Staffrider

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Stories

Poetry

Essays

Reviews

SPECIAL EDITION

CULTURE IN TRANSITION

Staffrider

Volume 9 Number 4 1991

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Illustrator and Artist: Andrew Lord
Marketing and Distribution: Matthew Krouse

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Contributions and correspondence should be sent to
The Editorial Collective
Staffrider
P.O. Box 421007
Fordsburg
2033.

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Comment

This special edition of *Staffrider* published by the Congress of South African Writers in association with the Progressive Arts Project is of special significance. Firstly, it marks the closure of the Progressive Arts Project. This organisation was founded in Johannesburg in 1978 to facilitate cultural production in the larger Witwatersrand area as well as to assist various artists in establishing representative organizations for their disciplines. Secondly, this edition seeks to explore the problems and challenges facing South African writers, artists and performers in the current period which is widely regarded as a transition from racial domination to a non-racial democracy.

In the light of this, Nadine Gordimer, in a recent address to the Los Angeles meeting on the Cultural Boycott hosted by the United Nations, reminded the gathering of the roles of the international and local communities of artists in bringing about lasting change in South Africa. She writes:

> As apartheid is slowly, reluctantly, officially carted away piece by piece, it must be remembered that this process began only because of and under international pressure, the irresistible force of the boycott and sanctions movements combined with the action of the liberation movements against what appeared to be an immovable object. It has been moved: and the process of clearance will be completed, every brick and stone, only under the continued and maintained pressure from the international cultural community and its governments.
>
> But clearing the ground of the evil of apartheid will not, from the point of view of the realities of culture, leave standing the good. It was never there. There never was any recognition by the succession of racist regimes that educational and cultural structures should be designed and operated by all its people, not for an exclusively white population.

Gordimer also addressed the role of South African writers and artists by pointing out that we now face the challenge to create a literature, art and culture 'which arises from and reflects the lives, the aspirations, the ability and above all the capacity to appreciate and enjoy the life of the mind of all the people in our country'. This issue of *Staffrider* attempts to assess the advances made towards such a culture and to draw attention to the work that still has to be undertaken to facilitate the democratisation of South African culture. It is done by looking at a number of interrelated cultural fields involving literature and language, music and performance, the visual arts, film, the challenges of community art projects and cultural rights in a democratic constitution.

This hardly covers the entire spectrum of cultural activities which requires stock taking and the development of new perspectives. Central to these questions is the need to open radio and television broadcasting in South Africa for popular participation. In this regard readers are referred to the broadcast edition of FAWO News, September 1991 in which the Film and Allied Workers Organisation comprehensively deals with the need to restructure the electronic media. It is further hoped that the issues explored in this edition of *Staffrider* will be taken up in conjunction with other related issues, developed and carried through in actual cultural practice by all South Africans concerned with creating a democratic culture.

This edition was compiled by members of the Progressive Arts Project in association with the regional editors of *Staffrider* and various other individuals and organisations. Thanks is due to all contributors.

Finally, *Staffrider* congratulates Nadine Gordimer, who serves as an editorial adviser for the journal, on receiving the 1991 Nobel Prize for Literature. It is an honour which she, as a major twentieth century novelist and short story writer, richly deserves.

Andries Walter Oliphant
Barbara Schreiner
Paul Weinberg
Matthew Krouse

Linda Kude Kube-Sebusuku

Sunset
It is not yet dark.
Wait my child, wait little one
Wait and breathe the air of patience,
Wait little one, sip the wine of tolerance.
Wait my child,
This sunset will surely pass.

Sunset,
It is not yet dark.
Like an eagle in search of its prey
You must wait,
You must wait my child
Do not sleep
Know your enemies
Know them well
They find comfort in the day.
But you the young lion of the nation
Be vigilant, attack
Linda kude kube-sebusuku
Wait only until the night.

Do not sleep
Be your enemies
Think like your enemies
But do not find comfort in the day,
Do not break the bread of satisfaction with your enemy
But instead, break the silence that comes at the end of the day
Break the silence with your RP 6s
Break the silence with your AK 47s
Break the silence with your land-mines,
Your Molotovs, your hand-grenades, your petrol-bombs.
Linda kude kube-sebusuku.

Darkness
It's not yet light
You have waited my little one
You have done well
Beat your drum of victory
Let your triumphs ring from church to factory floor
From cities to dorpies
From mansions to shanties,
Let it ring from hierdie kant to daardie kant

You have not found comfort in the day,
My child you have waited.
Anton French you have waited.
You have all waited until the night,
You have waited only until the night
Wait no longer Mqabane, wait no longer.

Thembile Pepeteka

Crossing Borders Without Leaving

Keorapetse Kgositsile

Returning home, even though just for a short visit, for the first time in twenty-nine years, as John Oliver Killens might have put it, is a humdinger. Jan Smuts Airport is a seemingly huge, clean, efficient monstrosity. Its size is more shadow than substance, though. No huge nothing about it. Monstrosity, yes. Dimly lit inside; eerie like a veritable cave of horrors. After we have been vomited at the 'arrivals' entrance by the bus from the plane, we walk in: Patricia, her two daughters Thandi and Lebo; and I, and many other passengers. And now the shit begins to hit the fan. South Africa does not celebrate the return of one of her many, many children from exile.

We queue up with those with 'non-South African passports'. In your own country! Deal with that! After a few minutes an immigration officer comes and takes our passports, Patricia's and mine and, after telling us to go and sit down 'over there' where our eyes follow his official finger, he disappears with our passports. I've just overheard him telling Zanele that she did not have a return visa. 'But,' she says to him: 'in the past few months I've been in and out of the country several times.'

After a while Zanele is cleared. She can go into her country and, we learn from Bunny who has a multiple entry visa, 'valid for the next three months' into *his own* country, that Thabo has just arrived from abroad and is waiting for her 'upstairs'. I wait. I begin getting anxious. I say to myself, 'I hope *die fokken boere* are not going to put me on the next flight back to Lusaka.' Ages pass. A burden of agitated rocks is threatening to do battle in my stomach. I decide to go to the bar upstairs to cool their temper or distract them with a beer. After gulping one down quickly I go down again to wait 'over there'. After more ages comes Mr Immigration. He gives my Ghana passport to a beach-looking, pink-cheeked, young woman who gives me back my passport and says, 'You can go that way'. And she walks away fast. I walk to the counter and ask one of her colleagues what she meant.

'Go out here and collect your luggage.'

'You mean I've been allowed in?'

'Yes.'

Quicker than soon I collect it. Junaid is there. So are Thabo and Zanele and Patricia's parents. I tell Patricia's parents she should be out soon and Junaid and I take the drive into Johannesburg.

On our way, Daphne with us, I do not recognize anything I could relate to. How is your Setswana, she asks. Dangerously good, I tell her; *Setswana A, sa ga* Monyaise. You know, in my opinion, old man Monyaise is one of our best living novelists. But because he writes in Setswana he is not known outside of a bit of South

Africa and Botswana. Soon I will translate his work. I owe it to him. He taught me Setswana and Afrikaans literature and language in Form IV and Form V at Madibane High School, Western Native Township, Johannesburg.

COSAW Office. Heita Majita, Die Ouens, Boys, Gents! Here are my colleagues and *hosts*. Can you deal with that? Hosts! In my own country. Junaid disappears. After a while he comes to call me to another office, to a phone. On the way: 'Hey broer, we are under fire from Baleka.' Baleka, Baleka uncompromising fighter through and through. One of these days she'll be the death of me, in loving care and concern, I hope. 'How can I learn only from the papers today about your being here?' she wants to know. 'You know, even I didn't know I was coming here until yesterday. Like Junaid says, COSAW sent you a fax. But evidently you didn't get it.' 'Well, I don't even have a place to stay,' she says, 'so where are we going to stay?' 'I'll sort it out with COSAW,' I try to allay her fears. And it is quickly sorted out. Protea Gardens Hotel, Berea.

But first to ANC Headquarters at 54 Sauer Street. There's Baleka there, pretending, unsuccessfully, not to be particularly impressed to see me at home. There's Barbara, 'Thembi' and Zanele, loving sisters and comrades from way, way back. Hugs, embraces, kisses, gleeful smiles. My sisters. Home at last, home at last.

But wait boet, wait. I can almost here ou 'Mabuafeja' Jimmy Jackson say, these young fools are in a *moer se* hurry *ek sê jou. Bas' pidile*. But Congress is an old, old man, boet, with a long, long beard. But wait a minute. Ya. Johannesburg. Home, Ya? But I do not know this place. I know some people who have remained alive, perhaps miraculously, from the old days. I avoid to meet too many people at ANC Headquarters. Selfish, perhaps even cowardly selfish, yes. Afraid to confront a past that has been immobilised or obliterated by apartheid and supposedly progress — whatever that might be supposed to mean in the context of latter-part twentieth-century South Africa.

Baleka has warned me against my expectations. And, you know, I suspect the most treacherous thing about expectation, at whatever level, in the same way that frustrated want tends to turn into pressing *need*, is that it so quickly turns into *DEMAND*. Ask anyone with memory which, as Zinga correctly says, is *the* weapon. But there are no memories here. The streets of Johannesburg cannot claim me. I cannot claim them either. Their names, like Market or Commissioner, Bree or Diagonal, remain, but it seems there is not much more than that for the returning one after ages and ages. And, delinquent brother and kind sister, if here and there I could be accused of having some sense, I would like to state something simple and seemingly obvious. Even at a very physical level, you cannot — or should I say — you should not destroy everything which connects people to history, to certain memories, to certain places, to memorial reference points. If you destroy even those points of reference, you are not just destroying the memory; you are destroying even the notion of historicity: you are destroying the link with any past and present, which should inform the future. Even at a very physical level, you destroy those physical points of reference, you destroy the individual, the compatriot, the son or daughter returning 'home'.

Day after my arrival. Market Theatre. Other chapters of history unfold. Over the past number of years we in exile have known of the *Market Theatre*. But I, personally, did not have the vaguest idea about even where it was located in Johannesburg. The old fruit and vegetable market. 'Wake up early in the morning go to the market go buy orange nabble orange avocado coconut come kappirboy steal my nabble orange. Hit kappirboy. Mr Magistrate want to sentence me then Mr Magistrate head full of water same like coconut also.' And guess, walking around, whom I run into, right here; Charlie Cobb and his wife Anne. Brother and comrade from across the big waters, doing a piece on South Africa for a special issue of *National Geographic*. It goes back and back — Washington, D.C.; New York, Africa — so many years I'd feel guilty if I said any more than that I was so excited that, like James Brown, I could have jumped back and kissed myself.

'Hey, I was looking at the paper yesterday and saw your book was being launched here today. Did you get my message?'

'Yea, I did. But the comrade didn't recall the name too clearly. And when he heard you were AMERICAN,

he was not exceptionally impressed. But I told him it might be you. So here 'tis. Whatshappening?'

Charlie, you remember your old piece, way way back during the old SNCC days, when you tried to grab us by the elbow to remind us of collected and collective memory and wisdom:

It's not the size of the ship
It's the motion of the ocean

Junaid has warned me, soon after my arrival, Broer there will be no rest for you. Of course initially I don't take that too seriously; I guess only because here and there I am capable of being an embarrassing fool, consciously or unwittingly.

Mxo has asked me, the second day after my return, no, not return, *arrival* in this strange place, how was Soweto after all this time? No, man, I was booked at Protea Gardens. What? I don't think that was quite correct, he says. Well, later my younger cousin, France, phones. He read about my arrival in the newspaper. They are all excited 'here at home' — which means practically every part of Soweto — and they are waiting for me. Boet, I'm in Berea, *ek sê*, and I have a very tight programme.

Things happen very fast here. After the book launch at the Market Theatre, a day to retrace some footsteps. I would prefer to walk from Berea, through Hillbrow, down Twist, past Union Grounds and the Alex Bus Rank, to Park Station, then down Jeppe or Bree to Diagonal and the old Sophiatown and Western Native Township Bus Ranks. But Baleka has not brought a pair of walking shoes from her 'underground' flat in Yeoville, for the long walk. So we settle for a bus. On the bus, 'Eh, bra Willie you are here?' An old young friend from the Jazz Pioneers. Baby We, I say to Baleka, check. They have performed together, the two of them, in Botswana and Holland, with the Jazz Pioneers. Maybe I *am* getting closer to home. At Park Station we part. Raks, Doreen, Baleka and I walk down to Diagonal.

Down the streets. No memorial points of reference. Therefore, return? Return to what? This place is foreign. I might as well have been wandering and wondering through any other part of this planet that I am not native to. Neruda says:

I know only the skin of the earth
And I know it has no name

A few years ago an old woman in Botswana, one of Jehovah's most militantly devout children — I guess there must be some deal between him and them that they will never grow to be men and women, even if they lived to be older than old age itself — who had seen the remains of Tiro after the enemy explosives had reduced him to tiny strips of flesh, scorched dry and clinging to the ceiling — was very impatient with the likes of me for concerns about the liberation of my country. 'Your country?' she explodes. 'Did you ever build a portion of this Earth, which you can claim as yours? I thought you were supposed to be educated! Don't you know this whole Earth belongs to God?'

As I walk down this impersonal, concrete, marble, glass and synthetic nonsense, I want to scream *COME THUNDER! CONFLAGRATION!* Where are you! The Bigger Thomas in me wants to blot all this perverse shit out of existence. And let no limp-minded charlatan try to tell me my responses are unscientific. Because I will tell you right here and now that, like Castro, no force on this planet can move me from conviction about the principles of socialism. To the bitter end. Socialism or Death. *Daar's kak in die land.* If you don't believe it, ask Sandile Dikeni.

There are many changes here. But no change, no progress. I am referring to the spiritual and material quality of human life and living. There is a level of decay in the moral fibre of our society which, until now, could not have vaguely formed part of even my most bizarre nightmares. Incest, the rape of even infants, prostitution, barbaric violence and bloodshed, frightening levels of illiteracy, homelessness, large derelict areas of towns where men, women and children seem more irrevocably derelict than their physical surroundings, and many, many more perversions. Perhaps there is only one modern monster which readily comes to mind by way of comparison — the Unites States of America.

Let me give you a little taste of what I'm trying to say. During the reception after the book launch at the Market Theatre, this young fellow — certainly born about a decade after I had left home — comes and joins us at our table. He is an aspiring writer, he says; and he really likes my work. He frequents the Transvaal regional office of COSAW to type his work and to use the Can Themba

Reading Room. After a while he tells us about how one day he and a few other 'comrades' had decided they had had enough of Inkatha raids and massacres and they were going to 'show them'. So they managed to get hold of one Inkatha fellow. They doused him 'good with plenty of petrol' and forced him to drink some. When the fellow started to holler they sprang back and set him ablaze. There was an explosion, and that was the end of the fellow, ash to ash — and not figuratively, mind you. What they did was not as horrifying and chillingly mesmerizing as the relish with which he told his story. When he saw the intensity of the surprise and the shock going amok through Baleka's eyes, in a voice as serious as any heart-attack he continued, 'Yes, Sisi, if we found out that you had anything to do with Inkatha, we would deal with you like that with pleasure.'

Curious as I am about what he writes, I am certainly more than a little bit frightened that one of these days, right there in the Can Themba Reading Room, he might ask me to read a piece of his and give him a comment. Wouldn't you?

Delinquent brother, kind loving sister, comrade, I will not claim to know much about how some things in the everyday ordering of our lives could be explained. You see, at one level, my being here is a homecoming, in terms of the one who has been away. But at another level, the returning one has never left. An uncle of mine was very proud, for instance, that in spite of how long I've been gone and been all over the world, I have not forgotten my language. But finally, what could that possibly mean, really? Was I expected or suspected to 'return' a foreigner, mumbling some unintelligible gibberish, or what? My people, I went away yes. I crossed borders and borders, many of them illegally yes. But I never left. Even if I had wanted to 'leave' my language would not have allowed it; my memories and our collective memory would not have allowed it; my concerns, my daily preoccupations, would not have allowed it. Wally and Bra Zeke, remember one day in Philadelphia, years and years ago, I told you some day I would make this English speak *my* language!

Okay. For a while let's move away from Johannesburg; I'm sure by now you have realised that for me it leaves a bit of a bad taste in the mouth, or whatever crevice of the sensibility it lingers around.

Junaid, as I said earlier, has already warned me: Broer, you better take advantage of your first two days here. After that, NO REST. But, like the fool I am, I do not take his advice seriously. After a few days in the country, my programme seriously begins. Eastern Cape, Western Cape, back to Johannesburg — but maybe I should say Jan Smuts, because on my arrival at Jan Smuts from Cape Town I'm whisked from the airport straight to Northern Transvaal. However, at the end of Lesego's reading of a few of his poems, our eyes almost jump out of their sockets in surprise and to Lesego's considerable chagrin and frustration when we hear this young Mzwakhe fanatic, applauding Lesego with 'VIVA MZWAKHE! VIVA!'. The welcome was very moving. As we were about to drive back to Johannesburg, though, there was this comment from that rural corner of our country: 'Comrade, for months now we have been hearing that a number of our people and our leaders from outside are back. But you are the first one to visit us. Why are we being neglected?' Well, Leadership, it seems like a valid and a burning question to me. Please account to the people, *honestly*.

We arrive back in Johannesburg at night, exhausted. The following day, Durban for a few hours. Late at night off to Umtata. Junaid and Mi stay in Umtata just long enough to freshen up and have a meal; they are rushing back for a meeting in Durban. I spend the night. Early the following morning back to Durban. My children are not happy about this but they understand, whatever that means to a child who rarely spends time with his or her parents. My Durban-Johannesburg flight delayed. Finally on arrival at Jan Smuts, straight to the Free State — Welkom. Because of this lateness we cannot stop at Kroonstad where Antjie Krog has prepared all kinds of edibles for us.

I've been desperately trying to get hold of Bra Ntemi — Ntemi Piliso of the legendary African Jazz Pioneers. Finally, one afternoon, Menzi, Lesego (Less Ego to some people), and I drive to Alexandra, to the Alex Arts Centre where Bra Ntemi is reproducing himself, teaching younger musicians music theory and equipping them with skills to play.

The Alex Arts Centre is up on that little hill at the

Everybody Gets to Town • Kweti Ndzube — Visual Arts Group • (Woodcut)

northern end of a number of streets, among them Five. When our car pulls up and stops in the yard Bra Ntemi is standing at the corner of the wire fence overlooking Five. We quickly pile out of the car. Bra Ntemi takes a quick look at us and just as quickly turns his head again to resume his vigil on Five. We join him at the corner of the fence. No word from him. We join the vigil. We have walked smack-bang into the terror and barbaric violence called Operation Iron Fist.

'The Law', armed with brutality, hatred, rifles and other weapons, is harassing and terrorising the unarmed people of Alex. As these brutes move up the street — and there are many of them, I tell you — some of them, weapons menacingly at the ready, take positions on both sides of the street as their colleagues raid residents' yards, houses, shacks and persons.

After a few minutes — but really, how do you measure time in a situation like this? — Bra Ntemi turns around, hugs and embraces me. Then, with a mischievous grin, he points at the violated street and says: Welcome Home!

There's a young trumpeter at the far end of the yard doing his practicals. They teach theory and practice here. Bra Ntemi goes over to him, gives him some tips on how to handle certain licks several different ways and comes back to where Menzi, Lesego and I are waiting for him. Then Bra Ntemi and I go to his office. Mandla joins us later. Menzi and Lesego leave to attend to some other duties.

The last time we were together was at CASA (Culture in Another South Africa) in Amsterdam, December 1987. For a while the whole world rotates through our tongues. CASA, AABN, Mbaqanga, Kingforce, Marabi, Swing, Jazz, Freedom Melody where Bra Kleintjie played his old trumpet which is probably my age, about which he told my enthralled daughter Ipe, 'My baby, I grew up your father on this very horn', the one and only Katse about whom legends are legion, Exile, AMANDLA!, Abdulla Ibrahim and Satimar Gwangwa, Dorothy Masuku, Hugh aka Huge Makasela in certain parts of our continent, Letta and Caiphus, Dorkay House, Gallo, SADF Raids, Inkatha, Sanctions, the Cultural Boycott, Kippie and many other late jazz giants at home and abroad, ANC and MK, Wally, Thami Mnyele, Baleka, Barbara, ou Tom (Nkobi) en ou Alf (Nzo) hulle — as Bra Ntemi says — the return of exiles, Mandela, De Klerk, the Alex Arts Centre, Funding, Kagiso Trust, SAMA, COSAW, and on and on. You'd be surprised at how much your tongue can cover in a few minutes. But then again, haven't music and poetry striven to do just that since time immemorial.

Now we go and have a look at some of the other work

being done at the centre. In one part of the building potters, sculptors and graphic artists share the space in which they work, rub shoulders, share jokes, stories, imaginative ideas and other juicy slices of life.

Upstairs is where music happens. On the walls as you go into what seems like a lobby as you approach the rooms from which music bids you welcome, is a hypnotic festival. Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, Count Basie, Miles Davis, Art Blakey, Ben Webster, Monk, Mingus, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Jackie Maclean, Dexter Gordon, Dizzy Gillespie, Eric Dolphy, Sonny Rollins, Archie Shepp, and many, many more jazz greats with their condensed biographies next to or below them, their axes held in combat readiness. Your whole being glows and your soul melts. In two adjoining rehearsal rooms younger musicians are working out their history, defining their space and picking up their generation's mission, with their instruments.

Rending, yes. Like the end of peace Gwen Brooks and I fear so much. That's what leaving the Alex Arts Centre feels like to me. But we have to go.

Practically everywhere I have been since I have been here, in addition to many other people I knew from the old days or from here and there in many different parts of the world in the past three decades, I met many younger writers, other cultural workers and activists, a lot of whom had not existed even as possible ideas in their parents' imagination when I left home. Usually, when we met, there would be a little amused giggle or mischievous grin from them as we shook hands and hugged or kissed, depending on the gender. When I would want to find out what the joke was so that we could share it if I also found it funny, one or several of them would recite some of my work, complete with the sound of my voice to the degree that had I heard the recitation without seeing who was reciting, I would probably have said, 'Wonder when I recorded that.' Perhaps *that* was my Homecoming!

For Bra Ntemi

Isn't sound continuity
Isn't sound memory
Loving care caress or rage
Sticking our shattered or scattered
pieces back together

Marabi is a filthy memory
Marabi is talent stomped in stokvel
And smothered in skokiaan fumes
Yet and still
Who would have been Mbaqanga's midwife

Bra Ntemi
What does a man bring to music
I wax back to the rebirth of our sound
Willard Cele
They are zombies now
Whose dance does not go back
To the birth of our new sound
Township passion screaming for space
Screaming for breath
Screaming for a moment of life
Raging and raving in the wilderness of our day

Oh Bra Ntemi have you not paid your dues
From Gallo to now!

Keorapetse Kgositsile

Promised Land

Johannesburg dingy overcoat wearing
four million faces, chewing its gum of acid rain
gritting the taste of steel with stone jowls
winking sly glass eyes each frosty dawn
a world fingered by electricity inhabited

by men who say, 'If thirty people
want to live in one room
they have the right to do so'
children settling like birds
among the dark, slow minds of father-mothers
they come to love who serve ancestral masters
dusty brains sucked dry as lemons each summer
diseased tongues flaring from the books
scholars burn to please anti-intellectuals

our promised land

poverty giving the rich work to do
as they gather round to discuss the poor
where only banks laugh all the way to the bank
a few neurotic chickens and a leg-lifting dog
the empty plate of the sun drifting
behind the clouds deceptive tablecloths
children who remember their own funerals
while still buried in their mothers' bodies
and dance at others'
we have changed our blood for petrol
the easier to catch fire
in the half-life of disguises
our ritual tongues must burn

our promised land

pompous figures mouthing phrases continue
to erect themselves on podiums and wave
fingers of mortal righteousness
while brave men seek their own murders
to free themselves from any guilt
the necklaced killer caught by a mob
jigs as her enflamed body engulfs my words
to give them meaning
and ingenue poets say the personal is political
it's all the same so what the hell
don't toyi-toyi with my heart
it's your promised land
those hung dangling for the freedom they sought
'the wages of sin is death' but sin here always
the courage to say no except for the jobless
who have no option on the wages we others endure
the flaccid smell of breath on trains
squashed full swaying to work each morning
punished by gangs signified by staffriders
blood of wet bulls roaring in the earth
where descriptions of the real world
startle our glance away from
the vague words that live in newspapers
prophets who give us a new found freedom
already as a slogan, an advert for our repeating days

while babies bloat into balloons for christmas
and marzipan housewives pick n pay
and never give a damn
Poloso and Thandi each night toboggan
down the screens of white owned showbiz
the same time surreptitious cops prowl outside
inflated conquerors of children and tin shanties
ouma Engelbrechts priming their sons like bombs
of chagrin
for violence

all and sundry speaking in tongues and pamphlets
the baboons laugh at each others' forcheads
and only the eventual bodies are honest
in their corruption
as the earth under our feet fester
with its recent history

our promised land

2.

I live in a country where the hunters
are wounded by their own smell
I live in a country where the dead
give birth to their own mothers
I live in a country whose heroes
deliquesce into mirages

will this be our promised land?

and search for my soul
in a night that covers all with fog,
with surrender, with bullets, with bodies
strewn into question marks.

will this be my promised land?

As I age, tyranny does not.
As I grow shrill, killers whisper
placating words in syrup
in this new age of media hope

as I hope, hope burns

Now that the spirit of glasnost
reaches out through the TV screens
and we see the crowds in Berlin and in
Moscow marching, millions strong
and freedom has ceased to be a swearword
and our own red flags appear
but hope of people's power lost to us:
now is the time
to think

Now we are told by Social Projection & Son
resplendent in their three-piece lives
that communism can never work,
that the deal that we make with each other
despite our 'different cultures'
must hold fast the sanctity of private property
and the four nations drown the working class
and the road of the town house and the Mazda
leads to the palace of national reconciliation:
now is the time
to think

Now that some activists are more concerned
with overseas tours and solidarity funding
are seen at fashionable discotheques
now that boycotts of beer instituted by strikers
fail as the community scabs in its collective thirst
now that the summer saunters out of hiding
out of skies long resistant to rain and thunder:
now is the time
to think

in this haze this anger of heroes
asking us for a vision so they can die

now that the country's leaders long-incarcerated
step forward from the darkness of time,
blinking like owls,
now that trade unionists
ask to build a luxury car
for their leader
now that it is possible
to support the workers' struggle from
the command tent of a miss cassidy suit
as we change molotov to idasa cocktails

now

that we are a breeding ground for thieves
soothed by the perfumed rhetoric of priests
from the going down of our oppression
until the rising thereof
now that we do not know or remember
what has happened to us

fascinated, appalled how ugly we are
and always have been, distracted by commerce
as we edge closer to our edge to celebrate
our new nation in its emperor's
new clothes

Now is the time to think

truth, an immense star,
scratching like cottonwool, that
which we die to avoid:
now is the time
now is the time

to reject the colonial and African
masks of nationalism
the false pity of liberal
pockets or nations with their money
and their own down trodden classes

now is the time to build democracy
with our own hands,
all that we have

all they will ever give to us.

Kelwyn Sole

Homecoming

Tribute to returning exiles

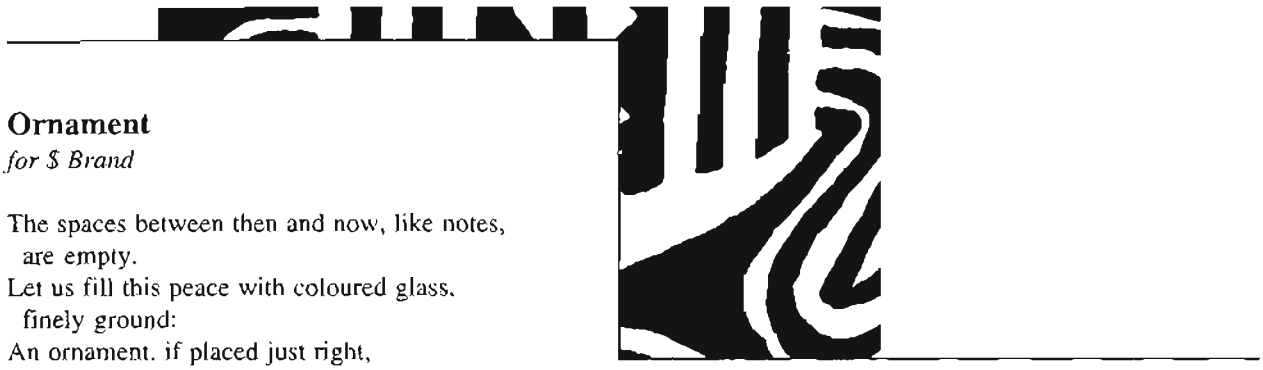
Our individual and collective glory
Sung,
We lay down our arms,
Recede into the mass of
Faceless braves
(Comrades all!).

Past days of anguished pain,
Relentless memories of exile
In foreign lands!
(We never believed it possible),
Overlaid
By new pain, new uncertainties.

Comrades all,
Exiles in a strange land,
Our Motherland!
Presenting a brave face
Harmonising together a different song:
'Happy days are here again....'

Mayibuye!

Bala Mudaly



Ornament

for $ Brand

The spaces between then and now, like notes,
  are empty.
Let us fill this peace with coloured glass,
  finely ground:
An ornament, if placed just right,
  can be a monument.

Let us take the crystals of passive longing,
  while bars of winter mist hang like convicts
in the foothills.

Summer fractures the shadows,
  finding a home in the eye of a woman
  staring from a doorway in a mud wall
    baked orange by the sun.

On the screen, in the wide white west,
  a luxury laboratory, where the son of all that money
    rises from his bath,
      scientists dripping from him
        like milk from the skin of an African queen,
          whiter than the horn of the elephants
            buried in her name.

And you sing, far away,
  the sangoma of Allah
    rolling the ivories.

Here, we are with the street, and brown chests
  heaving under brightly coloured burdens,
Orange white and blue, red green and gold,
  and black:
So many curtains to tear down,
  to make way for the river.

Houses will smoulder.

Let us wet our feet in the electric waters of hope,
  in the chance that the current will take us,
Let us walk, this way and that:
Let that sun not be a prophecy
  swollen to bruise and about to burst,
    while we cross our fingers behind
      the backs of our children.

Let us erect walls around this moment,
  collect drinking water in plastic sheets,
    after the thunder, while you cushion the space
      between the concrete and the steel
        with your saxophone.

Martin Jacklin

Mysterious Independence

Enoch A. Monkwe

Mr Majoko, a morose, thinnish man, in his thirties had experienced both better and bitter days.

From the way he referred to it, he seemed to have acquired a morose satisfaction from the fact that he had completed his share of chronic anxiety. He was at that time, as a matter of fact, getting on in life and at his present rate it seemed there was nothing to stop him.

He was a foreman in a building construction firm where I worked as a bricklayer. Getting there hadn't been all that easy to achieve. At twenty-one he had been a labourer in a small farm in Giyani — despite his matric certificate; at twenty-six he had been reduced to a common call-boy; and at thirty the farm had got rid of him altogether.

Since then he had taken various odd jobs to make a living, the byword being survival. He had been a helping hand to a succession of different businesses and in his time he had mastered the management of a business.

In his ups and downs he had also mastered the art of dressing respectably. As a result, Mr Majoko used to go off in the morning to the most miserable of jobs with the responsible care of managerial dignity still enfolded around him. He always carried an embassy case with him. The case contained nothing but his lunch. In his really bad periods Mr Majoko, a man who liked his rice and chicken, was sometimes reduced to crumbs of bread and sugar.

One Tuesday morning Mr Majoko did not make it to work. Our employers did not ask about his whereabouts. To everybody's surprise Mr Majoko informed nobody of his absence. I thought I knew him better than any of my colleagues until that day.

It was said that Mr Majoko had problems with his part-time job. Others said he ran a small business in Giyani. It appeared to me that everybody just vented their curiosity as Mr Majoko was stripped down to his bare bones.

At lunch Mr Majoko turned-up in a brand new three-ton mini-cab. Our employers seemed to be pleased to see him. They admired the truck, and congratulated him. All along my eyes held his face, and I saw a visage of one at peace with the world. He spoke eloquently and in a tranquil manner.

When we knocked-off the new truck was parked under the shade in the firm's garage. Mr Majoko was there, his tall figure bent over a reddish BMW, talking to a white man. Mr Majoko was silent for a moment, looking directly at the white man thoughtfully. As I passed-by he said: 'Give me three weeks and let me hear what my father has to say....'

That was all I heard. But what concerned me was the number of whites coming to see Mr Majoko.

I used to watch him talk. I couldn't make out the words but I could see much of the action. With each and every white man he talked to, he would be silent for a long time and would end up shaking his head. A sign of disagreement.

The next four weekends I spotted Mr Majoko standing in the sun next to the three-ton mini-cab at a crossroads in the city selling clay pots, baskets and reed bags.

'I say now, all work and no rest makes a dull man,' I remarked spontaneously.

'All work and no play made Andrew Carnegie a millionaire,' Mr Majoko said in his high-pitched voice.

I loved the manner in which everything was displayed. Surely everything must have cost Mr Majoko a fortune, I said to myself. And there was the new truck to add to the costs.

Mr Majoko had many customers. They all seemed very satisfied with their purchases. Ninety percent of them were white women.

When the last customer had left I asked Mr Majoko how he managed to start such a costly business that was beyond the bounds of many businessmen, even the whites. He looked at me for a moment and laughed to himself before replying.

'You see, Peter,' he said, his eyes beaming with pleasure, 'I have always been interested in commercial subjects. I fervently wished to be a commercial teacher. Unfortunately, my father could not afford to send me to university after high school. So I had to struggle as a labourer,' he paused thoughtfully.

'Then I thought how my schoolmates who were at universities and colleges used to taunt me when I went to a technical school. Not to forget the girls who passed such silly remarks when they passed the hostel gate. And even Lillian, my high school girlfriend who was then at a teachers' college despised me. She addressed me, as if it was uncommon for a man to be a bricklayer, like having three eyes.'

Mr Majoko went on, 'But my colleagues taunted me daily: "You are supposed to be the educated ones, why can't you look for better jobs?" some would say. "If I were you," others would say, "I would be a secretary in the Chief Minister's office". Although it pained me I tried to laugh it off as if it were some silly idea, and I accepted the fact that it was not everyone who succeeded in life.'

He served a customer then continued with his story.

'It's funny how people react when I tell them I had to save every cent for six solid years to reach this position today.'

At that moment a silver 300E Mercedes parked next to Mr Majoko's truck. A white man, with a gold necklace, a gold watch and a gold bangle purchased three clay pots. A large one, a medium and a small one.

The man asked who the owner was. Before I could point to him, Mr Majoko replied quickly, 'My father.'

Once inside the car the man said through the window 'Well, I just thought you had a good business with good money in it. But the success comes only when you know how to run the business effectively.' He paused for a moment. 'Where's your father?'

'On a farm in Natal.'

'How do you find it standing in the sunshine all day long?'

'I have no alternative.' Mr Majoko said, shrugging his shoulders.

'And when it rains?'

Mr Majoko shrugged again,

'Say,' the man said, 'I only see you on weekends. Where are you during the week?' He replied that he was working.

Then the white man broke out in a flood of words, 'Now your father is losing a lot of money in that way. Tell your father I could help him make more money. As a partner I could help him find a suitable name for the business and premises where the business can be conducted. Also tell your father that we can open a bank current account in the name of the company. Obtain the necessary insurance cover for the building. Buy a big truck, trading stock, arrange for the supply of essential services.'

The white man spoke declamatorily. His low-pitched tone was larded with conviction, but it was never overbearing.

I watched Mr Majoko's face. It showed no excitement.

'If your father agrees then he could kiss poverty good-bye,' I said.

'This is my business Peter and not my father's.'

I must confess that I did not have a clue to what game my foreman was playing with me.

'What's this all about?' I asked.

Mr Majoko was silent and looked at me meditatively. Then he spoke, 'You mean I should give in to all that big money the white man said I would make?'

'Yes! What's wrong with that? You'll certainly be rich in a week's time. Give up the post at the construction firm and be your own boss.'

I was getting carried away and wished fervently I was in Mr Majoko's shoes.

'Think of all those thrills of having to drive your own BMW and carrying a cheque book. And not to forget all those gorgeous women in the townships.' I could not help myself.

Even so Mr Majoko shook his head, 'At your age I would have jumped at the offer.'

I could tell from the way he looked at me that he thought me asinine.

'I have thought this thing over so many times that I sympathise with those who are still groping in the dark. Peter, this is so badly woven that you'll never understand it. And not just because you are still young, no....'

'But Mr Majoko,' I was getting annoyed, 'what with all that money that white man had just mentioned and Mr Majoko telling me I was still living in the middle ages?

'Mr Majoko, there is nothing wrong in desiring great wealth. Money can be compared to your blood circulatory system. When blood circulates freely in your body you are healthy. And when money circulates freely in your bank account you are financially healthy.'

As the clouds began to gather and the rain started to pour, we packed. I had it firmly fixed in my head that amidst the raindrops Mr Majoko was assessing the white man's offer. It was when he began praising the rain that I knew I was wrong. He never cursed the rain or complained about his business going down. In fact I've never heard Mr Majoko complain of something.

'You know, Peter,' Mr Majoko said as we sank into the saggy sofas in his home, 'do you really want to know why I turned that white man down?'

'I really do,' I replied.

He looked at me for some time, in silence, as if deciding if he could place his confidence in me and share a treasured secret. Then he said, 'It's just because he wants me to be a beggar and a vassal. He wants me to be a labourer and be hungry the rest of my life, so he will know who he is. He wants a frustrated Majoko for his ego. Do you understand what I mean, Peter?'

'I guess I do,' I said, but in reality I did not understand him.

He stared at me for a moment and said, 'All that white man wants is to spy on my business. Right?'

'How?' My voice was low and rough.

Mr Majoko laughed a little to himself, 'All he needs to do is supply me with a big truck and a servant. His servant will give him all the necessary information he wants like where I collect my stock. Do you see what will happen next, Peter?'

When I did not rely he said, 'Suppose I buy a basket at five rands. The white man will send his servant alone. Buying each basket at eight rand. Next he purchases a business premises and obtains the necessary licences.'

I sat there like a zombie in a movie campaign. 'Is that your conclusion, Mr Majoko?' I said.

Mr Majoko's eyes glowed even more as he spoke: 'It would be heartening, Peter, to think that as a result of six years in business I finally managed to come to terms with the social consequences of my business, seeing that the question I posed as I began — how free can one be from whites? — was not an excitement but a problem, and the problem is as old as the existence of the white man in our country.'

He eyed me with renewed interest this time; the way a cat regards a mouse it initially thought was dead.

'The trouble all along may have rested with the word business which represents luxury, not equal rights, and thus offers a perilous guide for diverse human beings. In the realm of business, had our country been inspired by the idea of equality rather than nationality, it might look a great deal healthier.

'So when businessmen are independent, Peter, they are freed but not yet free. To be free, in fact, seems to require an attitude opposite to that which sets one free; the acknowledgement that one is able to escape from anything except his skin.'

'But there is nothing new in such a lesson,' I said nonchalantly.

'Of course not. But it has mattered to learn it.'

And I guess it did, even though it seemed like a mystery to me.

Around the Tree

Hundreds of us walk around the tree
Miles we've travelled
An endless journey
Each pinning on his own fate
'What's the news?'
'The Black Sash is protesting
Demanding that we be charged or released.'

What magic is this tree
Foretelling of the outside world
Neither wind nor storm penetrating

Located within the high walls
This tree foretells of outside world
'What else have you heard?'
'Women in Nylstroom are boycotting food.'

I snug within the enclosure of the building
Snug into bed
'Have you heard of tomorrow?'
'A siren will go out, announcing end of life.'

Along the passage is a rattling of keys
A peeping into cells.
'Bly stil.'

Poor boy should be in school
Brought here by poverty
'Hulle is skelms'
He's being told

On the wall is scrawled
PAC
Facing the same enemy
Why should we quarrel
facing the same fate.

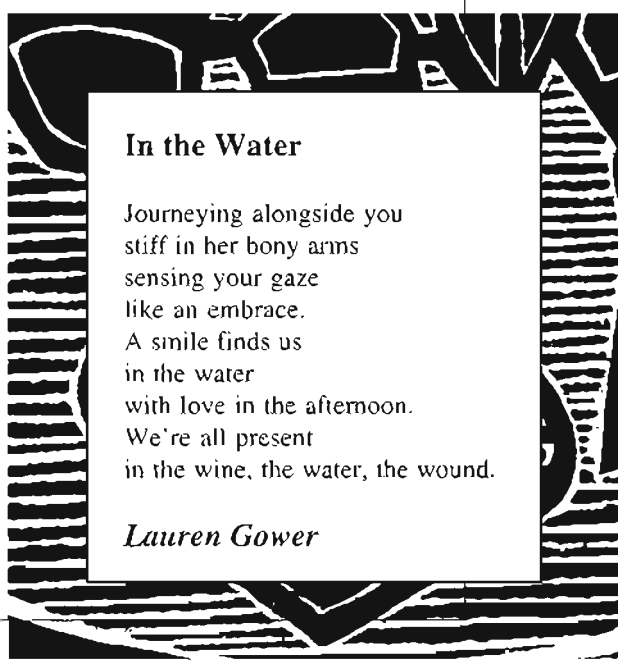
A Voice At the Door

Dreaming, snoring, astir
here men sleeping in a hall
Relax from a day's ordeal
Undispaired

I hear a voice at the door
Mumbling, agitated, unclear:
'Mlanjeni is shot'

Mysterious a door can talk
Fortified four bricks thick
Transmitting news

Sober and serious
The whole surrounding knows
A granite has cracked.



In the Water

Journeying alongside you
stiff in her bony arms
sensing your gaze
like an embrace.
A smile finds us
in the water
with love in the afternoon.
We're all present
in the wine, the water, the wound.

Lauren Gower

II

I hear whispers of nostalgia
For the cold war era

Peace is devastating
It leaves our crystal wine glasses
Empty and tarnished
It drains us dry
Of all our bile
And we are left exhausted
Like a python that has swallowed
An ox
We are lost
Wandering homeless souls
In bewilderment
Reeling in a woozy state
Wondering when again
Human folly will triumph
And drums of war will rumble
Peace leaves us jobless
And hungry

Zakes Mda

IV

Mamane
These walls are echoing your name
And the gardens grow such beautiful flowers
Look Mamane the flowers
We never used to write about flowers
We sang only about bazookas
The music of the guns
The smell of sulphur
Fires burning
Bulldozers like tanks of war
Petrol bombs
Ours were songs of war
They say things are changing
But for us they remain the same
Life has not been kind Mamane
Houses are rubble
Burning human flesh smells stronger
It overwhelms delicate garden scents
We build Mamane
We so much want to build
The sounds of the guns are so loud
We can't hear the birds sing
Only the guns
Our loves never died still
That is why we continue to have the strength
To fight and die
Until we can smell the flowers
And we can hear the birds
But these walls reverberate so strongly
With your name

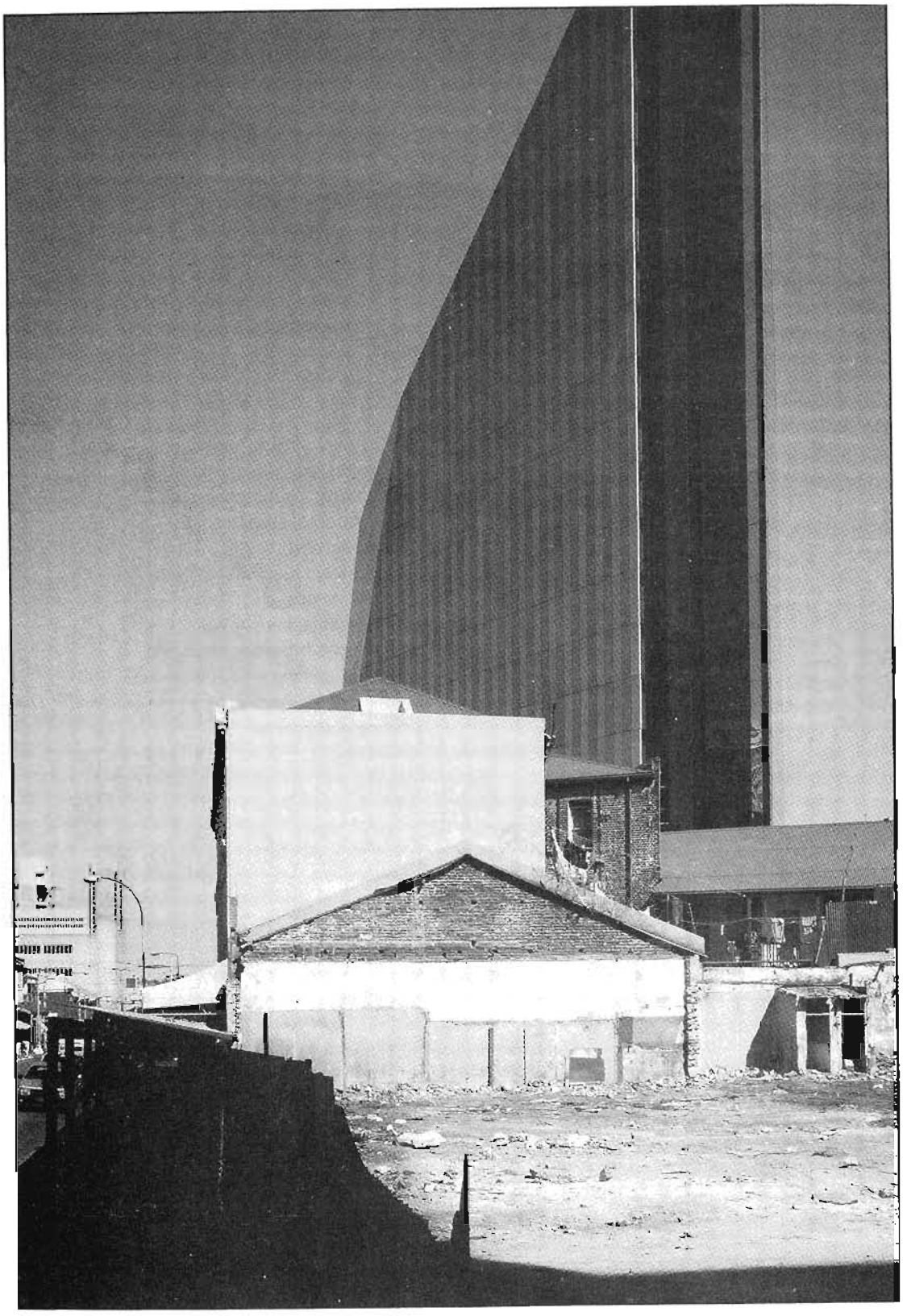
Mask

Edged with its rubric, it returns my stare,
This farewell-to-the-flesh disfigurement,
Abysmal eyes black-holing ruthlessly
My errant trespasser of ranging sight.

The Chinese-puzzle box of endless mouth,
With Grecian regularity, disarms,
And pioneers a maelstrom that sucks time
Down gonging spirals of forgetfulness.

No longer hitched to past or what's to come,
I drift, untethered, lockjawed by the clamp
Of something with a sense of destiny,
A shriven nought of wilder, darker gods.

Alan Thwaite



THE WEST END BECOMING

Text & Photographs by David Goldblatt

Off and on, in a random way, I have been photographing in the western end of the city for close on thirty years. By the western end, very roughly, I mean the area between the railway yards to the north, Commissioner Street to the south, Loveday or Simmonds to the east and Newtown to the west, but including a finger of West Street running through the financial district to Westgate Station. Although composed of many elements, there used to be a distinct and singularly South African wholeness or integrity to the areas. Over the years this has been eroded while other qualities have emerged. Looking back, I think it was with these disappearing and emergent qualities that I became involved. To my regret, I only realised quite recently the extent of my interest in the process. By then much of what I might have photographed had passed. This essay should be seen as a number of loosely connected fragments rather than as an attempt at a coherent essay.

It was the functional end of town. Basic things were done there: electricity generated, trams garaged, grain milled, produce marketed, animals slaughtered, their meat cold-stored and the guts sold on the streets to passing workers. At 15 Market Street, at the courts of the Depart-

ment of Native Affairs, called later the Department of Bantu Administration and Development, then the Department of Cooperation and Development, then the Department of Plural Relations and Development, then again the Department of Cooperation and Development, hundreds of thousands of the city's black people were tried and sentenced for contraventions of the Pass Laws. Down the road, on the tenth floor of John Vorster Square the Security Police conducted their interrogations.

It was an area into which a daily tide of thousands of workers surged from the black townships in the morning and out of which they poured in the evening on trains from Westgate or on PUTCO's green mambas from West Street and Kazerne.

It was a place of seed, grain and spice merchants, egg packers, marketing agents, millers, artisans, slaughterers, dealers in livestock, hides and skins, and of shopkeepers who lived above their shops; of workers, and of the cafes, coffee carts, shops, hawkers, photographers, muti men, barbers, goodtime girls, shebeens, Christmas hamper clubs, lawyers and trade unions that catered to them.

A sort of natural congruence existed between many of these activities, the structures in which they happened, and the people who engaged in them. It has gone.

Now there are decaying buildings, empty lots, offices converted to art schools, markets converted to theatres, galleries, and a museum-to-be. 15 Market Street is now the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Justice tries illegal immigrants there. The Security Police? Who knows? Big business has moved into the area, buying up, converting, knocking down and building. In place of a school and a flour mill there is the stock exchange; old buildings have been clad in modishly designed glass sheaths, while there are new ones whose forms relate not so much to physical as to conceptual functions: the image, finance and corporate power.

In belated concern for preservation of the 'character' of the area, property developers have replaced the intimate and deeply rooted Diagonal Street fruit market, which they destroyed, with the grotesquely grandiose 'Traders' Alley', a structure quite out of scale with the people and function it is nominally intended to serve, and with a name sucked from a copywriter's thumb. Next door, two old buildings have been repaired and one of them started up in synthetic Victorian lace.

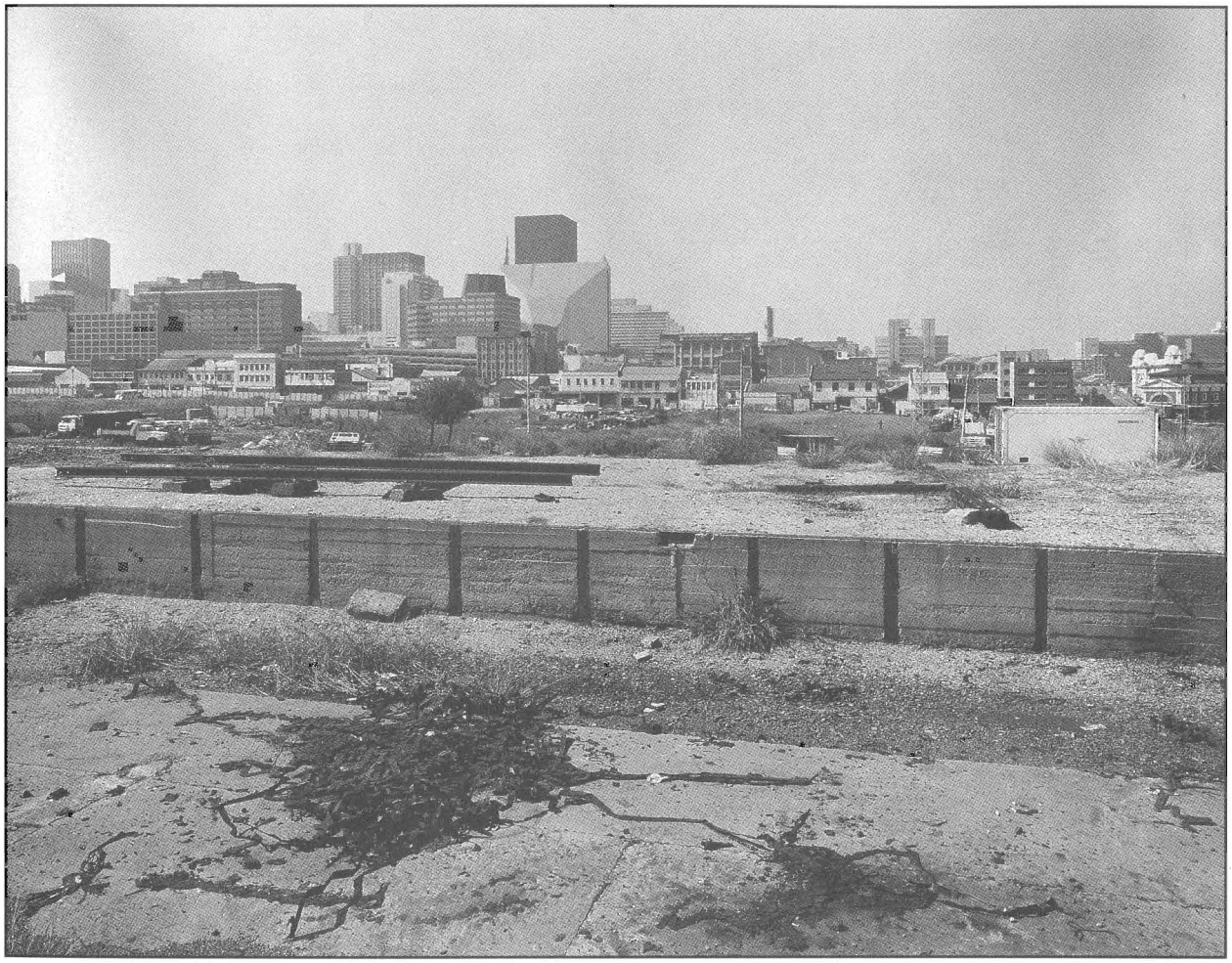
The daily tide of township commuters still comes and goes, though via minibuses rather than PUTCO. Paradoxically the robust street life, largely destroyed when African hawkers and coffee cart keepers were forced off the streets by apartheid decrees in the mid sixties, has emphatically returned. However it is in strange dissonance with the area's newly risen buildings and the functionaries of power who inhabit them. The latter glide into their basement parking bays in the morning and out into the homeward traffic in the evening; they are hardly to be seen on the pavements.

Urban growth, Group Areas proclamations and deproclamations, city planning, the lack of it, property speculation, returns on investment and the foregoing of them: the convoluted interacting of these and other factors, has produced a sort of vital disjuncture.

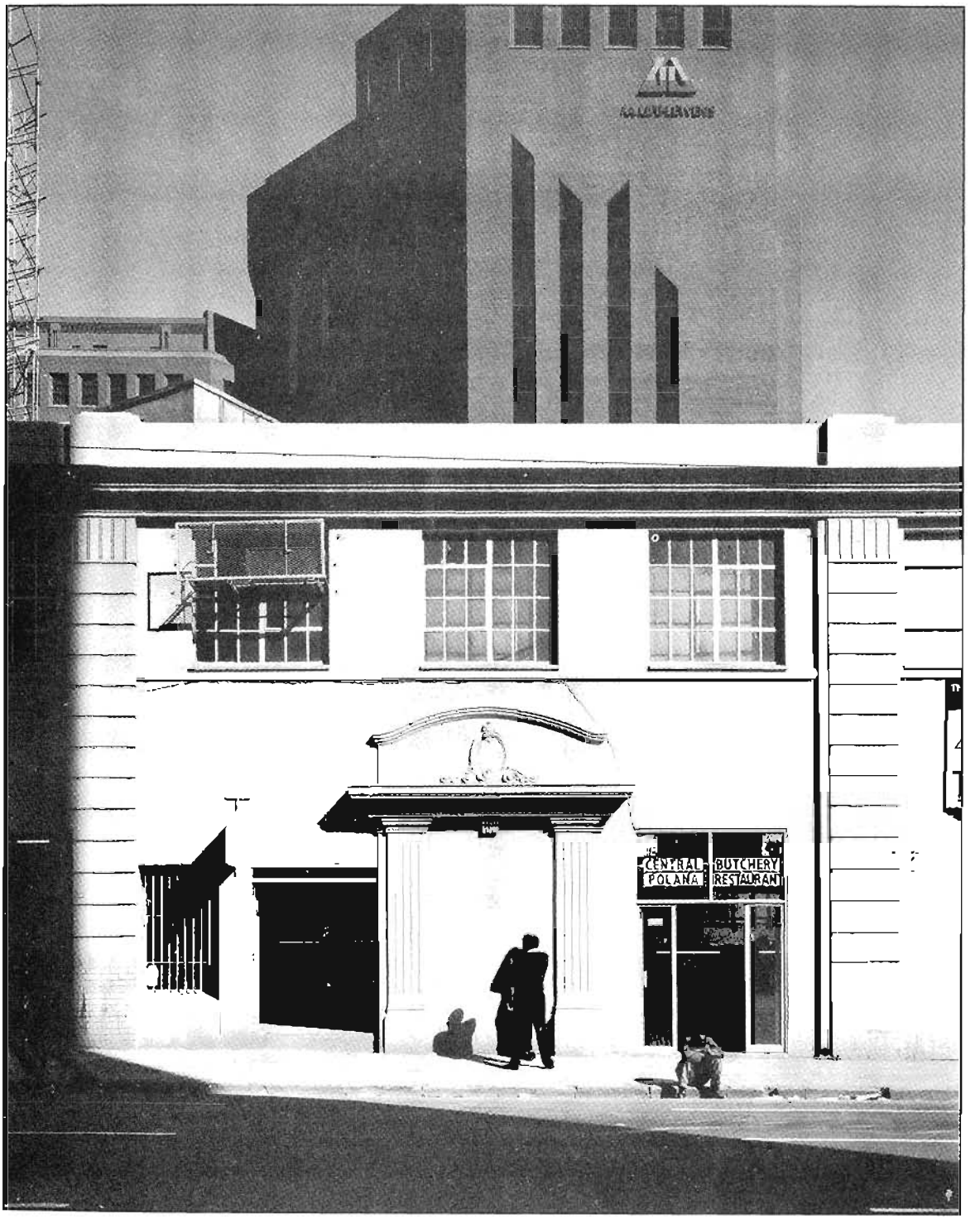
Of this area, the eastern parts are at present in rapid transition. First National Bank's Bank City and other developments will soon have wiped out many of the remaining older buildings. And of this area, the western, Newtown parts, are like a film set waiting for a production. If the money can be raised this will soon begin: a scheme for the redevelopment of Newtown, involving the retention and adaptation of existing structures. The plan centers around the old power station, which is to be converted to a transport terminus and shopping centre.

I doubt that Newtown will again be integral with the eastern, increasingly corporate part of the West End. But whether Newtown becomes 'whole' in any meaningful sense will depend on much more than the redecoration of a few facades in the trappings of nostalgia.

Page 20:
After the demolition of the Diagonal Street Fruit Market
• 1 April 1988 •

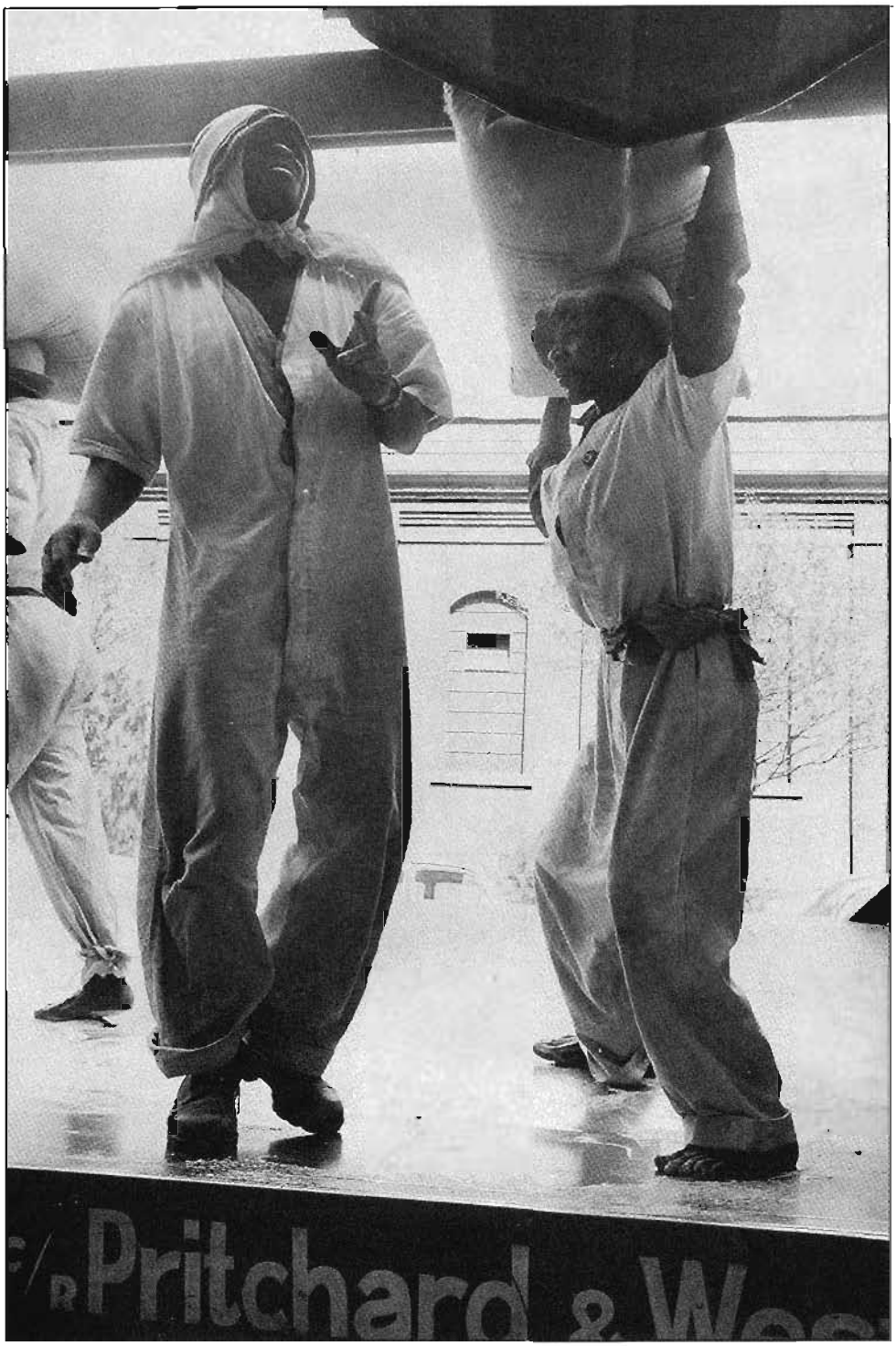


West End from the railway yards, Braamfontein
• 11 March 1991 •



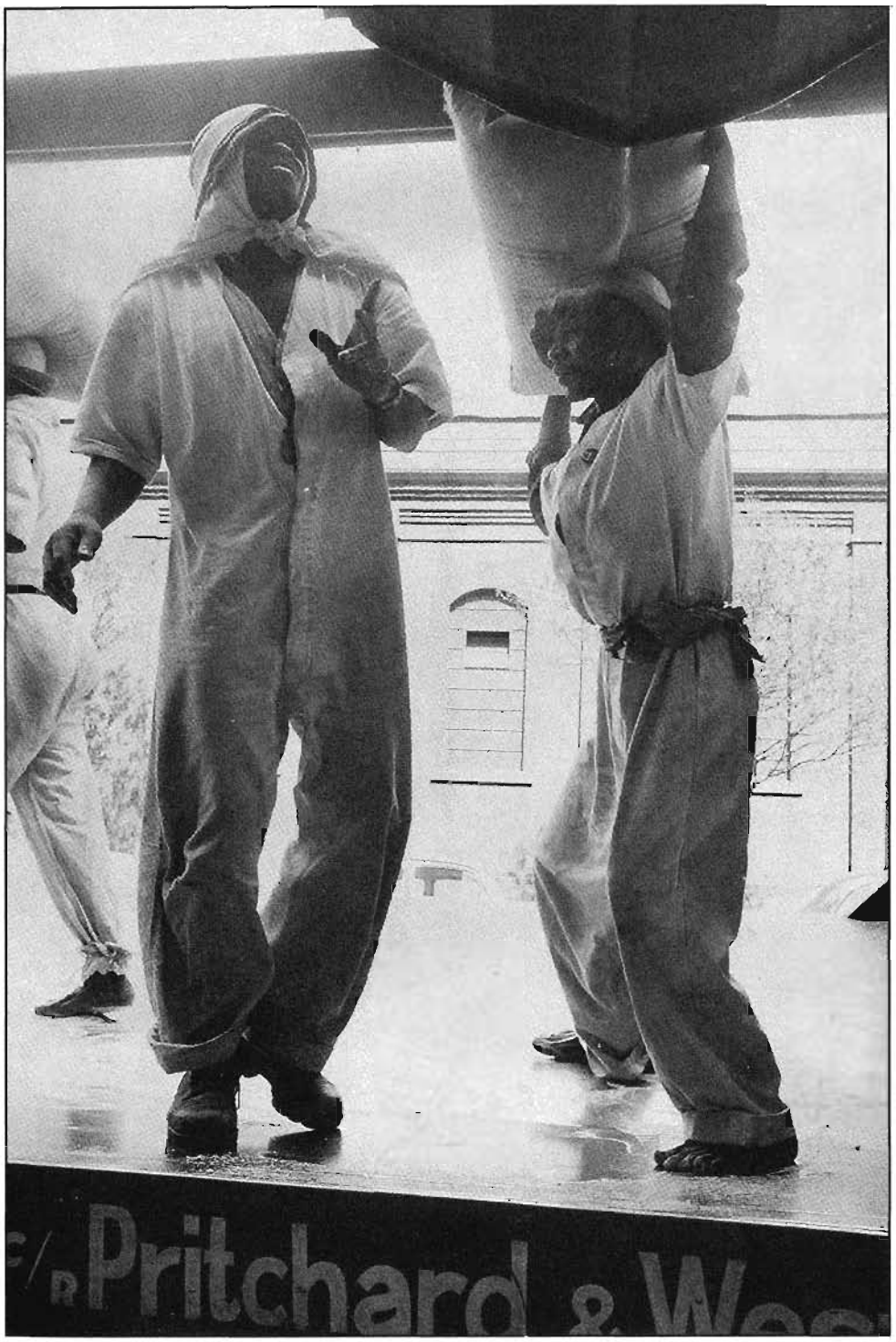
Polana Restuarant. Corner Sauer, Diagonal and Jeppe Streets
• 8 May 1988 •

Lavatory at the Municipal Market (Kippies was later modelled on this building)
• May 1975 •



Loading a truck, Union Flour Mills, West Street (The Stock Exchange now occupies this site)
• October 1963 •

Diagonal Street
• 6 October 1963 •



Loading a truck, Union Flour Mills, West Street (The Stock Exchange now occupies this site)
• October 1963 •

Diagonal Street
• 6 October 1963 •

Stonehill: Indraai

My pa wys my sy bome en plante,
Pointsettia, Stinkhout, die Wilgerboom,
Bougainvillea van Motswedi verplant.
Ek het emmers water gedra om
die bome nat te maak.

Die huis was nooit 'n plek vir vroue nie,
elkeen het dit verlaat.
In my tienerjare was
daar 'n lys teen die kombuisdeur,
rys, tee, koffie, meel, groente,
maar ek kon nie kook nie.

Sitkamerstoele, sideboard, koppies,
pierings, Kloof-koffie, stoof
leë huis sonder vrou.
Oranje bedsprei en gordyne,
Abba oor die radio
perde en lugwaardinne teen die muur
in my kamer.

In my hangkas
my vaal klere en my fantasieë
soberokke vir twintig grootmense
en my liggaam in die spieël.
My sussie het 'n baksteen
deur die sitkamer venster gegooi,
my pa het al die papiere weggesmyt

My onderwyser weet nou hoekom
ek nooit glimlag nie.

Amanda Kruger

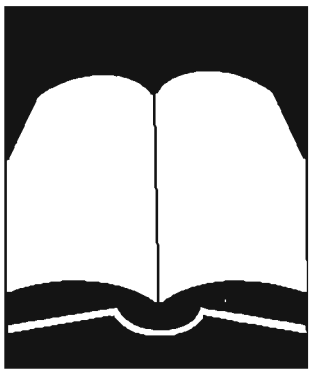
Main Shaft Blues

down with the swift, jerky movement
of the mine cage
down at level twenty-five
a mile-plus-something below the friendly surface
day becomes scary night
as the tak, tak, tak voices
of the dead miners' souls
whisper, jeer, laugh at my unsteady gait
i pause in mid-thought
they promised no blasting
on level twenty-five today
it's been some weeks
the gas alarm went off
it's muddy and slippery and dripping
but what the hell
i would like to tell that burly
bearded, blue eyed, stupid looking miner
to quieten down on his biza-khuluma
the heat rivals the proverbial hell's
my socks are as wet as mops
the test equipment i'm carrying
is trying to tear off my right arm
the flicker of my headlamp
sketches scary shadows in the tunnel
the roof is dangerously low
tak, tak, tak again
i feel lost, alone, condemned
at every jerky, rising and falling
shadow thrown by my third eye
at least no gas alarm....
mother earth, what am i doing
burrowing in your bowels
unsettling your balance

Senzo Malinga

The Renewal of South African Literature

Andries Walter Oliphant



> It seems evident that, to be precise, one should speak of a struggle for a 'new culture' and not for a 'new art' (in the immediate sense). To be precise, perhaps it cannot even be said that the struggle is for a new artistic content apart from form because content cannot be considered abstractly, in separation from form. To fight for a new art would mean to fight to create new individual artists, which is absurd since artists cannot be created artificially. One must speak of a struggle for a new culture, that is, for a new moral life that cannot but be intimately connected to a new intuition of life, until it becomes a new way of seeing and feeling reality and, therefore, a world ultimately ingrained in 'possible artists' and 'possible works of art'.
>
> — Antonio Gramsci [1]

South African society and culture have, despite minor internal shifts and adjustments, remained largely isolated from the processes of fundamental change and transformation which swept across human civilisation during this century. These processes were marked by socialist revolutions in the first half of the century and the advent of de-colonisation and national liberation in the aftermath of the Second World War. Presently, the world is experiencing a new wave of change. Now it is marked by internal and external changes in the socialist countries along with a renewed upsurge in democratic values. For once, after decades of rigid patterns of domination, conflict and resistance, South Africa seems to have entered a period of fundamental change.

This paper sets out to explore some of the cultural and literary challenges that a changing South African context demands. It is premised on two interrelated concerns. Firstly, the struggle for the future of South Africa has entered a decisive stage in which shifts in power relations will inevitably be registered in language relations, literature and culture. Given the plausibility of this, it will secondly propose a number of literary and cultural fields to be explored in a spirit of cultural freedom and diversity as a means of enhancing the process of fundamental change.

For the first time since the advent of colonialism and white domination, the momentous events of the last four decades have opened the possibilities of a new future for South Africa. The liberatory forces which have been amassing since the 1950s, marked by ever-rising waves of resistance, uprising and insurrection, had to overcome brutal and sophisticated strategies of repression and containment. Each of these waves of resistance and repression produced their own emblematic images in which the struggle for the future seared itself into the consciousness of a people.

Thus the Defiance Campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s produced great public crowds, the burning of passes and open refusal to acquiesce to racist domination and political immobilisation. This quest for freedom stands in stark contrast to the massacre of Sharpeville. In the 1970s the youth rose in revolt against apartheid and cultural imperialism. Then, the images of children in school uniforms with placards stood in contrast to the uniformed men armed to the teeth. The tragic outcome of this conflict is engraved in the image of Hector Petersen

being carried from the scene of carnage by a youth accompanied by a girl in school uniform. Horror, agony, suffering and determination contort their faces.[2]

In the 1980s the masses of workers and students, men and women, along with the leaders of three generations take to the streets of South Africa. Many fall in massacres at Langa in the Eastern Cape, at Sebokeng in the Vaal Triangle, many more are butchered by vigilantes.[3] Thus the unstoppable quest for the future against the desperate futility and destructive efforts to put a break on the wheels of history and the struggle for justice in South Africa unfolded. We now stand on the threshold of the future, moving from the shadows of the past towards a possible future of freedom.

Stephen Clingman has pointed out how in the course of the last three decades South African literature itself has developed from a concern with the past to a focus on the present manifested in the struggles of the sixties and seventies. As the 1980s unfolded a shift from the prevailing crises of the State to a concern with the future of South Africa is articulated in the fiction of several writers.[4] The most representative examples are Wally Serote's *To Every Birth its Blood* (1981), Nadine Gordimer's *July's People* (1981), Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) and Karel Schoeman's *Na die Geliefde Land* which dates back to (1972).

While the political paradigms and strategies of crisis management and containment of the State have changed markedly, the struggle for the future of South Africa is perhaps fiercer now then ever before. At the heart of this struggle is the government's public commitment to a new constitution while at the same time clinging to power as it dismantles apartheid in double quick time after dragging feet for almost half a century. It should not come as any surprise that the party which has been in power for so long labours under the assumption that it is the sole guardian of change. Likewise private enterprise, which for decades developed its interest in a context of super-exploitation supported by the racist legislations, now resists all suggestions of a radical redistribution of wealth and economic resources. According to these bedfellows change is postulated on the delusion of retaining white privilege and power along with the present economic dispensation. This situation, we are told, is in the interest of all South Africans. The unacceptability of this, and the extent to which it underestimates the aspirations, needs and demands of the majority of South Africans, should be evident.

Equality in the cultural, political and economic spheres will form the cornerstones of unity

The African National Congress, on the other hand, has made clear what it envisages under a new democratic dispensation. According to the ANC's constitutional guidelines this includes a constitutional structure based on equal rights for all South African citizens, irrespective of race, colour, gender or creed; a multi-party state elected periodically on the principles of universal franchise; a guarantee of freedom of speech, conscience and assembly and the protection of fundamental human rights through a Bill of Rights.[5]

Given this view and the socio-political transformation which it presupposes, it is unlikely that the present language and cultural relations will remain unaltered. Under a democratic dispensation which will put an end to political domination based on racial exclusivity, the current situation of linguistic and cultural domination will have to be replaced by policies and practices based on linguistic equality and cultural democracy. In this regard, Neville Alexander has pointed out how the language question is inextricably bound up with the struggle for national liberation, unity and the abolition of social inequality based on colour, class, religious beliefs, language group or on any other basis'.[6]

The importance accorded to language in social process is related to the extent to which it participates in social activity. Terry Eagleton mentions that language is

capable of revealing or concealing the material and ideological conflicts and struggles waged in a particular society.[7] In South Africa language has been instrumental in the stabilisation of apartheid. Recall, for instance, the labelling, name changes and other linguistic devices used by successive Nationalist governments to disguise and market apartheid. In addition, Afrikaans and English have enjoyed official status while the indigenous languages have been harnessed as means of constructing and perpetuating various ethnic identities and interests. This policy which has historically cultivated and produced a culture of arrogance, ignorance, chauvinism and violence will have to be replaced by a policy in which all languages enjoy equal status. Equality in the cultural, political and economic spheres will form the cornerstones of unity.

Albie Sachs argues persuasively for the way in which language equality can bring about unity as well as diversity free of discrimination. He writes: ' Language is a good example of an area where the principles of equality and diversity need to go together. No citizen should be entitled to more, or subjected to less favourable treatment because of the language he or she speaks; no language should be regarded as inferior or superior to any other language; there should be a policy of encouraging South Africa's many languages.'[8] The question concerning an official language, therefore remains open. If the need for a single national language arises it would be important to heed Lenin's cautionary views against attempts to make such a language mandatory: 'What we do not want is the element of coercion. We do not want to have people driven into paradise with a cudgel; for no matter how many fine phrases about 'culture' you may utter, a compulsory official language involves coercion, the use of the cudgel.'[9] In this regard language policy will have to be based on consultation and implemented with general consensus.

Against this background the privileged status as well as the nature of institutionalised English and Afrikaans are being questioned. The relationships of these languages to imperialism and domination are frequently highlighted. Suggestions that English is made the sole national language without uncoupling it from the institutions and practises of domination are rejected. In the place of the linguistic purism, ideological conservatism and economic instrumentalism which has dominated the history of English in South Africa the concept of a People's English is postulated.

This concept proposes the detachment of English from its local associations with racism, sexism and elitism. Furthermore, in the place of the distinction between first and second language English, with its emphasis on rule-governed formal competence and implied social hierarchy, the right to self-expression in spoken and written form in relation to the individual's experience and needs is foregrounded.[10] This process, in the words of Njabulo Ndebele, is governed by the willingness to open South African English to 'the possibility of its becoming a new language' informed by indigenous speech patterns and grammatical adjustments that might arise from 'the proximity of English to indigenous African languages'.[11]

The quest for new language relations is also evident in the rise of alternative Afrikaans which is aimed at linking the language to the democratic movement and the interests of the working class speakers of the language. There is also a strong commitment to restore and develop the indigenous languages as indispensable components of South African culture. Writers and cultural groups realise that this process should not be left in the control of politicians and language planners. They are challenged to give substance to the quest for cultural freedom and the need to disengage language from the hierarchical world and discriminatory agenda of apartheid. Their readiness is evident from the resolutions on language passed at the Conference for Culture in Another South Africa held in Amsterdam in 1987. Writers are urged to write in all the languages of the country.[12]

In this context the progressive streams in South African literature and culture which have for so long been involved in an opposition to apartheid have reached a point where the aesthetics of protest and resistance belongs to the past. This will have to make way for new proactive and inclusive perspectives on culture which go beyond a reactive concern with politics. The criticism levelled by a writer such as Njabulo Ndebele against the aesthetic inadequacies of the culture of protest in which writers remain preoccupied with presenting readers with

information about the nature of oppression, is now more valid than ever.[13] Similarly, Albie Sachs' call for cultural freedom, despite his somewhat simplistic and superficial assessment of South African literature and culture, must be welcomed for the autonomy it accords to the processes of cultural production.[14]

In the light of this no thematic or stylistic restrictions should be placed on writers from any political point of view. The imperatives of political orthodoxy have to make way for the freedom to explore new themes as a means of developing a new culture in which the full range of human experience and concerns could emerge. This freedom, however, does not imply that cultural production is a process which exists outside the material actualities of social life. While writers and other artists are entitled to freedom from prescription it does not imply that their creations constitute trans-historical moments unrelated to the world in which their cultural creativity occurs. Literary and cultural production, reception and consumption are, after all is said and done, conscious human activities situated in society.

In this regard, idealist reductions which see culture simply in terms of atomistic abstractions severed from social life are little more than mirror images of materialist perspectives which reduce the work to a set of economic and political configurations. Only a perspective, capable of dealing with the multiple confluences and interaction of the subjective and objective forces and their crystallisation in literature, is capable of coming to terms with the infinite variety in the modes and forms of cultural expression. This suggests that there is no simple set of ready-made answers.

With this in mind, the rest of this paper is devoted to outlining a number of fields in which literary renewal can be undertaken. This process of demarcating areas which offer potential for widening the concerns and purview of cultural production is in no way governed by a programmatic or prescriptive intention. Nor is it motivated by a desire to denigrate or undervalue the literary and cultural production of the past. It is rather inclined towards opening perspectives and stimulating a process of change based on the articulation of perceived lacunae and underdeveloped areas in South African literary culture.

These twelve fields which follow are by no means exhaustive. They are merely outlines to provoke debate, critical response and possible cultural transformations. These fields are not limited to any particular cultural group, class, language or literature in South Africa, but to South African literature and culture as a whole. While the emphasis falls on literature the underlying concern is with the broader cultural processes of freedom and change.

Firstly, there is a need to develop an aesthetic informed by the interdependence between human society and the environment. While the early phases of South African literature in the indigenous languages as well as English and Afrikaans were preoccupied with the dichotomy between town and country, this literature, nevertheless, is limited by an idealised conception of rural life. This call, therefore, is not, for an aesthetic of rural life and culture.[15]

What is required is an ecologically sensitive culture capable of examining the contradictions inherent in certain notions of development and progress while simultaneously exploring the dialectical interrelationship between urban and rural contexts. Instead of perpetuating an idealised dichotomy between these apparently disparate spheres of life, a new South African literature can explore the inter-connectness of these realms. The impact of human civilisation in rural and urban contexts on the natural environment could form the basis of wide ranging literary and cultural activities.[16] An ecological aesthetic could easily flow into poetry fiction and theatre. In this regard the work by the Theatre for Africa Company, is a pointer to the potential this area has for South African literature and culture.

Secondly, the inner, subjective life of human beings which have for so long been neglected by the culture of protest could be explored in relation to social changes. As apartheid dissolves the extent to which all South Africans have assimilated the imperatives of self-isolation into their psychologies could be examined. This does not in any way imply that writers should remain fixated on the past. It would however be simplistic to expect that subjective change will automatically take place once a democratic government is elected. To ensure that freedom is realised in objective as well as subjective forms it is a prerequisite that a new introspec-

tive literature and culture, which does not loose sight of how the human subject is inserted in social relations and conflict, will contribute to creating new conditions of self-experience.

Thirdly, in conjunction with the previous point, intersexual and gender relations could also receive greater attention. The role of feminism in restructuring gender relations acquires a special significance here. In exploring the reciprocality of gender and exposing the attitudes and values which inform beliefs and practices of gender inequality, the means for new interpersonal relations could be developed. This is crucial for the liberation of women and becomes inextricably bound to the emancipation of society as a whole. The steps taken by cultural groups to empower women in the process of cultural production should be strengthened and expanded.

Fourthly, in the past South African literature consisted of hyper-critical attitudes towards the racial hierarchies of apartheid. It can be anticipated that after the demise of racial capitalism a new relatively deracialised form of exploitation is likely to emerge if there is no fundamental transformation of existing social, political and economic relations. The role of the new bourgeoisie and its relationship to the working class could provide a rich field for the exploration of human conflicts and dramas.

Instead of a one-sided emphasis on either the working class or the bourgeoisie this new perspective should explore the extent to which these two classes are interrelated. In post-colonial Africa, the corruption which infested society with the ascendancy of the new elite has already received penetrating treatments in the work of writers such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka and others. In South Africa, the oppressed, conceptualised as victims, have traditionally been treated sympathetically while the oppressors have been vilified. This is historically understandable. It has, however, resulted in a culture made up of one-sided portraits of human beings, in which dangerous illusions concerning the supposedly innate good or evil of particular groups are dogmatically upheld.

In the fifth place, the use of sport and other games as a basis for exploring human relations remains underdeveloped in our literature. The role of these activities in the physical and spiritual development of humans, the manner in which they encode human relations and power struggles, make them ideal fields of literary exploration. Ndebele has mentioned how the energetic and creative world of sport and fashion has seldom been treated beyond the sensationalism of the popular press'.[17] He points out that these aspects of culture have been used by the state and capital to condition and contain the social awareness of the masses. Serious writers, on the other hand, have dismissed sport and fads as frivolous and unworthy themes. I would like to add that, in conjunction with sport and fashions, a number of traditional as well as newly invented games and social activities exist in rural and urban communities which reflect aspects of the social processes in these settings. These games are usually rule-governed and offer challenging possibilities for narrative structure, poetic metaphors and dramatic plots.

People's English proposes the detachment of English from its local associations with racism, sexism and elistism

In the sixth place, the development of a literature and culture in which spontaneous humour and playfulness is given free play can result in a rich body of comic theatre, stories and poetry. With the exception of writers such as Mbulelo Mzamane and Casey Motsisi, Pieter Dirk Uys and some of Andre Brink's humorous writings, South African writing is pervaded by seriousness, melodrama and tragedy. Mikhail Bakhtin has illuminated the liberating and subversive power of laughter and a carnivalesque playfulness. This attitude, in which every thing which is rigid, oppressive, authoritative and serious, is mocked, and turned upside down, is needed in our

literature. Through humour the relativity of social conventions is revealed. This lighthearted illumination is often the catalyst for change.[18]

In the seventh instance, the creation of a vibrant children's and youth literature, free of authoritarian strictures, moralisation, implicit as well as explicit racism, is required. Undertakings by the Congress of South African Writers and other organisations to facilitate this ought to be welcomed. To prepare the children of South Africa for life in a liberated society, indigenous children's tales and new stories in which playfulness, exploration and the development of critical but socially constructive attitudes are fostered will have to be written. The children and youth of South Africa have been subjected to extreme forms of deprivation. In the past two decades they have taken on the historical task of fighting and defeating apartheid. In the process successive generations of children have not had normal childhoods. The effects of this will continue long after the end of apartheid. The need to restore the right to happy childhoods for the children of South Africa is self-evident.

Emphasis must be placed on a literature and culture of diversity, drawing on all streams and traditions in South African culture

In the eighth place, the rich tradition of oral literature which exists in South Africa should not be neglected once a programme for wider literacy gets underway. It is important not merely to record the poetry and narratives but to allow these forms to shape new forms of writing. This has already taken place in poetry as the adaptation and radicalisation of the oral praise poems by worker poets such as Nise Malange, Alfred Qabula and Mi Hlatswayo demonstrate. In fiction writing, this process has hardly begun.

In the ninth place, ways will have to be found to incorporate the writing of exiles into the main body of South African literature. The work of writers such as Dennis Brutus, Alex La Guma, Mandla Langa and others whose work have been banned can now be freely distributed and read in the country. The recent return of Keorapetse Kgositsile to launch his collection *When The Clouds Clear*, recently published by the Congress of South African Writers, is part of the process of reintegrating into local literature the voices which have been silenced in South Africa for so long. The experiences which this work encodes can only serve to enrich South African literature. While South Africa has a long tradition of prison writing and militant poetry, the narrative and dramas which unfolded in the process of the armed struggle, clandestine missions and insurrection must still be told.

In the tenth place, as suggested by Ndebele, South African writing lacks a literature in which the social effects and possibilities of science and technology are explored. While other societies have considerable bodies of science-fiction, this genre of literature must still take root in South African writing. This is despite the fact that South Africa is a society with a considerable technological infrastructure. In this regard, Ndebele has suggested narratives which depict the struggle of the oppressed with the instruments of science.[19] In addition to this the contradictory potential of science as a means of manipulation and enslavement, as well as a progressive and liberating force, could be explored. Furthermore the challenge of imagining possible scientific developments and social scenarios as a means of anticipating the future, is also appropriate to this field. There is room here for science fiction as well as a literature in which fantasy is developed.

In the eleventh place, an openness to new aesthetic forms in literature as well as other fields of culture is required. For this to take place the freedom to experiment and the right to fail are pre-conditions. Here it is vital to understand that there is no inherent contradiction between artistic excellence and notions of a non-elitist culture. For excellence to emerge it is crucial that all people should have the right to cultural participation and

expression. In this way, a wider range of talents will surface and receive opportunities to develop.

In the twelfth place emphasis must be placed on developing a literature and culture of diversity which draws on all the traditions and streams in South African culture. The development of a decolonised national culture in which all the positive values of the indigenous culture find expression, as envisaged by Cabral, must be free of narrow nationalistic conceptions.[20] The simplistic and parochial opposition between Western and African culture must be avoided. All knowledge which liberates and enriches must find its way into our culture. Here a critical open-mindedness, rather than prejudice, is required. While the indigenous streams of South African culture, which have for so long been isolated from the rest of the continent, are closely linked to the cultures of Southern Africa, as well as to the rest of Africa, Asian, European and American tributaries are also part of South African culture. The need for a common culture of democracy and equality made up of all the diverse stands of local culture, should not however blind us to the class content and orientation of culture. What is required is not a superficial commitment to diversity but to create conditions and stimulate processes that will allow oppressed formations to assert their cultural needs. In this way the values of cultural freedom and social justice can play themselves out in the process of transformation and change.

Finally it should be stressed that none of these changes in the cultural spheres can be imposed on South African society from above. Cultural change usually consists of an interplay between objective social conditions, subjective needs, theories of change and spontaneity. In this respect South Africa is undergoing a period of social ferment in which the objective need for change is irrefutable. Under these circumstances blue-prints are not helpful. Suggestive frameworks, opportunities and the means to experiment with possibilities in which the future can begin to take shape will be more useful.

✪ First presented to the Annual Bad Böll Conference on South African Culture in Germany 1990

NOTES

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5. See *Die Suid-Afrikaan*, Number 23. DSA Publications: Cape Town October/ November 1989.
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11. Njabulo S. Ndebele: 'The English Language and Social Change in South Africa'. In David Bunn, Jane Tylor, Reginald Gibbons and Sterling Plumpp (eds): *From South Africa. TriQuarterly* 69. Northwestern University: Evanston, 1987. p.231.
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13. Njabulo S. Ndebele: 'Redefining Relevance.' In *Pretexts*: Volume 1 Number 1. Arts Faculty: University of Cape Town, Winter 1989. pp.40-51.
14. Albie Sachs: 'Preparing Ourselves for Freedom' In Ingrid de Kok and Karen Press (eds): *Spring is Rebellious: Arguments About Cultural Freedom*. Buchu Books: Cape Town, 1990. pp.19-29.
15. See Njabulo S. Ndebele: 'Turkish Tales and Some Thoughts on South African Fiction' In A.W. Oliphant and I. Vladislavic (eds): *Ten Years of Staffrider*. Ravan Press: Johannesburg, 1989.
16. See V.A. Los: 'On the Road to an Ecological Culture' In A.D. Ursul (ed): *Philosophy and the Ecological Problems of Civilisation*. Progress Publishers: Moscow, 1983. p.319.
17. Njabulo Ndebele: 'Redefining Relevance'. p.49.
18. M.M. Bakhtin: *Rabelais and His World*. Cambridge University Press: Massachusetts, 1968.
19. Njabulo Ndebele: 'Redefining Relevance'. p.49.
20. Amilcar Cabral: 'National Culture and Liberation' In *Unity and Struggle*. Heinemann: London, 1980. pp.139-145.

Karen Press

he is looking for her

when everyone had gone, he came back to the place
got down on his knees in the sand, and dug to fetch her out
not this containment
not this plastic bag of her
dumped where botanists and beach dogs plunder

he dug deeper than any burying spade had gone
up to his armpits in live sand
but only the small white crabs ran out through his fingers
how the tide dissolves
the place of memory
I hold nothing

he moved on, digging with his hands
the whole length of the lagoon, weeping for her
tearing up the earth

she touches his ear with her breath, calling:
look up, look up, I am flying on the updraught
of the emerald-breasted honeycatcher's wingbeat
look up, my darling, I escaped at once

he heard nothing, digging through his heart:
she is waiting for him to look up

poem for someone who died

M.H. - 21/5/89

who died?
she died
anybody could have died
but she died

many roses were dispersed
across the sand
where she died
anybody could have died

in a hole
beneath the oyster-catchers' feet
a yellow bag of ash is buried who died?
no-one, no-one

who called her back?
no-one

the petals scooped the ashes up
and sailed out on the tide
after she died

at midnight everything

everything is important and the seagulls
use the streetlamps as fishing nets
for their delicate moth dinners
and paving stones are deathly cold
for glue-drunk children at midnight, cars glare
along the hungry roads and the mist sinks
into polystyrene egg boxes tumbled in alleys
across the sleeping city and everything is important
and those who have left will never return

Peace

And these words
shall achieve nothing
as peace is a beggar

Max Gebhardt

We Always Sit

we always sit
with folded arms
sometimes with elbows
on our knees
hands on our chins
waiting for the rain to fall
and relieve our sorrows

we always sit
under the clear sky
waiting and hoping
for a new day
to ease our pain

but hoping does not help
for we communicate
and nobody takes heed
then we keep silent
and that's communication too

rubicons are crossed
while we are left
dying by the wayside

we always sit
with empty bellies
our eyes full of dust
from stormy days
our souls imprisoned
waiting for persecution

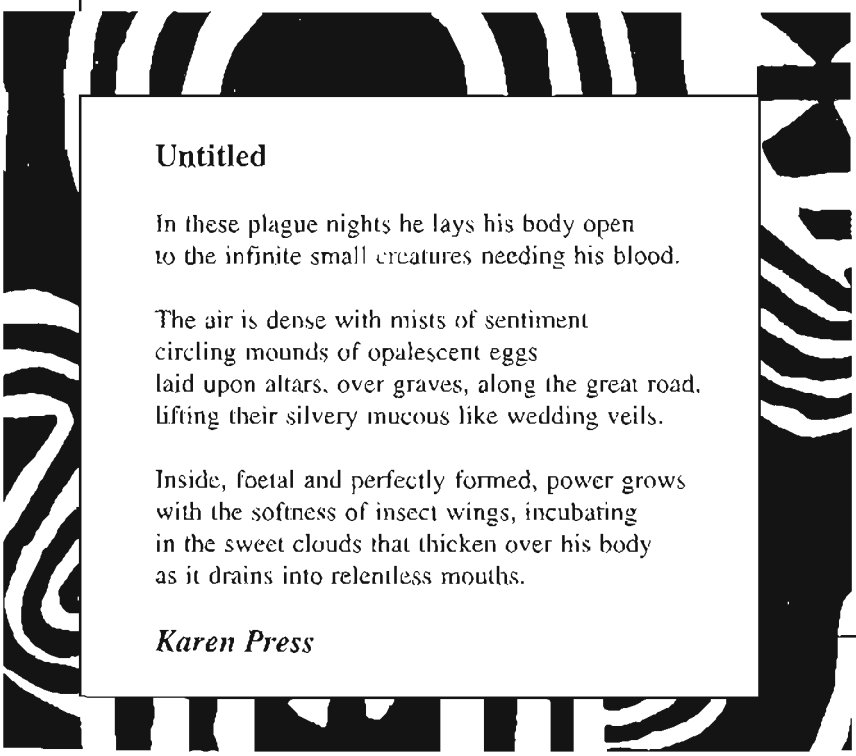
we always sit
in our lonely cells
unseen from each other
but communicating our plight
through the whistle
of the wind
and writing our names
on prison diaries
with our blood

we always sit
and look at the sun
as it opens its eyes
until it closes them at night
and we close ours with it
to open them the next day
which for us is the same day

we always sit
counting days and
not knowing weeks
counting weeks and not
knowing years
counting years and not
knowing decades
counting decades and not
knowing centuries

we always sit
listening to the storm
of conquest
blowing in our memories

Stan Ndongeni



Untitled

In these plague nights he lays his body open
to the infinite small creatures needing his blood.

The air is dense with mists of sentiment
circling mounds of opalescent eggs
laid upon altars, over graves, along the great road,
lifting their silvery mucous like wedding veils.

Inside, foetal and perfectly formed, power grows
with the softness of insect wings, incubating
in the sweet clouds that thicken over his body
as it drains into relentless mouths.

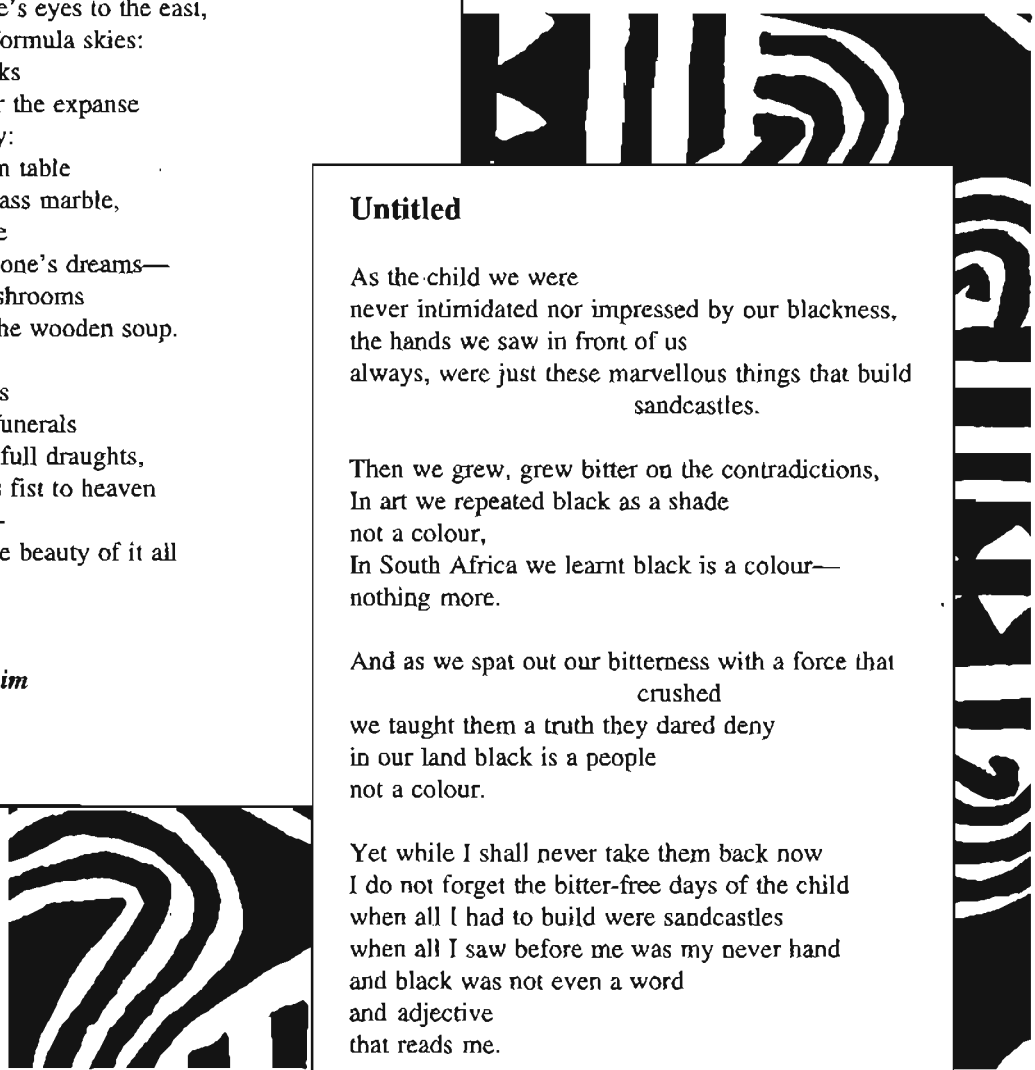
Karen Press

Funereal

One sees beauty in death,
and blood-pink star-toffees in the cracks of trees.
One holds one's eyes to the east,
to marvel at formula skies:
lead-blue dusks
stretched over the expanse
of a smog city:
a huge kitchen table
of working class marble,
over which lie
the clouds of one's dreams—
blue blue mushrooms
shrinking in the wooden soup.

For one drinks
the blood of funerals
in the slogan-full draughts,
to catch one's fist to heaven
one mourns—
underneath the beauty of it all
one mourns
the dead.

Rustum Kozaim



Untitled

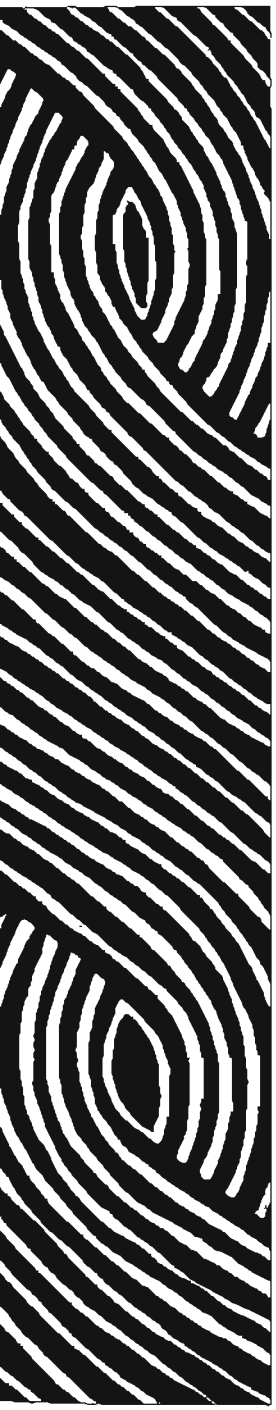
As the child we were
never intimidated nor impressed by our blackness,
the hands we saw in front of us
always, were just these marvellous things that build
sandcastles.

Then we grew, grew bitter on the contradictions,
In art we repeated black as a shade
not a colour,
In South Africa we learnt black is a colour—
nothing more.

And as we spat out our bitterness with a force that
crushed
we taught them a truth they dared deny
in our land black is a people
not a colour.

Yet while I shall never take them back now
I do not forget the bitter-free days of the child
when all I had to build were sandcastles
when all I saw before me was my never hand
and black was not even a word
and adjective
that reads me.

Roshila Nair



Till We Meet

Mavis Smallberg

Your voice on the telephone, wracked with emotion found me in this car; tacky with heat, my arm lame against the camera bag. There are three of us sharing the back seat and the day is hot.

Outside the window the land is dry, browny-grey and hard. Sheep cluster as sheep do, dark brown clumps against the brown earth. My eyelids droop drowsily. There's nothing really to look at, today. The best thing to do is to ride with the heat, hope to fall asleep and wake up in Bredasdorp.

But old habits are hard to break. So I look again through the window to where the land rises into mountains, blue patterns in the sky.

The tyres swish against the road. Abdulla's piano-strains of 'Shrimp Boats'. The road leads onwards, upwards. I sink in the heat....

> I'm in a narrow Amsterdamse lane.
> Wait here.
> Then: Open your mouth and close your eyes.
> What?
> Open your mouth and close your eyes.
> But —
> Come on, woman! Don't you trust me? What do you think I'm going to put into your mouth?
> Dutifully my eyes shut and my mouth opens.
> Hmmm, hmmm — It's delicious! What is it?
> I knew you'd like it. A big delighted grin. It's my favourite, too.

The chocolate truffle melts in my mouth like words do in yours....

Stories, *Klopse liedjies*, tales from home, places you've been to.... And now I'm going to the place your father died and you have not been allowed there.

We change into suitable clothes at a neighbouring house and make our way next door. A number of people are standing around. There's a tree in the yard with dark grey plastic chairs in rows in the shade. I meet your step-mother. She is strong, calm. She reminds me of those long suffering women in novels; she has that clear look that one sometimes sees on the faces of nurses or nuns. Those women who get down on their knees to pray, get up from their knees to work and brush the dust from their knees as they rise from yet another knock which life so indiscriminately delivers.

Don't Kill the World • **Zolile Kwinana — Visual Arts Group** ▪ **(linocut)**

The church is wide, airy, cool and simple. There are brickwork and arches behind the long narrow wooden alter. Two cloths, purple and white, are draped across it with their long, lacy edges trailing the floor. On either side of the nave, at opposite ends of the platform which houses the altar, the pulpit and other paraphernalia related to the rituals of prayers and sermons, are several pews which face each other across the altar. The choirs are seated here.

There is an old woman singing in one of the choirs your father trained. Her scaly voice rises above the rest and she drags out the words, sliding them around the corner of each line — something about f-a-i-t-h...f-u-l...n-e-s-s. You'd have liked her.

The rest of the congregation faces the altar which is directly opposite the front door. The ceiling of the church is pitted at several angles and is made of rhinoboard from which dangle several electric light bulbs covered with beige shades. In one place the weight of the bulb has dragged down a piece of the board and there is a dark gap.

The minister begins the sermon. He mentions the gap in the line of your brothers and prays for you. Your uncle plays the organ. Your brothers file in. They're easily identifiable as I see a fragment of you in each of them.

The minister compares your father to a musical composition — once the music is over, the melody lingers on.

Eating fried mussels on the beach, walking over dunes laughing, singing, laughing.... I'm reading your poem and your brothers begin to weep. They hold on to their wives and weep. Their tears splash out through their fingers. I lift my eyes away from them and out over the congregation. They are listening intently.

At the cemetery three graves, next to each other in a row, have been dug. I am struck by the hardness of the ground and the huge piles of stones and boulders next to the open graves. How many men and how long did it take to hack this out of the earth? The coffin is lowered into the first open grave. The hole is camouflaged by that green stuff which mercifully hides the gaping rawness of the earth. The people sing. They haven't sung your song yet. Shall I remind someone, but who? I am a stranger here in this small town where your family live, where your father died and you are still not allowed to be. The minister, he of the musical metaphor, remembers and asks the mourners to sing 'Till we meet'.

I am going to meet you again and then I shall hug and kiss you. Till we meet.

The coffin is lowered and the people throw flower petals into the open grave. They flutter like red and pink butterflies, flying off in the wind which has sprung up and which blows red dust into our faces. A little girl wearing a white dress, peers into the open grave. I want to look, too. I want to look for you. But I'm rooted in my high heels and my prim white and black dress, numbed by the trappings of my adulthood. They take a long time to fill the grave even though slats of concrete have been placed on ledges which have been dug into the sides of the hole.

The coffin lies way below and earth is piled on the concrete slats.

I think this is a good idea. It would be horrible to throw these huge stones down onto a person sleeping below. The men sweat as they work to fill the grave, first having to loosen the stones before being able to scoop them up on their spades. I fear for the old man, spindly in a brown suit , as he steps perilously close to the open graves. The women stand ready with wreaths of flowers. Masses of flowers. Do they grow here, in this soil? Your brothers finally arrange the grave. I see one whom I have not previously noticed. He is wearing a black blazer with the words 'Silver Tree' embroidered on the pocket. I know he is your brother because he is wearing your scowl — the one which keeps tears at bay.

I am in your father's *voorkamer*. There is a picture of your father and his wife on the wall, taken on their wedding day. They look young and very serious. There are some brass utensils hanging on the picture rail next to the pictures. Between the pictures is one of those Chinese bamboo plates with faded red flowers on them bearing sentimental words to 'Mother'. Tea is served; strong and sweet with plenty of little cakes and *pasteitjies*. I meet your uncle and your cousins. He tells how he missed seeing you in 1980 when he took his wife overseas...visited ten countries in X number of days...the only gift he could give after twenty-five years of marriage...it is getting stuffy inside.

I wander off to the yard where people sit on the chairs under a tree. A little girl of about four years old, wearing a pretty lilac dress, lilac shoes and tiny round spectacles with lilac frames, runs towards me, jumps up and lands in a squat to touch the dust. She runs back in glee, finds a friend and together they both run, jump and land to touch the earth. They keep their palms on the ground as if they are touching someone's cheek to feel for the heat there.

The smell of breyani and chicken curry tickle my nostrils and I am reminded that I have not eaten all day. Your brother comes over to thank me for having read. I hear snatches of conversation:

Ja die's jou cousin. Van Worcester. Hy's a gren ou.

Ek't my eye op hom gehad, ma' jy ken die mans. Hulle like mos die.

She laughs wickedly as she uses one finger to lightly rub at her own cheek, cinnamon coloured. The 'gren ou's' wife comes up. She is very fair with green eyes and mousy blonde hair. The 'gren ou', darkly handsome, merely smiles.

We make preparations to leave; say our good-byes and thank you's. As we pass the edge of the town, the trees stand to attention. Sunlight flickers through them. They too, are waving goodbye. Till we meet.

In Bain's Kloof

Bain to Montagu, Colonial Secretary: 'In'
this frightful terra incognita everything is
repulsive and savagely grand...vast piles
of funeral looking rocks...black disjointed
krantzes...the precipitous banks of the
foaming river....' Emily Moffat was more
positive, stopping 'occasionally to admire the
gentle rill, the hidden nook of
ferns or flowerets...I longed to
linger here....' We perched ourselves among
crags under open sky and the
wine was a modest blanc-de
blanc from Swartland, pale, crisp, as
the water that dashed at our
feet down to join the Witte
river which passes between the Liemietberge
and Slanghoekberge, swelling the Breede that
flows south east to St Sebastian
Bay and that debouches eventually among
sandbanks, swampy flats, oyster beds, rock
outcroppings at Whitesands and Infanta. André
lit a cigarette and looked about.
'He was tough that guy,' he
went on. 'You could see he
wanted a fight, shouting Kaffir, waving
his gun: but it wasn't anything
to do with me: and I
thought, Nooit this isn't for me:
so I made tracks fast and
last thing I heard he'd been
caught with dagga outside the Goodwood
Hotel in Voortrekker Road: just standing
there and then the cops rolled
up: they had dogs, everything.' The
story stopped. We lay down on
the rock. The sky was open
with the fullness you get with
a summer that's strong and high,
consonant, and seemingly certain that things
would never be otherwise: but we
knew that game: had played it
often. And so we lay under
the sky without much to say
that might help and for a
while I thought I might be
able to sleep, but that did
not happen. We worked next on
a robust Allesverloren, pulling big mouthfuls
of shiraz from the liquorice-yellow
bottle. It's hard to smell wine
when you drink it like that
but I reckoned this one was
like a humid tobacco and cut
cedar, very close to cedar, and
it tasted soft, almost silky-like
chocolate. 'Check this,' Moyra gurgled, reading
the back label. 'Allesverloren was originally
granted to G. Cloete by Willem
Adriaan van der Stel in 1704....
That's amazing hey. Who's land was
it anyway?' But nobody bothered to
answer. So she stretched and yawned.
'Just look out there. It's another
world you know.' We gazed at
the savagery, the frightfulness, the death
that was there and the thin
river, more a stream of pools
than a river, really. Then someone
produced SEE, photo-romance from Republican
Press. We listened. 'The Power Of
Love — Vera and Mark are happy
to be with each other whenever
they can, but they live for
the day they can be together
forever. But even as they lay
their plans for the future, fate
has already dealt a blow to

their happiness....' And so the day
spiralled inward and down, twisting back
to the patches between rocks where
sleep would clutch when darkness overcame.
And the next day we sat
for a long time in the
firstness and slowness of light entering
the galleries about: and afterwards we
hiked down for the best part
of two hours: but the bottles we
forgot, left empty, glorious in their
labels, beneath some scruffy bush blackened
by fire — a hazard, an evidence,
a future souvenir, a symbol that
I care not to consider: and
I will not have any reason
to be mindful of them: but
they will lie nevertheless where they
were laid and will probably
glint upwards when the sun hits
them right and in time to
come be broken up and perhaps
even be covered and I may
have emigrated at last and the
others will be somewhere scattered lingering
in unknown places, far-off country
where other rivers foam and debouch.

Alan James

Exhaustion

Rainforest, dark and wet
We trudge in silence
It is the silence of the dead
The squelch of our boots and the gentle tapdance
Of raindrops on leaves
Our only reminders of our membership
To the world of the living

Lifeless arms droop from heavy shoulders
Spines curve, in mock imitation of a hunch-backed moon
Our mouths hang open
Deep gaping caverns
Air rushes in, to quench thirsty demanding lungs
Bodies in automatic pilot
We move by sheer force of will

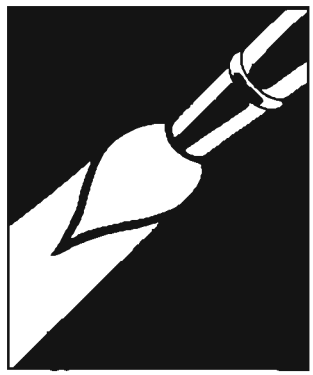
Legs ache we are chilled and cold
Gravity has increased ten-fold
Eyes glaze our minds in a haze
We drift as ghosts, we are zombies
Machine-like we wade through the trees

M.G. Solomon

Art as Love
• Zolile Kwinana — Visual Arts Group • (linocut)

A Freedom Charter For South African Artists

Albie Sachs



Preface

Nothing is as it seems, nothing seems as it is. This is Illyria, lady; this is the new South Africa, man. Let us welcome, even glory in the instability. It gives us a chance to ask new questions, to look honestly into each others' eyes. It was Samora Machel, poet of the political dream, who urged us not to run away from contradiction, but rather to embrace it; if you wish to know the taste of the avocado pear, he told us, you must cut it in half.

Words chase after words, when they should really be pursuing experience. We engage in debate over definitions, as if we can solve cultural questions through formulae. Art is the enemy of definitions. It revels in surprise and contradictions. Straight lines are the province of mathematics, not of art, which deals in the strange and hidden contours of subjectivity rather than the smooth surface symmetries of logic.

So it is with the debate over culture and politics. If you make two statements, the one interesting and the other banal, the chances are that it is the banal which will evoke the most excitement. Less than two years ago — in that distant time when we were all banned and in exile and subject to the hopelessly utopian dream of the day we would be back in our own country — I made a simple suggestion to my colleagues in the ANC, namely, that we ban ourselves from saying by way of monotonous incantation that culture was a weapon of struggle. Now, in addressing an audience made up more of aesthetes than activists, I propose, with equally banal solemnity, that we prohibit ourselves from repeating from morning to night that art is not a weapon of struggle.

As Uys Krige used to say, any lift-operator knows that politics enters into, affects, interpenetrates with art, and conversely, that art should never be reduced to a mere instrument of politics. There might be some who would like all artists to call themselves cultural workers and be exclusively mobilised into proclaiming one long breathless viva! There might be others who claim that true art is sublime and should never allow itself to be sullied by any association with the world of everyday experience .

Yet for the great majority of us, the debate on whether art is for the sake of politics or is for its own sake is about as interesting as a discussion on the weather, and about as efficacious. It blocks the way for real argument about real issues. It eliminates contradiction when tension is required, dictates answers when investigation is called for. We have huge questions that need to be faced up to in our country, and culture is right at the centre of the enquiry.

I. False Questions and the Language of Neo-Apartheid

I have journeyed into the future not once but twice. The first time was looking at the new-style TV adverts, where yuppies and yuppietjies bounced and grinned in perfectly harmonised consumer power-sharing, just enough blacks to make it non-racial, but no majoritarianism, thank you very much. The second was at the Wild Coast Casino; to get to our meeting, we had to pass through a vast cavernous pleasure-dome filled with hundreds of fruit machines (I refuse to call them onearmed bandits), whirring, clinking and flashing day and night, and there

were the people of South Africa, all of them expending their money in non-racial glory and oblivion, black and white, young and old, male and female, the blanketed and the be-suited, equal at last.

Apart from these two occasions, the country appears to be much as it always was. The atmosphere is new and we are lumbering towards change, but there is no doubt about who controls the levers of power, and it is not the blacks.

The problem with overselling a product is that even its genuine virtues get to be ignored. Too much triumphalism leads to too much disasterism, and brings out the Breyten in the best of us. So we put our heads down, stick to basic principles, make the most of the new possibilities we have opened up, and battle on. As always, one of the major terrains of combat is over the meaning of words, in this case, over the language of neo-apartheid.

One of the characteristics of white domination is that it seeks to control everything, including the process of its own extinction. As South Africa lurches from apartheid to democracy, a whole new vocabulary is invented to project the important though limited steps taken as though they represent virtually the end of the road. The problem of racial discrimination is over, we are told, the pillar of apartheid has been removed. No incongruity is seen in the fact that it is a whites-only government answerable to a white electorate that is proclaiming the joyous news.

It is not a question of petulance, of an unwillingness to concede that anything good can come out of the present rulers. It is that everything is done unilaterally. Decisions are taken in secret and then promoted by not-so-subtle media blitzes. Foreign ambassadors know more than we do. The art of the game is to score points, make the other side look in the wrong, and certainly not to share responsibility for getting the country to move towards democracy.

Apartheid is dead. Viva neo-apartheid! We are told that the only issue now is the question of protecting minority rights, surely a most estimable objective, except that the minority in this case wishes to protect its right to own ninety per cent of the country's wealth, to control the army, the police force and the civil service, to veto government actions, to dictate what the goals of educational and cultural policy shall be and to organise the spending of funds for the arts.

Next we are introduced to the language of devolution, local options and neighbourhood choices. Can it be that when we on the anti-apartheid side are talking less and less about people's power and more and more about people's rights, the other side is stealing our old vocabulary? Next they will be setting up Civics in Sandton, demanding the resignation of councillors and shouting viva's. The reality is that the words mentioned above have real meaning only as codes for locking up the treasure of schools, residential areas and amenities in the vaults of white privilege.

Similarly, we are told about the importance of keeping standards up, when, as everybody knows, what is meant is keeping blacks out. The insult is a double one: not only are the majority excluded from sharing in the good things the country should have to offer, they are treated as though they are either too dumb or too uncultivated to care about living in decent conditions themselves.

Finally, the tired old bullock is yoked yet once more to the wagon: culture is inspanned. Poor old culture, abused by all and sundry, now called upon to drag whiteness into the new South Africa. *Bleek blink die seile* — white are the sails. One of the disappointments for me on my return has been to discover how little true cultural rights mean to the majority of whites in this country, and how much their whiteness signifies. I feel the people I am speaking to are ten percent Afrikaner, or Jew, or Portuguese, or English, and ninety percent white. They are far more worried about their swimming pools and pensions then they are about Van Wyk Louw, or Buber, or Camoes, or even the Beatles.

When reference is made to zones of cultural preference, we know what is really meant: not a genuine language policy that takes into account regional language use, but privatised and localised apartheid. Instead of culture being the highway to discovering our common humanity, it becomes the means once more of keeping us apart.

There is another way, where we speak honestly to each other, giving to words their true meaning, attempting to find solutions beneficial to all of us, acknowledg-

ing the real suspicions and fears that we all have, and coming to terms with our whiteness and our blackness.

II. Guaranteeing Artistic Freedom

When I look at you, at the people in this hall, what do I see? Who are you, who am I, who are we? I am one of millions of South Africans for whom everything we hold dear is about to open up, while I fear that for many of you everything you most cherish seems about to close down. Can we speak to each other?

Does the Sleeping Beauty go back to sleep, you might be wondering, and will Rigoletto have to return to Italy? What does it mean that millions of rands are being spent on fantasy palaces to delight wealthy audiences with large homes to go back to, while there is no money to upgrade the shacks in which millions of their compatriots live? And, more important, what of the music and dance and poetry of the shack-dwellers, are these to continue to be regarded as squatter and marginalised cultural activities, subject to being bulldozed and moved on at any time, or do they become central and respected ingredients of a new South African culture?

Too much has been suppressed in South Africa. I refer not only to all that has been suffocated by censorship and banning orders. I speak of the voices that have been silenced and marginalised, the languages referred to as vernaculars and dialects, the dances condemned as heathen or else as just noisy.

A Bill of Rights draws its strength from the fact that it speaks for all South Africans, not just for this or that group. Its central tenet in relation to artistic freedom is that everyone has the right both to be a creator, and to enjoy the creations of others. It is essentially universalist in character. It helps us to South Africanise ourselves, to discover the full and rich dimensions of our country. It recognises the drummer in the rural homestead as it does the tympanist in the symphony orchestra, the dancer at the wedding ceremony and the ballerina on the stage.

A Bill of Rights creates nothing. It acknowledges and defends what is already there, and guarantees space for development of the new. We know some of the things we have fought for: abolition of censorship, freedom of expression, the right to criticise our rulers and challenge the system under which we live. We want an art that is vivacious and self-confident, that speaks in its own voice, that is prepared to take chances, explore the new while re-discovering the old.

None of this is specific to South Africa. These are internationally accepted values of creative freedom that have been fought for by artists in all continents and all ages. What is particular to our country is the context of apartheid, which established cultural hostility as a norm and fierce colonial-type authoritarianism as a way of life. A Bill of Rights cannot be bland on the question of apartheid or its psychic sequels, it must be affirmatively anti-apartheid and unequivocal in its recognition of the equal worth of every man and woman in this country.

Apartheid not only told us what we could or could not say or think, it sought to tell us who we were. It prescribed who we could or could not marry or love, where we could be buried, what liquor we could take, what days of the week we could go fishing or see a movie. It ordered us to use this or that language. Nothing was too intimate to escape its purview, not a pillow was lain on nor did a sparrow fall without a record being made in an official notebook.

We want to ban banning orders, censor censorship, protect ourselves from being protected against ourselves. New wine loves old bottles. The temptations will always be there for incoming governments to take over the panoplies and powers of the outgoing ones, and then to justify themselves with authoritarian hauteur. They did it, so what right have they to criticise us for doing the same? A Bill of Rights is thus imperative to consolidate principles that have been established in struggle, to block retrocession and to impede new modes of violation.

If Constitutions are based on a mixture of total mistrust and unlimited idealism, then our new Constitution must embody the special awareness that we have gained in the struggle for creative freedom in this country. Now is the time for us to declare unequivocally what we stand for, while the memory of repression is still sharp and our consciousness of wrong-doing strong. This is the moment to take freedom and rights seriously, to spell out in precise terms what we mean by these concepts.

We in the ANC Constitutional Committee have been battling to reflect that rights consciousness, trying to get

the apt formulation, the appropriate test. We are tired of seeing adults being treated like children, children treated as babies and babies getting no consideration at all. We are angry at the way language and religion and so-called ways of life have been torn from their roots and converted into instruments of domination and abuse. We have ourselves suffered repression, seen our books banned, been denied the right to associate freely and travel; my doctoral dissertation, published by University Presses in the U.K. and the U.S.A. under the title *Justice in South Africa*, was banned three times over in terms of three different statutes in South Africa — as a banned publication, as a book written by a banned person, as a work that quoted other banned persons (Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo!).

We do not in our Draft attempt to constitutionalise any specific policy towards culture, but rather seek to create a framework of clear principles within which such policies can be worked out. We propose two Articles which deal directly with these principles.

Article 4: Freedom of Speech, Assembly and Information

1. There shall be freedom of thought, speech, expression and opinion, including a free press which shall respect the right to reply.
2. All men and women shall have the right to assemble peacefully and without arms, and to submit petitions for the redress of grievances and injustices.
3. All men and women shall be entitled to all the information necessary to enable them to make effective use of their rights as citizens or consumers.

Article 5: Rights of Association, Religion, Language and Culture

Freedom of Association

1. There shall be freedom of association, including the right to form and join trade unions, religious, social and cultural bodies, and to form and participate in non-governmental organisations.

Freedom of Religion

2. There shall be freedom of worship and tolerance of all religions, and no State or official religion shall be established.
3. The institutions of religion shall be separate from the State, but nothing in this Constitution shall prevent them from co-operating
4. Places associated with religious observance shall be respected, and no-one shall be barred from entering them on grounds of race.

Language Rights

5. The languages of South Africa are, in alphabetical order, Afrikaans, English, Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Swati, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa and Zulu.
6. The State shall act positively to further the development of these languages, especially in education, literature and the media, and to prevent the use of any languages for the purpose of domination or division.
7. When it is reasonable to do so, one or more of these languages may be designated as the language to be used for defined purposes at the national level or in any region or area where it is widely used.
8. Subject to the availability of public and private resources, and limitations of reasonableness, primary and secondary education should wherever possible be offered in the language or languages of preference of the students or their parents.
9. The state shall promote respect for all the languages spoken in South Africa.

Creative Freedom

10. There shall be freedom of artistic activity and scientific enquiry, subject only to such limitations as may be imposed by law in accordance with principles generally accepted in open and democratic societies.

The Right to Sporting, Recreational and Cultural Activities

11. Sporting, recreational, and cultural activities shall be encouraged on a non-racial basis, drawing on the talents and creative capacities of all South Africans, and autonomous organisations may be established to achieve these objectives.

There are a number of other articles which bear on this question of creative freedom and cultural rights. Educational institutions, the media, advertising and other social institutions are declared to be under a duty to discourage sexual and other types of stereotyping [Art. 7 clause 5]. Furthermore, in terms of our proposed text, education shall be directed toward the full development of the human personality and a sense of personal dignity and shall aim at strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as promoting understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all South Africans and between nations [Art. 10 clause 11].

Taken together, the Articles on the Bill of Rights outline a double protection for freedom of expression and enquiry, namely, guaranteed rights of individual expression and guaranteed rights of cultural association.

Language and religious rights are particularly strong. Rather than declare any language or languages to be official, and as such enjoying a status superior to others, we felt it better simply to acknowledge the eleven most widely spoken languages with the deepest implantation as the languages of South Africa. The principle of the equal status and dignity of each of these languages is thus recognised, with obvious implications for future cultural policy.

Culture, instead of being the highway to discovering our common humanity, can become the means of keeping us apart

At the same time, we take account of the fact that it would be quite impractical to have ten translations of each and every communication such as is the case in the European Community, where translation is the second highest budget item after farm support. If every road sign were in all the languages we would not be able to see where to drive. Accordingly, provision is made for the designation of certain languages on a national or regional basis as languages to be used for special purposes, such as for record or for legislation. Pragmatic aspects can be solved in a pragmatic way, but only if people do so by consent, satisfied that their national rights are not being questioned. If language rights are not acknowledged, there will be fighting on the beaches, fighting over signs in every shop, there will be no surrender.

The approach adopted towards rights of conscience and religious rights is also strongly influenced by South African reality. The great majority of South Africans are believers. Religion goes well beyond being a question of faith, it is part and parcel of our culture. Non-believers sing 'Nkosi Sikelele i'Afrika' with just as much enthusiasm as believers. The churches, the mosques, the synagogues, and the temples are important gathering places, centres of group affirmation and belief. Religious bodies have a major contribution to make in helping a New South African nation to evolve. The draft recognises the autonomous spheres of religion and the State, but presupposes cooperation between them rather than total separation, bearing in mind that religious bodies will have a continuing mission to bear witness and will retain their right to criticise the actions of the State.

It was not difficult to declare the fundamental rights and freedoms that we felt all South Africans should enjoy. The problem came with the limitations. Here once more the background of apartheid is specially relevant. People's rights and sensibilities have been trampled on. Racism has been officially glorified for generations. We have seen recently how ethnic mobilisation, when linked to political ambition, leads to death, how instruments of blood are dignified with the title cultural weapons. Words can easily become fighting talk, and fighting talk leads quickly to homicide.

In dealing with these issues, we have drawn on legislative and constitutional experiences in other countries where the principles of free speech and freedom of artistic expression are accepted. We have also attempted to respond to the vexed question of pornography, where

we try to distinguish between the right of each person to follow his or her own erotic fantasies, without the State interfering, and the duty not to degrade or abuse women or men or children, where the law might well intervene.

Another difficult issue was how to treat the question of materials or utterances that are intended to give offence to deeply held religious convictions. The right to believe must include the right to question belief. Everything can be queried, provided it is done in the honest pursuit of truth; reverence must come from the heart, and not be imposed by the Constitution. At the same time we are aware of how hurtful and dangerous religious hate speech can be. The law must be clear: the Jews are not for burning, the Muslims are not for bombing, the Christians are not for beheading and the Hindus are not for impaling. Not every form of hatred need be penalised, but neither should the right to hate and create an atmosphere for pogroms be constitutionally protected.

The relevant clauses we propose are as follows:

Article 14: Positive Action

3. The State and all public and private bodies shall be under a duty to prevent any form of incitement to racial, religious or linguistic hostility and to dismantle all structures and do away with all structures that compulsorily divide the population on grounds of race, colour, language or creed.
4. With a view to achieving the above, the State may enact legislation to prohibit the circulation or possession of materials which incite racial, ethnic, religious, gender or linguistic hatred, which provoke violence, or which insult, degrade, defame or encourage abuse of any racial, ethnic, religious, gender or linguistic group.

By and large, our friends in the anti-censorship lobby (if they are sufficiently agglutinated to be called a lobby) have responded positively to these proposals. They have welcomed the idea that the starting-off point is freedom of expression and that there be no system of pre-publication censorship. They accept that there is place for the law to provide for limitations on absolute freedom of speech in relation to generally accepted principles of libel, contempt of court, respect for personal privacy and the like, and that a case can be made out for excluding certain security or industrial information matters from the scope of the right to information.

The part that makes them uneasy is the reference to the possibility of legislation being adopted to prohibit the circulation of materials which, amongst other things, insult, degrade, defame or encourage abuse of any racial, ethnic, religious, gender or linguistic group. The controversial word is 'insult', which, it is claimed, is far too wide and open to abuse.

This is exactly the kind of close attention that the Constitutional Committee welcomes. A Bill of Rights is not a set of self-evident verities proclaimed by self-appointed experts. It is built up, polished, infused with nuance and texture through the input of those who have fought for its realisation and whose life objectives it is to serve. This is an area where we hope for a special contribution from writers and artists themselves: the text we propose is capable of infinite amendment. Perhaps we South Africans take insult far too easily: we need skins that are both robust and sensitive at the same time, tough enough to withstand the buffeting of those who feel challenged by any move forward, and sufficiently delicate to feel the vibration of the country's emotions as change takes place.

Through this meeting at the Grahamstown Arts Festival we appeal to the culturally creative community of South Africa, artists, aesthetes, and activists alike, through us or in any way you prefer: help through your saxophones or voices or chisels or just your pens to write a text that is beautiful in itself and that honours the right of all to have access to beauty, make your contributions towards a Bill of Rights for South Africa.

Coda

The poet looked directly at me, and asked: How can I write about the white, white rose, when red is the colour of blood, when red is the colour of blood?

And I gazed straight back at him and answered: When we buried our sister Ruth, it was roses we threw on her grave and beautiful songs that we sang in her honour; there is beauty in struggle, and struggle in beauty.

© First presented at the Grahamstown Arts Festival 1991

cheryl irene

anyday now

each day the gap where you were greets me
faithfully loyally
the empty chair a/cross the table
and the place where your coffee cup/ is not
without fail says good morning

my mouth moves
and words come out
strange that people still seem
to understand what i say
my mouth moves
and words come out
but not your name
it is not pride
but fear that the only magic i have/ will fail me
if i say your name and you do not return
i never say your name

i smile
and when i laugh
there is a moment when i almost fly again
before i remember my broken wing
you are gone

i no longer turn my head when i hear
your footstep on the stairs
i know better now
the tricks of my heart
that seeks to create you
even where you are not

i have almost stopped waiting for
the mailman to bring word of you

the days seem normal
except for the loud silence wrapped around my heart
still the question wears on me
like water on stone
why love
why love
why leave me this way
why love leave me this way.
my second nature is to breathe
and love you

people's eyes
they want to comfort me for my loss
problem is there has been no funeral
there is no/body
everyone thinks I'm looking for a reason
I'm just looking for you

home

for themba, leonardo and willie

it is your eyes
bright and ancient
that touch me
so still so alive
your eyes hold the country in them
they carry oceans of shimmering water
they embrace rising tides of timeless yearnings
they hoist relentless forward motion

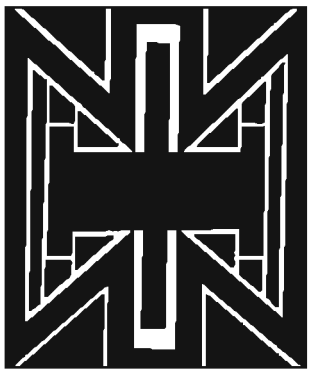
your eyes paint surprise
translucent sun on the land
feeds madiba's harvest

your eyes say you been gone so long
your eyes say you never left
you wandered worlds within worlds
your eyes stayed behind
always heavy with the last wind
that swept through Capetown
your eyes stayed rooted deep in the soil
holding on to a future that refuses to die

Detail at Botshabelo indicating the traditional dancing stick used by women at weddings
• Esta Mahlangu •

Contemporary Mural Art: Urban Dislocation and Indifference

Annette Loubser



The concept of mural art or wall decoration in South Africa continues to be the domain of academic researchers who have no desire to popularise their information. Otherwise, it is regarded by those who have grown up in communities where the tradition is maintained, to belong to their African heritage and not open to debate. Both these positions are dubious, as the tradition of painting on walls is of a recent nature especially where there has been conflict between black and white communities. Continual cultural 'borrowing' and change has been taking place during the process, and it is in the urban areas in particular, where difficulties are being experienced. If attitudes such as these should prevail wall painting could become sterile in its adherence to tradition or something quite haphazard and meaningless.

The only coherent tradition of wall-painting which can be regarded as unique to a particular group of people in South Africa is that of the now extinct southern San. It is certainly one of the oldest painting traditions in the world and apart from it being so rich and varied in imagery and content, it is now the most severely threatened painting tradition in South Africa.

Another well known tradition is that of the Ndzundza Ndebele who live near Pretoria. Their visually rich wall-painting tradition, which gives precedence to the front exterior walls and the front of the homestead, has come as a response to their need to retain their identity as a group. This desire for identity stems from 1882 when the Zuid-Afrikaanse Republiek under Joubert betrayed them: it confiscated their land, usurped their rights and indentured them to the Boers who had fought against them. This painting tradition of the Ndebele is linked to the homestead and to women. They are involved in their children's initiation ceremonies, especially those of their daughters — beadwork for aprons, for blankets and necklaces, which represent different stages in life. Their colourful and bold painting tradition is derived from their beadwork, but the paintings are less specific to occasions and more strongly related to the woman's desire for domestic competence and a desire to express a sense of beauty. Although their work is so vivid and their beadwork a common sight in the city, why is it that it is given more scrutiny in other centres of the world than in South Africa? There still is a distinct tendency to see the art of the Ndebele as a curiosity rather than as a manifestation of adaptation to loss of land and rights, which after all, has affected seventy percent of the population.

There is therefore an urgent need for display venues and for housing the collections in order to debate issues of culture in the larger townships. It is distressing that a community as large as Soweto, with a population of three million, does not yet have such facilities. The new Africana Museum in Johannesburg will be an attempt to show its full ethnological collections. This means that it will have to bus people in to see these cultural artifacts. But what about the living artists who continue to work within their traditions and adapt themselves in highly individual and competent ways despite their severely altered circumstances. The fact that no real attempt is

being made to encourage a closer relationship between the community and the artist on the part of the local and state authorities is an issue which Matsimela Manaka takes up in his play *Ekhaya* which was performed at the Market Theatre in July this year. This was not without good reason.

Since the 1950s black artists have been at the whims and fancies of art entrepreneurs who have generally marketed them as a phenomenon. They have become investments under labels such as: African Consciousness, Naive, Militant, Visionary, Female, or Transitional artist. In all these labels the term 'black' is not very far in the background. How would these so labelled works actually be seen if they were to be exhibited at a large, well publicised show in a community such as Soweto where the origin and economic activity of the inhabitants are varied? Would the work still be seen as manifestations of black art? Would anybody come to the show? Would people be too intimidated to attend an art exhibition for fear that they will be showing their ignorance? Would the artists enjoy the new meaning that their work is being given, or walk away in disgust at the appalling lack of developed sensibilities?

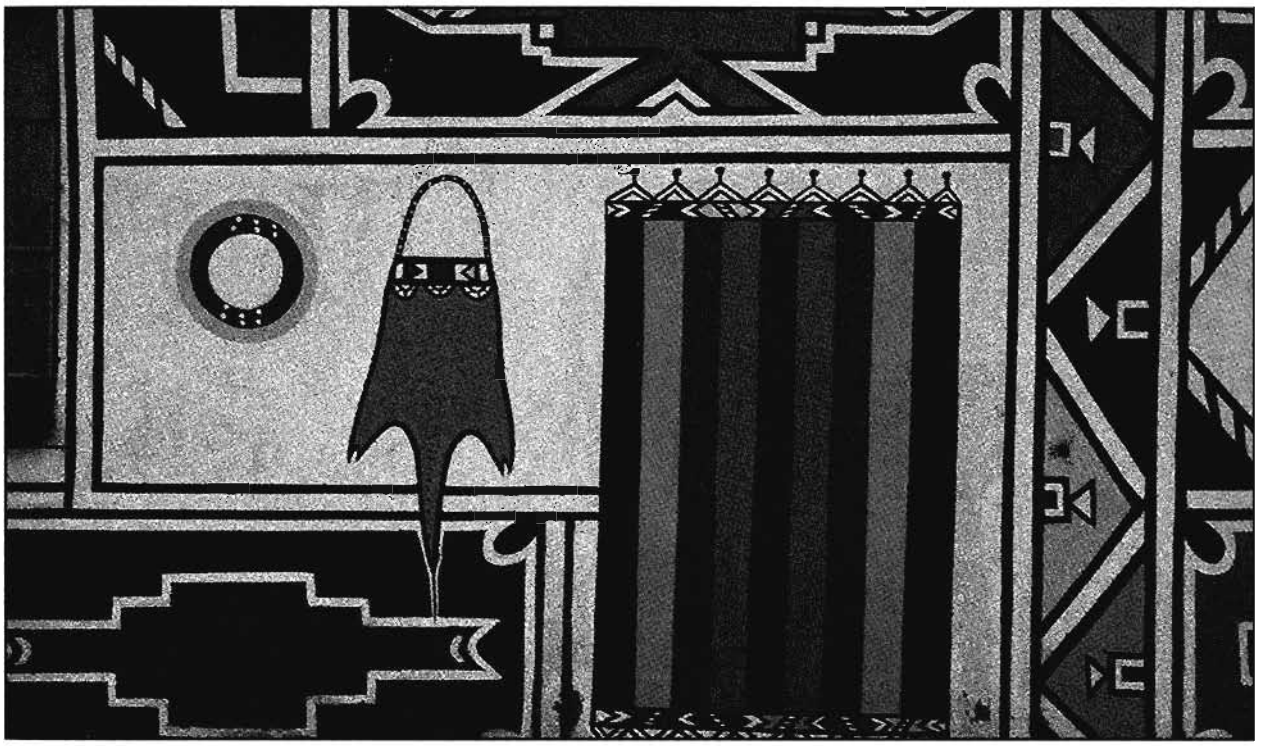
This dislocation of the artist from his or her community can be ascribed to a culture of indifference and a deliberately created one as well. Being forced to live in large urban townships and prescribed to ethnic zones meant that all forms of ethnicity were seen as devices of the Nationalist government to divide people struggling for democratic rights. Even today certain initiation ceremonies are done and paid for in the rural communities in order that it may not upset the agreed anonymity of the township culture. The culture of the township is a materialistic one and the rural culture is seen as something relating to that of the peasant, the past, to tradition and timelessness. But the poverty of the latter is creating large scale migration to the cities. This will mean that there will be no past to nurture or to remember. This indifference, which to date, has paid off so well for the urban dweller, will become his curse.

Wall-painting or mural art of the traditional homestead is a relatively new manifestation. Women wove grass for their domestic enclosures, smeared their floors regularly for tidiness and hygiene and painted their walls in local earth, ash and soot to create patterns and define their living space. This was regarded as a form of personal pride in their domestic status. Their decorations were closely linked to their role and function. Because they had scant power in the larger decision-making processes of the group, their works often reflected their own view of the world. The walls were decorated before important ceremonies and functions and the forms were initially those taken by the daughter from her mother or grandmother. As she bore more children and the homestead grew, her visual imagery would become more personal and become adapted to her specific needs.

The major change happened when colour paints began to be manufactured locally in 1945 and sold commercially.

Although they did cost much more than the earth pigments, ambitious women, notably the Ndebele, began to use these paints mainly on the outside of their homesteads and the exterior *lapa* walls. The paints proved to be more durable under the strong African sun and the fierce rainstorms. This meant that women could spend more time on their paintings as the threat of paint damage and constant retouching was no longer an issue. The tradition of wall-painting amongst the Ndebele is derived from an older tradition of beadwork. This was made and worn to indicate the different stages in the woman's or man's life, and it was more gender-specific. The earlier use of white sun-baked clay beads was replaced by colourful beads sold by traders since the end of World War II. It therefore seems that colour appeared simultaneously in both the beadwork and in wall painting. Colour, harmony and balance were seen as important components in the changing strict architectonic forms. Odd details in the delineated fields were introduced, such as lampposts, stairways, chimneys, necklaces, telephones and lettering. The women speak of a desire to create 'beauty' and 'happiness'. Wolfger Pöhlmann claims that these 'newly gained motifs and artistic technical developments of painting can be regarded as an attempt to gain cultural independence, not in the form of a rigid preservation of a tradition, but in a fusion with the achievements of progress'.[1]

In contrast, initiatives taken in the townships cannot claim such progress. The cultural centres are invariably

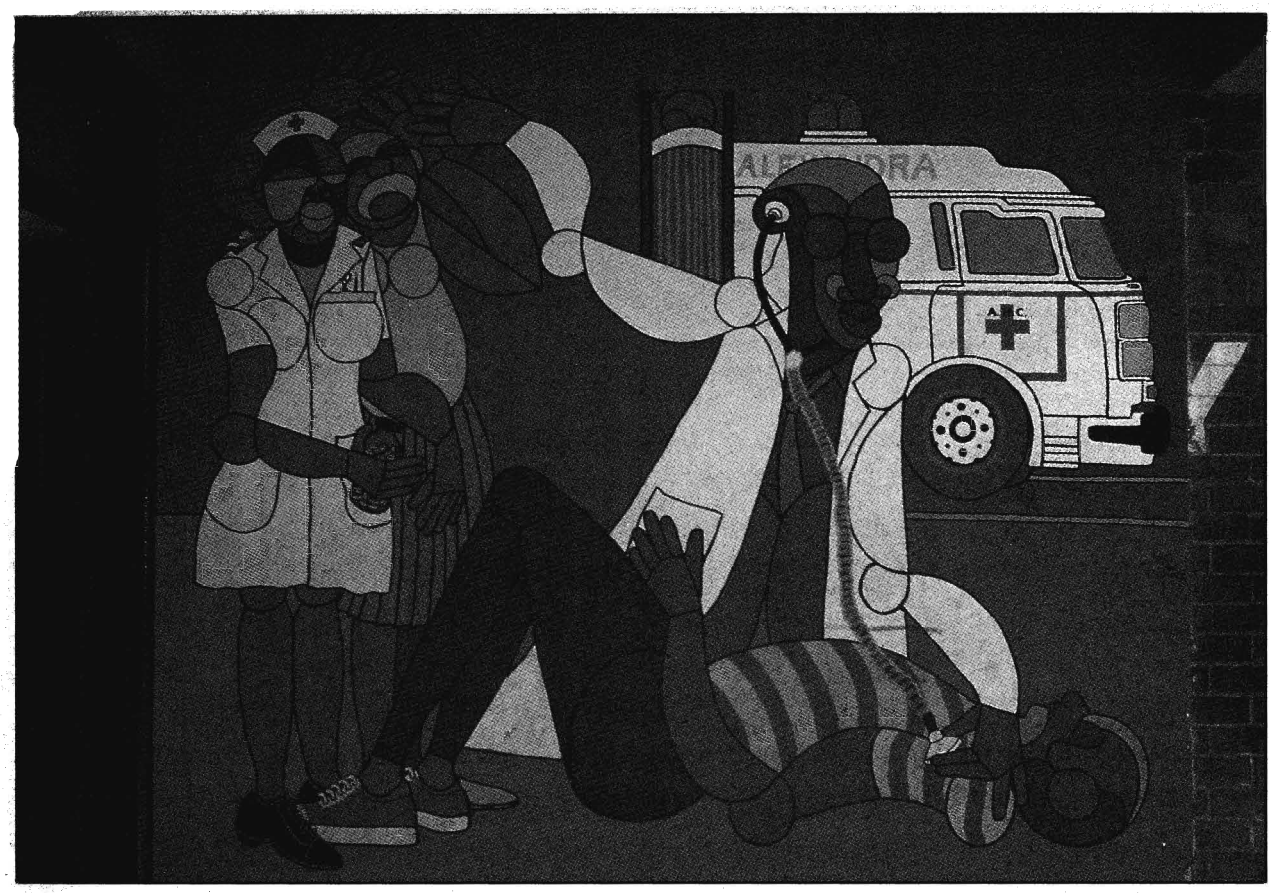


The painting of a 'poryana' (made of wild cat skin by the father for the son after the initiation) as well as an 'iirari' painted on the external back wall of Esta Mahlangu's homestead in Weltevreden.

dependent on sponsorship (which is often unreliable); their space is constantly becoming limited due to the growing demand by young people to develop their creativity; there are no exhibition spaces available, and artists are constantly needing to go to city centres to see exhibitions or to see their own work on exhibition. The general visual arts education system recognises art as serious if: (a) the artist has a recognised degree or diploma from an acceptable institution: a white English speaking institution such as a university or a technikon is often implied; and (b) a well-known gallery or sponsor markets the art-work into the current media backed by the credibility of prominent academics.

Both these options assure some form of investment value for the art and, very often, its functional value stops right there. This places the artist in a position of dislocation. As an artist, the person is alienated from the community who only read or hear that the artist's works have been exhibited and sold somewhere else to important clients. The works themselves they never see. They may hold faint recollections of a childhood of beadwork, wood and ceramic crafts and mural painting, but it is invariably regarded as something of the past. But is it really of the past, already?

Why did the Ndebele women decide to continue to paint despite their men being forced to leave the homestead in search of work? The women could have abandoned their domestic pride in search of alternatives. But they continued their art-making traditions, taking up commissions to paint on local churches, such as Isango LeZulu at Weltevreden, hawker stalls at Siyabuswa, the walls of mock-ups in museums, as well as accepting



The Alexandra Clinic Entrance Wall • **Tanki Mokhele** •

invitations to paint at shows in Paris, Bordeaux, Japan and Berlin. Their works do not speak of a tradition bent on any resistance to change, but a pride in identity. It is an identity which speaks of an extraordinary resilience against becoming anonymous as well as an ability to change under often arduous conditions. Today, men are not barred from participating in mural art. The women travel on the long and dusty routes of KwaNdebele to city centres, such as Johannesburg, to sell beadwork, made for the market. They sleep under railway bridges with their wares which will help feed and clothe their families. The identity of the Ndebele women was strengthened in 1988 when they took the issue of the vote for women to the supreme court in Pretoria and won. Their emergence from their traditional role came in 1986 when the entire opposition party was detained in the uprisings against the pro-homeland independence ruling party, the Imbokodo Party. The women demanded a meeting at King David Mabhoko's palace with the local commissioner of police to ensure an end to all the killing and destruction in the area. They were met, instead, with a riot squad who sjambokked, teargassed and set dogs on them. This was when the women took the case of their vote to court and, having won, they mobilised all opposition party members in KwaNdebele. In the ensuing ballot-poll the opposition won all of the 16 seats in the KwaNdebele Legislative Assembly. A cabinet was formed and the new party was called ' Intando Yesizwe Party' (The Will of the Nation Party) which had the support of the king. Prince S. J. Mahlangu became its chief minister.

The impact of the empowerment of women has been met with enthusiasm and a measure of caution by the Ndebele. Angelina Ndimande, aged 33, in an interview with Vusi Mchunu claimed that:

> Young and old amaNdebele women co-operate on all matters. We support each other, whether it is making beadwork or discussing issues of the

> nation. Especially today when we live under rapidly changing conditions. These are hard times and the political reality is also changing. Women are also changing. Even their mural design somewhat reflects this change. We played a big role in the creation of the new 'Intando Yesizwe Party', today's popular ruling party in KwaNdebele. I am experimenting in my new patterns with the colours of this party: Yellow for mineral wealth, brown for the earth that links us to our ancestors, green for nature and agriculture and red for emotions of hope and unity amongst the amaNdebele.[2]

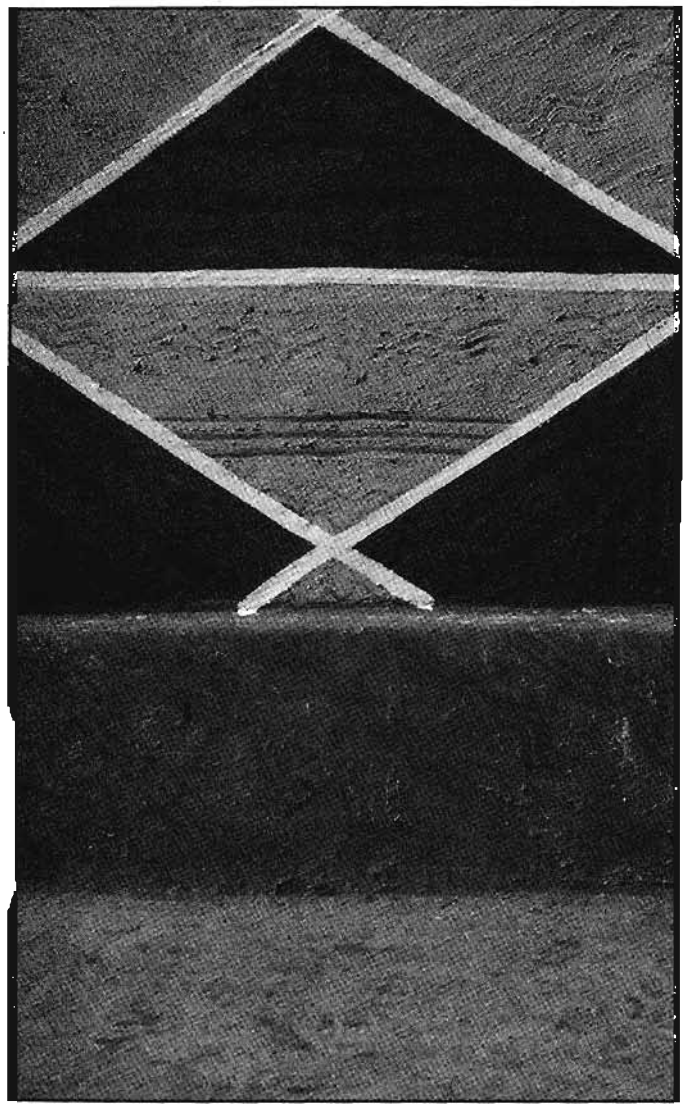
Her mother, Francina Ndimande (Ndala) of 51 years and of the royal house of King David Mabhoko is much more cautious: 'I cannot predict where I shall be as an artist once the rule of Intando Yesizwe is stable. I can safely state that I never change my style drastically'.[3]

This ability to survive and adapt stems from a tradition which has developed self-confidence and self-awareness. While Angelina keeps her home, paints her homestead, takes on commissions, makes beadwork, teaches the local youth in the community about her skills, she also paints on canvas. She finds her patrons generous and encouraging which inspires her to paint even more. This is a woman working outside, in isolation from the metropolis, yet vigorously involved in her own community and private work.

Initiatives at murals in the urban area are of a different nature, but most of them are attempts to involve the broader community. The sheer number and variety of people makes the task more daunting. In 1986, the Alexander Art Centre used a mural competition to launch itself. The venue was the entrance and exterior wall of the local clinic and the winner, Tanki Mokhele, painted a humorous work on the daily activities of the local residents. This proved to make the role of the clinic a little more credible to the community. It was not much later that the Alexander Art Centre was in need of relocating to bigger premises to continue its cultural activities. With the establishment of FUBA (Federated Union Of Black Artists), there was a need to define the function of the project, which was housed in a nondescript building within the Market Foundation precinct in Johannesburg. A mural went up, done by Johannes Phokhele, indicating the creative function of FUBA. The work is figurative, functional and has also helped to make the area around the building more amenable to creative activities. The Kathlehong Art Centre has two spontaneous exterior murals in black and white. These were done by two of its members, Iphriam Ziqubu and Bhekisani Manyoni. The composition of these walls is almost like that of a black and white lino-cut, and, in their respective personalised manner, the works speak about the migration to the city and their relationship to their rural origins. What is, in essence, a drab, nondescript building has become transformed into something which is of interest to the local community. This art centre has been involved in commissions of cultural works for shebeens and also encourages the youth to work collectively on murals.

Another artist involved in mural art for decades, doing the odd commission and constantly pushing for art to become more integrated with the community, is Durant Sihlale. He has often experienced frustration, and now regards mural art initiatives with caution. He participated in the 1988 Plascon Living Use of Colour community mural painting project. He and some FUBA students worked in the White City area of Soweto at his own expense. His project was met with fear from both the community and the sponsors. A local resident wanted the indigenous motifs painted off her facade and returned to a plain colour as she feared that she might be too conspicuous and a target for intimidation. The sponsors, on the other hand, felt that the project was politically dangerous and would jeopardise their dealings with the State. Later attempts by D. Sihlale and C. Manganye to co-ordinate mural art projects in the community with paint donated by the sponsors were consistantly ignored.

These were brave undertakings but, without support, they were not feasible. The need to create an awareness of the rich cultural heritage of the past can be taken up only by local artists. For they understand the dynamics and issues at stake as they involve the township community. There is a need to bring art to the community so as to ensure a more enduring market for the artists. At the same time, local authorities need to do something about urban renewal in many of the depressed areas of town-



Interior courtyard wall with step made of soot, ash, lime and cowdung. Botshabelo
• Artist unknown •

ships. Surely, there is room for local artists from the art centres to participate in this sphere? Civic pride does exist amongst the youth, as was seen in the People's Parks of 1986. Why not utilise it in a tradition which is in need of conservation and adaption?

The worrying point about traditional wall-painting is that academic research on it is often limited by the respondents not reacting openly to a researcher who is white. It took E. A. Schneider ten years to complete her definitive research on the Ndebele; conversely the interviews by Vusi Mchunu (in a catalogue for an exhibition in Berlin this year) have an immediacy, directness and openness which I suspect would have taken a white researcher years to attain.[4]

The South African way of life is essentially that of the outdoors and now is the time to consider the artists' desire not to be merely pawns in some investment orientated market, but to keep a measure of control over their production. By making work within their communities artists will help to create new contents for the use and enjoyment of their work. Mural art, as a means of providing visual material to communities, also provides work, a renewal of a tradition, and artistic credibility for artists. It is a medium well worth exploring. In this way, art centres, churches, schools, civic associations and other organisations would feel that they are actively participating as meaningful carriers and transformers of contemporary South African culture. Thus, cultural exhibitions would become an integral part of community life rather than something alienating and vested with anthropological content.

NOTES

1. Walter Pöhlmann, Forward to Catalogue: *amaNdebele — Signals of Colour from South Africa*. 1991, p.10
2. Vusi D. Mchunu, 'To Paint Is to Express Joy'. Interview with. Angelina Ndimande. 1991. p.83
3. Vusi Mchunu, 'The Strength of My Works Comes From Boldness and Harmony'. Interview with Francina Ndimande. 1991. p.78
4. Schneider, *Paint, Pride and Politics: Aesthetic and Meaning in Transvaal Ndebele Wall Art*. Ph.D. Thesis. University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. 1986; and *amaNdebele Signals of Colour from South Africa* Catalogue for Haus der Kulteren der Welt, Berlin. 1991. Organiser: W. Pöhlmann, Editor: Vusi D. Mchunu

© Photographs by A. Loubser

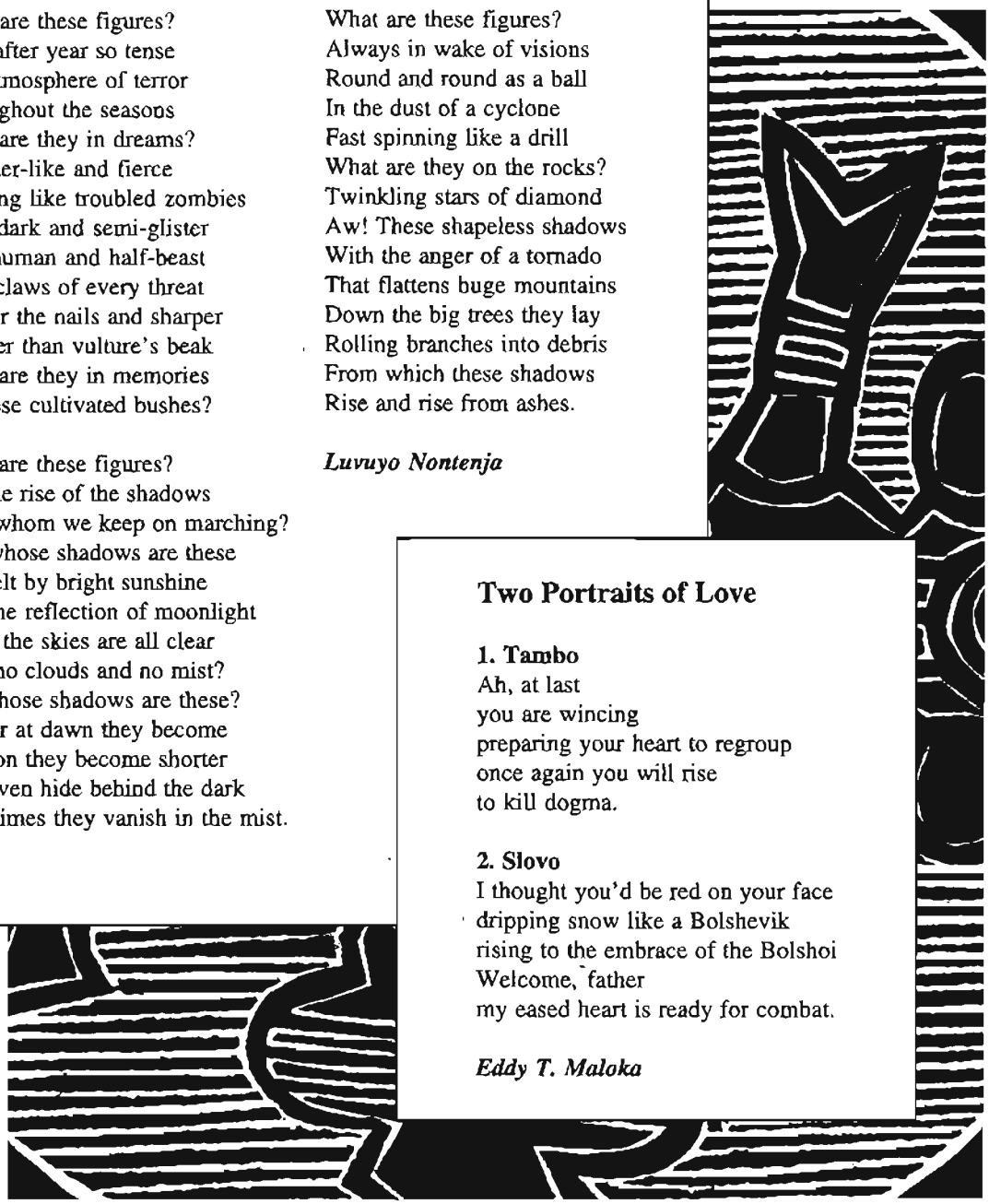
The Shadows

What are these figures?
Year after year so tense
The atmosphere of terror
Throughout the seasons
What are they in dreams?
Monster-like and fierce
Looking like troubled zombies
Semi-dark and semi-glister
Half-human and half-beast
With claws of every threat
Longer the nails and sharper
Sharper than vulture's beak
What are they in memories
Of these cultivated bushes?

What are these figures?
Is it the rise of the shadows
With whom we keep on marching?
And whose shadows are these
So spelt by bright sunshine
And the reflection of moonlight
When the skies are all clear
With no clouds and no mist?
But whose shadows are these?
Longer at dawn they become
At noon they become shorter
And even hide behind the dark
Sometimes they vanish in the mist.

What are these figures?
Always in wake of visions
Round and round as a ball
In the dust of a cyclone
Fast spinning like a drill
What are they on the rocks?
Twinkling stars of diamond
Aw! These shapeless shadows
With the anger of a tornado
That flattens huge mountains
Down the big trees they lay
Rolling branches into debris
From which these shadows
Rise and rise from ashes.

Luvuyo Nontenja



Two Portraits of Love

1. Tambo
Ah, at last
you are wincing
preparing your heart to regroup
once again you will rise
to kill dogma.

2. Slovo
I thought you'd be red on your face
dripping snow like a Bolshevik
rising to the embrace of the Bolshoi
Welcome, father
my eased heart is ready for combat.

Eddy T. Maloka

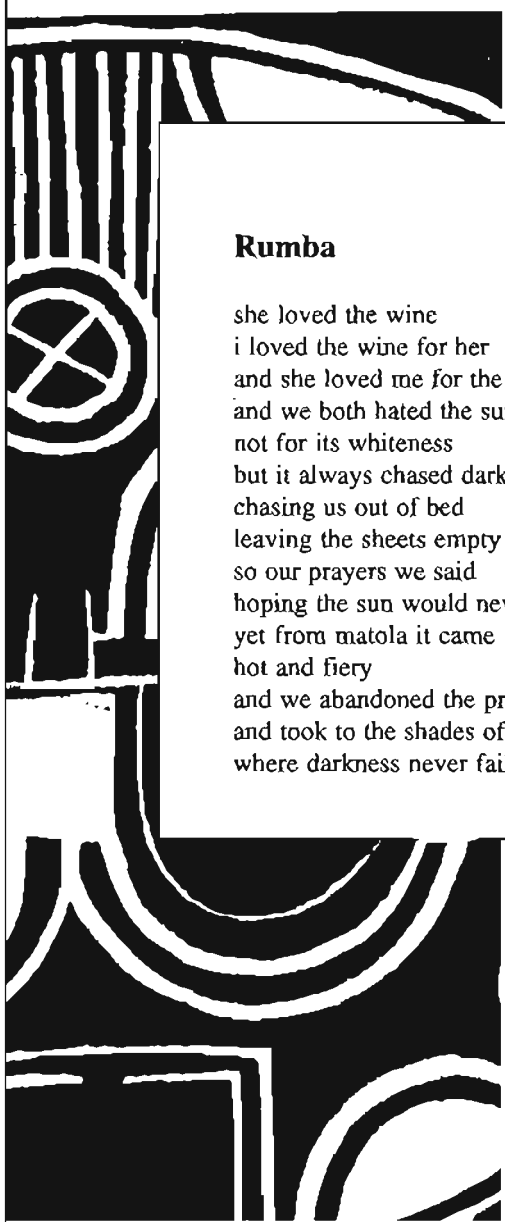
Bongani Ndlovu

Reflections

the farmers pile up
the good harvest
unburying potatoes
pregnant with labour
the cobwebs crisp
in their mortis rigor
and the sun watches
amicably from the heavens

from the sea emerged
the gasping dromedaris
the prophets had but
seen her from their
distant dreams of wisdom
the great limpompo had
emptied its heart into
the sea to perish
silently and unnoticed

but this was no time
to embrace sorrow
and unfruitful mourning
it was no time to
recall treasures lost
for glittering bangles
nor to brood over
those victorious rocks
rolling down the basotho ranges
time could not decay
as history slowly faded
in their minds
leaving behind scars
that would never heal



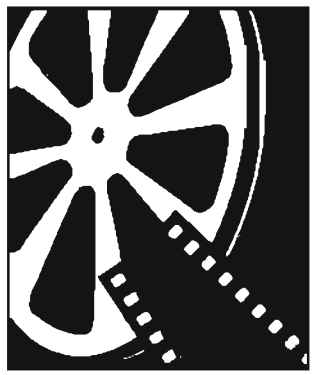
Rumba

she loved the wine
i loved the wine for her
and she loved me for the wine
and we both hated the sun
not for its whiteness
but it always chased darkness away
chasing us out of bed
leaving the sheets empty and sad
so our prayers we said
hoping the sun would never come
yet from matola it came
hot and fiery
and we abandoned the prayer
and took to the shades of the jungle
where darkness never fails

Movies and Monopolies: The Distribution of Cinema in South Africa

Jeremy Nathan

Whoever controls the distribution of film and television controls the industry.
Mark Levere
Tanzanian Film Industry
Harare, Frontline Film Festival 1990



Cinema, as perceived by the entire world, is an expression of national identity. It is the so-called highest expression of art and business. Because it is so capital intensive, it always requires state supervision, in order to regulate the interests of culture and business. Because it trades in ideology and information, it is often the tool of politicians. It is the coal-face where politics, business, entertainment and art all meet.

When all these factors are brought into play, the only examples of cinema, including television and video, that ever get to see the light of day, are those that the dominant captains of finance and government allow. Thus 'cinema as an expression of national identity', is most often that cinema sanctioned by business and government, which supports the maintenance of power of both these sectors of society.

Every country in the world strives to establish a cinematic culture that reflects itself and its peoples. This is a vital characteristic of humankind and our use of communication. We all strive for a better understanding of ourselves and our communities. In South Africa most South Africans have been deprived of the possibility of seeing themselves portrayed on the silver screen.

All the countries in the world do this with greater or lesser degrees of success in the face of American cinema. This is not to say that American cinematic culture is all bad, but that it often excludes all other possibilities. The American market accounts for about 50% of world cinema. American cinema in all countries outside of America accounts for between 70% and 80% of those countries' cinema revenue. Cinema is America's third largest export commodity.

South Africa is no exception. The history of cinema in South Africa has been one of imperialism and colonisation. Since the first moving images were ever seen here, they have largely been American, or British, controlled by and from either America or Britain.

Since 1957 and the introduction of a regulated subsidy system, government and business have collaborated in the manipulation of cinema in South Africa. Ideology and capital came together in an attempt to create a national South African cinema, one that reflected South Africa. This was taken to its extreme when in 1988, P. W. Botha declared the film industry a 'strategic industry', to be harnessed and used in the 'total war' against the 'enemies' of South Africa. Thus cinema became part of apartheid's military campaign.

A true reflection it strangely did create: one that is racist, sexist, and elitist. A national identity which denied the existence of the majority of South Africans,

which enforced a master/servant ideology, and which made most South Africans illegal in their own land, and in their own cinemas.

This apartheid legacy has been implemented and controlled by the SABC, Ster-Kinekor, Nu Metro and UIP. Relatively few works of cinema have been able to be made outside of these structures, and those that have, have rarely been seen. And if they have not been seen, the very essence of their existence is denied. For cinema is made to be seen, and only through distribution and exhibition networks is this possible.

In the world of distribution and exhibition the maxim 'the audience knows what it wants' is often bandied about, in an attempt to prove that what an audience goes to see is what it wants to see. This is a misconception. The audience can only go and see films that are there to be seen. The choice of what to watch is dictated by a very small number of individuals, starting in America, and filtering down throughout the world. Nobody really knows what works, or otherwise every film made would be a financial and critical success. It comes down to what a very few people, largely distributors, think will work, both financially and critically.

There is a long and complex history of what has worked in the past. But most people in the world have been forced to watch a particular type of cinema. Powerful American distributors and exhibitors tell people what they ought to go and see, through massive marketing and promotional campaigns. Often more money is spent on marketing a film than on making it.

This is nowhere more true than in South Africa. Controlled by the State's attitude to the ideology of cinema, of being part of the First world, by local distributors' and exhibitors' desire to make enormous revenues whatever the cultural cost, South Africans have been deprived of choice. Distributors, hand-in-glove with the State, have controlled the cinema culture and industry, because it has suited their financial and political desires.

Distributors and exhibitors have chosen to allow South African audiences to see a cinema that has masked the realities of South African society. These choices have been made based largely on films that have been financially lucrative in America and Europe. Secondly, the only South African cinema that they have chosen to actively promote is one that reflects a one-sided Afrikaner culture, based on 'candid-camera' type spoofs. They have consistently refused to promote a South African cinema that reflects the myriad of cultures and stories that exist.

In order to better understand the cultural arena that has to be changed, let us briefly examine the history of exhibition and distribution of cinema in South Africa. This is by no means exhaustive or definitive. It is merely an attempt at analysing what measures have been utilised in order to make all South Africans believe they are part of the First World, and that racism is natural.

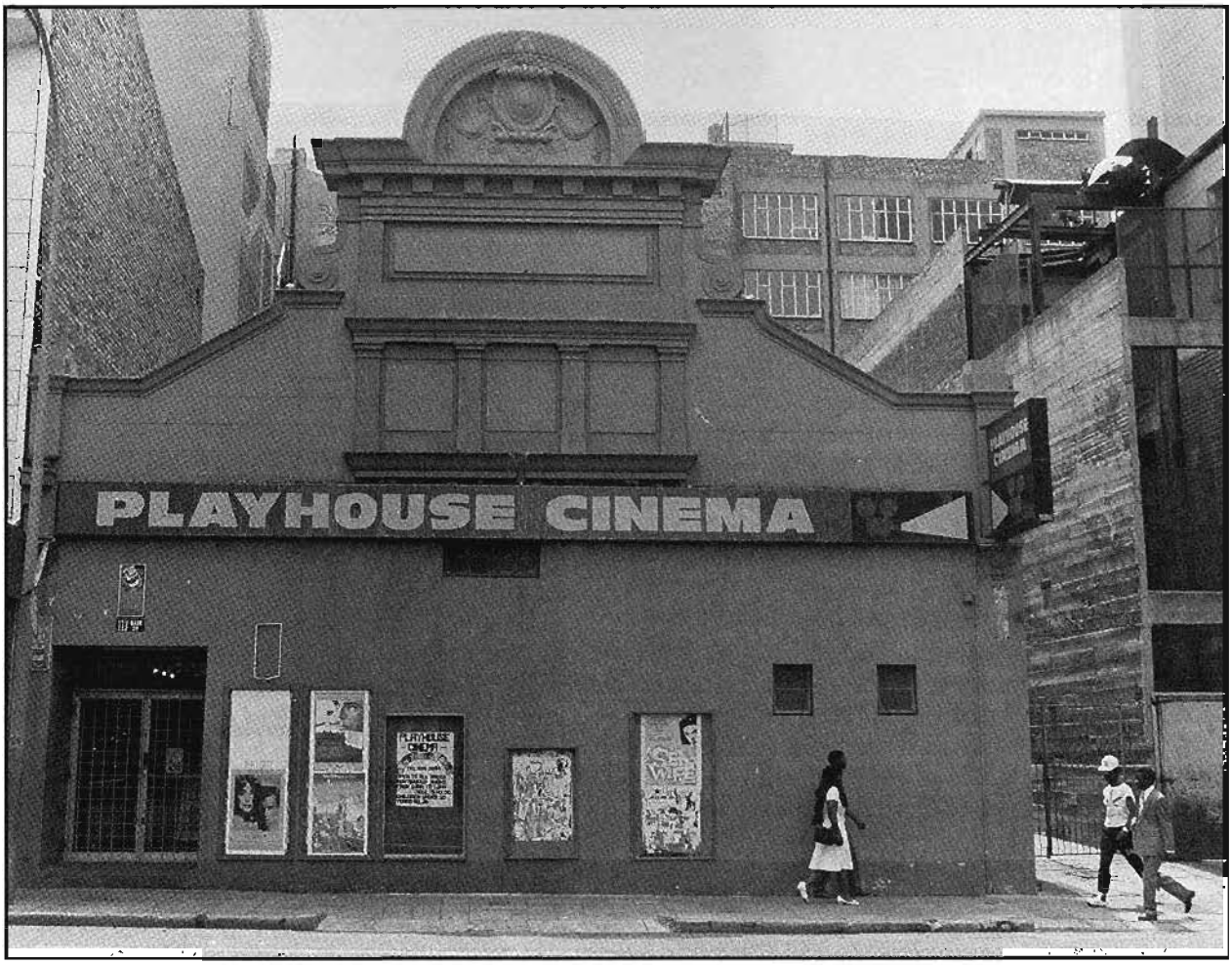
A Brief History of Exhibition and Distribution in South Africa

The first example of the moving picture appeared in Johannesburg in early 1895. Edison's kinetoscope or peep-show was first shown to President Paul Kruger, so beginning a long history of collaboration between Government and distribution, and reflecting distributors' reliance on Government. The first projector came from Britain. These examples of spectacle were confined to the urban centres like Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. The screenings took place mainly as part of circuses, vaudeville shows or at roller-skating rinks.

Each new invention or development of the machinery drew more and more people to the cinema. Investors from Britain looked on South Africa, one of its colonies, as a potentially lucrative market. Films shown came only from America or Britain.

The audiences aimed at were only the white people living in the new colony. The majority of South Africans, from the very beginning, were never perceived as an audience worth cultivating. Itinerant showmen began to take the invention on tour to rural and less accessible areas, still avoiding black South Africa.

The history of organised cinema begun with the formation of the South African Biograph and Mutoscope Company. This company was a branch of the British Bioscope and Mutoscope company, which in turn was a subsidiary of the American Bioscope and Mutoscope company. The first Bioscope and Mutoscope shows were



Playhouse Cinema — Johannesburg City
• Photo: Giulio Biccari •

held in 1899 in Pritchard Street in Johannesburg.

During the Anglo-Boer War, filming was more important than exhibition. The war turned exhibition into chaos. Touring shows were still popular, as were the shows in bigger cities. But they were haphazardly organised. American, British and now French and Italian films were shown. Films of the war were very popular. Two companies emerged as the dominant forces, Perkins's Biograph and Wolfram's Bioscope. By the end of the Boer War, the South African Bioscope company was in financial trouble, so Wolfram teemed up with one of his major competitors, Rees, and they monopolised the distribution until 1908.

Names of companies operating during this time include the Royal Bioscope, Olympic Bioscope, Anglo-American, and Franco-Swiss Bioscope company. Competition was rife as many independent 'quick buck' operators sprang up, intent on making huge profits in the shortest time possible.

Unrest was growing and increasingly the cinema became the only form of entertainment.

In 1909, the move to exploit the popularity of cinema in South Africa came from England in the form of Frederick Mouillot. His Electric Theatres, a British company, formed a South African subsidiary. He had a permanent circuit in Britain. But the Electric company did not last long, as the British owners saw South Africa as a dumping ground for their worn-out films, and wanted to make quick money rather than invest in development.

Several Canadians and Australians also started ventures. Wolfram and Rees' Union Bioscope company

began the picture palace idea. The attempt to build circuits was the next step in trying to build an organised industry. The Union Bioscope, Tivoli and the Bijou companies were the prime movers in this regard. These circuits screened films in their own cinemas as well as in independents. The Bijou fell out as did many speculators. Hotels and cafes entered the scene, and the era of the lounge tearoom began. Picture palace fever reigned but many did not last six months. Shops, halls, warehouses, stores, and abandoned theatres were the first venues. By the end of 1910, the 4 major companies started opening distribution agencies, which serviced both the palaces and the independent cinema owners.

By the end of 1910 there were many bioscopes scattered throughout the country, which except for a few led a precarious existence, frequently closing and reopening under new management. These exhibitors imported films themselves from overseas agencies. But this was too expensive and these owners had to sell their films to lesser owners at a reduced cost. So exhibitors were also distributing films.

In 1911 organisations were established that took the distribution out the hands of exhibitors. The African Film Syndicate (Fisher), the Universal Film Supply Company, and the Pathe agency started. But the business was precarious and profits were not enormous. The 'bioscope boom' had reached its peak in 1910. Many palaces closed in early 1911.

Owners tried for more publicity. Exclusive American rights became a drawcard. The 'star' system was also introduced. In 1911 the Tivoli and Union companies merged, renamed the Africa Amalgamated Theatres. A large circuit was thus established, with the 1 500 seat Orpheum palace on the present Anstey's building site launched.

The Grand company also bought up smaller cinemas and started a large circuit. Called the Empire Theatres Company, it incorporated the Grand cinemas, the Empire cinemas and the African Film Syndicate distribution agency.

However, these circuits could not sustain themselves, the competition being very fierce, forcing prices down. In 1913 the Empire Theatres company went into liquidation. A new way of organising exhibition needed to be devised, and the emerging idea was co-operative rather than internecine competition.

I.W. Schlesinger, an American involved in insurance in Johannesburg, bought the Empire Theatres and African Amalgamated Theatres in 1913. He intended creating a financially viable circuit and also a way of controlling admission prices. Thus the African Theatres Trust was formed. It controlled all the major cinemas in Johannesburg and most of the major cinemas all over South Africa.

At this time there were 150 cinemas, and seven distributing agencies. Schlesinger got all these companies to merge under the banner of his African Films Trust, a distribution and importing agency. African Caterers also merged all the bio-cafes into one company. A mega monopoly had been launched.

African Theatres Trust were criticised for their monopoly control. However, with the world on the brink of World War I, little was achieved in attempting to break the monopoly. By the end of 1915, the African Theatres Trust controlled 50 cinemas and distribution to the remaining independents.

Throughout the war the African Theatres Trust bought up cinemas, as well as leasing those cinemas they did not own, continuously expanding. They froze out any competition. Almost all cinemas not owned by the Trust hired films from them. The only independent who tried to remain so, was Fisher, and he advertised as such. Fisher was finally bought out by Schlesinger in 1918.

However the African Theatres Trust was under attack from another quarter. This time from the Union government, who entered the distribution and exhibition business, masquerading as an independent distributor, who was trying to obtain screenings for 'charity', basically for government use.

By this time, 1918, the cinema had become incorporated into white South African life. No attempts to develop black South Africans as an audience had been made. American cinema was surging ahead, with South African cinemas getting the films relatively soon afterwards. British films continued to be shown, but to a lesser extent. An outcry against the American monopoly arose in 1926, coupled with the accusation that British films were of poor quality.

Schlesinger was appointed to the board of the British International Pictures, the largest company in Britain. He argued against instituting a quota system for British films in the colonies and abolishing the block booking system whereby exhibitors were forced to buy American films in bulk regardless of their quality. He rather wanted better British films to be made.

By 1921 the African Theatre and Film Trusts were unable to deal with the demand. In order to expand, the Trusts were formed into public companies. The companies built many new cinemas. Other independents sprung up, including the Rialto Film Company, the Feature Film Booking Office, the Anglo-African Kinema and the New Independent Film Exchange. None of these represented a serious assault on the monopoly. The African Trust merely countered the opposition by saying that the cinema industry was open to all.

However on 17 December 1925, the American Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) announced that it would distribute to independent exhibitors. But MGM eventually entered into contracts with African Theatres. In 1926, United Artists established a company in South Africa for the distribution of its own films. African Theatres replied by building more cinemas. Public indignation at the American company helped give African Theatres a better image. However, at the end of 1926, African Theatres bought the rights to United Artists films, thus further limiting competition.

In 1927, a small company called Kinemas was formed, with the aim of distributing 'talking-pictures'. It aimed to build cinemas capable of showing films with sound. Because of the initial successes, Kinemas bought a small exhibition company called Independent Film Services. Kinemas organised country-wide opposition to African Theatres, creating a large network. Six months later they formed a public company. The bioscope industry was becoming the cinema industry. The monopoly of fourteen years was in the process of being broken.

There was talk of municipalities controlling their own cinemas or halls, as they then were. This was in opposition to African Theatres' monopoly.

In 1927 the battle came to a head with a court case over the use of the title 'The Somme' by both Kinema and African Theatres. African Theatres were found to be guilty of trying to limit competition.

Both companies were building cinemas at a huge rate, building larger and larger cinemas. By the end of 1928 Kinemas had 60 cinemas. Competition included bomb threats from anonymous telephone callers. Kinemas had cinemas in then Rhodesia, Uganda, and Kenya.

With the introduction of 'talkies', Kinemas had a decided advantage. By the end of 1929 they had built 100 cinemas. There was talk of an amalgamation, but nothing materialised.

New cinemas were built by offering public shares in the buildings. These 'atmospheric cinemas' were huge cinemas, complete with thick carpets, upholstered armchairs, enormous entrance halls and galleries, Wurlitzer organs and 'cosmetic rooms'.

In April of 1931, MGM head Edward Schiller arrived to investigate South Africa for himself. MGM was dissatisfied with the terms of the deals concerning the showing of their films in SA. MGM films were being shown in SA through Union Theatres, owned by Schlesinger.

With the 1930s depression in full swing, MGM began its South African operations, setting up a distribution company. In the face of this pressure, on 2 December 1931, African Theatres and Films Ltd and Kinemas Ltd merged, so creating the largest monopoly to date.

African Consolidated Films Ltd and African Consolidated Theatres Ltd were thus born, controlling cinemas, distribution companies and agencies, as well as a production company. The companies were worn out through their competition. The competition between the companies had given white South African audiences examples of different films, but once again had ended in a monopoly situation.

In 1932 MGM opened its first cinema, the Metro, in Johannesburg. Seating 3 000 people, it was the largest in the country. In 1934 MGM began importing films from other companies, particularly United Artists. Between 1933 and 1937, audiences flocked to the cinemas, making fortunes for the distributors and exhibitors.

In 1937 executives from both Twentieth Century Fox and United Artists arrived in South Africa. Twentieth Century Fox set up a company in 1938 to distribute films in South Africa, and began investigating local business

for capital to build its own cinemas. Twentieth Century Fox was particularly interested in the then Rhodesia, Kenya, Mozambique and in fact the entire region.

Twentieth Century Fox opened 13 cinemas in 1938, 27 in 1939, and 8 in 1940. These included cinemas in Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania, South West Africa, Zanzibar and Rhodesia. The building spree was phenomenal. South African investors had exceeded all expectations, investing huge amounts of money.

United Artists combined with Fox, opening an office in Johannesburg. The United Artists films were screened in Fox cinemas. African Consolidated Theatres also continued building cinemas, some 5 in 1938, and a further 6 in 1939. Competition was again tense.

Cinema chains competed with each other for the audiences, which at this stage was still predominantly white, although several cinemas had been built specifically for black audiences. These include the Rio, in Johannesburg, the Lyric in Fordsburg and the Avalon in Durban.

World War II interrupted cinema by reducing the audiences, soldiers going off to war, the difficulty of obtaining material and the depression created by the war initially did not encourage cinema-going. Independents were finally broken by the Fox and United Artists entrance to the scene.

In 1940 the rise of Afrikaner nationalism also saw a new interest in the cinema. The Reddingsdaadbond created a special branch to make short documentaries and newsreels. The Volksbioskope Maatskappy Beperk (VOBI) was founded, with its principle of 'film is more powerful than force'. It concentrated on showing films in schools, community halls and eventually cinemas. No provision had ever been made for Afrikaans speaking people, and this initiative filled the gap.

Thus began the rise of Afrikaner capital into the exhibition and distribution business. A company was launched by Andre Pieterse, called Ster, with the explicit intention of providing cinema for predominantly Afrikaner patrons, who had not really been exploited as an audience.

Twentieth Century Fox bought out Schlesinger's African Consolidated Theatres in 1956, establishing American interests firmly in South Africa. African Consolidated Theatres was until that time the dominant exhibitor and distributor. Twentieth Century Fox had existed profitably since its arrival in 1940, building and buying cinemas.

Ster, with the backing of SANLAM's (the giant insurance company) investment, attacked Fox by creating an independent circuit of largely drive-ins and small cinemas, serviced by their own distribution company, and by acquiring product from Fox's American competitors, Columbia and Paramount. During 1961, Ster led a legal attack on Fox, through the Regulation of Monopolistic Conditions Act of 1955. The Board of Trade and Industries found that monopolistic conditions existed, and Fox voluntarily reorganised themselves.

By the end of 1966, Ster had 38 cinemas, Fox 107. With too many films to show, and not enough cinemas, and highly indebted to SANLAM, Ster finally bought out Fox in 1969. All the major players, Schlesinger, Fox, SANLAM and Ster, were now united in one company, much to the dismay of other American major studios, who stood to benefit from the competition.

SANLAM created the Suid-Afrikaanse Teaterbelange Beperk (SATBEL), as the parent company of Ster and Kinekor (Fox), with an enormous injection of capital. They insisted that the two companies would be independent and would compete with each other.

Pieterse broke with Ster and formed Film Trust, and brought MGM into his fold during 1971. CIC, a company set up by Paramount and Universal to distribute their films, and those of MGM, everywhere except in America, made Film Trust a competitor for the two Satbel 'independents' by purchasing 50% of the company. The new holding company was called Cintrust.

American majors were at this time pursuing a policy of building, with local capital, cinemas throughout the world, for the distribution of their films.

Satbel now represented Ster (20 cinemas), Kinekor (83 cinemas), Cinemark (controlled all screen advertising), Irene Film Laboratories, Killarney and SA Film Studios (production companies), ACF Merchandising (cinema equipment), Cine 16 (16mm distribution), with interests in several other cinema related companies.

By 1972, Satbel owned 160 of the 360 cinemas in South Africa. They controlled about 30% of the remain-

ing cinemas, giving them 60% of the total exhibition revenue.

In response to the advent of television in South Africa in 1976, Ster and Kinekor finally merged officially in 1977. The entire industry restructured itself, not wanting to be devastated by television, as had happened in America. CIC involved international and local capital in building cinemas, so providing outlets for American film.

At this time the Government invaded the neighbouring country of Angola, resulting in many white South Africans entering the military. Together with the impact of television, cinema attendances dropped 18% at cinemas and 35.5% at drive-ins. This affected Afrikaans films severely, particularly in the rural areas, which constituted their biggest audiences.

By the end of 1976, Film Trust sold its share in Cintrust to the now CIC-Warner (Warner Brothers having joined the international company). Satbel, free of long-term distribution contracts to the majors, was able

The Rio Cinema — Johannesburg City • Photo: Giulio Biccari •

to be more flexible and screen films only if they were financially viable.

By 1978 the industry had recovered from the recession created by the introduction of television, raking in more revenues than ever before. CIC-Warner, now also representing Orion (four of the seven American majors), had to look to distributing its films through Satbel, as its own 20 cinemas were not enough. Thus began the custom of distributing on each others circuits, Satbel and CIC operating closely together. Local Afrikaans cinema was pushed into the cold, with both companies concentrating on the American products, due mainly to their long-term commitments.

At this stage, black and white audiences were still treated differently, with the development of the so-called 'black circuit', appallingly low quality films made by white producers for black audiences. The audiences in South Africa had been separated and divided, each with its own set of rules and operations, different films for each group. Any film that managed to be made that in any way reflected a South African society in turmoil, received no distribution whatsoever.

Today, Ster-Kinekor has long-term distribution contracts with Columbia, Twentieth Century Fox, Tri-Star and Orion. In 1989 it had 183 cinemas, representing 35 280 seats, and 36 drive-ins, with 26 571 car-berths. It had a yearly attendance of 11,8 million people, which in 1990 rose 13% to 13,3 million people. In its 1991 yearly report it stated that it planned to expand its 212 cinemas to 392. In 1989 it distributed 10 South African films.

Ster-Kinekor is owned by Interleisure. Kersaf and Federale Volksbeleggings each own 38% of Interleisure, with SANLAM owning the rest. In turn, 76% of Kersaf is owned by SAFREN, a huge South African company. Interleisure is involved in cinema exhibition and distribution through Ster-Kinekor, film and television production through Toron Studios, video distribution, cinema advertising, Computicket, coin-operated amusements, bus shelter advertising, Irene film laboratories, Boswell Wilkie circus, restaurants, fast food chains, sports wholesaling and retailing.

In 1990 cinemas contributed 50% towards its overall profit, film production 15%, services 24%, food 10% and sport 1%.

In 1987, Ster-Kinekor earned R2 710 000 in overall profit, rising to R62 148 000 in 1990. After tax, this represents R2 044 000(1987) and R38 600 000(1990). If distribution and exhibition account for 50% of the profit, then in 1990, Ster-Kinekor earned R19 300 000 from cinema exhibition and distribution alone.

Ster-Kinekor's managing director, Mike Egan, claimed that in 1986, 200 000 black South Africans went to the cinema. In 1990 the figure reached two million. Ster-Kinekor is planning to build forty-four new cinemas in so-called black areas over the next few years, and one hundred and thirty-six cinemas in white areas. In October 1991, Ster-Kinekor dropped the price of their day screenings to R6-50 from R10-00.

Nu-Metro holds the film distribution rights to Cannon, and through Gallo, it holds the video distribution rights to Disney, Warner and Touchstone. In 1990 it had 78 cinemas, representing 16 210 seats. It had no drive-ins. It distributed 8 South African-made films.

In October 1990, the Nu-Metro group sold 50% of its shares to Gallo, apparently for about R12m. By combining their home video companies they now constitute the largest home video company in the country. Anglo-American, via the Johnnies company, own the Argus Group of Companies. The Argus Group in turn owns CNA-Gallo, several other video companies, part of Toron Studios, and most of the bookshops in South Africa.

UIP represents Paramount, Universal, and MGM/UA. Based in America, it is primarily in South Africa to promote and protect the interests of these companies.

Independent cinemas are largely second-run cinemas (cinemas screening films that have already played the major networks), playing double-bill shows, at costs of between R1-00 and R2-00. There are approximately 145 independent cinemas.

The segregation of cinemas

The history of exhibition in South Africa has been one of racism and segregation. CIC-Warner apparently applied to the government as early as 1975 for cinemas to be desegregated. They applied for multi-racial exemption. However nothing happened until 1985, when Peter Dig-

nan, the new head of UIP, arrived in South Africa.

At drive-ins, black patrons were only allowed to park at the back in specially enclosed areas. In some cinemas, they were restricted to the first few rows, or the balconies in larger cinemas. However, blacks only and whites only cinemas were the more common rule.

In 1985, UIP made several applications to de-segregate cinemas. Most cinemas refused outright, especially in the rural or small town areas. Only when Dignan withheld films in several cinemas in Pretoria for a period of 5 weeks, did cinemas change. After a long period of avoidance of the issue, and through the threat of not getting films, did most cinemas change their policies. Ster-Kinekor held out as long as possible.

1987 saw the cultural boycott being implemented by liberation movements. It was felt that if South African audiences, and in particular white audiences, were deprived of American and international cinema, they would realise that apartheid was wrong. This had very little effect on the industry. Only filmmakers such as Woody Allen and Spike Lee managed to withhold their films from being seen inside South Africa. An organisation called the Filmmakers United Against Apartheid (FUAA) was set up by Jonathan Demme, Spike Lee, and Woody Allen amongst others, with over 200 signatures of major American and British filmmakers.

Communication between them and the then President of America, Reagan, bore no fruit. Reagan refused to stop American films from coming to South Africa. Jack Valenti, head of the powerful Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), also refused to prohibit American films from coming to South Africa, stating that it was 'more important for South Africans of all races to see how a free country could operate.'

Obviously there were strong financial pressures on him, as South Africa is seen as a good, profitable source of revenue for American films.

A spirit of friendly competition exists, whereby major American and British films get released on both circuits. UIP, under Peter Dignan, continues to control the market. It has developed an exhibitors pay-scale for every cinema in the Nu Metro and Ster-Kinekor chain, as well as for independent cinemas, whereby each cinema has a rate which it pays to the distributor for any film that they screen. Thus it is able to control the very foundation of the film industry in South Africa.

Both Ster-Kinekor and Nu Metro have recently embarked upon the building of cinemas in black areas, for the first time acknowledging the existence and importance of the majority of South Africans, so clearly deprived both socially and economically of the chance to be part of a cinema-going public.

Conclusions

From the very beginning of exhibition and distribution in South Africa, several patterns have emerged which keep on repeating themselves.

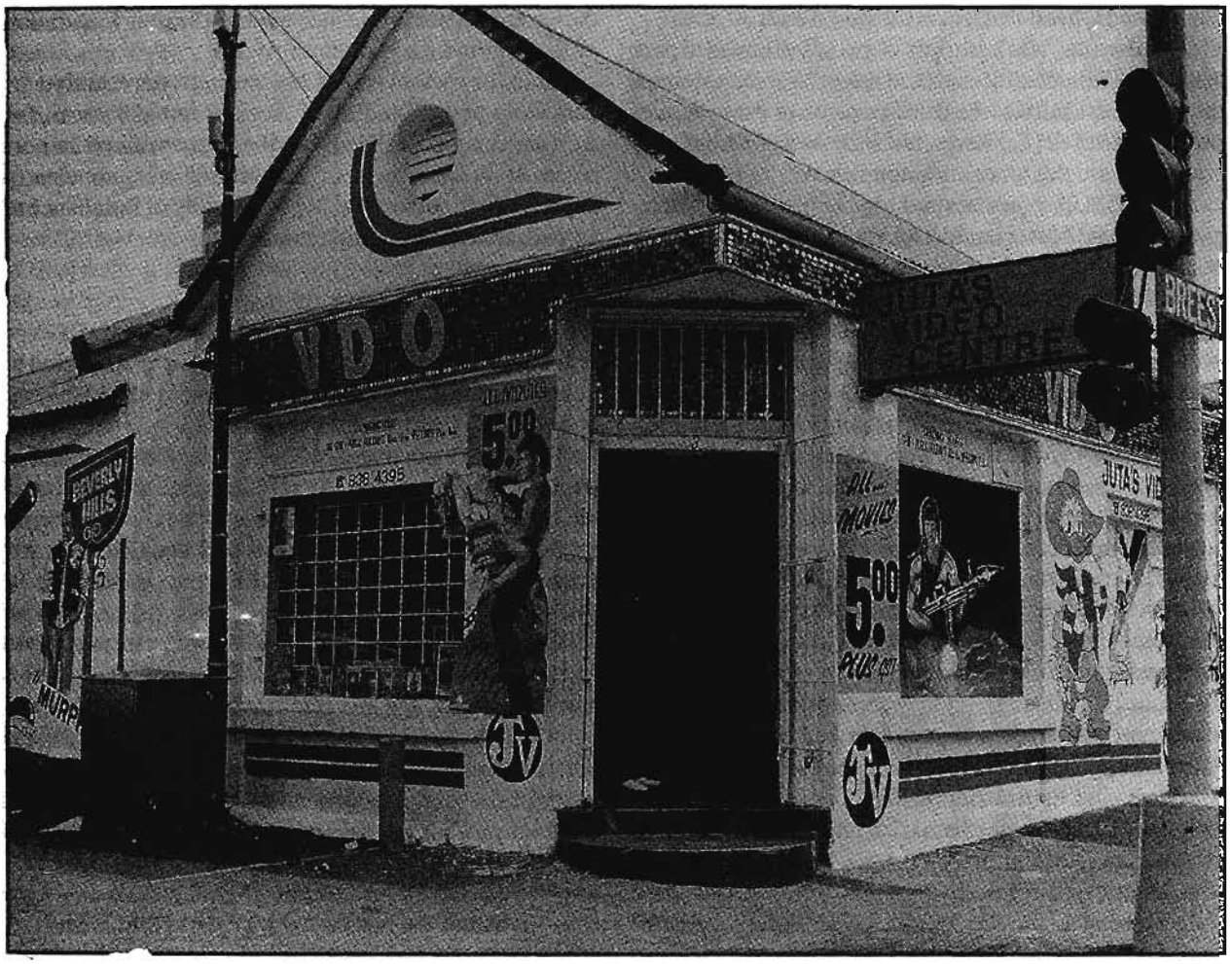
Firstly, the context of exhibition and distribution is important in relation to the political and social state of the country. Times of uncertainty, such as mass upheaval, riots, war, both international and civil, strikes and economic depression, all affect cinema attendance in two ways.

One analysis reflects the link between social events and the cinema, between periods of war/uncertainty and the desire to escape this reality. South Africa has been involved in almost full-scale war since 1976. White South Africans have flocked to the cinema, in an attempt to avoid the reality of their lives.

A sense of social chaos develops, where no-one really knows what is going to happen next. Initially there is a drop in attendance, exacerbated by the intake of young white men into the military, which deprives cinemas of a large part of its audience.

This is followed by a sharp increase as people try to 'escape' the unpleasant realities of the world through entertainment. This creates an expectation on the part of the industry-owners of an imminent boom. The established companies begin making enormous profits. As a result, many independent entrepreneurs enter the fray, short on knowledge but intent on making the proverbial 'quick buck'.

As some of the independents drop out through bad management or as the market becomes saturated and cannot sustain the number of operators, the larger companies buy out the more successful distributors/exhibitors. Thus a monopoly situation develops, whereby one



Juta's Video Centre — Fordsburg • Photo: Giulio Biccari •

or two companies control the entire country. Competition in the form of international but primarily American companies creates initially a positive response, that the monopolies will be given good competition, so providing a better range of product for audiences. This competition grows until the large South African companies buy out their competition, restructuring the industry according to lines that suit themselves.

One analysis of this is that the South African market cannot really sustain a large number of operators. That there have to be strong controls that regulate the direction, and life-line of the industry. Monopolies have to be controlled, the so-called free market system does not operate efficiently.

The second way that the social situation of South Africa effects distribution is through ideological control. In times of political upheaval, the combined forces of government and capital actively and subconsciously work towards greater control of the industry.

Three periods of cinema exist in South Africa: when

South Africa, as the Union, was a colony of Britain, cinema was used by British interests to support its colonial desires; with the ascendancy of Afrikaner nationalism, international and Afrikaans cinema was supported by the state and capital in an attempt to reinforce its ideology, either by saturating the market with American cinema and forcing South Africans to 'escape' their realities, or by stimulating Afrikaner culture; and we stand on the brink of a new South African cinema.

In 1988 Afrikaner hegemony culminated in P. W. Botha's declaration that the film industry was 'strategic' and to be used in the 'total war' against South Africa's enemies. It reflects an understanding on the part of the government of the power of cinema and information if controlled to suit its own interests.

In order to break this down, an extraordinary amount of work needs to be done, with ultimately few resources, to counter the structures of apartheid. Progressive political parties need to be made aware of the power of cinema and need to act upon this information in ways that will create an open, honest, and viable distribution and exhibition culture.

However, this entire section on the historical development of exhibition and distribution has been predicated on the belief and practise that the only cinema-going public worth cultivating has been white in race. With the narrow concentration on English speakers in the first fifty years of cinema's existence, followed by the push by Afrikaans-speakers in the following thirty years, South Africa is living with a clear legacy of racial discrimination.

Black people of South Africa have had to settle for practically little or no cinema whatsoever, except as dictated by the joint interests of politics and economics in their attempts to preserve white supremacy. Exhibition and distribution of cinema has been, albeit sometimes less upfront in its intentions, obviously propagandistic.

The cinema that black people have been allowed to participate in as an audience has been propagandistic, at least, and of the lowest quality escapism, at most.

The majority of the population of this country have seldom been seen as a viable audience except in ways that have promoted racist ideology. This is surely a naive and impractical business decision, let alone the racist implications.

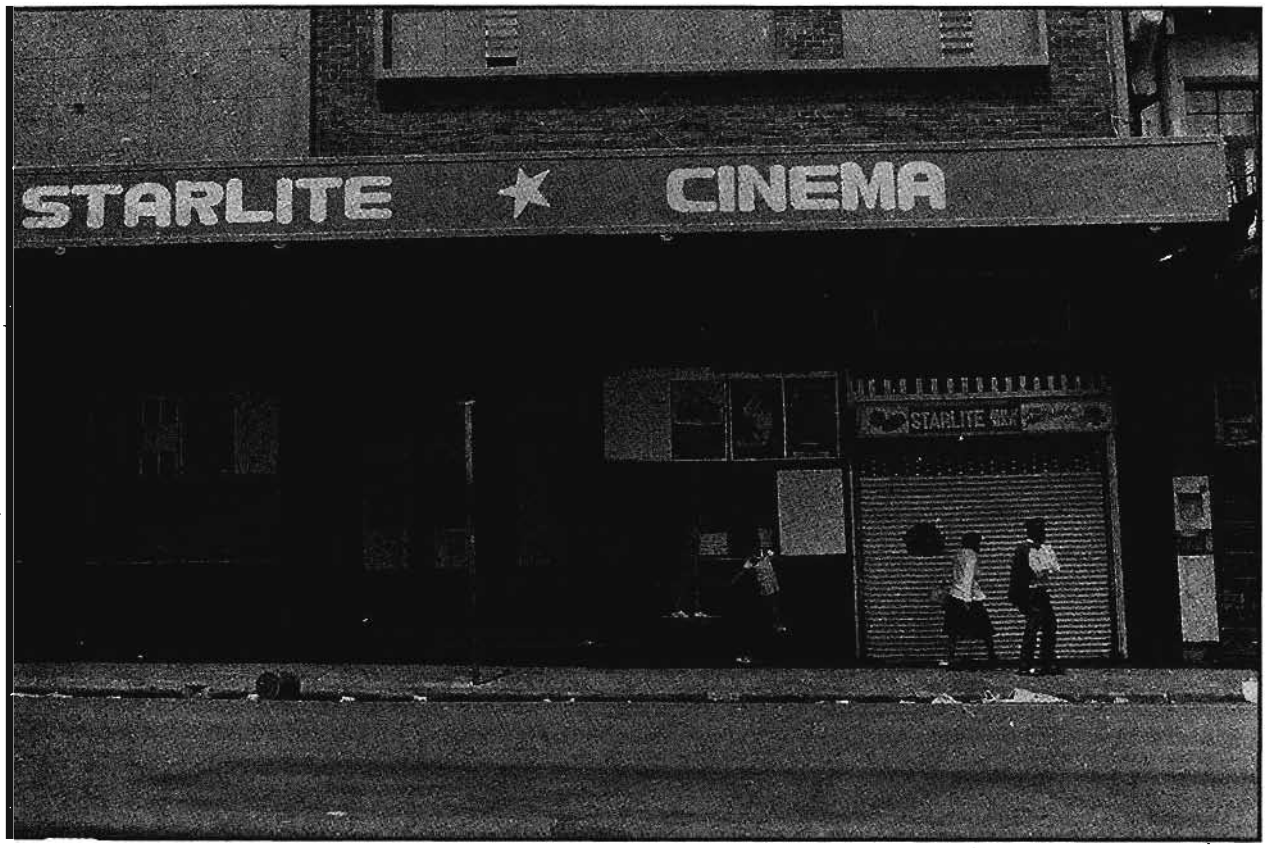
The collusion between international filmmakers and distributors, and South African capital and Government, has been incredibly successful. To such an extent that a virtual monopoly or duopoly (Ster-Kinekor and Nu Metro) exists today. With the ever decreasing possibility of nationalisation in this industry, the only way forward will be through the exploding of possibilities, not along the line of 'quick buck' exploiters, but through the careful development and sustained growth of competition that will allow the destruction of the centralised control, so permitting access to more cinemas by all South Africans.

Until the entire audience in South Africa is treated as worthy of being cultivated, there shall be no true cinema culture here. Until all South Africans are allowed to see themselves in stories about South Africa, not merely Afrikaans-speaking South Africans, there will be no film industry here.

History has shown that monopolies do last for long periods, but that they are not unbreachable fortresses. They can and do wither and die. In such a high risk industry, there have to be more skilled people really trying to develop a national cinema culture, that everyone can be proud of. And this self respect is so important to an industry such as this, made up as it is of social, political, and economic factors.

One pattern that has predominated has been the dependence on Eurocentric/American product. This is a phenomenon that every country in the world faces, including America itself. The possibility of options, of choice needs to be cultivated, whereby all world cinema, and especially South African cinema, has the opportunity to compete. The dominance of American cinema has to be carefully regulated. The market has to be controlled to protect this notion, it cannot function in a so-called free market, as this is never a reality, given the nature of capital in this particular industry.

As we enter a new era of South African social existence, with the balance of power moving towards black majority rule, the cinema industry will be forced to change, even if it is reluctant to do so. Cinema, as a true art should, and because of its link to politics and business,



The Starlite Cinema — Johannesburg City • Photo: Giulio Biccari •

will have to reflect the realities and dynamics of the country that it exists in. It is an arena that will not merely cave in, but will have to be fought for, against the wishes of American imperialism, and in the final analysis, victory will have to taken, not given.

Some Suggestions

In order to create a film industry that all South Africans could be proud of and participate in, strategies and tactics have to be employed that lead towards the aims and objectives of a dynamic and real cinematic culture. Viable alternatives have to pursued that will actively move our culture forward.

The aim of this new emergent South African cinematic culture must surely be that of recognising that cinema in this country is part of the overall social fabric. South Africans must be able to go to the cinema and enjoy what they see, both international and local product. Cinema as a cultural artifact, or product, must portray the national identity, and help create this identity, through all its diverse forms.

Another aim must be that of empowering those South Africans who have not had access to the cinema, either as part of an audience, or as makers of cinema. People must be free to express and watch the countless number of stories that exist, and that have never been told.

How is this to be achieved? The question of nation-

alisation must be debated, and ultimately rejected as a viable option. If we look at the experience of other countries such as Cuba, the enormous power of American cinema should not be overlooked.

After the Cuban revolution, America implemented a total boycott of American films to Cuba, with the result that only subtitled films could be imported and audiences, not used to this type of cinema, dropped off. Pirating of films became widespread and eventually those prohibited films were able to be seen anyway. However, this did force the Cuban filmmakers to make their own cinema, and excellent entertaining cinema at that, with the support of the new government. This government had the foresight and vision to support and enhance a nascent industry, and so created a national identity.

If culture, and film in particular is to be revolutionised here, and if it is through the political process, then film will be a function of the political process. If the mines get nationalised, then film may have a chance. However this will still need film workers to intervene and advise the new government of the role of cinema.

The other option is a mixture of government and capital involvement. Every country outside of America has state support in one way or another, that helps the local cinema compete with American film. A free market can never operate effectively, as film is so dependent on government in the first place, and secondly because the uncontrolled market will only reproduce itself, entrenching its grip on a risky industry. History has proved that film is a big risk venture, with huge financial possibilities, but mainly losses. Massive abuses of viable tax and subsidy structures in the recent years, based on human greed, has lead to its demise, and quite rightly so.

So a mixture of government and market support is essential, managed by filmmakers together with government and business. This cinema culture must have built-in possibilities to experiment and fail, education, production and distribution/exhibition support. If filmmakers do not involve themselves in the creation of their own industry, they only have themselves to blame.

As exhibition and distribution are the interface between product and consumers, between filmmakers and audience, they must finance the industry. The people who watch cinema thus will finance the films they like. This should be on a partial basis, as it can not be the only solution. The government must make tax and grant finance available, as well as subsidies in a variety of forms, regulated by a responsible and accountable body.

Other countries throughout the world have an understanding of the role of American cinema, and have created government supported distribution/exhibition networks. Sometimes this is done through a quota system, where the law regulates that a certain percentage of foreign films are allowed to be seen on screens and television. This can be flexible, with the percentage decreasing as local cinema becomes commercially viable. This strategy enforces distributors to cultivate South African films that are entertaining and culturally important. It allows filmmakers and audiences here to learn about each other.

Another way is to enforce by law that a certain percentage of revenue earned by foreign films in South Africa be made available to South African filmmakers for the education, production, distribution and exhibition of local films. This does not stop foreign films from coming to South Africa, but ensures that South Africans are not merely exploited as an audience for American and other foreign concerns. Rather it encourages them to build more and better cinemas, and to help create a viable local industry that not only the entire population of South Africa, but also the entire world, would be proud of and keen to see. Thus foreign control would be regulated, so prohibiting the swamping of South African culture. International cinema will thus be actively participating in the creation of a real South African cinema.

The only way that these two possibilities could be used effectively is if the quota system and revenue percentages are controlled by law, and if Ster-Kinekor and Nu-Metro are prohibited from merely increasing the price of cinema tickets. An advisory, representative and accountable body, dominated by filmmakers, needs to be established that advises government and business. The entire new system of VAT on cinema ticket prices also needs to be examined, as the revenue generated by this will only be misused by an already discredited government and Home Affairs Department.

How does one break the apartheid government's ideological control and capital's abuse? Actions need to

be taken on several fronts, but central to these actions needs to be a fundamental decision lying at the very base of the film industry throughout the world. Does one follow a path of conglomeration, by allowing the incorporation of exhibition, distribution, and production under a single company? Or does one rather opt for a separation of these endeavours, possibly prohibiting by law the concentration of power. This question has been at the centre of cinema debate since it began.

The maintaining of independence between the three branches of the film process, it has been argued, allows for healthy competition, and results in better films, distribution and theatre management, possibly a more market orientated industry. On the other hand, vertical integration allows for more efficient control and possibly more emphasis on the profit motive. This vertical integration has resulted in the massive abuse of power and concentration of this power in the hands of a few people. In America there have been attempts to break this vertical integration, with the end result being that producing/distributing major film companies can no longer own cinemas. However they still control them indirectly by long-term product. 'If you don't take this film, you will never get another film from us.'

If the aim of this paper is to argue for the rehabilitation of the cinema industry, as an industry, for the abuses of power to be rectified and for the flowering of cinematic possibilities for all South Africans, then one has to argue for the control of power and for the breaking of a centralised cinema industry, for the removal of vertical integration. If one wants to develop cinemas as sites of culture, and to make cinema for, with and by the people, then one must argue that vertical integration must be fought. The best solution may be placing the control of the cinemas in the hands of the people for whom they are designed.

Thus Scandinavian experience becomes important, where the concept of 'municipal cinemas' has worked effectively. Cinemas run by the communities themselves, serviced by local and national distribution companies, with products made for them by state and capital supported funding, is an option then to be considered. It would appear that the best solution is to at least separate exhibition and distribution from each other. For this to work, it must entail total co-operation between the communities, the distributors, the filmmakers, the government and capital.

Anyhow, let us assume that the best policy is towards this independence. Like all other areas of South African society, a campaign needs to be mounted whereby the existing apartheid mentality/monopoly must be fought and broken. This campaign, in order to create a truly democratic future, must involve all the organs of civil society. The public must be informed of the current unacceptable situation, and must be brought into the movement for a truly South African cinematic culture. Real alternatives have to be developed.

In terms of the South African law as it stands today, there are several remedies that exist whereby the huge distribution/exhibition duopoly or monopoly could be challenged.

The REGULATION OF MONOPOLISTIC CONDITIONS ACT 24 of 1955 was the first legislation that regulated harmful monopolistic conditions in South Africa, eliminating by administration conditions which are not in the public interest. The Board of Trade and Industries (BTI) must, on the directions of the Minister of Economic Affairs, make such investigations as it considers necessary. It must make recommendations to the minister, who has the discretion to take remedial action. The minister can then tell the guilty party to stop such acts, or declare the acts to be unlawful and enforce the prohibition of such acts. Guilty parties can be fined R20 000 or 5 years in jail.

On 12 December 1961, a case was begun, involving the distribution of motion pictures in South Africa. Ster was attempting to prohibit Twentieth Century Fox from monopolising the industry. The BTI found that indeed certain monopolistic conditions did exist, which Fox voluntarily remedied. No other action was recommended. And Ster began its march towards its own monopoly, which has yet to be challenged.

The MAINTENANCE AND PROMOTION OF COMPETITION ACT 96 of 1979 relates to unfair competition. In discussions with a variety of independent cinema owners, they have all stated that they will be closed down by the majors, by not getting any of their films to distribute, if they allow films to be seen in their cinemas

that are not theirs. They say that they could hide the fact of screening independent films for between 6 and 9 weeks a year. This could be deemed an example of unfair competition, but no legal action has ever been taken. The control of international distributors with long-term contracts by the two majors could also be deemed an unfair act.

Application must be made to the Competition Board which is appointed by the government. Investigations are then carried out, and fines and jail sentences can be imposed. These avenues need extensive legal research before embarking on.

In order to be successful in these actions, there have to be real alternatives waiting in the wings. When the monopolies/duopolies are broken, commercial distribution and exhibition companies have to be ready, with viable track-records, that will be able to professionally service the needs of an entire society, in a new and innovative way. One does not want to merely replace the existing companies with replicas of themselves, but to have companies that are actively involved in creating dynamic new possibilities.

Therefore, extensive financial research and packaging needs to happen, which must be combined with the obtaining of films from all over the world, as well as South Africa, which would enable these companies to provide an alternative to the present majors. Thus there has to be both the product and the places to screen them, if one is going to be a real alternative. And as the industry is after all a business, this has to be done along business lines.

The cultural boycott could still be used to pressurise international companies into working with these alternative possibilities, instead of merely carrying on with the majors. By international distribution companies thus empowering local initiatives, they will have the muscle to negotiate with Ster-Kinekor, Nu-Metro and UIP, especially if these films are possible financial successes. One should use the boycott in the sense of forcing the majors into negotiating and discussing the future distribution and exhibition structures.

What is of absolutely vital importance is the inclusion of civil society in the debate over the future of cinema distribution and exhibition in South Africa. If South African and international cinema is to be made available to all South Africans in new and innovative ways, this cannot be done in top-down, monopolistic ways. The organs of civil society, such as community organisations, educational organisations, unions, political organisations and cultural bodies need to be included in the design and planning of these possibilities. For they and their members are the audiences for whom cinema is made, who will prove that South African cinema is indeed commercially viable.

South Africans stand on the brink of being able to restructure their entire system of cinematic culture. It is not only up to filmmakers, but also the audiences, both groups historically excluded from the decision-making process, to participate in the formatyion of the new South African cinema.

Although some may scoff that this is idealistic and unworkable, if one is intent on redressing the cultural crimes of the past, irrevocably, then one has a duty to embark on creating the possibility. It can only benefit all South Africans, and the entire world.

NOTES

1. The section on the brief history of distribution and exhibition owes much to two books; *The History and Social Significance of Motion Pictures in South Africa*, by Thelma Gutsche, and to Keyan Tomaselli's *The Cinema of Apartheid*.

Arrival II

'This is a war zone,' says he
'Copters hovering above
Streets littered with smashed bottles
Crashed stones
Black-smoking remnants of a burning barricade
An overturned bus
in its last glow of glory
Soldiers on every corner
Some astride hippoes
Drunk on fear and confiscated booze
A wary cat in the hedge
Glimmers of hope and determination
Graffitied on every available wallspace
A general dealer's burglar guards drawn
Eleven a.m.
and they have called it a day
A Zola Budd rolls to a halt
No passengers, the holiday is unanimous
A weary, drunken soldier
His R4 rifle obscenely protruding from his crotch
Sits down against a wall
Enclosing Local Authorities blunders
Behind and above him
Sprayed in black and red paint 'One man, one vote'
'One bullet, one fascist'
'One necklace, one sellout'
Deep, deeper in the ghetto
At Sis Mary's it's business as usual
Sounds of 'Ag, shame lovey' blare out
In some room, in some building, in some street
A tense strategy meeting is in progress
In some room, in some building, in some street
Issues out throaty moans of painful pleasure
In some room, in some building, in some street
A cadential, monotonous drunken snore
Rivals the drone of the hovering helicopter
In some room, in some building, in some street
A worried mother wonders where the hell we are
    Smarten up, comrade
    We are home at last
    We arrived in good time

Senzo Malinga

In the Wheeling and Dealing Time

Kinsman how will the crimes
Of our land be purged
These days these intemperate days
Sometimes I wonder though
I'm no bluesman
Sometimes I wonder
Just what it is
Or where it is we are going to
Are we headed for the light
At the end of the tunnel
Zinjiva has already seen and sung
Moved to behold flowers with our mothers?
Or are we headhunters
Headed towards the chilling nightmare
Of an inexorable conflagration?
These days
                These intemperate days
                                Sometimes
.
I wonder
            Some times...no...often
These days I feel I should jump bad
Because as my brother says
Daar is kak in die land

Keorapetse Kgositsile

For David Rubadiri

Every fella is a foreign country says
My sister who is an area
Of mellow feeling and catharsis
Who can rage and rave like the blues
Or like La Guma's preacherman
Across vastnesses of land and water and memory
Who knows the world dont belong to General Motors
The world dont belong to Chase Manhattan
The world dont belong to Coca-Cola
No matter how cool
The pause that refreshes

Now though I am
Neither scientist nor philosopher
I know there is something of you
In Rubadiri of the slow smile
Which can explode into folds of laughter
Or the tears you can feel in the depths
Of his heart. Like you Rubadiri
Is a foreign fellow he is you
Rubadiri can ask a diplomat who talks
Can you make a baby smile
Rubadiri can ask any man
Do you know how it feels to be pregnant
Of a Sunday morning straight from service
Where he has been scratching his jaw sedately
Rubadiri can ask
In a tone juvenile mischief would envy
You know bhuti they talk as if
Sugar daddies are a thing of now
But Joseph the father of Jesus
Was he not the original sugar daddy

Keorapetse Kgositsile

anti-thesis: Song of Innocence

i was 3 when
blades of grass
have called me on one windy afternoon
and seduced me

in silence

while the wind and the mud
and our wooden shack and the rusted oil drum
and the smell of rotten rice

stared

expressionless, clouds like porridge.
Or semen,
Or eyewhite.

And let me introduce the term
natural socialism:

i was scattered across lawns
and assimilated into the smell of pine needles
carried along by the subordinate wind
and fertilising individual grains
of mommy and daddy's holy ground

while enveloped by creeping
i-vy
definitions were nurtured:
deconstruction
in multitude
fractured subject
post-structuralism
and you already i should have said
fuck you:

free my comrades from your
zealous
filing-cabinets

Mark Anderson

Sleeping In Church

Depending on the tall grey building is no sin.
Yea, depending on it for security and shelter
is no murder.
The hard cold floor
being my Sealy Posturpaedic mattress,
my arms are my pillow.

Through that window I sail like a snake,
a non-poisonous and undangerous snake,
a snake tamed by circumstances man-made.

Someone wanted me to live like a silly little rat,
that silly little rat which gives sleepers sleepless nights.
I wanted to live like a snail
which carries its own shelter and responsibilities.

I went to Ntate Sebutsa where he is a night-watchman,
asking him to allow me to take shelter in the building.
But he had no authority, so he sent me
to ask Mme Mmaselekane to permit me.
But because I was afraid to face Mme Mmaselekane,
as she was my guide, educationally and otherwise,
I decided to sail through the window unauthorised.

Through that window I have to sail in
like a harmless snake.
Some tired nights my sleeping time gets to be late:
when I find people churching in the grey tall building
I have to join them like a church-goer.

Sometimes when the authorities were around
I sheltered myself with Ntate Manyika,
an old man who had no place to sleep
so he slept in the maroon truck, where I also
sometimes took shelter on cold or rainy nights.

The maroon truck moved to nowhere.
Now Ntate Manyika and I had no place to sleep.

Through that window I have to sail in like a snake.
Depending on the grey tall building is no sin,
but one day I shall live like a snail
which carries its own shelter and responsibilities.

Benjamin Molefi

The Negotiating Poem

Everybody is talking
and from the prison cell emerge the disinterred
Time-shocked, they embrace the enslaved

Everybody is talking
Voices rushing
Into the GROOTE SCHUUR OF OPPRESSION
While the blind ARGUS persistently
Sells its own bargaining power

Down emaciated streets
  clenched fists roll
the footballs
 of the young soldiers in uniforms
Aha they are laughing and smoking
As they play with their balls
Of defiant flesh
While everybody is talking

In Guguletu and Hanover Park
In Imbali and Pabelello...in WELKOM
The unemployed
        painfully perform a daily obligation
Leaving not a stone unturned
        as they strive to restore the dance
of the starving gumboot
Not a stone
The child is crying
Whimpering again
For it knows only the language of hunger
And everybody is talking

I listen....
But only to the unemployed
and the employed
and employed
To the exploited worker
singing — saying:
'An injury to one
Is an injury....'

Cecil Prinsloo

In the Shacks of Inanda

Gladman Mvukuzane Ngubo

From *Where We Come From*
edited by Astrid von Kotze for the Culture and Working Life Project

Getting off the green Putco bus Mr Gudlindlu Mdlalose stood for a while at the bus stop, as if he didn't know where to go now. Of course he was a little bit confused. He had not been at Maotana in Inanda for ten years. And the place had completely changed, as there were now shacks built in the area.

He looked at his shoes full of dust. They told the story of his long walk from home to the bus stop in Mbumbulu.

'I'll go straight up this road, pass the first one to the right, and the second one is where my nephew's house is. I think I'm not mistaken. Yes, truly, I think I'm not mistaken,' he said softly, speaking to himself and drawing with his stick the road he was planning to follow.

He looked at his trousers, brushed them off with his hand and mumbled, 'No, I'm wasting time. It's already a windy day and these roads are dusty too. So no one can recognise that I'm not from these parts. Yes, truly, no one can recognise that,' he concluded his lonely talk.

He then picked up his pillow-like bag, using that old style of carrying a bag on the back of his shoulder with his stick and up the straight road he went.

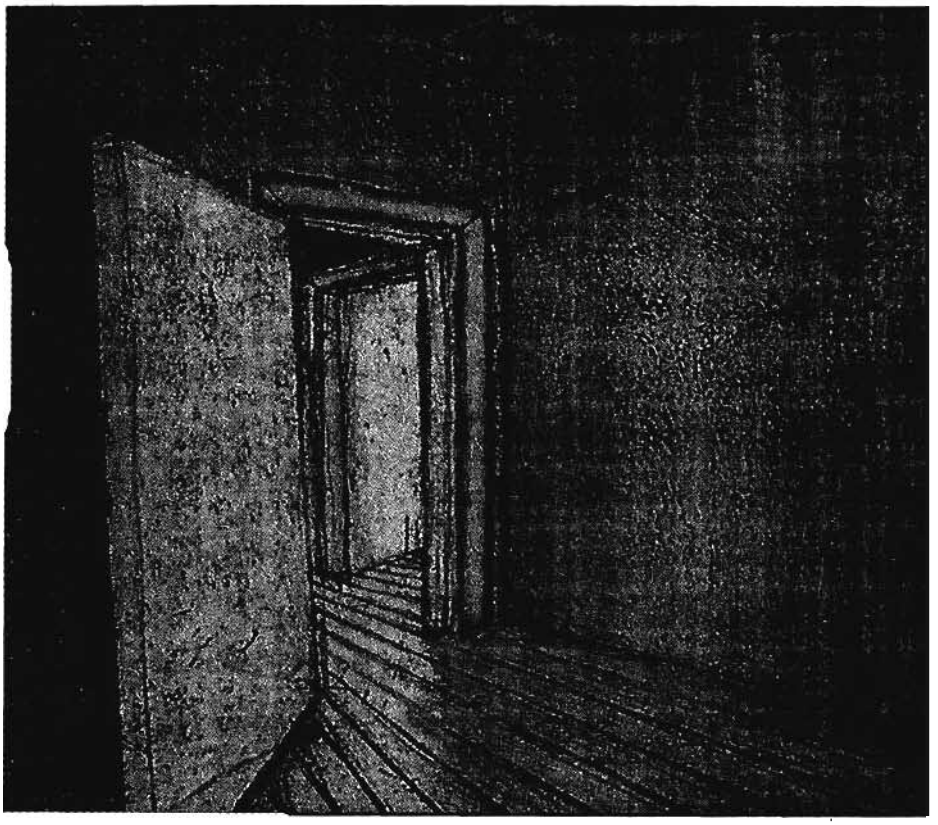
He was half hungry but very thirsty. Passing some shacks he was attracted by one of them on the left side of the road. There was a lot of noise inside. People were singing while the music from the radio was playing. And some were sitting outside with bottles of beer and cartons of Juba, playing cards. Mr Mdlalose quickly summed up the situation.

He went over and asked the first girl he met to buy him Juba. The girl did so, and went back into the shack, singing the song which was playing on the radio.

He sat down on one of the stones in the yard and shook his juba with a smile, showing great satisfaction.

As he was opening it the people who were playing cards stopped playing and glanced at him suspiciously. They started to talk about him secretly.

'I've never seen that man here before,' one of them called Max said, touching the rim of his big black hat, as if he wanted to take it off. 'And we must be careful of strangers. Some people run away from their places because of violence. And I don't trust that one, his age indicates that he belongs to the other side. So, let's quickly find out about him,' he added.



Etching
• Paola Beck •

The others nodded, and one of them said, 'Yes, you're right. Old people kill young ones in their area, and when things become tough for them they run away to us, claiming to be comrades. So, guys, without wasting time, let's check him out.'

'Zacs, go and search him. He won't be scared of you because you are the youngest. Try to handle him with great care, so that he can spill the beans,' said a man called Willie with his bassy voice, and he pulled up the zip of his tracksuit jacket. His cigarette was hanging from his mouth and smoke drifted out of his nostrils. 'While Zacs is dealing with him you carry on playing cards. I'll stay here, and take a sharp look at them.'

Zacs stood up and went to the man. Mdlalose, seeing the boy approach him, smiled widely and kindly: 'Sawubona, mfane, you are a clever boy. You've come to me just as I was thinking of calling one of you to ask something. Yes, truly, and ask something,' Mdlalose said using his fashion of repeating what he had already said, and emphasising it with 'yes, truly'.

Zacs knelt in front of the man and, narrowing his eyes with suspicion, said, 'Calling one of us and asking something? What were you going to ask him, Baba? And first of all: who are you?'

'Thank you my boy, that is a good question,' Mdlalose said, still smiling, 'I'm Gudlindlu Mdlalose, from Umbumbulu. That's where I'm coming from. Yes, truly, that's where I'm coming from. And who are you, my boy?'

'It's none of your business who I am. Just tell me: For what were you going to call one of us and what were you going to ask him?'

'Okay, my son, if that question worries you, I apologise. Yes, truly, I apologise,' Mdlalose said softly,

still holding his Juba. 'I have not been here for quite a long time. And now I am a little bit confused. I've come here to see my nephew who stays here. We've received the news that his house was attacked by unknown people. Fortunately his family managed to escape, but he was seriously injured.'

'Who's he? And in what manner is he your nephew?' Zacs asked frightenedly, showing impatience for a quick reply.

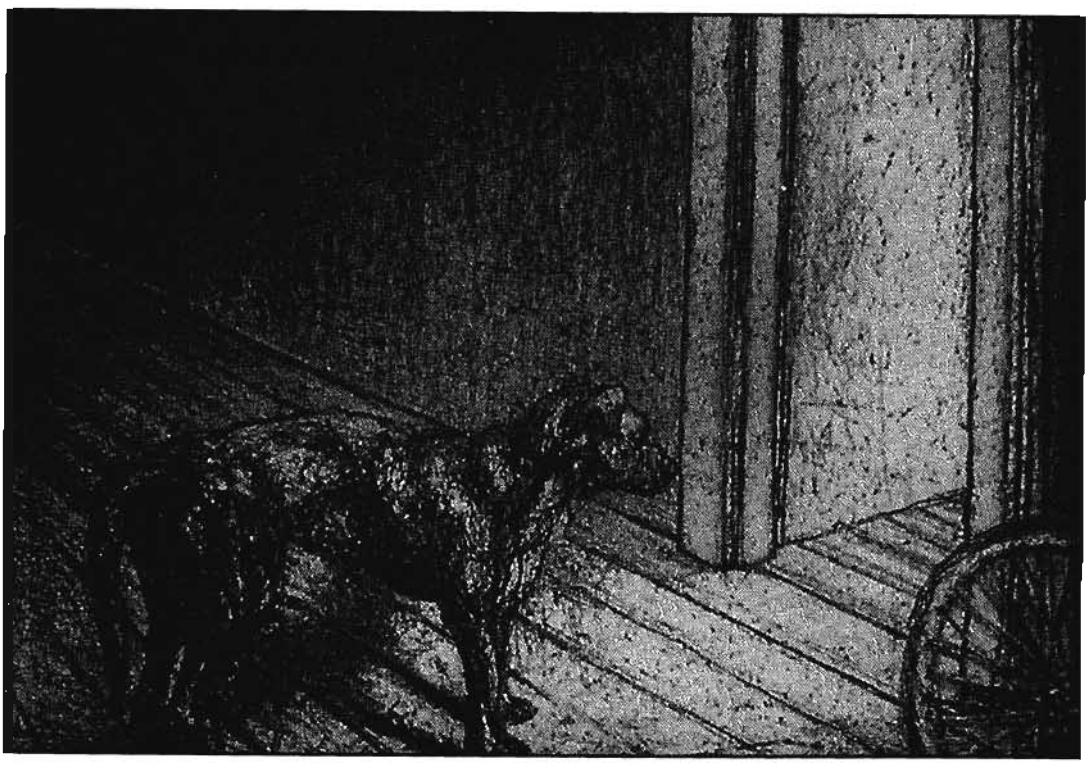
Some metres away at the corner of the yard Max was carefully watching Zacs and Mdlalose, although he didn't hear their conversation. He was looking more ugly under his big black hat and, holding his ankles with his hands, staring straight at them.

Mdlalose noticed that the boy who was asking him was frightened and he replied quickly, 'That attacked man is my nephew. Even now I wonder how he is.' He looked down for some seconds, raised his head again and said, 'He is my nephew. His grandmother and my mother were sisters. His name is Themba Mfeka.'

Zacs stood up shyly. He remembered that he had heard his father talking about their relatives who were staying at Umbumbulu. 'I am Vincent Mfeka. Themba is my father,' he said, extending his arm to shake the old man's hand. Then he added, 'Baba, I apologise for the way I've talked to you. It's because we don't trust anyone here now. Especially the unknown old people. My house was attacked by unknown old men.'

Mldalose nodded and shook the boy's hand, 'Don't worry mzukulu, I understand what you mean. I've also heard about the old people who attack others without a reason. In Umbumbulu we used to have faction fights, although those are also senseless.'

Zacs told him that his father had been discharged from hospital last week, and that he was on the road to recovery. Then he went back to the group of young men and informed them about the conversation with the old man. Then he returned to the old man and when Mdlalose had finished his juba they went together to Themba's home. S



Etching
• Paola Beck •

Apartheid Mechanics

This is an engine
There it goes
Driven by Unqualified drivers
Produced by underdeveloped schools
Supervised by De Klerks and Viljoens

Yesterday this engine was fucked-up
So-called expert mechanics were consulted
Those were Thatchers and Bushes
They failed
Because they are foreign mechanics
Yes they all failed
because their pikinini toolboy Buthelezi
Doesn't know all the tools needed

The Italians cannot mend it
Britons also cannot
The Americans cannot mend it
Japanese also cannot
They all failed
Not because it's irreparable
But because it's a South African make

Wena De Klerk, Consult ANC mechanics
They'll tell you about nationalisation tool
And your engine will be in motion
Contact COSATU mechanics
They'll advise you about worker control
And your engine will locomote
Consult Communist mechanics
They'll tell you about social justice
An indispensable oil
And your engine will start moving

Apartheid mechanics are inexperienced
They talk of surplus
An outdated tool
They talk of balkanisation
A no longer used method
Apartheid mechanics your future is bleak in this field
Apartheid mechanics you know no tools
Consult our mechanics
[illegible]o know better than you do.

[illegible]da Kaizer Ngaki

Reflections of an Old Worker, Or The Ballade of the Power Over My Body

When I was a young man,
powerful and strong,
I had dreams:
I wanted soft pillows for my head
and to hear my children sing.
Those dreams never came true:
today I'm but an empty shell.
You reaped the harvest of my labour,
you became the power over my body.

I've worked this earth,
yet it offered me nothing.
My life partner
passed on through sickness and hunger,
my children all astray.
Why did I dig so deep?
I found nothing,
the hard work, the sweat.
You reaped the harvest of my labour,
you became the power over my body.

Man is born to work and toil,
but I've carried your load,
I've tilled the soil.
My black face is a concrete mask,
your buildings reach the sky,
your dreams fulfilled,
you smile victoriously.
Is it for this I bent my back?
A day's work done
I return to my shack.
You reaped the harvest of my labour,
you became the power over my body.

Long ago in my youth,
I was healthy and strong;
the dreams were there,
but now they're gone.
The hard work, the pain,
you stripped me of my strength,
but not in vain:
the power remained in my head.
You reaped the harvest of my labour,
you became the power over my body.

My children will return,
more powerful and stronger.
They will labour but demand their reward,
their dreams *will* come true,
their bodies fulfilled,
they will become new.
You reaped the harvest of my labour,
you were the power over my body.

Gladys Thomas

I have a little eye

A little eye
And two more
I have a little eye
If you see my little eye
If you....

Please don't tell or rush to the shore
Please don't remove it
from amongst the shells
And save yourself the curse of the ocean

I have a little eye
A little eye
And two more....

If you see my little eye
Do what the earth-scratching fowl does
Side-step your astonishment
And let the sun do the rest
Or the runaway child
who needs a small light
in his crevice amongst the waves
or the nest building swallow
Which needs a little eye to guard its nest

I have a little eye
A little eye
Which I dare not touch
For the curse of the ocean
would follow me
I have a little eye
And two more
which sometimes smile at you....

Cecil Prinsloo

Dance In Search of Commonality

Jay Pather with the Jazzart Dance Theatre

This paper is in two sections. The first contextualises the topic, 'Dance in Search of Commonality' and explores its root and its meaning. The second includes a practical demonstration of some of the techniques that embrace the central thesis of the first section.

Much is being said today about the South Africa that is emerging, coined the 'new' South Africa in what I would term a fit of desperate optimism. Newspapers carry reports about events 'in the days of the struggle', our language makes reference to apartheid only in embarrassing past tense. Jazzart Dance Theatre performed *Ekanivatie* in Cape Town and amongst many reactions was a telephone call from an audience member who felt distraught that Jazzart had the audacity to perform a work on violence which according to her was outdated and might only have been relevant seven years ago.

The vision of the pillars of apartheid falling down with the scrapping of the infamous four Acts is a pleasing one. In response to all this news reports are inundated with the ending of sanctions, re-establishing sporting links, South Africa a possible host for the Olympic Games, the Russian Ice Skaters performing at the Good Hope Centre in Cape Town, on June 16 no less, amongst other events of this ilk. So the new South Africa goes.

Fundamentally however, we are a violent society. This is the essence of what we face. Mostly this is a bewildering time and there is very real confusion; people being burnt, whole families rendered extinct, the soaring crime rate, a creeping disregard for life, an almost unstoppable momentum of violence. The fabric of South African society is a disturbed one. To stay with and acknowledge the legacy of a violent and divided society is not merely to take the stance of the sulking school boy when we are being lauded with such 'gifts' as Japan's lifting of trade sanctions or a visit by Miss World. These are instantaneous solutions, quick fixes that cover up long term and severe damage that has been wrought on collective and individual psyches concerned with the spine of things, the centre. There is a whirlwind of desperate euphoria but at the centre of that whirlwind, I see disease.

It is not the scope of this paper to measure statistics with regard to the old and the new South Africa in order to gauge the accuracy of change. But the momentum of euphoric optimism is worth noting if only to enquire into the roots of the topic at hand, 'Dance in Search of Commonality'.

In my current teaching, while my students enter intellectually and hopefully into the glib theorising about the emergent culture in a new South Africa, a simple step, jump or gallop across the floor reveals bodies in utter disease and trauma. Shoulders ride way up to the ears, eyes remain downcast, mostly, spines are rigid. This is not just the self-consciousness of the beginning dancer. This is symptomatic of something deeper. I have seen on the other hand trained dancers and skilled performers reveal profoundly deep-rooted prejudices in how they touch someone else's body. The weight of prejudice and prejudicial conditioning lies heavily on our fractured psyches and manifests itself in various ways.

Therefore then, to what extent is the title of this paper born out of euphoria, desperation, a need to relieve our fractured psyches. 'Dance In Search Of Commonality' is a title I myself suggested. It is one of the hopeful new

South Africa statements and it is an abominable error. It is an attractive title as the notion of 'commonality' carries a measure of self-sacrifice and unity of purpose. It is actually a very self-conscious statement. The title suggests a searcher, dance and commonality that which is being searched for. Already there is division, there is an I and a you, a consumer and a product, an inside and an outside. How small our thinking is, and therefore how fruitless and paltry our actions. Surely this is divisive enquiry, symptomatic of a divided consciousness, a divided life in such a stratified society.

'We must reach out', the advertising jingle for the new South Africa goes. Self in these instances is still paramount. The commonality we seek out of fear, perhaps guilt, desperation, we seek to wear this commonality like a cloak that may reasonably hide the scars and the not yet dry pus of prejudice. Our search besides being divisive is full of motive. It is hail and hearty and an illusion. We are still talking from our dividing lines, our constituencies; our form is still intact, because our sense of self is so protected and immovable. There is no change. The momentum of violence started by colonialism or even pre-colonial conflict and group identity follows rapidly through unhindered, unchecked.

Hence dance which tries to be a hybrid, which tries to incorporate the outer shell of forms will remain self-conscious and uncomfortable, or rather, discomforting. Muddling ahead with desperate intention and motive, we create a melting pot of dance styles for the new South Africa, putting together diverse cultural products, dressed up in ethnic printed costumes, stirred willy nilly and posited as visionary. This may have been a necessary stage to pass through but essentials are being missed and we must watch ourselves becoming at best swept up by a desperate euphoria, at worst hanging on to a bandwagon driven by opportunism.

At one end of the debate is the argument that cultural products are contextualised and so the question is, why can't the ballet, traditional African dance, contemporary dance etc. remain in their forms and preserve their identities feeding those sections of the population who want this. This is a rational debate with enough strong argument for the existence of cultural products as separate. The ballet for example remains as it is, apart, unto itself, having its own merit just as it has its own audience. This debate is based on a solid premise, pure in its intent, if purist in its form.

Dance in Search of Commonality, the self-conscious hybrid, is even less so as I have described above.

There is yet another direction. It is not the ultimate one by any means. This must be stressed. But this other direction is staying as closely as possible to essence and origin, staying with the dance. The intention then is not to discover commonness, indeed how wonderful if motive and intention was absent altogether, we are dancing, but with an awareness of essence that led. For in doing

fully and attending fully with an undivided consciousness, surely commonality will reveal itself. This is my interest and it is to this consideration that I turn the rest of this paper.

I must stress that this is not an itemising of steps towards some new and grand aesthetic but a means whereby the creative consciousness may work intimately within an unknown decontextualised, and if you want, ahistorical perspective, so that it may be possible for a dance form to emerge that can be born out of the fractured psyches and heal the fracture.

Oppression preoccupies us. Particularly in South Africa, we notice it, our days are saturated by it and so we have innumerable ideas about it, in response to it. This is not surprising but the process of oppression and reaction can quickly become its own trap. Cultural endeavour caught within this oppression-reaction syndrome has resulted in some powerful morale boosting work, if not without its special pleading. Is there a way to meet oppression fully, without one merely reacting and reaching for the closest, easiest, often the most angry or most sad resolution, which if angry or sad is not really resolution?

In contemporary dance we acknowledge that oppression has created a legacy of theatrical dance that is elitist, in that a few people practice it and a few people watch it. In redressing the imbalance how do we respond?

I am worried about the imposition of forms. I have no compunction about various dances existing for various reasons as I said earlier. But at the same time surely there needs to be a form of dance that does not become another imposition amongst all the other impositions. Ideally, an holistic response to oppression and its multi-fold effect on bodies and the dance is to lay the notion of oppression aside and embrace the multifarious possibilities within the body. For this to happen though one has to work intimately with training processes and the body; the essential form of dance will change, it would need to be open to constant change as hardened layers soften and fall away. These processes may then create points for the reintegration of mind-set and body, for the development of a liberating mobility and for the birth of individual as well as group creativity.

In her book *Taking Root To Fly*, Irene Dowd a teacher and scholar in Neuro-anatomy writes:

> All postural alignment patterns, all muscle use and development, all human body movements are directed and coordinated by the activity of our nervous system, in other words, our thinking. Therefore, in order to change our body shape or our movement patterns we must change our neurological activity. Although most of this neurological activity is habitual and/or non-conscious, changing our exact conscious goals affects this extensive, sub-cortical, unconscious process.

In meeting the challenge of creating new forms and inspiring the growth of dance within individuals, this vital connection between our thinking and our movement needs to predominate in our work and be central to our forms. In responding fully to the weight of oppression on thought and body, the route is not to re-impose a structure of movement which is very often learnt fairly rapidly since an oppressed and thereby unselective consciousness has already become adept at receiving and reproducing without question. This re-imposition, however good the intention, stresses empowerment through merely taking on a structure that is different to the supposedly oppressive one but the essence of choice, of individual creativity is lost in the effort and excluded in the structure.

Becoming conscious of one's own movement impulses, tendencies, habits, patterns, the process of awareness deepens. Through an in-depth awareness of the relationship between thought (conscious and subconscious) and the body, creativity releases itself in the body that moves within and beyond its very natural inclinations and may dance fully and wholly.

I wrote (rather angrily) in a paper delivered at Dance Umbrella 1990 in a seminar 'Dancing In The New Decade':

> Dancer's bodies are trapped in images and therefore by definition a lack of reality. In South Africa body images of dancers are all the more ridiculous than if you want Europe or America since the majority of the bodies in South Africa don't look like that anyway and why should they? Why are there so few black women contemporary and ballet dancers? What is it? What is it that has been created as a blueprint for body type and body movement that is so exclusive, that is so difficult to attain that so few actually fit this description?

The anger remains. Images of bodies and body shape are extremely problematic phenomena. This is so since the major players in this game are the media and advertisers who also wield economic power. But conventional dance has played the same game and the result is narcissism, exclusivity and disempowerment.

While teaching at both Zululand and Durban I found that non-theatre students were far more interested in doing aerobics than any creative movement. Body image is a powerful and pernicious factor and we have to be so careful. The diseases, anorexia nervosa and bulimia, fairly common amongst conventional dance companies that stress a particular look of especially the female dancer, attest to a highly emotionally charged and complex problem.

If dance is not just an unquestioning imposition of particular techniques and idiosyncratic style but the evocation of movement possibilities within a body, any body, the notion of a particular dancer's shape would naturally cease to exist.

The argument for line, form and therefore slender bodies is valid within its exclusive domain and its idiosyncratic style. But these aesthetics are part of a cultural and economic imposition. I am saying that this is not the only way. A respect for one's body as a functional effective instrument, no matter what its shape, is the other way.

A well known South African choreographer remarked to one of his dancers who according to him was plastered with make-up already as she prepared to go on stage, 'that's day make-up, you need some more'. This choreographer incidentally is gay, a homosexual. He spends his time creating dancers that look like dolls for the consumption by the public of a product that he himself is not personally receptive to. The point in relation to choreographers such as Balanchine is comparable and no less debatable. This is not the paper to explore this more deeply though. However, I do include this comment to point to a range of absurdities and disempowering influences that have consumed the dancer and the dance.

In performance, audiences need to see a whole cross section of body shapes and body types, fully functional and toned so that dance in its essence as an experiential ritual and not just a visual narcissistic picture show, may flower. With the emphasis on the experiential nature of dance the challenge for audience and performer is to discover commonality which is central and integral beyond the shapes and the colours, beyond the peripheries and the superficialities. This is my central thesis.

The neuro-anatomical connection, the relationship

between the brain, spinal-cord and the nervous impulses on the one hand and on the other the body, its muscles, joints and bones, is the basis of a technique for training, improvisation and composition in the Jazzart Dance Theatre. Familiar as I am with the work of this company, it emerges that a practical demonstration and description of these processes would add some concrete substance to what I have been saying.

Dance in which commonality may reveal itself and nourish and heal, is an ideal. In our experiments we are not evangelists for a particular way. We are not always fully certain and the work process is not without its contradictions and problems. It has proved effective on many levels, hence we persist. Needless to say, in terms of the paper I do not posit this work as the ultimate direction. I state this because I do not wish to fall prey to a parochialism that is symptomatic of South African culture. However, the processes described will hopefully engender openness and a search for possibilities, a search for ways to look into what is essentially unknown and at this point without form.

The Jazzart Dance Theatre is basically an amorphous group of mongrels. Our roles constantly interplay with each other and it is unfortunate that I get to theorise publicly and Alfred Hinkel gets to be known as the choreographer, all of which is an inaccurate reflection of our roles as they play themselves out in the work process itself. We do not eschew these titles as a result of some anarchical impulse but simply because the categories do not embrace the actualities. All the members of the current company constantly move from performance to choreography, from student to teacher and vice versa.

Areas of work in the rehearsal process are far reaching. These include: dance technique; vocal technique; rhythm workshops; ritual in performance procedures; dance, voice and contact improvisation; and composition and choreography.

Dance Technique

Influenced by the Alexander technique, Alfred Hinkel has developed a technique for dance training based on the natural inclinations of the body and the achievement of this through release. The aim behind this is to create mobility without affectation or artifice. Arms move as a result of the torso, as a result of the spine, as a result of intention deep within the nervous system. Through a clean and uncluttered process, the dancer experiences blocks and holding in the body and is asked to consciously let them go.

The process no doubt is a slow one. The simplicity of these beginnings is aimed at providing an uncluttered base as free of affectation as is possible, so that the body may be open to the complexities of improvisation and choreography.

I quote from one of Alfred's reports on his teaching process:

> The word education comes from the Greek word *educare* meaning 'to draw out of'. The process I use to develop the technique in a dancer is precisely this: drawing out of the dancer's body what is already there and building on that. Coupled with this I work closely with the natural inclinations of the human body. The body is designed to operate in a clearly defined way but impulses, be they materially or emotionally oppressive, interfere with this. This causes a malfunctioning in the spine since the alignment of the body is affected, which in turn in a cyclic way affects biological, emotional and reasoning processes.

Voice

The release of breath into sound and then words is organic to movement, provided strictures don't exist by which the sound may emanate. The vocal work involves deep breathing and panting using the four basic resonators: the chest cavity; the nasal cavity; the head and the abdomen or pelvic region.

Sound and movement are combined to develop the whole body as an instrument for primal expression. This area of the work is still in its experimental stages. However, the relationship between words and dance, as well as incorporating further conversations and dramatic script provide exciting possibilities for a dance theatre that knows none of the boundaries and limitations set up by enclosed categories.

Rhythm

Concerning rhythm, The Chase Approach to Dance Therapy states:

> Rhythm permeates every aspect of human life. The everyday activities of speaking, walking, working, and playing would be chaotic without structure in time. The ebb and flow of the breath and the steadiness of the pulse are very personal human rhythms yet a group moving together seems to have one breath, one pulse.

Work with rhythms and cross rhythms is yet another manifestation of the multiple influences of the various dancers. For while there is group rhythm at moments in, for example, Jazzart's Arathi, workshop and improvisation produced a variety of idiosyncratic rhythms. The cross rhythms in the piece point to a complexity produced by the overlapping and displacing at once, of accent and secondary beats.

Pulse is integral to our lives. At moments we share a pulse but we have our individual ones. Therefore, through a complex exploration of rhythms and cross rhythms, idiosyncratic and group, commonality exists as a very fine, precious, and fragile state between complete chaos on the one side and rigidity and totalitarianism on the other.

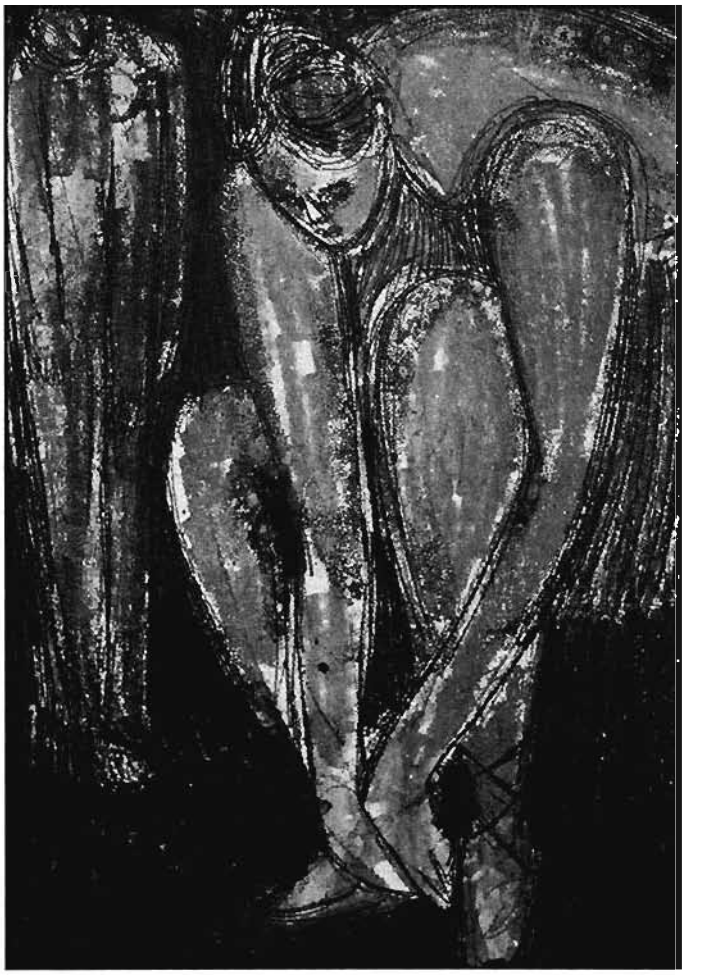
Ritual In Performance Procedures

Jamake Highwater, a Native American researcher on dance and ritual writes:

> Ritual sustains the life of people by reshaping nationalistic experience into a significant form unique to the culture which produced it. Ritual is not a product of primitive people. Rather, it is produced by all peoples still in touch with the capacity to express themselves in metaphor. Though ritual is primal, it is not primitive. It is neither simple, crude nor barbaric. To the contrary ritual is a complex, pervasive, and remarkably human process which exists everywhere on earth. It gives people an access to the ineffable and it provides them with ways of dealing with forces which seem beyond their comprehension and control.

Three major strands for work in ritual performance training emerge:

1. It makes provision for the creation of a net, tribal if you want, within a group so that explorations and risks may be embarked upon in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.
2. Within this net it allows for both group and individual to make contact with a subconscious depth and to give



expression to that depth. Hence, what emerges is both a deep-seated bond within a group, as well as the empowerment of the individual, aware as the individual becomes of a holistic power, physical and spiritual.

3. Ritual in dance releases the contagious nature of movement, making it possible for a commonality between audience and performer beyond words and other external signs. Yawning is the most obvious example of the inherent contagious nature of movement. Through a process of simple, what I term ritual, procedures, the performer may be led to convey non-verbally, even non-symbolically, the most intangible experiences, ideas and feelings.

In its entirety then, ritual procedures in performance stress performance as an experiential event, experienced and lived through in that moment by both performer and audience, a ritual, not just a visual picture show.

Improvisation

In her work, *The Politics of Improvisation*, Carol Horwitz writes:

> Of all dance forms improvisation is probably the most political because it contains the urgency of immediacy. Improvisation forces people to make decisions on their feet and to live with those decisions. It helps people to see how their decisions affect others. When done by groups of people, it has everything to do with learning to work with others — not competing but working with the idea of the total picture and the individual's small but significant place in the overall picture. When working in duet form, as in contact improvisation, one is forced to really listen to what the other body is saying.

In contact movement choices are based upon forces of nature such as gravity and the spiral, plus a direct response to the movement of the partner's body. This ability means survival in the contact form. While improvising, we learn again and again that to listen another's movement is to come to a shared meeting ground. This is the politics of improvisation.

Improvisation allows the uniqueness of the individual to be celebrated. It enhances creative thinking, problem solving, kinesthetic perception, group dynamics and movement logic. It can be a place to celebrate our difference while helping us to understand that we share the same roots.

It is without question that a dance form in which commonality reveals itself has as a prerequisite the technique of improvisation. This does not refer to the mere rearrangement of steps already learnt. A net of safety is first created in a group in which risks may be taken and the fear of failure may disappear. The safety net is achieved mainly through the ritual procedures I

spoke of earlier. Depending on how extreme the circumstances, improvisation can produce movement and sound that can evoke a most central expression within a performer's body. However an atmosphere of trust and respect needs to predominate — I must stress this. The more clear and uncompromising the circumstances, the more extreme the risk, the freer the impulse, the more evocative the movement. Peripheral improvisation will no doubt emerge. We should not settle for this.

Commonality is an uncorrupted strain already deep within, and number of stages have to be gone through to touch this, a number of masks have to be ripped off. This is timeous.

Composition And Choreography

In the acceptance speech for the AA Vita Choreography award for 1990, Alfred Hinkel made a comment which was apparently not well received by some members of the audience: 'The notion of an award for an individual choreographer is an archaic one.'

This is again not a statement of pure anarchy but arises out of the actualities of the choreographic process in a company such as the Jazzart Dance Theatre.

Improvisation within structures set up by Alfred result in movement which the dancers clarify and refine in collaboration with the workshop facilitator. The process then is exactly that: a dynamic, mutual evolution that occurs between facilitator and dancer, bouncing back and forth continually.

Choreographic phrases emerge as a result of simple exercises which evolve into complex phrases through further improvisation and development by the dancers.

The linking element in all the areas of endeavour in the rehearsal process is the provision for a structure in which commonality in, and through dance may be achieved.

The process is an arduous and complex one even though its premise is simple. It is not without reference points in other human endeavours as varied as politics, activism, rearing a child, teaching, night clubbing, going to school, personal relationships and a host of others. Reference points also exist in the work of other people in this field throughout the world.

Having said this, however, immediacy is the cornerstone. And so a process in which commonality may reveal itself is mostly a grappling in an unknown, because in the here and now the specifics are like no other. I use the word grapple deliberately to point to a process that is not without its contradictions and problems that sometime reveal themselves gently, most times explode in our faces.

Let us look at a few of these problems if only to demystify the process further. So very briefly, these include:

1. The predominance of a particular style due to the strength of a few dancers' mastery of that style.
2. There is strong diversity as well as sameness in any group even if it may not be as heterogeneous as the Jazzart Dance Theatre. The balance between diversity and sameness is impossible to speak about as when it is achieved integrally, one will not be aware of it. As a result one is more likely to stress differences since this is what may explode visibly in our faces. This can cause disillusionment.
3. Dance has a musicality of its own. However, most dance is predominated by the four or eight phrase and very often in pre-performance polishing sessions this becomes a nightmare. Counting is external but not to count demands a great deal which takes time to achieve.
4. The role of choreographer is not completely settled. In spite of the rich process of collaborative choreography there needs to be overall shaping which very often involves ruthless decision-making. Due to the fact that the entire group is performing the most objective perspective can only come from an outsider who has to be both astute and sensitive. This is a necessary process, eschewed by latter day workshop theatre which often resulted in incomprehensible indulgence. The debate is still up in the air.

✪ First presented at the Grahamstown Arts Festival 1991

✪ *Artworks by Michael Barry*

An Icon of Bones

For Sylvia Plath's Daddy

Every woman adores a fascist,
The man, the truth, the dependable truth,
A man of stuck-together bones,
In a room of daughterly charm,
A hitlerish charm, the appeal
Of black boots on the soft
But vindictive face of a foreigner
Who once was born his daughter.

These lines are but an attempt
At de/reconstructing the woman behind
The text from the pages unglued and
Loosely bound with swastika pins
And needles. Ich Ich Ich —
I I I the I is now dead as is the
Ich, the Uber-Ich.

The pretty red heart broken,
Bitten in two, imprinted with
The soapy toothmarks of a German coward
Clad in a black leather coat
With Aryan blue eyes turned empty
In death.

Dear Sylvia, I hope you can't read me
In the hell of those who punished the
Symbolic order for punishing them.
For Vienna's beer is still clear,
Some Germans are still fascists,
Tyrol's snow still as white as
The poor and the white child in
Poetic death. If two men have been killed
Then a women has been murdered too —
Daddy, daddy, you symbol, were through.
She kills two men, I kill a woman
I never wanted to talk to you.

The vampire of unreason
Drowns itself with a passionate embrace
Of love and the world and the unloved
Child turned poet reveals herself
In the burning flesh of a backboneless
Poem. Please leave your name and number
When you hear the tone
Of the black telephone.

Carsten Knoch

Good Morning South Africa

We are certain
nothing has happened before February:
now this is inexplicable
frozen meat in the deep-freeze of history

Somewhere there must have been a past
but we don't seem able to remember it
except penny whistles and guitars
and happy smiling faces
there was a black nanny in the park
although the sign said whites only
but who had put that up

There were fragments of reality
flashed on the TV screens
but the camera denied them:
scenes from a play on another planet, perhaps
their foreignness was in the words
spoken
or Novo Sibirsk
there was never a Gulag

Let us be reconciled
from now on for ever
but what are these strange bulges
on the surface of the earth
just outside our townships

Do they remind you of what
maybe one should pour cement
to seal off any possible contamination
this is Chernobyl or Auschwitz
but I may be mistaken:
there could be more harmless causes
for the pocked face of the landscape

Digging up corpses
never did anyone any good
and this is not the jungle of Malagasy

So far we have not been able
to ascertain what crimes we are supposed
to have committed
if any: there are only vague rumours.

Peter Horn

Mukorob: I and eye

'Listen here, and hear now'

Conceived in dry desert dominion
Where earth yielded to time
A seed germinated into a rocking shoot
caressed by the elements
My shape took form
And my form withheld

Being the pointer of time immemorial
My shadow heeded warnings innumerable
I was the eye
Focusing on the flecked firmament
And the emptiness of eternity
I was mortal too

Then great gusts of nightmare
threatened to throttle my shadow
burning in the reflection of my forlornness
'Look here, and see now'

Beholding my raised pedestal
power was granted over me and to me by Book and Sword
relating me, naming me — the indignant index

Witnessing puny history making man
Shifting restlessly to and fro
In the relentless expanse of time and space
That had been my heart and honesty
Mortal elements were my mortal enemies
Though they kinned me in symbol and thought

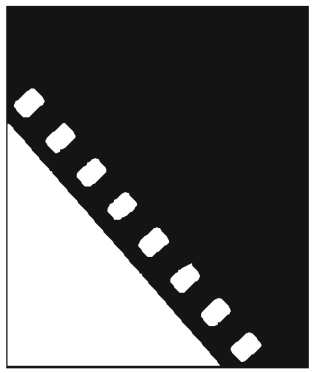
Relishing the contaminated power and authority
I got used to the lay of the land
And inoculated against the lie of the situation
Forgetting the past and idealising the future
deceit corroded my slender stem
Toppling my heavy head that knew the truth!

'Say here, and speak now:
Do I always have to wait in lie?'

Volker Röder

Documentary Photography: Past, Present and Future

Paul Weinberg



It's almost ten years since the first *Staffrider Exhibition* was held in this country. In this decade images have reflected the most momentous historical shifts and changes. The *Staffrider Exhibition* can be seen as an important contributor to this bank of images. I would like to argue that *Staffrider* magazine through its publication of photographs and later on through the exhibitions heralded the beginning of our South African brand of 'the collective exhibition', a process unparalleled in other countries and possibly unique. It was a process that challenged the 'individualist' style of before, put the statement ahead of its producer, brought township and established photographers together and questioned some of the fundamental contradictions that are inherent in the tradition of documentary photography.

Documentary photography has been by and large the domain of the middle class world wide: outsiders looking in, products that people will never see once they have been published in far off and distant places or in publications few could afford.

The mix of people and ideas that came out of *Staffrider* began a consciousness in documentary photography. Skills were passed on through workshops encouraging community photographers and approaches. Our close relationship with the alternative press broke the uncomfortable divide between subject and photographer. Photographers felt part of a movement both culturally and politically.

Its roots were founded in a time when photographers were focussing on the frightening products of apartheid and on a political situation of naked oppression that was about to explode in cathartic and sustained resistance.

Culturally black consciousness was still in its prime, and the government with its ugly tentacles snooping, surveilling, was everpresent, waiting to pounce on the left, which inhibited 'political expression'.

The ultimate statement that emerged from the twenty photographers in that first exhibition ten years ago (many of whom also participated in the 'Culture and Resistance' festival) was to change the face of documentary photography in this country. It brought a community of black and white photographers together and in its own way took a swing at apartheid, reflecting how South Africans lived and survived under such a system. In a special issue of *Staffrider* containing an edited version of the exhibition, its editorial called on photographers 'to hit back with their cameras'. A naive, over enthusiastic rallying call? Yes, without a doubt, but to be generous, a small signal of victory in very difficult times.

It is nearly ten years since that first exhibition. Collective travelling exhibitions focussing on issues of Women, Labour, Human Rights, Domestic Workers and Children are now historical documents of that genre. Looking back over the period there are two prominent exhibitions that need highlighting. 1983 saw the Second Investigation into Poverty sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation (the first investigation in the early 30s looked at poor whites). Its collective documentary fruits saw the completion of *The Cordonned Heart* (also published

very widely as a book). The other exhibition which also was published in a very sensitive and difficult political climate and which for those reasons has been seen more overseas than here is *Beyond the Barricades*. This too was a collective venture, highlighting the resistance to apartheid in the 80s. Both these exhibitions have had a profound impact in understanding our country. They have been widely acclaimed both locally and internationally and remain our high points of the decade.

I do not intend to pursue an in depth critique of ten years of photography. This would sideline what I believe is more important, and that is what we have learnt from this period and where we go from here. However I wish to make a few points that I believe need to be made.

The 'collective approach' was always vulnerable to attack by critics of culture. Those familiar with these photographs, would be aware of the shortcomings and strengths of these exhibitions. Some of the criticisms made by John van Zyl of the *Star* in 1986 and the Market Gallery about the exhibition lacking depth and being too political were digested and transformed into a new approach the following year. The next year saw three photographers produce in depth essays. Making a 'political statement' was always bound to attract criticism. It may have been lauded as 'humanistic' or trashed as 'propaganda'. Essentially it is to be judged like all other culture on its quality.

The notion of culture as a 'political weapon' is a hard one to break

We were dealt with generously primarily because we were staffriding the 'moral highground', we reflected what international opinion was so outraged about.

This documentary genre nurtured a core of black photographers. Santu Mofokeng, Juda Ngwenya, Cedric Nunn, Rafs Mayet, Rashid Lombard and Jeeva Rajgopaul are some of the more prominent names of the period. The genre built great bridges in a divided society, developing a spirit of non-racialism amongst the photographers. I would describe the generation as the 'Taking Sides' generation that assimilated an anti-apartheid, highly political stance into its work. The flow of resistance had its natural ally in photography which monitored and recorded the continuing struggle against a brutal system. We were obviously 'the witnesses', and gained the trust of the people who clearly identified the media as a form for legitimising their voice.

But the 'Taking Sides' generation had problems of its own. How long could we continue doing the same thing, photographing strikes, protests and meetings and police oppression? Was the alternative press, our natural ally, ready for new approaches? Were we capable of shifting the stereotypes and the cliches and consciousness?

By the time February 2 1990 dawned, indigenous South African photographers were facing new problems. Would the highly efficient, organised international media with their seemingly unlimited financial support leave us watching the show and render 'the South African story' to their well-paying clients? The question raised itself dauntingly as I arrived late (as is the alternative press style, and in this case because no seats were available) at Victor Verster prison to the sight of hundreds of foreign photographers on cranes, tweaking 1 000 mm lenses, dripping with Leicas, radio phones and back-up I could hardly believe. As I took up my position uncomfortably pushed by the increasingly undisciplined and excited comrades, the view I hoped to have of Nelson and history in the making was obscured by a *Time* correspondent and his girlfriend with long flowing hair.

I knew then our special position of privilege and access was to be shared with others who were driven by news, ambition and the need for a profitable story.

The release of Nelson Mandela, an event we had been

bombarded with through graffiti, slogans, T-shirts, and had long waited for, was happening in front of our eyes. Ironically, from a media point view, the event was very unSouth African. South African photographers were now competing with limited resources against the best in the world. Our position of privilege had been defined for us by a more tolerant Pretoria who wanted the world to see. Our work, therefore, had to adapt to a changing climate.

World opinion towards South Africa had changed. No more cliches, no more stereotypes. Positive stuff please! These were the messages we received. But the legacies of apartheid have not gone away. Impoverishment, housing and education crises continued and continue. The political violence has been frightening and tragic. How, then, does the documentary photographer begin to respond?

We need to explore, search and stretch our creativity to new heights

The momentum we flowed with has gone. We now have to create our own. Our photography is faced with precisely that challenge. We need to go beyond politics or maybe redefine what politics is. Maybe we should start by recognising that it is people out there that make this struggle. It is people who are behind these statistics. It is time for photography to shift its focus. People make the struggle and it is not simply the politicians, the press conferences and the talking heads that are important. 'News and politics' both so critical in our highly politicised country have made the rendition of imagery superficial and limited.

News is, as one colleague once described, 'the quick and easy formula' for understanding this country. Documentary photography which can accommodate news, simply isn't. Its requirements are of a more lyrical, suggestive and story telling nature (as in the photo essay). It is generally work done for love and not money. It is here where we hit our first problem. Unlike many First World countries we do not have a tradition of State or other grants to encourage us. While we are blessed with our own Centre of Documentary Photography based at the University of Cape Town, funded for this precise purpose, after five years of existence they have yet to make us the beneficiaries of this noble project.

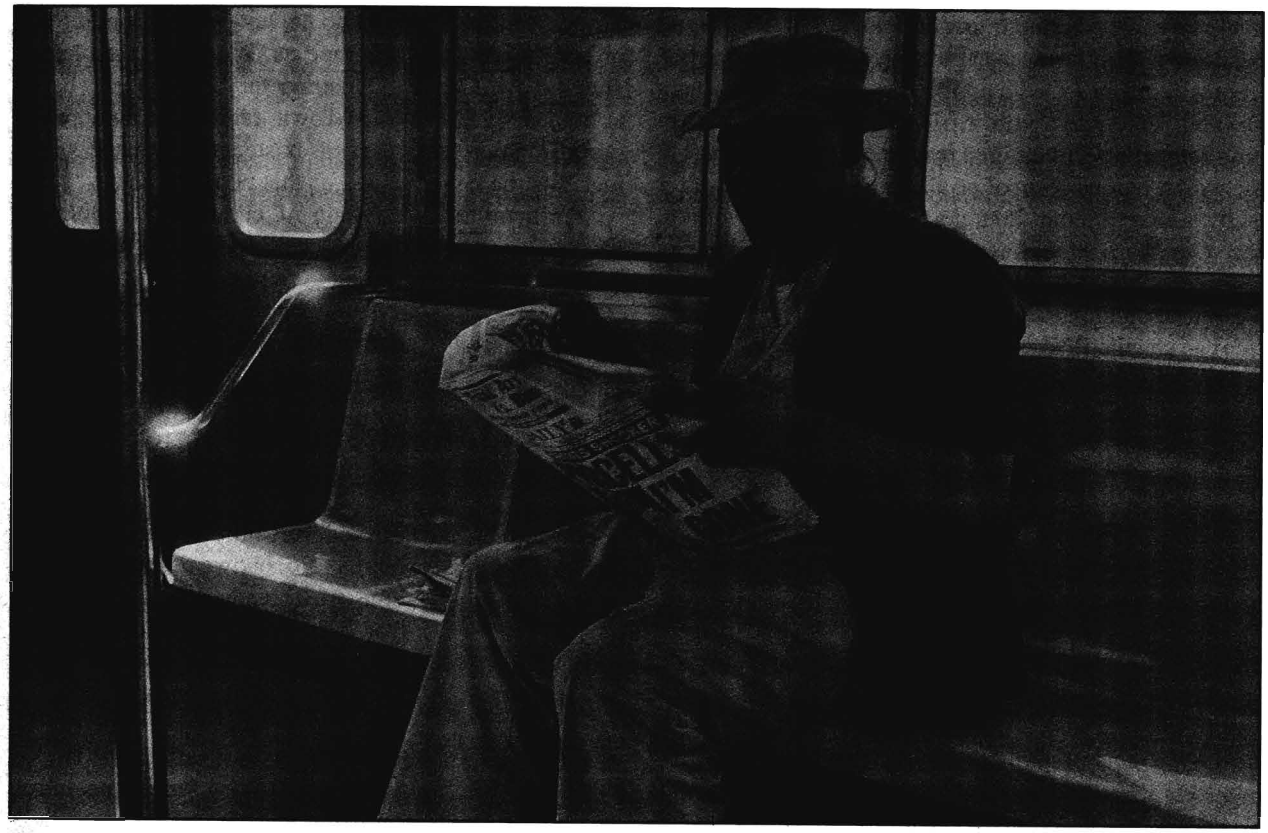
Furthermore, the notion of culture as a 'political weapon' is a one hard to break. Albie Sachs had the courage to raise the debate which we were only to happy to take on, yet the manifestations of its resolutions are still to be born.

In short, documentary photography as of now is at a very low ebb. Is this the time to sigh with relief and dive into the production of art for arts sake with very little relevance to where we live? No, but we desperately need some life breathed into our work. That 'life' will only come from our own energy and pursuits.

Like the other cultural disciplines we need to explore, search and stretch our creativity to new heights. Do we discard the 'Taking Sides' generation and begin again?

Taking Sides was our passion for humanity in a particular political context. Taking Sides has always been the hallmark of outstanding documentary photography. In my view it is time to go back to the basics of our struggle and let them speak for us. A new South Africa inherits the legacies of apartheid and remains poised to change them. Documentary photography is challenged to play its role.

Humanity in struggle and celebration? A return to the exploration of universalisms and what documentary photography is all about? To both questions — a definite yes, but with one appeal. May we break the deadlock of cliches that ultimately fail us in our endeavours and begin to explore and search for new approaches. And may we set a new barometer for ourselves — that the work becomes the judge!

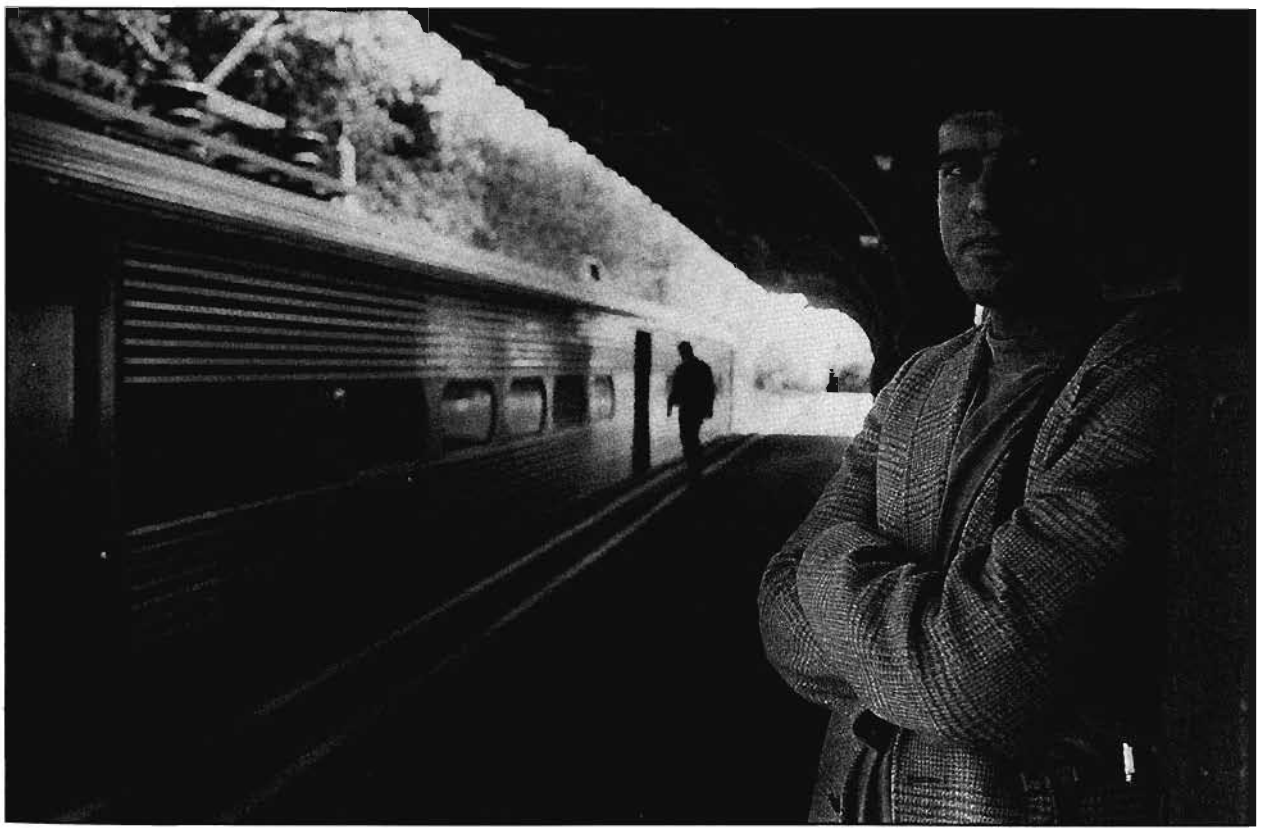


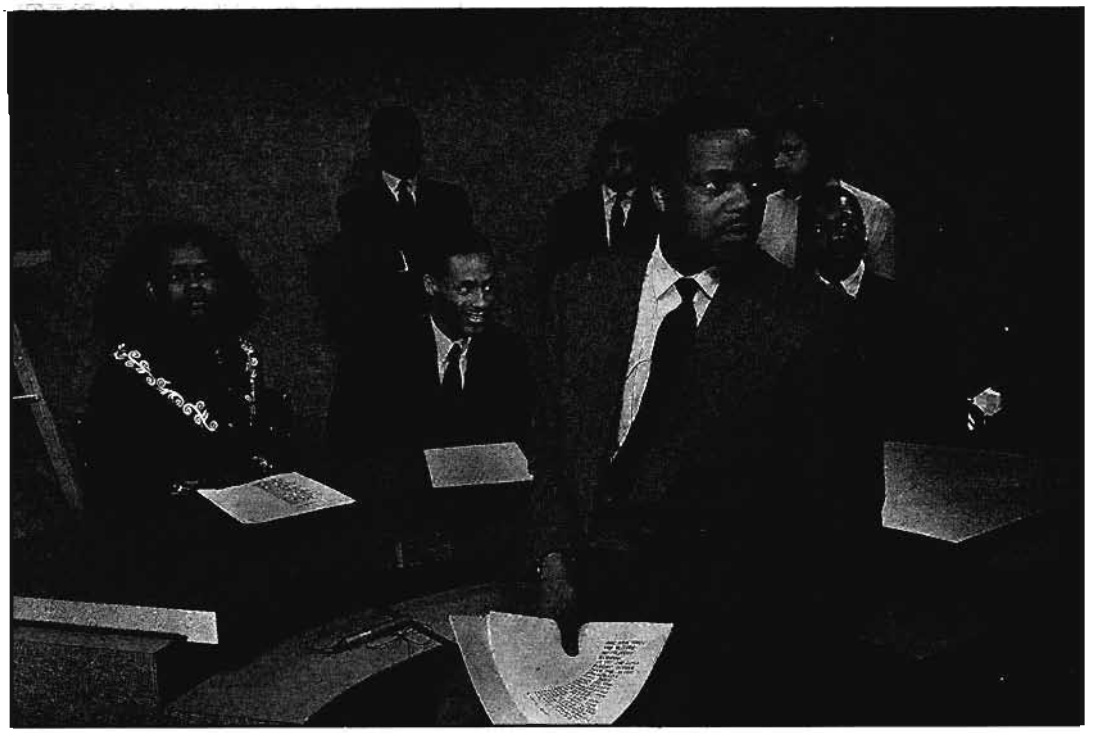
Above: ***Calvin Prakasim (videomaker)***
Princeton Junction,
New Jersey, May 1991

Right: ***Bubezi (actor) in New York subway***
May 1991

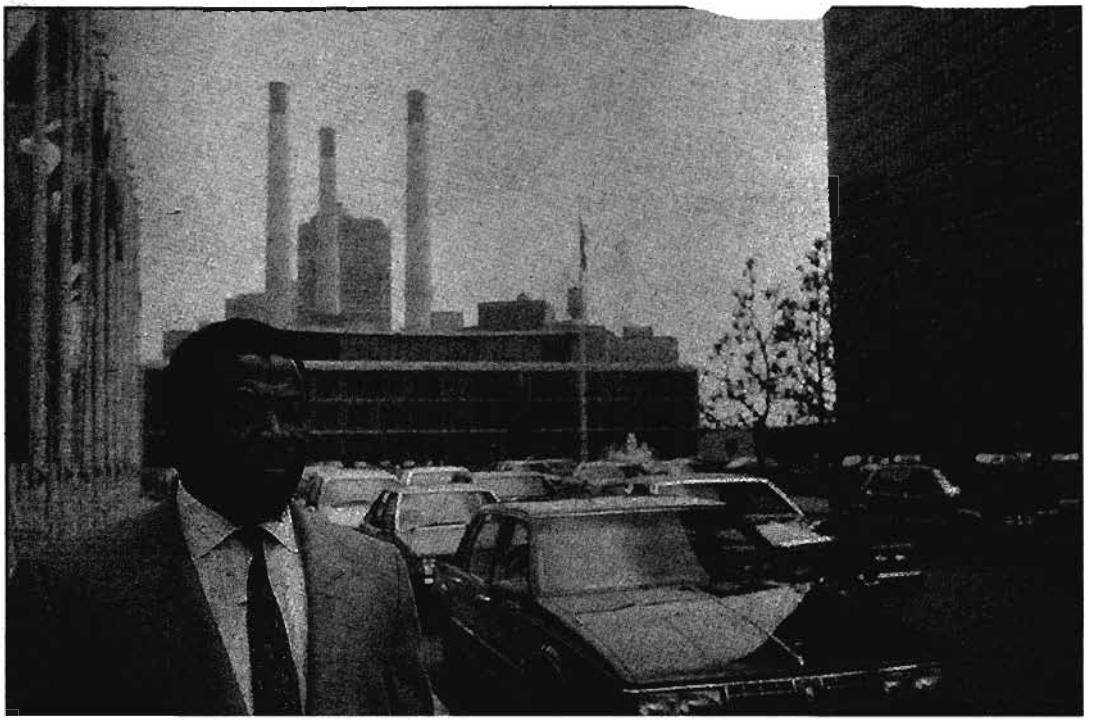
Photographs by
Jeeva Rajgopaul

SOME SOUTH AFRICAN EXILES





Above:
Fana Kekana with colleagues
at the last production of the TV programme 'S.A. Now'
New York City — April 1991



Above:
Susan Mnumzana (poet & teacher)
in her flat in Harlem
April 1991

Opposite, below:
Thebego Mafole (ANC chief representative to United Nations)
outside United Nations Building in New York
May 1991

Community-based Cultural Education in the Nineties: Problems and Possibilities

Mike van Graan

Changing political conditions have necessitated the re-evaluation of educational programmes, strategies for change and programmes of action in a range of areas. Culture and the arts are no exceptions.

Factors Leading to Community-Based Cultural Education

In the late eighties, there emerged various educational and training initiatives such as Music Action for People's Power/Progress with its jazz course, New Africa Theatre Project offering part-time and full-time theatre courses, Culture and Working Life based at the University of Natal and aimed at organised workers, and the redefinition of the Community Arts Project (CAP) as an education and training institution in the arts and crafts, which were geared towards training individuals drawn from communities which, through apartheid education and social engineering, were denied access to the arts or had had their cultural and aesthetic life stunted.

These community-based cultural educational initiatives generally owed their origins to three factors:

Firstly, the states of emergency in the mid-eighties severely restricted 'normal' forms of political activity. In this context, community organisations began to explore the arts increasingly as a shield behind which to organise politically and to commemorate important dates in the political calendar. Examples are May Day cultural events aimed to boost the morale of activists at that time and to attempt to rebuild their organisations' profile in the wake of the devastation of restrictions and detentions. In addition, regular community cultural evenings were organised.

Secondly, within the stark 'us-them' conditions prevailing at the time, conventional arts institutions — whether state subsidised or commercial — were generally regarded as 'part of the enemy' and co-operation with these in terms of accessing skills and resources was simply not an option. Besides, these institutions were quite content to continue serving the aesthetic interests of the white minority, and even when blacks were actively recruited by liberal, university-based drama departments for example, they were educated and trained on the terms and within the value and aesthetic paradigms of essentially white teachers and for the needs of conventional or establishment theatre.

The lack of training institutions geared at nurturing the aesthetic needs of the majority, particularly at a time when 'people's culture' was beginning to emerge in the form of cultural events and artistic products which reflected the fears, hopes and struggles of the disenfranchised, led to the creation of education and training programmes aimed at distributing skills among the oppressed.

Thirdly, with the intensification of the struggle against apartheid and the concomitant repression, came an increase in the internationalisation of South Africa as an 'issue' resulting in the availability of increased foreign funding for anti-apartheid struggles.

The generous availability of funds even benefitted cultural organisations which traditionally had struggled to obtain funds because they were not regarded as a priority within the struggle for social transformation. However, the role of culture during the repressive states of emergency enabled cultural organisations to access more funds, particularly those involved in education and training, as their work was seen to have a long term effect beyond apartheid.

To summarise then, repressive political conditions which favoured the emergence of culture as a shield for anti-apartheid political struggle, the absence of training initiatives geared at black communities and the availability of funding (essentially foreign), contributed to the initiation of community-based cultural education projects in the late eighties.

Purpose of Training

Within the progressive cultural movement and probably within each educational project, there was much debate about what recruits were being trained for. There were essentially three options:

One, to train individual artists/practitioners who were competent and skilled enough to make a living out of being musicians or artists or theatre practitioners. Those who supported this argument ranged from liberals who regarded it as necessary to provide skills for blacks deprived by apartheid to progressives who asserted the need for highly skilled progressive practitioners who, through the quality of their work and creation of new forms, could counter the hegemony of the art forms and aesthetic values and assumptions of the privileged Eurocentric minority.

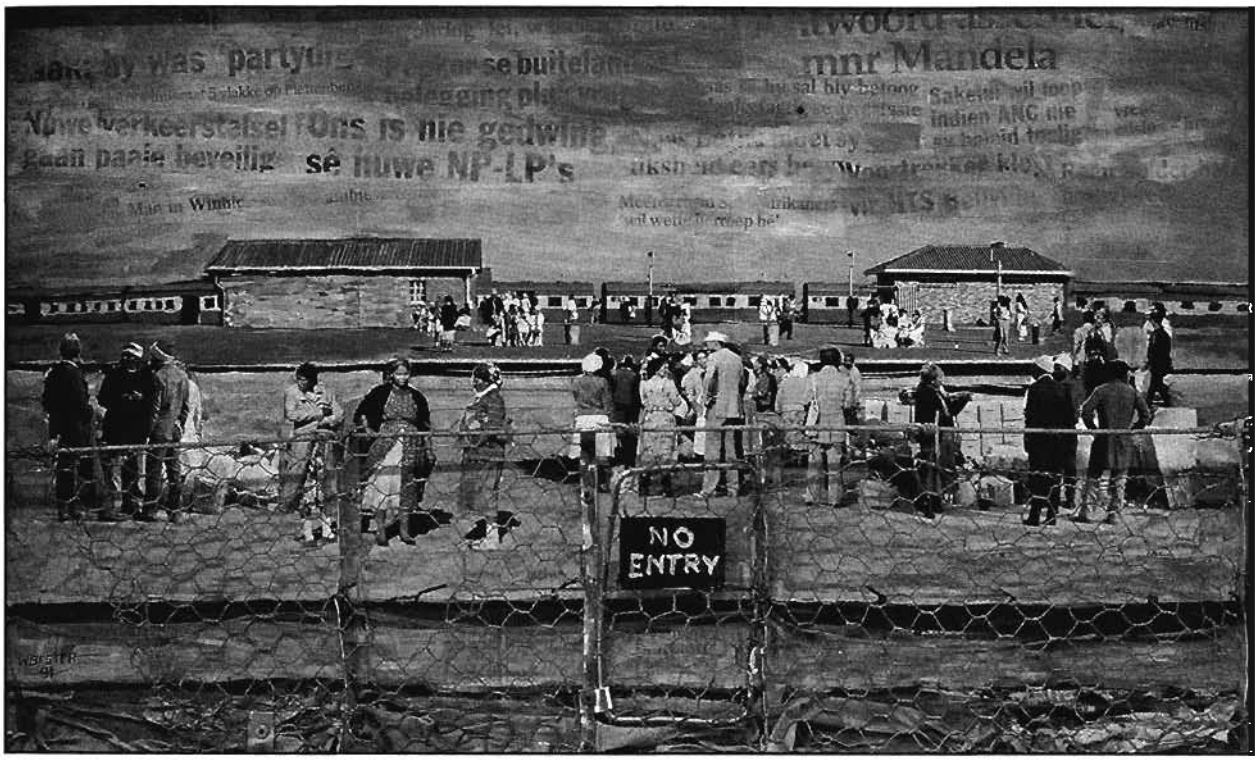
Two, to train facilitators, teachers and trainers of others. Here the emphasis would not be on training individual practitioners, but rather on training facilitators drawn from deprived communities who would return to their communities to pass on their skills and develop aesthetic consciousness and skill at a grassroots level. This argument was supported by those who regarded it as more important to disseminate skills broadly than to train individual artists.

Three, to train cultural workers who reflected both of the above concerns, i.e. who had sufficient practical skills and theoretical knowledge to experiment with and produce qualitative aesthetic products as well as sufficient educational theory and teaching skills to be able to pass on their skills to others.

There were certainly needs for all of these kinds of trained people. The problem was that individual projects generally had to make up their own minds about what to concentrate on; there was an absence of a national or regional strategy to advise as to what kind of training should be concentrated on by which group. Regional and national cultural formations which sought to bring various organisations together had more of a cultural-political agenda which had to do with monitoring and implementing the cultural boycott and engaging state and commercial arts institutions than a practical concern for developing the arts at a grassroots level through training and the creation of the material infrastructure to support such work.

There was often a tension between those organisations which emphasised the politics of culture and which included using the arts as a 'weapon of struggle' in the campaigns of the day to make short term political gains and those who emphasised the long term development of the arts as an area of struggle in its own right, with its own laws and dynamics and which through the quality of the work, sophistication of theory and ideas, the competence of its organisation and the vision of its leadership, would make more substantial and long term political gains as it would be better equipped for hegemonic battle.

While these different poles were not necessarily mutually exclusive, and could both have been creatively pursued with each reinforcing the other, the lack of vision, pettiness and political in-fighting among and within cultural organisations militated against regional and national formations. Such formations pool material, technical and human resources, formulate a national and regional strategy for the development of grassroots culture and determine a programme of action which could



Untitled • Willie Bester — Visual Arts Group • (mixed media)

realise commonly agreed to goals and objectives. Each cultural organisation could make its individual contribution through training, organising, recruiting or hosting creative events.

In the absence of regional and national co-ordination and strategies, individual organisations determined their education and training priorities according to their own internal vision and ideology.

Whether they were trained for one, two, or three above, recruits had to be black. If they were being trained as individual practitioners, it was sufficient that they be black and have a degree of natural talent either displayed in an audition or a portfolio.

If they were being trained as community arts or theatre facilitators, they would need to pass the additional criterion of being committed to return to their communities on completion of their course, to pass on their skills there. To achieve this, recruits would be drawn mainly from community organisations such as trade unions, women's, youth and civic structures as well as cultural groups as this would imply that by virtue of belonging to such groups, they would have a commitment to their respective communities. Besides, on completion of their course, they would also have an organisational infrastructure and support-base to return to.

The identification of needs within 'the community' or within the progressive cultural movement generally, contributed to the drawing up of the curriculum. In other words, knowing what trainees would be required to do on completion of their course and in what kinds of conditions they would have to work, would determine what they would need to learn to do their work effectively.

Some of the needs which influenced the development of CAP's full-time popular theatre and visual arts and crafts courses were:

1. To disseminate technical skills and critical knowledge

in the v' 'ous disciplines at a grassroots level. This meant imparting the means of artistic production to those deprived by apartheid so that they might develop the arts in their interests, to articulate their aspirations and anxieties, to raise their quality of life through creative work and by making the arts more accessible.

2. To train facilitators or teachers recruited from such communities with the necessary technical, theoretical and teaching skills. By being rooted in their community, they could engage in the long term processes of disseminating skills at a grassroots level.

3. To develop the material base to support cultural work in communities which did not have venues for training, exhibitions, performances and where there were no state or other subsidies to sustain the community's cultural activity.

4. To create the organisational infrastructure which would ensure the longevity of grassroots cultural projects through training in administration, organisation, planning, financial and marketing skills.

5. To develop new audiences to support grassroots cultural work, particularly in communities where there is little or no tradition of going to the theatre and paying ticket prices or attending exhibitions and buying art works.

CAP's courses have no precedents or models and are in themselves experiments

6. To experiment with new aesthetic forms and develop new critical models which are rooted in and are meaningful to the life experience, worldviews, values and tastes of marginalised communities.

7. To contribute to the growth of theory through praxis, which will inform our strategies and programmes of action to develop grassroots culture or a counter-hegemonic movement of the arts.

8. To correct the historical imbalances in the distribution of skills and thus to target women, workers and rural areas for training.

9. To help build local, regional and national networks to support, develop and sustain cultural work at a grassroots level.

10. To develop a desperately needed leadership in the cultural sphere. This involved creating opportunities for participants to develop integrated knowledge and skills in a particular discipline with organisational competence, critical skills and political and cultural sophistication to plan, strategise and implement practical programmes in the interests of the majority.

While training individual artists or practitioners will follow a more or less conventional curriculum, training facilitators to meet the needs identified above would require a broader curriculum.

At CAP, the curriculum generally comprised five major areas:

One, technical skills and theoretical knowledge in at least one discipline eg. visual art or theatre, although each course would include basic skills in other disciplines too, to allow for interdisciplinary work and experimentation. These skills would also be geared towards the realities in their communities so that in the popular theatre course for example, students did not learn the Stanislavski method of acting and the ability to interpret someone else's script since they would primarily be engaged in improvisation or workshop theatre rooted in the life experience of those they would be working with.

Two, teaching skills which involved planning a lesson or workshop and basic educational theory such as how children learn.

Three, organisational, administrative and planning skills. This included how to chair a meeting, draw up a budget, simple bookkeeping, devising a programme of action, starting a drama group or cultural organisation.

Four, life or leadership skills which focused on conflict resolution, group dynamics and models of leadership.

Five, cultural/political theory. Students would be

introduced to and would engage in current debates about cultural issues and be informed by various readings and research with the intention being that they critically understand the socio-political-cultural context in which they would be required to work.

Reflections on CAP Experience

Some of the difficulties which we at CAP encountered through practically implementing courses based on our vision include the following:

The conflict between personal mobility and community needs: while students are recruited from community-based structures and are contractually required to return to work in their communities for at least one year after completing their respective courses, the nature and urban context of the courses open up possibilities for the students which they may not have access to in their own communities and so they prefer to pursue their career options outside of their communities.

Organisations which are in existence at the beginning of the courses and from which students are recruited, have a rather fragile life and often are non-existent or in disarray by the time the course ends two years later and are thus unable to accommodate the newly-graduated community arts/theatre facilitator in their structure.

Where organisations do still exist, the arts are generally not a priority as their activities revolve around the political issues determined at a national level, so that there is little moral and political, let alone material and organisational support for the 'returnee'. Often though, the returning student has acquired a range of skills which may be useful to the organisation and so gets drawn into work other than that related to community art.

While such courses in themselves have an ideological validity and are indeed geared towards meeting significant needs, they are located within a much larger battle for hegemony in which a privileged minority with its aesthetic values, assumptions and concomitant rewards and attractions for practitioners, through its control of the media, and of conventional institutions such as theatres and galleries, is dominant.

Work at a grassroots level is always going to be a struggle because of the lack of organisational infrastructure and support and the lack of material resources. Furthermore, being involved at that level brings few personal rewards either in remuneration or fame and accordingly, the attractions of the conventional institutions, which ironically students have become more exposed to through their courses, are a lot more enticing than grassroots cultural work.

While there is a need for both producers of qualitative aesthetic work and community arts facilitators, there is a conflict between these functions and often the individual who has skills in both areas, will choose, unless s/he is intensely ideologically committed, to emphasise those areas which bring personal rewards in the form of remuneration or fame. They may start out with the intention of being community arts facilitators, but through the exposure to other options through the courses and their acquisition of skills which allows them greater flexibility, it is likely that students, who generally come from deprived backgrounds and so would legitimately be seeking to improve their lot and that of their families, will, if they have a choice, select a path which ensures greater personal mobility.

CAP itself has rather limited resources and is unable to provide the ideal backup to graduates in the field, whether this be in the form of skilled staff working alongside them to set up a basic organisational structure and programme of action or material support. The isolation of the returning student, both in terms of her/his organisation and the training institution, in generally hostile conditions, makes remaining in her/his community not a very attractive option.

Since it is unlikely that students will obtain bursaries from even progressive bursary organisations to attend such courses, it is incumbent upon the institution offering such courses to raise the money for the monthly stipend/bursary for each student to enable her/him to attend the course.

This, however, creates an unproductive, often debilitating and conflictual relationship of dependency. While it is the intention of the course to develop independent, critical, generally self-sufficient community arts facilitators, the legacy of gutter education coupled with the unhealthy situation where those who offer education are also those who determine and administer the bursaries of

those being educated, actually militate against the intentions of the course, not least because one does not have to do very much to access a monthly stipend/bursary.

The vision and methodological expertise in running these courses are often located in the heads and hands of a few individuals and may not be shared by those who, because of their skills, need to be drawn in to teach parts of the course. It is possible therefore, that students get different signals, and while this may be healthy in exposing them to different methodological and career options, it may also serve to confuse them precisely because these courses have no precedents or models and are in themselves experiments.

Often too, it is those who because of their class position and 'racial classification' have had access to education and training in the arts who become teachers and course co-ordinators in such institutions. The legacy of apartheid, including language differences, does not enhance good, progressive education in this context because of problems in communication and mutual anxieties in confronting each other across 'racial' divides.

If the difficulties outlined above were experienced in a context which was relatively sympathetic to community-based or community-centred cultural education, then changing political conditions in the last two years have only served to add to the difficulties.

The opening up of the political terrain, the unbanning of major political groupings, the prioritisation of major national issues such as a new constitution and the decline in formal repression (states of emergency, detentions, restrictions, etc.) have reduced culture or the arts to its pre-emergency status of 'non-priority'.

While its role during the last few years has made it a bit more respectable in 'the struggle', the current dual emphases on national political priorities and development which is generally defined in terms of upgrading the physical conditions in which the majority live and providing technical education to suit the needs of the economy, have once more rendered the arts expendable.

International funding which has been the backbone of many community-centred cultural educational programmes is fast coming to an end. Local funding sources i.e. the state and business are gearing their resources to projects which are consistent with current (limited) definitions of development and/or which bring the most political kudos. Cultural organisations — even those involved in long term educational work — are finding it increasingly difficult to access funding to just survive, let alone work effectively.

Cultural formations are engaged primarily in the politics of culture, with little practical support for grassroots training

The stark 'us-them' era of the apartheid past is dissipating and those conventional institutions which were off-limits before are now becoming more acceptable and accessible, either through their own marketing strategies or by default because there is no longer any concrete reason to not relate to them. Accordingly, because of their superior resources and more attractive benefits, they provide far better options for training and careers than struggling community-based projects.

The collapse of community organisations either because of a lack of funding or because their anti-apartheid reason for existence has vanished or because they have been swallowed by the whale of unbanned organisations, means that there is even less of a grassroots organisational infrastructure from which to recruit and which could support returning graduates in the field.

National and regional cultural formations are still engaged primarily in the politics of culture, in changing the boards of conventional institutions and in implementing the cultural boycott with little practical support for grassroots education and training initiatives even though it is here that the engine room for a counter-hegemonic movement of the arts has its most potential.

Finally, changing political and funding conditions are contributing in no small measure to the loss of skilled individuals who were active and sometimes crucial in community-based cultural initiatives, to more secure or more strategic jobs. What does this imply for the future?

At this point, the future of community-based, full-time cultural courses looks pretty dismal and given the uncertainty of political and funding conditions, it is of paramount importance that the purpose, nature and viability of such courses be thoroughly evaluated.

It is likely that some educational projects, because they are located within relatively strong organisations or because they have a good history, will continue to exist and do good work. However, it needs to be recognised that in adverse conditions, the intention of the course, noble and historically necessary as it may be, may not be realised and that such courses in and of themselves will have limited effect when measured in the overall context in which they are located and in which they intend to have an impact.

Community-based or community-centred cultural education will have long term potential only if it is recognised as being valid by funders, if it is part of a broader national strategy to develop the arts at a grassroots level and if the graduates of such courses are rewarded with at least as much remuneration as those involved in more conventional pursuits.

At the moment, state subsidies for the performing arts councils mean that they have an overwhelmingly significant role in determining the kind of aesthetic training needed at their feeder opera, ballet, drama and music schools, since they are the major employers of people in the performing arts. This is also the case because the performing arts councils have traditionally served the aesthetic needs of a privileged minority whose cultural roots lay in Europe.

It is only when the aesthetic needs and aspirations of the black majority are taken seriously in government policy and funding allocations, that community-centred cultural educational projects can hope for a viable long term future.

It is when community-based cultural education is part of a national strategy to develop the cultural life of the nation as a whole and with a bias in favour of those who have been marginalised by apartheid, that it will have the most potential to be effective.

While community-based/centred cultural education projects will survive to a greater or lesser extent in the next few years depending on their internal capacities for survival, the next two years are going to be crucial in devising a national cultural vision, programmes of action to realise this vision and agitating for new government policies to enhance and promote such activities.

There is much change happening in a range of areas; it is imperative that progressives begin to intervene in policy formulation and changing conventional training institutions to suit the long term interests of those on the underside of apartheid's legacy.

Perhaps access to the arts should be decentralised with the performing arts councils being replaced by neighbourhood cultural centres, one for every 300 000 people. These would be multifunctional centres located throughout the country, serving the local community's aesthetic needs by providing both training in the various disciplines as well as access to theatre, music, dance, film and art through local and state-subsidised travelling bands, troupes and exhibitions. In this way, new audiences and markets will be developed and the aesthetic consciousness and level of skill at a grassroots level will be raised organically, ultimately contributing to vibrant, exciting cultural practice on a national scale.

To feed into these cultural centres, what about ten training schools throughout the country, one for every three to four million people, training recruits in film and video, literature, dance, music, art and theatre, management, marketing and admin. This means training people in the various disciplines, some to do them, some to teach them and some to administer them.

Then what about local cultural festivals every year, regional festivals every two years and national cultural festivals every three years to promote the arts at all levels?

It is in the context of this kind of alternative vision that community-based cultural education will have its greatest validity and impact. It is for this broader vision that we need to be organising and agitating if we are serious about the need for community-based/centred cultural education.

The Calabash

I hold in cupped hands this pale ochre sphere,
still warm from the sun, the history of other hands
still pregnant with song.

I stroke this shell gently, waiting for sound.
This space was born full, but since has been emptied
by hungry mouths, by nimble fingers,
by kinsfolk feeding at a fire
that was not my fire,
within your dense embrace, old Africa.

Has it a voice, then, this calabash?
I shake it. It rattles like the obscure syllables
of a witchdoctor's chant,
or an old woman's last words, high pitched,
emptied of song.

What is it to me? This dry rattling shell?
If I take it by the stem; pass it
to you, to you or to you,
will I then be making music?

Others, having fed then left it to dry,
knew how to fill it with quiet murmuring
of milk matured in the shade,
and then would pass it around in circles
to quench parched throats and aged voices;
all those hands touching, the beat
the circle, the melody:
the poetry of shared speech.

While I try to write
men make music in the streets
with calabashes
and all sorts of hardy instruments.

M. R. Hendrikse

Christmas Eve Curfew at Crossroads

In the shacks of a squatter camp
Frightened and hungry children cry,
A worried mother lights her lamp
Soon, she knows, some friends will die.

A tracer-bullet luminates the sky
Like a splendid shooting star,
It came from a Casspir parked nearby,
And could be seen from afar.

'Disperse!' An angry voice rings out.
'Fire!' The officer has made up his mind.
People start running about,
Leaving the dead and wounded behind.

The curfew must be carried out,
The rulers had decreed it so.
The protesters sing and shout:
'The government must go'

The squatter camp is dark once more.
Some people wail and weep.
Soldiers go from 'door' to 'door',
Waking some from troubled sleep.

In a shanty made from bags,
Lies a sweating girl in labour
On her bedding of old rags....
A stay cow was her neighbour.

Tracer-bullets fall downwards
And expose the shanty's size.
A child was born soon afterwards.
His name was Jesus Christ.

Albert Frank May

Lisa Combrinck

The Letter

To Lance

I shall miss your spirit.
Distance like drugs disturbs
the steady rhythms of our dialogue.

You slip away snug as a suitcase,
while I grow thin and limbless as an airstrip.

But my fleeting sadness becomes solidarity,
and I wish you handfuls of happiness on your trip:

May your heart bloom like a flower
and your eyes ripen like fire.

Let life unleashed reveal
infinite epochs of delight.

My soul will be in exile
until your return.

But time passes quickly
on this earth which is our womb.

Afterthought

The words of the girl
become the wounds of the woman

Dreams become desire
and desire is doomed to die.

Experience like an anaesthetic
deadens the illusion of love.

In the tomb of the dead
a woman sweeps her blood

in the room of the dying
a child dreams of a fire
that some day will survive

she strokes this nebulous dream

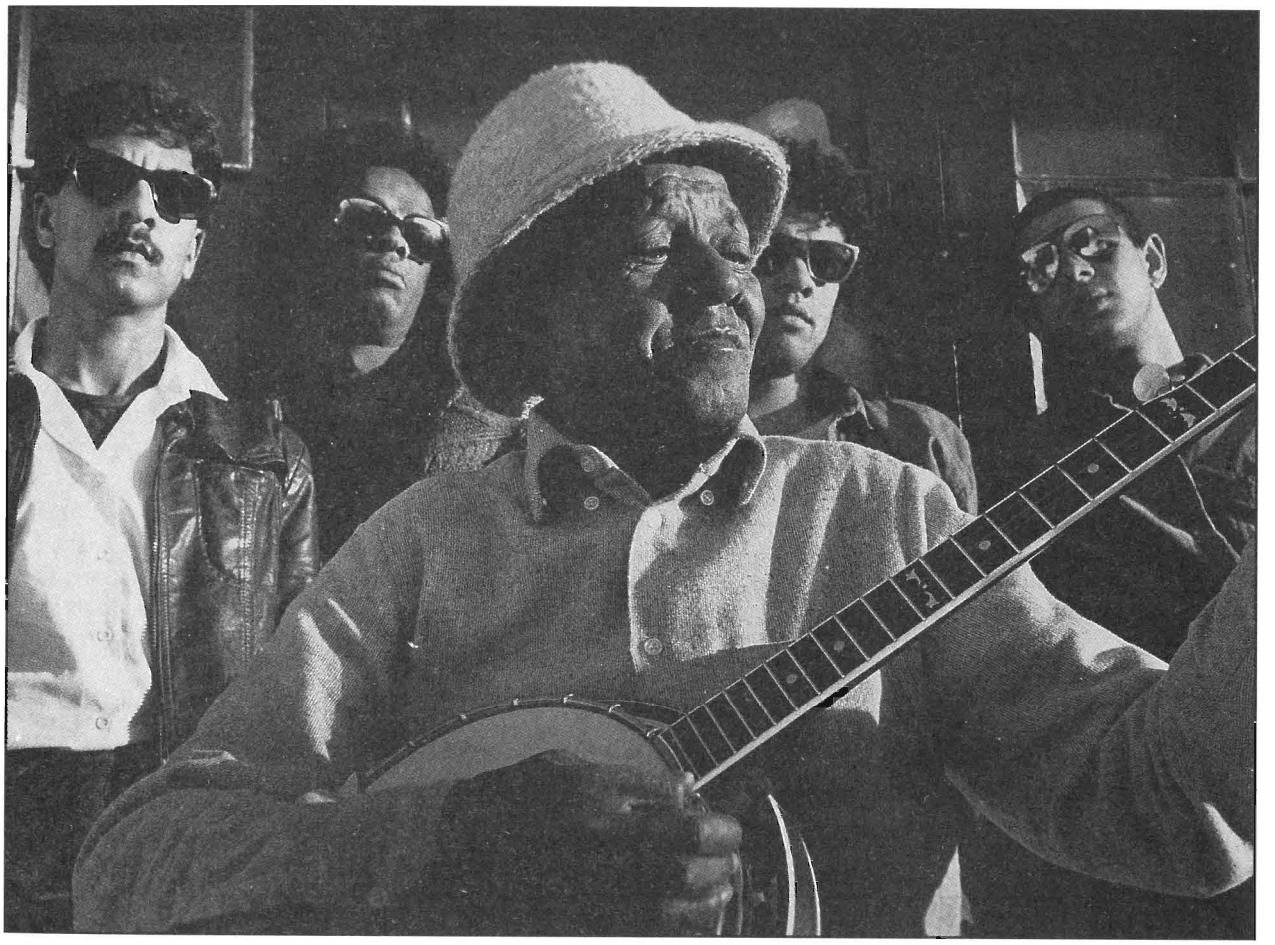
wood by wood

word by word.

Hegemony of Love

The tree
that we planted
in the shade of the storm
is bearing fruit now
and my love
for you is not dead
only a mob of doves toying in the sky
leaving smog on the ozone horizon
now tell me
why do you love — the popular way
battle scars perish in the winter dew
and monsoon nights
hang stiff on inkatha air
camaraderie flagellated
in the spiral of mobility
the fruit, hangs free
on the trees planted in the storm
beckoning the breeze
(boughing) to wind
tell me why do you love — the popular way.

Abduragheim Johnstone



Mr Mac and the Genuines
• Photo: Lloyd Ross •

Strange Business: the Independent Music Culture in South Africa

Warrick Sony

'...it's a big rock beat on civil rights
Fun with the forces every night
I advertise, I hypnotise, reorganise, I sympathise
I'm music pop music I'm a vehicle of the State
Big business approve me, their policies dictate
What harmony and melody
And words that make no sense to me
For the Top Twenty.'

From 'Emergency Rap'. Warrick Sony 1986.

Nothing in South Africa is considered to be 'Desirable' according to the Publications Control Board. There are only two categories, 'Undesirable' and 'Not Undesirable'. My fourth album as the Kalahari Surfers was found to be 'Undesirable' not only by the Publications Control Board, but judging by sales figures, also by the public at large.

As an independent producer with a rampant interest in music which is not part of the mainstream, I have discovered that just about everything in this country works against me. During an attempt to register my record label as a closed corporation my lawyers came back to me to report that the authorities would not accept the name I had chosen (Gross National Products C.C.) and that I had to think of something else. (Free State Music was found to be 'not undesirable').

I have been involved with Shifty, an independent studio and record company in Johannesburg since 1983. I assisted Lloyd Ross in the early days when he'd just discovered Sankomoto, a band from Lesotho who had said some things on stage that resulted in them not being allowed back into South Africa. We were a mobile track studio then and were able to trek to Maseru to do the recording which to this day is one of Shifty's (and the band's) finest records. Their lyrics were found to be undesirable and consequently sales were reliant on word of mouth and newspaper reports and reviews.

This was the pattern which all subsequent releases by Shifty were doomed to follow. Radio shunned it all. Payola was something we couldn't afford or morally support. Lloyd was financing most of these projects himself. Then along came Bernoldus Niemand a man who was sure to win Esme Everhard's approval and get masses of air time on Forces Favourites, her troopie programme for the boys on the border. 'Hou My Vas Korporaal' was the single that was chosen. It was another great project to be involved with. I played a bit of trombone on one song and drummed on an ode to Gerrie Coetzee called Boksburg Bomber. Bernoldus' recordings had a strong influence on the Alternative Afrikaans movement of the late 1980s. Younger and more of a skollie than David Kramer, Bernoldus sang songs that were real. They were South African white trash stories about girls, broken hearts, the army, smoking zol and 'die snor gevaar' in Pretoria. He didn't get played on radio either.

Lloyd spent weeks mixing and re-mixing the song to

change the lyrics which Tinus Esterhuizen (the convicted paedophile) found offensive. It didn't help. The song was thought to contain a generally pessimistic view of the army and consequently was unfit for radio. We were told that it had been defaced with a sharp object so that no rebellious DJ's could play it in years to come. Apparently this is a standard practice at the SABC with 'undesirable' music.

I puzzled over the nature of our independence as record makers. We were forced to compromise the lyrics to the Bernoldus single to no avail, the title of the LP was going to be *Hooked On Dagga Vol 1* after the 'Hooked on...' craze, but it was felt that the CNA would not carry a record with a title like that and was compromised to *Wie is Bernoldus Niemand* so here I felt we were already bending over and being jabbed in the butt by the very forces we were seeking to be free of. We were behaving like the rest of the industry because we were still slaves to Radio. We were losing the joy of being independent record makers. We had lost the power to say fuck you to the SABC and still had to bend over for people like Tinus Esterhuizen. I decided to do a record of my own that would definitely not be played on Radio. It was called 'Own Affairs' and caused a bit of a storm at the pressing plant who found it 'undesirable'. I had to get it manufactured in England through an English record company, Recommended Records. The beginning of a relationship which lasts to this day. Despite being described by the *City Press* as 'one of the most mature expressions of rhythmic resistance this country has ever seen' it sold only 300 copies. In Europe it sold over 1000 copies. We had to import all copies of the record into South Africa. It was cheaper to call them 'vinyl samples' and send the covers separately. They were called 'cardboard sleeves' but each shipment turned out to be a nightmare of bureaucratic postal engagements which I'd need a lot more space to cover.

A weighty negativity permeates the South African recording scene. It derives from a lack of joy or pleasure one feels in the making of the music. I don't mean the contrived obvious *jiveasspleasure* that the performer has perfected but more the feel of the artist's understanding of the possibilities of the studio environment. No chances are ever taken. Radio calls the shots and the industry demands that the formula is followed. Initiative comes from the new territories charted by successful overseas artists. If I had approached a South African record company with the idea of doing a collaboration with Mahlathini and the Mohatella Queens they would have thought I was mad but it takes the initiative of an avant-garde British group Art Of Noise to put together the idea and one of the best Mahlathini tracks ever, 'Yebo'. The artist removed from that environment and the constraints of the 'formula' immediately blossoms forth. Art of Noise are not that far from my own area of work. We both cut up PW Botha's State Of Emergency speech and put a funky beat to it. Being a South African I think I understood the meaning of that speech much better than any group outside the country.

A concise history of independent record making in South Africa probably amounts to a few typed A4 pages. Interest is such that these would have to be privately photocopied, and given away free to people who would never read it. For a country which prides itself in its love of music we are sadly lacking in interest and imagination for anything that truly breaks new ground. The long years of cultural isolation cannot be blamed entirely for this though I believe that it has had a lasting stunting effect on the ordinary growth of the artistic imagination of our people. In all types of music; I have yet to see a South African free jazz ensemble or a multi media performance embracing different disciplines classic/jazz/african/electronic...is it so off the wall? I don't think so. Musicians playing totally off the wall music in New York make a decent living. We do not even know they exist. Phillip Tabane struggles to get a decent audience here. A unique performer and the last remaining exponent of the African avant garde in South Africa, he draws better crowds in England. When I saw him play to a packed venue in Brixton London I was struck by his strength of commitment to the spirit of no compromise. Here is a man who should be at the centre of an African experimental music movement in his own country, but local Industry and Radio deem it unmarketable.

The cultural boycott has ironically assisted the State in limiting our collective imagination. They of course took the gap and through their Broadcasting Corporation fed the people a diet of dubious consumerables. Even the

Soviet Union are more part of the global village than we are. I was invited to play in Moscow at a festival of independent music. I saw a group called Nez Dhali who had copied Johnny Clegg's Zulu dancing. I spoke to them afterwards and they said they had seen him on a Finnish TV broadcast. They were from Estonia. Anything is possible in Russia because they have no industry to speak of. There is only one record company called Melodia (State owned) who ignore most of the underground music. Consequently there is no self-censorship and musicians tend to experiment in all sorts of strange and weird ways. I saw a group called ZGA who made their own electronic instruments...a weird scaffold of bits and pieces that produced fantastically controlled and atmospheric music.

In 1989 I came across a group here called KOOS who for me were one of the best exponents of the concept of alternative Afrikaans music. The language is perfect to convey white South African angst. 'One of the most hard edged bands I'd ever heard. Very dissonant but very memorable chant-like tunes roughly executed. Words drawn from the writings of Ryk Hattingh, Chris Van Wyk and Johan van Wyk. I recorded them one week-end. Shifty weren't wild about it and it was decided that a record was a bit of a waste of money. A cassette was released in a brown paper bag. Out of all the alternative Afrikaans music to gather momentum at that time KOOS were perhaps the most radical so much so that they were considered a bit heavy for the Shifty Records Voëlvry Tour. This was disappointing as I felt the band could have been very quite inspiring for a lot of people (and would have sold some of the cassettes). The Voëlvry album title was my idea and was drawn from the track by Pieter van der Lugt which I had originally produced. KOOS suffered a huge setback when Andre Letoit decide to change his name to 'Koos Kombuis' and released an LP under that name. The confusion was too much and the band disbanded. They were the alternative to the alternative.

During the years of isolation and turmoil it was easier to define alternative music. Anything that was politically centred, which strove to capture the feelings and images of our own microcosms, anything with relevance could be called 'alternative'. It was that, which a State which could not tolerate criticism of itself, would have had to crush and condemn. As it was, Radio did it for them. The record companies would not record music which could not be played on the radio (they still don't). One who places unnecessary obstacles on the road to success is surely foolish. South African popular artists in their desire for mainstream success, chose to ignore political content in their music. As a result the archive of resistance songwriting is very thin. Sure the jazz guys came with numerous jams and melodies with titles like 'Song For Winnie' etc. but I am talking vocal song with penned words like the wealth of political songwriting which blossomed from places like Chile and Nicaragua. I worked on numerous foreign documentaries that inevitably tried to unearth this music. Foreign producers couldn't accept that the form did not really exist. There were Worker Choirs and poets with strident political slogans, BC jazzmen, but where were was our Thomas Mapfumo or our Ruben Blades, the song writers, the balladeers, like the Bluesmen of the American Twenties, like the hundreds of radical songsters in Papa Doc's Haiti? Where were the soul rebels?

Perhaps they were on a different stage. Theatre has been the most radical of the arts in this country and has the best track record for creative struggle culture. This is because it has never been seen by the State as a major problem because it cannot be mass produced in the same way that a book or a record can. One of the key reasons that the State unbanned my fourth LP *Beachbomb* was the fact that I had never sold more than a thousand copies of any of my records. If the system works on its own there is no need to ban records or anything. Without access to the means of proper promotion, especially broadcasting, it will effectively die its own death. In theatre the limitations of audience size and ticket prices always kept the wild youth at a distance. Imagine then a free concert in a stadium packed to capacity and a performance of some of the most politically savage poetry attacks on Apartheid ever. This was Mzwakhe Mbuli's stage and his audience were the young comrades from the townships. A tall elegant man of powerful voice, he had just about every struggle youngster wishing they were him. His first cassette 'Change Is Pain', recorded by Lloyd at Shifty, was banned outright. It was 1986 and the State recognised a powerful popular threat to their security. They

The Mahotella Queens at the World Beat Festival at Durban's Village Green
• Photo: Rafs Mayet •

Left:
Musicians from the Voëlvry Tour
• Photo: Steve Hilton-Barber •

Right: *Koos*

removed him from circulation. He spent two long stretches in detention doing months in solitary confinement during which time he prepared material for his second work 'Unbroken Spirit' released on record to be Shifty's biggest selling record ever. To date both of these albums have gone Gold (sales in excess of 25000). All this without radio. Mzwakhe should have been happy. He wasn't.

Something of an overnight success phenomenon had hit the company and like may small independent labels the world over, their paperwork was in disarray. Lloyd, trusting in the 'buddy' system, left things fairly informal. The company had footed the bill for all the recordings and took the risk. There was some interest in Germany and 'Change is Pain' had been released there by a tiny independent. I was still selling more Surfers there than they were selling Mzwakhe. I myself had never signed anything neither with my overseas connection nor with Shifty. This was to my advantage as it meant that I could drop everything and go with a major if an attractive offer came through. A serious lack of communications got Mzwakhe paranoid that the whites were ripping him off. Things went sour. He never appreciated the spirit of the small independent record company. Understandably his influences had nothing to do with the punk/new wave music revolution that swept Europe and America. The do-it-yourself attitude that inspired us to tackle recording and releasing music for no other reason than the joy and fun of it. We were from different worlds and Lloyd made the mistake of thinking that we were all pulling together in the same direction. Mzwakhe had a different agenda and in the end it was the race thing that nailed Shifty to the wall. We were whites and traditionally, even historically, it is always the white record companies that rip off the black artists. Who'd believe anything else? It was a cheap shot and we were an easy target.

Mbuli used his position on the Cultural Desk to try to block various other Shifty projects. Some were things that he'd agreed earlier to be involved in. One was the making available at cost all the speeches of the recently released leaders, and set up an infrastructure to speedily record and mass produce these vital oral gems of our history. Predictably, Mbuli accused us of political opportunism, but I think the worst we could be accused of was naivete. Like most people in the country we were swept away by the euphoria of the times. I stood outside Sisulu's house after he was released, I stood in the sun outside Victor Verster when Mandela walked out to freedom. Our whole lives we'd been waiting for this. I wanted to use my skills in the service of this great historical movement forward. Combining my tape editing skills together with Shaun Naidoo's keyboard skills we released a cassette of funky electro dance mixes featuring excerpts from the speeches given at the welcome home rally for Sisulu, Kathrada and 6 others. It was called 'Urgent Release', proceeds of which went to the fund set up for released detainees. It sold reasonably well again without radio play.

The elation of those days is over. Shifty took some flack in the press. Other artists followed Mzwakhe in search of the Big Record Deal. The Genuines, Noise Khanyile, Simba Morri. I spent a fair amount of time and energy on the cover and promotional material for the Tananas album. After the ground work was done they too left for greener pastures breaking a verbal contract and wasting months of studio work that Lloyd had done completing their second album. Even in the early days Sankomoto were the recipients of the first ever Shifty Record contract but it wasn't worth shit when the band went overseas and happily ignored it. This is not a problem unique to Shifty. Small independents overseas also struggle to keep successful artists with them and if company management is shaky, professional artists need to move into infrastructures that can give them more security, and ultimately more money. With the realisation of one's creative potential an urgency seems to set in where the artist is frustrated at the slow pace of his/her development with a not quite professional organisation. The series of destructive attacks against Shifty have sadly collapsed the energy and momentum of the earlier days.

As for myself...I was employed once by Shifty and drew two months of salary but I prefer a quiet seat on the sideline. I have a financial investment in the studio and the record company owes me some good will for work and commitment during the earlier more fun-filled years. I am an artist and continue to produce occasional independent music that takes my fancy. I have recorded an

Warrick Sony • **Photo: Steve Hilton-Barber** •

artist from Tembisa called Petric Mahlalela who with his group play a fascinating cross over of Tracy Chapman and Stimela. I battled to get interest from Shifty and the majors are wrapped up in their own work. The master tapes are mixed but I have no money to conclude the project. Another project that is still ongoing is a collaborative work with poet Lesego Rampolokeng. The German Embassy came forward with a tiny amount of development money but still no one is interested in putting money up to do a proper LP and CD. We'll probably do a limited edition of cassettes. This is outstanding work and the sort of thing arts councils in developed countries would fund. I find it impossible to do these things alone. They would also not get radio play. Shifty are now moving towards licensing overseas catalogues and trimming down local unmarketable artists. Where does that leave the independents? What independents?

It's a strange game this music business. We visited Alex Jay's studio some weeks back. He has a partnership with three or four other people situated in Houghton. In the entrance hall I noticed a number of gold and platinum disc awards hanging on the wall. I wondered how a Disc Jockey manages to get a gold record and strolled over to read the little brass plaque. It was awarded to him for his hard work in helping to sell in excess of 50 000 records of the Australian group Midnite Oil. Makes you think doesn't it?

E-Makhabeleni

U-Thukela led the way
Streaming down the valleys
Rocks washed from pillar to post
Trees planted on the river banks
Dams and pools took shape
The natural lillies flowered on dongas
This is e-makhabeleni

Ama-Bomvu clan live here
The recitation of episodes arouses anger
The people's hero, BAMBATHA fought here
Abafazi baphuma bakikazi
When regiments left for the battlefield
The war is over but the anger remains
The bullet scars are there forever

Cattle wandered the barren velds
Grazing along the shallow river
At midday, flocked to drink u-Thukela
Rested nearby and yelled for home
bulls fight on the barren dusty patches
The dust swelled into the greyish sky
Abafuna bahasha izinkunzi zakubo

The bushy trees hide the huts
The beautiful mud and stone rondavels
The shelter for millions of dwellers
Makhabela you survived for generations
The ever willing birds sing to your fate
They bring messages from e-Goli
The husbands clean those skyscrapers

Women, with kids on the back fetch water
They line u-thukela, chat their worries away
The other world is foreign to them
Theirs is u-Msinga and ama-Khabela
Amantombazane ayoshaya ingqakala emfuleni
The boys way lay them to propose love
The young ladies are not prepared to agree

Our women of calibre bear testimony
A letter comes once in a blue moon
It will be read under the flames of fire
A ray of hope, remembrance — ubaba usaphila
The grandmother pricks the red coal with joy
Makoti, undodana uthi uyobuya nini?
It is sunset, cattle are coming home

Sikhulekile ekhaya ema-Khabeleni!
We heard your cries and joys alike
Madoda niyibekile induku ebandla
Sipho Mchunu strummed his guitar
Taught us the history and life of the people
Johnny Clegg — the white son of ama-Khabela
The revival of culture raised the spirits

BAMBATHA ka-MANCINZA — Rise!
Wake up the fallen heroes
The black cloud has closed on us
Vuka LUQA, ndlondlo enophaphe ekhanda
Wake up the sleeping heroes
from their everlasting rest
E-Makhabeleni — where we are.

Henry Zondi

frank meintjies

walk the road with me

you tearing at the aperture
of our insides
a deep deep cave
in which we walk, you walk me
and then i don't know where

you, filled with the rhythm of tears
in the howl of the night
i hear weeping
that stifles reply, shreds words
mine and yours
and leaves still silhouettes
on the wordless lapping of the wind

heroes ride on the tall ships of dreams
but we are bringers of pain
we present it to you like a prize
we open your pain like the slow ripening of a flower
we, whose presence you come to out of breath
for repose, so often with anger
why do we cause you such intensity?

between the delicate pages of the flames
our bodies clasp
fighting the moment's numbness
reluctant to walk into the night, into the streets
that call us each by name

brother/father/child/boy
who am i to myself, to these voices
so unclear and echoey
in the dripping aloneness of the cave
i, whose love is a broken mirror
on which you walk while i keep my shoes on

still, will you walk the road with me
to where i'll know my face clearly
to a place of words
and we'll know ourselves apart from
these sheaves of bonding flame

and then i will know the answer:
is there such a place?

photo-cleaning

every now and again
she comes back
to the contour-ploughed lines
of your now distant greeting

with the thoroughness of a sandblast
her obsessed hands
probe dustfolds and grained surface
till
the pale-blank square
(the disease of stagnant shadow pools)
stares at her

she executes
a wistful intake of breath
and quickly
plugs the hole with
the mat-finish breeziness
of your expressiveness

morning

i search for that morning
when your first movement
is a smile in the early light

my hands the floating bramble
to cover you against
the suddenness of waking

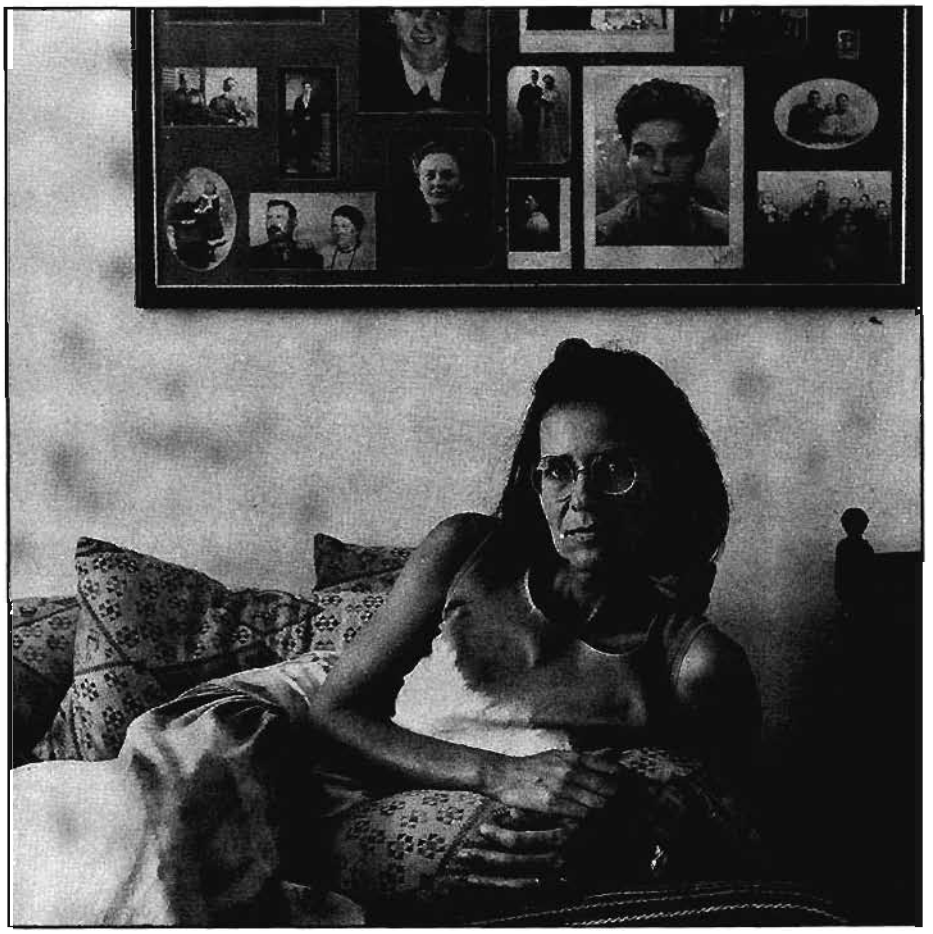
my thoughts are about yours
that wander through the day, because
every moment is like a lifetime
filled with much that must be given
and that much must be harboured
in the warmth of the breast

i look for that morning
when there's nothing between us, not
preoccupied eyes
nor quiet perching of a clock

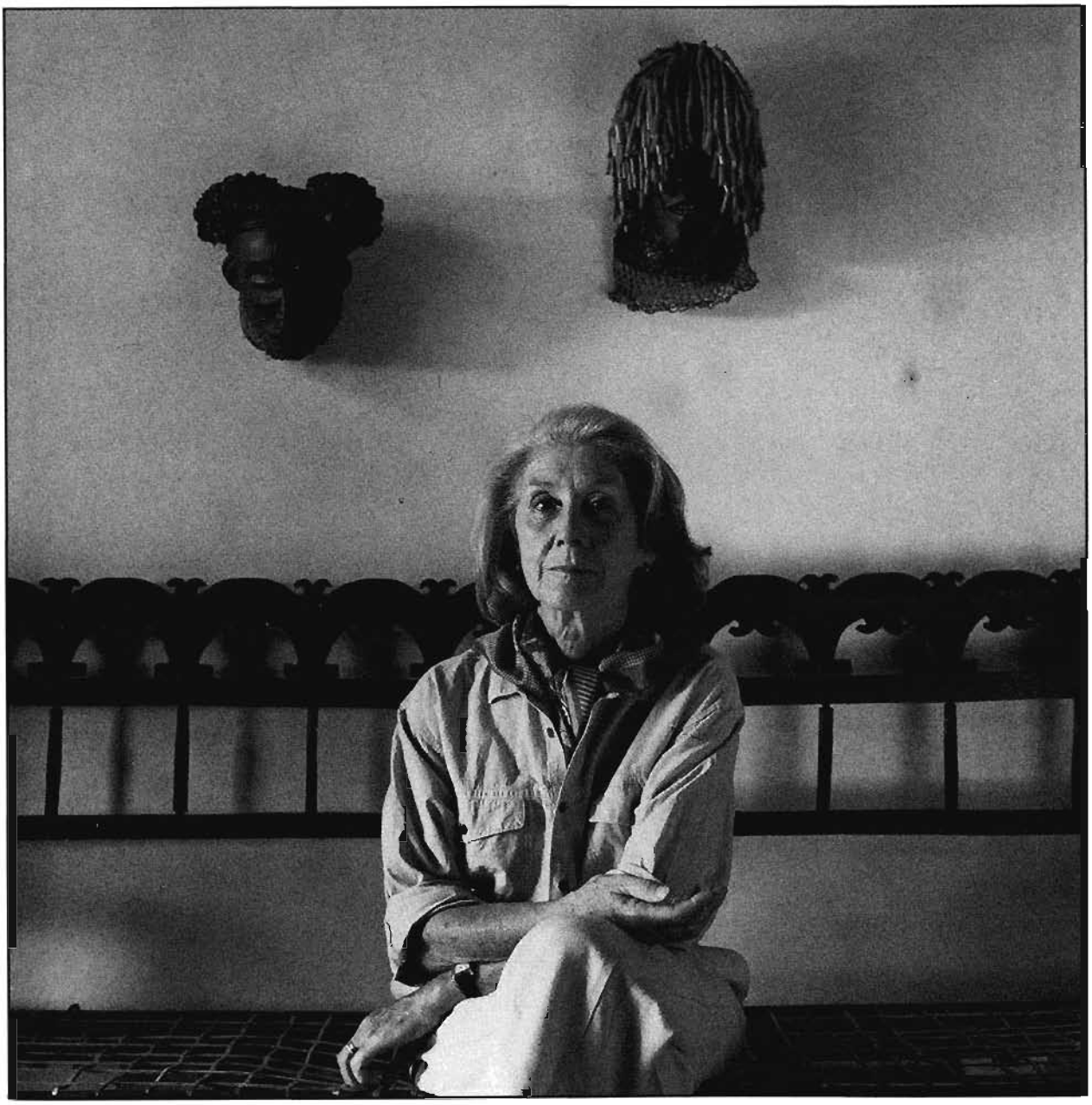
Above:
• *Gcina Mhlophe* •
Opposite:
• *Antjie Krog* •

Photographs by
Gisele Wulfsohn

PORTRAITS OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN

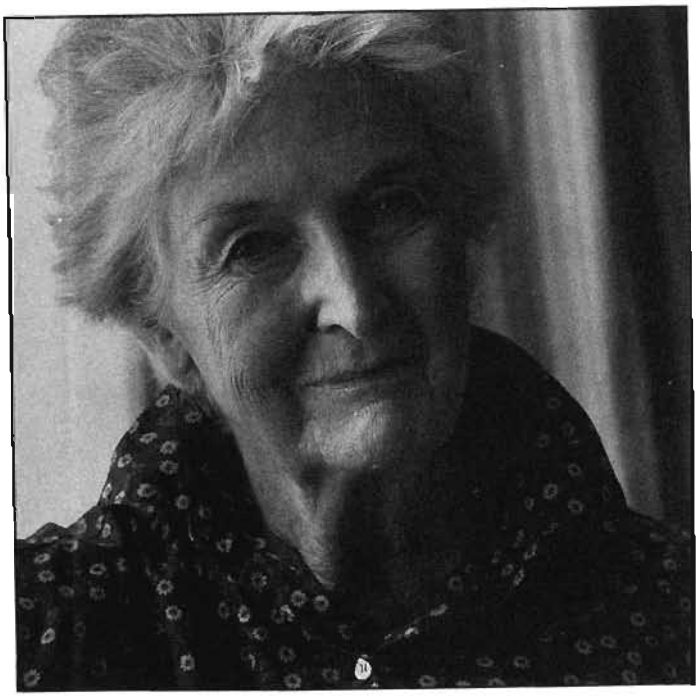


• *Maggie Resha* •



• *Nadine Gordimer* •

Right:
• *Ethel De Kaiser* •



Left:
• *Mary Benson* •

• *Adelaide Tambo* •

Review

An Important and Imaginative Anthology

Isobel Hofmeyr

Raising the Blinds: A Century of South African Women's Stories
Editor: Annemarié van Niekerk, Publisher: Ad Donker 1990

This anthology forms part of a recent upsurge of interest in women's literature in South Africa and along with other similar ventures, participates in an attempt to package this often diverse cultural production into a 'tradition' of women's writing.

Much of this work is extremely valuable and in making more women's writing available for reading, teaching and discussion, the compiler of *Raising the Blinds* has performed a valuable service. It brings together thirty-eight stories culled from a wide range of sources that include nineteenth century collections of oral literature, short story; anthologies both in and out of print, popular women's magazines, newspapers, sociological and historical texts, and literary journals. These stories have in turn been arranged roughly chronologically and the compiler has usefully cited the source and original date of publication at the beginning of each story.

As the introduction explains, the stories fall into four rough sections. The first of these comprises five oral narratives, some collected last century, some collected in the 1970s and 1980s. The dating of this section is, however, quirky. Why in the case of the two stories culled from nineteenth-century collections are the dates of reissues used? The second section covers the 'late nineteenth and early twentieth century period dominated by white colonial fiction' (p.17) and the authors used here are Schreiner, Smith and Mary Byron. Lessing, Doris Sello, Bertha Goudvis, Millin and Gordimer make up the third 'mid-twentieth century' period, 'more specifically the 1950s and 1960s, during which prominent white voices emerged reflecting on and challenging the newly instituted apartheid regime, while writing by black women was still submerged in the sexism of the *Drum* decade' (p.17). The fourth period comprises the 1970s and 1980s, marked by 'the advent of the Black Consciousness Movement and the emergence of English short fiction writing by black women, dealing both with rural life and the township context' (p.17). The 1980s is 'dominated by black voices' and during this period 'an analytical awareness of women's position in society emerges (p.17). The number of stories in this period is disproportionately large (25 out of 38) and includes well-known figures like Sheila Roberts, Gcina Mhlophe, Zoe Wicomb, and Miriam Tlali. In addition, there are lesser known names like Sharyn West, Joan Baker, Kefiloe Mvula and Ponkie Khazamula.

For those knowing little about South African literature or women writers in the country, the collection provides a useful overview of material. For more informed readers, teachers and academics, the collection — in its scope and breadth — will also be invaluable. This is undoubtedly an important and imaginative anthology and is certainly the most comprehensive collection of South African women's literature to date.

The introduction, however, is less useful, largely because it does not reflect more critically on the tradition-making process in which it participates. Instead, the introduction tells us that a tradition of women's literature is already made, waiting only to be discovered and so saved from the sexist neglect of academic and publishing institutions. Or, as Van Niekerk explains in her introduction, 'The title signifies a gesture of raising the blinds of a dark and shut-in interior, exposing it to light. This involves the exposure of an already existing, but previously obscured interior' (p.11).

Yet, to what extent is this 'interior' self-evident,

waiting simply to be revealed as a 'century' of unfolding tradition? The introduction does, of course, point out that because so little is known about the extent and nature of women's literature in South Africa, much research work needs to be done before definitive statements can be made. However, it is clear that the introduction has fairly firm ideas about the outlines of such a tradition and by setting out a chronological framework, Van Niekerk establishes the major markers around which the future tradition will cohere. As already indicated, this framework comprises four periods: pre-colonial; late nineteenth and early twentieth century; mid-twentieth century; and the 1970s and 1980s. It is largely this schema that the introduction uses to make sense of the stories in the anthology.

The point to note about this schema is that it is often used in discussions of South African literature and history. It is also implicitly nationalist since it construes the movement of time as leading up to the emergence of national self-assertion and cultural independence. On the face of it, there is, of course, nothing remarkable about this periodisation. However, much feminist literary criticism has made the point that a consistent analysis of women's writing — or the literature of any marginal group for that matter — inevitably challenges the boundaries and major preconceptions of existing canons and orthodoxies. In light of this idea, it is a pity that Van Niekerk did not let the stories enter a dialogue with this schema since they would undoubtedly have forced her to reformulate some of the orthodoxies that inform her interpretations.

Take for example the explanation given for the emergence of black women's writing in the 1980s. Like all other interpreters of South African literature, she puts this down to the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement and the changed cultural climate that this inaugurated along with the facilitating role of literary magazines like *Staffrider*. But since this is a collection of women's writing, the interesting question on which one can at least speculate is the extent to which the Black Consciousness Movement — heavily male-dominated and relying on a discourse often tied up with male constructions of knowledge — both aided and impeded women's cultural production. Another issue that would repay closer investigation is the advent of Bantu Education. Whatever its noxious political implications, it was a mass education system. As such, it dramatically increased the number of scholars in primary and then secondary school. Within this group, the most spectacular increase was most probably amongst girls since the levels of female attendance at pre-Bantu Education missions schools was minute. Self-evidently, Bantu Education was destructive. Yet, at the same time it did provide increasing numbers of women with literacy. Similarly, the growth of homeland universities in the 1970s increased the number female graduates.

Another area in which the book relies on standard forms of explanation is in the area of oral literature and pre-colonial gender subordination. While the introduction focuses on the structural determinants of pre-colonial gender oppression, no attempt is made to read the oral stories in the collection as a response to, or subversion of this oppression. Instead, Van Niekerk discusses the female performer in rather cloying terms: '...she is also an artist, and she desires to project an image that is at once a reaffirmation of her own inherited ideals, an extension of her culture, and — most important — a thing of beauty' (p.18). The introduction goes on to note that the major themes of oral stories relate to 'mother-children relationships' and 'wife-husband interaction', without raising the question of whether oral stories subsubvert or challenge such oppressive discourses of fertility. These issues are, of course, extremely difficult ones to answer but if we are to have a gender-sensitive understanding of oral literature then it is these questions — which are largely ones of how to read oral narrative — that urgently need to be examined.

Related to this question of oral literature is the issue of how oral and literate streams interact. In dealing with this area, Van Niekerk — in keeping with orthodox views on orality and literacy — sets up an implicitly evolutionary relationship between the spoken and the written whereby the latter always precedes the former. This perception also guides her ordering of the material and the oral stories all come at the beginning despite the fact that at least one of them was performed and collected in 1965. Since the book is chronologically arranged and if there is indeed some vital link between oral stories and

written ones, then why not put the story in its true chronological place rather than relegating it to some ghettoised pre-colonial one?

In understanding women's cultural production, a satisfactory understanding of how the oral and literate interact is paramount. The standard model used thus far in conceptualising this interaction has generally been one of combining two traditions or rediscovering and reformulating an oral tradition and it is on this type of explanation that the introduction draws. However, this model is rather one-dimensional and does not allow us conceptual insight into the diverse ways in which women writers in particular appropriate, or more properly, 'gender' tradition, to meet their particular needs. Turning to examples from the rest of Africa, a common theme in writing by African women is the struggle for the right to choose one's own spouse. This theme is also often surrounded by issues like the struggle for monogamy, attempts to withstand kin obligations and demands on household resources. These issues are often close to the heart of middle class, African women writers and many of them attempt to legitimise these class-gender interests by rolling them back in the past and clothing them in 'traditional' oral storytelling forms. In this anthology, Bessie Head's story 'The Lovers' falls squarely into this category and it opens up a range of insights into how women writers manipulate oral storytelling forms.

Some women, for example, launched or built careers around writing down oral stories for children, drawing thereby on a colonial institutionalisation of oral storytelling that has relegated this genre to primary schools and so infantilised a form that had previously been seen as being directed at both adults and children. Not all women, however, follow this path and some have taken up a more critical stance to the use of oral storytelling as indicated by several writers interviewed by Adeola James in *In Their Own Voice: African Women Writers Talk,* 1990. The introduction mentions the case of Violet Dube who clearly falls into the former category and it is a pity that some of her material was not included in translation since it would stand as testimony to the complex and various ways in which women writers have gendered 'tradition' to meet their particular needs.

Another interesting group of women writers in South Africa who have attempted to manipulate tradition to build writing careers have been white documentors of oral narrative — most notably Minnie Postma and Phyllis Savory. As Dorothy Driver (in *'M'a-Ngoana O Tsoare Thipa ka Bohaleng — The Child's Mother Grabs the Sharp End of the Knife: Women as Mothers, Women as Writers* 1990) has analysed in a different context, this figure of the white women documenting black women's experiences is not uncommon in South African literature. This type of figure also appears indirectly in this anthology in the guise of the interviewer and two stories 'There You Are Under The Cows' by Anna Mazibuko and 'Let Me Make History Please' by Johanna Masilla — are heavily edited versions of life history interviews undertaken by academics. Van Niekerk ignores the heavily mediated nature of these documents and sees them simply as stories of the women themselves. Again, she could well have raised a series of interesting questions about the simultaneously enabling and constraining relationship of white women 'speaking for' black working class women and the extent to which the format of the biographical interview prevents informants from expressing their experience through alternative fictive conventions derived from popular, oral storytelling traditions that are, for example, not necessarily chronological.

Another way in which these women's stories can challenge existing canons and literary periodisations concerns perceptions of pre-colonial societies. This is a point often made in relation to women writers in the rest of Africa, and the work of someone like Emecheta, for example, rewrites a romantic, nationalist view of a supposedly egalitarian pre-colonial period by highlighting forms of gender and other oppression, most notably indigenous slavery, a theme that seldom made its way into African literature of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Some of the stories in this collection similarly tell stories of protagonists struggling against the constraints and demands of existing 'pre-colonial' forms of patriarchal authority rooted in male lineage authority. It is a theme strongly expressed in Mhlophe's 'Nokulunga's Wedding' and emerges interestingly enough in Pauline Smith's 'The Sisters'.

A story like Mvula's 'The Naked Night' extends this

theme of indigenous patriarchal authority by investigating how it melds with the most reactionary aspects of colonial-Christian ideas of gender subordination. The interaction of these systems and the tendency for the most oppressive aspects of both to reinforce each other has been taken up by much recent writing by African women, particularly Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. In this collection too a number of stories explore the complex intermeshing of chiefly and settler forms of gender subordination. Lessing's 'The Nuisance', for example, gives a subtle exploration of farmer and foreman collaborating to get rid of a troublesome woman. In other instances women use colonial institutions to escape or at least lessen the burden of male lineage control. One of the many stories on domestic workers — this one by Goudvis — indirectly reflects this process by portraying an African woman's manipulation of mission and church activity. Other stories like those by Motanyane and Wicomb also address mission education but highlight its propagations of oppressive race-gender ideologies.

What these stories all suggest is the very ambiguous impact of colonialism on existing gender relations. Again, however, the introduction cannot alert readers to this complexity since it gives an implicitly nationalist reading of colonialism that sees it as uniformly oppressive for women. While this was often the case, recent historical research has demonstrated the extent to which missions provided an escape for women keen to flee the strictures of unwanted marriages in particular and patriarchal, lineage-based controls in general. Parenthetically, this group of women gave rise to the figure of the 'run-away daughter' that crops up frequently in colonial and chiefly records. Interestingly, this archetype appears in a variety of different contexts in this anthology.

For making this wide and unusual range of stories available to readers, Van Niekerk is to be congratulated. While the book makes possible some of the reading suggested above it is, however, a pity that her introduction could not fully alert readers to the complex light that the gender issues in these stories can throw on the existing orthodoxies through which we are constrained to see the world.

The Nadine Gordimer Short Story Award: Results 1991

The winner of the 1991 Nadine Gordimer Short Story Award is Deena Padayachee for his story 'The Finishing Touch'. Padayachee is a medical doctor living in Dormerton in Natal. He has published stories in a number of South African journals.

Last year at the celebration of the 67th birthday of Nadine Gordimer, the Congress of South African Writers announced the establishment of an annual short story award bearing the name of the 1991 Nobel Laureate. The aim of the award is to encourage the writing of new fiction by emergent writers. The contest is open to all South African writers who have not yet published an anthology of their own stories. The award consists of two book vouchers to the value of R500 each and an offer of publication.

The adjudicators, Stephen Gray, Kaiser Nyatsumba and Annemarié van Niekerk, unanimously decided to select only one winner. In addition, the work of F. Kumalo, A. Salafranca, R. Anderson, G. Kivan, G. Ngubo, M. Shabalala, N. Luthuli, V. Bengu, B. Schreiner, Jiggs, M. Jacklin, J. Singh, M. Wessels, E. Beattie and H. Edwards will be published in an anthology next year.

Details of the 1992 award will be made available early next year. *Staffrider* congratulates the winner and thanks all contributors.

Review

Throwing Stones:
The Theory and Practice of Feminist Anthologies

Marcia Levison

Breaking the Silence. A Century of South African Women's Poetry
Edited by Cecily Lockett. Published: Ad. Donker, 1990.

In challenging traditional power structures, especially 'the patriarchal society which predicates experience as male and suppresses the female' ('Introduction' p.14), Cecily Lockett has thrown down the gauntlet and established herself as a pivotal presence in our local literary world.

It is not my intention to use this review as a platform once again to enter the debate currently active concerning gender politics. This has been done fully and ably at a number of recent (and forthcoming) conferences and in the pages of the October 1990 issue of *Current Writing*. However, while applauding the appearance of a volume dedicated to collecting and promoting poetry written by women, and while agreeing that at least up to the last decade there would seem to be few South African women poets published in individual volumes or anthologised, I have some reservations about *Breaking the Silence*, subtitled *A Century of South African Women's Poetry*. It is Lockett's practice rather than her feminist theory with which I shall take issue.

Deeply concerned with women's oppression in an androcentric society, Lockett maintains that the paucity of the publication or appreciation of women's poetry has been wilfully 'imposed by anthologists, literary critics and teachers of literature' (p.14). Although she is careful to disavow any reference to a 'conspiracy' theory (p.15), she states unequivocally that poetry by women has traditionally been treated with '...scorn (which) effectively excluded (it) from the tradition' (p.15). She is therefore making a claim that a large quantity of superior women's poetry never saw publication because an androcentric culture marginalised it. If that is the case, one would expect the present volume to be dedicated to unearthing, dusting off and presenting for the first time this excellent, anthology-worthy poetry. And, to a certain extent, this is what it does. But here I have two separate problems with Lockett's endeavour.

Let me first look at the poetry represented in the Section entitled 'Early Period'. Although there is evidence that not everything significant was collected — for example, in her introduction, Lockett tantalisingly mentions Alice Mabel Alder as a member of the Veldsingers Club, but she does not include an example of her work — Lockett has certainly assembled work from an impressive number of fascinating women poets writing between 1834 and about 1960. I think particularly of Anna de Bremont, Charlotte Moor, Alice Green, Elizabeth Molteno, Mary Byron, Mary Morison Webster and Adele Naude. If they were all unpublished, scorned and overlooked, how did she find the poems? Did she rifle ancient trunks or archives, or have access to private sources? Indeed, when I noticed that the second poem, written by Anon was subtitled 'Lines sent by a Kimberley lady to her mother, in 1873,' I thought that Lockett had uncovered unpublished and entirely original material. But I was disappointed. She gives no information about where this poem was found. And throughout this section, in fact throughout the whole volume, her silence on the issue is marked. Of the 136 named poets in the anthology, bibliographical material is provided only on 65. And seldom if ever is an indication of the location of the text given. By consulting the list of acknowledgements, I was able to discover where some of the modern poems had previously appeared, but that was all. By default, therefore, since no other evidence of origin is given, one must assume that the poems of the 'Early Period' have already

been published, presumably in male edited journals, newspapers or in individual volumes put out by male publishers. This, to a large extent, weakens her central argument. But worse, and this is my real quarrel: by her silence on the nature of her research and the location of individual poems, Lockett has missed an opportunity to make her exercise historically satisfying, not merely politically so.

I have two problems with the second part of the anthology, entitled 'The Modern Period'. The first is a minor quibble. The initial part of this section overlaps the previous section with no indication given of where the cut-off point comes or on what basis a poem is consigned to the 'Early or Modern Period'.

The more serious issue is that the anthology represents the last decade or so in a very incomplete fashion, given the enormous amount of poetry by women that has in fact been published, especially in the little magazines. I started to make a rough count of the number of women poets marginalised by Lockett herself but deemed worthy of publication by the (male) editors of literary journals, and stopped when, not having gone very far, I counted over forty active women poets not represented in the anthology. Glancing at some of the poetry Lockett has overlooked, I noticed that much of the subject matter was not of the kind she has prescribed as being suitable for inclusion in her anthology. And this is obviously why it has been excluded. For her, as a feminist, suitability was dictated by treatment of '(women's) conception of themselves as women and as poets, their problems in South African society with its racial structures, their celebrations of their biological womanhood manifest in childbirth and childrearing and their relationships with other women, including their mothers and their daughters' (p.20-21). While concentrating on experience that she maintains male editors have overlooked and therefore highlighting those 'neglected' areas, she has dangerously narrowed her focus. This makes her guilty in another way of the very crime of which she accuses the male hegemony. Wilfully suppressing poems which do not treat certain aspects of women's experience and showing only a selected facet of women's creativity, ultimately does women a disservice and, I believe, damages the feminist cause.

In passing, I notice that relationships between women and men — sons, lovers, husbands — are not on Lockett's (the feminist's) list of acceptable topics. And fathers are represented with rather unpleasant animus. Here are only two references of many to nasty fathers:

> Drawing on his overcoat
> prior to his departure
> the paterfamilias
> looking at his pale daughters
> said to their meek pale mother
> 'They get outta line — smack smack.'
> Just like that.
> Smack.
> Smack.
> ('Paterfamilias' Vanda Van Speyk, p.325)

> Cast in bronze is the mocking wrinkle,
> the mouth cheating the steel chain.
> He has placed obligation upon thorny mockery,
> he has held the foolish seat of authority
> stripping limbs which hold no life...
> ('Fathers' Tania Van Zyl, p.127)

I was not aware that heterosexual love was such a taboo subject for the feminist. I searched in vain for a decent love poem. I couldn't even find an indecent one!

However, representing breadth of subject matter and aesthetic value no matter what the subject was not Lockett's intention. She writes: 'the locus of value in these poems is not primarily formal or aesthetic or even literary, but their importance lies in their articulation of the gendered conditions of women's lives and women's writing.' (p.21). That is to say that these poems might well be limited or even bad art but they are good politics. It must be that a rigid prescription of topic lies behind Lockett's neglect of such important poets as Anne Kellas, Terry Sussman (both of whom have published volumes), Fiona Zerbst who has won a poetry prize, and so many others. If so, then gender politics gets in the way not only of aesthetics but of a fidelity to the map of women's writing in South Africa.

If I read and enjoy the anthology on Lockett's own terms, I am made aware as never before that during the last hundred and fifty years women have written a great number of poems on feminist subjects, some quite en-

thralling — Mary Byron, Mary Morison Webster, Stella F. Helman, Adele Naude, Eva Bezwoda, Sizakele Ndlovu, Tembeka Mbobo, Ingrid de Kok — some moving, some quaint and many weak or plain bad. I still believe that there were other equally good if not better poems written by women which Lockett has not collected because they were not on feminist or women's issues and that these poems would immeasurably have strengthened the case being made for a powerful tradition of writing by women poets. This anthology should therefore, not have advertised itself as a *Century of South African* Women's *Poetry*, but rather it should have been titled *A Century of South African Women's Feminist Poetry*. As a feminist text, it will certainly be invaluable for those lecturers or teachers who wish to construct courses on feminist discourse, and it amply redresses the balance of published poetry in South African anthologies, since Lockett informs us that Michael Chapman's influential *A Century of A South African Poetry* contained the work of only 10 women and 127 men! I could add that Chapman's anthology does scant justice to the writing of the black poets, to say nothing of the black women poets. This is not the case in Lockett's anthology where the writing of black women is abundantly and movingly represented.

Say No, Black Woman
Say No
When they call your jobless son
a Tsotsi
Say No

Say No, Black Woman
Say No
When they call
Your husband at the age of 60
a boy
Say No....
('Say No' Gcina Mhlope, p.351)

In a world of war and restless nights
words fill mouths like dictionaries
but they do not fill her heart
she squeezes blood out of a dream
and dry weeds tumble from her eyes
as a black bark in a forest of ash
she forgets her name — forgets the clock
the scorching sun — the long dusty road
and remembers only that she is Mother
with a vacant mielie bowl in her hand
and a swollen belly of sadness
in a desert of dark grieving....
('Refugee Mother' Dee September, p.312)

I do understand that in 'breaking a silence' it may be necessary to throw stones. Yet when the dust settles, I could have wished to know more about where the stones came from and I would have preferred them not to have been so uniform. While welcoming what will undoubtedly and justly be regarded as an important literary enterprise, I confess to being sometimes irritated by over three hundred pages of often strident feminism. Only at rare and wonderful moments are there flashes of irony or wit, and these illuminate the whole volume:

People surprise me by asking
what kind of feminist are you
concisely, what's your specific stand?
....

But you tell me,
is what I should demand,
judging by my way of acting
by the way you see my passion
articulate with the discourse,
what kind of feminist
do you think I seem?
What kind of critic do you think you are
I might as well say,
what kind of a man are you?...

That is precisely it you see
the problem with this kind of discourse
this kind of criticism
with the reference only to the name
or idea of discourse at all
is precisely that it will not see
which cogs driven by which passion
grinding which men and women
in what chains when specifically
make up
the name and the reality
to which it refers....
('Poem' Joan Meterlerkamp, p.316)

This is wonderful stuff! I do wish more women poets had a sense of humour!

Tell the Truth

Tell us how many lives have been lost in Pietermaritzburg,
before you tell us that troops are in townships
to protect us.

Tell us the number of the vigilantes who are in detention
before you tell us detention is for public safety.

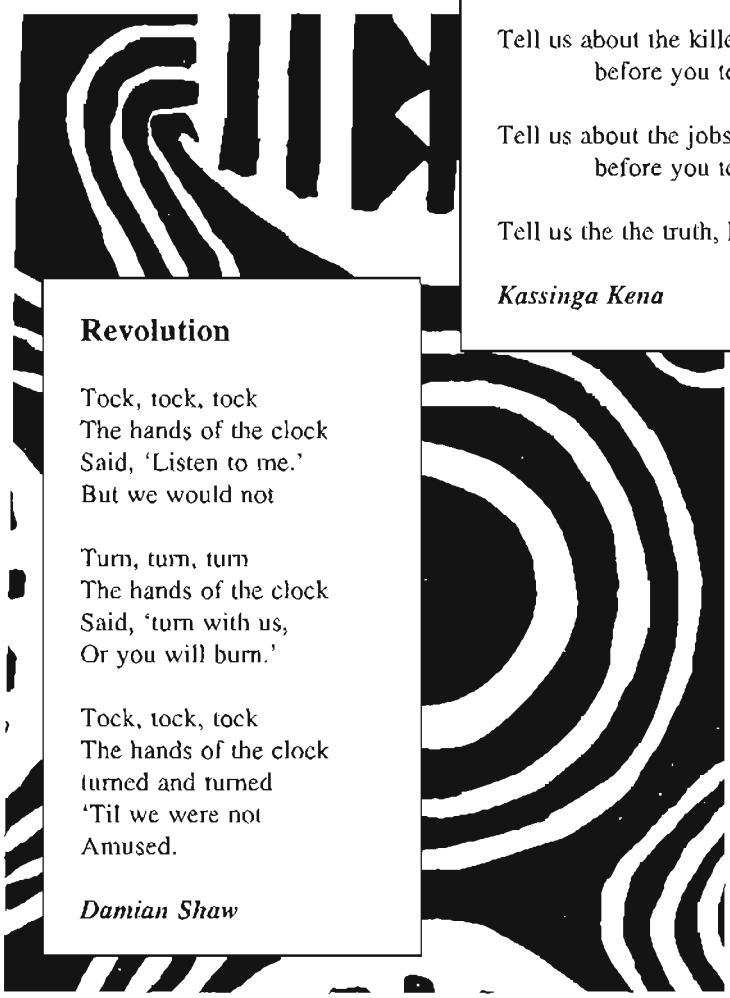
Tell us about the houses you have built for the homeless people
before you tell us about the Squatters Act.

Tell us about the killers of Sicelo Dlomo and David Webster
before you tell us about Law and Order.

Tell us about the jobs you have offered to us
before you tell us to pay rent.

Tell us the the truth, De Klerk's Regime!

Kassinga Kena



Revolution

Tock, tock, tock
The hands of the clock
Said, 'Listen to me.'
But we would not

Turn, turn, turn
The hands of the clock
Said, 'turn with us,
Or you will burn.'

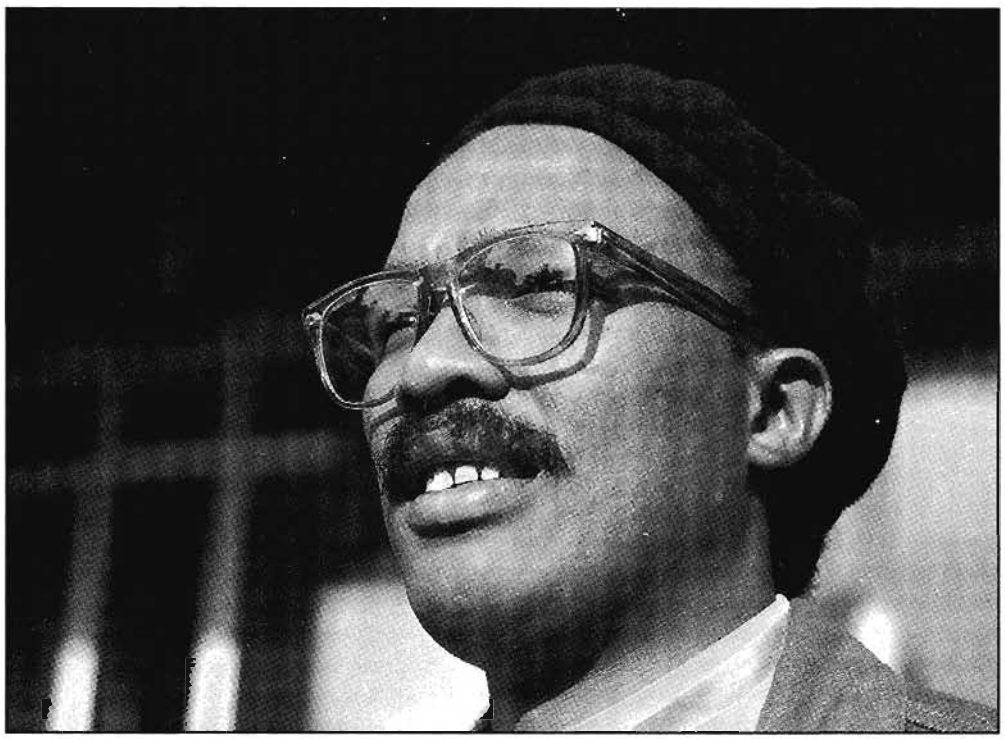
Tock, tock, tock
The hands of the clock
turned and turned
'Til we were not
Amused.

Damian Shaw

Interview

Developing An Indigenous Music Culture

This interview with Rashid Lanie was conducted by Barbara Schreiner in Johannesburg, August 1991, for *Staffrider*.



Rashid Lanie • **Photo: Andrew Lord** •

STAFFRIDER: How can the imbalances in South African music be redressed?

LANIE: It is very difficult for any artist in our country to speak about imbalances that have to be redressed, specifically as far as one discipline is concerned. It has to be seen in the broader context, and not only from an artistic broader context, but politically and socio-economically speaking. However, obviously, myself being an artist, as far as my contribution is concerned on a political level, I do feel that I have a voice and that my voice should be heard as an artist. I am also the type of person who feels that, just like the media reserves the right to freedom of expression, the artist almost doesn't need to express the right to have that right. It is something that is so inherent, that is so internal and so private that when it comes out we don't want to ask for permission.

But of course we do live in a practical world and there are realities that one has to address. At times the situation is such that one tends to be embroiled in some kind of emotionalism of the situation, instead of taking it further to the intellectual level, and then further to the intuitive level. But right now I think what we should address is this whole idea of whether there is something like a South African culture, or a South African art.

Although they're not my prime model, I think the

Americans are very similar to South Africans in many respects, in the sense that they are a very ethnically diverse society, and each State in America almost has its own character, but yet when something is produced from any of those States is says 'America', it doesn't say 'California', it doesn't say it's 'New York'. So in a way that could give some kind of guidance to the different styles of music, the different styles of art or dance, or ideas or whatever kind of artistic endeavour that is prevalent in our country. There is a resemblance between the two. Because I was stuck with the idea, and I think many artists are at present stuck with the idea that somehow or other we have to fuse some boere-musiek with some jazz, with some kwela, with some marabi, with some klopse- musiek, and then from that amalgamation we will come to what we call a South African music of some kind.

STAFFRIDER: There was a seminar that the Progressive Arts Project hosted some time ago, on 'Towards a Progressive South African Music', and one of the things that came out of that is that there is no one progressive South African music, it is wrong to talk about 'a' South African music....

LANIE: Absolutely, because by doing that fusion you are almost saying that we must lose the innocence of individuality. Although we are in a group, we still want to maintain our individuality and it is the contribution of the different individuals that create the power for the group. And I think our art works in very much the same way, that if you have an mbaqanga kind of music, that should be preserved, but it shouldn't be preserved as 'the' or a particular people's type of music. It's like jazz in America. It started as the blues, and it was purely from a black experience that that music emanated, from West Africa. It is still prevalent in West Africa. And then obviously, through the years, and through its travels, from the south up to the north, it changed its face into many different types of jazz, like Dixieland and swing, bebop, post-bop, all those different eras of jazz. And today we have what we call the West Coast jazz and we have East Coast jazz, west being in California, LA, and east is New York jazz. And all the people of America are involved in entertaining or promoting or participating in those forms of jazz, as professional musicians or as amateurs.

So in our country, we can obviously take the idea of kwela, and we can take the idea of marabi, especially marabi, which was in a way a kind of blues, an urban kind of music that was taken from folk models, and then became an urban model through the advent of radio and the electronic media in our country, so that musicians were influenced by other Western musical forms. And also, it goes centuries back to when we had visitors like the American minstrels coming to our country to entertain the gold miners, in Kimberley and Johannesburg; there's also the history of the Malays who because of their contact with the Dutch sailors, while they were coming from South East Asia and the islands to the Cape, heard this new music and adopted it either through force, or through attraction. So that when they came to the Cape they had this knowledge of Dutch sailor folk songs. However, coming from an Islamic culture their melodies were embellished in such a way that it reminded one of Saudi Arabia, and that is why when you go to the Cape today, when you hear them singing some of the Dutch songs that they still sing, it has an Arabic influence, but its sung in Afrikaans. Another very important contribution at the time was of course the San's and the Khoisan's, contribution to the general culture at the time in the Cape.

STAFFRIDER: If you look at what you were saying about the development of jazz in the States, essentially what you are talking about is a development that happened on the ground by the practitioners themselves: nobody said do it this way or that way, it happened in the practice of making music. Now, my question is, what is the role of SAMA and cultural organisations in developing a national culture or a national music?

LANIE: I will answer that question a little later, because I think I have to mention the fact that all cultural structures in our country unfortunately have been working in a vacuum. Working in a vacuum in the sense that firstly there is no finance to ensure that there are strong infrastructural elements within these cultural structures to ensure that when certain positions are taken, that those positions are taken effectively, because there are channels or structures through which those positions could then be made popular in the community or throughout the country. And of course, because there has been a lack of

that, there's been a lot of inefficiency, a lot of disorganisation and those cultural structures as a consequence could not be as effective as they should have been. However, I feel that the role of any cultural structure should be that they should be involved in the promotion of indigenous culture, indigenous arts. There should be finance made available so that these cultural structures could function and address the necessary projects that need attention.

STAFFRIDER: What do you mean by indigenous culture?

LANIE: Indigenous for me, is the music that emanates from the ground, for example, the story-telling culture of the tribes of the past, that has gone from generation to generation. For example, Gcina Mhlophe is preserving that, and she is taking it further, it is not just lying there.

Obviously, because of the centuries of white domination in our country, black culture got literally buried. The task that we have to charge ourselves with as artists and cultural workers is to ensure we dig up all of that. We should start promoting that. We can set up platforms, forums; there have to be seminars conducted. We have to have workshops, so that when we talk about a certain kind of Zulu warrior dance, we know exactly what we mean by that, what are the elements that give it a certain kind of individuality from another type of ceremonial or wedding dance.

STAFFRIDER: Are you then saying that the cultural organisations have no role to play with regard to promoting culture that is perhaps a cross-over of indigenous culture and say, Western culture?

LANIE: I think the commercial aspect is extremely important and I don't think it should be denied. The commercial aspect, apart from the fact that it creates jobs, also creates the kind of revenue that one would need to ensure that one protects and promotes what we have, the local aspects. So I see them working hand in hand. I don't think the one should be done at the expense of the other, but because of our history of suppression, you don't just avoid that and say let's become commercial. We need the commercial, we acknowledge that, but at the same time, money should be set aside for research and development. There should be programmes that are set aside to actually address the wealth of folk materials that we have in our country, and to use it to our benefit.

STAFFRIDER: Is that happening at all?

LANIE: A lot of people are talking about it. I think when it will really start happening is when we start having conferences on culture, when we start coming together as a country, and of course that's tied again to the political reality of our country. But it is important that cultural workers realise that they are normally the last item on any political agenda, and without confronting political organisations about why or why not they are part of that, we should just take the ball in our own court and address the situation as effectively and as together as we can. And I think we have to be practical, we have to be business minded about it, I don't think romanticising about it is going to help us. We need money. How are we going to go about ensuring that we receive that money? Which people will be involved? We need business people to get involved. What are our objectives? Are we going to reach our objectives in a specific time frame? Do we need assistance from overseas? Obviously, I feel that, yes, international assistance is extremely important, and that they could assist us, but I think that we overlook too often as well, the assistance that is right on our doorsteps.

For example, if you look at the Art Councils, the monies that are pumped into the Art Councils are tax monies that come from not only a white minority, they come from the black majority. Yet that tax money is not used to promote black culture. So that has to be changed. We are saying fine, you want to promote this western culture, but aren't you being a bit unfair, because most of that money belongs to the black people, so shouldn't you be concerned more with the promotion of black culture in our country, because they are paying for it. Art Councils should be taken to task for that. Basically what we are saying is that the administration of these Art Councils has to be democratised. Now, when we say democractised, does that mean that we eliminate completely the present administration? I am very much in favour of them being democratised and if that at the end of the day means that they have to be eliminated and rebuilt, well then fine. Whether it is black, white, pink or whatever doesn't bother me, as long as it is democratic.

STAFFRIDER: If we are looking at the way forward, specifically looking at music, what do you see as being

necessary to democratise the music situation?

LANIE: I think I'll concentrate here on the educational aspect. I think there has to be a re-emphasis made on priority and relevance, very much in line with what I said earlier about the promotion of culture and education. We need literature. We lack the necessary history of music, of our people, of our culture in South Africa. We lack the teachers and educators that could give us guidance on that level. I think when school kids are given music education, and here I include western and eastern and all other music education, I should say a priority is 'where do you come from, you come from the continent of Africa, specifically South Africa, what are the musics that are existent in South Africa?' We don't know. That's an emphasis on priority. So that then we know through our schooling years that we have that music, we have this music, these are the performers that play that type of music, and it is possible that they give performances at schools sometime. Once you have a student who is schooled in what our culture is about, then you have a more critical student, so that when she listens to a piece of music, she knows 'Hey, you can't fool me, boy. And I won't come listen to you if you don't jack your act up.' So that increases standards, it develops a more critical society.

STAFFRIDER: This education is going to require material resources such as books, tapes, possibly video cassettes. Is there any way in which, say for example, the record companies, can be involved in that process?

LANIE: I think it is imperative that not only the industry, but the Arts Councils, the government, companies and individuals should be persuaded into making donations. You see the problem is that we are all politicising, we're all culturalising or whatever, but we never actually sat down and drew up proposals, and said, 'Well, people, this is the project we need'. We didn't think it is important to know that there is a certain thing called a business ethic, so we don't bother. Yet we are standing outside in the cold and we are shouting and waving our fists. And we can't understand why people didn't listen to us. There are certain procedures that need to be followed, and if we learn to follow those procedures I think we will surprise ourselves at the kind of response we get. No person will give you money if he thinks you are going to abuse that money. If that person knows that you are accountable, because you present yourself in a responsible manner, I doubt whether that person will think twice, because I think our country right at present is very concerned with development, particularly in the marginalised communities. People are concerned. Of course, you can say there are people who have hidden agendas, fine. Everyone has hidden agendas. But, at the end of the day, are we reaching our objective? That is the most important question that should be asked.

I think we are very much still immersed in the emotionalism of what we are trying to achieve, but I get a very strong feel that we are moving more into a practical direction as far as support for the arts is concerned. I think we have to adopt a different attitude as artists and cultural workers in our country, that we are not just artists. At the moment we cannot just say 'art for art's sake', there are other steps we have to take to reach that level where we can say well, 'I don't care what you think, that's my art'. So that at the end of the day I can still pay my rent, I can still put petrol in my car, or I can still feed my family. These are bitter realities, and too often we overlook them because we are on this romantic mission as artists.

And for me, it is imperative that artists remain non-partisan. However, artists should , because of the present impulse in our country, support the road to democracy, because the road to democracy is not only for or after the transitional stage, it is a road that should be followed regardless of who is in power. It is only through having that freedom in your day to day work as an artist that you will be able to open yourself to all the necessary influences in your expression. If you allow yourself to lean on one angle, you are only going to be a one-angle artist as it were.

I'd just like to talk briefly about the cultural boycott. Firstly, a separation has to be made between what the external boycott was and what the internal boycott was. Artists have sacrificed both as cultural people, and as cultural workers. Now for me there is a distinction there, because somehow or other, there is some impression that because you are a worker, it's fine for you to work at OK Bazaars. It is fine for you to work at the State Theatre, provided that they pay you a minimum salary. Right,

then you find that it is not fine if you are a singer, if you are a pianist or whatever, to perform there. In other words, what is implied is that because you are an artist you are not allowed to make a living for yourself. But we are also workers, we are working and we need to get paid for our services, and why shouldn't our rights be fought for? There is a concern about the impact that we have on the public, and yes, we do have an impact. That is why if people say we are not special I would really ask them to have their heads read, because any society needs entertainment and culture, it needs heroes of all kinds, not only political heroes. But does that mean that because I am a political hero that I mustn't get a salary at the end of the month? So from the point of view of the internal boycott I think that it is completely unfair, and I think it has to be redressed. I agree ideologically that performing at the State Theatre is a bad thing to do, but would you provide me with an alternative venue? I'd be very happy to perform at an alternative venue.

In terms of the external boycott, I think it was an extremely positive weapon, not only politically, but culturally and in every other way, because I think yes, the South African government needed to be pressurised and needed to be isolated to the extent where they realised that the black people in this country need a voice. And the cultural boycott, as part of the mandatory packet of sanctions against South Africa, definitely played its role in pressurising and isolating the government, and I support that fully. Also, another positive aspect, during the cultural boycott the audiences in our country, both black and white, were forced to accept that there are local musicians and artists, and art forms in this country which they had to start to acknowledge.

But the cultural boycott was always a strategy, not a principle. When you apply something as a strategy, when conditions change, the strategy has to change. And I feel right now, because of the state of the development in our country, I think the cultural boycott has to be relaxed, relaxed to the point where we as cultural structures have to be in a position of strength, where we can have the power to decide whether foreign cultural people or artists should come to our country.

You know, the cultural boycott also protected us from any kind of invasion or intrusion of some kind from any foreign element or opportunists in our own country.

STAFFRIDER: If I can take issue with that, did it protect us from American music, did it protect us from American films, did it protect us from American soap operas?

LANIE: A good point. I would say that would raise the question of how effective the local political groupings and cultural workers were in maintaining the boycott, and that is something that we all have to take credit for or discredit for. I think we are all responsible. But from a possible larger raping of the local economy and local artistic endeavours in our country, I think we definitely did make progress in protecting ourselves. But I do think that within our own country we have very opportunistic people. For example, if we have a local person or promoter wanting to bring in foreign artists, to line his or her pocket. If it is done at the expense of local musicians who don't get hired, who don't participate, local writers or film people don't participate, then there's a problem. So, it is important that we start looking carefully at forming equities or unions, in order to protect ourselves in a post-apartheid society in any event, because we don't want any interferences from any kind of political or social or economic bodies, because we have to look after our own interests. The equity, or union, or whatever you call it, has to be established, and in that way we will receive the necessary protection in the end.

And at that point I would say the cultural boycott should be lifted, when we have the necessary protection. But on the other hand I don't want to be too categoric about it as it is not my decision alone to make.

Review

Contradictions and Inequalities

Anette Horn

Tales of Tenderness and Power by Bessie Head
Published by Ad Donker 1990.

As the title indicates, a tension runs through this posthumous collection of tales by Bessie Head, which contains three unpublished stories, the rest having appeared in literary journals, magazines and anthologies before: On the one hand Head depicts the moments of tenderness within a rural African community, although it is bound by strict laws and customs. On the other hand she reveals the power struggle under the calm surface of rural life, which threatens its very existence. These concerns also mark the stories which are set in South African townships and in African cities, although the power relations operate on a far larger scale here. In both cases power is an effect of a hierarchical system which structures even the most intimate personal relations. It creates the positions of authority and of subservience which people assume. The inequality between men and women is perhaps the most obvious manifestation of this authoritarian system. Yet why is it so difficult to resist? Is it because women appear to benefit from it? As Bessie Head knows, authority relies equally on the force of the dominant as on the consent of the dominated.

In the story 'Property', a young woman insists on her role of the subservient wife, because it is safe and predictable. There is a split in her husband's perception between her social self, as defined by custom, and what he loves as her 'untamed' self, which he compares to 'the tall cool grasses that swayed in the summer wind'. (p. 65) This ability to glimpse people's other selves lends a magic dimension to everyday life: 'People were all kinds of things to him: nothing like the dull pretentious clothes of custom which they all wore; but in flashes, and at moments of crisis they revealed their real selves: some were giant icy mountains, some were wide wind-swept plains in breadth of thought and depth of suffering; some were stark bare twigs perpetually bent before the storms and winters of life, and some, like his mother were the evening sunsets.' (p. 65) This secret knowledge finds no expression except in his strange gaze and half-smile, which almost drive the woman mad.

She has no relation to her real self and her husband's awareness of it threatens her identity. Partly in response to this threat and partly because she perceives her husband's tenderness as a sign of weakness, she assumes the dominant role in the household. Her natural self has been crushed by the law. This subjugation to the law is a symptom of such a harsh repression that it renders any resistance impossible. Through her strict adherence to the law she forces her husband to use his authority over her. As soon as the man adopts this authority though, he loses his sense of magic. Tenderness and magic seem to be incompatible with the clearly defined duties of the marriage contract, which is compared to a slave contract. (p. 66) The narrator's wry comment, that theirs was a normal marriage, seems to reinforce the defeat of the individual by society.

The son, however, completes the process that started with the father. He forsakes his inheritance and tradition for an education in the city. He becomes involved in the political struggle for liberation, which leads to his imprisonment, banning order and exile. The circular movement of the narrative, which encompasses two generations, suggests both historical continuity and change. The son's name, Mbuya, which means he-has-come-back, reflects this. His name not only refers to his uncanny resemblance to his father but also to the return of Africa to its disinherited people. This could be seen as

a secular version of Christ's second coming. It is a recurrent theme of this collection, most notably in the story, 'The Coming of the Christ-Child'. Underlying this myth is the belief that history will redress the imbalance between good and evil. Yet this faith is constantly undermined by an equally pervasive sense of the horrors of power. This ambivalence between optimism and pessimism seems to characterise Bessie Head's attitude to African history.

In the story 'The Lovers', which is based on a South Botswana legend of 'The Hill of the Lovers', Bessie Head explores the relationship between the individual and society in a mythical African context. Individual passion clashes with the very foundation of tribal society, the arranged marriage, which binds together different families through an exchange of women for goods. The lovers' refusal to acknowledge society's claim on their desires forces them into a hostile environment. The hills, which they seek as a refuge, allegedly swallow them. Yet their death, which is seen as the punishment for their defiance of social norms, has its repercussions on the tribe. It begins to associate the hills with sinister forces and moves to a safer area. The hills acquire a legendary status with the next tribe too, bearing testimony to the disruptive force of love in a tightly-knit community.

The thought of love evokes both fear and fascination in Tselane, as Keaja presents it to her while they are sheltering from the rain in a cave. She is thrown out of her usual way of thinking in more than one way by Keaja. (p. 87) His open criticism of his mother takes her aback, because it breaks the taboo of talking negatively about one's elders. Yet she feels completely at ease with him and quite unexpectedly she reflects on tensions in her household. When Keaja leads her to question the arranged marriage as the cause for these tensions, Tselane is speechless. This question occupies her mind even after her encounter with Keaja. She gets no help from her second mother, Mma-Monosi, in whose eyes social laws and customs are synonymous to the laws of nature and questioning them is tantamount to inviting disaster.

While Keaja and Tselane meet in secret, the negotiations about Keaja's marriage are under way. He suggests to his father that he choose his own wife, although he knows that he does not stand a chance against his society 'because the individual was completely smothered by communal and social demands'. (p. 92) These demands differ among men and women. Failure to comply with them will bring misfortunes upon their families and on the community. If the man 'broke the taboos at a personal and private level, death, sickness and great misfortune would fall upon his family. If he broke the taboos at a social level, death and disaster would fall upon the community.' (p. 93) The woman, however, is seen as the greater potential threat to the community because of her child-bearing role, which is associated with fertility, animals and crops. If she does not take special precautions during menstruation, childbirth and accidental miscarriages, she could bring harm to animal life, crops and the community. While these laws emphasise the close relation between the individual and society, they also provide an explanation for possible disasters, such as death, drought and war, which affect both the individual and society. The individual depends on others for his/her survival and therefore has to accept the laws which bind them together, but the law relies equally on the individual's desire and energy in order to exist. Bessie Head seems to postulate a dialectical relation between the individual and the law.

This does not imply that equilibrium restores itself automatically, as it were. In this story the lovers are isolated and the law remains intact. Tselane experiences her love as an incurable disease, brought on for no apparent reason. But she begins to understand the cause of her state. She explains to Keaja: 'I was fighting my training. My training has told me that people are not important in themselves but you suddenly became important to me, as a person.' (p. 96) Keaja is aware of the dilemma he is letting himself in for: 'He knew that, in terms of his own society, he was starting a terrible mess; but then his society only calculated along the lines of human helplessness in the face of overwhelming odds. It did not calculate for human inventiveness and initiative.' (p. 96) Keaja and Tselane know that if they continue their love affair they will have to decide between separation or expulsion from their community. They opt for the latter and disappear into the hills. When Tselane's mother visits the hills and, overcome by grief, dies shortly

afterwards, the hills begin to be associated with 'sinister forces which destroyed life', fulfilling Mma-Monosi's dark prophecy. (p. 100)

In the stories 'A Power Struggle', 'A Period of Darkness' and 'The General' Bessie Head examines the role of leaders in a pre-colonial and post-colonial context. She sees pre-colonial history as a dialogue between the chiefs and their people, which is based upon a choice between good and evil. (p. 77) This dialogue has been cut off by colonialism and replaced by a system of slavery and exploitation. (p. 77) Yet even in pre-colonial times there was a capacity for the abuse of power, which destroyed the dream of the universe, 'the power to make evil irrelevant' (p. 72). In the story 'The Power Struggle' Bessie Head describes the rivalry between two brothers for their father's throne as one of the causes of the horror, which engulfed the community at regular intervals. Davhana is not only the rightful heir to the throne but also has a rich personality, 'always reaching towards love and friendship' (p. 74), while Baeli, whose personality 'turned inwards into a whirlpool of darkness' (p. 74), is jealous of his brother's popularity and imminent power. He conspires with allies in the inner circle of power, which consists of relatives and councillors, to usurp Davhana's position. At this stage the power dispute does not affect the people, although the danger signals are already visible. Davhana is unable to follow the advice of one of the elders to 'kill or be killed'. (p. 76) He narrowly escapes an assassination attempt by Baeli's supporters and seeks refuge with the powerful Pedi clan. There he is reunited with his former clan, which has abandoned Baeli in small groups at a time. Thus order is restored after a period of upheaval.

Order is not merely guaranteed by the good fortune of having a good chief, however, but also by making use of the democratic institutions built into the tribal system. This becomes particularly evident in 'A Period of Darkness'. Chief Motswasele reverses the order, whereby a chief 'had to put all matters of government before the people'. (p. 78) Although it is admitted that every chieftainship has been tainted by some measure of corruption, Chief Motswasele makes no attempt to cover it up He takes anything he wishes from his tribe and stifles any opposition by the free use of the death penalty. Leungo's and his wife's suicide is the first sign of revolt. This unheard of action so shocks the people that they consider breaking the most sacred law, the sanctity of the chief's life. His execution takes the form of a court case. When the chief gathers his warriors for another war, the praise singer lists all the crimes he has committed, instead of reciting the usual praises. The warriors merely carry out the sentence passed by the praise singer, who is a voice of the tribe.

In the post-colonial era the dialogue between good and evil is resumed, although it is still marred by tyranny. In the story 'The General' Bessie Head depicts a president of a 'socialist' African state as a megalomaniac, who sees himself as the saviour of the people and incarcerates anyone who doubts his greatness. One of the first dissenting voices is that of M. M. Makhudo, who publishes a critical assessment of the government's first Five Year Plan, which he helped draw up, in a daily paper. As a consequence, he is dismissed from his job on the government planning group. The president also fears a coup d'état from his general Aksan who combines an aloofness with a sense of belonging to the people, which the president sees as a sign of opportunism. The general meets regularly with another potential enemy of the state, the unconventional Professor Okola, at whose lectures there are peals of laughter and debates rather than 'serious study'. (p. 106) On the advice of his soothsayers, the president has the professor imprisoned, while the general is placed under house-arrest. The military stages a coup d'état and appoints the general as head of state. He releases Okola and Makhudo and puts them onto his economic planning group in order to weaken their potential opposition. He reintroduces private enterprise to his country to revitalise the economy, which has been left bankrupt by his predecessor.

In the post-colonial situation an unchecked individualism seems to take over from the communal structures of the pre-colonial era. This is a legacy of colonialism which deepened the rift between the rulers and the ruled by concentrating the means of production in the hands of a few. Instead of a truly democratic system, the majority of the people are now confronted with a neocolonial elite. Although pre-colonial African 'democracy' was not an ideal state, it did however contain checks and

balances which limited the chief's power. This was largely the result of the control the people had over their chiefs in a tightly-knit community, where everyone was accountable to the other. Colonialism has amalgamated these small communities into a centralised state and taken away the checks and balances on the rulers. Yet there cannot be a simple return to the pre-colonial society. A new synthesis has to be found, which draws together the best qualities of both an individualist and a communal culture. In the story 'The General' there is an utopian vision of the professor and the general abdicating from power and tilling the earth together, which negates individualist values. (p. 115)

Bessie Head seems to take a humanist rather than a structuralist view of power. Within this framework the position of authority remains unchanging, whereas the character of the person who fills it is all-important. Yet in traditional society, where authority is determined by lineage, this is pure coincidence. If the incumbent chief happens to be ruthless, his people will suffer for the rest of his life, unless they leave his tribe or kill him. On the other hand, Bessie Head is also aware of the corruption which unlimited power lends itself to. While she criticises individual abuses of power, she does not contest the positions of authority themselves. Perhaps that is left to the reader. S

Father's Treasure

Blue with exhaustion
My father bent his back
In search of his lost treasure
The treasure of his sweat
Enriching Potgieter's fields
The treasure of his blood
Drenching the damp pits of Hlobane colliery

He beamed at the smiling sun
Potgieter thought it was the bag of mealies
he gave him that made him smile
But my father smiled because he knew that one day
...someday, his sons will return from the land
of exile.

Charles Ndaba

Review

Posters and People's Struggles

Matthew Krouse

Images of Defiance: Resistance Posters of the 1980s
Compiled by the South African History Archives, published by Ravan Press 1991

The South African political poster is a living child of the cultural struggle. Its history parallels the history of the struggle to date. *Images of Defiance: South African Resistance Posters of the 1980s* is a culmination of the work of the Poster Book Collective of the South African History Archive. It is published by Ravan Press.

It showcases the development of postermaking as a community practice intrinsically linked to the struggles of the Congress Movement.

The Foreword, written by Nelson Mandela, outlines the usefulness of the posters as an educational and conscientising medium. He also draws attention to the fact that new prisoners arriving at Robben Island were highly conscientised, indicating the success of the alternative propaganda campaigns being played out in the society.

The Afterword is written by poet and graphic artist Dikobe Martins who, as an inmate of Johannesburg Prison, remembers a political rally he saw when on an outing to the doctor. The sight of the mass wielding posters was 'a great morale booster'. The examples cited by Mandela and Martins testify to the posters' success in achieving a medium that will probably be sustained as a form of mass communication, well into the future.

The book's contents are divided into posters of politics, labour, community, education, militarisation and repression, and culture. Each one of these topics has a written introduction outlining the vast network of organisations, and what their roles have been in advancing the democratic struggle. There is also a short section on the work of the Medu Art Ensemble of Botswana whose foremost graphic artist, Thami Mnyele, was murdered by South African army insurgents in 1985. (Even in the one poster by Mnyele, reprinted in the book, it is obvious that his graphics embody character and detail, a total sensitivity of approach to life.)

Produced in full colour, this book is the most comprehensive collection of its kind to date. More than three hundred posters adorn a splendid folio-sized, soft back first edition.

The posters chosen for publication were mainly produced by the silkscreen method, but there are also some made by means of desktop or computer publication. In addition, there are posters rendered in spraypaint with stencils; and others that are the results of printmaking processes like lino and woodcuts.

When viewing this formidable body of work, one automatically identifies posters commemorating events and atrocities that all generations of South Africans remember. This results in a bittersweet nostalgia for a time, in the recent past, when public outrage against apartheid became a spectacle of symbols commemorating the thousands of issues that prevented the cycles of normal everyday life. In this way, the posters of the Congress Movement do not serve as a testimony to the development of the community. Instead, they testify to the fact that community life in South Africa has been so pressurised and amputated that its people have been driven inadvertently to producing an instant and lasting document of their oppression.

In its poster production, the mass movement has often been characterised by the fist, the flag, the rallying mass, and combinations of colours reflecting Congress ideology. In its collation, this collection can be seen as a mega-pamphlet, partisan in approach, expounding that which has moved in the last decade, from being margin-

alised to being dominant in character. And this has been a positive development, for the aspirations of those who produced the posters have so often been realised virtually directly through the act of poster production.

The posters and the book therefore bring about a reflection on the formula for success in the acts of social and political struggle. As with other historical movements, there is a great deal that can be said about going back in order to go forward. The book ultimately achieves a balanced perspective of poster production, one that must be viewed critically. That is not to say we must look at a fist and then criticise it for its likeness to the human object it portrays. Rather, we must look at the content of the posters as reflective of the society they attempt to change. This has been the criterion for selection that the editors have put into practice, and they state in their preface:

> We decided the criteria had to include whether a poster accurately reflected the times, and whether it captured, in its words, images, its design, shape or colours, a significant moment in our struggle.

The true value, then, of an individual political poster and a collection of political posters, is found in the individual's attempt to stage an objection to his/her personal circumstances. The preface to the book nevertheless bases its critique on the 'collective spirit' of those who contributed to the struggle — and not for reasons of career or for the cult of self. For this reason, few artists are credited for their work. Rather, workshops and organisations who produced the work receive the ultimate accreditation. This highlights the unity and group conviction in that which is opposed. But there is always an unsettling dichotomy between group and individual interests. Granted, only a small minority of hands-on artists are known by name, and this further complicates the issue. Nevertheless, where oppression exists, people are driven to collectively stating their outrage by acquiring a means of communication that will ultimately ensure their survival. These people learn quickly to combine slogans with images that will function with maximum effect. The individual suddenly makes creative choices based on what is taught in conjunction with the needs of the group. In execution, these choices either succeed or fail. When they succeed, group objectives are met. People are not forcefully removed from their homes. Strikes and boycotts are popularly supported, and heroes and martyrs are honoured. This is the formula. But beyond the formula there is a greater cultural dynamic at play, enmeshed in the building of a contemporary language of visual communication. This is embodied in the words and images that have built an alternative telling of events as an antidote to apartheid and the draconian news blackout of the emergency. Individuals who have been silenced by the State are given voice through quotes and an alternative means of advertising their presence on various podiums. The names of those detained are commemorated.

The ultimate credit must go to the various workshops around the country, like CAP (Cape Arts Project) and STP (Screen Training project) who have facilitated postermaking over the years. These groups have produced a functioning system of production that has been vital and alive. The regional and historical development of poster production is outlined in the essay 'Making Posters in South Africa' which traces the craft from the 1950s to the present. It is interesting to note that political posters in South Africa have been as suppressed and silenced as its people. This highlights the crucial and pivotal role posters have played in conscientising our largely semi-literate population.

In conclusion, as collective propaganda, these posters go beyond the bounds of success. Long after you and I are dead and buried, this book, *Images of Defiance*, will be reprinted and read. It is a formula for success, and in its historical approach it is a type of publication sorely needed for every sphere of enlightened South African life.

Letter

Those Circumcision Photos: Arrogance or Ignorance?

Tom O'Neill

A reaction to the photographs of Steve Hilton-Barber

Until reading Steve Hilton-Barber's defence of his photographs, I had simply dismissed the taking of the photographs, their public display, and the subsequent indifference to the anguish and outrage which their continued exhibition evoked, as just a not unusual symptom of the harsh arrogance common amongst our 'liberal' white people.

Because, all people have the right to maintain social norms and taboos, even if these differ from those prevalent in 'enlightened' western circles. Indeed for many people in South Africa very little else has been left to them. As long as it is not the source of injury to others, people have a right to declare certain parts of their lives to be private. To barge in under your plastic banner of 'the public's right to know' is just too shallow for words. To continue parading your trophies even after you've heard the cries initially seemed arrogant.

Steve Hilton-Barber's article didn't change my views on the exhibition of the photos. It only moderated my understanding of how this situation could have arisen.

Firstly, to address some of the reasons put forward in the article for why he 'should be criticised on the standard of his photographs' rather than on anything else:

Why are the photographs which apparently caused the most concern not included amongst those displayed with the argument? This can't be chance. And since this article was primarily published as part of the debate, publishing photos other than those most controversial ones seems like an acknowledgement that the author's arguments would rally less sympathy if surrounded by the controversial subject matter.

Either the author or the editors are shying away from the author's case.

To say that it's racist and paternalistic to assume that on one level or another the principal who gave Hilton-Barber his permission was probably brow-beaten into doing so, is not adequate. It's neither racist nor paternalistic to make such an assumption in South Africa.

It is a simple reality of this country that a great many of the interactions between black and white involve the black person deferring.

The reasons can range from the need to avoid abuse, humiliation, or loss of employment, to simple habit. And instead of this phenomenon being absent when the 'white' involved is a 'progressive' who can perhaps give the black person lectures on 'his own' struggle, it is in fact more powerful there.

Because, as well as the baaskap weapons of intimidation that have traditionally been in white hands, we progressives have added moral righteousness to our armoury and so have become even more invincible. What chance would an elderly rural man have, stripped bare by sophisticated arguments, of even the words that could give form to his unhappiness.

And it must be said that in this case it does seem likely, considering the almost universal black reaction against this exhibition, that under totally unstressful conditions this man might not have given his permission.

Hilton-Barber emphasises the fact that he was given permission to be present only after he had shown himself to be qualified (i.e. circumcised). This can only mean one of two things. First is that he was insincere and was prepared to use trickery to gain access, in which case the whole argument is unnecessary as the ethics of the matter were disregarded right from the beginning. The other is

that he was acknowledging the legitimacy of a tradition which considers it correct for this ceremony only to be known to qualified people. If this is the case, to subsequently expose this ceremony to the general (uncircumcised) public is an about face, and a breach of the contract implicitly made when he produced his own entry qualification.

Hilton-Barber says that the fact that this is a semi-religious ceremony is no reason to suppress the photographs.

He suggests that coverage of Roman Catholic, Jewish, or Muslim religious ceremonies doesn't cause such a fuss. Of course not. Not as long as the ceremonies covered are public religious ceremonies. But this ground provides an excellent argument against these photographs. For would it not be a fool-hardy photo journalist who decided to try to scoop on the private aspects of these faiths? And each of these faiths does have its ceremonies which it has decided should be private. Where are our photo documentations of the Vatican Councils? And where are the photo journalists who would dare to tread on the toes of the Jewish or Islamic faithful? Is it a coincidence that those whose rites we feel obliged to document are those who are powerless to fend off such invasions?

The criticism that the photos display a racist attitude towards nakedness are also shrugged off a little too flippantly. No, of course the author is not to be blamed that white male nakedness is censored. But, no matter whether this censorship arises from Christian Nationalism or not, it does reflect a fairly prominent strand in the moral fabric of white society. Just as the corresponding feeling patently does in black society. And the question is, even if the author disagreed that a society had a right to entertain such a taboo, would the author so easily flaunt the values of the much more powerful white society? To put it crudely, would he not be scared to put on public display, photographs showing the genitals of white children if he hadn't first extensively consulted with their parents and his own lawyers?

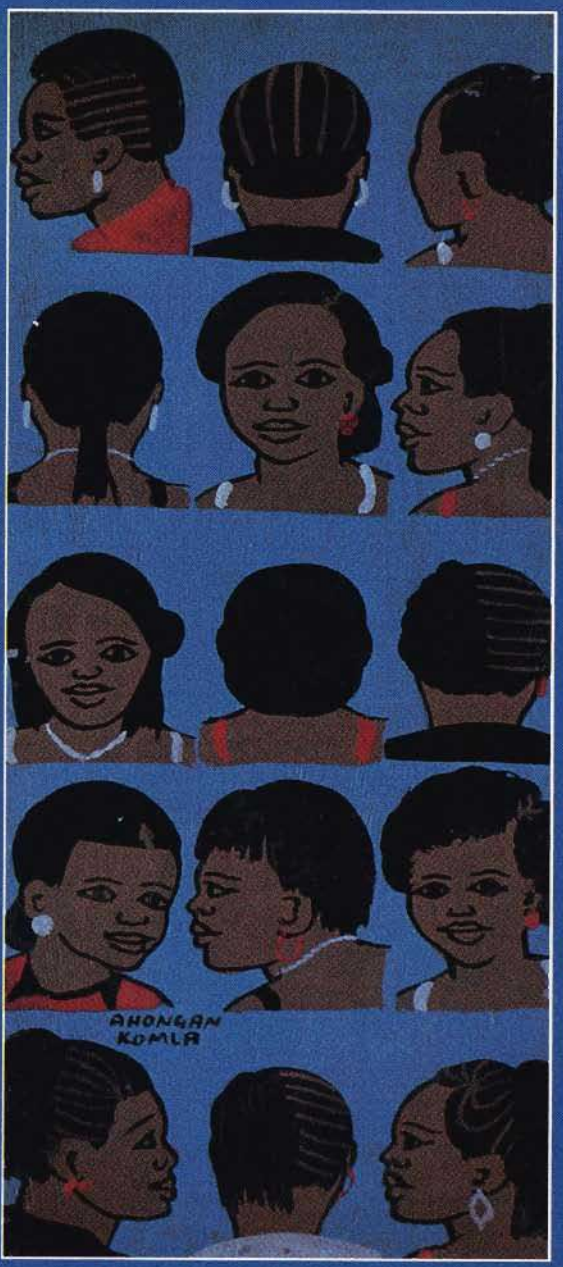
And the defence that the *National Geographic* has already photographed initiation ceremonies isn't really a useful one. The concerns of such a magazine for the sensitivities of its subjects would hardly extend beyond the capture of the glossy artifacts. We on the other hand all live in the same little country, and as Hilton-Barber himself points out, we don't all have tremendous understanding of each other's cultures. Perhaps, this expose has helped fill some of us in on the details of part of another culture; but I suggest that what is needed more badly than detailed pictorial 'understanding', is respect for each other's cultures.

This exhibition does little in that area.

I did say that reading Steve Hilton-Barber's article altered my perception of how this whole situation could have arisen. Though I doubt if what I have to say in his defence will be welcomed by him. For his article indicates that he is still sticking to his position full square.

My sympathies were with him though in the desperateness of his plea for vindication. The venom which has focussed on his race has hurt him most of all. He is even driven to listing his progressive credentials. It's probably not correct however to assume that there would have been no fuss if he were black. A black journalist would have been very unlikely to have become involved in the first place. Secondly, just as the white community would have the power to prevent anyone from breaching its moral codes, the black community would have had at least the power to do the same with a black photographer — the exhibits would have been withdrawn.

Overall though, I now think that the problem is less about arrogance and more about ignorance. As Hilton-Barber himself touched on, we are all pretty ignorant of each other. The problem here may be that the liberal and progressive whites are the professors of everything and are considered by many, often including themselves, to be exempt from such a petty ailment as ignorance. When something such as this arises the obvious solution is perhaps then not given due consideration. The authors of the 'graffiti' in the Market visitors' book automatically assume that this man knows what he's doing, hence that his motives are purely exploitative, and consequently the conclusion that rational persuasion would be useless. Perhaps Hilton-Barber has also mistakenly presumed that he knows what he's doing, sailing confidently with the international codes of journalistic conduct and cold intellectual argument, not for a moment considering that maybe he has made a mistake.



RIDING

Anderson
Barry
Beck
Bester
Biccari
Combrinck
Dikobe
Gebhardt
Goldblatt
Gower
Hendrikse
Hilton-Barber
Hofmeyr
Horn
Irene
Jacklin
James
Johnstone
Kena
Kgositsile
Knoch
Kozaim
Krouse
Kruger
Kwinana
Levison
Lord
Loubser
Mahlangu
Malinga
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Mokhele
Molefi
Monkwe
Mudaly
Nair
Nathan
Ndaba
Ndlovu
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Ngubo
Nontenja
Oliphant
O'Neill
Pather
Pepeteka
Press
Prinsloo
Rajgopaul
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Sachs
Schreiner
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