THEORIA

A JOURNAL OF STUDIES
in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

VOL LXX

40 YEARS
ANNIVERSARY EDITION

70

OCTOBER 1987

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A JOURNAL OF STUDIES

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Vol. LXX

October 1987

CONTENTS

Published twice yearly by the
UNIVERSITY OF NATAL PRESS
PIETERMARITZBURG

EDITORIAL

Forty years ago *Theoria* was launched as an annual publication sponsored by the Arts Faculty in what was then the Natal University College. By the fourth issue *Theoria* had broadened its scope, describing itself as 'a journal of studies in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences'. Since 1958 it has appeared twice yearly. For many years now *Theoria* has been firmly established as a publication of the University of Natal Press, serving as a record of scholarship and criticism within the University, while also welcoming contributions from outside, nationally and internationally.

An anniversary such as this invites reflections on continuity and change. In 1947 Natal University College was in many ways very different from Natal University today; it was a different South Africa; a different world. Nevertheless, for *Theoria* a significant connection between past and present is provided by the editors' observation, in the first issue, that the publication of this journal sprang from 'the conviction that a University Arts Faculty' (and we may surely extend this to every faculty concerned with the arts, humanities and social sciences) 'justifies its existence most fully, in our own country and epoch, if it seeks to promote an outlook of humane criticism in as many fields, and as many groups of people, as possible'. That conviction remains as relevant and as challenging in our changed circumstances today as it was four decades ago.

To mark *Theoria*'s fortieth anniversary, this issue is devoted entirely to contributions from within the University of Natal — an act of editorial introversion which we trust our readers will understand and appreciate all the more readily because these articles (in their various ways exemplifying that spirit of humane criticism) have such wide horizons.

* * *

With this issue, Elizabeth Paterson retires as literary editor of *Theoria*. Her co-editor takes pleasure in paying tribute to her depth of interest and the hours of care she has given to the editorial work she first took up in 1966, with *Theoria* 26. For half its chronological life, and in almost two-thirds of its issues, this journal has borne the special imprint of her talent — that 'blend of sympathy and scrupulousness' which a reader has identified as her particular quality, and which all who have experienced her editorial attention will recognise immediately.

As editor, Elizabeth Paterson brought the same commitment to her work as she gave to her other role within the University, as a

teacher of English literature — of which the head of a major School of English in the United Kingdom has said that Betty 'conveyed to her students that literature was an integral, integrated part of her ordinary living; and as we learn more by example than instruction, many of her students acquired a sense of a form of life rather than a "profession" or "an object of study" '.

Through her conviction that academic study should have the urgency of something lived, and in her commitment to standards of quality and integrity, Betty Paterson taught a difficult but worthy ideal.

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These should be sent to:

The Secretary,
University of Natal Press,
P.O. Box 375,
Pietermaritzburg
3200 South Africa.

The annual subscription for *Theoria* is:

Individuals R9,00 per annum (+ GST)
Institutions R12,00 per annum (+ GST)

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Authors should send contributions to:

The Editors,
Theoria,
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THE EDUCATION CRISIS — THE UNIVERSITY'S ROLE IN THE FUTURE*

by G.D.L. SCHREINER

I have divided what I wish to say essentially into three parts. The first concerns the 'crisis' itself, an examination of its causes and a consideration of whether in any way it can or should be isolated as an 'education' crisis. The second part concerns the proposed alternatives in any new educational dispensation — the legitimacy of ideologies of education particularly in countries such as South Africa where the state plays a major role in providing education infra-structures. The third and final part is a consideration of possible roles for the University in making immediate contributions to crisis resolution, and its longer term role in a changing environment which will be altering rapidly both in political and educational spheres.

Let me begin by saying that the existence of a Committee which styles itself the National Education Crisis Committee is not in itself a proof that a national crisis in education actually does exist. When, however, such a Committee exists and, despite being subjected to considerable authoritarian pressures not to exist, still commands a wide level of general support; when, too, even in this relatively newsless country, we are informed of schools, technikons and training colleges being closed by educational authorities, albeit for many different reasons; when further we know of the destruction of school records and school buildings; when many scholars cannot anticipate the calm conclusion of a school, or even a University, year; when, despite success in the formal process of educational progression, a scholar may find himself not admitted to the next year of schooling; when teachers are threatened with, and even subjected to, violence and often live in a state of fear because they seem to have expressed a particular ideology or are perceived as supporting, in the 'normal' execution of their duties, a particularly hated educational system; when many of the scholars themselves have become convinced that there is an adequate and relatively immediate alternative education which could be accepted; when all of these things are true, it would be foolish, if not impossible, to deny that education and the existing educational systems and processes are in a state of crisis. It would also be foolish to think that it is not a very grave crisis which needs to be both immediately and honestly addressed.

* This is the text of a University Lecture delivered in Pietermaritzburg on 22nd April, 1987, by the Vice-Principal, as one in a series of lectures concerned with the education crisis.

But it would also be foolish not to examine the contributory factors to this late 20th century crisis in education and to recognise that although some of them have their primary causes within the educational process itself, others have their dominant causes in socio-political conditions in the country. It would be unwise to attempt to define a rigid boundary between these two kinds of factors, because they often overlap considerably not only in fact but particularly in the perceptions of those concerned with seeking improvement in the present position.

Nevertheless, unless we attempt to use such a differential analysis of the causes of the crisis, some, if not many, intermediate remedies may become obscured or lost, and even the overall direction, in which long term improvement could be found, could be ill-chosen. Some people may, and some already do, take the view that the educational crisis is so deeply embedded in the fundamental socio-political struggle that to seek educational change without achieving simultaneous success in the political liberation struggle is a wrong strategy and would postpone the attainment of the ultimate goal. Others would argue that this attitude is irresponsible toward the present generation of scholars and that immediate remedial steps should be worked for, so that yet another generation of black scholars are not condemned to a life significantly influenced by a lack of those fundamentals of education which are essential to be able to contribute to one's own position in society (whatever the nature of that society). While I would claim to be able to understand both views, I am inclined to favour the second, although at the same time recognising that I am not in the position of those who have, through direct experience, already totally lost their trust in all present education and educational systems. Of all the factors which are contributory to the reality of the education crisis, it is this loss of trust, this rejection of the bona fides of the present educational process which to me is the most cogent. If there is a real and certain conviction amongst scholars that what they are offered and receive as 'education' is offered in bad faith, is offered in order to deceive, is offered in order to ensure the continued domination of a particular group in our society, then the crisis is one which cannot be solved in any other way than by the removal of the reasons for this belief. It will not be solved by educational facility changes or equalisation of expenditures per scholar, or by any changes associated only with education.

I speak now in 1987 and this follows a period of some years in which there have been a number of documents from a number of different sources which have been concerned at least partially with the problems of education. This period includes such documents as the De Lange report, and I use it as the example of a change, in the rhetoric at least, of what has been written and said about South

African education in the past. But, before examining the current attitude of the powers-that-are, I would like to try to look further back into the history of South Africa's official educational practice and philosophy. It would seem to me that this may be useful in isolating what future paths have potential and which do not.

There is a single attitudinal thread in education which extends into the long distant past in South Africa. This is the attitude that education, and its associated organisational structures and institutions, must and can properly be thought of as belonging to a particular group within our total community. If 'eie-sake' (own affairs) is a recently introduced formal constitutional definition, its use in relation to education is little more than the confirmation of a very long-standing South African practice. In our context this group thinking has been associated with race and language rather more than with say religion, although there have been overtones of the latter which have enriched the tone of the symphony of prejudice which has been fundamental to our national educational practice. The enthusiasm with which this group separation in education has been propagated and propagandised has varied from time to time and from place to place in the last three hundred years, but those influences which have tended toward an integrated approach have never been more than regionally confined, small scaled, and often temporarily operational.

The coincidence of the division of the racial and language groups with the distribution of political and economic power between the groups inevitably influenced the provision of educational facilities in favour of those in power and resulted in, at best, a neglect of those not in power. In particular, Black education was the most neglected; and, indeed, for a long period White governments of all political persuasions shirked their responsibilities by leaving this group's education, particularly in rural areas, largely in the hands of the mission schools. Significantly during this period both the question of the 'educability' of the natives and the 'desirability' for their education was debated from time to time.

The need for Black education was largely interpreted in the light of the need for the power group to have a support group educated to do certain levels of job. But it is not until comparatively recently, 33 years ago, that this was formulated into a completely explicit statement of governmental policy. This was that there should be a differential and limited education for Blacks in 'White' South Africa and that any higher or White-equivalent Black education should be achieved only in the 'homelands'. No single factor can have contributed more to the destruction of any remaining confidence in the provision of Black education than the statements made by Dr. M.C. Botha and Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd. M.C. Botha stated that Bantu education had achieved 'nothing except to train

the Bantu into imitation westerners'; and Verwoerd was even more explicit in the Senate in 1954 — 'There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour . . . For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption into the European community', and earlier in the same speech — 'The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects'. In this statement education is entirely subordinated to the perceived societal needs of a particular power group and the object of Black education is solely to serve the ideology of the dominant White group.

This was the official pronouncement of an educational policy, totally consistent with past separationist thinking and actions, and equally in keeping with much other restrictive legislation introduced around that time based on the Verwoerdian nightmare. It represents a watershed in that it embodies in policy a built-in philosophy of unequal education for different races in so-called White South Africa. This brutally clear statement, although it was opposed and even vigorously opposed in Parliament and by some educationalists, did not produce an education crisis in the middle of the 1950s. It is only much later and, indeed, after the partial reversal of this policy in the Government White Paper issued in response to the H.S.R.C. report on education, that Black education emerges in the political sense as being in a state of crisis. We must ask the question why this was so?

The Government White Paper firmly rejected the idea that there should be a single ministry in control of the education of all South Africans and in practice embeds further than in the past the concept of separation of groups for educational purposes. Not only is education constitutionally defined as an 'eie-saak', but we are now faced with corresponding new governmental structures and more clearly defined vested interests which make the possibility of an holistic concept of education much more remote. But that same Government White Paper also removed the concept of deliberately unequal education and expresses the intent of moving toward equality of educational opportunity for all South Africans. In addition there is considerable talk that, if there is more money available for education, it will be used to close the gap that exists between expenditures in each separate educational system. It is, then, at a time of apparent change in the policy of the central authority — a time at which we might expect to see a start of co-operative moves toward real improvement of Black education — that we find a gap in the conceptual thinking about education which seems already to be a block to any such progress. While in the past we have had considerable ideological conflict about education, we must anticipate that the future holds a continuing conflict.

Before I move further into this part of the problem, I must return

to what I have said about a 'change in the policy of the governing authority'. I do not wish to create the impression that this change has gone very far, nor that it has been reached because of a sudden and widespread change of heart. Some South Africans of the dominant power group have undergone such a change, others have approached this same change in attitude with considerable reluctance but have accepted it because they see that route — the equality of educational opportunity route — as the only means of preserving their own group interests. Others, of course, have not undergone any significant change although some of their rhetoric has. Some have not even gone that far.

When the Minister of Education and Culture (House of Assembly) states categorically that South Africa is turning out a sufficient number of highly trained graduates and that therefore 'his' Universities should not expand their numbers beyond those of 1986, he demonstrates as clearly as possible that the disease of separationist thinking remains endemic. He cannot have arrived at such a conclusion unless he is thinking within the totally fallacious parameters that created the Verwoerdian idiocy. He can only be thinking about some imaginary place which he calls 'White South Africa' and which does not exist within any South Africa that I know of.

As a contribution toward the future of South Africa, this statement in an educational sense (or for that matter in any other sense) is as useless and irresponsible as it can possibly be. We need then to be aware that although there are more hopeful expressions about a wider sense of understanding of South African education contained in a number of important documents, there are those who appear unable even remotely to understand the inevitable direction for South African education. It is sad to see too that, here in Natal, people are still being appointed to powerful positions whose known perceptions about education do not make them capable of helping in the present situation. But I have not answered my question: Why did Verwoerdian brutality not create an immediate educational crisis in 1954?

It is obvious that there can be no simple answer, but I would suggest that a great deal of the answer lies in that past attitude of 'eie-sake' in education. Most Whites in South Africa simply accepted the separateness and largely shrugged their shoulders; to an extent blissfully unaware of the real significance of what was happening. The Black South Africans opposed the system but had to use it. They looked to their, as yet unbanned, organisations for leadership; but these had not yet emerged sufficiently into the long period of tempering necessary, from their position of no-power, to form an adequate protest force. Further, it must have been a significant factor that the number of Blacks who were either then at

school or had experienced any form of education was considerably smaller than is now the number in the late 1980s. The very process of unequal and inadequate education, started by design to prepare Black South Africans for their limited positions in White South Africa, was accompanied by a vast increase in the number of Blacks who attended school and therefore provided, some time later, a significant strength to the growing discontent. But perhaps equally important is that in the 1950s a number of other restrictive laws were being implemented — all designed to achieve the apartheid dream. These non-educationally oriented restrictions built up, in time, a socio-political resentment in which the educational crisis (if such can be distinguished) is inextricably bound up.

As this discontent grew, the legitimacy of Black organisations was steadily removed by the process of banning the organisations rather than individual leaders, and the voice of protest was for a while muffled. The recognition of new legitimate organisations, whether of a comparatively conservative nature or not, and the acceptance of legitimate forms of mass action by these organisations following the partial acceptance of the Wiehahn commission report, transformed the South African scene and prepared the ground for many different forms of expression of the overall discontent into which both political and educational dissatisfaction had become welded. So the labour reforms, designed to achieve a stability in one particular sphere of South Africa's societal pattern, provide a significant model for the extension of direct methods of action into other spheres where this type of disruption had not previously been contemplated. The 1980s stage was then well prepared for growing disorder within the Black educational system.

It has taken me a long time, using what may seem to many of this audience to be well known and obvious arguments, to reach the point of saying that the educational crisis is only a part of a major socio-political crisis. Consequently, in considering ways and means of moving through this period, we need to consider matters which are far wider than purely educational. If we were from this point onward to think entirely in terms of equalising the educational facilities available to South Africans of different colour, of transforming the qualifications of teachers and of reaching the target of equal opportunities in education for all, we would be missing the major point contained in the statement that 'the educational crisis is only a part of a major socio-political crisis'.

I tried earlier to stress that 'if there is a real and certain conviction amongst scholars that what they are offered and receive as "education" is offered in bad faith, is offered in order to deceive, is offered in order to ensure the domination of a particular group in our society' then the crisis can only be resolved by the removal of the reasons for that belief. At that point I used the word 'group' in a

mainly racial context. I would suggest to you that by now the interpretation of the word 'group' has undergone a change. The socio-political crisis is no longer based purely upon the racial groupings in South Africa but has absorbed strong overtones of the class grouping of workers and capitalists. Associated with this change there has arisen a new educational philosophy. This was eloquently expressed by Mr. Hadebe from this platform a short while ago. He strongly supported the concept of 'Peoples Education for People's Power' and I have referred to it earlier in the phrase 'when many scholars themselves have become convinced that there is an adequate and relatively immediate alternative education which could be accepted'.

I do not hold the view that any system of education can escape from the taint of being based on an ideological stance. I do on the other hand hold the view that the best educational system is the one which is least strongly based on a fixed or rigid societal ideology. Perhaps it is partly because of South Africa's history in education that I am particularly nervous of accepting a strongly purposeful educational system designed to produce at its end a group of societal clones. These would be people trained in their formative years to reject, as heretics, any who show deviations from, or even question, those norms which were accepted by that society when it first erected its educational 'netwerk'. It may be argued that this is a gross overstatement of what could occur, but such systems smack to me of 1984, of Christian National Education or any other ideology in which the individual is subordinated to the society, and can therefore be denied the freedom to challenge the direction which that society imposes on its members. There are many Afrikaners in South Africa who have suffered just this fate. It would seem to me that in the present South African crisis we are in grave danger of moving from one ideologically based education (which has contributed to this crisis) to another ideologically based system which will in due time produce its own crisis.

At the risk of boring you let me develop this problem a little further. There can be little doubt that each society will develop for itself an educational system which is designed to inform the new generation of its mores and its values. This seems to be true from the simplest systems of initiation through to the most complex of our societies. Indeed it would be surprising if it were not so, for it would be near to lunacy for a particular generation to say to its successors 'what we stand for and value is wrong'. At best one can hope that there will be an attitude toward education which will accept and recognise the need for educational change as society itself undergoes its own continuing change. It cannot be denied that any society, however homogeneous in nature, will try to confine and to limit through its educational systems the re-evaluation of its values

by succeeding generations. This will be particularly true in societies where there is a high level of contented acceptance of the existing societal pattern. This could arise in two very different societies. It could arise in a society where there was a multiplicity of choice of educational processes but the very freedom of the society in this and a number of other essential ways resulted in a sense of the justness of the society as a whole, and therefore successive re-evaluations led to contentment with the 'status quo'. Equally it could arise because, within a monolithic educational system, the individuals are all conditioned to find the 'status-quo' acceptable, and the concept of successive re-evaluation of the society is effectively not possible because all the individuals are pre-conditioned to accept the same assumptions about what is desirable. The educational system itself becomes a total tool which is used to prevent any re-evaluation, and the judgement that the society is a just one is no longer a judgement but becomes a matter of definition.

Because of the complete loss of faith in present Black education the concept of 'Peoples Education for People's Power' (PEPP) finds a very ready popular response. PEPP seems to have at least three principal thrusts. First, it will gain a broad 'people's support' because of its concern with the educational conflict and because of the total failure of existing education policies. Second, it will provide an educational policy which meets the needs of its own mass constituency. And, third, it will develop an educational programme linked tightly to a new political order based on the popular will.

But as yet it remains a broad expression of intent, an assumption of a particular set of value positions rather than a formulated educational policy. Perhaps one should ask the question 'Is this new movement significantly different from the Volksonderwys movement created by the Afrikaner volk in the 1930s?' Then, the underprivileged position of the Afrikaner workers within the community of White South Africans was used to mobilise them as a group which provided the muscle for a minority from that group to gain access to positions of financial advantage and therefore to some aspects of power from which they had been previously excluded. It had, during its formative years, strong features of community nationalism and some of the rhetoric of socialism. It could easily have accepted, with some limitations of the meaning of the word 'people', the following basic value positions which Morphet attributes to Peoples Education: 'Education to meet the needs of the people, education for equality, and education for the development of the economic and political life of the society under the democratic control of the people'. 'Volksonderwys' was supported by such catch phrases as 'separate but equal education' and 'Christian National Education', which equals in simplicity some current phrases such as 'Education of the people, by the people and

for the people' and 'Pass one, pass all' or 'Revolution now, education later'. Van Wyk Smith has said of all these phrases that they 'rank about equal in naivety and intellectual stultification'. But I do not wish to devalue PEPP by referring to its simpler slogans. The Volksonderwys movement was a necessary one in the attempted equalisation of societal opportunity within the White South African community. It, and the rest of South Africa, suffered when the rhetoric used to develop and strengthen the movement became embodied in the beliefs of the educationalists who were trained in separatist educational institutions which were committed 'holus bolus' in support of the movement itself. Those who were trained then, and in the subsequent period of fixed and separationist ideologies, are still teaching or are still training the next generation of teachers. The time scale of emancipation from this blight is long but this does not mean that that movement was not a necessary one.

So, too, is PEPP, or something like it, a necessary feature of today's South African educational scene. It, too, like its minor predecessor, contains an unexpressed separationist component, and a very strong political adherence manifest in its full title, but less so when referred to as Peoples Education only. It has within it both the seeds which may lead to significant emancipation and the seeds which may lead to significant enslavement. But whatever wisdom may be brought to bear to avoid the potential toward another disaster, the only point I would wish to make now is that the time scale for changes in educational systems and the experiencing of the benefits that may result from such changes, is not short. Even if the change may properly be referred to as 'revolutionary', the revolution is necessarily one of long duration, involving change not only in what is taught, but in those who teach and those who are taught. I therefore question very strongly the assumption, that I believe to be made by many at present, that there is an 'adequate and relatively immediate alternative education which could be accepted'. I do not wish to be misunderstood. It is imperative that a new direction in education, one which can be accepted with trust, be started as soon as possible, but its formalisation in policy and its practice must be such as to allow of its evolution in parallel with societal change.

There is, of course, one fundamental difference between the Volksonderwys and PEPP movements. The first was a move made by mobilising a group consciousness of people who were within the existing political power system. It was therefore a move which could be presented as essentially an educational one, not requiring an accompanying political upheaval. The second has a more difficult path since it involves the mobilisation of a group which has no such immediate political leverage. It may well then need to seek

strategies which are new and to introduce into its expressed intentions some sense of timing for its goals.

Much of what I have been able to glean about PEPP and its philosophy occurs in the writings of authors who use the Transvaal or either the Western or Eastern Cape as their backgrounds. In these provinces the major part of Black education comes under the Department of Education and Training. Here in Natal there is a further dimension. The major component of Black education is not under D.E.T. but is controlled by the elected KwaZulu Legislative Assembly, whether it is urban or rural. Financial control may still rest largely in the hands of Pretoria, but curriculum control and the in-school atmosphere in which learning takes place is not. Morphet's exaggerated statement in a recent article — 'School learning is less about gaining knowledge and insight than it is about the rules of apartheid power' — takes on a new significance in this province. This fundamental difference may be regarded either as providing a very real educational opportunity to move toward a 'non-apartheid' education or as a major stumbling block. Which of these two views is taken depends very largely on the interpretation that is placed on the relative importance of the two objectives contained in PEPP: the socio-political objective or the educational objective.

It is my view that the existence of the KwaZulu control of part, at least, of its educational system could be used as a powerful lever to move rapidly toward a wider educational process. To do so, however, involves a high level of political compromise, and supporters of the PEPP type initiative need to consider the wisdom of a temporary ideological compromise against the potential wastage of further generations of black scholars. It should not be necessary to point out that 1987 is the third successive year in which, in the Eastern Province, there has been virtually no Black senior schooling, and that elsewhere the situation is not very much better. Last year only 7 per cent of Black matriculation entrants in Soweto were successful. Dr. Ken Hartshorne has described this as 'irredeemable damage to a large proportion of the Black school-going generation.' He went on to say: 'It is impossible that we can allow it to continue'. This question of a choice of strategies for educational reform is closely linked to interpretations of time scales. Those who are convinced that the time scale of political emancipation is short may, perhaps justifiably, opt for the confrontational path. Those who are more pessimistic about the time scale may opt for a multi-faceted approach and use such opportunities as Natal should present to start initial moves toward a system which will command popular trust.

* * *

What then can we do in the Universities to help in this situation? There are some obvious things that we must do.

First, we must train teachers, more teachers and more widely or elastically trained teachers. Teachers who will be able to accept and accommodate a wider kind of education than is currently accepted in any of our separatist educational systems. And because the major teacher crisis occurs in Black education we must bend our efforts to the training of more Black teachers; for it would be unrealistic to assume that all the years of separatist educational thinking and practice will be swept away instantaneously. Further, we must bring in to those Councils which determine the training of teachers expert representatives of all points of view about what is appropriate for school education. Although some steps have already been taken by this University in this direction by the formation of more widely based advisory bodies, these still remain too narrowly associated with established educational authorities.

Second, we need to consider ways of admitting to the University those with the potential to succeed whether or not they have followed a path to the conventional end of the secondary school system. This may be full of difficulties and, in the first instance, full of mistakes, but some counter to the present wastage situation should be started while we move to improve the present assessment of University potential. Parallel with this, the academic Boards should be imaginatively examining their offerings and, perhaps, putting forward parallel courses in which the basic principles are, of course, still taught but where their applications could be considered in different ways. Perhaps the most obvious illustration of such an opportunity would be the provision for student choice of parallel high level courses in applied agriculture entitled High-capital X and Low-capital X. But this approach should not be confined to the applied sciences.

Third, we must move in all the constituent parts of our University toward a nearer reflection of the community which we are serving. This means a policy of inclusion in all levels from Council downwards of those whose advice and control will help us to fulfil our community service role. We cannot continue to be what we are, and are seen to be at the moment, an essentially White University, White administered, White staffed (with the exception of the Medical School) and even essentially White studented. This may, of necessity, involve what the American's call 'affirmative action' — the introduction of deliberate policies of employment and admission which are designed to produce a University which can adequately fulfil its service role to the whole of South Africa.

Fourth, we must look carefully at ways and means in which the University can act as a catalyst in out-reach activities designed to

keep before the public mind the present disastrous situation, while at the same time actually providing some improvements. We should be actively promoting adult education, for both Blacks and Whites, which can help people to fit in to a society which Paton has described as going through its most difficult period of political evolution.

Fifth, we must be conscious of the scale of the contribution that we can make, in isolation. This is necessarily small, for we are not a large institution and have limited resources. Therefore we must seek, or even demand, support for this endeavour from outside ourselves. To achieve this we need to be more outspoken, to attempt to bring other educationally oriented groups to a real awareness of the problems and the direction of their solution. We must press in every possible way for the acceptance in South Africa of a single and not separatist educational philosophy. In particular we should now not accept the proposed view of the Government that we should refrain from pressing for a single Ministry of Education, because, as they erroneously suggest, there is in fact a single overriding Ministry. We should also resist from whatever quarter it comes any further attempt to introduce further separate educational systems.

Finally, let me end with a word of warning. The University must be true to itself and to its methods of operation. If it claims to strive after truth it must do so without fear. If it believes that there are many in any community who cannot benefit from a University education it must say so. It must recognise an 'elitist' nature in itself, and merely make as certain as possible that that 'elitism' is based not on extraneous factors such as colour, or the possession of wealth, but on intellectual ability of a particular and hopefully creative kind.

The University must also in its consideration of its national responsibilities, not lose sight of what is likely to be happening in the international world. It is highly likely that in twenty years time the revolution of automation and communications will have produced fundamental changes in society, such as, for instance, a change in the employment pattern to say three days a week. This probable change must produce corresponding changes in educational needs and in the total content of education. The University, if it is to have a leadership role, must be constantly aware of such potential changes and be advising and informing its community of such possibilities.

These possibilities will place the University in the position of becoming increasingly involved in society, strengthening rather than weakening its role as critic and commentator on society. It will lead to situations where the Universities will become increasingly unpopular and possibly even more subject to external attack and

interference. They may frequently disappoint those who thought them to be their friends and anger those who already regard them with suspicion. But if this University is to take on its much-needed role of leadership, it cannot allow these considerations to interfere with its expression of the 'truth' as it sees it.

If it fulfils this role honestly and adequately it has the right to demand support even from those who find its views unpalatable.

University of Natal,
Pietermaritzburg.

RACISM, SEXISM, AND OLIVE SCHREINER'S FICTION

by MARGARET LENTA

In a review article on Ruth First and Ann Scott's biography of Olive Schreiner, Nadine Gordimer expresses dissatisfaction at Schreiner's feminism, present in *The Story of an African Farm* and in *From Man to Man* which she worked on all her life and was finally unable to finish.

> I suppose one must allow that she had a right to concern herself with a generic, universal predicament: that of the female sex . . . Yet the fact is that in South Africa, now as then, feminism is regarded by people whose thinking on race, class and colour Schreiner anticipated, as a question of no relevance to the actual problem of the country — which is to free the black majority from white minority rule.[1]

In her introduction to the 1986 edition of the first novel, Cherry Clayton remarks on Schreiner's 'sensitivity to all forms of oppression' and claims that this sensitivity is 'central to South African fiction'. 'Waldo's story and Lyndall's story are the same story', she says, suggesting that each is a legitimate manifestation of human longing for social justice.[2]

It cannot be denied that the injustices suffered by blacks at the hands of whites are incomparably greater than those suffered by white women. Nevertheless it is true even now that in all sections of society in South Africa, women are disadvantaged and that black women, especially those living in urban areas, would be resistant to the notion that feminism is a white middle-class luxury. And in 1883, when *The Story of an African Farm* was published, white women were excluded from the franchise as firmly as black men and women. It was of course possible for a white woman to avoid the abject poverty in which blacks were compelled to live by putting herself at once under the protection and control of a white man, but Lyndall asserts that the terms on which white women acquired this protection were very frequently degrading, and the alternatives to it were terrible. She imagines what would happen if, without a male protector, she were to ask for a night's lodging on a farm: 'The Boer wife will shake her head and give me food to eat with the Kaffirs and a light to sleep with the dogs' (190), and this rejection would, she believes, be repeated everywhere.

> With good looks and youth marriage is easy to attain. There are men enough; but a woman who has sold herself, even for a ring and a new name, need hold her skirt aside for no creature in the street. They both earn their bread in one way. (190)

Her case against the settler community is that it disadvantages and exploits its women. Its ability to do so is based on the fact that government is not answerable to women; laws and social beliefs assume that it is proper for them to lack any rights which interfere with men's will to control them. She speaks of them as forbidden to use their abilities 'tunnelling mountains ... healing diseases ... making money' (192), and therefore compelled to use their sexual attractions to survive. In Schreiner's early novel *Undine*[3] she shows how similar the fate of a white woman without male protection could be to that of a black woman who enters settler society on the same terms: her white heroine is reduced to being an ill-paid washerwoman for the diamond diggers of Kimberley. In *From Man to Man* she shows the terrible series of punishments which this society was willing to inflict on a girl who at fifteen offended against its rules for women.

Her *Thoughts on South Africa*, though first written between 1890 and 1892,[4] was revised by her for publication in 1896 and the introduction completed in 1901. The book therefore represents the reflections of a much later period of her life on racial issues in South Africa. Significantly, the greatest change which has taken place is in her views of 'Bantus' as she calls them, as opposed to Bushmen or Hottentots. About people of mixed race she is as yet undecided, but she has arrived at the questions which will lead her to a just view of South Africa's people of mixed race.[5] *From Man to Man*, written and rewritten for most of her life, seems to offer a history of the change which took place in her ideas: the 'Kaffirs' of the farm in the early part of the novel are merely background to white life, and Griet the Bushman girl appears no more to Bertie as a young girl than an intelligent pet, but at the end of the novel, Rebekah teaches her children a much more enlightened way of thinking.

It is something of a failure in Gordimer's sense of history that she uses the phrase 'now as then' when talking of 'the actual problem of the country — which is to free the black majority from white minority rule'. The 'actual problem' had not in the late nineteenth century yet presented itself in quite such clear terms, and the questions which Olive Schreiner contemplates through her characters are different ones. She is not unmoved by the treatment meted out to blacks by whites, but when she writes *The African Farm* she is still unaware that blacks, like white women, are possessed of potential which remains unused. This awareness is all-important if she is to move from her sense that she herself is unjustly disadvantaged (a sense which, through Lyndall, she generalises on to settler women) to a general concern for political and social justice.

As Gordimer admits, Schreiner knew in later life that the vote was necessary to all groups who hoped for justice; in *The African*

Farm, however, she often depicts Bushmen, Hottentots and 'Kaffirs' alike as being at so early a stage of human evolution that sympathetic treatment from their white masters and mistresses must be their highest good. There are nevertheless important distinctions to be made between her attitudes, even in 1883, and those of 'fellow colonials' who often found her writings, especially on the subject of just dealings between national and racial groups, not at all to their taste.

If one agrees with Gordimer that Schreiner discounted 'the priorities of the real entities around her', as did her fellow colonials, the danger exists that one may lose sight of a vital difference between her attitudes and those of the power-holders of the white community. Schreiner's attitudes arose out of her own experience of 'the real entities' and altered as that experience broadened or changed. Colin Bundy has suggested in *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry*[6] that nineteenth-century colonists combined in the legislature to disadvantage black farmers lest they compete with whites, or cease to offer their labour to white farmers. Mrs Colenso, in *Colenso Letters from Natal*[7] also offers evidence that white settlers feared blacks in any other rôle than that of near-slaves. Such fears make it clear that there was considerable awareness of the potential of blacks to develop into economic rivals. The idea of the black peoples as unevolved and unalterably childish, capable only of rendering simple services to whites, is exposed as merely a convenience to whites who react in such ways.

In Schreiner's writing there is no such duplicity: in *The African Farm* and at the beginning of *From Man to Man*, characters and narrators alike seem to perceive all peoples other than whites as primitive in their social development and probably also in their intellects. At times the narrators seem to exclude blacks — it is hard to know how conscious Schreiner is of this — from the truly human community. The famous opening scene of *The African Farm*, the description of the Karoo farm by moonlight, contains an example of exactly this: 'First, the stone-walled "sheep kraals" and Kaffir huts; beyond them the dwelling-house — a square red-brick building with thatched roof.'(35)

It is not of course merely because of her own opinions on matters of race that Schreiner describes the buildings of the farm in a way which implies that its black inhabitants are excluded from the human group implied by the term 'dwelling-house'; she is describing a Karoo farm from first-hand experience of the way in which accommodation on such farms is organised. An anecdote which she tells in the Introduction to *Thoughts on South Africa* about herself as a child and repeats in *From Man to Man*, giving it to her heroine, Rebekah, may explain why she does not protest against this customary siting of farm buildings, or consciously

register it as a verdict — and perhaps an unjust verdict — on the rights of different groups.

> I started in life with as much insular prejudice and racial pride as it is given to any citizen who has never left the little Northern Island to possess. I cannot remember ever being exactly instructed in these matters by any one; rather, I suppose, I imbibed my view as boys coming to a town where there are two rival schools imbibe a prejudice towards the boys of the other school, without ever being definitely instructed on the matter. I cannot remember a time when I was not profoundly convinced of the superiority of the English, their government and their manners, over all other peoples.
>
> One of my earliest memories is of walking up and down on the rocks behind the little Mission House in which I was born and making believe that I was Queen Victoria and that all the world belonged to me. That being the case, I ordered all the black people in South Africa to be collected and put into the desert of Sahara, and a wall built across Africa shutting it off; I then ordained that any black person returning south of that line should have his head cut off.[8]

Schreiner seems to be discussing a racial prejudice founded at first on the child's propensity to group loyalty, and encouraged no doubt by the fact that she saw all around her behaviour and arrangements which manifested a determination amongst members of her own group to prevent blacks from making contact as equals with whites. The opening scene of *The African Farm* is evidence that the humblest domestic structures manifested, as they continue to do today, that determination to maintain separation which is no doubt the reason why neither Schreiner herself nor the children of *The African Farm* require exact instruction in these matters.

Schreiner nevertheless already presents in *The Story of an African Farm* evidence, available for reinterpretation by her reader of the late twentieth century, that the view held by the narrator and the characters of the dark races of South Africa is mistaken: Waldo talks to Lyndall about a bushman painting on the farm:

> 'Sometimes I lie under that little hill with my sheep, and it seems that the stones are really speaking — speaking of the old things, of the time when the strange fishes and animals lived that are turned into stone now; and the time when the little Bushmen lived here, so small and so ugly, and used to sleep in the wild dog holes, and eat snakes, and shot the bucks with their poisoned arrows. It was one of them, one of these old wild Bushmen, that painted those pictures there. He did not know why he painted but he wanted to make something, so he made these. He worked hard, very hard, to find the juice to make the paint; and then he found this place where the rocks hang over, and he painted them. To us they are only strange things, that make us laugh; but to him they were very beautiful.'
>
> The children had turned round and looked at the pictures.

> 'He used to kneel here naked, painting, painting, painting; and he wondered at the things he made himself,' said the boy, rising and moving his hand in deep excitement. 'Now the Boers have shot them all, so that we never see a yellow face peeping out among the stones'. He paused, a dreamy look coming over his face. 'And the wild bucks have gone, and those days, and we are here. But we will be gone soon, and only the stones will lie on here, looking at everything like they look now.' (49–50)

The essence of this passage is Waldo's understanding that life is transitory and so are species and races. The fact that the Bushman has disappeared in the fairly recent past allows him to extend his sense of the evolutionary process which led to the extinction of the 'strange fish and animals' to encompass the process by which human races and groups disappear. He knows that 'the Boers have shot them all', and yet by associating their disappearance with that of the fish and animals (who presumably became extinct because of climatic changes) he seems to suggest that this shooting too was an inevitable process, on which moral judgements are inappropriate. His verdict on the paintings themselves, that though they were a great achievement for their artist and were beautiful in his eyes, they appear absurd to a nineteenth-century white, also relates to his understanding that Bushmen represent an early stage, now past, of man's development. There is no evidence in the novel that Schreiner herself disagreed with him.

Even in later life she seems to have kept this view: the Bushmen were described by her in the *Thoughts on South Africa* as 'a race caught in the very act of evolving into human form'. She knows them as hunter-gatherers, but claims that they have 'no fixed social organization . . . no marriage ceremony, and no permanent sex relations, any man and woman cohabiting during pleasure; maternal feeling was at its lowest ebb . . . and paternal feeling was naturally non-existent. Their language is said by those who have closely studied it to be so imperfect that the clear expression of even the very simplest ideas is difficult.'[9] She writes in a very similar tone of the Hottentots who, she claims 'were a versatile, excitable, lively little folk . . . incapable of bearing a long-continued intellectual or emotional strain . . . the eternal children of the human race.'[10]

In *The African Farm* the question is asked by Lyndall of whether the 'Kaffir' people will also become extinct; and the form of her question makes it clear that she, and probably her author, regard these people also as occupying a lower rung on the evolutionary ladder:

> Will his race melt away in the heat of a collision with a higher? Are the men of the future to see his bones only in museums — a vestige of one link that spanned between the dog and the white man? (227–8)

This verdict, that the 'Kaffir' was an earlier and less developed human subspecies, was very greatly changed by Schreiner in the *Thoughts on South Africa*, in a way which explains her insistence that black women too had a right to the franchise: she writes of the 'avidity for study' of the 'Bantu' and adds a footnote in which she claims that even Bantu females are capable of academic achievement.[11]

Schreiner's new understanding of the black peoples here comes from observation of their new achievements which she had no way of foreseeing during the period in which she wrote *The African Farm*. It is true that the Colensos, in the same period and earlier, could see the potential of the black peoples of Natal but their involvement with the people was, because of Bishop Colenso's position, necessarily close, and their commitment to the education of blacks was closely linked to their duty to convert them to Christianity. The life of a governess in English and Afrikaans families in the Eastern Cape did not provide such opportunities for independent assessment of blacks, which only became a possibility for Schreiner after she returned from England in 1889. By that time, she could acquire the experience which led to a revision of her views on 'Kaffirs', but the Bushmen and Hottentots had virtually disappeared from South Africa. No new assessment based on their recent achievements could be made and Schreiner apparently remained convinced that their disappearance had been an inevitable process, and the result of an inability to integrate with the mainstream of modern life.

It is interesting to compare her sense of the evolutionary inferiority of Bushmen and Hottentots with Joseph Conrad's understanding — or misunderstanding — of the people of the Congo in *Heart of Darkness*. He claims that they represent basic savagery with no overlay of civilisation, but he has no sense of their being at a stage of evolution earlier than that of nineteenth-century Europeans: his narrator, Marlow, explicitly denies this:

> No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it — this suspicion of their not being inhuman . . . They howled and leaped and spun and made horrid faces: but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity — like yours — the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar . . . The mind of man is capable of anything, because everything is in it — all the past as well as all the future.[12]

Conrad is denying the idea of evolutionary stages through which races pass never to return. His preoccupation is with the individual's pattern of socialization, which is generally called civilization, and how fragile it is. Where he resembles Schreiner and reminds us that

both are limited by their historical placing, is that like her when she describes the Bushmen, he cannot when he looks at the inhabitants of the Congo perceive a social organisation different from that of Europeans: for him, the people on the riverbank are not different, they are less, even though he sees the Europeans of the novel as corrupt.

Like Schreiner, too, he sees black people as ugly; perhaps in his case as he was no more than a visitor to Africa, it might be fair to say that he never learnt that other aesthetic code which would allow him to respond to features so different from those of Europeans. In both *The African Farm* and *From Man to Man*, however, it is startling to the present-day reader that the narrator and characters share a sense that the features of blacks are ugly. Waldo uses this adjective for the Bushmen; the narrator describes the herd's wife as a 'sullen, ill-looking woman with lips hideously protruding.' (87) And not only have these whites, born in Africa, never learnt to respond appropriately to faces of a different type from their own, but they have not learnt to read expressions. When Bonaparte Blenkins arrives at the farm and Tant Sannie screams out her fear and mistrust of him, the 'Black Kaffir maids' we are told ' . . . stared stupidly at the object of attraction.' (51)

In *From Man to Man* Rebekah speaks of herself as having, in early childhood, a sense of the black people on her parents' farm as ugly:

> 'When I was a little girl,' she said, stretching her arms out upon her knees, 'I could not bear black or brown people. I thought they were ugly and dirty and stupid; the little naked Kaffirs, with their dusty black skins, that played on the walls of the kraal, I hated. They seemed so different from me in my white pinafores and my little stiff starched pink skirts that rustled as I walked. I felt I was so clever and they so stupid; I could not bear them.' (435)

The connection which she makes between the clothes she wears (and which, we know from the first section of the novel 'The Child's Day', she was required to keep clean and in order) and the somewhat burdensome lifestyle which she was already being taught was morally right and superior to that of the black children of the farm, tells us much about how children absorb prejudices. She goes on to say that by the time that she was seven years old, this infantile prejudice was fading: she heard from her parents and their visitors stories about self-sacrifice and courage in blacks which made her understand that moral superiority was not a monopoly of any particular culture or race group. She understands that attraction to members of one's own group is a feeling which, especially in childhood, supports the racial prejudice which is being taught by

elders: '"It's natural," Rebekah said, 'that we should love those who are like ourselves. A little child feels very lonely if it has not another child of its own age and size to play with. And perhaps the greatest longing a human being can have is to find another being who feels and thinks as they do . . ." ' (438) It is not only Rebekah who struggles against her learnt sense that whites are the standard of beauty, against which other races appear ugly: the description of Rebekah's four sons and her adopted daughter, Sartje, the daughter of her husband and the coloured servant, makes it clear that the narrator (and Schreiner herself) shares this perception. The terms in which the boys are described emphasize intelligence, sensitivity, and the delicate beauty of childhood; 'Sartje, the adopted child', is described as having a 'small head of woolly hair and glittering narrow eyes.' (412) Her half-brother, of the same age, Rebekah's youngest son, is somewhat like her in feature — 'the likeness between a figure carved delicately in alabaster and the same cast in brown clay.' (413) The failure, or learnt refusal as we must suppose it was, to register that blacks might by other standards be beautiful, must be related to Schreiner's account of her prejudices when she was a small child. No doubt she, and most other white children, were surrounded by images, people, and books which confirmed for them that the European was the standard of beauty from which the African deviated.

Blacks are characteristically spectators of the life of whites on the farm, but uncomprehending spectators. The old German, Otto, is the only person who treats them as fully human, with similar needs and responses to those of the whites and he is shown as being either comically or tragically mistaken in doing so. When, for example, the herd's wife with her six-day old baby is driven out by Tant' Sannie, Otto sees her as 'like Hagar . . . thrust out by her mistress in the wilderness to die.' The narrator comments, 'That she would creep back to the huts at the homestead when the darkness favoured her, the German's sagacity did not make evident to him.' (88) His view of the woman's plight is presented as naïve; the animal strategies of such people make driving out a small matter. When Otto returns to the farm, Blenkins has convinced Tant' Sannie that he has boasted of his power over her, and she is determined that he too must be driven out:

> 'But what then is the matter? What may have happened since I left?' said the German, turning to the Hottentot woman who sat upon the step.
>
> *She* was his friend; she would tell him kindly the truth. The woman answered by a loud ringing laugh.
>
> 'Give it him, old missis! Give it him!'

> It was so nice to see the white man who had been master hunted down. The coloured woman laughed, and threw a dozen mealie grains into her mouth to chew. (90)

The coloured woman's reaction seems that of a vengeful child: Otto has controlled her and she is happy to see him in his turn made subject to orders. She is Tant' Sannie's confidante and sycophant whose interests demand that she support the Boer woman's acts, but Schreiner depicts no conflict in her, no sympathy for the old man who has been kind to her. She seems incapable of the affectionate response that Otto expects from her. Does Schreiner notice that Tant' Sannie's willingness to turn on a man who has served her for years, shows a similar lack of moral development? It seems she does, because the next occasion when grotesque laughter occurs in the novel is when Bonaparte Blenkins horsewhips Waldo: 'Tant' Sannie felt half sorry for the lad; but she could not help laughing, it was always so funny when one was going to have a whipping, and it would do him good.' (123)

The novelist's eye here has revealed what Schreiner the theorist did not at this stage consciously know, that both the coloured maid (she is elsewhere called the Hottentot) and Tant' Sannie are undeveloped so far as sympathetic understanding of others is concerned, as well as in other important areas; their shortcomings probably do not relate to any incapacity but to the narrowness of their education and experience. Tant' Sannie's sense of right and wrong, of marriage and the upbringing of children, is primitive in the sense of being two hundred years behind the times, but Schreiner cannot relate it to any incapacity common to members of her group; the underdeveloped moral sense of the Hottentot maid, though Schreiner does not within the novel show that she realises it, is presumably explicable in the same way. She writes at length in *Thoughts on South Africa* about the difference between the mentality of the rural Boer and that of the nineteenth-century English speaker and claims that the former, because of geographical and linguistic isolation, remained untouched by the Enlightenment and by the revolutionary movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[13] The historical accident which isolated the Boer has also left the Hottentots — indeed, all the dark peoples of South Africa — without contact with the ideas of the Enlightenment, and though Schreiner was never faced with any opportunity to recognise the potential of Hottentots as she was of 'Kaffirs', she nevertheless faithfully recorded her observation that the same kind of failure in sympathy was characteristic of Boer and Hottentot. Old Ayah, in *From Man to Man*, is similarly unable to understand or sympathise with Rebekah as a child.

There is a moment in *The African Farm* when it appears that Schreiner is already on the way to conscious doubt of theories about the different evolutionary stages of human races: it occurs when Lyndall is dying and the Mozambiquer maid is determined to leave her:

> The landlady began to talk to her.
> 'You are not going to leave her really, Ayah, are you?' she said. 'The maids say so, but I'm sure you wouldn't do such a thing.'
> The Mozambiquer grinned,
> 'Husband says I must go home.'
> 'But she hasn't got anyone else, and won't have anyone else. Come now,' said the landlady, 'I've no time to be sitting always in a sickroom, not if I was paid anything for it.'
> The Mozambiquer only showed her white teeth goodnaturedly for an answer, and went out, and the landlady followed her. (268)

The Mozambiquer's English is inadequate to explanations of the fact that she belongs to another social group where she is a wife, and no doubt has other obligations which must take precedence over duty to her employer. The landlady's sense that because she herself does not want to be a sick nurse, the Mozambiquer is obliged to remain, is obviously absurd; but it is not so clear whether or not Schreiner thinks the 'grin' which accompanies the black woman's attempt at explanation, is evidence of an inability to register sympathetically her employer's plight. To the reader of today, the woman's embarrassment and her wish to avoid giving offence are clear. I do not wish to over-interpret a tiny scene, the most important function of which is undoubtedly to allow Gregory Rose the opportunity to become Lyndall's nurse, but it seems to me a small example of the way in which the novelist's habit of accurate observation will lead her eventually to outgrow the prejudices which she has learnt.

In an article on Pauline Smith's *The Beadle*, Sheila Roberts remarks on a strange feature of that novel:

> It must strike any South African reader as odd that in a farming community such as the Aangenaam valley there were no black labourers, that there was no 'location' nearby nor black people living in huts on the peripheries of the farmlands. Yet Pauline Smith excludes black people from her book and any intimation of the nature of the relationship between the black and whites, an exclusion that makes this assertion on her part inadequate:
> 'I always felt that what had been written about them (the Afrikaners) did not do them full justice and I made up my mind that I would try to write about them as I had known them.'
> (Quoted on the dust jacket of the 1972 edition of *The Beadle*)[14]

Either because she considers the relationship between rural Afrikaners and blacks discreditable, or perhaps because she does not wish to add to her matter a second major subject, Pauline Smith has excised the whole black population whose existence was an essential part of the system of labour and social organisation of the rural Afrikaner. Such an excision is not uncommon in white South African writing of the period, though it is seldom as complete as it is in *The Beadle* and *The Little Karoo*. Roberts very properly reminds us that 'her (Pauline Smith's) works contribute towards upholding certain myths about the Afrikaner — myths that have had and are still having important political implications,'[15] that is, that a society exclusively composed of rural Afrikaners, sufficient unto all of its own needs, once existed in South Africa.

Olive Schreiner has allowed herself no such simplifying excision in either of her major novels: both her portraits of South African farms acknowledge fully that black people are essential to the work and life of the farm. They are present at every moment, usually working in the background whilst whites converse or deliberate. In *The African Farm* the Hottentot maid invariably accompanies Tant' Sannie; the 'black Kaffir maids' crush mealies whilst she shouts at a stranger; the Boer dance which celebrates the wedding cannot take place without the service of 'Hottentot, Kaffir and Half-Caste nurses whose many-shaded complexions, ranging from light yellow up to ebony black, add variety to the animated scene.' (211) A little Bush-girl comes to tell Tant' Sannie that the wagon is leaving (the presence on all occasions of messengers and suppliers of all kinds of services explains, though Schreiner never comments on it, why Tant' Sannie weighs 260 pounds at the end of the novel). Even Em, diligent though she is, only supervises and finishes tasks; she washes the butter when the black woman has finished churning, she measures out the rations for her black labourers. At almost every point in the novel it is indicated that necessary physical work is being done by black people, not only on the farm but in the store where Waldo works, in the hotel when Lyndall lies sick and on the transport waggons. 'But should one sit down to paint the scenes among which he has grown, he will see that the facts creep in upon him,' says Schreiner in her introduction to the novel, and so it has proved. The dependence of whites in all areas of their lives on black labour is faithfully recorded, as faithfully as the sense of the author and her characters that these suppliers of labour are inevitably excluded from the social and intellectual life of whites.

The saddest exclusion from the life of whites on the farm which Schreiner records comes in *From Man to Man*: it is that of the Bushman child, Griet, bought by Bertie from a drunken mother for 'a pair of old shoes and a bottle of wine.' (104) Rebekah, Bertie's

elder sister, is married and living far away in Cape Town, and the little girl has clearly been a pet or a doll to Bertie in her loneliness. What is sad is that Griet, on the evidence of behaviour which the narrator faithfully records, seems to have imagined that she was Bertie's adopted child. She tries to be part of the family welcome for Rebekah, returning with her children on a visit; she is jealous of Bertie's interest in John-Ferdinand; she weeps bitterly when Bertie goes away to Cape Town for six months. Bertie's mother's verdict, that she spoils Griet (109) is accurate in a way, for it is clear that however she has amused herself with the child in her loneliness, Bertie does not recognise that Griet has any claim on her other than that of remaining at the farm as a servant. Once she has left the farm, she thinks no more of the little girl. Even the narrator, though she describes Griet's behaviour in a way which shows us that the child feels that she must imitate the behaviour of the whites on the farm, seems to see her as a kind of parody of a human. When Bertie, unthinking, never calculating the results of her actions, abandons Griet and leaves the farm, we are not allowed to blame her, since she has herself been abandoned by a man who is far more aware of the seriousness of what he is doing. And Rebekah, the elder sister, behaves very differently to the dark child who becomes her responsibility.

In childhood and early adult life Lyndall, Waldo and Rebekah are certainly preoccupied with questions which, as Gordimer points out, were much discussed in late nineteenth-century Europe. Lyndall's feminism, Waldo's problems of religious doubt, his longing for a non-religious morality which would lead to a just world, Rebekah's scientific interest in animal and plant life — all these are related to their positions as second-generation colonists. Their families have imported the seeds of these interests which germinate in the children, as Em's father has imported his books. The societies which preceded them in the Eastern Cape, of Boer, Hottentot and 'Bantu' peoples were troubled by no such questions or investigations. But to the society of the future represented in embryo within the novels by Lyndall, Waldo, Em, Gregory Rose, and Rebekah and her children, they will be very important. It is certainly true that problems related to race will be even more crucial, though they are not yet recognised as being so in *The African Farm*. Yet the positions of the races vis à vis each other are faithfully recorded, as are absurdities like Tant' Sannie's exclusion of the blacks from religious service because they were descended from apes and needed no salvation. *The African Farm* seems to offer us a vital moment in the movement of a settler society into the earliest phases of conscious coexistence with the indigenous peoples: the presence and function of these peoples is recognised, though there is little awareness of how much of life is lived jointly.

The capacities, moral and intellectual, which would allow blacks to be equal sharers in community life have not been allowed to become apparent, but they are rapidly learning the skills which make them essential to it, and Schreiner has faithfully acknowledged this as many of her contemporaries could not.

Cherry Clayton sees Schreiner as offering in her portrayal of blacks in *The African Farm* 'a profound critique of exploitation and possession by displacement, and calls her 'hard headed' because she does not suggest 'that people become noble under brutal treatment'.[16] My own view is that the novel certainly invites such a reading in our own day, but that the ability to read it in this way depends on an awareness which Schreiner acquired only in later life, that blacks possess potential which is being ignored by the white society of *The African Farm*. It may be significant that in the long account of *From Man to Man* which she wrote for Karl Pearson in 1886,[17] there is no suggestion that her heroine's views on racial questions will develop alongside her views on the necessity of independence for women. Perhaps at that stage when she was still in England, she was unable to foresee how the novel would eventually reflect the changed views of its author in its final version when Rebekah adopts Sartje, her husband's daughter by their coloured maid, and acknowledges that his child has a right to be brought up with her siblings. And it is clear that Sartje will not be a plaything, discarded when she becomes burdensome, as was Griet: Rebekah is already concerned to help her children to cope with the contempt and derision they will meet because they have a coloured family member. The parable which she tells them about the superior race of the future which arrives from another planet and despises and enslaves the races now dominant on the earth is intended to give them and much more, her reader — the children are ten, nine, seven and five at the time — an understanding of the plight of blacks as Schreiner has seen it. The emphasis is on the greater scientific knowledge of the superior race, which leads its members to believe that the people of earth can only serve them as slaves. When they rebel, they are crushed. Some of the enslaved decide to learn what they can from the superior race and wait for an opportunity. What this opportunity will be and where it will lead, Rebekah does not know, but she is clear about the effects of subjection:

> 'But to some of us a much more terrible thing happened. We did not try to fight and were not killed suddenly; a more awful fate overtook us.
>
> 'Because they despised *us*, we began to despise *ourselves*!
>
> 'If you pull up a tree suddenly by the roots and throw it down on the ground with all its roots exposed (the roots through which it has sucked its life for so many years), for a little while the leaves may keep green and the sap run up the stem; but by and by the leaves will wither, and

> the tree dies. Even if you try to transplant it and stick it up carelessly in a bit of ground, if you do not spread out the roots in the new earth and press down the ground carefully on them and give it much water for a time — it dies.
>
> 'So, when they took from us all our old laws and our old customs, when they told us all we had thought right was wrong and all we had known foolishness — and when they made us believe them; when they did nothing to teach us their wisdom and make us grasp their freedom — then we despised ourselves; and so we died.
>
> 'We did not die suddenly; we faded and faded, as the leaves fade on an uprooted tree and grow browner and browner till they drop off and are blown hither and thither by the wind, till you see them no more. So we died by millions. And the strange white people said, "See, they are an inferior race; they melt away before us!" ' (422–3)

Her long meditation on questions of racial superiority and inferiority ends with a recognition of the value of human differences in strengths and skills. It seems evident that it represents Schreiner's own thinking about race and poses the questions to which, as yet, there could be no final answer. Two of her letters, both dated 1908, one to her husband and the other to W.P. Schreiner make it clear that 'Fireflies in the Dark' the section in which Rebekah discusses matters of race with her children, was written that year and that Schreiner, though she feared that it might not be 'interesting', felt that it was an intervention which she had to make in the debate on 'our relation to the darker races.'[18]

The first section of *From Man to Man* is perhaps the best and vividest of Schreiner's writing: it describes the life of a five-year-old on the day in which her twin sisters are born, one of them still-born. The child lives on a farm where there are many black children but she is the only white child. Her sense of remoteness and exclusion from the activities of adults, white and black, and from those of black children is movingly rendered because, as Schreiner made clear, she was here rendering the emotions and experience of her own childhood.[19] 'Fireflies in the Dark' is certainly not experience rendered into fiction: it is almost an essay. The scenes among which she had grown up, could not help Schreiner to imagine what just relations between racial groups would be, but her belief in *From Man to Man* as her big novel about the lives of women would not allow her to omit this painful matter which she knew all women in South Africa must consider.

It is in *From Man to Man* that Schreiner comes closest to relating the oppression of women to that of blacks. Frank, Rebekah's husband, is willing to exploit and discard both wife and servant carelessly, because law and custom give him power over both. The white wife can, at great cost, extricate herself and her experience makes her compassionate towards the servant and her child. The

potential of Sartje, the adopted coloured child, is a question as yet unanswered, but neither Rebekah nor her creator will allow the reader to escape the question or supply to it an answer dictated by prejudice.

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NOTES

Numbers in brackets refer either to pages in the Penguin edition of *The Story of an African Farm* (1969) or to the Virago edition of *From Man to Man* (1982).

When writing of *The Story of an African Farm* I have used the terms Bushman, Hottentot and Kaffir as did Schreiner and her contemporaries, rather than the modern San, Koi and (presumably) Xhosa, anachronistic in this context.

1. Nadine Gordimer, 'The Prison House of Colonialism: Review of Ruth First and Ann Scott's *Olive Schreiner*', included in *Olive Schreiner*, edited by Cherry Clayton, South African Literature Series No. 4 (Johannesburg: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1983) pp. 97–8.
2. Cherry Clayton, Introduction to *The Story of an African Farm*, (Johannesburg: Donker 1986) p. 7.
3. Olive Schreiner, *Undine*, (London: Benn, 1929). *Undine* was completed in 1876.
4. S.C. Cronwright-Schreiner, Foreword to *Thoughts on South Africa* by Olive Schreiner (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1923) p.7.
5. She writes in *Thoughts on South Africa* ' ... there do exist in the social conditions of the Half-Caste's existence, in almost every country in which he is found, causes adequate, and more than adequate, to account for all and more than all the retrograde and anti-social qualities with which he is credited, and ... therefore in spite of the fact that there do exist the certain circumstances which suggest the possibility of the crossing of widely discovered varieties producing a tendency to revert to the most primitive ancestral forms of both, yet until science has been able to demonstrate that not social conditions, but a congenital defect has made the Half-Caste what we find him, the balanced and impartial mind, in answer to the popular accusation against him of congenital anti-sociality, can bring only one verdict, that of — Not Proven.' (pp. 139–140)
6. Colin Bundy, *The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry* (London: Heinemann, 1979).
7. Wyn Rees, ed. *Colenso Letters from Natal* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter, 1958). Pp. 272–281 give accounts by Mrs Colenso and her daughter Harriet of the Langalibalele controversy, especially the colonists' fear of black men who owned guns and their determination that Langalibalele should be savagely punished for an act of disobedience to which he was in a sense forced. Throughout her letters, Mrs Colenso records the colonists' anger at the idea of education being offered to Zulus.
8. *Thoughts on South Africa*, p. 15.
9. *Thoughts on South Africa*, p. 108.
10. *Thoughts on South Africa*, p. 107.
11. *Thoughts on South Africa*, p. 112.
12. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983 — first published 1902) p. 69.
13. *Thoughts on South Africa*, p. 98.
14. Sheila Roberts, 'A Confined World: A Re-reading of Pauline Smith', *UCT Studies in English*, October 1982, Issue 12, pp. 38–44, p. 40.
15. Sheila Roberts, 'A Confined World: A Re-reading of Pauline Smith', p. 39.
16. Cherry Clayton, Introduction to *The Story of an African Farm*, (Johannesburg: Donker, 1986) pp. 12–13.
17. Richard Rive, ed., *Olive Schreiner: Letters 1871–1899*, (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987) pp. 91–95.

18. Both of these letters are included in *Olive Schreiner* edited by Cherry Clayton, South African Literature Series No. 4, (Johannesburg: McGraw-Hill, 1983) pp. 125–6.
19. In 'A Note on the Genesis of the Book' (*From Man to Man* p. 493) Cronwright-Schreiner quotes a letter written in 1918 to Mrs Francis Smith in which Olive Schreiner hopes that it is clear that 'The Child's Day' is autobiographical.

RICHARD TURNER AND THE POLITICS OF EMANCIPATION*

by DUNCAN GREAVES

Richard Turner died in the early hours of January 8, 1978; he was gunned down, at the age of 37, by an assailant who has yet to be identified. In the decade since then political violence in South Africa has escalated to the point where we now stand on the brink of civil war. Or perhaps I should say anti-political violence; for there is a sharp limit to which the purposes of politics and violence can be reconciled. There is, to be sure, an intimate and complex link between the two; it has often been suggested that war is the prosecution of diplomacy by other means, and, by a logical extension, that civil war is the prosecution of politics by other means. But the link is one of tension, for the one does not simply translate into the other as the need arises. Instead, we typically find that violence tends to drown politics in its own purposes. As Hannah Arendt remarked in her observations on revolution, the justification of violence must also constitute its political limitation. To cry havoc and let slip the dogs of civil war, therefore, marks not the prosecution of politics by other means but its failure; indeed, its death.

Politics is my theme; a particular kind of politics, the sort of politics which lies at the heart of Richard Turner's life and work, which I have chosen to call a politics of emancipation. It is a politics which has never flourished in South Africa — it has rarely enough flourished anywhere — but at crucial moments in the history of our country it has flared briefly and brilliantly, rendering the past transparent and illuminating the future as a horizon of possibilities. And then, as always, the darkness has closed again. For Richard Turner, the darkness concealed an assassin. For us, the darkness conceals many assassins; the path forward, if it exists at all, is dim, and certainly blood-coloured; our torch, if I may extend the metaphor, is almost out. We must surely pause here, to take stock of the passage of events which have brought us to this sticking point. We need to reflect critically on our past in order to take control of the future back into our own hands. I suggest that central to this task is an engagement with the work of Richard Turner. For Turner's project is, at its core, a transcendental one. It is transcendental in a double sense — in the sense of its own internal purposes, which aim, through a process of redemptive discourse, to render society transparent and thus to transform it; but also in the sense that his life

* This is a modified version of the first Richard Turner Memorial Lecture delivered at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, on 12th August, 1987.

and work are a triumph of the human spirit, of dedication to freedom and justice, which is in no way negated by his death and indeed survives beyond it to resonate powerfully in our own time.

Richard Turner was born in Cape Town in 1941. His childhood was unexceptionally that of a white middle-class South African, and on leaving school he charted for himself an unexceptional course: in 1959 he registered at the University of Cape Town for an engineering degree. Midway through his second year, however, he changed his direction of study to philosophy. The change of course is the first indication of the crucial role that philosophical enquiry was to play in his life and work. The study of philosophy led him in 1964 to the University of Paris, where he completed a doctorate on the political work of Jean-Paul Sartre. A distinguished committee examined and commended his work: Jean Wahl, Raymond Aron and Sartre himself. It is Turner's engagement with Sartre which underpins all of his politics.

If I may be permitted some extremely bald compression, the heart of Sartre's work is an attempt to sustain a materialist model of human behaviour without at the same time reducing human volition to structural causation. He seeks to do this by means of a set of crucial ideas: the notion of project, as a continuous and critical extension of human choice into the future; the category of the practico-inert, referring to the ways in which human choices rebound on actors in unrecognisable and unwanted form; and, most memorably, the distinction between the group and the series, as a way of explaining how individuals can engage in authentically willed collective action. In capitalist societies, social institutions depend for their survival on an opacity which separates the people embedded in them: they constitute a 'series', a collection of atomised and alienated individuals. Under such conditions, there is almost no possibility of collective action. Precisely because the experience of the members of the series is shared, however, there remains the theoretical possibility of the atomised ensemble undergoing a transition to a 'fused group' — a highly volatile social structure characterised by authentic and spontaneous forms of collective action, and which may in turn undergo further transitions, either preserving or losing crucial moments of this authenticity. The emergence of a fused group is never purely the result of theorising, but requires, to some extent, a revolutionary spark that abruptly illuminates the nature of the series.

At the heart of these ideas is the conviction that social structures, however complex and tortuous they may appear, are the products of human choices; and for precisely that reason they can be changed. That conviction provides us with a vision and a hope, but not yet with a politics. But the politics are already implicit in the theory; for collective action, in these terms, does not emerge from a

process of external education but rather from one of internal reflection, either implicit or explicit. As Turner expressed it in his dissertation on Sartre, we constitute our values through a process of synthesising all our experience. Behind this assertion lies a theme that is crucial to Turner's politics. It is that consciousness — political or otherwise — is not a scarce resource that is presided over and administered by a political agency. Consciousness is intimately linked to social being, and, more importantly, to activity, to an active, practical engagement with nature and with society.

At the centre of a politics of emancipation, therefore, there must stand a commitment to a redemptive discourse, to a process of Socratic dialogue that aims to lead out what is already within rather than to replace one dogma with another. A politics of didacticism, by contrast, aims to inject a political consciousness from without through the repetitious preaching of keywords and slogans. In his play *The Measures Taken* Brecht characterises communist cadres as 'blank pages on which the Revolution writes its instructions'. It is in much the same way that a didactic politics proceeds. But it is a bad politics, for it either doesn't work — since it is grounded in an inadequate sociology of consciousness — or, when it does work, it produces results very far from the open and democratic society at which it ostensibly aims.

The work on Sartre provided Turner with a political vocabulary, a language of freedom so to speak, which would allow him to step beyond the bounds of the given and the conventional, to engage all those around him in searching and critical dialogue. He returned in 1966 to a South Africa in which the public space was not only narrow and cramped, but growing daily narrower under the pressure of a repressive government. As it grew narrower, so he expanded his commitment to a redemptive discourse, until, at the height of his powers, he was regarded by the state as one of the most dangerous opposition figures in South Africa.

The political project which flared so brilliantly in the early 1970s began simply enough, through teaching — first at UCT, Rhodes and Stellenbosch, and then, from 1970, in the Department of History and Political Science at the University of Natal in Durban. Turner's method of teaching relied heavily on the use of dialogue and critical discussion, through a continual movement from the given to what is not given, an ever more searching interrogation of unspoken assumptions and preconceptions. Education, in this manner, is fundamentally self-education; the teacher is present as a facilitator rather than an instructor. Certainly the effect on students was electrifying; students from as far afield as the Faculty of Engineering attended his lectures. The student left, in particular, was galvanised by Turner's lectures — not necessarily because he told them what they wanted to hear (he frequently didn't) but

because his method of enquiry seemed to provide both a hope for, and a challenge to, the future. Between Turner and the student left there quickly developed a running dialogue, in which no part of the field of possibilities was left shadowed or unexplored.

This would, of course, have been a period of flux and openness in student politics whether Turner had been there or not; the effects of the French student revolt were just beginning to percolate through to South Africa, and other forces were simultaneously at work. The revisionist historians had opened a searching discussion of the relationship between racism and capital accumulation; black political opposition was coming slowly to the surface again after a decade of political passivity; the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) had been shaken to its roots by the angry desertion of black students in 1968; and penetrating all of student life was the noncomformist popular culture of the late '60s. The dialogue between Turner and NUSAS gave a potently critical edge to the student politics of the period. At the same time, however, Turner acted as a brake on student militancy. He was resolutely opposed to student violence — partly because he had himself witnessed the tragic consequences of such violence in the early 1960s, but more importantly because in his view the conditions prevailing in South Africa neither justified nor required violence within civil society. What was required, rather, was a critical culture, the sort of culture which could enter and inhabit civil society at every level, thus constituting a new social order in embryo within the old. Violence was more likely to hinder the development of such a culture than to foster it. But protest, legal or otherwise, could contribute importantly to the building of a critical culture; and here Turner played a crucial role in student affairs. He did not attempt to organise students, as the Schlebusch Commission which recommended his banning later charged. Rather, through a process of dialogue and engagement with Turner, students developed strategies of protest that were themselves committed to dialogue and engagement. A typical incident from 1970 illustrates what sort of protest was at issue. After a number of students in Johannesburg were arrested, students in Durban planned to stage a protest march. It struck Turner that instead of pointing posters at the white public it would be more fruitful to try talking to them, and he put this to students at a mass meeting. The tactic was taken up; some 500 students took their case to the white public in groups of two and three, arguing their position from door to door and winning support through dialogue and critical engagement.

At the heart of Turner's envisaged critical culture there lies always this process of engagement and argumentation. If a position could not be argued for it was not worth holding, and it had to be argued for openly with all opponents. Of his own position, he

declared simply, 'I am a socialist. I believe that there is no justification for the claim that some individuals have an exclusive right to own the land and the means of production which have been produced and formed by the common ingenuity of a whole society. I accept these principles because I believe that there are good rational reasons in favour of them. If I can be presented with better reasons against, then I will happily change my mind ... But I believe that it is important that there should be rational debate about these questions.' The project was the construction of a democratic socialism in South Africa; its method was the building of a critical culture, a culture that could be actively lived in the here and now rather than be deferred to the future, that would expand outward, not through a process of dogma and didacticism, but through Socratic dialogue. Its point of articulation with civil society was always the lived experience of men and women, the practical basis from which consciousness derives; for fundamental shifts in consciousness are not the product of education, but rather of action, mediated by reflection. Turner was keenly aware of the need to 'organise', but this meant essentially the facilitation of events and situations in which people would act, and, in reflecting on their action, would see the structure of social relations as increasingly transparent. As a model of political activity, it is not bound to any particular set of interests, but finds application at every level of society; and from the sphere of student politics, Turner's engagement expanded progressively outwards.

The early '70s were important years for the growth of the Black Consciousness Movement, and through his involvement in community self-help projects, and a personal friendship with Steve Biko, Turner developed a critical yet sympathetic relationship with the BCM. The disagreement between Turner and the BCM was vast, yet it remained always fraternal. Black Consciousness, for Turner, was an authentic attempt to thematise the lived experiences of the black population; and, most significantly, it was coupled always with a searching critique of white western culture, the sort of critique that lay at the heart of constructing an alternative. By the very nature of the association, it was a limited one; but it lasted through some of the crucial shifts in the BCM, and in 1976 Turner — somewhat awkwardly, under the circumstances — appeared as an expert witness in the SASO/BPC case, a key trial of Black Consciousness activists.

Black Consciousness offered, at least potentially, a critique of the dominant culture; so too did Christianity. The early 1970s were equally an important period for the growth of Christian dissent, and here too Turner was crucially involved. The Christian Institute, founded in 1963, provided one of the key organisational expressions of the unhappy or outraged Christian conscience, and as the 1960s

advanced so it and other groupings such as the South African Council of Churches were searching for an understanding of apartheid and its alternatives. In September of 1968 a theological commission under the SACC produced a 'Message to the People of South Africa', calling on them to distinguish what was required of them as citizens from what was required of them as disciples of Christ. Out of this grew the Study Project on Christianity in Apartheid Society — SproCas, as it quickly became known — which appointed six commissions. Turner was regarded as essential for the politics and economics commissions.

He was not a Christian, and he stated the fact bluntly. However, Christ's injunction to do unto others as you would have them do unto you establishes, for Turner, a radical principle of justice. Christianity therefore constitutes a challenge to all accepted values; it is an invitation to continuous self-examination and transcendence. It must be committed, therefore, to a searching interrogation of the values of everyday life, and dedicated to building alternative values, where necessary, that will place people before things. This, Turner argued, obviously cannot be done in apartheid society; nor, he insisted, can it be done in capitalist society, for capitalism must necessarily place things before people and thus subvert the principles of Christian love. Turner's contributions to SproCas argued these positions consistently; he was impatient with the hesitancy and lack of critical imagination of Christian opposition in South Africa, and this impatience was to play an important role in motivating him to write the little book for which he is best remembered, *The Eye of The Needle*.

The Eye of The Needle is Turner's most enduring value statement, and I shall want to say something more about it in a moment. But the political work which has left the most lasting results in South Africa was his involvement in worker organisation. Initially, and characteristically, this grew out of his involvement in student politics; in collaboration with David Hemson and others, he set up the Wages Commission on the Durban campus. Its purpose was to gather information about the wage structure of factories in and around Durban; this information was used with devastating effect in the foreign press, and contributed importantly to the establishment of the EEC and Sullivan codes of employment. Out of this grew a host of worker-related projects. In 1972 Turner and others set up the Institute for Industrial Education, an adult education project that was designed to allow rank-and-file workers to perceive, through a self-educative learning process, the structure of interests in which they were located and hence the extent to which they could take control of their own lives. In the same year he and others laid the groundwork for the authoritative journal, the *Labour Bulletin*. The first issue only appeared in April 1974, after

his banning, and thus he was cut off from being publicly associated with it. Simultaneously with these projects, important trade union organisation was developing. The foundations of the umbrella union FOSATU, which later amalgamated with others to form COSATU, were laid at this point.

As these worker-orientated projects flourished, so Turner progressively disengaged from earlier involvements; and this shift has led some commentators to suggest that he adopted, around 1972, a more orthodox Marxist position in which class struggle is conceptually privileged. But such a shift in emphasis does not accord with the theoretical basis of his political activity, which rested always on the construction of a universal rather than a particular critical culture. Moreover, the shift can be explained in other terms. In the first place, the last thing that Turner sought was to be a leader. He was sharply aware, from his experience with students, that people tended to regard him in this way, and he sought always to avoid becoming an institutional fixture. His disengagement from earlier activities probably gew in part out of this, and had his banning not cut short this last phase of his work he would probably have moved out of worker-orientated projects in time. Certainly, he would have had to face a choice between teaching and unionism; towards the end of this period he was so busy that at one stage he moved a cot into his office.

Turner was, first and foremost, a teacher; teaching was a mode of engagement with the world that best suited his commitment to Socratic dialogue and critical enquiry. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Richard Turner was a deeply compassionate man who had a horror of human suffering. The Wages Commission investigations had shown that human suffering was rife in Durban factories. Some concerns — the Frame Group became infamous among them — were paying appallingly low wages. The engagement with unionism, therefore, was also an urgent attempt to help people in need; and precisely because the level of organisation was so low, it is scarcely surprising that unionism swamped his other activities. But it was not only that; at its core it was informed, as much as any of his other political engagements, by the attempt to build a critical culture, a coherent and lived set of alternative values and morals.

This concern with the choice of values is fundamental to Turner's project, and it forms the basis of what is unquestionably his most profound and lasting value statement, the little book he published as part of the SproCas project in May 1972, entitled *The Eye of the Needle*. In it he sought to marshall the arguments for democratic socialism which lay at the heart of his life and work. In academic terms, it is not a particularly good book; it was written in perhaps 36 hours, and under such circumstances it is not surprising that it is

ambiguous and even at times internally contradictory. Turner himself made no immodest claims about it. Yet it made an impact that was quite disproportionate to its value as a philosophical and political study. For he did not set out to produce a fully elaborated case for socialist democracy. What Turner was attempting, rather, was to infuse a sense of vision into the narrow and restricted political debate of the time. It was a time of flux and challenge, but also a time of despair. Nearly all radical opposition to the government had been effectively crushed, and white liberals and Christians alike, in the search for a programme acceptable to the white electorate, were falling short of a full commitment to either liberalism or Christianity. What Turner sought to provide was a value-statement that could provide a fresh basis for political debate; instead of niggling over possible reforms, what was needed was a model of a just social order, cast in self-consciously utopian terms, against which all political activity could be indexed. In the opening paragraphs of the book he explains his purpose: 'let us, for once, stop asking what the whites can be persuaded to do, what concessions, other things being equal, they may make, and instead explore the absolute limits of possibility by sketching an ideally just society.' He then argues that social institutions are, finally, nothing other than a lot of people going about their business, acting on the values they have consciously or unconsciously chosen; and that a different set of values would thus generate a different set of social structures. We are thus returned to the fundamental question of the choice of values, and what sort of politics are most appropriate to a value-orientated project. The argument is a utopian one, but there are fertile and infertile utopias. Turner's utopia is richly powerful; it generates a sense of transcendence and affirms the capacity of men and women to shape their society in accordance with rational goals. The book resounds quietly with an indomitable faith in human reason, and few people come from *The Eye of The Needle* without a change — for many a sea-change — in their thinking.

Some nine months after the book was published, the state finally acted against Turner; along with seven NUSAS figures, he was served with a banning order that cut him off from teaching and effectively curtailed his political activity. A banning order is a monstrous imposition, but Turner resolved to respond to it within the limits that were abruptly imposed on him. His task was made easier by the University of Natal's generous and unusual decision to continue paying his salary. His life project had begun with the study of philosophy, and it was to philosophy that he now returned. He applied for, and was awarded, an Alexander von Humboldt scholarship for post-doctoral studies in Germany, but was refused permission by the Government to take it up. He therefore turned to a re-examination of the philosophical tradition from which he had

begun: the relationship between the materialist dialectic and the individual as a knowing subject. One of his purposes was to produce a coherent model of the relationship between activity and reflection, and thus to elaborate the basis for an emancipatory politics. By late 1977 he had written some five hundred pages, much of it in polished form. He was of course forbidden to publish during this period; but his banning order was due to expire in early 1978, and he was preparing both for a return to teaching and for publication of at least part of the manuscript.

Neither purpose was fulfilled. On that January night an assassin stepped out of the darkness and cut him down; he died in the arms of his daughter.

* * *

His art was the art of the Socratic dialectician; it was an art he practiced with quiet forcefulness but no arrogance or flamboyance. To be defeated in argument by Turner was never to be crushed. Dialogue with Turner was always a rich, almost a magical experience; the poet Peter Sacks, who was once his student, has given us this image of him:

> You sat among us on the floor
> translating Althusser,
> barefoot, jeans, a pale blue shirt,
> your black-rimmed glasses doubling
> the light, the red shock of your hair.
> At some slight turn of argument
> your freckled hands followed
> the actual phrasing in the air.
> "I know it's difficult in this country,
> but we've got to think more clearly
> than the State allows."†

Always his concern was to go beyond the limits of thought that were set by the State and civil society, to engage in dialogue and debate. For Turner, those disputing any question would always be involved in an act of emancipation if they advanced their cases rationally. Rational debate about the choice of fundamental values, therefore, lies at the heart of constructing a critical culture, at the heart of a politics of emancipation. It is a politics built around self-education rather than didacticism, around discourse rather than dogma, around argument about values rather than the assertion of them, around openness rather than closure; around the primacy of ends rather than means. It is a politics which fares badly in time of civil

† 'For Richard Turner': from *In These Mountains* (London: Collier Macmillan, 1986)

war, for the brutalisation of civil society tends to petrify political identities; it simplifies them dramatically into the good and the bad, armouring them with a horny carapace of dogma that renders them immune to dialogic reconstruction. How a politics of emancipation is to be redeemed under such circumstances I do not know, nor even if it can be redeemed. Without such a redemption, however, our future can only be grim — either more grim or less grim, depending on the course of the conflict; but grim.

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THE PRAISES OF YOUNG ZULU MEN

by ADRIAN KOOPMAN

Ruth Finnegan, in the chapter 'Panegyric' in her *Oral Literature in Africa* (1970: 121), states:

> The praise poems of the Bantu peoples of South Africa are one of the most specialized and complex forms of poetry to be found in Africa. Many examples have been published in the original or in translation ... and there is a large literature about them by scholars in South Africa.

Jeff Opland, in his paper, 'A Critical Survey of Research into South African Oral Poetry', read at the 3rd ALASA[2] National Conference in Pietermaritzburg 1985, gives a total of 105 books, articles and theses referring directly to *izibongo*, or 'praise poetry', as a literary expression of the various African societies of South Africa. Most of these works are concerned with literary analysis of the *izibongo zamakhosi*, the highly polished, complex poems created and performed for royalty by professional bards, known as *izimbongi*. Grant (1927: 29), Nyembezi (1949 and 1958), Cope (1968) and others have written specifically on Zulu chiefly or kingly praises; Schapera (1965) on Tswana praises; and Cook (1931) on Swazi. Norton (1921), Kunene (1971) and Damane and Sanders (1974) have written on Southern Sotho praise-poetry. Opland has concentrated on Xhosa oral poetry (1970, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1983, 1984), Van der Merwe (1941) on the oral poetry of the Hurutshe, and Hodwa and Fortune (1979) on Shona.

Other scholars have covered aspects of oral poetry not necessarily concentrating specifically on the praises of chiefs and kings. Lekgothoane (1937) has written on the praises of animals in Northern Sotho. Gunner has published widely: on the role of the bard (1976), poetic language (1981), the praises of women (1979) and the praises of the prophet Shembe (1982). Mzolo (1977, 1978, 1980) has analysed and discussed features of Nguni clan praises, as has Rycroft (1976). Rycroft has also considered the melodic features of oral poetry (1960, 1962, 1980). Wainwright (1979) has considered the praises of Xhosa mineworkers. Cope has looked at praise-poetry as written literature (1976 and 1984), both articles published in *Theoria*.

And yet, despite this wide range of scholarly activity on such varied aspects of Southern African oral poetry, I have found no reference in the literature to any work done on the composition and use of personal praises of young Zulu men, although this is a well-known, wide-spread, and on-going activity. Noting this gap, and

having an unpublished and hitherto unanalysed collection of such praises, it seemed apposite to celebrate the 40th edition of *Theoria* with a study of the praises of young Zulu men.

Finnegan says of such praises: 'Self-praises, created and performed by the subject himself, are not uncommon. Among the Sotho, all individuals (or all men) are expected to have some skill in the composition and performance of self-praises . . . ' (1970: 116) and Bryant says of young Zulu men: 'But not even yet have we reached the end of the Zulu name-scheme . . . the Zulu man dearly loved both praise and admiration, and so, to the preceding, "praise-names" and other such now became added. When now at length the babe . . . had grown into a brave and handsome youth, he was wont to flatter him[self], or more commonly, be flattered by his companions, with some brand-new "fancy name" (*isitopo*), usually one of adulation, by which name, among his set, he henceforth was generally called, instead of by his birth-name.' (1949: 434)

The sub-title of Bryant's work — *'as they were before the white man came'* — suggests an outmoded custom no longer practised amongst Zulu men, but this is not at all so. The personal praises discussed in this article were all collected from young men in and around Pietermaritzburg in the early 1980s, when I was collecting primary data for my MA thesis on Zulu personal names.

Two points must be made about the quotation from Bryant. Firstly: 'with some brand-new "fancy-name" . . . *usually one of adulation*' — while the majority of 'praises' I collected were of 'adulation', some are distinctly critical, and even insulting. Secondly: Bryant's use of the term *isitopo* (modern spelling: *isithopho*) — Doke and Vilakazi (1958: 802) define this term as 'praise-name, term of endearment, pet-word, pet-name', and offer (1959: 203) *isifengqo* (alternatively *isifenqo*, *isifeqo*) as meaning 'nickname, praise-name'. None of my informants knew these terms, and all referred to personal praises as *izibongo*, specifying, where necessary, *izibongo zokushela* [courting-praises], *izibongo zokulwa* [fighting praises], *izibongo zokugiya* [dancing praises], etc. The term of *izibongo* has, incidentally, a range of related meanings, from 'clan-names' or 'surnames', to 'clan-praises', to praises of all kinds, from the one-word 'nickname' of a young Zulu male, to the 'most specialized and complex forms of poetry to be found in Africa',[3] such as the 450 line 'epic' [?] recorded by Stuart as the praises of uShaka kaSenzangakhona (Cope, 1968: 88–117).

The rest of this article is divided into two sections: a categorization of personal praises according to content and reference; and a description of some of the poetic features found in such praises.

* * *

In my categorization of these praises, I have followed the way Zulu men themselves see these, and have added two modern sporting categories. These categories are:

(1) *Izibongo zokushela* — [courting praises]
(2) *Izibongo zokugiya* [dancing praises]
(3) *Izibongo zokulwa* [fighting praises]
(4) Descriptive praises
(5) Football praises
(6) Boxing praises

Courting praises and descriptive praises are found in both urban and rural communities; dancing praises and [stick]-fighting praises occur mainly in rural areas; football and boxing praises occur mainly in urban areas. It should be emphasized that these praises are not only used during such activities as described above, but may be used at any time. If a man has been given a praise referring to his dancing ability, this praise will not only be used to encourage him while dancing, but may be used during courting, stick-fighting, or even during casual conversation.

Courting Praises: These refer to one's love of girls (and vice-versa); ability to attract girls; methods used in courting; and so on. They usually imply a number of girl-friends (although whether this is simultaneously, is not often clear). Central to the concept of courting is the word *isoka*, with no direct translation in English, but with the rough meaning of 'successful lover', 'lover boy', 'Don Juan', 'Romeo', and 'gay young blade'. The word *isoka* itself is often a base for courting praises as in *uSoka-lezintombi* [lover of girls], and *uMasokawoshi*, which, again, is difficult to translate, but could be rendered as 'As for lovers? — Oh my!' or 'Has he girlfriends? — Say no more!'

An *isoka* has (or believes he has) qualities which attract girls to him, as in the following two:

(i) *Unqwaze lwensizwa, isoka lezintombi, umamalisa ulimiintombi imamatheke* [The tall, robust young man, lover of the girls, he softens his speech — and the girl smiles].
(ii) *iBhunu! Umhlophe wensizwa, ilanga elixhopha abesifazane* [White man! [<'Boer'], White young man, the sun which dazzles the women-folk]. A very light skin is often regarded as attractive.

Praises referring to numbers of girlfriends include *uNogwaja ozikhundlakhundla* [Mr Rabbit-who-is-holes-holes], which was explained to me as 'just as a rabbit can find a hole anywhere, so I can get any girl I want.'

Presumably the bearer of the next praise feels that if you have a

number of girl friends at one time, they should be kept apart: *uNcwincwi ephuza kwezokude iziziba* [Honey-sucker which drinks at distant pools]. Note the metaphorical nature of 'honey-sucker' in this context. In contrast to these last two, is the following comparatively lengthy praise: *uGalela besikiza, ikhekhe elidliwa izinjinga, ngoba izichaka ziyalibalekela* [Mr Strike [one] blow [where] others [merely] feint; Cake which is eaten by the rich, because the poor run away from it]. This refers to a young man who is serious about his one girlfriend ['strike-one-blow'] as opposed to others who merely play around ['feint']. He is fussy, too, not just accepting any girl, in the same way as the rich are fussy about their food.

A praise which suggests a courting technique is the one-word praise *Mduze* [<*eduze*: nearby, close by], given to him by his friends in reference to his invariable habit of saying 'come closer, baby' to all his girlfriends.

Dancing praises: Dancing praises refer to any special mannerisms during *ukugiya*,[4] agility of foot movements, and speed of movement. Dancing praises therefore have a lot in common with football praises, where speed and agile foot are the main focus of praise. Bryant has given us the praise *uNovandzi* [Agile-legs] (1949: 434), and I have found *uZindlelazimazombe* [Mr Zigzag-paths]. The high-kicking characteristic of *ukugiya* dancing (and of the Can-can!) is reflected in the often-used image of a hoe, as in *uGeja likaMamphendu* [the hoe of Mrs Turn-it-over], and in *uMagejageja* [(the movement) of many hoes]. Light, delicate movements, as well as speed, can be seen in *uHushamoya* [Mr Rustle-of-the-wind], and frenetic dancing is suggested in *uKhuzuhlanya* [Stop-the madman]. The following praise describes both movement and accoutrements: *uMvemve ongcokazi*, [Red- and white-speckled wagtail]. 'Wagtail' suggests abrupt, jerky movements, and 'ongcokazi' refers to a shield made from the hide of an *ingcokazi* (red and white speckled beast). A particular mannerism is referred to in *Qhude elintam' ende ebona ngale kwentaba* [Rooster with long neck looking over there at the mountain] referring to the habit of sticking one's head well back when dancing, as if looking at a mountain. Anyone who has watched any *ukugiya* will recognise the posture.

Fighting praises: These praises refer to skill and ability in formal stick-fighting competitions; general ability and willingness to fight or defend oneself; and the general qualities of *ubuqhawe*: manliness, fearlessness, enthusiasm and courage. Some of the praises included here are clearly not self-conferred, as they refer to the opposite: timidity and cowardice.

An aggressive attitude towards fighting as well as a clear ability to use a stick is reflected in the following relatively lengthy praise:

uNtandakubukwa! Wayebukisa ngezinye izinsizwa izishaye ngenduku zibe ngozi ngozi zibhaleke amakhanda, kwaze kwa-thiwa ngumabhala ngozipho [Mr Likes-to-be-looked-at! He who shows off in front of other young men and hits them with a stick (until) they become wound-wound with scratches on the head, until it is said it is scratches from a finger-nail]. Compare this with the more succinct *uMpimpiyana* [Little Battle-battle], and *uQathimpi* [Crunch-fight].

Fearsomeness in fighting is suggested in the following three praises:

(i) *uMehlabovu okubheka maqede ushaywe uvalo* [Red (i.e. angry) Eyes which as soon as looked at, you are struck by fear].

(ii) *uBantu bayaziginqa embuba* [People roll around in a confined space]. i.e. there is no escaping this one when he wants to fight.

(iii) *Balekani magwala nali iqhawe* [Run away, cowards, here is a hero].

The common use of an initial metaphor can be seen in the following praise, suggesting a large, well-built youth who will only bother with worthy opponents: *uNdlovu! uMagawula umuthi omkhulu ngoba omncane uyaziwela nje*. [Elephant! Mr Chop-down a big tree because a small one simply falls by itself].

Other praises suggest steadfastness in the face of a threat, as in: *uNgquluzana beyiqhubisa* [Mr Starer-out (until) they carry it (the fight) on]. *uNsimbi kayigobi* [Mr Iron doesn't bend] speaks for itself. One who always meets his opponents at close quarters, and thoroughly defeats them is metaphorically expressed in: *uManqwamana nenja kwafa ikati* [He who meets face to face with a dog and there dies a cat]. Rather more obscure is *uMpisikazi-mudli* [(even) the hyenas cannot eat him].

A fighter with great self-control is described in *uSosha elizikhuzayo* [soldier who commands himself]. Stick-throwing, rather than stick-fighting, is referred to in the praise *uJikijela abhuxeke isigodo esimaholo* [He (who) throws and sticks into the ground (even) a rough-barked pole].

Praises, as I have said above, are not *always* flattering. They may imply criticism, or even be insulting, as in the following, which is clearly not self-conferred: *uGadluthithiza nje, awuliboni yini ikhanda, ufuze ekhaya bonyoko yini? Wagadlela enxenye mfoko MaNene* [Mr Strike-merely-a-confused-blow, do you not see it, the head, that you should resemble (those) at the home of your mothers[5] (i.e. the womenfolk). He struck a blow on one side (i.e. he missed) this (worthless) fellow of Manene (i.e. his mother)]. What one might call a compounded insult, and, if one should fight with him, adding insult to injury. The same kind of inability is referred to, at far less length, in *uNdidiza* [Mr Act-confusedly].

Cowardice is clearly expressed in *uMaqaba ngejubane ngoba kusinda ezakwa Gwala* [Depender-on-speed, because those who run away (escape) are from the house of Mr Coward]. The final praise in this section describes one, who, while not quite going so far as to run away, is clearly less than enthusiastic in his fighting. The significance of the last three words is obscure: *uGadla unogadliso okwevaka, udakane lwani lolu, alukhishwanga inyoni entabeni* [Striker of the blow of a coward, what kind of listless person is this, not being taken out by a bird on the mountain].

Descriptive praises: These are praises which either (commonly) describe the appearance of the bearer (e.g., height, skin colour, flashing eyes, etc.) or (less commonly) describe his personality.

Praises which refer to height include the following: *uMuntomude akaliboni izulu* [Tall person, he doesn't see the sky]; *Yinde lenyoni ayiboni kaZulu* [It is tall, this bird, and doesn't see the sky]; *uJojo* [long, pointed object]; *iSukile lendoda* [he has got up, this man]; and *uPhondo lwendod' ende ebamba izulu* [Horn of a tall man that grasps the sky].

Height that is attractive to girls, which suggests the image of a tree, is referred to in *uMthunzi wokuphumula amatshitshi* [Shade where young maidens rest]. Shortness, rather than tallness is jocularly referred to in *uShort Division isibalo sabantwana* ['Short Division' is the arithmetical problem of young children]. Presumably older children do 'long division'.

References to dark skin are common: *uNod' emnyama* simply means 'dark-skinned man'. Light and dark are contrasted in *uNsizwa emnyama ekhanya ngamazinyo* [dark-skinned youth shining by the teeth]. *uZululiyaduma* [the sky thunders] implies a temper to me, but in the words of the informant: "When the sky starts to thunder, the clouds become black, and then there appears lightning, and they liken him to the clouds". *uSteelwool* refers to a man with a thick beard covering the face.[6] *uMkhaba womfazi omitha amawele* [large stomach of a woman pregnant with twins]. The informant said that whenever this man was drinking with his friends, they would tease him by saying *Mkhabó* [Paunchy], every time a new round was put on the table.

Descriptive praises that refer to character are less common. I have given several under *fighting praises* referring to both courage, aggressiveness and steadfastness, as well as cowardice and timidity. *uJuba* [dove] was given to a man 'because he is merciful'.

Characteristic habits are referred to in *uEnglishman*, a teacher who refused to use Zulu while teaching; and *Impangele ekhala igijima* [guinea-fowl which sings as it runs] for a man who habitually sang as he went around. *uCharlie Chaplin* is the praise of someone who likes making others laugh.

Football praises: Football praises usually (but not always) refer to ability, and performance on the field. With emphasis on speed, and agile footwork, such praises are similar to *giya*-praises. These praises are usually in Zulu, whereas football praises referring to coaching ability, managerial ability, service to one's club, etc., are usually in English.

Examples of the former are: *Shaluza wemfana* [Keep on the move there, boy!]. *Shelela* [slip out of the way]. *uMshini-ozishintshayo* [machine that changes them (feet) about]. This praise is expanded in another version: *uAutomatic! uMshini-ozishintshayo! uMadolo enkonyane*! [Automatic! Machine that changes them about! Knees of the calf!].

Praises (of all kinds) often take the form of an extended metaphor, as in: *uKhozi olumaphiko olucosha ichwane ngokuphazima kweso* [Wingéd hawk that snatches up a chick in the blink of an eye] in reference to his speed at tackling another player and taking the ball away from him.

The following two praises belong to one person. The first, given by his grandfather, refer to general ability and agility, and are used in open context. The second, given by his football friends, refers to specific ability on the soccer field, and they are only used there.

(i) *S'hozi sezulu esethe singabonakala sabangwa ngabakhulu* [Lightning-bolt of the sky, which, as soon as it is seen, draws the attention of the great ones]. The image of the lightning-bolt indicates speed and power, and the image of the great rushing to it (as *izinyanga zezulu* [heaven-herds][7] would rush towards a lightning bolt), underlines his power.

(ii) *uMandize ondizele phezu kwezihlwele zahlokoma, ngobuncweti bobuhlakanipha bakhe* [Flyer who flies above the crowds to their applause, on account of the expertness of his technique]. The image of the bird is like the 'wingéd hawk' mentioned above, and ties in well with the image of the lightning bolt. In both praises he is above other people, i.e. superior.

Praises not so obviously referring to speed and agility (and notice that most are in English), include: *uDoctor Moroka*: 'doctor' in the sense of *inyanga* (one who excels, has power over) the *Moroka* [Swallows] (a football team). *uDirty Wizard* and *uFour-man-power* speak for themselves. *uDinga-baby-put-it-in-the-way*: it is not clear whether Dinga should put his foot in the opponent's way, or the ball in the way of the goal. *uMgedeza* [incessant talker], even on the football field. *uActive Man* refers to the bearer as a referee and a coach, rather than player.

Alleluia Amen! is clearly a praise, although perhaps not in the

sense I have been using the term. It suggests an air of triumph and finality as the ball goes in the goal. *uSikhindi-beSuthu* [Mr Shorts-the-Sothos]: he belonged to a club where *all* members wore shorts both on and off the field. *He*, however, particularly liked playing against, and beating, Sothos.

Boxing praises: Boxing praises are similar to the football praises like 'Dirty-Wizard' and 'Action-man' mentioned above. The only examples I have are all in English (although I am sure Zulu praises must exist), and most consist of two-word phrases. I can do little more than list my examples:

Goat-in-a-gate [jumping around the ring];
Green Cobra [a fast striker];
Sugarboy [?];
Walk Tall;
Four-man-power (cf. above) cf. *Five-Star-Man*;
Happy Boy cf. *Golden Boy*;
Baby-Lux cf. *Baby-Jake*;
Windmill [flailing his arms about?];
Terror [presumably he *is* the terror, rather than *in* terror];
Fighting Prince;
Dancing Shoes;
The Hammer;
Blue Angel;
Young Destroyer;
Skeleton;
Playboy.

* * *

In discussing the poetic features of Zulu personal praises, I will focus on imagery; structure; and wit and humour.

IMAGERY

Finnegan, in her chapter on 'Panegyric', has stated: 'The imagery in this form of poetry provides a striking contrast to the much more straightforward expression in prose. By far the most common form is that of metaphor.' (1970: 133) Cope has said much the same thing, and Gunner (1981) has devoted the whole of her article 'The pool of metaphor' to this aspect of oral poetry. Metaphors used in Zulu praise poetry are commonly based on animals (wild animals and birds, less commonly domestic), and natural phenomena like the sun, wind, storms, lightning, rivers and pools, etc. Let us take these separately in seeing how frequently they occur in Zulu personal praises. Most of my examples have appeared in the various categories given above.

Use of birds as metaphors: The 'hawk that snatches up a chick' has already been given as an example of a football praise. An example of a fighting praise referring to continuing to the bitter end can be seen in *uHeshe! Inyoni edl' amachwane ingashiy' into* [Hawk! A bird which eats chicks, and leaves nothing behind]. The format of this praise is typical: The metaphor is initially presented as a single word, and then extended in the rest of the praise. This format can also be seen in the following praise referring to height: *Inde lentaka, idl' amakhwezikhwezi phezulu* [It is tall, this bird, eating the bright, shining things above]. 'Amakhwezikhwezi' could refer to berries, or could equally refer to stars, adding hyperbole to increase the image of height. *uMzwilili* [canary] refers to a sweet-voiced singer, whereas the praise *Impangele ekhala igijima* [guinea-fowl that sings as it runs about] refers rather to an incessant, non-stop singing. The dancing praises *Qhude elintamo ende* ... and *uMvemve* ... ['rooster' and 'wagtail' respectively] refer to the movements of the dancers as being characteristic of these birds. *uJuba* [dove] indicates quietness and an easy-going nature. The bird is undefined in the football praise beginning *uMandiza* [the flier], but suggests a position of superiority in 'being above the others'. The honeysucker in the courting praise *uNcwincwi ephuza kwezokude iziziba* suggests a courter who flits from flower to flower (girl to girl), just dipping the beak briefly before moving on.

Use of animals: Examples of the metaphorical use of animals amongst the praises I collected include the courting praise *unogwaja ozikhundlakhundla*: the Western concept of the rabbit being a prolific breeder is, as far as I know, not part of Zulu thought patterns; on the other hand, the rabbit is (i) known to have many holes; (ii) is a 'fast mover'; and (iii) appears commonly as the trickster character in Zulu *izinganekwane* [folk-tales]. The use of *Ndlovu* [elephant] in the fighting praise mentioned above indicates a large person. The metaphor is frequently found in *izibongo zamakhosi* [kingly or chiefly praises] to refer to majesty, and in the form *Wena wendlovu*! [You of the elephant!], it is the title of the Zulu King.[8] Snakes can be found in the boxing praise 'green Cobra' mentioned above, and in *uSicholo semamba nkunzi* [Crest of a bull-mamba]: a fearsome person.[9]

Use of natural phenomena: The height of a tree is covertly suggested by 'shade that gives rest' in the courting praise *uMthunzi wokuphumula amatshitshi*, and the movement of the wind in the dancing praise *uHushumoya*. The sky [*izulu*] is referred to both as an indication of height: ... *ubamba izulu* [... he grasps the sky], and of skin colour, as in *uZulu liyaduma* [the sky thunders]. The

hawk is a successful metaphor in indicating 'swift snatching from the sky', but even more swift, more dramatic, is the use of the lightning bolt in the football praise mentioned above. *uMsimbithi* [iron-wood tree] is a descriptive phrase indicative of a generally steadfast character, as is the fighting praise *Insimbi kayigobi* [the iron does not bend] mentioned above.

STRUCTURE

The praises of young men normally consist of a phrase rather than a single word, although a phrase may be encapsulated into a single compound noun, as in the following:[10]

uSokalezintombi < noun *isoka* [lover] + possessive *lezintombi* [or girls];

uZindlelazimazombe < noun *izindlela* [paths] + relative *zimazombe* [zigzag];

uHushamoya < verb *husha* [rustle] + noun *umoya* [wind];

uKhuzuhlanya < verb *khuza* [stop] + noun *uhlanya* [madman];

uMpisikazimudli < noun *impisi* [hyena] + verb *kazimudli* [they do not eat him].

Phrases with more than one word commonly begin with a noun (usually a metaphor) which is extended in some way. Examples are:

uNsimbi kayigobi < noun *insimbi* [iron] + verb *kayigobi* [it does not bend];

uSosha elizikhuzayo < noun *uSosha* [soldier] + relative *elizikhuzayo* [who controls himself];

uPhondo lwendoda ende ebamba izulu < noun *uphondo* [horn] + possessive *lwendoda* [of a man] + adjective *ende* [tall] + relative *ebamba izulu* [who grasps the sky].

Contrast is used effectively in some of these praises, as in *uNsizwa emnyama ekhanya ngamazinyo* [black-skinned young man who shines (whitely) with the teeth].

Cope states of Zulu *izibongo*, that: 'Although imagery is the essence of poetry, its effectiveness is greatly increased by the judicious use of repetition. Repetition also contributes the aesthetic necessity of form, which gives unity and satisfactory completeness to a poem and to the constituent parts of it, such as couplets or triplets or stanzas.' (1968: 39–40)

Cope is referring to *izibongo zamakhosi*, the highly complex and polished praises of kings and chiefs, so we would not expect, for instance, repetition to be used in young men's praises to the extent that it 'gives unity ... to the constituent ... couplets, triplets or stanzas'. Effective use of repetition is, however, found in such praises. The most simple form is re-duplication of stem, as in:

uNogwaja ozikhundlakhundla [Rabbit who-is-holes-holes];

uMagejageja [Mr Hoes-hoes];

uMpimpiyane [Fight-fight + diminutive].

A pithy and humorous reference to a successful courter can be seen in *uGandaganda eMasondosondo abanye* [Mr Pound-pound (i.e. a tractor) being Wheels-wheels the others]. 'Just as a tractor can ride over anything with its huge wheels, so I can get any girl I want.' Repetition may be used in the form of a play on words, as in: *uZulu omnyama obamba izulu* [dark-skinned Zulu who grasps the sky (*izulu*)].

A particular form of repetition found in Zulu is 'parallelism', where an *idea* is repeated, in different words, as in the praises of Jama (Shaka's grandfather):

Obeyalala wangangemifula,
Obeyavuka wangangezintaba.
[Who when he lay down was as long as rivers,
Who when he got up was as big as mountains.]

Parallelism can be seen in the following praise, descriptive of personality: *uZond' abamzondayo, uthand' abamthandayo* [he hates those who hate him, loves those who love him]. Note the repetition of the idea in both halves (parallelism), the repetition of the verb in each half, and the exact repetition of syntax in each half.

The next praise is unusual in several respects. It is a praise descriptive of personality, in two halves, using phonological, morphological and syntactic repetition, but without repetition of meaning: *uManyathela umhlaba sengathi owakhe, uManyanyela umbala ashaye inximfi* [He-who-treads the earth as if it is his, He-who-has-aversion to a mark and goes 'nx' in annoyance]. These two halves might be said to contrast in meaning, with the aggressive arrogance suggested in the first half balanced by the petulant fussiness in the second. Note the 5—3—3—3 syllabic structure in each half; the morphological and phonological similarity of the first word; the similarity between *umhlaba* and *umbala* and the syntactic similarity of (verb + object) at the start of each phrase. These two phrases are also tonally similar. These parallels suggest that the praise was composed either at one time, or that the second half was composed later to form a specific parallel to the first.

WIT AND HUMOUR

Finnegan (1970: 123) has stated that 'some animal praises are more light-hearted and humorous than the solemn panegyrics of prominent people' and the same may be said to be true of personal praises.

I have already noted a 'jocular reference' in the descriptive praise *uShort Division isibalo sabantwana* ['Short Division' is the arithmetic of *young* children]. The allusion in this praise, where the height of the person referred to is compared to an aspect of scholastic study characterized by the term 'short', is similar to two others mentioned above: *Steelwool*, a humorous allusion to the

comparative qualities of the beard and the household cleaning agent; and *uMkhaba . . . amawele* where unrelated stomach sizes are compared.

It seems to me that the nature of humour in these praises is a sharply individual comparison of otherwise unrelated features; for example, when the all-terrain nature of a tractor is related to successful courtship in the praise *uGandaganda emasondosondo abanye*. This kind of witty comparison is clearly seen in the dancing praise *uMendokanesi* [the marriage of a nurse]. This praise indicates speed in *ukugiya*, and the informant explains it as follows: Nurses make extremely popular wives, both because of their earning potential, and their knowledge of hygiene, first-aid, child care and dietetics; consequently they marry as soon as they qualify — 'I myself dance as fast as that'.

The same kind of allusion to a feature of Zulu social patterns can be seen in the courting praise *uBhasikidi* [Basket], which, like the praises *Unogwaja . . .* and *Ncwincwi . . .* above, refer to a youth who has many girl-friends, and takes none seriously. '*UBhasikidi*' is the head-word of the jocular expression *Nongenabhasikidi angaya emakhethe* [even he without a basket can go to market], which itself refers to the well-known saying referring to the custom of *ilobola: Nongenankomo angashela izintombi* [even he without a cow (to *lobola*) can court a girl]. This, incidentally, is the only example that I have ever found amongst the Zulu of what Finnegan describes as a 'proverb name' (1970: 473) when the head-word of a well-known proverb is given as a personal name, for example, in the Nyoro name 'Bitamazire' from the proverb *nkuto z'ebigogo bitamazire* ['The sandals which were made of banana fibre were inadequate', i.e. small children cannot be expected to survive long].

A final example of the light-hearted nature of some personal praises can be seen in the praises of the owner of a car with the registration number 'NU 2': *uNawe Futhi* [and you, too!].

* * *

Although the personal praises of young Zulu men are by no means as complex and polished as the praises of royals and chiefs, they still share a number of poetic features. They are the oral poetry of the common people as opposed to that of the professional bards; they have a lively, earthy nature which reflects the characteristics of those who compose them; and they are still very much a feature of modern Zulu society. They merit far greater study than this introductory article.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This article has been adapted and developed from pp. 60 to 74 of my unpublished MA Thesis (UNP: 1987).
2. African Languages Association of Southern Africa.
3. See opening quotation from Finnegan.
4. Dancing by an individual, usually simulating fighting, in order to display one's speed and agility to one's peers.
5. *unyoko* is an insulting term for 'thy mother'.
6. cf. *uMahlekehlathini* [he who laughs in the bush], the characteristically used term for any heavily-bearded man.
7. See Krige, 1965: 310 et seq.
8. cf. *uNdlovukatsi* (Great She-Elephant): title of the Swazi queen-mother.
9. cf. one of Shaka's praises: *uNdlondlo*: the crested bull-mamba.
10. For further information on compounding procedures in Zulu see Koopman (1984): 'Zulu Compound Nouns: Towards a Preliminary Analysis'.

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WRITING IN THE MARGIN: SHIVA NAIPAUL'S 'A HOT COUNTRY'

by J.U. JACOBS

'Politics unmasks the metaphysics of private life, private life unmasks the metaphysics of politics.' *Milan Kundera*

The histories of the emergent countries of what has been called the Third World have given rise in recent years to a number of works that have their origin in the travel journal. These small nations of the world are defined by Milan Kundera as ones whose very existence may be put in question at any moment. They can disappear and they know it: 'If you are a small nation . . . you do not make history. You are always the object of history.'[1] Recording the precarious nationhood of the countries of the Third World are works such as Patrick Marnham's *Dispatches from Africa*, Ryszard Kapuściński's analyses of revolutionary social conditions in Ethiopia and Iran in *The Emperor* and *Shah of Shahs*, V.S. Naipaul's range of travel books from *The Middle Passage* and *India: A Wounded Civilization* to *The Killings in Trinidad*, Graham Greene's *Getting to Know the General* (the story of his involvement in Panama) and most recently Salman Rushdie's *The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey*.

In the Introduction to his travel book *North of South: An African Journey* (1978),[2] Shiva Naipaul explains his motivation for the work as arising out of his own concerns — even obsessions — with what terms like 'liberation', 'revolution', and 'socialism' actually mean to the people who experience them:

> Certain questions arise. How wide is the gap between the rhetoric of liberation and its day-to-day manifestations? How much cynicism is there? How much apathy? How much sheer incomprehension? How much fantasy? What kind of Marxism is possible in Africa? The answers to such questions cannot, I believe, be found in the abstract speculations of theorists and professional revolutionaries — who often simply don't *see* the world in which they live. The answers, I feel, can be found only by experiencing the heat and dust, so to speak, of the countries themselves. Do the people actually care? What are they like as individuals? What is their level of knowledge? Should we despair? Or should we continue to hope? (pp. 13–14)

The form he envisages for his undertaking is not a straightforward travel book or a current affairs book or a sociological treatise, but '(almost) a kind of novel, a montage of people, of places, of encounters seen and interpreted in the light of the questions . . . outlined above.' Although the answers to these questions are not

quite ready-made, they are dishearteningly predictable. Naipaul's narrative stance is that of the emotionally uncommitted but nevertheless interested outsider; in recounting his experiences in Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia he achieves a certain neutrality in his record of ideological fervour in league with administrative ineptitude, apathy tied to cynicism, and idealism made sham either by ignorance or alternatively by a pragmatism born out of more immediate human needs. *North of South* is ultimately, however, a documentation of failure, and it is with a growing despondency that the reader anticipates the conclusion inevitably reached at the end of the last section — which is prophetically entitled 'Into the Void' — that colonization has created the colonized just as it created the colonizer:

> Black and white deserved each other. Neither was worth the shedding of a single tear: both were rotten to the core. Each had been destroyed by contact with the other — though each had been destroyed in his own way. Black Africa, with its gimcrack tyrannies, its Field Marshals and Emperors, its false philosophies, its fabricated statehoods, returns to Europe its own features, but grotesquely caricatured — as they might be seen in one of those distorting funhouse mirrors. As for Western civilization, that had aborted almost from the beginning. Civilized man, it seems, can no more cope with prolonged exposure to the primitive than the primitive can cope with prolonged exposure to him. Everywhere, in the New World, in the South Seas, in Australia, his lusts, released from constraint, gained the upper hand. He too became a caricature of all that he claimed to represent. In European literature, the figure of Conrad's Kurtz stands as the supreme memorial to the civilized man's vulnerability to the call of the wild. Kurtz, who had written so eloquently and with such easy conviction of "Progress" ("By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded") and of the White Man as Benevolent Deity, had given way, by the end, to the mad visions born of the craving for total power. " . . . the wilderness had found him out early, and had taken on him a terrible vengeance . . . " His degenerate suburban heirs, ruling to the South, still speak of Civilization and its Values. But their bullets defend only a system of servitude and plunder. Hopeless, doomed continent! Only lies flourished here. Africa was swaddled in lies — the lies of an aborted European civilization; the lies of liberation. Nothing but lies. (pp. 347–8)

There is more than a note of contempt in Naipual's tone here, certainly something of world-weariness, little pity and none of the confidence that Steiner refers to in his essay *In Bluebeard's Castle* of Western culture in its own self-evident superiority, its conviction that it embodies within itself almost the sum total of intellectual and moral power. Naipaul's is no Western posture of moral self-indictment; he speaks from a position outside of the new Africa but

one which is nevertheless not securely centred in the West. This voice reveals a need both to assert its analysis of Africa as a defrauded continent and also to dissociate itself from a fraudulent Western civilization. His are the narrative tones of a writer operating from a tacit marginality.

That Shiva Naipaul's perception of modern African history is neither an isolated one nor perhaps even invalid, is borne out by V.S. Naipaul's more contrivedly fictional analysis of the Congo in his novel *A Bend in the River* (1979).[3] The works share an element of jaundice in their view of changing Africa. The old Roman saying *ex Africa semper aliquid novi* echoes ironically throughout *A Bend in the River*: the only constant factor in the various views of Africa offered in the novel is the image of Africa as a junkpile, a dump for human litter and commercial garbage, a repository for intellectual refuse, discarded schemes and jerry-built nationalisms. The history of Africa continues, the book argues, like a column of ants on the march, regardless of stragglers who might lose their way: 'all the time the great busyness continues' (p. 93), with the individual having to devise his own strategy for survival by reducing the image of Africa to himself in total identification with the cultural struggle, or by isolating himself to the extent of solipsism, or by maintaining a deliberate but vulnerable neutrality. That none of these strategies can guarantee salvation is implied in the image of helplessness in a world of expected but unavoidable chaos with which the novel ends: a passenger barge has snapped loose from the steamer towing it and is adrift on the Congo River, its passengers caught in the gunfire of civil war, and the steamer's searchlight having sliced through the dark only briefly to show up the thousands of flying insects in its white light. The change taking place in Africa, V.S. Naipaul suggests through his barely disguised fictional construct, is from decay to confusion.

There is a portentous ambiguity in the title of Shiva Naipaul's 1983 book, *A Hot Country*,[4] that announces it as another novel about the Third World (as opposed to a novel emanating from the Third World). The 'hot' country of the title, Cuyama, 'a tract of land perched uneasily on the sloping shoulder of South America, a degree or two north of the Equator [for Cuyama read Guyana, and for its capital Charlestown read Georgetown — Naipaul has not even bothered to camouflage the colours of the Guyanese national flag] . . . a tract of land on the fringe of an Empire whose interests had always lain elsewhere' (p. 1) is offered as a representative Third World republic. If all of Europe had gone into the making of Conrad's Kurtz, all of Europe has certainly gone into the making of its mongrel satellite Cuyama. *A Hot Country* begins conspicuously with a history lesson, the dedicated Cuyamese teacher rehearsing the tawdry if typical facts of the history of colonial Cuyama into a

myth of nationhood for his young pupils. After Sir Walter Raleigh had first entered this wilderness, the country was ruled successively by the Spaniards, the Dutch who introduced slaves from Africa, the French, and the British who abolished slavery but brought in labourers from other countries, Hindustanis from India, Chinese, Javanese and Portuguese: 'So it was that all the people we call Cuyamese came together, creating a blend of many peoples, many religions, many cultures. All different and still all Cuyamese.' (p. 5) Cuyama may have its poinsettias, bougainvillaea and hibiscus in common with the other newly created nations of the Third World, but it can at least claim its own distinctive National Flower, National Bird, National Tree and National Hero. The latest stage in the evolution of this nation of 'a million people trapped in the sun-stunned vacuum separating ocean from jungle' is a declaration of a People's Plebiscite by its President in an undisguised attempt to nullify the democratic constitution, bequeathed by the British to the Cuyamese at independence as their blueprint for a Western-style future; and to set himself up as totalitarian head of a country whose synthetic nationhood acquires an ironically personal interpretation in his slogan of 'One Man, One People, One Struggle.'

That Cuyama should be a political construct is fictionally legitimate, but that it should serve merely to illustrate conclusions arrived at in connection with questions posed elsewhere and answered in earlier books about the Third World, is less defensible. A novel does not assert anything, Milan Kundera maintains; a novel searches and poses questions.[5] However, *A Hot Country* is virtually formulaic in its analysis of the metaphysics of this small country whose history is a by-product of the West. The tacitly marginal stance of *North of South* has become an explicit narrative attitude that is painstakingly projected onto his material by Naipaul in *A Hot Country*. Marginal man has been translated from social psychology into fiction, and marginality has become both a theme as well as a perspective in imaginative writing about marginal societies. Naipaul applies his grid with great skill but the relentlessness with which he does this, leaves one finally with the sterility of a *roman à thèse*, or worse still, with a dubious impression of cynicism. One would want something more generous of the novel than a clinical and reductive account of the lives of irrelevant people in an irrelevant country.

Not only does Cuyama perch on the edge of the South American continent, but what it contains of civilization clings to the coastal fringe of the country. Europe is as remote culturally and physically from the capital Charlestown as is the Interior of Cuyama with its Bush Folk. Charlestown epitomizes the marginality of the entire country: by design a colonial town, it is losing its European character as it reverts to the chaos from which it was originally

claimed. Nothing is ever repaired or even replaced; whatever begins to crumble is allowed to go on crumbling. Decay is the only recognizable law. It is as if the inhabitants do not merely have no use for beauty and order but are hostile to their very existence.

The inexorable descent into chaos that seems to be an inherent part of the Third World vision is presented in *A Hot Country* by an overwhelming impression of deterioration, from the clutter of copybooks and broken sticks of chalk on the schoolmaster's desk to the irregular water and electricity supply, from the disused bandstand and rejected colonial statues in the weed-choked Botanical Gardens with its crumbling paths to the blackened wall of the Anglican church. Central Charlestown is full of social derelicts, its suburbs are rundown, and the squalid Hindustani area a case study in neglect: 'Only the dogs baring their teeth in mindless fury had mastered the art of responding to this celebration of human futility clamped down between fields and forest.' (p. 192) The once-handsome colonial mansions are being allowed to fall into decay, their gardens overgrown and their verandas invaded by unpruned trees and shrubs. Even the new suburb, created in such a burst of optimism and barely twenty years old, is decaying. Vacated in haste by their panic-stricken owners the houses are falling into ruin, several of them having been occupied by squatters who have migrated into Charlestown from the surrounding hills. Safe from eviction, these new householders live among the pothole-cratered lanes and weed-choked gardens in the midst of drifts of litter piling up in the gutters. Cuyama's only historic monument, the fort, is also crumbling and its out-buildings are roofless. Nor is this decay only a reluctance or inability to maintain reminders of colonialism; the squalor extends also to the new monuments to Cuyamese independence. And at the heart of Cuyamese darkness, its Inner Station, the network of congested streets and lanes around the Market, Naipaul makes us most aware of its corruption:

> There was an abiding miasma of putrefaction hanging over the locality. The blending odours of rank fish, of rotting vegetables and fruit, of blood, of decomposing offal, of stale sweat, fused into a nauseous fog. This miasma not only floated in the air but seemed to ooze out of the asphalt and brick; to infect every surface. One had to walk with care: a permanent slick lubricated the pavements. In the stagnant heat of mid-afternoon, the dirt, the stench, the clamour of horns and bells and voices, became almost unbearable. (p. 169)

This putrefaction has a twofold function in the novel. It is a symbol of the political corruption in Cuyama which has 'blossomed into a transcendence of its own' (p. 59) with banditry, cynicism, and lies having become a way of life. And for Dina Mallingham St Pierre it

not only constitutes the chaos in which she lives, but is a constant reminder of the chaos out of which she has been formed.

Dina Mallingham, of Hindustani-Portuguese extraction, with her degree in English Literature from the University of Cuyama and an imploded intelligence, and her husband Aubrey St Pierre, scion of an old colonial family, with his compulsion to expiate the sins of his slave-owning forefathers, are the central figures in Naipaul's study of individuals in crisis in a society in crisis. Naipaul's meticulously developed fictional argument demonstrates the truth that politics unmasks the metaphysics of private life and private life unmasks the metaphysics of politics. *A Hot Country* deals with the plight of characters who have become marginalized within their own minority culture which has itself been thrust aside in a small country whose history, given its correct perspective, actually occurs on the outer edges of the mainstream of world events. Aubrey recollects his initial sense of the momentousness of their being forced to leave the family mansion: 'We were leaving that big, old house not because we wanted to but because we had to. The St Pierres — former owners of slaves and vast estates — were *finished* and there was nothing that could be done about it.' (p. 140) Later he modifies his perspective to 'a vision of sorts' (p. 144), a vision of their isolation, their ignorance and their unfounded arrogance. There is nothing, he realises, in the dismal family record either to be proud of or to be mourned. For the first time he sees the St Pierres as others must have seen them, and in so doing perceives the unreality of their lives. Worse than refugees, they are corpses, 'washed up and stranded by the tides of history.'

Aubrey's liberalism combined with his philanthropic impulses make him marginal in this community, just as his conviction of having a mission in life to be an exemplar and teacher of the Cuyamese to compensate for the privilege he had enjoyed from birth, set him apart from his fellow students while he was still at university in England. The image of himself as a 'holy fool' which he accepts in good faith, is appropriate in a way which he lacks the intelligence fully to realize. He is in fact a pedantic bore, given to self-improvement and earnest platitudes about 'universal values'. He is a failed novelist and failed editor of a small journal, *Unchained*. He claims the company of young artists and intellectuals without being himself truly creative, and his bookstore, the Aurora (motto: 'Books To Feed The Mind And Gladden The Soul') is redundant in Cuyama. His letters of concern and protest to *The Times* about the dismaying political developments in Cuyama are absorbed as minor off-stage noises into the larger turmoil of world events. And excluded by his antecedents from an insider's understanding of the crude realities of the fragile new nation, he is a naïf in the midst of cynical self-

seeking. Towards the end of the novel, he confides to his wife his sense of the untidiness and insubstantiality of his existence — a recognition that his life has always been peripheral and that his fate is inseparable from Cuyama's drift toward chaos:

> 'We go abroad and see how other people live. We study at their universities, we read their books, we admire their paintings and their fine buildings, we walk in their parks. Then we return home and discover that, in terms of what we've experienced, we're barely human. We discover that we've done nothing worthy of interest, don't know how to do anything and, perhaps, don't even want to do anything.' (pp. 149–50)

Whatever urge it was that made ancient civilizations take to the disciplines of settled agriculture, build cities and develop a culture, led them to discovering the seeds of their humanity. But in Cuyama, Aubrey concludes, they have not yet made that discovery; and because the seeds of their humanity lie unfertilized, they remain ineducable. Unreflecting creatures of appetite, they exist from day to day in a frenzy of self-regard, able at best only to explain away their failures and refusing to recognize their futility.

Dina has always felt that whereas her husband's agony is essentially cerebral, hers is visceral: Cuyama runs in her blood, its sterility and pain have hurt and deformed her. Dina is the psychological centre of the novel, the 'stunned vacuum' at its core. She is tormented by nightmarish visions of her own extinction; she is experienced by her husband as an absence in their marriage; she is estranged from her infant daughter to whom she refers as 'the child'; she is alienated from her domestic help, Selma; and she exists in a state of passive detachment from Aubrey's friends. While still a child, her mind had 'ballooned with vacancy', and when as an adult she was engulfed with a formless terror — a feeling that her little path in life had come to an end — she married Aubrey. As his assistant in the bookstore she is given at least some definition between the clacking of his typewriter in the back room and the drunken hum from the Serenity Bar opposite. Dina's strongest emotions are her feelings of dread and futility which she understands in terms of her being part of a society that is settling into its own reality: 'The real horror was the endless sinking, the nightmarish reaching out for contact with the bedrock that would arrest their slow death by drowning — and not finding anything there.' (p. 63) She is as remote from the general hysterical exodus from Cuyama, the scramble for foreign visas and the smuggling of valuables out of the country, as she is from the decision of her only friend, Aubrey's brassy cousin Beatrice, to carry a handgun for protection after she and her architect husband Ralph have been

shaken off by the Cuyamese benefactors to whom they had professionally leeched themselves.

Naipaul's voice can be heard even more clearly through Dina than in Aubrey's self-analysis. 'I live in [the Third World] — that's my fate', she says to Aubrey's journalist friend, Alex Richer. Her psychology is the psychology of Cuyama; her mind is inseparable from the town in which she has spent her life:

> Looking out at its derelict perspectives, it seemed to her that she was looking out at no more than an extension of herself. She and the city were one. When she ventured out into it, it was like venturing into an inalienable part of herself. What she saw, what she heard, what she felt, held no revelations for her. All its perspectives were well-trodden pathways through her brain. (p. 176)

The listless drama of Dina's mental deterioration *is* the drama of the gradual dissolution of civilization in Cuyama, its fabricated nationhood simply an extension of her own fabricated identity: 'I can't imagine what it's like to have slave-owning ancestors [she says to her husband]. I come out of darkness, out of blankness. I have no past.' (p. 44) Dina is as synthetic a construct as the state of Cuyama. Her Hindustani grandfather had converted to Christianity and Anglicized his name of Mahalingam to Mallingham. The price paid by Dina's father and his family for this voluntary deracination was to become peripheral to his native Hindustani as well as to his adoptive British culture. In the rhetorical intensity of Dina's reflections on Lawrence's analysis of the dark races and their gods, one hears the voice of Naipaul expounding his thesis about the dilemma of marginalization: 'Gods ought to exude out of the pores like sweat. They had to well up from the inside. They could not be borrowed from others or imposed by others. Such gods were no good at all. They had no magic, no potency. Borrowed gods erased the soul and left you with nothing you could call your own. It was the most terrible form of robbery.' (p. 104)

Dina's blankness stems from the absence of gods identifiably her own. She has no claim on any divinity. Her Christianity is nominal; she has never experienced the Christian god as a living presence within her and her attempts at prayer have been futile, her invocations petering out in an arid silence. The gods of her father's Hindustani ancestors are equally dead to her. Her formlessness and lack of geometry, she understands, result from her father's having divested himself of everything that he could unreservedly lay claim to. Together with his name he lost his religion and his identity: the transition from what he thought of as Hindustani superstition and backwardness to English culture amounted finally to nothing more than the exchange of one kind of defeat for another. Civilization in the wide as well as the narrower sense has passed them by, and Dina

has grown up without allegiance to anything, caught only in the interface of cultures. Marginality and the consequent feeling of insubstantiality are what identifies her as Cuyamese. As she says to Alex Richer, 'I'm nothing but a mongrelized ghost of a human being living in a mongrelized ghost of a country. There's nothing holding me together. Every day I have to reinvent myself.' (p. 160)

Given Naipaul's thesis in *A Hot Country*, the novel can have no momentum other than its drift into personal and public chaos. The characters become more self-consciously analytical towards the end and Naipaul himself more intrusive in further elaborating his argument that enforced marginalization is the consequence of an option to be marginal as a way of life. He can only offer more perspectives in the person of Alex Richer, the international journalist who specializes in angles on the Third World. There is even a helpless kind of self-awareness in Naipaul's projection of himself as a professional non-participant in Alex Richer: a career expatriate. Richer has no real answer to Dina's demand: 'What do you want from us? ... Why do you come all this way merely to observe our misery, to feed upon it? Why can't you and your kind leave us alone?' (pp. 159–60) The crises of the inhabitants of this little country in crisis have only served to dramatise Richer's own sense of insubstantiality. He is, by his own admission to Dina, a dilettante, a moral butterfly with the habit of travel laid like a curse upon him in his somnambulist excursions to the 'hot countries' of the world.

That there are no solutions is expressed by the response Dina receives from the old Cuyamese fortune-teller Madame whom she again consults in the midst of her personal confusion at the end: 'How can I help you? Tell me.' The thesis about a colonial culture defrauded by a fraudulent European culture which concluded *North to South*, is reiterated at the end of *A Hot Country* in Dina's realization that her 'English' father's tacit acceptance of the colour bar in colonial Cuyama, his admission of his own marginality, is a symptom of the chaos of Cuyama: 'If the white people wanted to be by themselves, how did that harm me? Let them be by themselves! I wasn't going to run after anybody begging to be admitted to the human race.' (p. 183) Cuyama, according to Naipaul, is the Third World discovering its marginality:

> Their hurt and rage was the hurt and rage of the despised and rejected; the hurt and rage of those who had suddenly found out that they had been left outside and were naked, defenceless and redundant. It was shocking news. They banged furiously on every door that was shut against them, seeking to be let in. They had been fooled and cheated. But fooled and cheated out of what? Out of the knowledge of their condition. That, in the end, was the true oppression. They had been duped. (p. 184)

The ultimate horror, Naipaul despairingly suggests, is the legacy of Kurtz: pausing to look into itself, the Third World has discovered only a void.

* * *

'To unlock a society,' Salman Rushdie's narrator advises in *Shame*, 'look at its untranslatable words.'[6] There is, he says, an opaque, worldwide set of concepts which refuse to travel across linguistic frontiers. For instance, *takallouf* is such a term without which his fictional Pakistan must remain impenetrable. Likewise Czechoslovakia, Kundera maintains in *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, cannot be understood without a precise grasp of the meaning of the word *litost*, 'a Czech word with no exact translation into any other language.' (p. 121) These passwords to a nation's culture form part of the baggage of the emigré writer, giving the weight of inside knowledge to his fictional re-creation of the home country from which he is exiled.

Shiva Naipaul, too, writes from the perspective of what Rushdie in *Shame* calls a 'translated man', a migrant who has been 'borne across' (p. 29) and come unstuck from his native land. Such people have in fact come unstuck from more than land, Rushdie says; they are in danger of floating 'upwards from history, from memory, from Time.' (p. 87) Given the emptiness of their luggage, they fantasise and build imaginary countries which they try to impose on the ones that exist. Their palimpsest fictional countries function, like themselves, 'at a slight angle to reality' (p. 29). This off-centring is necessitated by their being forced to reflect that world in fragments of broken mirrors and having to reconcile themselves to the inevitability of the missing bits.

Such awareness of being a person apart, of having been severed from cultural roots, becomes in Kundera's fictional world a burden of buoyancy, and in Rushdie's a vertiginous sense of living at the edge of the world, of hovering dizzily near the Rim of Things. It is this heightened awareness of peripherality that informs the looks of blank incomprehension offered and reciprocated by the main characters in *A Hot Country* and that is articulated on behalf of his author by Alex Richer, the Third World specialist whose life, he feels, has been eaten up by perspectives. Naipaul's Cuyama is a palimpsest country like those created by Rushdie and Kundera, but unlike them he can offer no untranslatable word with which to provide access to the society he so painstakingly dissects. Arguably, in terms of his analysis the Cuyamese *have* no untranslatable concepts inalienably their own; but to grant this would also mean having to accept *A Hot Country* as merely an elaborate rhetorical exercise.

The true purpose of Naipaul's Cuyama may finally be found in

Rushdie's 'hot country' to the north: Nicaragua. Having defined in *Shame* the persona of the peripheral man in whose life story other persons have been the principal actors, Rushdie introduces himself in *The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey*[7] as a traveller who does not have his origins in the countries of the West, but recognising in Nicaragua sights that are familiar to his eyes trained in India and Pakistan, he documents the struggle of a people trying hard to construct for themselves a new identity and a new reality under threat from external pressure — a people with history roaring in their ears. 'The idea of home had never stopped being a problem for me,' he admits. (p. 86) 'Home' is the imaginative base of the emigré writer, the construction of fiction an act of self-definition. For the expatriate West Indian Naipaul, Cuyama is his hot country of the self.

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NOTES

Page references in brackets in the text are to the editions cited.

1. Milan Kundera, *Granta* 11 (1984) p. 27.
2. Shiva Naipaul, *North of South: An African Journey* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).
3. V.S. Naipaul, *A Bend in the River* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980).
4. Shiva Naipaul, *A Hot Country* (London: Abacus, 1984).
5. Milan Kundera, 'Afterword', *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983).
6. Salman Rushdie, *Shame* (London: Picador, 1984) p. 104.
7. Salman Rushdie, *The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey* (London: Picador, 1987).

CHRISTA WOLF'S 'KASSANDRA': MYTH OR ANTI-MYTH?

by JÜRGEN LIESKOUNIG

Christa Wolf is without question one of the most eminent female German writers today. Although she lives in East Germany, her fame is perhaps even greater in the West, as she has always published simultaneously in West and East Germany. Privileged by East German standards, she has been able to travel in the West; for a period in the past she was considered to be loyal to the regime. However, in recent years this has changed, especially since Christa Wolf has turned increasingly towards feminist writing (*weibliches Schreiben*, as she herself calls it).

When the tale *Kassandra* was published in 1983 simultaneously in East and West Germany, it instantly became a best-seller.[1] At the same time she published her Frankfurt 'poetic lectures' in which she describes the process of the shaping of her book from March 1980 to the end of 1981. There are several factors which would account for the impact which *Kassandra* had at the time of its publication. In 1983, the book seemed highly appropriate and urgent, and certainly corresponded to the *Zeitgeist* of that period, even more in the West than in the East. The feminist movement was still very strong in West Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and also, from 1980 to the end of 1982, West Germany experienced the so-called missile-stationing hysteria.[2] In West Germany this was the time of the peace movement, a powerful coalition of pacifists from all political corners combining with the ecologists and their 'anti-nuke' movement; both the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran churches participated massively in the numerous peace demonstrations.

The mood in those years was highly emotional. Many Germans gave way to fears of *Götterdämmerung*, of imminent catastrophe and total destruction. The spirit of the time was gloomy, doom reigned, and even such an optimistic writer as Günther Grass joined the prophets of destruction. The time was ripe for Cassandras of all kinds, proclaiming the ultimate failure of the ideas of the Enlightenment—the failure of rationality, technology and progress.

Before discussing Christa Wolf's fictional work, it seems appropriate to summarise the contents of her 'book-about-the book', which she called *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Kassandra* (*Preconditions of a Story: Kassandra*).[3] This consists of the text of four lectures which she delivered to students of the Frankfurt University in 1982.

The first lecture records Christa Wolf's initial encounters with the literary figure of Cassandra. In March of 1980, the author is about to

embark on her long-awaited journey to Greece when she reads Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and is instantly captivated by the figure of Cassandra. Right at the start of this intense relationship, Christa Wolf writes 'I seem to know more about her than I can prove.'[4] A conscious 'recognition' between the two seems to be taking place, a determined identification and a conscious familiarity with the ancient prophetess.

Christa Wolf's feminist stance is evident from the beginning: for instance, she criticises Aeschylus' treatment of Cassandra, claiming that he has not realised her obvious potential and deeper meaning. Christa Wolf then embarks on her voyage to Greece, falling into a long tradition of Germanic Hellenophilia and longing for Classical Greece. Perhaps without realising it, she joins the throng of German poets and thinkers who, like Winckelmann and Goethe, were set on 'searching the land of the Greeks with their soul.'

During Wolf's travels on the Greek mainland, the outline of her inner Cassandra becomes more and more defined. Christa Wolf declares her strong solidarity with Cassandra and from the increasing invasion of Wolf's thinking by the figure of Cassandra, there emerges an image of the seer viewed from a feminist perspective. This at times appears in a light that is somewhat different from that suggested by Christa Wolf's very serious tone and her personal involvement: for instance, Cassandra is in all seriousness identified as 'the first professional woman in literature'![5]

The second lecture continues the travelogue. Christa Wolf, accompanied by her husband, is on her way to Crete and meets two American feminists who are in turn looking for the female (matriarchal) origins of the oldest occidental culture. During her travels on Crete, and subsequently in mainland Greece, Christa Wolf records the 'construction' within herself of her own Troy, which is utopian and non-patriarchal. This 'inner Troy', as she calls it, becomes 'a model for some kind of Utopia.'[6] Christa Wolf herself is at times quite conscious of her own wishful thinking, of her projections, but she is determined to carry on her search for the lost femininity that could provide the alternative to what she perceives as the masculine 'reality' with its male way of thinking. When she eventually arrives at Mycenae she undergoes a kind of key-experience, almost an epiphany, facing the Lion Gate: Wolf has a vision of Cassandra standing on that very spot just before she meets her end.

The third lecture is in the form of a working diary that Christa Wolf kept between May 1980 and August 1981 in her country house at Meteln in East Germany. This diary reflects the historical background of the period: regular reports on television and in the press about the nuclear armaments race, the looming nuclear

holocaust and the absurd 'balance of terror' between the superpowers, that made many West Europeans (particularly the majority of Germans) extremely pessimistic about the prospect of a livable future.

Christa Wolf as a writer wants to depict what she thinks her contemporaries see, but cannot believe: imminent and total destruction, if there is not a radical change. She suggests that since the time of Troy, male thinking has led the world — or at least Europe — into a *cul-de-sac*. It is on this foundation that Christa Wolf builds her identification and kinship with Cassandra and her Troy. The writer is convinced that 'in Troy, the people were no different from us.'[7]

In this working diary, Christa Wolf at one point states her intentions concerning Cassandra quite clearly, 'My endeavour with the Cassandra-figure: "repatriation" from the myth into her own social and historical coordinates.'[8] Christa Wolf's anti-mythological intentions are asserted here explicitly, and most German literary critics and scholars were to pick this up repeatedly. The 'repatriation' Wolf mentions here means to her quite clearly a 'bringing home'; that is, Wolf intends to make the myth understandable, transparent to rationality; she desires to make it 'humane', in the sense of 'relevant to humanity'. At the same time she intends to 'repossess' or 're-occupy' the past through the 're-directing' or rewriting of the myth.[9]

Christa Wolf's intended 'repatriation' of the myth into rationality, into an imagined myth-free realm of socio-historically determined 'reality', seems to be not unproblematic. She does not, for instance, take into account the complex mediated history of a myth's reception.[10] She also reveals a rather undialectical way of thinking that is difficult to reconcile with a writer and intellectual who still affirms her Marxist and socialist belief.

Regarding her position within feminist writing, she states in her diary that for biological and historical reasons, women experience a different reality from men,[11] and thus she explains the causes of feminist writing. As a woman writer, what she wants is to describe this other reality by means of 'poetic force and imagination',[12] for, as Christa Wolf says, the existence of women so far has been unrealistic. Her concept of this 'other' reality is a truly alternative one — peaceful, female-oriented, which is to say anti-heroic and mundane. As Wolf becomes more and more involved, the Cassandra-figure takes on flesh as an outsider who withdraws from the world of males, from her family and the palace at Troy, striving for autonomy.[13]

Wolf's fourth lecture consists of a letter to a female writer-friend. In it she discusses the matriarchal 'prehistory' of the Greek gods and goddesses, and speculates on the matriarchal origins of some of the

oldest myths.[14] Christa Wolf postulates a female-oriented, matriarchal origin for all culture and cults, but suggests that around the time of Homer the cults were 'patriarchised' — consider for instance Apollo, who pushed out goddesses and their priestesses. For Wolf, woman was either gradually excluded as prophetess, priestess and poetess or she was dehumanised into an object. Wolf reiterates her intriguing idea about occidental thinking: she strongly believes that it would have been different (and consequently so would our world) had the women been permitted to participate in the shaping of occidental thought. Occasionally Wolf's rather Germanic seriousness and sense of commitment lead her dangerously close to the comic: Sappho for example emerges as an independent, free-lance, professional working woman.

Turning now to Christa Wolf's story *Kassandra*, the form is one continuous interior monologue. Cassandra, while waiting outside the Lion Gate at Mycenae, tells herself her own story, facing the certain death that she has long foretold. The tale is designed as a process of *anamnesis* in which Cassandra takes stock of her life and tries, in the face of death, to 'take possession' of her biography; to transmute her existence retrospectively into a self-determined, non-alienated model, so that she becomes at least in her final hours the subject (that is, the maker) of her own history.[15]

In *Kassandra*, three major elements may be identified as the essential components of Wolf's revaluation of the myth: her portrayals respectively of Cassandra, of Troy and the Trojans before the war, and of the Greek enemy camp.

Christa Wolf radically reinterprets her central character, revealing Cassandra's development from childhood as the daughter of a king (queen?), through the priestess and seer, to the woman in love and a kind of 'Green', or alternative drop-out. Her life and biography may be summed up and simplified as one of radical emancipation, taking her from the initial *emancipatio* from the *paterfamilias*, through her self-liberation as a woman and priestess (who is still a privileged part of the 'system' of the royal palace), to the ultimate liberation from Aeneas, the man she loves but whom she is not prepared to follow after the fall of Troy because he 'will soon have to be a hero.'[16] As Cassandra asserts, 'a hero I cannot love'[17] since for her this heroism resembles the heroism of the victorious Greeks and must necessarily lead to death and destruction. Christa Wolf tries to give Cassandra's death a meaning, making it appear a conscious and self-determined decision. This amounts to a rather heavy-handed attempt to 'salvage' Cassandra from her negativity and death-wish, and it turns her into a 'positive' feminist-conscious tragic figure.

We follow Wolf's Cassandra as she reflects on her life that has led her from the corridors of power in the paternal palace (a power

eventually corrupted, affecting everyone, including herself) to what seems to be the only viable alternative to a male-dominated world of killing and dying: life with the uncomplex women of the ordinary people, a life-style that exists outside the palace, outside the beleaguered city. This alternative and essentially 'humane' and unassailed life is characterised by female solidarity; by living, singing and working together in the caves of Mount Ida, worshipping the old goddess of the earth, Cybele.

Cassandra's liberation process leads her to provocative insights into the male world: ' . . . men are self-centred children', she says, 'they are all afraid of pain.'[18] As the almost inevitable consequence of Cassandra's 're-mythologisation', she who throughout her self-recorded life is determined to conquer her feelings through *thinking* (as distinct from the male *reasoning*), arrives finally at the point where she *wants* Troy to fall. For Cassandra realises that the Trojans have become indistinguishable from their enemies — in the course and through the dynamics of the war they have taken over the same heroic-tragic, destructive and murderous principles in order to beat the enemy. In short, in the attempt to be victorious, the Trojans become like their Greek enemies. This however does not present a 'livable alternative' to Wolf's Cassandra.

There are other, more questionable, traits in Cassandra: there is an underlying 'lust' for self-destruction that seems to contradict her search for a 'humane', peaceful and sane life. Wolf's Cassandra seems secretly to triumph at the thought of total and final destruction. At the same time the prophetess is quite explicit in her belief that she sees through everything, unmasks everyone (including herself), and is aware of all the contradictions that others as well as herself have to live with. 'Now there was embedded within me, and even in all the women of Troy, the contradiction that we had to hate Troy whose victory we desired.'[19]

War to Wolf-Cassandra represents *the* male occupation; it is utterly non-female. Whether this kind of absolutist simplification in any way furthers the radical change in thinking that Christa Wolf so much desires, remains in doubt. Consequently Cassandra in her increasingly militant, feminist rebellion arrives retrospectively at the conclusion that the men on *both* sides, Greeks and Trojans alike, have been united against the women of Troy. Not surprisingly, then, in the final years of the war, Cassandra attempts to renounce all connections with the world of men, including her family. Instead, she and the other like-minded women worship Cybele; they weave, they make pottery, they harvest fruits, and in general live a simple and impoverished life, experiencing one another's physicality: in a word, they 'sensitivise' themselves.

All this indeed leads to the social and historical coordinates into which Christa Wolf intended to repatriate Cassandra and her myth,

with the small but significant modification that the reader is in fact presented with Christa Wolf's *own* socio-historical coordinates and *her* reality. This kind of alternative life corresponds more or less exactly with the prevailing *Zeitgeist* of the late seventies and early eighties. In those years we find all the ingredients of the New Sensitivity, the New Physicality, the feminist emancipation movement, the alternative 'muesli-and-seed' generation with chunky, hand-knitted sweaters, and the 'Green' movement — with all the attendant myths of dropping out and alternative living that were rife in West Germany at that time.

Christa Wolf's Cassandra is a contemporary woman, even if she seems to represent the proto-'Green' movement that, according to the book, was started by women in the ancient city of Troy. Wolf's Cassandra-figure corresponds almost fatally to the 'headwoman' of an intellectually inclined and poetically sensitive, alternative *Frauenhaus* such as existed in West Berlin by the hundred, in about 1980.

The second major component in Christa Wolf's revaluation of the myth is Troy and the Trojans as they were before the war. They represent, for Cassandra, the 'humane' counter-world to the heroics of the Greeks (that is in itself a myth, of course). In the course of the war a metamorphosis takes place. Troy becomes identical with the enemy for the war, according to Cassandra, deformed the men in a dehumanising process. The war grows to become a (mythical) monster that effectively makes the Trojans 'dead' before the actual fall of the city, to the extent that they even hope for the end — an ancient death-wish syndrome?

Helen whose abduction conventionally caused the whole war and Troy's destruction, according to the de-mythologising intentions of Wolf-Cassandra has never set foot in Troy, and in fact becomes a kind of substitutional myth for the Trojans.[20] 'In Helen, whom we invented, we defended everything that we did not possess any more.'[21] By extension, Paris is painted as an infantile macho-type who craves prestige to an excessive degree. The only acceptable (in the sense of positively portrayed) Trojans are Aeneas and Anchises. The latter incidentally appears quite unintentionally comical as the *Übervater* of all the alternative and 'Green' rebels, who argues with amazingly Brechtian logic. In her version of Aeneas, Cassandra's beloved who is almost too good to be true, Christa Wolf steers dangerously close to a type of bitter-sweet love story.

The final component which is the depiction of the enemy camp of the Greeks, Wolf-Cassandra unmasks and demythologises perhaps most radically of all. Here her target is, of course, *the* (male) heroic epic of all times, the *Iliad*. The Greek heroes appear without exception weak, infantile, cruel and cowardly. Cassandra singles

out Achilles and Agamemnon in her denunciation. The latter is portrayed with some fine feminist psychology as a pathetic weakling who has serious problems of impotence, for which he compensates by being particularly cruel in battle. To Cassandra, Agamemnon appears as the idiot compared with Clytemnestra whom she views as the true sovereign, an independent and emancipated woman (and a professional one at that!). Cassandra sympathises with her — and applauds her slaughtering of Agamemnon, as a fair revenge for his butchering of her daughter Iphigenia in the name of sacrifice. Achilles is also dealt with mercilessly by Cassandra, being introduced in the book as 'Achilles the animal';[22] and hated by her more than anyone else because he embodies the male combination of lust and murder, of destructive barbarism and inhumanity. To Wolf's Cassandra, Achilles is a homosexual who has relations with women only as an alibi; he is a butcher with no finer feelings.

At the same time Cassandra realises that all of the Trojans, including herself, harbour 'an Achilles within'.[23] It appears that Wolf-Cassandra is determined to destroy the Achilles-myth above all others as the most influential and far-reaching male heroic myth. Her anti-heroic, anti-tragic perspective is very consciously perceived and clearly defined. On the whole, the Greeks represent the 'moderns', the 'enlightened' and efficient ones to whom the (male-dominated) future belongs. They are the determined and thorough ones, the brutal, successful and inhuman victors — and they are all men.

Returning to the point of departure of Christa Wolf's claim to anti-mythological writing, one comes to perhaps the most fundamental conclusion that she effectively replaces ancient myths with other myths. If one takes, for example, her notion of a feminist counter-world in the sense of a non-heroic 'earth-culture' (as practised in her book by the women who worship Cybele), does the Utopian concept of a redeeming, more 'humane' and unheroic alternative world not belong to the stock of well-known myths? And what of the belief in the healing powers of female thinking that would counter the present, seemingly desperate situation? However true and however necessary, surely this must inevitably imply a kind of unhistorical regression that approaches dangerously close to a substitute religion.

For Cassandra, the livable alternative to the world of the palace and the world of men and war, exists in the world of mountains, caves and forests. It is the simple, natural life that is characterised by the transition from the world of tragedy to the world of what Wolf calls the 'burlesque'.[24] By this she means a peaceful, 'humane', complete and ordinary kind of world where people do not take themselves tragically seriously, as happens in the male-dominated world of heroes and war and its unavoidable self-alienation. All

this, too, is a well-used myth in our century that proclaimed the impossibility of tragedy and the tragic hero in the face of a mass-society with increasingly Orwellian characteristics.[25]

Christa Wolf's belief that the *naming* of dangers in itself might be able to work some kind of magic, reveals a romantic belief in the powers of poetic language which is in turn another myth. Further myths emerge in the book, one of the most common in our times being the one about the end of all myths — the myth of the end of the world, the myth of catastrophe that has its roots in the negative myth of the failure of the Enlightenment, the failing of belief in the power of rational thinking and all its consequences. This belief in the end-of-the-world-through-man's-own-doing — that is, the believing religiously in the infallibility of rationality — is perhaps a particular German favourite. The apocalypse is the only remaining 'story' that can still be told and this, of course, constitutes another myth, the 'final' one perhaps. A myth can be counteracted only by another myth — it can, however, be replaced by another, more successful, myth.

Thus one might say that Christa Wolf, far from demythologising Cassandra and her context, is rather engaged in rewriting old myths and re-directing their complex history of reception. Whether her version will eventually replace the ancient version seems doubtful in a world where the voice of Cassandra has been reduced to computer-printouts whose matter-of-fact horror-prophecies we consume with the daily newspaper.

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NOTES

This paper was originally presented as a paper at the 17th Biennial Conference of the South African Classical Association, Stellenbosch, January 1987.

1. C. Wolf, *Kassandra* (Luchterhand, 1983).
2. This arose when the N.A.T.O. countries had decided to station a whole range of new-generation nuclear missiles in Western Europe, mostly in West Germany, to counter the threat of new Soviet missiles. The advance warning time in the case of a nuclear attack had been effectively reduced.
3. C. Wolf, *Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Kassandra* (Luchterhand, 1983).
4. *Voraussetzungen*, 13.
5. *Voraussetzungen*, 38.
6. *Voraussetzungen*, 83.
7. *Voraussetzungen*, 95.
8. *Voraussetzungen*, 111.
9. See also M. Eliade, *Myth and Meaning* (Harper & Row, 1963), 136.
10. See for instance H. Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* (Suhrkamp, 1979).
11. Wolf, *Voraussetzungen*, 114.
12. *Voraussetzungen*, 115ff.
13. *Voraussetzungen*, 118.
14. Christa Wolf takes as the primary source for her investigations into ancient Greece the Marxist classicist, George Thomson; and for mythology, to a lesser degree, the letters exchanged by Thomas Mann and Karl Kerenyi.

15. See also Eliade, 136.
16. Wolf, *Kassandra*, 156.
17. *Kassandra*.
18. *Kassandra*, 37.
19. *Kassandra*, 90.
20. Wolf follows the versions of Euripides (*Helen*, *Electra*) and Apollodorus.
21. Wolf, *Kassandra*, 97.
22. *Kassandra*, 66.
23. *Kassandra*, 135. This concept has its origin in the rather neo-German myth of the 'brother Hitler in us' as part of the painful traumatic and often repressive attempts of the Germans to come to 'livable' terms with the multi-faceted phenomenon of Hitler and his regime.
24. *Kassandra*, 63.
25. Swiss playwright Friedrich Dürrenmatt stated more than twenty years ago that only comedy could effectively come to grips with our kind of society.

A COGNITIVE INFRA-STRUCTURE FOR CHANGE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

by A.P. CRAIG

It is hardly necessary to emphasise the degree to which the people of this land are confronted with a set of socio-political moves for and against change: a socio-political situation which tugs at the very core of individuals' and groups' power to adapt to present circumstances (cf. Bhaskar, 1979 & 1986; Harre & Secord, 1972), and in the process to harness the unknown future (cf. Pascual-Leone & Goodman, 1979). Contained within this process of change are possible moments of (deliberately) destroying and/or preserving past material circumstances, institutions, practices, and the knowledge or ideational network surrounding human praxis. In this paper I ignore the moves against change, in an attempt to cast a psychological framework for understanding some essential conditions for progressive change.

The debate or discourses (cf. Jensen & Harre, 1981) associated with deliberate attempts at transformation usually focus on the social or institutional level of analysis and typically demand some or other form of *political* action. What seems absent from these debates is an investigation of the *cognitive constraints* associated with change. Because 'psychologising' has become the moment at which the force of 'the individual' in a critical emancipatory analysis of 'the society' is negated, we tend to dispense with Psychology together with 'psychologism'. Yet, as even Marx realised (albeit in the beginning of his career), 'Dangerous practical attempts, even those on a large scale, can be answered with cannon, but ideas won by our intelligence, embodied in our outlook, and forged in our conscience, are chains from which we cannot tear ourselves away without breaking our hearts; they are demons we can overcome only by submitting to them'. (McLellan, 1980). It is my contention that an analysis of change which does not address the cognitive constraints associated with change cannot provide an adequate conceptual basis for the deliberate transformation of society; that the process of constructing (or re-constructing) reality rests at some point on both *individual* (mental) and *social* (institutional) 'functional structures' (Pascual-Leone, 1976, p. 110). The point of the present paper is to highlight some necessary conditions for the development of a *cognitive* infra-structure for change in southern Africa. This focus obviously does not negate the social (institutional) level of analysis for change.

* * *

> 'A goal of modern human sciences is to solve the puzzle of the psychological organism, i.e., what is the very active system or organismic functional structures which allows a human to know, to act upon and, sometimes, to change intentionally his environment, perhaps making it more satisfying to him if not to others?' (Pascual-Leone, 1976, p. 110).

Without wishing to enter the debates about either the goal of 'modern human sciences' or different definitions of 'the knowing subject', what I intend with the quotation above is to dislodge the view of the project of Psychology as aimed primarily at the investigation of individual *idiosyncracies*. Clearly, such a body of information (derived, I would argue, from an erroneous reading of Freud merely through his therapeutic endeavour) will be profoundly out of place in a critical analysis of the possibility of societal transformation. However, 'the knowing subject' viewed as an active, purpose-seeking instrument of praxis (from the Piagetian paradigm in cognitive studies) and as the internalised, historical and culturally rooted, social forms, communication, and symbols (from the Vygotskian paradigm in cognitive studies) becomes a legitimate explanatory focus in an analysis of the necessary conditions for change (cf. Piaget, 1977; Pascual-Leone & Goodman, 1979; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch (Ed.), 1985). Phrased differently, as long as we read for 'psychology' an inventory of *a* Joe Soap's 'attitudes', 'motives', 'intentions', 'desires', etc., we negate the explanatory vantage point locked into knowledge of the knowing subject.

In our attempts to investigate '. . . the practical activity of man in all its aspects . . .' (Bottomore & Rubel (Eds), 1956, p. 61) — actual behaviour *and* consciousness — we must of necessity address the 'carrier' of the psyche and ideology, or the knowing subject. In the absence of creating also a psychological level of analysis we may fall prey to a kind of 'sociologism' (albeit in defense against 'psychologism'!). Volosinov (1973) breaks down some crucial dichotomies which underlie our tendency to move from one epistemological evil to another, in the absence of solving the reality *between* such contradictory or conflicting points of departure. Of relevance for our present purposes in his analysis of the relationship between the psyche and ideology: " . . . therefore, *from the standpoint of content, there is no marked division between the psyche and ideology; the difference is one of degree only*". In other words, the psyche as an active, purpose-seeking instrument of praxis, 'filled' with the historical and culturally rooted social forms, communication, and symbols (from a co-ordination between the Piagetian and Vygotskian paradigms in cognitive studies, cf. Craig, 1985), the knowing subject, becomes one level of analysis of the necessary conditions for societal transformation.

* * *

In his theory of the origin and growth of knowledge, Piaget (1977) describes the process of 'equilibration' as '. . . leading from certain states of equilibrium to others, qualitatively different, and passing through multiple "non-balances" and equilibriums' (p. 3). In other words, Piaget invents the theoretical construct, 'equilibration' as an explanatory model for the development of knowledge — it is a model which contains various 'mechanisms' (eg. assimilation and accommodation) and furthermore reflects different forms of '. . . the fundamental interaction of the subject and the object' (p. 9) of knowledge. Central to this model is the concept of 'non-balance' which indicates a conflict between what the subject can do and does know at the moment of interaction with an object of knowledge (people, ideas, events, things, etc.), and what the object demands in terms of its historical constitution.

Piaget comments about non-balances in the cognitive system as follows: 'It is worthwhile to note that however the non-balance arises it produces the driving force of development. Without this, knowledge remains static. But non-balance also plays a release role, since its fecundity is measured by the possibility of surmounting it, in other words, of reaching a higher equilibrium. It is therefore evident that the real source of progress is to be sought in the insufficiency responsible for the conflict and the improvement expressed in the equilibration' (p. 13). The important points for our discussions are, (1) How a non-balance may arise in a system of knowledge, and (2) What may serve as resources for surmounting the conflict.

Before considering these two points in some detail, we must note Piaget's conception of 'knowledge'. We tend to narrow this concept to something like 'individual possession of certain facts and information'. Piaget, however, intends something much broader. For Piaget, the construction of knowledge and/or reality refers to the conscious, goal-directed praxis of people — individually or in groups — which constitutes both a superstructure and consciousness. Moreover, Piaget wrote about Marx's theory of ideology as follows: 'The great merit of Marx is that he made a distinction, in social phenomena, between an effective basis and a superstructure which oscillates between symbolism and an adequate consciousness, in the same sense (and Marx explicitly says this) as psychology is obliged to make a distinction between actual behaviour and consciousness. The social superstructure stands in the same relation to its basis as does individual consciousness to behaviour' (quoted in Bottomore and Rubel, 1965, p. 48). Of importance is that the oscillation between symbolism and an adequate consciousness or the 'non-balances' in the cognitive system both refer to *occasions for change*.

* * *

Whereas Piaget addresses primarily the epistemic subject's potential for logico-mathematical thought (cf. Smith, 1986; Vuyk, 1981), Vygotsky (1978) places his analysis of cognitive constraints in the particular context of actual social relations. Whereas the level of abstraction achieved by Piaget does not require an analysis of '... however the non-balance arises ...', this becomes the point of focus for Vygotsky. In other words, Vygotsky's analysis specifically addresses the social actor, his/her material conditions of existence, the social communication between people, and the social processes underlying cognitive development. In this regard Vygotsky proposes the mediator or cultural guide as the crucial factor in the determination of the kind of cognitive constraints which will result from particular social relations between people in society.

According to Vygotsky, the origins of self-regulatory activities lie in culturally prescribed patterns of control, exercised initially from without by the mediator; gradually the child internalises these outer directed cognitive controls and learns to regulate his/her own behaviour. Vygotsky's empirical focus on 'the adult-child dyad' may be extended to illustrate the theoretical import of his ideas as it relates to any individual or group of people (i.e. system) entering an unfamiliar reality; unfamiliar in the sense of it being the product of another socio-political development trajectory. The 'neophyte' or adapting system will internalise through social communication or transaction the regulation exercised from without or from the mediating agent(s) of the adapted system towards developing its own modes of regulation; modes of regulation which may serve to change the adapting, or adapted, or both systems.

To be more concrete, when 'Black' and 'White' realities, for example, meet in the classroom or marketplace or political arena, each to each will present an unfamiliar reality — unfamiliar not in the sense of being totally different or clearly defined or mutually exclusive, but unfamiliar in the sense that each reality has been constructed within specific material-social-historical-political circumstances; and each to each may serve a mediating function in order to penetrate the hidden meanings behind the taken-for-granted practices, beliefs, and so forth, of each system. But, and this is what makes this society so tragic, if fundamental social communication and transaction is limited and even prohibited, the occasions for adaptation to the unfamiliar are absent or gravely restricted; each system is left opaque to the other — opaque and only superficially approachable or knowable.

The case of African students at 'racially mixed' Universities is a good example of two realities and systems meeting. The African student is mostly left to decipher the hidden meanings of practices, beliefs, and so on for him/herself — and can only meet the other system in this way, coldly and unmediated, which does not elicit the

generative power of transaction. Neither the adapting, nor the adapted, is given the full opportunity to change. Of course some change does occur, even though such a process may be slow, painful, and through trial-and-error responses.

The ability of 'education' to empower people to confront and deal effectively with the unfamiliar (or negatively, to lock people individually or in groups into static class, race, or culture 'states') must not be underestimated — as those who suffer with their lives for their attempts at opening the doors of learning could well attest. However, 'education' involves much more than confronting one ready-made system (eg. a particular conglomeration of information and teachers) with another system (eg. African students as a group at 'racially mixed' Universities) and 'nursing' the victims of this 'meeting'.

* * *

It is hardly surprising that 'education' has become one major battlefield in the struggle for socio-political change in southern Africa. It is not my intention to repeat the debates in this regard nor to offer ready-made answers. Rather it is my aim to consider the process of education in terms of different ways in which unfamiliarity may be confronted; ways which may be more or less capable of allowing people to surmount conflict between the known and the unknown; stated differently, to consider the process of education in terms of creating a cognitive infra-structure for change.

An unfamiliar situation, task, or problem may be confronted without attempting to resolve the unfamiliarity but by attempting to change the situation, task, or problem in order to make it consistent with existing knowledge, practices, and resources. The role of the mediator in this case is directed at obscuring or removing or otherwise minimizing the discrepancies between the situation and the system confronting it. It would seem, for example, that efforts directed at making disciplines 'relevant', and some forms of 'people's education', may be of this kind — not strictly attempts to resolve unfamiliarity but rather to remain on familiar terrain.

An unfamiliar situation may also be confronted by attempting to highlight and resolve the conflict between the demands of the task and the system's understanding of the task. In this case the role of the mediator may be that of presenting the elements of a task in a way which deliberately and explicitly emphasises the discrepancies between the task and its own socio-historical development, and the system's resources for dealing with the task and their socio-historical context. Efforts at 'conscientising' oppressed groups in society often follow this route.

The question as to what may serve as resources for surmounting

the conflict between the familiar and the unfamiliar can now be clarified. Obviously, social conditions may reach a stage of such glaring contradiction that people spontaneously will confront the situation in order to change it. But, and this seems the neglected part of deliberate attempts at transformation, people may need (1) explicit *opportunities* to exercise their natural power to change and be changed (cf. Piaget, 1977); (2) the generative power of *transaction* (cf. Vygotsky, 1978); (3) and most importantly, agent(s) who will serve the *mediating* function between realities. The cultural guide or mediator Vygotsky proposes as the interface between the social and psychological must create the *conditions for conflict* and *the resources for surmounting it*. In this regard, social communication seems to carry the hope for ' . . . movement from one state (ignorance, uncertainty, error) to a qualitatively different state (knowledge, certainty, truth) by means of a process (conversation, debate, dialogue) that is characterised by opposition (contradiction, refutation, negation) and governed by an internal necessity (logic, deduction)' (Tolman, 1983, p. 320). However, to allow the generative power of transaction to unlock the confrontation between different realities we also need to take seriously the continuous and dynamic nature of change; to decide once and for all and all at once does not appear a recipe for progressive and critical cognitive and social change.

* * *

'The call to abandon their illusions about their condition is a call to abandon a condition which requires illusions' (Marx in Bottomore & Rubel, 1956, p. 27) rings as true for a social revolution as for the cognitive revolution Piaget saw as the driving force of development. In directing all efforts at institutional transformation through political action, without attending to the cognitive constraints for change, one may run the risk of creating individuals filled with rhetorical battle cries grafted onto their familiar knowledge but lacking the cognitive means to confront, resolve, and deal effectively with the unfamiliar demands of the new world (which they have helped to bring about but may not be able to benefit from).

'Educators' in their various forms seem to bear the brunt of the collective guilt for both *under-educating* and *not educating* (at all) large groups of people in southern Africa. To add to this 'remedies' which either propose teaching people what they already know or are good at, or propose to (merely) 'assist' the victims of the slow grind between systems, seems unjustifiable.

In this paper I have outlined the basic tenets of a psychological perspective on change in the hope that bringing the knowing subject into prominence may create debate about the necessary conditions

for creating a cognitive infra-structure for change. There is much to suggest that the role of the educator should be viewed in terms of the deliberate creation of (cognitive) conflict (cf. Piaget, 1977), and the provision of resources for surmounting that conflict (cf. Vygotsky, 1978).

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'LITERATURE IN SOUTH AFRICA TODAY'

The Editors
Theoria

We were surprised to see Anton van der Hoven's complaints in *Theoria 69* (June 1987) about our editing of his article 'Planning the Future of English Studies in South Africa: Some Observations', which, as Guest Editors, we selected for inclusion in the special issue 'Literature in South Africa Today' (*Theoria 68*, December, 1986). We are even more surprised that, having accepted Van der Hoven's letter for publication, the regular Editors did not invite us to reply in the same issue. This is the usual procedure when, as in Van der Hoven's case, a letter-writer does not discuss ideas but questions the competence and integrity of particular people.

While we realise that the substance of Van der Hoven's letter must by now have been forgotten by all readers of *Theoria* except Van der Hoven and ourselves, we nevertheless feel that, for the record, we should respond to his charges. He claims, in short, that in modifying certain sections of his article, we have distorted his intention.

As far as stylistic editing is concerned, we attempted to clarify several awkwardnesses of syntax, to eliminate repetition, and to avoid redundancies in what was originally a spoken address — our standard procedure in the case of all the articles.

As far as Van der Hoven's specific complaints about our modifications to his article are concerned, first, we could not leave readers of *Theoria*, not all of whom are students of literature, with Van der Hoven's unspecific use of the term 'practical criticism'. Our explanatory addition that 'little attention was given [by practical criticism] to the shaping codes of context' seems accurately to represent Van der Hoven's argument. His article, after all, supports the view that 'prac. crit.' has tended to regard literary texts not as processes of society or history, but as achieved products, the contextual codes of which are seen to be superseded by notions of 'universal human experience'. Certainly, as Van der Hoven spells out in his letter to *Theoria* (though not in his original article), contemporary cultural preferences do inform such an approach. This is not disputed by our phrasing. We retain the suggestion of the article that the cultural pre-givens of the 'prac. crit.' critic are not formulated as coherent theory, but are felt to be intrinsic to texts as 'life realised in the concrete'. As Van der Hoven intended, his article identifies the tendency of prac. crit. to offer, in teaching practice, a Literature self-evidently replete with 'timeless values'. To indicate that our explanation of the term 'practical criticism' is a fair reflection of what has been the teaching practice in many

English Departments here, we refer readers to texts such as *Poems for Discussion* by A.G. Hooper and C.J.D. Harvey.

Second, Van der Hoven complains that our modification of what to us seemed to be a particularly convoluted paragraph has committed him to a 'defence of literature and literary studies as valid activities *per se*. But the offending words, 'radically alternative views to literature and literary studies as valid activities *per se* have usually revealed little more than different attempts to co-opt that very literature into the service of new but equally circumscribed activities', can hardly be taken to suggest that the author, Van der Hoven, himself regards literary studies as a valid activity *per se*. Rather, the sentence attempts to put concisely the gist of Van der Hoven's argument: that just as prac. crit. approaches had their particular circumscriptions so do the new radical alternatives which, according to his article, are more than ready to co-opt literature to immediate political exigencies.

In preparing 'Literature in South Africa Today' we received the material from the different authors in August and the issue was in the bookshops by December. We did not have time to confer with authors on what we thought were minor editorial amendments; our editing was however shown in the usual way to editorial advisers of *Theoria*. In conclusion, we believe that we acted in good faith and under severe constraints of time in making some aspects of Van der Hoven's article more accessible to the target readership. We do not agree that our editing procedures have in any way distorted the point of his argument.

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Margaret J. Daymond

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There was no deliberate exclusion of the Guest Editors from correspondence. If we had read Dr van der Hoven's letter as one in which he 'questions the competence and integrity of particular people', we would certainly have invited them to reply. — Editors.

INDEX TO THEORIA Nos. 1–70

By M.P. MOBERLY

The first index to *Theoria* was compiled by R.M. McConkey in 1965. When I updated that index in 1979 I abandoned the listing by title in favour of a subject index; economy demanded, then as now, that this be as concise as possible so the reader is referred from there to the full references in the author listing.

The first two issues of *Theoria* carried no numbers but from the third issue a number was assigned to each publication; for convenience those first issues, which appeared in 1947 and 1948, have been numbered 1 and 2 in this index. Since 1957 *Theoria* has appeared twice each year except in 1986 when a third issue, Number 68, was published in December.

One of the difficulties facing an indexer in this country is the multiplicity of terms that have been applied to the various population groups. The contents of *Theoria* 5, 1953, provides a good example: among others there are articles on *Non-European* education, *Bantu* art and *native* reserves. In this index I have used the term *Black* as it is the most widely accepted today although many of the articles entered under this subject heading were written before it came into general use. There is, however, one important exception to this usage which demands explanation. In my introduction to the 1979 index I wrote

> Once the term *Black* had been chosen it would have been correct to enter all material dealing with the education of Blacks under *Blacks — Education*. But this would not have suggested the special nature of the whole concept of 'Bantu Education'. Thus the term *Bantu Education* has been used deliberately to reflect the view, so often expressed by contributors to this journal, that between education and 'Bantu Education' there is a great and shameful divide.

The tragic events of the last few years have only added to the truth of that last comment.

AUTHOR INDEX

SUBJECT INDEX

Numbers refer to individual issues of *Theoria*. Full details of title, year of publication and page number are given in the Author Index.

University of Natal Press
Pietermaritzburg