility of photographs they can arrest the conscience of those people and influence them into remedial action.

Positive Documentation:

We can see the danger of negative documentation. We could be seen as a pathetic and hopeless people. Nothing could be more misleading, our struggle has shown resolution, dignity and strength. We've got to show the hope and determination of all committed to freedom.

The photographer must serve the needs of the struggle. He must share the day to day experiences of the people in order to communicate truthfully. We must be involved in the strikes, riots, boycotts, festivities, church activities and occurrences that affect our day to day living. We must identify with our subjects in order for our viewers to identify with them. Because of the realistic nature of photographs and the relationships built up around the camera and its images they can promote unity, increase awareness and inform. A society possessing these qualities is an easily mobilized one. We as photographers must also be questioning, socially conscious and more aware than our predecessors.

WHAT OF TECHNIQUE?

With technical advances in photography it is within the grasp of most people to produce pictures of good technical quality. Automatic exposures, films with 4-stop latitudes and self-focussing features makes this hardly surprising. The area of technique that is more important is the area we isolate in our viewfinder and how we arrange the content to make our statements readable. Walker Evans suggests four basic qualities of the committed photographer – basic to the medium of the camera, lens, chemical and paper.

1. Absolute fidelity to the medium itself, that is full and frank utilization of the camera as the great instrument of symbolic actuality that it really is.
2. Complete utilization of natural un-contrived lighting.
3. Rightness in camera view-finding or framing – the operator's correct and crucial definition of his picture's border.
4. General but unobtrusive technical mastery.

If we're going to use images in responsible communication then we need to make these images as strong and impressionable as we can. A slapdash approach to the practice of photography shows no responsibility to the ultimate purpose of the image. While not denying the relevance of technique committed photography must move its allegiance away from the aesthetic to the social functions of photography.

OUTLETS FOR COMMITTED PHOTOGRAPHY

The responsibility of communication does not end at the print, it is then up to the photographer to circulate his work to his intended viewers. What good is documenting if we're going to hoard these documents in photo archives or display them for liberals in photo galleries. There are other avenues of service for the committed photographer through which he must advertise the struggle.

1. Street exhibitions – in townships and cities.
2. Advertising public meetings, theatre and other acts of resistance; rent increases, bus boycotts.
3. Using responsible media to publish features on events that go unnoticed.
4. Slide shows for community work, highlighting problems that affect the whole community.

We as photographers are responsible for the way in which our pictures are used. Irresponsible cropping, captions and lay-out can distort the intended meaning of single photographs and photo-essays. So much valuable material in South Africa is misused because of irresponsible editing. It is better for the photographer and editorial staff to make collective decisions about the use of photographs.

CONCLUSION

This paper has briefly dealt with the role of culture in photographic communication, the formation of our resistance culture, our country's uniqueness and how this affects the level of awareness of the people, the relevance of technique and finally outlets for committed photography. An understanding of these topics will enable us to be better equipped for the responsible job of photographic communication in Azania. Two intentions are necessary for committed photography in South Africa:

1. We must be committed to liberation.
2. We must prepare our people for a democratic Azania. ●

BLACK AS I AM

Black as ebony. Black as soot,
Black as the darkness of a thoughtless brain,
As the starless midnight with a cloud-shaded moon,
As the gloomy cloud of a thunderous rainfall,
I keep my faith to increase my hope.
I wield my weapon like a mighty warrior
That paves his way out of grief and hatred
Armed to the palm of an empty hand;
Angered to the bitterness of a fiery tongue.

Black as the garment of a bereaved widow;
As the pupil of my own eye,
That sees sorrow without a watch;
As the despair of a convict,
That lies condemned in the death cell;
I drop my tears in lament,
In solitude; at prayer;
In the meditation of a wounded bull,
When life and death are nothing else
But equidistant destinies from me.

Black as my own blood;
Like the sweat of a forefather in times of slavery
Like an opaque barrier that bars me from prosperity
Like fears at night confined in a haunted house
I hit my chest thrice with pride,
As I stand at the fore
Of the scattered fragments of nations.

I am the survivor without doubt.
I am the conqueror of a paralyzed foe.
This land which lacks justice
Is the pavillion of my rest.
Here, a deed shall be done.

THE ANSWER

Not in the sky
where birds flap their wings in ecstasy,
singing the sweet melody of their taste of life.
Not in the sea
where the carapace of the fish desalts the mighty waters.
Not in dreams
where ancestors vigilantly hold their reign
But in the thought of a brain,
the nourishment of flesh and soul;
the seed of heroism and victory;
lies the answer.

Not beyond the horizon
where the sky falls into eternity;
Not on the escarpment
where rainwater flows back to the sea;
Not at the sea-level
where water and air constantly meet;
But in the mind
the palace of conquest and existence;
the very reservoir of might and will;
lies the answer.

Not in the shed blood of a sacrificial lamb
drunk by the dark soil at the last bleat;
Not in prison cells
where men buzz off their thought of manhood;
Not in the grave
where ghosts and night creatures refuse to rest
as maggots feed on flesh to clean the bone;
But in the tintinabulations of the heart
as the fresh gush of blood sends away
ripples of hope for peace throughout the veins.
There the answer is buried.

EVICTION

Soon to take place,
Seven days' notice!
Reasons are crystal clear:
Rent arrears;
Lack of qualifications for house ownership;
For full citizenship,
Or the right to exist on my heritage.

Dogs have kennels; Cows have kraals;
Pigs have sties; Horses have stables.
Where shall my brothers dwell?
Wherein shall our children live?
They shall take to the forest
And smell on the track of savage beasts.
They shall saunter across the trackless desert
Where drought and thirst prevail.

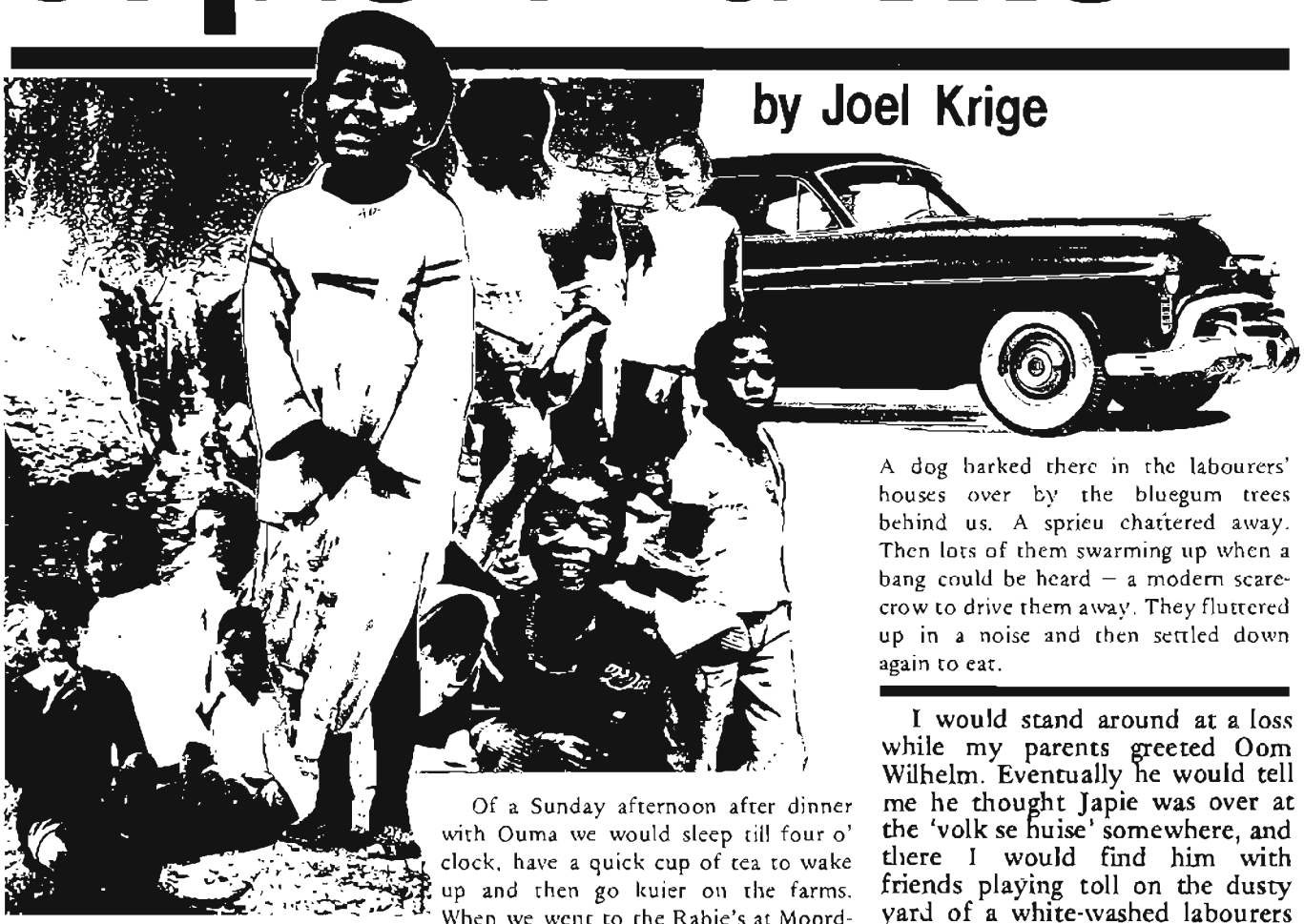
Who told them not to seek shelter
Where their fathers' hands built?
Tell the mother bird
not to lay eggs on her dexterously woven nest.
Who demands payment for the water they drink?
Go! Tell the mother duck
not to swim on nature's free fountain.

We do not want to exist but to live.
Impatient hosts of unbearable parasites:
Lice shall drink our fresh blood;
Dogs shall lick the sweat off our brows;
Bats shall hang on our hairs
Worms shall wait for our bodies to rot . . .
Ho! We do not want to exist but to live!

Forlorn mercy; merciless hearts;
Heartless inhumanity; inhuman brutality;
What nature is this, our life?
No one heard the widow's lament.
No one cared for the children's cry,
When a policeman armed to the teeth,
Armed with a baton, hauling a gun,
Telling the message, doing justice:
Eviction soon to take place,
Seven days' notice.

Japie and Them

by Joel Krige



THE farm lay at Moordkuil over the koppies that lie at the foot of the Langeberg and Japie played with Doekvoet and his friends in the afternoons after school. Japie was tough and it showed through the khaki shortpants his mother put him in. His heels were chapped from walking kaalvoet all year round, his dusty hair shorn so short that it stood up like bristles on a brush.

They would play all over the farm whether it was bollemakissing from the rafters into the haystack or mucking about in the cowsheds. What they really used to enjoy doing was chasing each other in the wine kelders. Tannie Marita had warned them not to play there, it was dangerous, she said, 'the gases can overcome you and in any case what happens when you fall from the vats onto the concrete.' But they used to go there often enough anyway; that is, until the accident. It was during the Pars. and Doekvoet's father was standing on a ladder in the vat, stirring the korrels, as he so often did, only this time he was asphyxiated from the fumes rising from the fermentation, and fell off his ladder into the skins. Before they could get him out, he was dead. And then they didn't want to play in the kelders anymore.

Of a Sunday afternoon after dinner with Ouma we would sleep till four o' clock, have a quick cup of tea to wake up and then go kuier on the farms. When we went to the Rabie's at Moordkuil Japie would always be somewhere on the farm; he too released from the confinement of his dark bedroom.

I would stand around at a loss while my parents greeted Oom Wilhelm.

They would play all over the farm whether it was bollemakissing from the rafters into the haystack or mucking about in the cowsheds. What they really used to enjoy doing was chasing each other in the wine kelders. Tannie Marita had warned them not to play there, it was dangerous, she said, 'the gases can overcome you and in any case what happens when you fall from the vats onto the concrete.'

Eventually he would tell me he thought Japie was over at the 'volk se huise' somewhere, and there I would find him with friends playing toll on the dusty yard of a white-washed labourers hovel. After watching them for a while and then trying my hand at it, and usually if it were summer, we would go and swim.

To get to the river that ran near the koppies we had to walk across the vineyards. It was a hot, still afternoon. A dog barked there in the labourers' houses over by the bluegum trees behind us. A sprieu chattered away. Then lots of them swarming up when a bang could be heard – a modern scarecrow to drive them away. They fluttered up in a noise and then settled down again to eat.

I would stand around at a loss while my parents greeted Oom Wilhelm. Eventually he would tell me he thought Japie was over at the 'volk se huise' somewhere, and there I would find him with friends playing toll on the dusty yard of a white-washed labourers hovel. After watching them for a while and then trying my hand at it, and usually if it were summer, we would go and swim.

'Eina bliksem,' I shouted, lifting one of my feet. I had walked into a patch of duiweltjies and the little prodded thorns were sitting like flies on the soles of my feet.

They burst out laughing.

'Dammit man' and I fell over, not knowing which foot to stand on, right into the patch of duiweltjies.

When they had finished laughing, Japie, sliding his feet on the ground came up to me to help pull them out.

'Hey, Japie, how come they don't worry you? 'Suppose your feet are hard like pot clay!'

'My feet are hard, but you must know how to do it,' he said and moved away from me down the path between the woven vines, sliding his feet along. 'If you slide your feet like this then you can't stand on top of one, you dumb dorpenaar,' and they all laughed.

'Look here,' he said, stooped and picked one up from the dust and held it in his palm. He called me over and said, 'there are four points,' and pulled my head closer to see better. 'you see,

three points lie flat and one points up. Then you push it over, can you see, and then there is still one pointing up,' and sure enough, whichever way it lay, one point always pointed upwards.

We all shuffled off to the river with the dry dust of the fertile soil beating up and hanging in the still air. The sun shone off the river water as if reflected off a mirror, the white sand so hot that it burnt our feet. With a 'Dis fokken warm vandag,' we pulled off our clothes and dived in. The surface water was quite warm, but underneath it was cold. A water fight ensued, all of us digging down into the water to pull up handfuls of dark mud from the shallows and splattering each other with it.

Japie leant over to me: 'Is hulle piele nie fokken groot nie,' as if I had not noticed before. And I sat up and looked, but it was only really Pielietjie's; which indicated to me where he got his name from. The others' however, were various shapes and sizes.

Tired and exhausted we flopped down under the shade of a melkbos. All our young bodies lying stretched out in a row. Japie's and mine tanned but still white in comparison with the dark brown of Doekvoet and them. We were all more or less the same height.

Japie leant over to me: 'Is hulle piele nie fokken groot nie,' as if I had not noticed before. And I sat up and looked, but it was only really Pieletjie's; which indicated to me where he got his name from. The others' however, were various shapes and sizes.

This was Japie's domain and it was a privilege to be allowed to be part of it. Japie was intrigued by the size. He had swum with them often enough before and yet it was obviously something that had not yet ceased to amaze him.

We played a form of jukskei with sticks until the mountains began to grow orange before the approach of sunset and we heard a car hooter far over at the homestead. 'Jou pa,' Japie said and something seemed to come over him and his eyes became mournful as if he were caught between two worlds. Like the rather envious remark he had made about his friends, he seemed to be caught between the mountains and the sea and yet unable to choose one.

A reluctant good-bye was said and we jogged back 'so op 'n draf'.

Outside, the two families were standing at the car in the process of saying their long good-byes.

'Hier's hulle nou,' when Tannie Marita saw us coming through the vineyard, and Japie became all sheepish and went to stand on the side, all his toughness now gone.

She called him to come and stand next to her, but he refused, twisting one leg around the other, trying to hide his dusty feet.

We played a form of jukskei with sticks until the mountains began to grow orange before the approach of sunset and we heard a car hooter far over at the homestead. 'Jou pa,' Japie said and something seemed to come over him and his eyes became mournful as if he were caught between two worlds.

'Julle't natuurlik met die klonkies gespeel,' she said, and turning to all of us: 'you know what, it was Japie's birthday the other day and I asked him who he wanted to invite to his party. And you know what he said: "Doekvoet and them." And I asked him: "don't you want to invite your school friends?" But he wouldn't. He insisted so much that I had to have a party for him and all the klonkies. We had it outside in the garden.' And turning to him she said: 'And we had such a party, didn't we, Japie?'

At which Japie blushed and we all kept quiet as he brushed his hand through the bristles on his head. ●

POETRY

JOSEPH MOLADIRA LUCAS SIGELA

DRUNK AT NIGHT

In that airy night
I staggered backwards
As if to gather courage
And get free from the monstrous claws of drunkenness.
I waddled forward with a weakened force.
Losing my path
Like a shepherd behind his disordered flock,
I knocked my head against an electric pole,
Only to relieve my bladder of the burning urine
And vomit the distilled water in my roaring stomach.
Home I shall arrive, that is certain,
Or like a tortoise without a shell
I had to lie sprawled on the pavement
With my bloodshot eyes gazing at the barren sky,
As if I counted the stars
Or beg for mercy from the god of inebriety.
My colleague with a similar disease
Shall pick me up and carry me home.

Joseph Moladira

DO YOU

Do you
    understand
When I laugh
It's a symbol
of happiness

And when
I cry
It's a symbol
of bitterness

So when
I cry
don't laugh
at me

Lucas Sigela

SHARPEVILLE

The event flashes into memory like a snapshot:
Moments after gunfire scatters
The crowd,
A man lying flat
On his back.
His arms spread like one anticipating death,

Close by a group of cops in blue shirts, blue pants
And blue caps, confer.
One glances at
The man
Stretched out on his back.
His arms open like one surrendering to death.

The rest of the scene constitutes a shaken crowd:
Men and women among abandoned shoes
Tending to bullet wounds, while
A man pushes his bicycle away.
His arms flung open in defiance of death.

FERTILITY RITES

The Bakongo face stares pensively at me
As I move from
The Maternity statue of a mother
With a new born baby
On her lap, to the warriors standing back to back.

The mashamboy of the Bakuba fits well over
My head
I dance until my eyes shine like
Polished cowrie shells
Black raffia drops from my chin like an enormous beard.

I carry a gunpowder container like a pendant
Around my neck.
My glittering teeth are cowrie shells.
I have fathered a tribe:
My life is strung to the spear, the seed, and the gun.

FRIDAY NIGHT

It's Friday night and I'm leaving Joe's place
With long standing binge mates
We rock down a dark road,
Along sagging fences, past sombre gates.
We all know
This is the hour of flying bricks and switchblades.

Discordantly we sing long forgotten maraba songs,
And mumble about good times.
Stooping and tilting
We stagger into the silent zone.

SONG OF THE UNEMPLOYED

This room with its brooding coal stove
And aluminium pots, unnerves me.
The broom standing in the corner,
And the black coat hanging from the wall,
Have something strange about them.
What's in the cupboard below the window?

I stand in the doorway or look from the window
And see a grey dustbin
At the hingeless gate.
An aloe with spear shaped leaves
Catches my eye:
What does it want to say?

Later today, I will take a plastic bucket
And fetch water
From a tap down the street.
I will step around puddles
And avoid hungry looking dogs.
Where do all the emaciated animals come from?

At dusk when the first trains pull up
I will stoke the fire,
Cook a huge pot of porridge,
Some vegetables
And a small portion of meat. Then
I will wait for my wife and children to return from work.

Andries Oliphant

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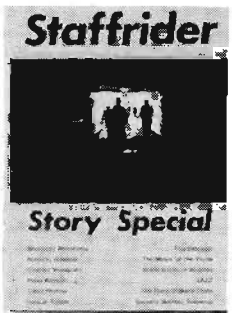

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An excerpt from Amandla. Poems of Remembrance; June '76. Poetry by Wole Soyinka and Molahlehi wa Mmutle.

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Stories: Njabulo Ndebele, Charles Mungoshi, Peter Wilhelm.

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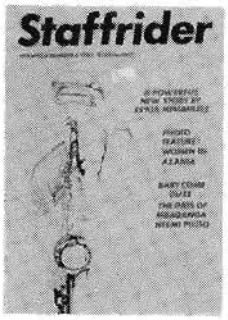

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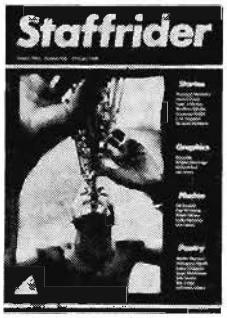
Stories by Mothobi Mutloatse, Bheki Maseko, Es'kia Mphahlele



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'Mineworking' by Greg Latter (won the Pringle Award for 1982).

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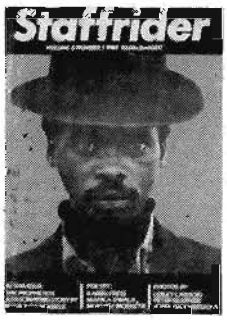
Stories by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ahmed Essop, Daniel Kunene.



Vol. 5, No. 1
Stories by Njabulo Ndebele and Bheki Maseko.

IMAGES IN

CONFLICT

OVERTIME

by Mpumie Cilibe

That afternoon, after work, Nzwaki hopped into the boss's car. She sat in the rear seat as the man drove home to Humewood. She had gladly accepted when the man asked her to go home with him, for the missus would be entertaining visitors that evening. The boss's wife would need extra hands. The extra money would do Nzwaki's family a world of good, more so, since Bozo, her husband, was unemployed. Their's was a daily struggle, a struggle to make ends meet, a struggle to live.

They entered the house through the backdoor, the boss leading the way. A boy or a girl, or perhaps, the African servant's entrance is always through the backdoor. Nzwaki knew this very well. The house impressed her – the well looked-after garden, the rolling lawns, trees and flowers. The kitchen excited her. She waited there, standing, while the boss went into the inner rooms to call his wife. Nzwaki glanced around, her mind absorbing each and every gadget and appliance .She breathed in, and then released a long sigh as if she had just finished a long journey – this was luxury!

The boss appeared followed by his wife. He said to the smiling woman, indicating Nzwaki, 'This is Joyce. And Joyce, this is the missus.' He left the kitchen to join his visitors, leaving the two women together. After some small talk, the women were lost in the work of the kitchen. Nzwaki toiled, but at least she was not feeling tired yet. The domestic science she had learnt at school held her in good stead. The missus was amazed by the speed and dexterity of the 'girl'. She soon found herself looking on, her arms folded on her breasts, shoulders narrowed, a smile playing at the corners of her mouth. Thoughts wandered away to the black woman's hovel in the location. She envisaged Joyce working in her own kitchen. And then it occurred to her that the other woman's place was different. She had seen those box-like so-called houses in a newspaper photograph. She shrugged and moved away, towards the stove.

It was time to serve the visitors. The boss's wife donned her starched apron. Course after course of delicious dishes were served by the missus – the perfect housewife and hostess in a white, impeccable apron. Nzwaki never saw the visitors, she did not care to anyway. She imagined bloated bastards, stuffing their fat faces with roast potatoes, licking their sausage-like fingers, nodding their skulls in satisfaction.

Soon it was time to tidy up. The missus was kind enough to let Nzwaki collect the remaining food scraps for her children. Also she did not have to worry about washing up the dishes. She only had to arrange them carefully in the dishwashing machine and the missus would take care of them the following day.

In the location, at Nzwaki's house, Bozo and their two children were waiting. He rolled a zol, bit off its ends, took out a match stick and stuffed both ends of the zol with the match. He told the children jokes. They laughed half-heartedly. They were hungry and thinking of their mother. Bozo could see they were worried – he was worried too. He was wondering what was keeping his wife, for she always came earlier from work. He hated being out of work, he feared losing respect in the eyes of the children, because he was unemployed. He lit his zol, pulled and blew smoke towards the dirty ceilingless roof overhead.

Nzwali was paid ten rands for her services. It shocked her. She had not expected such generosity from her boss for this was half the weekly amount she earned at the pelts factory where she worked. The visitors having left, the boss and the missus drove her to the township.They dropped her at the bus-stop in front of the New Brighton police station where she boarded a bus to Njoli Square. In the bus, Nzwaki fingered her hard earned money and smiled. She shoved it in her bra, between her breasts.

At Njoli Square, she alighted from the bus and walked towards the Jikelezas. But then it occurred to her that she had no small change for paying these township taxis, and it would be unwise to take out the ten rand note in front of too many eyes. She decided to walk.

In one of the houses at Zwide location, not very far from Cab's Supermarket, a man had died. There was a wake and men took turns in preaching the word of God. A young man by the name of Zizi had just finished preaching. He glanced at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He decided it was late. He left without attracting anybody's attention. He was dressed in an old army overcoat and had a balaclava on his head. He thrust his hands in his coat pockets and walked into the night.

Nzwaki took a footpath that cut through the open space just behind Cab's Supermarket. She almost bumped against the small bushes along the footpath, until, when in the middle of the open space, some of the bushes appeared to be jumping at her.

She was too shocked to cry out. She lay among the bushes and cold steely hands were ripping off her panties. The shiny knife-blades were too close to her neck for comfort. She pleaded with them not to harm her.

They took her in turns, satisfying their animal lust. Nzwaki was numbed. Her heart beat against her ribs like a one-pound hammer. She tried to swallow saliva, but her mouth was dry. Her breath escaped in gasps. It went on and on and her head began to reel. She vomited. But they would not let her go. They milled above her like vultures. She felt her inner self leaving her. She lay there moaning, no longer caring to live any longer — wishing for her throat to be slit open with their blades.

Zizi took the same foot-path. Zizi from the funeral wake. He saw figures scattering in different directions — like surprised vultures. He was puzzled. Nonetheless, he moved on and stumbled over a body. On closer inspection he discovered the woman. She was spread-eagled. She moaned, 'Please *Bhuti*, take your turn and take me home after you have finished.' For a long moment the man was stupefied by the invitation and request. He stammered, 'No . . . no . . . please get up, I will take you home.'

With one hand, the lady groped around in the darkness She found her panties. Zizi, one hand in his coat pocket, thrust his other hand under her arm and hauled her up. Her knees wobbled. She fell headlong into a bush. Zizi sprang, moving fast and pulled her up again.

He brushed her head and the rest of her clothes using his hands. She slipped on her under-garment.

Bozo, the husband, was worried. He mustered some false courage. His hands in his baggy trousers' pockets, he whistled a non-existent tune and moved towards the door, opened it, and went outside. His two young sons were watching him all along. As soon as he was outside, the two boys went to the window without talking. They pulled aside the curtain and watched their father's shadow in the night. He was standing at the gate facing down the street. He shook his head and sighed. Then he went back. The boys left the window and watched him silently as he entered. He rolled another zol, not lifting his eyes to meet the boys.

Bozo was about to tell the children to go to bed. Precisely, just as his lips were parting, the door opened and his wife entered. The boys were exultant. They both embraced their mother smiling broadly. The smell of food from the parcel in her hands caused their mouths to water. She reached in her bra and pulled out the ten rand note. Bozo eyed the money, his eyes widening. Then he confronted his wife, his face contorted. 'Why are you coming home at this bloody hour? Where have you been?'

'I worked overtime . . .' ●

POETRY

LERATO N MZAMANE MOYAHABO POCHANA

RETHABILE

Oh you Mosotho girl,
You black shadow by the riverside,
What's your name I wonder,
Your name given to you by your parents.

It's Rethabile is it?
You don't look as happy as the name suggests,
You look sad and tired,
Hungry and unfed.

That sweat that slithers down your face,
That stinks of blackness,
That shows who you are,
Black, tired and beautiful.

Your beauty intrigues me,
Your pure black beauty,
Your beauty that shows how pro-African you are,
Your beauty of blackness.

I watch you strip,
With the background music of the wind,
Your black breasts go up and down,
They are large like the
Mama's back in the village.

Slowly and carefully,
You take the first few steps into your bath,
Your long, slender, well built body
Slowly disappears.

You black princess,
Taking your bath in the dirty water
The non-clean parts of Africa,
In the rivers and waters of the Motherland

Look at yourself,
Look at your blackness,
Look at what you are,
You are black, black and beautiful
I share the same dream,
I share the same wish,
The same determination,
But most important, I share the same Africa.

Lerato Nomvuyo Mzamane

FUNNY THAT I LIVE

Funny that I live beside a
walking corpse
I smile through tears where
furrows carve my face

Funny that I kneel
for hope beside this grave
where I lay
Dried beneath
the sun

Lucas Sigela

SUMMER

men in the bundus
men in the ghettos
are longing for your arrival,
summer

let your waters
dilute man's acidic tears

come wet this barren soil
come wet these dusty streets

Moyahabo Pochana

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IF YOU ARE NOT STRONG YOU MUST BE CLEVER

by Milkalena Ndokola Petros

'This is a story which tells children that if you are not strong you must be clever. This story was told me by my grandfather Augustinus Kwenye who is 87 years old and lives in Kavango.'

Have you heard similar stories, parables, folk tales from your grandparents or other members of your family? Send them to us. If you feel you cannot write scribble them down exactly as you've heard them. We will put them into shape and possibly publish them in *Staffrider*.

LONG, long ago there was a Kavango tribe called Kwangali. Among this tribe there were four twelve-year old boys. Their clothes were made of Springbok skins. Their names were Nangolo, Ihalwa, Idhimbwa and Tonata.

They were the laziest children in that area. All the children of the tribe worked hard, except these four. Their work was playing games. Each one of them had his own game. Nangolo's game was to catch fish from the rocks. Ihalwa's game was to drink water from the river, and Idhimbwa's game was to pull trees out of the ground. Tonata was always playing with irons.

When they were sixteen years old Nangolo tried to catch fish from the rocks as usual. This time an incredible thing happened. He caught all the fish in the river. He called his friends to have a look at what he had done. They asked him how he did it. 'It just happened naturally,' he said.

When they were sixteen years old Nangolo tried to catch fish from the rocks as usual. This time an incredible thing happened. He caught all the fish in the river. He called his friends to have a look at what he had done. They asked him how he did it. 'It just happened naturally,' he said.

Ihalwa said: 'Well, then I will drink all the water from the river. Although it is much water, I'll drink it all. Then we will be able to cross the river to the other side.'

When he tried it happened!

Idhimbwa said: 'I am used to uprooting trees. I think I will succeed also.' And he did! 'Now I will build a road for us!' he shouted.

While all this was going on, Tonata sat aside quietly.

'What are you going to do with your irons?' the three asked him.

Tonata did not answer. He knew the irons would not help him achieve such fantastic feats.

One evening the parents of the four boys held a meeting. 'What are we going to do with these lazy children?' they asked. 'All the children in the village work, except them.'

While the parents were discussing their problem, Ihalwa the water drinker crept up and overheard what they were saying.

The following morning Ihalwa went to the same place to play. He met his friends and told them about the previous night's meeting.

'Our parents want to punish us,' he warned. We must escape!

Idhimbwa said: 'We need food to keep us alive. I know of a big river with an island which has a house. Our fathers must not know about this.

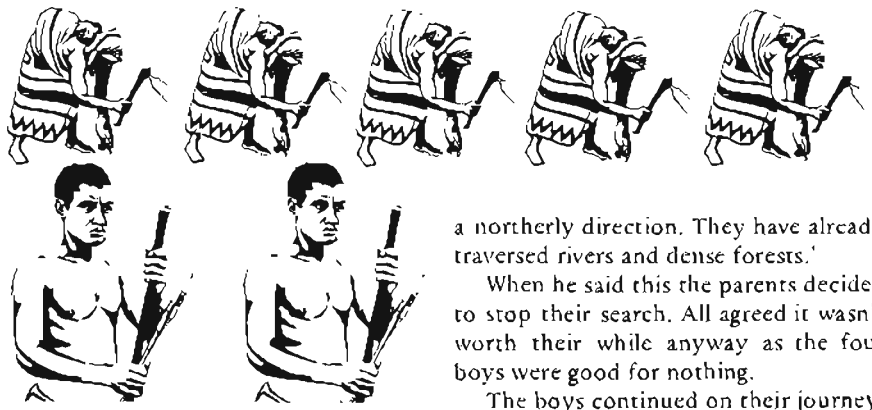
Ihalwa said: 'I will drink all the water to dry up the river so that we can cross over to the other side.'

Idhimbwa said: 'I will uproot all the trees in our way.'

Nangolo said: 'I will catch all the fish so that we will have enough to eat!

Tonato said nothing.

His three friends asked him whether he had thought about his irons. Tonata



was saddened because he knew his irons could not help. His friends told him to remain. But Tonata pleaded with them saying he was afraid of his father.

On the fourth day of their journey, just before the river, they came upon a forest of great trees that blocked their way. Immediately Idhimbwa set to work, uprooting the trees.

'I wish to come with you to see what you will do.'

The three agreed. 'It is better that he stays with us because he is our friend and we always play with him.'

They took everything and went on their way. On the fourth day of their journey, just before the river, they came upon a forest of great trees that blocked their way. Immediately Idhimbwa set to work, uprooting the trees.

Before long they reached the river. It was deep and dangerous. Ihalwa went to work and, a few gulps later, they were walking through a dry riverbed.

They sought the help of a witchdoctor, a thin man called Haimane. He threw his bones and said.

'I see four sixteen-year old children. They are at this moment journeying in a northerly direction. They have already traversed rivers and dense forests.'

Later, Tonata said: 'I am tired. Let's sleep here.'

'Why' said the others indignantly, 'what have you done to feel tired?'

'My iron is heavy,' he said feebly. But his three friends ignored him.

Soon the boys were hungry. So Nangolo caught as many fish as he could for their supper. They had their fill of the fish but everyone agreed they needed meat as well.

Meanwhile the fathers of the four runaways searched for their children in vain. They sought the help of a witchdoctor, a thin man called Haimane. He threw his bones and said.

'I see four sixteen-year old children. They are at this moment journeying in a northerly direction. They have already traversed rivers and dense forests.'

When he said this the parents decided to stop their search. All agreed it wasn't worth their while anyway as the four boys were good for nothing.

The boys continued on their journey. When they came to the river Ngami, Ihalwa again easily drank all the water and they passed through without any problems.

At last they were on the Island! And there was the big house that Idhimbwa had told them about. They tried to open the door but in vain.

When they peeped through the windows they gaped for their eyes beheld an astonishing sight. Inside were hundreds of people calling and conversing in a chaos of noise. Around them were goats, sheep, bulls, snakes, reptiles and birds of every kind slithering and fluttering and tramping about.

Nangolo threw large rocks at the windows to break them so that they could enter. But no matter how hard he tried the windows would not even crack.

Then they called upon Idhimbwa. After all he could uproot trees. But even Idhimbwa could not break the windows.

They asked Ihalwa to swallow the house.

Ihalwa refused. 'If I swallow the house you will not see it anymore.'

'But the house will come out when you vomit' they urged. 'And the door will probably be opened.'

So Ihalwa tried. But all in vain.

The four boys gave up. They decided to have supper and sleep as it was late.

The following morning they decided to go hunting for meat. Nangolo remained behind to tend to the cooking. The other three boys set off, Ihalwa and Idhimbwa with their bows and arrows, and Tonata with his big iron.

Before long the boys came upon a reedbuck. They gave chase and killed it easily. But Tonata had not helped much in the hunt.

'Why didn't you help,' complained Ihalwa.

'It's this iron,' explained Tonata sheepishly. 'It's kept me behind.'

'It's quite useless to us all,' grumbled Idhimbwa.

Back at the camp Nangolo had just finished cooking when a girl strode up to him.

'Oh, I'm cold,' she said.

So Nangolo offered her a place by the fireside.

'Give me some food!' she demanded with sudden nastiness. 'Or I will go.'

'Go if you like,' said Nangolo, taken aback by her rudeness. 'I never asked you to come in the first place.'

Suddenly the girl pounced on him, grabbed a rope and tied him. Then she ate all of their food.

When the three hunters returned they found Nangolo bound and the food eaten.

'What is going on here and where is the food?' asked Idhimbwa.

Nangolo explained what had happened.

'I will remain here tomorrow,' said Idhimbwa. 'And if that slip of a girl makes an appearance I shall fling her away as I do with trees.'

The next day he remained behind, promising that they would have food on their return.

After he had cooked the girl came.

'Oh, I'm cold,' she said.

'You may sit by the fire,' said Idhimbwa. 'But don't think you can do to me what you did to my friend yesterday. Warm yourself but don't ask for food.'

'Please give me some food,' pleaded the girl. 'I am very hungry.'

'No.' said Idhimbwa emphatically.

'Please,' persisted the girl. 'I don't want to fight with you.'

But Idhimbwa was adamant. And before he knew it, he was bound.

'When I ask for food you must give it,' she said gobbling up the supper. 'And you had better tell your friends about it.'

When the three hunters returned they could hardly believe their eyes.

'Tomorrow I shall remain behind,' said Ihalwa. 'You are cowards! If she comes here again I shall swallow her up like a small river!'

The next day Ihalwa remained to tend to the cooking. While he was stooping over a pot he heard a voice say:

'Good morning. I am cold. May I sit by your fire please?' It was the girl.

'Sit down, but don't move,' warned Ihalwa.

'Give me some food, I am very hungry,' said the girl.

'This food is for my three friends who have gone hunting. Now be still and be quiet.'

'You had better give me the food,' said the girl. 'Or have you forgotten what I did to your two friends?'

'Girl be careful,' warned Ihalwa. 'You are far too small to do with me what you did to my friends.'

The girl laughed, tied him up and ate the food

'Let this be a lesson to you,' she laughed, and disappeared into the bush.

And so it was Tonata's turn to

Tonata gave her some more food. But while she was eating, he took his big iron and cut off her ear. In a panic the girl ran towards the mysterious house. Its door opened, and closed when she was inside.

remain behind.

The next day the girl arrived just as before.

'May I sit by the fire?' she asked. 'I am very cold.' Tonata let her sit.

'Please give me some food,' said the girl.

Tonata gave her some. She ate it greedily.

'Please give me some more,' said the girl.

Tonata gave her some more. But while she was eating, he took his big iron and cut off her ear. In a panic the girl ran towards the mysterious house. Its door opened, and closed when she was inside.

Then the ear began to speak: 'Treat me well and I will give you everything you like. If you need anything, bite me and your wish will be granted.

Now, like his friends Tonata too had an extraordinary gift.

When his friends arrived they were surprised to find him not tied and with food for them.

'How did you escape from her?' they wanted to know.

Tonata told them what had happened.

'And after I cut off her ear, she ran into that house that cannot be opened.'

They all agreed that they must attempt once more to enter the mysterious house.

Nangolo, Ihalwa and Idhimbwa tried once more to use their different talents to enter the house. But they failed.

Then it was Tonata's turn. He tapped on the door with his iron. It opened immediately.

'Ah!' said Nangolo. 'Now I can go inside.' He stepped in. But no sooner was he in then he ran out, frightened.

'All the animals and reptiles and people are angry and were about to attack me,' he cried.

He bit the ear and it said: 'Every person and every beast will welcome you into that house.' And that's what happened. When Tonata entered every bird, person and animal was pleased to see him. And he was given gifts of farms, wagons, skins and even people. So busy was Tonata receiving gifts that he remained in the house for three days.

'You're a coward!' said Idhimbwa and went to see for himself. But he too received the same reception.

Ihalwa tried too, boasting that he would swallow every person and beast if he were attacked. But he couldn't and ran out instead.

Then it was Tonata's turn. Before entering he sang a song:

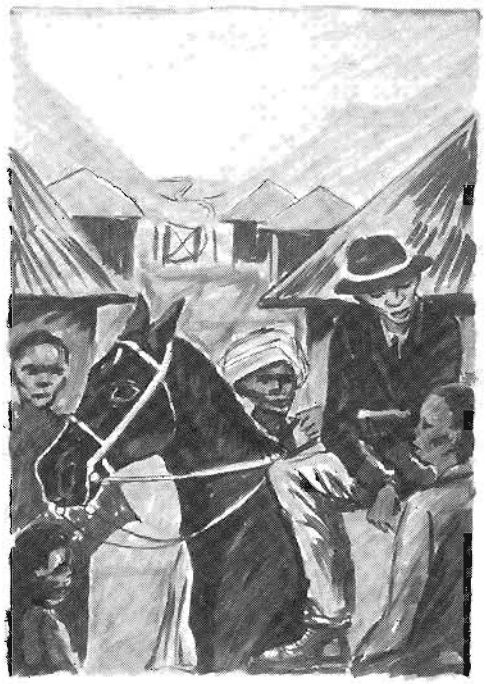
Everybody said I am Lazy
and all my friends laughed at me
but my iron did something
which they couldn't do
Ront, ront, ront, ront
Burr burr tu tu tu

He bit the ear and it said: 'Every person and every beast will welcome you into that house.' And that's what happened. When Tonata entered every bird, person and animal was pleased to see him. And he was given gifts of farms, wagons, skins and even people. So busy was Tonata receiving gifts that he remained in the house for three days.

His friends lost hope of ever seeing him alive and returned home to tell Tonata's parents about the death of their son.

But soon afterwards the rich Tonata returned home with hundreds of people from the island. All in the village were happy to see him and a big feast was held in his honour. He became the chief of the Kwangali tribe and his friends were his slaves. ●

FLIGHT IN WINTER



by Sol. T. Plaatje

-- An excerpt from a great African classic now published by Ravan Press.

In the winter of 1913 Sol. T Plaatje (the author of *Mhudi* and a founder of what became the Congress movement) travelled through his country to observe the effects of the 1913 Land Act. This is what he saw . . .

'Pray that your flight be not in winter,' said Jesus Christ; but it was only during the winter of 1913 that the full significance of this New Testament passage was revealed to us. We left Kimberley by the early morning train during the first week in July, on a tour of observation regarding the operation of the Natives' Land Act; and we arrived at Bloemhof, in the Transvaal, at about noon. On the river diggings there were no actual cases representing the effects of the Act, but traces of these effects were everywhere manifest. Some fugitives of the Natives' Land Act had crossed the river in full flight. The fact that they reached the diggings a fortnight before our visit would seem to show that while the debates were proceeding in Parliament some farmers already viewed with eager eyes the impending opportunity for at once making slaves of their tenants and appropriating their stock; for, acting on the powers conferred on them by an Act signed by Lord Gladstone, so lately as June 16, they had during that very week (probably a couple of days after, and in some cases, it would seem, a couple of days before the actual signing of the Bill) approached their tenants with stories about a new Act which makes it criminal for anyone to have black tenants and lawful to have black servants. Few of these natives, of course, would object to be servants, especially if the white man is worth working for, but this is where the shoe pinches: one of the conditions is that the black man's (that is, the servant's) cattle shall henceforth work for the landlord free of charge. Then the natives would decide to leave the farm rather than make the landlord a present of all their life's savings, and some of them had passed through the diggings in search of a place in the Transvaal. But the higher up they went the more gloomy was their prospect as the news about the new law was now penetrating every part of the country.

One farmer met a wandering native family in the town of Bloemhof a week before our visit. He was willing to employ the native and many more homeless families as follows: A monthly wage of £2 10s. for each such family, the husband working in the fields, the wife in the house, with an additional 10s. a month for each son, and 5s. for each daughter, but on condition that the native's cattle were also handed over to work for him. It must be clearly understood, we are told that the Dutchman added, that occasionally the native would have to leave his family at work on the farm, and go out with his wagon and his oxen to earn money whenever and wherever he was told to go, in order that the master may be enabled to pay the stipulated wage. The natives were at first inclined to laugh at the idea of working for a master with their families and goods and chattels, and then to have the additional pleasure of paying their own small wages, besides bringing money to pay the 'Baas' for employing them. But the Dutchman's serious demeanour told them that his suggestion was 'no joke'. He himself had for some time been in need of a native cattle-owner, to assist him as transport rider between Bloemhof, Mooifontein, London, and other diggings, in return for the occupation and cultivation of some of his waste lands in the district, but that was now illegal. He could only 'employ' them; but, as he had no money to pay wages, their cattle would have to go out and earn it for him. 'Had they not heard of the law before?' he inquired. Of course they had; in fact that is why they left the other place, but as they thought that it was but a 'Free' State law, they took the anomalous situation for one of the multifarious aspects of the freedom of the 'Free' State whence they came; they had scarcely thought that the Transvaal was similarly afflicted.

Needless to say the natives did not see their way to agree with such a one-sided bargain. They moved up-country, but only to find the next farmer offering the same terms, however, with a good many more disturbing details – and the next farmer and the next – so that after this native farmer had wandered from farm to farm, occasionally getting into trouble for travelling with unknown stock, 'across my ground without my permission', and at times escaping arrest for he knew not what, and further, being abused for the crimes of having a black skin and no master, he sold some of his stock along the way, beside losing many which died of cold and starvation; and after thus having lost much of his substance, he eventually worked his way back to Bloemhof with the remainder, sold them for anything they could fetch, and went to work for a digger.

The experience of another native sufferer was similar to the above, except that instead of working for a digger he sold his stock for a mere bagatelle, and left with his family by the Johannesburg night train for an unknown destination. More native families crossed the river and went inland during the previous week, and as nothing had since been heard of them, it would seem that they were still wandering somewhere, and incidentally becoming well versed in the law that was responsible for their compulsory unsettlement.

Well, we knew that this law was as harsh as its instigators were callous, and we knew that it would, if passed, render many poor people homeless, but it must be confessed that we were scarcely prepared for such a rapid and widespread crash as it caused in the lives of the natives in this neighbourhood. We left our luggage the next morning with the local mission school teacher, and crossed the river to find out

some more about this wonderful law of extermination. It was about 10 a.m. when we landed on the south bank of the Vaal River – the picturesque Vaal River, upon whose banks a hundred miles farther west we spent the best and happiest days of our boyhood. It was interesting to walk on one portion of the banks of that beautiful river – a portion which we had never traversed except as an infant in mother's arms more than thirty years before. How the subsequent happy days at Barkly West, so long past, came crowding upon our memory! – days when there were no railways, no bridges, and no system of irrigation. In rainy seasons, which at that time were far more regular and certain, the river used to overflow its high banks and flood the surrounding valleys to such an extent, that no punt could carry the wagons across. Thereby the transport service used to be hung up, and numbers of wagons would congregate for weeks on both sides of the river until the floods subsided. At such times the price of fresh milk used to mount up to 1s. per pint. There being next to no competition, we boys had a monopoly over the milk trade. We recalled the number of haversacks full of bottles of milk we youngsters often carried to those wagons, how we returned with empty bottles and with just that number of shillings. Mother and our elder brothers had leather bags full of gold and did not care for the 'boy's money'; and unlike the boys of the neighbouring village, having no sisters of our own, we gave away some of our money to fair cousins, and jingled the rest in our pockets. We had been told from boyhood that sweets were injurious to the teeth, and so spurning these delights we had hardly any use for money, for all we wanted to eat, drink and wear was at hand in plenty. We could then get six or eight shillings every morning from the pastime of washing that number of bottles, filling them with fresh milk and carrying them down to the wagons; there was always such an abundance of the liquid that our shepherd's hunting dog could not possibly miss what we took, for while the flocks were feeding on the luscious buds of the haak-doorns and the blossoms of the rich mimosa and other wild vegetation that abounded on the banks of the Vaal River, the cows, similarly engaged, were gathering more and more milk.

The gods are cruel, and one of their cruellest acts of omission was that of giving us no hint that in very much less than a quarter of a century all those hundreds of heads of cattle, and sheep and horses belonging to the family would vanish like a morning mist, and that we ourselves would live to pay 30s. per month for a daily supply of this same precious fluid, and in very limited quantities. They might have warned us that Englishmen would agree with Dutchmen to make it unlawful for black men to keep milk cows of their own on the banks of that river, and gradually have prepared us for the shock.

Crossing the river from the Transvaal side brings one into the province of the Orange 'Free' State, in which, in the adjoining division of Boshof, we were born thirty-six years back. We remember the name of the farm, but not having been in this neighbourhood since infancy, we could not tell its whereabouts, nor could we say whether the present owner was a Dutchman, his lawyer, or a Hebrew merchant; one thing we do know, however: it is that even if we had the money and the owner was willing to sell the spot upon which we first saw the light of day and breathed the pure air of heaven, the sale would be followed with a fine of one hundred pounds. The law of the country forbids the sale of land to a native. Russia is one of the most abused countries in the world, but it is extremely doubtful if the statute book of that empire contains a law debarring the peasant from purchasing the land whereon he was born, or from building a home wherein he might end his days.

At this time we felt something rising from our heels along our back, gripping us in a spasm, as we were cycling along; a needlelike pang, too, pierced our heart with a sharp thrill. What was it? We remembered feeling something nearly like it when our father died eighteen years ago; but at that time our physical organs were fresh and grief was easily thrown off in tears, but then we lived in a happy South Africa that was full of pleasant anticipations, and now – what changes for the worse have we undergone! For to crown all our calamities, South Africa has by law ceased to be the home of any of her native children whose skins are dyed with a pigment that does not conform with the regulation hue.

We are told to forgive our enemies and not to let the sun go down upon our wrath, so we breathe the prayer that peace may be to the white races, and that they, including our present persecutors of the Union Parliament, may never live to find themselves deprived of all occupation and property rights in their native country as is now the case with the native. History does not tell us of any other continent where the Bantu lived besides Africa, and if this systematic ill treatment of the natives by the colonists is to be the guiding principle of Europe's scramble for Africa, slavery is our only alternative; for now it is only as serfs that the natives are legally entitled to live here. Is it to be thought that God is using the South African Parliament to hound us out of our ancestral homes in order to quicken our pace heavenward? But go from where to heaven? In the beginning, we are told, God created heaven and earth, and peopled the earth, for people do not shoot up to heaven from nowhere. They must have had an earthly home. Enoch, Melchizedek, Elijah, and other saints, came to heaven from earth. God did not say to the Israelites in their bondage: 'Cheer up, boys; bear it all in good part for I have bright mansions on high awaiting you all.' But he said: 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows, and I am come down to bring them out of the hands of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.' And He used Moses to carry out the promise He made to their ancestor Abraham in Canaan, that 'unto thy seed will I give this land.' It is to be hoped that in the Boer churches, entrance to which is barred against coloured people during divine service, they also read the Pentateuch.

It is doubtful if we ever thought so much on a single bicycle ride as we did on this journey; however, the sight of a policeman ahead of us disturbed these meditations and gave place to thoughts of quite another kind, for – we had no pass. Dutchmen, Englishmen, Jews, Germans and other foreigners may roam the 'Free' State without permission – but not natives. To us it would mean a fine and imprisonment to be without a pass. The 'pass' law was first instituted to check the movement of livestock over sparsely populated areas. In a sense it was a wise provision, in that it served to identify the livestock which one happened to be driving along the high road, to prove the bona fides of the driver and his title to the stock. Although white men still steal large droves of horses in Basutoland and sell them in Natal or in East Griqualand, they, of course, are not required to carry any passes. These white horse-thieves, to escape the clutches of the police, employ natives to go and sell the stolen stock and write the passes for these natives, forging the names of magistrates and justices of the peace. Such native thieves in some instances ceasing to be hirelings in the criminal business, trade on their own, but it is not clear what purpose it is intended to serve by subjecting native pedestrians to the degrading requirement of carrying passes when they are not in charge of any stock.

In a few moments the policeman was before us and we alighted in presence of the representative of the law, with our feet on the accursed soil of the district in which we were born. The policeman stopped. By his looks and his familiar 'Dag jong' we noticed that the policeman was Dutch, and the

embodiment of affability. He spoke and we were glad to notice that he had no intention of dragging an innocent man to prison. We were many miles from the nearest police station, and in such a case one is generally able to gather the real views of the man on patrol, as distinct from the written code of his office, but our friend was becoming very companionable. Naturally we asked him about the operation of the plague law. He was a Transvaler, he said, and he knew that Kaffirs were inferior beings, but they had rights, and were always left in undisturbed possession of their property when Paul Kruger was alive. 'The poor devils must be sorry now', he said, 'that they ever sang "God save the Queen" when the British troops came into the Transvaal, for I have seen, in the course of my duties, that a Kaffir's life nowadays was not worth a —, and I believed that no man regretted the change of flags now more than the Kaffirs of Transvaal.' This information was superfluous, for personal contact with the natives of Transvaal had convinced us of the fact. They say it is only the criminal who has any reason to rejoice over the presence of the Union Jack, because in his case the cat-o'-nine-tails, except for very serious crimes, has been abolished.

'Some of the poor creatures,' continued the policeman, 'I knew to be fairly comfortable, if not rich, and they enjoyed the possession of their stock, living in many instances just like Dutchmen. Many of these are now being forced to leave their homes. Cycling along this road you will meet several of them in search of new homes, and if ever there was a fool's errand, it is that of a Kaffir trying to find a new home for his stock and family just now.'

'And what do you think, Baas Officer, must eventually be the lot of a people under such unfortunate circumstances?' we asked.

'I think,' said the policeman, 'that it must serve them right. They had no business to hanker after British rule, to cheat and plot with the enemies of their Republic for the overthrow of their Government. Why did they not assist the forces of their Republic during the war instead of supplying the English with scouts and intelligence? Oom Paul would not have died of a broken heart and he would still be there to protect them. Serve them right, I say.'

So saying he spurred his horse, which showed a clean pair of hoofs. He left us rather abruptly, for we were about to ask why we, too, of Natal and the Cape were suffering, for we, being originally British subjects, never 'cheated and plotted with the enemies of our Colonies,' but he was gone and left us still cogitating by the roadside.

Proceeding on our journey we next came upon a native trek and heard the same old story of prosperity on a Dutch farm: they had raised an average eight hundred bags of grain each season, which, with the increased stock and sale of wool, gave a steady income of about £150 per year after the farmer had taken his share. There were gossipy rumours about somebody having met someone who said that someone else had overheard a conversation between the Baas and somebody else, to the effect that the Kaffirs were getting too rich on his property. This much involved tale incidentally conveys the idea that the Baas was himself getting too rich on his farm. For the native provides his own seed, his own cattle, his own labour for the ploughing, the weeding and the reaping, and after bagging his grain he calls in the landlord to receive his share, which is fifty per cent of the entire crop.

All had gone well till the previous week when the Baas came to the native tenants with the story that a new law had been passed under which 'all my oxen and cows must belong to him, and my family to work for £2 a month, failing which he gave me four days to leave the farm.'

We passed several farmhouses along the road, where all appeared pretty tranquil as we went along, until the evening which we spent in the open country, somewhere near the boundaries of the Hoopstad and Boshof Districts; here a regular circus had gathered. By a 'circus' we mean the meeting of groups of families, moving to every point of the compass, and all bivouacked at this point in the open country where we were passing. It was heartrending to listen to the tales of their cruel experiences derived from the rigour of the Natives' Land Act. Some of their cattle had perished on the journey, from poverty and lack of fodder, and the native owners ran a serious risk of imprisonment for travelling with dying stock. The experience of one of these evicted tenants is typical of the rest, and illustrates the cases of several we met in other parts of the country.

Kgobadi, for instance, had received a message describing the eviction of his father-in-law in the Transvaal Province, without notice, because he had refused to place his stock, his family, and his person at the disposal of his former landlord, who now refuses to let him remain on his farm except on these conditions. The father-in-law asked that Kgobadi should try and secure a place for him in the much dreaded 'Free' State as the Transvaal had suddenly become uninhabitable to natives who cannot become servants; but 'greedy folk hae lang airms', and Kgobadi himself was proceeding with his family and his belongings in a wagon, to inform his people-in-law of his own eviction, without notice, in the 'Free' State, for a similar reason to that which sent his father-in-law adrift. The Baas had exacted from him the services of himself, his wife and his oxen, for wages of 30s. a month, whereas Kgobadi had been making over £100 a year, besides retaining the services of his wife and of his cattle for himself. When he refused the extortionate terms, the Baas retaliated with a Dutch note, dated the 30th day of June 1913, which ordered him to 'betake himself from the farm of the undersigned, by sunset of the same day, failing which his stock would be seized and impounded, and himself handed over to the authorities for trespassing on the farm.'

A drowning man catches at every straw, and so we were again and again appealed to for advice by these sorely afflicted people. To those who were not yet evicted we counselled patience and submission to the absurd terms, pending an appeal to a higher authority than the South African Parliament and finally to His Majesty the King who, we believed, would certainly disapprove of all that we saw on that day had it been brought to his notice. As for those who were already evicted, as a Bechuana we could not help thanking God that Bechuanaland (on the western boundary of this quasi-British Republic) was still entirely British. In the early days it was the base of David Livingstone's activities and peaceful mission against the Portuguese and Arab slave trade. We suggested that they might negotiate the numerous restrictions against the transfer of cattle from the Western Transvaal and seek an asylum in Bechuanaland. We wondered what consolation we could give to these roving wanderers if the whole of Bechuanaland were under the jurisdiction of the relentless Union Parliament.

It was cold that afternoon as we cycled into the 'Free' State from Transvaal, and towards evening the southern winds rose. A cutting blizzard raged during the night, and native mothers evicted from their homes shivered with their babies by their sides. When we saw on that night the teeth of the little children clattering through the cold, we thought of our own little ones in their Kimberley home of an evening after gambolling in their winter frocks with their schoolmates, and we wondered what these little mites had done that a home should suddenly become to them a thing of the past.

Kgobadi's goats had been to kid when he trekked from his farm; but the kids, which in halcyon times represented the interest on his capital, were now one by one dying as fast as they were born and left by the roadside for the jackals and vultures to feast upon.

This visitation was not confined to Kgobadi's stock. Mrs Kgobadi carried a sick baby when the eviction took place, and she had to transfer her darling from the cottage to

the jolting ox-wagon in which they left the farm. Two days out the little one began to sink as the result of privation and exposure on the road, and the night before we met them its little soul was released from its earthly bonds. The death of the child added a fresh perplexity to the stricken parents. They had no right or title to the farmlands through which they trekked: they must keep to the public roads – the only places in the country open to the outcasts if they are possessed of travelling permit. The deceased child had to be buried, but where, when, and how?

This young wandering family decided to dig a grave under cover of the darkness of that night, when no one was looking, and in that crude manner the dead child was interred – and interred amid fear and trembling, as well as the throbs of a torturing anguish, in a stolen grave, lest the proprietor of the spot, or any of his servants, should surprise them in the act. Even criminals dropping straight from the gallows have an undisputed claim to six feet of ground on which to rest their criminal remains, but under the cruel operation of the Natives' Land Act little children, whose only crime is that God did not make them white, are sometimes denied that right in their ancestral home.

Numerous details narrated by these victims of an Act of Parliament kept us awake all that night, and by next morning we were glad enough to hear no more of the sickening procedure of extermination voluntarily instituted by the South African Parliament. We had spent a hideous night under a bitterly cold sky, conditions to which hundreds of our unfortunate countrymen and countrywomen in various parts of the country are condemned by the provisions of this Parliamentary land plague. At five o'clock in the morning the cold seemed to redouble its energies; and never before did we so fully appreciate the Master's saying: 'But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter.' ●

POETRY

IRVIN MOHALANE JOHN EPPEL

EXCEPT IN POEMS I WON'T LOOK BACK

Iron railway sleepers still support
the narrow bridge where trolls must have lived.
Easter Island faces, five a side,
stare sightlessly through years that unfix
me from this place, remind me of fears
I felt as a child for these haunters
of dreams. I used to hop that gauntlet
like a goat. Even now, with bristly
chin, and you at my side, the old fit
nudges my belly.

Not much remains
of the strips, but middle-mannetjie
is pushing out thorn after thorn. We
did not go immediately to
the house. I showed you the foundations
of the store where we had swopped our coins
for sugar-sticks and sherbert. I showed
you the pile of bricks where the Meyers
used to live; I pointed out the less
bushy patch of ground which supported
the Van Deventers, their twenty one
alsations, countless ducks, a houseboy
called Dicky, the finest naartjie tree
in Colleen Bawn, and red hollyhocks –
darker than blood.

Our turn-off was choked
with snake-apple bushes. At the gate-
post you took your second photograph.
The click was picked up by a thousand
christmas beetles. With ringing ears we
inspected those remains of my child-
hood. Pioneer bush blocked the front
entrance. The roof was gone. We tiptoed
over rubble to the lounge. Above
the brick mantelpiece where our Laughing
Cavalier used to hang, just there,
the crude charcoal drawing of a child.
Her hair fell straight to the shoulders. She
was standing naked, pulling open
her vagina. 'I want you Couplet Jim,'
said a bubble from her mouth. We held hands.
The other walls were covered in Zanu
slogans and genitalia – in the style
of Couplet Jim. Penises like adders,
vaginas like holes in the ground. Forward
with the struggle. Pamberi. Pamberi.

We retreated through the kitchen window
into the back yard. I forgot to point
out our cricket pitch, or the place where my
mother used to hang the washing, though I
had an image of my father's trousers:
upside-down and inside-out, with clicking
buttons in the wind. It was there we found
two empty jars of moisturizing cream.
I thought then of my mother's flowers.
She loved petunias, and they flourished
in that sunny place where the soil was full
of bitter lime. She planted 'Rosy Morn'
and 'Rose o' Day'. She had 'multifloras',
'grandifloras', and variegated types,
like 'Butterscotch' and 'Cherry Pie'.

Gently
you tugged my sleeve and guided me away
from that place. I didn't look back. I won't
look back except in poems. And that night
when I woke up shouting that the faces
were pursuing me, you held me tightly
and said, 'It's all right; it's over now.'

John Eppel

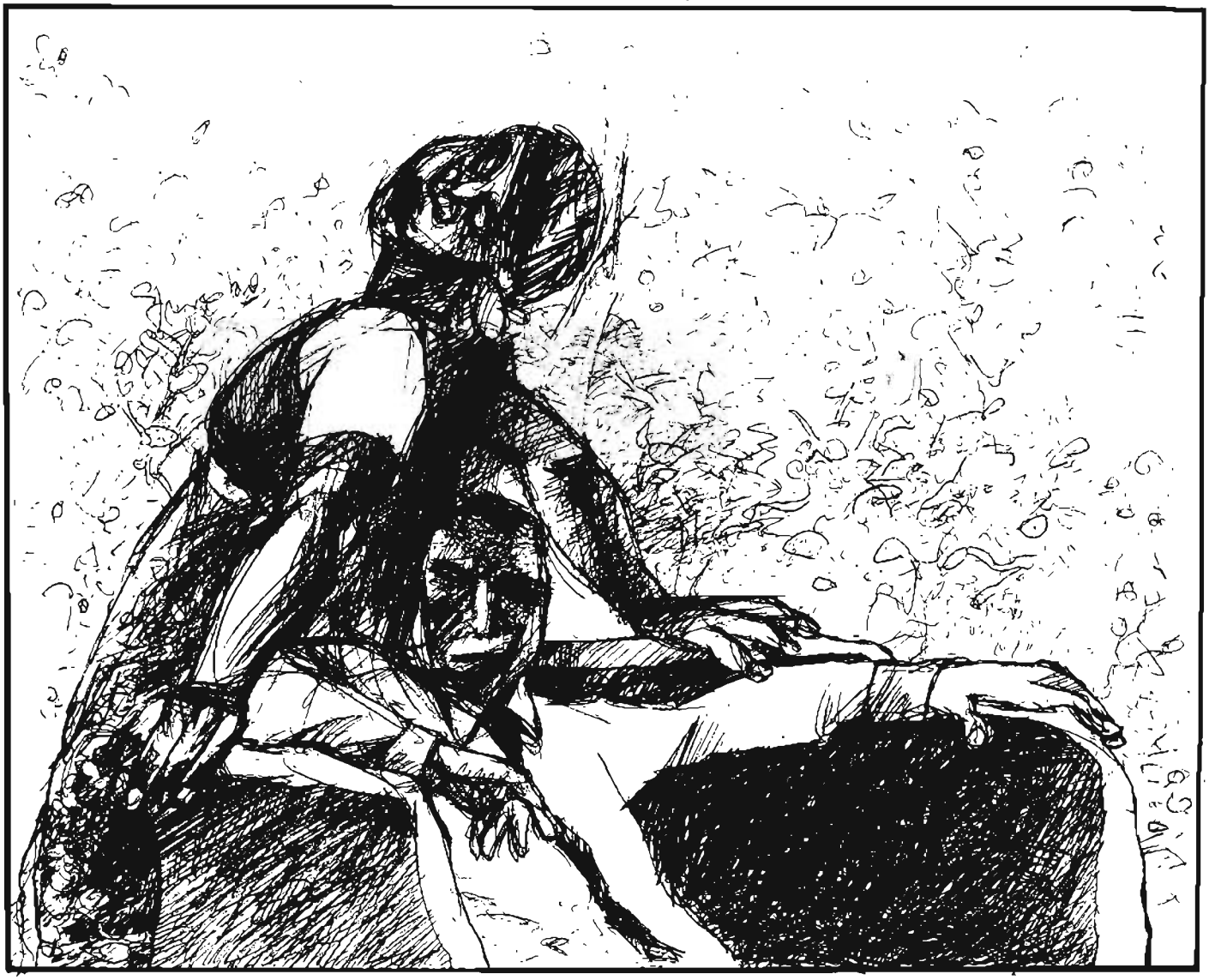
ALL BY MYSELF

EMPTINESS is the world in which I live, loneliness is the clothes I wear, bitterness is the water I drink, sorrow is the food I eat and tears are my face-lotion.

Love is a decayed flower in my garden. Hope is just a green bud that grows on the tallest tree that I will never reach. Words of courage are burning spears penetrating my body. Dreams are as painful as the claws of a tiger that rend someone's skin.

Irvin Mohalane (Std. 10, 1981)

WORK FOR OTHERS



BEHIND EVERY SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSMAN THERE'S FLORAL WALLPAPER AND A SERVANT

NTATE SEKOTO

by Mpikayipheli Figlan

Portraits by Mzwakhe

Gerard Sekoto left South Africa for Paris in 1947. He is regarded by many as one of the pioneers of modern African art. This article is part of extensive research into modern African art. If you have any information, artwork, slides etc which you would like to contribute to this research project, please write to:Mpikayipheli Figlan c/o The Graphic Equalizer, 404 Dunwell House, 35 Jorissen Street, Braamfontein 2017, or Phone: 39-7921.

GERARD Sekoto, one of the pioneers of modern African art, was born in 1913 at a mission station in Middelburg, Transvaal. He received his education at Botshabelo, a school run by German missionaries, and later went to Gracedieu, the Anglican Teachers' Training College in the Pietersburg district. It was while training at this college that he decided to do art.

In 1939 Ntate Sekoto left his teaching career and went to Johannesburg to find work. He failed to find a job and went to St. Peter's, Rosettenville in Johannesburg where he met Brother Roger Castle who was himself a painter. They became friends and Sekoto was offered a place to stay.

At this time Brother Roger was conducting part-time art classes for African students at the school. In that year Ntate Sekoto exhibited with Brother Roger's students at the Gainsborough Galleries in Johannesburg after his first exhibition which was held in Pretoria. After the exhibition with Brother Roger's students he was persuaded to submit an entry to the South African Academy.

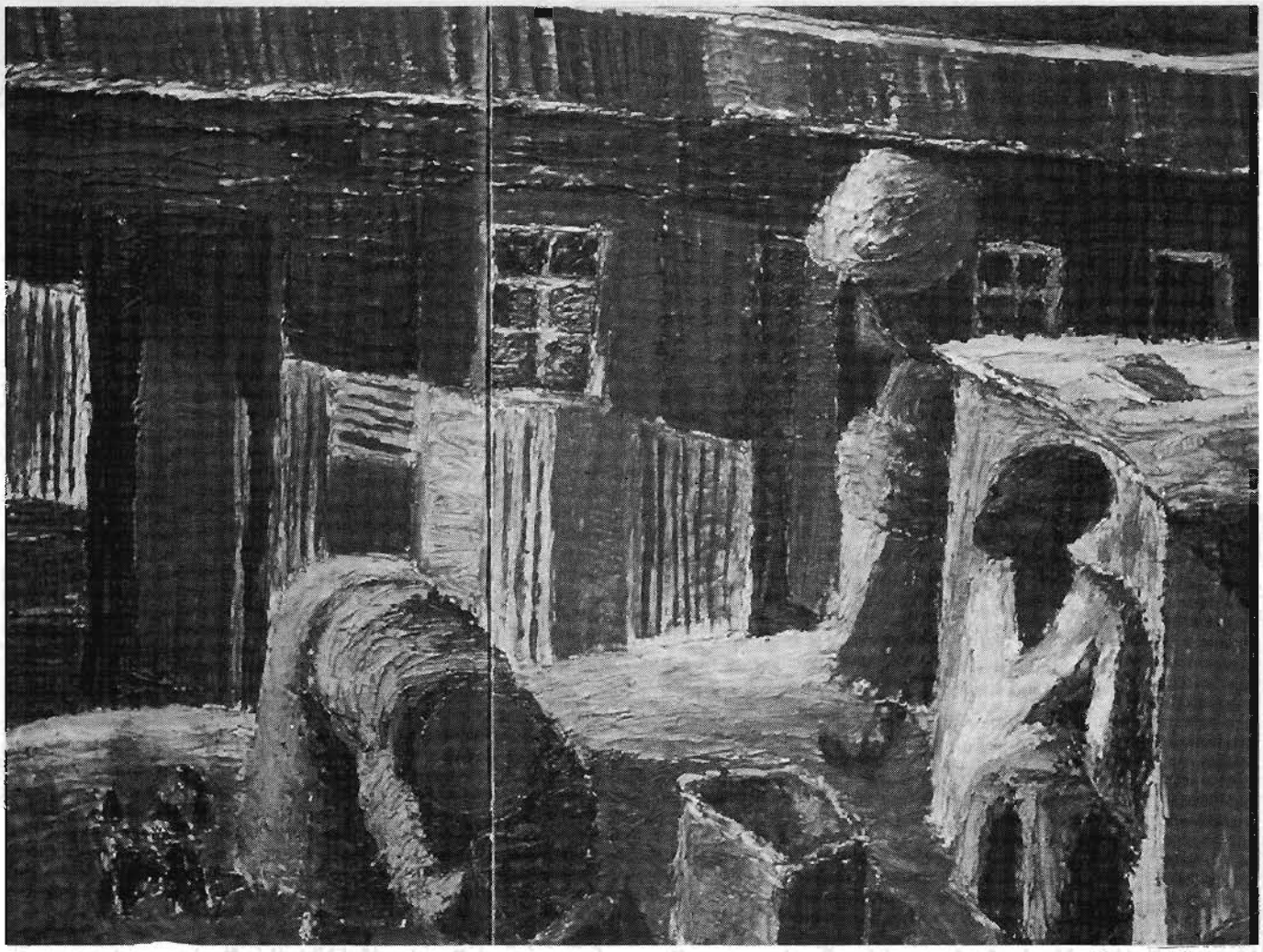
In 1942 Ntate Sekoto trekked to Cape Town to put onto canvas the lives of the people of District Six. A committed and compassionate man, Sekoto realized his people were oppressed and had been denied the right to self-determination in the country of their birth, that his people's oppression and struggles against it were not regional but national. Therefore, he noted, our art of resistance against oppressive domination and minority rule, should also be national. Putting onto canvas his struggling people, their energy for work, and their domestic activities, their determination, courage, hopes and victories. All this, Sekoto realized, was all-important if the Azanian people were to maintain their fighting culture. This portrayal of his people's struggles can be clearly seen in the work done before he left for France, his adopted country. Some of these works include 'Mother and Child', 'Symphony of Labour', 'Starvation in Midst of Plenty', 'Sixpence a Peep' and 'The Song of the Pick'. A detailed discussion of his work can be expected in the next issue of *Staffrider*.

Paris had always been an important cultural centre. Artists from almost every corner of the 'civilized world' went there for artistic inspiration and to learn and work among great European masters. Perhaps the great factor which led to Paris being the major cultural centre was the Napoleonic wars of arrogant greed. In these wars Bonaparte looted art treasures from the invaded and conquered countries, (eg. Egypt and Italy).

So in Sekoto's day every artist's dream was to see himself among great artists in Paris. Our pioneer of 'Township Art' was not an exception among the artists of the time. In 1944 he had a successful exhibition in Cape Town. This exhibition was followed by others held in Pretoria and Johannesburg in 1947. After these Sekoto became famous. They helped him realise his long-time ambition to go to Paris where, as he had been made to believe, he could 'improve' as an artist. As he had accumulated enough money for the trip, as a result of his previous shows, Ntate Sekoto left for Europe at the end of 1947. He was never to return except for visits and his participation in the colonial exhibitions: the 'Van Riebeeck Festival Exhibition' in 1952, the 'Rhodes Centenary Exhibition' held in Bulawayo in 1953 and the 'Republic Festival Exhibition, 1966.

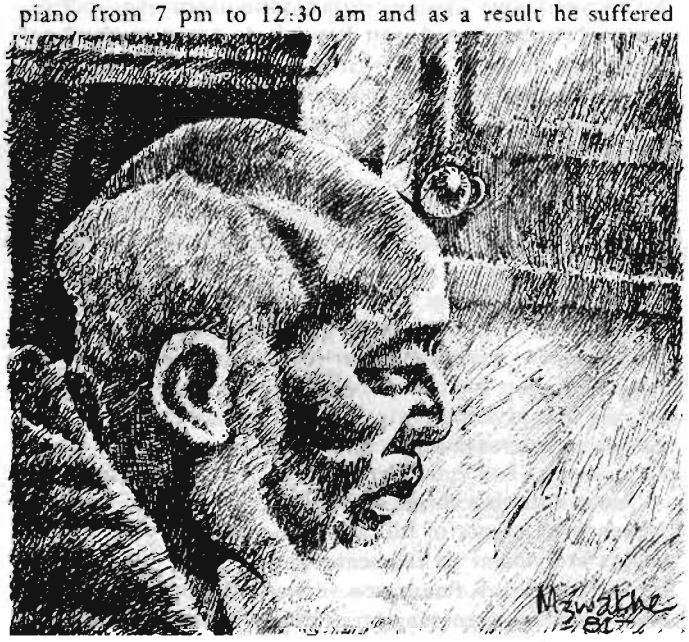
Sekoto felt he lacked something as an artist and that if he could get a chance to go to Paris, he would better himself. He told Peter Magubane in 1964 (when the latter was in Paris) that he left because he felt Africans were locked up from the rest of the world as far as art was concerned. He was really determined and ready to go to Paris and see for himself the work of great European painters.

At home the newspapers praised him and his work, giving him special publicity because he was the first African to 'succeed' as an artist. Es'kia Mphahlele describes Sekoto's



Street Scene — Gerard Sekoto

position in Paris: 'He was plunged into an art community where competition was fierce. The fact that as an African he was bringing an extra dimension to European art did not count for anything. He could not rely on the exotic nature of his art, as the Europeans might view such an element.' Despite his 'success' at home, Ntate Sekoto found Paris hostile. In his first night in Paris he slept with his clothes on because it was very cold. To survive he had to find a job. He finally got one as a pianist at a chinese nightclub. He worked for several months and in 1949, two years after his arrival in Paris, was admitted to the local clinic. Sekoto had to play piano from 7 pm to 12:30 am and as a result he suffered from a mental disorder. It took him a year to recuperate.



Professor Bob Leshoai recalls: 'During this time one of his paintings was bought by an American woman tourist who sought him out because she had been impressed by this particular painting. This of course, gave him a new lease of life and he regained his health and strength to enter once again the stiff competition in Paris with courage and determination.' This no doubt must have consoled him, there was somebody who admired and accepted his work. It was during this period that Sekoto became internationally famous and his work began to be accepted.

When Es'kia Mphahlele met Sekoto in Paris in the early 60s he urged him to return to Africa to re-establish his cultural contact with his land. Sekoto came to Africa in 1966 to attend the First World Festival of Negro Arts held in Dakar, Senegal. He stayed in Senegal for a year to paint the Senegalese in their everyday lives.

Before his visit to Dakar, Sekoto had earlier attended the Congress of Negro Writers and Artists held at Sorbonne in September 1956 and again in Rome, Italy in March 1959. At these conferences he and the two other African artists, Ben Enwonu and Kofi Antumbam, presented papers. The papers were later published in special issues of *Présence Africaine* devoted to these conferences.

Sekoto's departure for foreign lands had not been the first loss of an artist that Azania suffered. Ernest Mancoba (spelled Mancoba by some European art historians) was the first to leave the country for France just before the second world war. Nothing much is known about him except that he was a sculptor friend of Sekoto's who once carved an African Madonna, which artist Lippy Lipschitz noted, 'was interesting for its peculiar symbolism of the glory of the African Mother.' ●

A WREATH FOR UDOMO

by Peter Abrahams

Reviewed by Tyrone August

Published by Faber & Faber

. . . a brilliant statement on the generation in transition.

A Wreath for Udomo. A bouquet to Peter Abrahams. For in this perceptive novel he masterfully explores the emotions and fears of the people who spearhead Africa's revolutions.

They are not just radical firebrands who utter militant rhetoric from platforms. They are people just like us, who also experience hate, love, pain, suffering, hope and despair.

Michael Udomo, the central figure, is sketched as a pathetic human being. Through the eyes of Lois Barlow, we see his 'haunted and lonely' eyes and his 'smouldering, caged restlessness'.

It is this same Udomo who later becomes the driving-force behind the struggle of a nation to free themselves from their colonial oppressors – and eventually achieves this.

In Tom Lanwood we encounter the same ambivalence. On the one hand he is portrayed as 'the greatest political writer and fighter Panafrica had produced.'

However, he is later dismissed by Udomo, who once worshipped him, as 'a goddamned fool'. It is a sobering message. Ordinary people are caught up by the demands of history and thrust into leadership positions.

We see this in other central characters too. David Mhendi is the major force behind the struggle of the people of Pluralia (a reference to South Africa?) to free themselves.

But Udomo sees right through him, and what he sees is 'a sad-looking man'.

The novel is thus a sincere attempt to probe behind the masks of Africa's revolutionaries. And Abrahams does so with ruthless honesty.

Udomo, for example, has a selfish, physical relationship with the young Jo Furse when he lives in England. When she falls pregnant, he callously turns his back on her.

His solution? An abortion. It is a revolting contradiction – Udomo, the liberator of the masses, has no sympathy for the feelings of a woman he used and their unborn child.

At this level *'A Wreath for Udomo'* is a remarkable literary achievement. It does, however, also have its limitations – particularly in the story-line.

The element of coincidence is irritating. Udomo bumps into Lois, who leads him to Lanwood, on his first visit to an English pub. And this after he has not heard from Lanwood for ten years.

Another hard-to-accept coincidence is when Udomo meets Selina on the ship to Africa from England. It is a casual meeting, but she later plays a crucial role in the revolt against their colonial rulers.

These coincidences are a serious shortcoming, as Lanwood and Selina are key figures in the novel. It smacks of laziness and sloppiness.

The ending is also slap-dash. Udomo is destroyed by the forces of tribalism. And this without these forces being analysed properly. They are merely presented as mysterious and irrational powers.

Surely there is more to it? Selina is dismissed as 'a terrible tribal woman', and Udomo's death is blamed on a desire to return 'to the days of tribal glory'.

Abrahams only gives us a passing glimpse of the real answer. In his letter to Lois, Paul Mabi writes: 'It (tribalism) has security, colour, and emotional outlets that the bleak, standardised, monotonous chromium and neon benefits of mass-production civilisation lacks.

It must nevertheless be reiterated, that *'A Wreath for Udomo'* is one of the classics of black literature. In no way does it detract from Abrahams's other major works.

It is a brilliant statement on 'the generation in transition'. They have to make the greatest personal sacrifices. As Mabi puts it: 'The cause is greater than personalities.'

Abrahams has managed to illustrate this with sympathy and insight. The reason is simple. He too was part of this generation.

We all still are. And it is because of this that *'A Wreath for Udomo'* is so important to us – at both a literary and a political level. ●

THE PALMWINE DRINKARD
(R5.25)
and
MY LIFE IN THE BUSH OF GHOSTS
(R6.65)
by Amos Tutuola

Reviewed by Nhlanhla Maake

Published by Faber & Faber

At last! I was tempted to exclaim after reading these two novels, 'oral African literature is rearing its head in the scene of modern literary genre.' This would be a benighted remark, for Tutuola wrote these novels about a decade ago. The narrative in the two novels is based on the oral cyclic folktale; where the life of a character is traced through a series of adventures and back to the same point.

Tutuola's pace of narrative unfolds with creative aggression; the point of view shifts from the narrator – protagonist to the omniscient narrator malleably; mortals transcend the world of the living to that of ghosts and there is no doubt of the setting and time – 'at that time I noticed that my father married three wives as they were doing in those days, if it is not common nowadays,' as *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* opens.

The author's dexterity proves itself in his twist of English into the African idiom. There is in these novels a recurrent idea of escapism – man in search of psychic consolation, satisfaction and refuge. The adventures and sojourn of the protagonists in the land of ghosts may have allegorical significance – a dramatization of human concern with life, death and quest for the unkwown. The mythologist, anthropologist and psychologist can recognise in these novels some aspect that encroach on his field of interest.

Amos Tutuola's narrative technique violates convention of sequence of events in full awareness of what they are, his images are violent to the sense of time, like the 'television-lauded ghost', it is this aggressive invention that gives a touch of aesthetic uniqueness and freshness to his writing. ●

THE MAN FROM THE HOUSE OF TRUTH

Talk had gone the rounds at Madibane High at Western Township that we would be getting a new teacher from Fort Hare who had obtained his B.A. with a distinction in English. As black matriculants grappling with irrelevant guys like Shakespeare, Milton and the vagaries of English poetry we felt that any black getting a distinction in English at university must be something out of this world. A phenomenon.

You can imagine our disappointment when the principal Mr Harry Madibane proudly stood on the stage and introduced the new wonderboy. He was scrawny with an incongruously puffy, rubbery face. At my most generous, I would not say he looked a 'bit' distinguished. Sartorially he was a disaster. No tie, a cheap baggy grey workman's gaberdine trousers, a khaki shirt, shoes that had an overdue date with the repairers and the kind of jacket a fussy student would not be seen dead in. Quite a let down after the imposing figure we had over the days built up in our minds.

Fortunately our disappointment was short-lived. From the moment he opened his mouth to address us, we were, to use a cliché, eating out of his bony palm. Blinking all the time like something unused to harsh lights, he spoke in a cool, sophisticated voice. He used words we were accustomed to, but he used them only the way he could. Eloquent, and articulate he really made the occasion his show without being pompous. On the contrary, he made us feel like his equals.

This was my first encounter with Can Dorsay Themba.

Can was to disappoint me once more. Although he didn't teach us, our own English teacher had a great respect for him. So before we sat for our final exams, he asked Can to test us in essay writing. He gave us the subject, The poetry of the earth is never silent.

I went all out to please the man from Fort Hare, pulling out all the stops.

When the scripts came back, the first thing I looked for was Can's remarks at the end of what I regarded as my magnum opus.

'The poetry of your earth is ever silent,' was Can's verdict. Can, however, more than made up for it a few years later when he asked me to join him on *Post* where he was news editor and later assistant editor.

To be invited by Can, who was rated among the top black writers was, for me like being granted the freedom of the city.

In spite of the respect and awe he was held in as a writer, Can proved to be the most prosaic person I'd ever met. At lunchtime he would send to the chinaman around the corner for pork bones and some slices of bread.

It may sound a bit unAfrican for me to be referring to someone older than me and my former teacher at that, by his first name, but Can in his own vain manner had an answer for this. As he used to say: 'Have you ever heard of Mr Jesus, or Mr Shakespeare?

Can loved company and he was superb company himself. A sparkling conversationalist with razor-sharp repartee. But what stands out in my mind is the day editor Arthur Rudolph found Can snoring on his desk, dead drunk. Arthur warned Can that the next time he found him drunk on the job he would fire him. Can lifted his head, looked at Arthur through bleary eyes.

'Yes, promises, promises, promises. That's all a guy can get in this place,' Can slurred, dropped his head once more on the desk and continued with his snoring.

Until he met his charming wife Can never discriminated in the kind of girl he fancied. Once I had to object when he came along touting a tatty scrubber.

'Voetsek,' he said. 'Who am I to question what the gods give.'

At the time he had a pad in Sophiatown we called The House of Truth. The place perhaps was Can's way of cocking a snook at snobbery, offficialdom and anything that smacked of the formal. Everybody but the snob was welcome at The House of Truth. You did not have to have permission to bunk with your date on the only single bed in the room. Can would stagger in in the early hours of the morning and pass out in a corner on the floor.

Can was vain. But his was the kind of healthy, innocent vanity of a child. Like the time he rushed up to my desk with a hardcover book.

'Look,' he showed me the index of the book. There were the names of well-known writers.

'And look here.' There was the name, Can Themba.

'Yes boy, at last immortality has caught up with me,' he gave that laugh of his that rocked his disjointed frame.

Although the Writers Association of South Africa honoured him with the Henry Nxumalo Award for his contribution to journalism, Can was never a legman. For him, slogging it out in search of news bordered on the mundane. He was essentially a writer.

He fell four-square on the definition of a poet as somebody who can give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name. Yes, Can could write about nothing and anything and make it pleasant reading.

Like one day when Sir Tom Hopkinson, former editor of *Drum*, approached the chief sub.

'Look, I don't know what Can is writing about. I don't know what he is trying to say, but it is mighty good prose. We must use it,' Sir Tom said. Can was an erratic genius. He had many faults but at times he reminded me of a song we used to sing as kids at Sunday school. 'Look them up. Get them gone. All the little rabbits in the field of corn. Anger, envy, jealousy, pride. These must never in my heart abide.'

Can never had any of these rabbits.

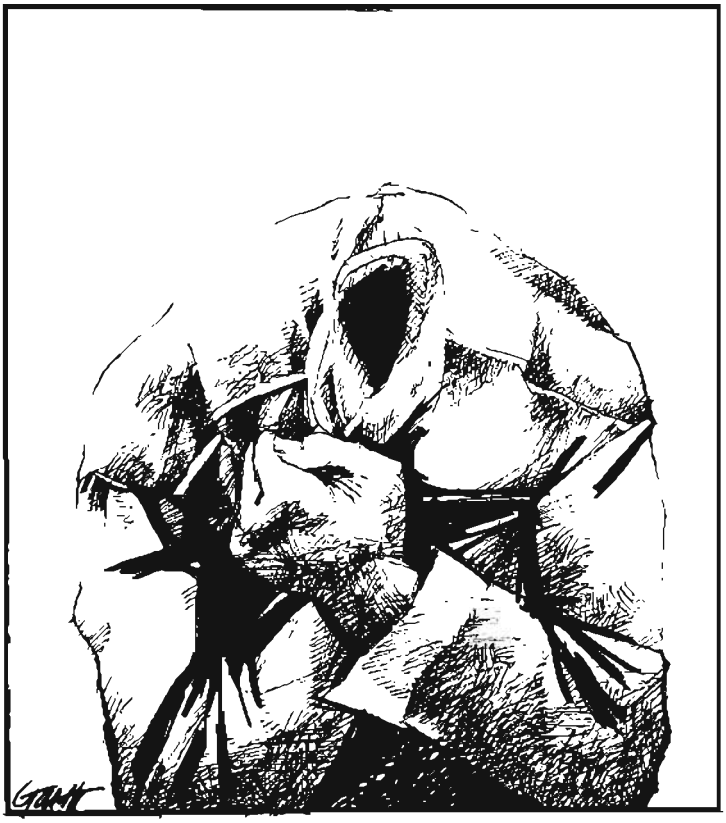
One of Can's greatest weaknesses was his rhino thirst. This is what prompted one writer to say that Can didn't die from natural causes, but died from drowning. Tragic.

His only legacy to posterity is a book aptly entitled: 'The Will to Die.' Apt because the way Can lived gave the impression that he had a death wish.

We'll all remember Can. ●

FRANK ANTHONY

robbeneiland my kruis my huis



oggend
kaapstad
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tussen ketting
en ketting
ons heiningstutte
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klingel
aan die voorbokke

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bibber
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'n ferrie wag
knikkend
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ons lag
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die doodsweetbang
van hulle hart

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want wie
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toe sak
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aas
in die onderdek
van die boot
en die werkers
groet ons nie

patryspoort
o patryspoort
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ons sê hallo en koebaai

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uit die see
'n boggel

jy sterf

want jy moet sterf
tien terroriste
sien jou aan

deur al jou hakiesdraad
jou bloukliptronk
kners op sy staaltande

maar jy het melaats
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uit op die sementvloes
tot ek my trommeldik
leer
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suip ek smakkend

en waarders vloek f-n-erig in hul slaap

water
uit jou fonta mara

die aand kom ook
ek wonder
oor die maan
aan jou sel
se ystervingers
trek ek my op
ek sien maanlig
aan jou leiklip
die maan is weg
die ster
die univers
ek hang
swart silhoëet
aan die tralies
van jou blinddoek

maar ek phoenix
spring op
uit my stram vleis
siedaar
die maan
die ster
die melkweg
makros
uit mikros

hoe kan beton
staal
kruisig

ek transendeer
ek maan
ek son
ek melkweg
ek kosmos
ek lag
vir jou kaplaar
vir jou futaliteit

want ek is uitgelei
uit jou slawehuis
ek steier weg
van beloofde land
uitgelei
uit slawehuise
die land
is ons land

gister
robbeneiland
sien ek jou gesig
nabyopname
van duiwelspiek
van bloubergstrand
moet jy zoomlens
moet jy toeskouer

op langafstande
is daar hier
geen prisoniers
die h-blokke
die kulukuthu
die eensameopsluiting
die enkelselle
van die makuluspan
staan leeg

vryheidsvegter-vreemdeling
op bloubergstrand
op die duiwelspieke
pik jy nie saans
hoendermielies
kannie weet
van die geel grasmat
op die onverskillige vloer

snags
waai 'n wind
om die wêreld
se tronkhoeke

dan blaf die waghond
bang
en waarders
vloek f-n-erig
in hul slaap

gister
is robbeneiland
hier voor my
gejag
soos 'n roofdier
skrikkerig en grommend
ek word kil
spierstil
van vrees
vir die vreemding
wat wag

maar vanaf duiwelspiek
flits snags
die vuurtoring
en niemand voel
die bulk
van die mishoring

bloubergstrande
jy sal vir ewig
na my kyk
maar nou nog weet jy nie
hoe die houtkamp
omspan word
met hakies draad

seepunt
jou strate
jou strand
hoereer
langs die leiklipgroef
maar die bloedvint
sien jy nie droog
tot eelt

tafelberg
jy kyk af
op die witoond
van die kalkgroef
hoeveel pikke
wat swaai
sien jy die skedel spleet

gister is
robbeneiland
hier by my
witenswart
bang

ons arriveer
terroristeseksie
'n verwelkoming
breek
oop soos 'n nuwe era
die nuwe namibia
spoel oor die kamp
warm
soos 'n blikvuur
uit kinderjare
en langs die hakiesdraad
staan 'n vakkeldraer
stug
by die
smeltkroes
van die oshakati
kleinboer
en die goue
proletariat
die haat
die kaplaars
en die hakiesdraad

toe skeur
die voorhangsel
van robbeneiland
die aarde skud
duisternis sak toe
ek word wakker
herbore

die swart lug
is wit meeue
duisende
ek kyk beangs
vir die botsing
wat kom
maar hulle krys
triomfantelik
vry

dis eerste oggend
die koperklok
klap my wakker
verward
my kind
aardbewing
uit na veiligheid
ek hardloop
ek strompel
ek val
oor die voete
van tien terroriste

buite
hoor ek
hoe die gruis
op sy tande

kners
kaplaars
my god
robbeneiland

ek moet opstaan
ek moet seewaterstort
klewerig
koud
fascisties

die ou manne
staan grys-grys
bibber

so bibber
masjiengewere
ook

ons staan op aandag
voor die uitverkorenheid
rooi kaartjies
soos hoede
voor die bors
grotesk
ritueel

toe groei die son
uit die vel
van die see
'n geel pitsweer
van 'n dag

die doringdraad
skitter
dit dou
op robbeneiland ook

'n kaplaar
praat
houtkamp toe
houtkamp toe
nader na 'n houtkamp toe
die hond
hang
aan sy wurgketting

dis 'n mooi dag

die voete protesteer
op die skulpgruis
dit klink mooi
ons kwetter
soos lentevoëls

die stil waarders
hang
aan hulle honde
en 'n f-n
is koud
in die winter
die winter
winter

dis 'n mooi dag

ek ruik die see
verwonderd
oor die dooie strukture
van wêreldoorlog
oor die demokrasie

die waarders se blink
skoene
is vaal
die honde
is tongerig
die f-n
bly koud

dis 'n mooi dag

die meeus
by die broeikolonie
bars hulle luidkeels
oop
soos 'n pamfletbom
ek lees hulle
gretig
politieke geskrifte

die waarders
kyk verskrik op
die honde
duik
in hulle wurgketting
vas
'n f-n val
amper

dis 'n mooi dag

die houtkamp
is hier
ek sien die vangtou
van hakiesdraad
een vir een
glip ek
in sy doringvelling
terroris
met blink byl
kap
spaanders waai
in slaweland
deursaag
die rooikranshout

want vanaand
maak die volkies
vuur
vanaand
maak die volkies
vuur

my geliefde
hang annie doringdraad
my geliefde
hang annie doringdraad
my geliefde
hang annie wag 'n bietjie
draad

dis 'n mooi dag

die waarders
is 'n velling
kordon
dis natuurlik
hulle kyk
f-n-erig
na terroris
maar in die houthok
lê hoeka
'n sak koerant

dis 'n mooi dag

veral
ek kameraad
penduleer
boer se balie
in die see
ons vee sy kak
met koerantpapier af
tot insulasie
verdwyn

f-n kyk
ons agterdogtig
aan maar reeds knars
die skulpgruis
selle toe

die aand
sit kleinboer
sit stadswerker
sit intellektueel
die moeniegebooie
van die eiland
lees

en in die donker
by houtkamp
by kalkgroef
by steengroef
hou die meeus
massaproteste

in h-selle
deur die nag
slaan menings
te pletter
teen 'n rots
van antitese

maar môre
vloei verdruppelde
water
terug na 'n see
van petisie

koperklok lui
weer
kaplaars knars
intimideer
kyk

vir die rooikaart

somtyds word ek openlik swak moersmoeg ek wil huistoe

vir die aandag
voor god
van god
van awie en sakkie

maar kyk
in my regterhand
is die witskrif
van rewolusie twee
in rewolusie een

toe spartel
die herrenvolk
in my hand
soos 'n slang
giftig

die kulukuthu
val oop
die rooisee
van eensame
opsluiting

spoel toe
die water
word stil
om my verswelgde
hartklop

dis donker
op robbeneiland
die ure
lê stil
soos moeraswater

my kind se kop
peul
snags
uit die stink
pappery
'n gasborrel

'n dier
loer
deur sy ystervingers
na 'n stil mens
se kokon

ek hoor 'n giggel
ek biggel
'n traan
ek taan
ek waan
somtyds
word ek openlik
swak
moers moeg
ek wil huis toe
ek word moeg

van aldag tronk
dronk
rondslinger
in die ruimtes
van eksistensiële
vryheid
sartreaans
ingewerp
die absurditeit
van 'n ruimtelose
eensaamheid

ek sak
weg
in wakkerdroom
'n rosekrans
wat ek vingerig
voel
my sewe
stasies
van lyding
ek is nameloos
eensaam

my dogter
wag
by die venster
ek verdwyn
soos 'n mooi droom
sy sukkel
elke dag
om my terug
te huil
maar ek is haar ensame
opsluiting

ek verlang
na my vrou
ek word taktiel
arm
ek smag
na iemand
in my intieme
ruimte
ek is koud
eensaam
soos 'n tronksel

luckhoffstraat
moer se dorp
speel ek dassiebol
innie lokasie
van cirasvlei

trap ek my harde tone
in bra cecil
se vars kak
hel cecil
kan djy na nie anne
plek kakkie
in djou moer in

ek kap 'n blik
se bek toe
met 'n klip
blikaspaai
se someraand

ek wag
weer vir pappie
bang
die hout is nat
ek gooi lampolie
oppie lam
vlam
maar die vuur
willie brantie
venaand
kry ek weer
op my moer

ek speel aamblou
ek gil van geluk
verby die armkettings
en die waswaterstrepe
op die straatsand

maar elke dag
is my droom
'n skrefie
ek sien 'n yster
penis
trillingstyf
soos 'n ereksie
in die vagina
van my sel
my vryheid
afgeskommel
skoot in 'n skede
opgevang

ek is verkwis
ek lê koud
en slymerig
op die semen(t) vloer
uitgestort

nou lek ek saans
my kos
'n hond
'n lunsbaard
gril oor my bek
my kloue
word swart
'n boemelaar
'n stank

nou vlug
ek nie meer
soos vroeër
skaak
ek elke boeing
op d.f malan
baie hoog
oor havana
hou ek 'n rewolusie
is ek god
van proletariaat
van kleinboer
fantaseer
ek magtige damme
in die groot karoo
sien ek honger
vervlug
die millennium
aangekom
maar nou

tot 'n nuwe dag oopbreek, 'n vars lemoen sappig

is ek platgeval
soos a mislukte
plan

tot 'n nuwe dag
oopbreek
'n vars lemoen
sappig

enkelselle
makuluspan
hoeveel mitologie
ontdek ek nog
in die heropstanding
maar nou
is ek jubel
is ek blydskap
is ek magtig
soos rewolusie
icarus
ek suiwer
in die son
broederskap
word helder
in die soeklig

broers
tuimel trug
aarde
toe in die liefdesnet
van stryd

o robbeneiland
my kruis
my huis

ek herstel
van eensame
opsluiting
ek voel
nie die gruwel
van die grasmat
nog ruik
ek die priemende
stank
van die balie
ek hou
my honger hande
oor die warm vlam
van die mensestem

ek maak my 'n b-b-pil
ek rook
alles is 'n geel gloed
en naby
alles is menslik
'n knus kombers
om my moeë
gees
ek slaap

die hoë
gloeilamp
glim
'n suidoos
waai
môre reën dit

die dag kom weer
koperklok
metaalmeesters
mars
energiek
gangaf
die enkelselle
ontplof
met kommunistiese
bedrygings
totale aanslag
vryheidsvegter
jou slopsemmer
hang krampagtig
aan jou krom
vingers

jy eet vandag
baas se braaipap
sonder braai
dis lekker
want om my sit
makuluspan
ek trek die tralies
om my dig
veilig

ek is in die dal
van doodskadu
ek vrees
geen onheil
want u is met my
makuluspan

drie-drie
strand toe

want in die sweet
van my aanskyn
sal jy jou brood
verdien
herrenvolk

sien jy ek trek
die vars bamboes
nat
taai
vas in die wortel knoop
van die ideologie

ons raak verstrengeld
makuluspan

die son brand
realiteit
om homself
'n bamboes skiet
los somtyds
vir die kompos
ek steier
agter my slag
ek is doodmoeg

makuluspan
ek haas
my na my sel
maar die musiek
van makuluspan
blêr
my agterna
gesellige
gevangenisskap

ek stort
in die smeltkroes
belangestryd
belangestryd
op die rant
van die kroeskrans
proletariaat
wil jy wegdamp
kleinboer
wil jy wegdamp
ek gil
van die kleverige
pyn

onder my
brand
die hoogvlam
van uitverkorenheid
gesellig
voort

die koel reën
is weg
die dag is droog
en aangeskakel
in die kalkgroef
begrawe herrenvolk
marxismes
ek pik
skrams
in die harde wit kalk
ek tesis
'n antitese
'n moerse
dialektiek
stort strydend
oor die groef
'n lorriebak wag

maar saans
sleep ek my pik
en graaf
na die gereedskaphok
ontnugterd
onder die wit kalk
diep
lê marx
gefossileer

en f-n
kyk smalend
oor die groot amfiteater
van die groef
na die verniste
lykbesorgers

saans
dompel ek trug

die see stamp sy kop stukkend teen die tronk se muur

freudiaans
in my plasentale
sel
bourgeois
leerboeke
ontspan
ek in die psigodeliese
realiteit
die vraatsug
van kapitaal
telkens
infantiel
skop ek
die buikwande
van robbeneiland

gedwelm
luister
ek na die ver blaf
van die waghond
die wagtorings
verdof
'n mishoring
kla vergeefs
ek dryf
weg
na 'n mooi vryheid
op die rotse
die see
skitter
by bloubergstrand
my kinderberge
vou om my
magtige arms
salig
ek trap
op die spons
van wintergras
in my moer
se agterplaas
pappie
het my hand
op die heuwels
van helshoogte
ons storm
langs die helling
af
en lag
die skoolklok
lui
ek hardloop
oor die speelveld
ek mag nie laat
wees nie
die koperklok
lui
dit knars
ken
ek die klank

ek hoor vryheidsvegters
in die gang
elke oggend
word ek gebore

ek moet vandag
die blouklip breek

ek stap stil
langs die mites
van 'n verwronge
rewolusie
makuluspan
ek sal vandag
die blouklip breek
ek stap stil
kuslangs
die kanon
kyk verlate
oor die see
vandag
breek ek blouklip
ek stap stil
die houtkamp
lê versplinterd
tussen die hakiesdraad
die see spring
op teen die rotse
om te sien
wie steel koerante
in die mopgat
die oumanne
breek kolomme
om te water
hulle skater
lag
ek stap stil
na 'n blouklipgroef
meeus oral
soos 'n stryd
gewonne
ek dra my hamer
in 'n regterhand
af in 'n groef
waar die water
stil is soos 'n klip
ek begin breek
proletariaat
kleinboer
ek moet jou los moer
uit die klip

maar die klip
is hard
ek ruik die swawel
van die hou

die son sak
soos 'n bloedvint
in die koel see

môre
kap
ek en jy weer
die klipatoom
moet spleet

ons stap sel toe
langs die jare
die kanon skilfer
nuwe babies
bloei in die blomakker
die tralies groei
weelderig
uit die klipmuur

soms
vang ons voëls
in slim strikke
van die galg
of pluk
ons pêrevoete
langs die see
krismis swaai
die pad
nuwejaar toe
seskeer
snik
die koperklok
for auld lang syne
maar die groef
bly stroef

by die hawe
wag
die besoeklokale
boetvaardig
die houtkamp
sterf
o kalkgroef
jy is die vlak
graf
jy moet oopgaan
soos 'n heropstanding
ons skend
jou gestadig
die klipgroef
word stil
die klip kraak
die werkers
roer
hulle pikke
die blink
bamboes
breek makliker
nou
die mishoring
bulk nog
snags verlore
die waghonde
tjank
na die volmaan
van die kaap
die see
stamp
sy kop
stukkend
teen die tronk
se muur
die f-n
se bek
sleep in die stof
die waarders
lyk triestig
soos winterreëns

op die eilandhawe
wag die ferrie
knikkend
op tien terroriste
wat huis toe
gaan ●

I'd like
To break
The bounds
Of petty
Man made
Laws
And make
Love
To you

Religious
Fanaticism
Yet
A fast
Traveller
In
His constellation
Loins
Aching
For
Black innocence
While
His code
Of
Ethics
Lay on
His bedroom
Pedestal
Undisturbed

I'd like
To break
The bounds
Of Petty
Man made
Laws
And
Make love
To you
But
The Demon
Of doubt
Raises Havoc
In
My Mind
And
Dances Unashamedly
on
My Burning
Soul
And
Ridicules
My
Tormented Heart.

Am I
only
a Character
From
a
Romantic Pen
an
Object
Of Pleasure
Devoid of
Wit
Or
Sense
The Slave
Denied
His Love

Please Come
Love
And
Exercise
My mind
My soul
My heart
Because
If
I am
Sure
Of you
And
Love
Then I
can
Face
The devil

Louis Charles

SONG OF THE CHAIN AROUND YOUR NECK

the girl was sitting
huddled in a corner
with a mirror in her hand
fingering the chain around her neck

pain was tearing at her heart
and conflicting thoughts
giving her a splitting headache
tears blinding her eyes

Mother's child
why do you scald your face
tying your beautiful breasts
your lips like an open sore?

you can plait your hair
wear colourful beads
sing beautiful songs
and let your laughter ring in the air

Maano Dzeani Tuwani

SELF-EXAMINATION

I need a mirror desperately
To see myself, my reflection
To see the reality
  That I am.
I long to see my eyes
To read the tales they tell
To others looking at me
To decipher the puzzle
  That I am.

David Phuti (Std. 7, 1981)

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