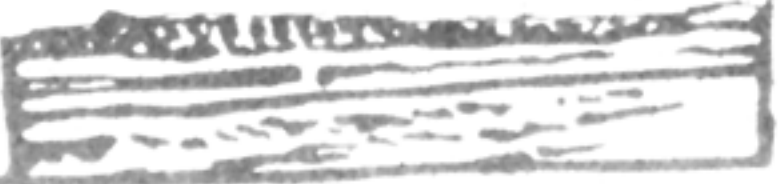


tings, ook by stam-  
treinboets, word deern  
gehuwes.



**KNOW YOUR LAND**  
The Paardekraal Monument  
was erected in 1880 by  
Pres Burgers of the Z.A.R.  
to object to British annexa-  
tion.



**KNOW YOUR LAND**  
Jan Smuts, S. Africa  
Kloof, K.P., sinkoah



Devil's Peak, C.T. built  
by General H. Craig  
after the British occupa-  
tion of the Cape.



**KNOW YOUR LAND**  
Sjeik J. J. de Graaf-  
ombe, Faure, K.P., is  
of the Maleiers ter  
herinnering aan die  
Sjeik gebou. Dit kyk  
uit op die Eersterivier  
by Faure.



**Dead In One's Own Lifetime.**

DEAD IN ONE'S OWN LIFETIME.

- Art in Apartheid Society.

A collection of papers presented at the Nusas Art and Liberation week (1-4 May, 1979, UCT); UCT Arts Students Council lecture Programme, Literature, Culture and Society (1-11 May, 1979) and The State of Art in South Africa conference (16-20 July, 1979, UCT).

The article The Abortion of the Intellect by Kelwyn Sole was to have been presented at The State of Art in South Africa conference. After reviewing the nature of the conference, he withdrew his paper.

Thanks to Sue Myrdal for a mass of typing and to Bill for everything else.

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October, 1979.

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Gerhart

## Preface.

The Nusas Art and Liberation Week and The State of Art in South Africa conference were both generated by a belief that work being produced must be seen and heard beyond the exclusive and mysterious context in which it is produced. In both cases the impetus for the events was initiated and motivated by students who wanted to expose dynamic developments rather than exhibit established artists and writers. The aim of the organisers (certainly in the case of the Nusas Art and Liberation Week) was to investigate and implement efficient ways of goading the audience and participants towards a more critical perception of an environment which conditions them and towards an understanding of their capacity to transform it.

But that environment was seen by some to be imitated, if not bolstered, by the conferences and so they chose to reject them and assume a non-participation line.

If artists do not profess to be socially relevant then they have no responsibility to society but only to themselves and their art. But if they have determined and registered their social relevance, then by virtue of that decision and, by virtue of being an artist, they must produce and perform, expose and articulate their work and make options explicit to their audience: to produce to select soirees means to avoid scrutiny and serves to entrench rather than investigate the 'artistic mystique'.

Impotent rejection can, in one sense, be seen or misinterpreted as a pretext or cover-up for doing no real practical work, and the rejectors reward conformity by perpetuating a mode of producing and performing which they apparently oppose. Thus they reduce any potential for demonstrating a very real opposition and their only form of participation is non-participation.

Decisions and active opposition based on principle can be transformed into sterile inertia when the strength of that opposition is underestimated. Little mass support, lack of thorough organisation and political understanding means that words, outside the sphere of intellectuals, lack concrete applicability and the rejection is passed off as an isolated event having little educative value or results.

Critical consciousness is not passive - it demands an authentic fusion of action and reflection. Thus we have asked the authors of the following papers if we might publish their work believing that this written (as opposed to an audible or visual) collection constitutes an important source of cultural expression in South Africa.

Andy Durbach.

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# Dead In One's Own Lifetime.

Gavin Younge

This paper attempts a survey of the historical and social dimensions of the system of apartheid in so far as they affect visual art in South Africa. I have tried to avoid arguing from an individual-psychological point of view, that is, considering how the individual feels about making art at this time and under these conditions, largely because this approach seems to me to be spurious. I think more is to be gained for an analysis of art in South Africa from an assessment of where artists as a group stand in respect of the fundamental relations of exploitation. The argument proceeds from an outline of those social, political and economic forces which have shaped the major South African cultural and ideological institutions, and goes on to consider what repercussions they hold for the nature of art in South Africa.

To anticipate my argument somewhat, I take it as self-evident that at this particular time, more so, perhaps than at any other time, the ideas which dominate life and thought in South Africa are the ideas of the ruling elite.

I will then take a look at the high degree of congruence between race and class in South Africa, and show how art production reflects at one and the same time, both white, neocolonial and middle-class values. The adoption of these values will be shown to have an impoverishing effect on all art production, and, inevitably, a fatal effect on the culture and art of the oppressed people of South Africa.

In saying this, I am not advancing a conspiracy theory - artists are not directly responsible for this, and are in a rather ineffectual position as regards social change. It is because of this that visual art is relegated to the scrapheap of political servitude - a position which the state recognises and has come to depend upon.

But, in spite of the temptation to withdraw into despair, to feel that although we cannot accept what we see, we are unable to do very much about it, I would like to suggest that there are things which can be done. But, in doing them, we have to go beyond mere relevance. The Cuban film-maker, Humberto Solas, says of political films that they are passive testimonials to the good and the bad, the rich and the poor - nothing more. They don't give people the organisational tools that would enable them to make use of the opportunities offered by political life itself, in order to change society.

I would like to emphasise at this point that this paper does not pretend to be definitive of its subject. In the space and time available I have only been able to map out the contours of art under apartheid and to provide the barest summary of the extensive control that this system wields over all aspects of life in South Africa, and particularly over labour.

Let me begin by looking at this particular conference. It is a conference on the state of art in South Africa, held at a tribal university. Firstly, isn't it rather curious that there is a separate university for each tribe? Secondly, why are there no black visual artists presenting papers or their viewpoints at this conference? I know that black artists were invited. Why didn't they come? What I have heard from artists in Cape Town is that they are suspicious of a conference which is organised by whites solely, that there isn't usually any discussion between the university and 'simple blacks', and that they will feel inferior. There is also the feeling that nothing important would change as a result of the conference. These are harsh criteria. But before we over-react, we must first look at the already overdrawn account between the races in South Africa. It should be clear that despite concrete attempts to deracialise art institutions, the permanence of government race policies is equal to these periodic sorties, perhaps because of that very congruence of race and class which I mentioned earlier. Someone must be laughing somewhere to hear that black artists want to remain separate from white artists.

I want, now, to take a brief look at what has been called, variously, apartheid, separate development, or ethnic pluralism, in an attempt to

assess the impact on South African culture of the wholesale incorporation of blacks, as cheap labour, into the capitalist economy of the white settlers.

The question I am attempting to answer is: how do the particular and, if I may say peculiar characteristics of the South African social formation find expression in the nature of South African art? Crudely put, South African culture has been cut into quarters by a process which has simultaneously hidden three quarters and distorted the fourth. I must, however, emphasize here that the apartheid system is only a very sophisticated articulation of repressive policies which have their roots in the social system of the earliest settler-colonialists. Many of the fundamental elements of the apartheid system, such as migrant labour, job reservation, racial discrimination, residential segregation, and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the whites, were developed well before 1948, albeit in a less systematic and overtly repressive manner.

Although blacks are perhaps not openly discriminated against by the art institutions and the art public, there is nonetheless the impression that, proportionally speaking, they have very little say in the dominant modes of cultural expression in this country. One determining factor here, which has systematically been overlooked by art historians because of its extra-aesthetic dimension, is the structural context of exploitation, both political and economic, of the black artist. It is only after rubbing our noses in the morass of legislation and coercion which surrounds the lives of eighty percent of the population of South Africa, that we can begin to give an account of what shapes and distinguishes the general character of art in this country. I doubt that there are many people here today who seriously consider that there are biologically innate differences between the so-called 'races' as regards what is called 'creative expression'. I also doubt that there are many who clandestinely hold out the hope that this same differential capacity for creative expression is hereditary, and that they as whites with Dutch forbears can draw on the genius of Vermeer and Rembrandt. I will thus leave these interesting but spurious paths unexplored. I am going to seek answers in a different thicket. That they are the right answers is of course still a matter for discussion, both here and in the future.

In the discussion which follows, I am attempting to show what forces propelled the black people of this land into positions of political, economic and cultural inferiority, and what forces and whose interests were, and still are, served by keeping them there.

Prior to 1870, feudal or pre-capitalist modes of production predominated in Southern Africa, and it was only with the discovery of gold that the transition to capitalism was initiated. Even the mines and then manufacturing and large-scale agriculture required a large and cheap labour force. The potential which existed in the indigenous black population to provide labour was hampered by the fact that most black families were either successful peasant-farmers in their own right, or could exist fairly adequately as subsistence farmers, and were unwilling to enter wage employment. Having failed to entice blacks to work for a meagre wage, industrialists and farmers pressed for legislation which would coerce blacks into the labour market, and cut them off from access to their own means of production. The hut and poll taxes were two ways in which this process was stimulated, augmented in the years following Union with the introduction of legislation reducing the area of land available to black farmers.

Eddie Webster has outlined three aspects of this process of forced proletarianisation:

1. The Pass Laws. Introduced in the Transvaal in 1896, they stipulated that so-called natives on the Rand must work for a master, and must wear a metal badge on the arm as proof of being employed. Jennings commented at the time, "We have a most excellent law, namely the pass law, which should enable us to gain complete control over the kaffirs." These laws have merely been refined and extended since that time, including the change in name from pass to 'reference book'.
2. The Glen Grey Act introduced a hut and labour tax. As taxes had to be paid in cash, it was necessary for rural, self-sufficient blacks to sell their labour for part of the year in return for a cash wage. Rhodes was moved to comment that these tax

obligations "removed Natives from that life of sloth and laziness, teaching them the dignity of labour...and making them give some return for our wise and good government."

3. The Land Act of 1913 froze African land ownership to a constant level of thirteen percent of the total land area of the country. This had the effect of suppressing the emerging African peasantry, while it created a pool of cheap labour in the aptly named 'reserves'.

These elements distinguish the creation of the black wage-labour force as being essentially coercive. Taken together, they contributed to the historic process of divorcing the producers from ownership of the means and materials for the provision of the necessities of life. This process should be seen as part of a political assault initiated by the state and ultimately by capital itself, against the working class. This working class was not exclusively black but the possibilities for class action across ethnic barriers were systematically eroded by the concerted actions of the state and capital. With the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924 and job reservation two years later, the division of the working class along racial lines was almost complete. White workers were now incorporated in a complex system of labour arbitration which specifically excluded African workers. It was left to Smuts to prevent any further erosion of white privilege by absorbing unemployed whites into the civil service in terms of his 'civilised labour policy'.

Black workers suddenly found themselves subject to a web of labour regulations emanating from central government, put into motion by rural labour bureaux. The system as it operates at present, in its refined form, requires every African male living in the area of jurisdiction of a labour bureau to register ~~as a workseeker within one month of becoming unemployed.~~ This applies to everyone from the age of sixteen to sixty-five. Upon registration for the first time the worker is arbitrarily allocated to one of seventeen categories of employment. Once allocated, he may not shift into another category. Some labour bureaux are 'zoned' and therefore closed to certain categories of work, thus compelling the workers in those areas to accept employment in the lowest-paid sectors of the economy, such as farming.





any time by the police. Any bargaining power that workers might have had was removed by the 1924 Industrial Conciliation Act. Under this act, which provided for the registration and regulation of trade unions and employers organisations, African men were excluded from the definition of 'employee', and therefore could not belong to registered trade unions. Recently this legislation has been subtly changed, allowing blacks who have urban residence rights to participate in the union system, and excluding migrant workers from any form of collective bargaining whatsoever.

The migrant labour system thus reveals itself to be nothing less than a highly sophisticated means of state intervention to control the movement of black workers, ensuring a constant supply of labour to both high and low wage sectors of the economy, and more generally, curbing any upward trend in wage levels which might be induced by competition between different firms and different sectors.

We must now look at those structural elements which constrain aspiration and frame the individual's world view. This brings us to the system of education. Education plays specific roles in society, one manifest and the other latent. Manifestly, education instills creativity and the ability to reason. Its latent function seems to be very much the opposite. Apart from the universal capitalist need to instil the work ethic in the working class, through the regularity and discipline of the school system, there is also the need, evidenced in 'streaming', to produce labour at particular skill levels. In South Africa, this 'streaming' takes place both within schools, and through the segregation of schools. Access to the higher reaches of the education system is effectively limited to members of the ruling group, and to those blacks who can be relied upon to toe the line and to administer their own affairs in their own areas. The brutal repression of dissidents at black tribal colleges is clear evidence of this. Bantu Education is specifically designed to create a labour-force acquainted with both managerial languages, (for easier control), and having the rudiments of literacy. This serves to provide the captains of industry with a politically powerless labour-force having the minimum necessary levels of skill and competence. The content of education has been cut to fit the user of its products. "Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life, according to the sphere in which they live," or as Verwoerd put it, "My department's policy is that Bantu education should stand with both feet in the reserves. What is the use



of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it(sic) cannot use it in practice?...There is no place for the Native in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour." These views are so blatantly racist that they inspire disbelief, and yet they are utterly consistent with the governments plans to direct and control the process of urbanisation. Kane-Berman, in his book 'Soweto', regards the shortage of urban black schools (by official estimates, forty schools short in Soweto alone), and the high pupil-teacher ratio of 60:1, as not only the result of a scarcity of funds, but as a deliberate back-up to influx control:

The question of art education needs to be taken up here. Turfloop, Ngoye and Fort Hare Universities do not have art departments, nor does the University of the Western Cape. Blacks may not be admitted to any of the seven formal art schools falling under the Colleges of Advanced Technical Education. This leaves us with the 'Indian' university of Durban-Westville, a number of good but informal art schools, and the teacher training colleges, such as Hewan, M.L. Sultan, and Ndoleni. There is, of course, the possibility that aspirant artists will apply to the Minister for admission to one of the white universities' art departments. We at the University of Cape Town have had only one application from an African in four years, and he has had to withdraw for financial reasons. It must be clear to everyone here that the structure of privilege in our society, together with the entrenchment of that privilege through the apartheid system, limits access by blacks to educational resources, to skilled teachers, to materials, and ultimately to ideas. Education in the schools run and controlled by the Bantu Education Dept. is expensive and inferior. Students who do reach the higher levels of secondary education, and there are very few of them, in general tend to follow tertiary education courses which enhance their prospects, both in terms of status and income. Even fewer, therefore, take up art as a career, and this is reinforced by the ethnocentrism of most art schools. The really important centres of creativity for blacks are places like the old Polly Street School, Rorke's Drift, and Ainslie's school. Many artists, Dumile and Duke Ketye among them, simply worked closely with other artists, and had no formal training at all. S.A.S.O. utilised the ideology of black consciousness to undermine the pervasive belief of black inferiority, a belief sustained by exploitation and having its roots in

colonial cultural and economic domination. One front of this attack was on cultural production, but unfortunately the Black Arts Workshop in Durban managed only one exhibition before fragmenting after the detention of the S.A.S.O. leadership. The lack of formal study also characterises black musicians and writers. Jazzmen like Winston Mankunku, Kippie Moeketsi and groups like the Malombos were all products of the culturally self-aware communities of Sophiatown and 'Alex', communities which the state has attempted to, and often succeeded in, destroying. The most virile and potent forms of black artistic production, I feel, are those which have arisen outside of the formal art education system, since they have not been polluted by the ideology of black inferiority, nor have they been eroded by cultural imperialism.

South African art displays a lack of diversity. The political and economic dominance of the white middle class ensures that it is their values and their culture which predominate. Externally imposed patterns of social segregation are completely codified: one can speak of white culture and know what is meant. White culture assumes socio-centrality, it informs with its spirit all taste and custom, and confers a hierarchy on cultural production: high culture and low culture, and of course, mainstream art and 'primitive' art.

In our unique cultural environment with its rich heritage of different traditions, we find that instead of individual artists relationships developing through social interaction, they become transfixed. Almost all members of our society see reality through the ideological spectacles of the ruling class. But, one might ask, what of the white liberal avant-garde? While they certainly do reject aspects of the dominant culture, what they replace them with is often along the lines of liberalising censorship, gaining greater state or provincial subsidies for art, and obtaining royalty rights on the resale and reproduction of their work.

In other words, demanding a bigger slice of the pie. It is only infrequently that the avant-garde artist rejects the status of the ruling ideology. The avant-garde is like the old aristocracy: fiercely anti-bourgeois, and fiercely anti-proletarian. By failing to attack the enemy in the minds of the people, that is the ideological forms of racism, sexism, consumerism, and political elitism, these artists fail to attack

the fundamental forms of economic and state exploitation. The avant-garde espouses the aesthetic of indifference, the belief that art is ten feet off the ground and has no historical connection to its social base.

It is part of the formalist manifesto that art is great when its inputs are drawn from the history of art itself, and that any other input pollutes it.

How do those in power exercise this power over those who reject it? Gramsci answers, and I quote,

" by removing from the arena of political debate, the belief and value systems which keep them in power. Viewed as part of the natural order of things, ideology masquerades as an eternal verity and functions to depoliticise the people it is designed to exploit."

This is what is meant by hegemony - it is a form of social control based on consent. Society recreates itself by ensuring that particular norms and values are internalised by each succeeding generation. Part of this socialisation process depicts culture as neutral, and consequently a large proportion of artists fail to recognise that the alleged neutrality of their work carries with it, in concealed form, a bourgeois political attitude.

Thus the maxim, "Art is above politics" conceals the inclusion of bourgeois politics in art. Cultural hegemony in South Africa, however, requires supplementing by force if artists ignore the silent pressure to conform. The repression of non-conforming art production is swift and effective - this has taken the forms of the banning of student posters and publications critical of the regime, the detention of art students who became involved in the black political campaigns following the 1976/77 uprising, the banning of the work of poets such as Dennis Brutus, and the actions taken against S.A.S.O.'s Black Arts Program. In general, however, direct repression is reserved for black South Africans while hegemonic control serves to limit the questioning of whites, both in art and otherwise.

Another force distorting the nature of art in South Africa is found in other western countries, and that is commercialism. In South Africa it takes on an extra dimension, in that economic exploitation of black

artists is justified on the grounds of the supposed inferiority of African culture (note for instance the derogatory nuance in the term 'primitive'). This leads to the promotion of forms of black art which are orientated towards 'ethnic' and 'tribal' standards. Authentic art forms are pillaged to satisfy consumer needs which have themselves been shaped by white definitions of what black art is. Nhlapo, writing in *Bantu World*, commented that "Msakaza (commercialised indigenous music) is the brainchild of recording companies who saw Africans as a source of income..." Township art is a package offered up for consumption. Possession of a work of art is seen as a necessary adjunct to its aesthetic consumption, which in fact it is not. This is what artists object to in the 'gallery system': their relation to it is utterly reified. The relation between the artist, his or her work, and the consumer loses its social character, and takes on the form of an exchange relation, which renders the art work simply a commodity among other commodities. The artist, however, must enter these relations in order to survive.

The impression that artists create freely for the market is illusory. We create freely within the forms of art production, but these forms themselves are ultimately determined by their production for exchange. Thus those artists whose work is critical and who are lucky enough to actually sell, find that their work is appropriated and consumed by the art public. There is consequently no need for the state to intervene to protect its interests, since the offending work has been sterilised by its cooption. As a demonstration of the primacy of the forms of art production, I can draw an example from my own work. An image of a resettlement camp was used in a silkscreened canvas and exhibited in Johannesburg and Durban. When I re-used this same image in a poster, in 1976, and printed hundreds, it was immediately banned for possession. To invert the cliché, it is form not content!

Commercialism cloaks exploitation, as in the case of Duke Ketye. His limited sales led to his being given a small monthly retainer by the Bantu Development Corporation, who, in return, kept a certain number of his works.

These were marketed in North America extremely successfully, but the profits were retained by the Corporation. This is the face of exploitation within art production. David Copland cites instances in the music industry where the white recording companies were able to capitalise on the major cultural innovators of the township 'swing' bands. Aaron Lerole was paid thirty rand for his hit recording 'Tom Hark', Columbia made R250 000. There were no royalties or copyright protection available to black performers who entered the recording industry. As in all spheres of political and social life, limited rights and exploitation went (and still go) hand in hand in South Africa.

In our society there is a very marked cycle of what are often called 'dominance-dependence' relations. This refers to the disparity of wealth, imbalance of distribution of power and resources, and in the form that affects art, what can be called cultural imperialism. Thus the cultural relations between South Africa on one hand and European and American art movements on the other, constitute one such cycle of dominance dependence. These relations are built historically on the residual influence of colonialism and are bolstered by the peripheral position of South Africa in the international capitalist system. In the visual arts we are very familiar with this cycle and its one-way flow of ideas and information. Within South Africa, too, the patterns of dominance and dependence are re-activated; placing the rural hinterland and provincial towns at the narrowest end of the cultural funnel; the patterns, however, are not only spatial, but exist in the relations between social classes and between ethnic groups as well. The phenomenon of imperialism itself has never been benign - there has always been some degree of imposition. It is this imposition of foreign values, coupled with a keen commercial instinct which has progressively undermined the capacity for authentic indigenous expression. The culture and achievements of the black and brown people of South Africa have been disparaged and swept aside, assisted by apartheid policies which are supposed to protect them, on the basis of trusteeship. A 1948 National Party document claimed that apartheid "is the only basis on which the character and future of each race can be protected and enabled to develop in accordance with its own national character, abilities and destiny."

I wonder what kind of 'protection' is offered to the development of 'national character' by regulations which make it an offence for black married couples to live together. What future is guaranteed to the Xhosa 'nation' after swapping their birthrights in a prosperous country for political rights in a minute, overpopulated and underdeveloped rural former region of that country? What Paulo Freire called the 'culture of silence' is the only cultural form which accompanies such repression and exploitation - a flowering of black cultural expression can only occur when the possibility of liberation is glimpsed, as occurred in Soweto in 1976 and '77. The authentic cultural expression of the oppressed people of South Africa is necessarily political.

The view that the culture of the so-called 'bantu' is expressed in beadwork is the popular form of an attitude that impoverishes all art by narrowing down the range of objects of human enjoyment. This loss of range and intensity constitutes the poverty of expression which alienated art suffers most from. Art could be an essential dimension of human life. Art for the privileged few and degrading mechanical work for the masses, coupled with harshly repressive social control measures, is only the form of the basic contradiction - the cause lies elsewhere. Vasquez, a Marxist, claims that to reduce art to ideology is to diminish its one essential dimension, that is, its creativity. Likewise to see art only as a form of reflecting reality is to forego its fundamental potential as index of the presence of its human creator. An emphasis on art as a mediator of ideology alone conceives of the artist as approaching reality in order to express his or her vision of the world, time and class. Art as a form of cognition, on the other hand, emphasises that the artist is approaching reality in order to reflect it, but without dissociating from ~~the ideological content of the work.~~ Thus the true artist works not by copying a reality, but by creating a new one. Art as theory and practice is involved in a constant process of encounters in which history is first transigned and subsequently transformed. Art theory, properly considered, theorises retrospectively and projectively, thus indicating a change in history. Art practice executes this change. Kafka wrote in his diary in 1921, 'with his other hand he can jot down what he sees among the ruins, for he sees different and more things than the others; after all, he is dead in his own lifetime, and the real survivor.'

# Art and Bondage.

Mick Goldberg

There are many of us who might believe that South African art, that has its implicit origins in the socio-political context of this country, has a comprehensive and functional role in a process of liberating its oppressed peoples.

This dream is perhaps not as real as one might wish it to be.

At the outset, only the naive can presume that 'Art', however eloquent, can put food in the mouths of the hungry, give jobs to the unemployed, put roofs over the heads of the homeless, or provide equality before the Law.

Within that part of society that yearns for political liberation, Art perhaps, in some measure, serves to propagandize, politicize, make one aware of certain situations and provide for some sort of emotional and intellectual release.

However noble this may seem, the possibility must be considered of an illusion being fostered in the process, indulged in by both the artist and the viewing public.

This is the illusion of 'present Bondage and future Liberation', which in its expression provides temporary and superficial relief, mainly for the politically impotent white onlooker, and which now seems to be seducing many blacks as well.

Unless the South African artist, bondage and liberation conscious, or not, and the viewer of his or her work, develops a keen self-understanding, and an understanding of the facts of living in South Africa, then the



blinkers that they have become conditioned to wearing every day, will ensure that their actions and reactions will remain bedded in illusion. The efforts of many artists will remain absurd exercises in deception.

The problem is that we seem to be caught in a contradiction that exists between the awareness of an existence that is often intolerable - and the search for happiness in order to make such an existence bearable.

Within such an existence, the outcome can only be illusory. In other words, a compromise between Reality and the need to feel that we are facilitating change, or between Reality and allaying the guilt of our complicity in the system as it stands at the moment.

On the one hand, the gratification that one might get from the expression of a state of bondage, or the possibility of future liberation, is only permitted in South Africa in a spiritualized or idealized form, provided of course that the Publications Control Board doesn't consider it to be too threatening.

Art provides the spiritualized and idealized vehicle for attaining this gratification. But, on the other hand because enjoyment and pleasure are foreign to Bondage and the Ideal of Liberation with its ascetic atmosphere of constant struggle and discipline, the artist is caught in a no-win situation, where he or she can only guiltily enjoy the results of his or her labours arrived at through a process which in itself is ultimately an exercise in Illusion rather than Reality.

Even the arm-chair idealist can take part in the Bondage and Liberation ~~illusion that Art is able to provide~~

Art has the power to temporarily captivate the viewer, through the process of identifying with the subject of the artists vision.

Within such a process involving the expression of a state of bondage or of the Liberation Ideal, the individual can experience the illusions of beauty



and gracious, and hospitable, suffering, and in all respects, the safety of a comfortable arrangement, furnished with a glass or two of excellent port wine.

Ideally, the viewers of the art should be able to see the problem, but through an appropriate choice, and a lot of art objects.

In South Africa, however, the majority of the artists seem to be engaged in a perpetual cycle of those of artists who, fearing social upheaval or loss of suburban freedom, and, not being able to take the responsibility on their own shoulders, transfer the burden of the impact of the work of the Bondage and Liberation-conscious artists to the viewer, to the status of some potent god-like messenger, and then go home to a good night's sleep like those who sent off the artist to Spadegat.

Ernst Fischer, in his Marxist-oriented exposition on the 'Necessity of Art' says:

"The artist has the responsibility to arouse and stimulate understanding - to emphasize social responsibility. It means that, instead of working in a vacuum, he recognizes that he is ultimately commissioned by society. When he discovers new aspects of Reality, he does not do so for himself alone. He does it for others as well, for a community of those who are discovering what sort of a world they are living in, where they come from, and where they are going. He produces for a Community."

But, like the many viewers being bound by a lack of understanding concerning the relationship between themselves and South Africa, many "Bondage and Liberation-conscious" artists produce work which is seemingly innovative yet in reality proves to be merely self-indulgent.

The "Bondage and Liberation-conscious" public desires to be educated both intellectually and emotionally, and the function of the artist within this context, carries the danger of hackneyed over-simplification and crude propaganda disguised under the pretext of some moral message.

No "Bondage and Liberation-conscious" artist can really be without moral intention, but he or she should be constantly aware of the probability that indulgent self-interest will lead to an alignment with the ranks of voyeurism.

On the other end of the scale, the white and black, South African artist is faced with yet another pot-hole into which all too many stumble, and that is the rampant, sentimental traditionalism that comes about as a result of a clinging to European and tribal cultures.

As Breytenbach put it:-

"One will come across the glorification of simple values and of earthy patriotic atmospheres. Perhaps it is felt that this work gives some mental stability because it talks of eternal truths - consequently we find an art which might not issue from personal experience, but is grafted on to another."

He goes on, referring more specifically to white artists:-

"Culture can become a parody of Europe's cultures in which aesthetics are unrelated to any conceivable facet of reality.

The South African's cultural diet can easily consist of overseas offal, spiced with what can be taken from indigenous cultures.

Apartheid has worked very effectively in the sense of isolating the white man.

He is becoming conditioned by his lack of contact with the South African inside himself.

For the White artist, it results in less contact with Reality.

He cannot dare look into himself. He doesn't wish to be bothered with his responsibilities as a member of the "chosen" and dominating group. He withdraws and longs for the tranquility of a little intellectual house on the plain, by a transparent river.

He will consider himself a new "realist" - an "anti-idealist", saying "This is the way I am. I just want to be an ordinary human being, free to write, or paint, or film as I wish. I don't want to have anything to do with dirty politics." He cannot identify with anyone but his colleagues, any other class but his own white, well-to-do one.

His culture is used to shield him from any experience, or even an approximation of the reality of injustices.

The climate of the creative artist's environment is the system of institutionalised violence.

Although this violence is seldom directed against him, he still has to live in the system. In fact, he is part of the system. The white artist's sensitivity has become blunted towards this violence, - the hangings, the shootings, the "accidents", the beatings, the torture in prisons, pass-laws, migrant-labour, rezoning of areas of residence etc., etc., - or the slower and more insidious violence of poverty and undernourishment and disease, infantile mortality and daily harassment.

This insensitivity is reflected in personal relationships, as well as attempts at creative work.

The artist who closes his eyes to everyday injustice and inhumanity will without fail see less with his writing or painting eyes too.

His work will become barren.

When one prefers not to see certain things. When one chooses not to hear certain voices. When one's tongue is used only to justify this choice, - then the things one turned away from do not cease to exist, the voices do not stop shouting, - but one's eyes become walled, one's ears less sensitive, therefore deaf. One's tongue will make some decadent clacking noises, and one's hands will only be groping over oneself.

Within this climate, one can also find a frenzied experimentalism with the forms of the arts. It is a wallowing in the cerebral and the abstract, avoiding any content that might commit one to a view of human relationship. There is the all-out effort to keep the hands clean. White, South African Culture tends to be descriptive, and not participatory. When one is not able to integrate or participate, - then we bow down before the concepts of "knowledge" and "understanding" of oneself and others, phenomena and objects around one.

This is a desperate effort to orientate oneself within the environment."

The illusion that is propagated by the 'Bondage and Liberation-conscious White South African artist, is deepened by his or her isolation from the life of the black man.

Can white artists reflect the "Black experience" in their work, if their own experience of life stops short of the borders of Soweto, Guguletu, Lenasia or Bonteheuwel, and their knowledge of the "Black experience" consists of what can be gleaned from the media, and the ability to say "Sabona", "Kunjaniwena" and "Amandla"?

They may ridicule shows like "Ipi-n-Tombi", but if they looked closely enough, maybe they would find that they're as much part of that syndrome, as if they had written and produced it themselves.

Nat Nakasa had this to say about White isolation:-

"I believe it is important for our writers to illuminate all aspects of our life from a central point in the social structure. That is, whatever their colour or views may be, they must accept their presence in the country as members of one community. After that they can choose to be what they wish. Without this view of life, the writer will lack closeness to this subject - his work will suffer from the inadequacy of his own insight into the human situations that he handles.

For how else will he achieve a consciousness of his black fellows as human beings like himself, if he sees them as a mysterious mass, a labour-force, or nothing more than semi-human creatures?

The question that arises from this argument is a complicated one. How does the white writer come close enough to his black fellowman?

Much of the African's life is spent outside the law. His moral values are those of an outlaw. Human decency tells him it is right to give shelter to a friend overnight. The law says it is criminal.

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The visitor from Johannesburg is committing an offence if he sleeps in Benoni location without a permit from officialdom. The result is that many people have the experience of regular imprisonment and lose the status of "law-abiding citizens" without much choice.

How is the white writer to penetrate such circumstances in order to gain a

...and the only way to get out of it is to work together...

...the only way to get out of it is to work together...

...the only way to get out of it is to work together...

...the only way to get out of it is to work together...

...the only way to get out of it is to work together...

...the only way to get out of it is to work together...

# Internationalism & Provincialism

STEPHEN WATSON

To speak of the nature of art in South Africa in terms of 'internationalism', 'provincialism', and 'ethnicity', is a pretty phoney way of approaching the subject - as phoney, in fact, as the sound of those long-winded words. For these concepts, and all their practical implications, are by no means the major determinants of the particular characteristics of art in this country. Rather, it is the nature of the State which performs that function, and which bears ultimate responsibility for the nature of art. In other words, one cannot speak of the nature of art without speaking about the nature of the State. And in this summary, I'm going to outline very generally, but briefly, the determining influence that the structure of the South African State has had, and continues to have, upon just one segment of the country's literature, and the way in which this class structure has also been largely responsible for its current characteristics - for both its provincial and international nature. Although I'll be referring to contemporary white English South African literature alone, it's possible that my comments will have a wider reference.

The State's influences on literature in this country are both numerous and obvious. In apartheid and its elaborate, savage ramifications it has not only provided the truly distinctive, ethnic subject for most writing (and I might as well mention that 'ethnicity', despite the development of distinctive argots in English and of indigenous languages, is much more a matter of content than of form), but also, through censorship, it has with great efficiency and diligence obliterated much of the really valuable writing here along with the lives, mainly black of those who have created it. But what I want to emphasise is that the kind provision by the State of a national, and indeed inescapable topic for all writers, as well as a bureau of grey ones to ensure that it is only treated within certain official bounds, is only the most conspicuous crowning feature of its determining and constraining influences. For, more particularly, it is

the very social structure of South Africa itself, consolidated and reinforced by this present State, which has largely determined the manner on which its racism has been treated, and is the absolute determinant of the condition of its literature, and, if I'm not mistaken, of much other South African art as well. And this apartheid structure, that creation of separate kingdoms in each of which, as God knows, there are also many separate mansions as well, has always been the ultimate censor in South Africa and the prime reason, quite apart from questions of individual talent or lack of it, for the general impoverishment of its literature - from the whimperings of much white poetry today right through to the historically essential, yet none the less asinine contents of much contemporary black consciousness verse. By entrenching a societal structure through a monolithic system of controls and yet, at the same time, through the resultant rifts between races making all too easy the perpetuation of an untenable ideology in one of these races, the State has been increasingly responsible for the emergence of a literature about impotence and an impotent literature. Contemporary white English South African writing provides an extremely graphic illustration of this:

But before elaborating upon the fundamental determining effects which the State exercises upon it, a few basic definitions are required. Internationalism can be said to equal Modernism, that generally pessimistic attitude of mind and those techniques in the arts which have been developed primarily for the depiction of that de-humanisation of mankind and all the (by now) modish forms of nihilism, alienation and fragmentation to which this century has made such an unequalled and almost ubiquitous contribution, and to which this State has made such an unexampled one. On the other hand, provincialism, with its connotation of narrowness, refers to that dependent ideology which is found in a people who are geographically displaced from a parent culture or civilization whose superiority they nevertheless continue to acknowledge and ape. In art, provincialism, at the earliest stage, tends to be marked by fairly facile copies of metropolitan originals; at a later stage, by the emergence of a certain home-spun originality, but also by a significant eclecticism as the more creative spirits look around for adequate instruments for portraying their own reality; and, finally, by new forms and contents which are not only unique to that society (its provincialism has been in its own way unique) but which compare in depth and wholeness to the parent society.

A movement away from provincialism through these three general stages has been particularly evident in all the art forms in the U.S.A. Its artistic experimentations have long since surpassed, both in depth and vigour, those which have come out of Britain, a parent society which seems to have retreated further into the insularity of its own provincialism the further this century has progressed. But this movement to an independent uniqueness has been an extremely slow one in White English South African literature - despite the always unique nature of its ethnic subject matter. And in a sense this was inevitable. Being products of British colonialism and imperialism, the earliest English writers here could scarcely escape seeing Africa through Western eyes, and more particularly through the eyes of that nineteenth century English liberal ideology which was their main intellectual heritage. Without this provincial vision, clouded as it often was by the myths of colonialism, these early writers would have had no vision at all. And, at any rate, colonialism always results in provincialism. But what was not so inevitable was that the basic elements of this liberal ideology and the literary forms which are the vehicle for its expression should have remained, with so few exceptions, the prevailing ones in the vision of white English South African writers to this very day - at least not inevitable had the State not been so successful in perpetuating a class structure which has so successfully deluded the majority of these writers into believing that their provincial liberal ideology was still an adequate one for coming to grips with the South African reality when, clearly, it has long since been outdistanced and rendered historically obsolete by this reality.

The State has nourished that delusion and determined white English South African literature by determining the culture from which it comes. And its structure has done so in a fairly simple, yet effective, way. For the particular ~~complexion of English culture is the result of several factors.~~ Most significant among these is that the English have been, almost from the very beginning, members of the ruling bourgeoisie in South Africa and, until relatively recently, have been utterly dependent upon their British connection for their values, their sense of identity, and their culture in the widest sense of that word. Occupying this class position which the State has only entrenched, being able to ignore the challenge of Africa because of it, and never having been forced by history into



a complete cultural reorientation, has meant that a moat of isolation has never ceased to surround them, and that they have been afforded every opportunity of continuing to live here in the torpor of their mercantile concerns and behind the genteel stockade of an undisturbed colonial culture. This stockade seems only to have been reinforced by the Nationalist victory of 1948 and the subsequent creation of a Republic largely for Afrikanerdom alone. And the result of all these factors is that the liberal ideology which has informed the English culture and which is marked above all by a supreme value being attached to the individual, to personal relationships and to personal as opposed to collective virtues, has continued to flourish as well - and this both because of and in spite of the exploitation which has made the nurturing of these values possible, and the ironic fact that, although liberalism has always been the ideology associated with the English, they have in no way warranted this tag as a group.

Now this ideology is absolutely in accord with the class position of the English and the number of relative, if largely spurious, freedoms they inherit from inhabiting it. And it is an ideology which is quite viable within the bourgeois realm of white South Africa. But a very great contradiction occurs, however, when it is seen in the totalitarian context of South Africa as a whole. For while liberalism is so viable and appropriate to the internal structure and workings of white English South Africa, it is in fact totally inappropriate and inadequate when brought to bear on anything outside the insulated and isolated enclave of this vague communion of whites. In effect, by being part of the ruling kingdom and yet remaining hemmed in by their British culture, white English South Africa has been able to preserve the illusion of the efficacy of an ideology which has no viability whatsoever in this country.

And it is this liberalism perpetuated primarily by the class structure of the State, which has been, and is, the determining influence upon white English South African literature, and is the major reason for its protracted provincialism. Its provincialism is, in fact, precisely this liberal ideology. And despite the tenacious hold it continues to have on the minds of many writers because of the tenacity of the class system here, its utter inadequacy can be seen quite clearly in any number of examples of contemporary white English South African literature. In all of these one witnesses time and again an attempt to interpret

a situation in the light of values which, though they may have great reality for the writer because of his privileged class position, have no reality at all when carried outside the protective fence around that position. But perhaps just one example - and there are hosts of them available - will provide sufficient illustration of this. Here are the two concluding stanzas to Guy Butler's poetic response to the Soweto revolt of 1976:

Nowhere  
 Escape; still safe in my skin I turn  
 To sniff, like a thin stray dog, the air.  
 Where, where today do the schoolrooms burn?  
 While deeper than all fear  
 I stumble through no-man's-land, through buffer spaces  
 Hoping at last to reach and learn  
 The ground beneath all feet, all fists, all voices.

In hours like these  
 Let's take no child for granted; let's curse  
 Those treacherous years; grasp at, seize  
 Each small chance for good, tenderly nurse  
 Each just seed, rejoice in smallest traces  
 Of mercy; open our heart, hand, door and purse.  
 Dear law-makers, dear Law-breakers, may it please  
 The Gods to give us the needful insights and graces.

How these flat lines which are such a perfect example of the fact that fine sentiments do not make fine literature, are also a perfect example of how a certain class structure can continue to foster an ideology which is almost laughably inadequate when brought to bear upon the truly significant historical events working through that structure. There is no need to continue with a list of contemporary writers whose work is similarly emasculated from the very start by being informed by an obsolete ideology. All of it merely points to the remarkable ease with which the State has been able (without any recourse to censorship) to defuse a literature and to determine its impotence.

Needless to say, the most accomplished white English writers in this country over the last decade or so, have significantly also been those who have been most aware of the poverty of the provincial, liberal ideology, and have consequently adopted and adapted those models which came out of what was later to be called the Modernist movement, one whose literary experiments began appearing in Europe in the first two decades of this century. And it is worth noting that these experimentations were also largely a response to an historical period in which

the reigning ideology and its traditional artistic forms had been revealed as inadequate in the face of a new and unprecedented reality. But the use of modernist techniques by writers like J.M. Coetzee, Athol Fugard, and increasingly by Nadine Gordimer, has not been simply for the sake of conforming to a certain style which has become internationally fashionable. It has also been made necessary by this State which, over the same last decade, by widening the rift between races to the point of utter estrangement (among other things), has reached new heights in its programme of dehumanizing everyone in South Africa - albeit in ways differing according to your complexion. And modernism being, as I've said, the general artistic movement which has developed those styles through which dehumanization can be most accurately portrayed, has been essential for the adequate treatment by these writers of that alienation, anomie, bewilderment about identity, not to mention angst, which have been some of the consequences of this programme in white South Africa although, obviously, these have taken a far more brutal form in black South Africa. Modernism has been essential for an effective writing about that sense of impotence which has become such a feature of certain sectors of the white world; and generally it has been required for an adequate portrayal of the destructive reality which we inhabit.

When an ideology breaks down, one invariable result is considerable confusion and disarray in the arts. With the liberal ideology no longer being a going concern in South Africa, and yet with the structure of the State still making possible the belief that it is, one has, on the one hand, the confusions of a continued provincialism in literature. But it is a body of work which is impotent and dead from the start since it comes from a dead and impotent tradition. On the other hand, this breakdown has led the three writers mentioned above to a writing which is largely about individual impotence. But unlike those who are still enmeshed in their provincialism and its lame literary forms, they have, each in their own way, managed to create a style which powerfully expresses this impotence. Interestingly enough, the increasing evidence of a Marxist influence in some of their books (particularly Gordimer's) would seem to point a way out of the cul-de-sac which has come about with the death of liberalism in this country. And considering the powerlessness of the individual in the face of the State, a movement by writers in this direction would seem inevitable. It is perhaps the only way out of the present confusion in white

English literature.

In conclusion, then, I hope it is clear from this outline that one cannot discuss the notions of 'provincialism' and 'internationalism' - at least not in contemporary white English South African literature - without talking about the structure of the State as well. But I might add that the fact that this structure should so greatly determine, both directly and indirectly, the nature of so much art here is scarcely a surprising conclusion - at least not when one considers the extent to which it has succeeded in determining just about everything else in South Africa down to this point in time.

# Ideology, the State and South African Film.

Keyan Tomaselli

"What we need in South Africa, is sound films for children for matinees, nice films dealing with animal life, nice films dealing with family life, nice films dealing with heroic deeds."

The Hon J T Kruger, Houses of Parliament, 1970.

"As with White films you shouldn't make the government look bad. There is the Police Act etc... as long as you stay within the laws of the country."

Johan van Rooyen, Igoli Films.

"I think we are all influenced by the Censor Board to a large extent."

Tonie van der Merwe, Bayeta Films.

"... while on the one hand Dr Rhoodie was handing out secret funds for all sorts of projects, he set out to destroy my independently financed project, which was planned to show South Africans aspects of their country they'd never seen."

Sven Persson on his film Land Apart, 1979.

Humanity lives its relations to the world within the confines of ideology. Or, as Althusser expresses it:

Ideology is the 'lived' relation between men and their world, or a reflected form of this unconscious relation... It is distinguished from a science not by its falsity, for it can be coherent and logical (for instance, theology), but by the fact that the practice-social predominates in it over the theoretical..."

~~Ideology functions to reinforce a given relation within a society's conditions of existence and adapts individuals to the tasks that society sets for them. It permeates all aspects of life and represents an objective reality (e.g. 'the right of all population groups to self-determination.')~~ This reality is nourished and reinforced by popular cinema which can be studied in terms of its

consequences for society. Cinema, like other art forms, stands in a double articulation to society. Whereas film genres (Westerns, love stories, gangster movies etc.) are conceived to reflect and reaffirm existing relations within the dominant society, revolutionary or breakaway movies project possible future states which work out the existing ideology to its logical conclusion.

In class society, the function of genre films is to reinforce social roles according to the division of labour. That is, the characters must not see themselves in roles other than those allocated by the social relations of production. Films, whether good or bad, artistic or conventional, emanate from the same social structure of production. They are viewed by the same audience and the images society sees reflected are an index of national consciousness: its fears, values, beliefs, myths, guilt, contradictions and motivations. Film is both a reflection and an expression of society. That is, film as a system of cultural indicators provides a symbolic insight into the value and ideological structures of society.

Film as an ideological product is the result of three interacting determinations:

1. At the most basic level are the ideological preconceptions of the financiers. Producers who are dependent on both government subsidy and private investors are chary of overstepping acceptable limits. Hence only films which reinforce existing ideology are likely to find investment capital. This factor is particularly important in South Africa where few competing sources of finance exist.
2. Despite the constraints of this ideological capital, some producers have, nevertheless, been able to raise finance for breakaway and revolutionary movies (e.g. How Long, Die Kandidaat, Jannie Totsiens, Land Apart, The Guest). At this juncture, producers have to face the problem of distribution and exhibition. Distribution companies are making enough money through the release of safe pictures. They are unwilling to act as crusaders.
3. The ultimate disincentive is the fear of state intervention, police intimidation and censorship. Although relatively few South African films have been banned or censored, the constant fear of restriction leads to the deformation and warping of depictions of social reality.

Against such a background this paper will attempt to study South African film

from two points of view:

1. In films made for Black audiences it will be shown that ideology assumes the function of ensuring class domination. It forces the exploited to accept their conditions of exploitation as natural, moral and inevitable.
2. The reflections seen in white cinema will be shown to be indicative of a disintegrating social structure where the causes for disturbance are implicitly attributed to alien ideologies. In this context, a distorted ideological knowledge will not be explained in terms of a false consciousness, or the will to deceive, but rather in terms of the opaqueness of social realities.

#### A FILM MADE FOR BLACK AUDIENCES

Films aimed specifically at Black audiences may be termed 'Colonial Cinema'. ~~This genre distorts recorded history and culture in terms of the perspectives of the dominant group. The dominated culture is over-ruled as this type of movie transmits back to them the ruling class's own image of that group. This process prevents the development of a cohesive class identity or ideology. It also distorts the image of the imperialist group (be it in a literal or figurative sense) to justify to members of the dominant class the policy of exploitation and to convince the dominated that their rulers are protecting them from their own savagery which is their essential state of mind.~~

Local Black movies appear to be located somewhere between the functions of Colonial Cinema and an indigenous identity which is ideologically filtered to approximate the norms and values of the dominant group. The plots are self-contained within Black society and little interaction between the races occurs as happens in real life. The financing of these films is largely based on capital generated by the Nationalist dominated sector of the South African economy. This in turn regulates the reflection of social relations and works to control the individual consciousness, his attitudes and his conduct in ~~pursuance of his designated duties and conditions of existence.~~ The more educated, sophisticated urban Black describes such movies as humiliating, childish and "belonging to the day of our Great Grandfathers." According to social scientist Ted Matsetla:



To a certain extent these films are realistic in so far as the ordinary Black man's mentality has been conditioned. They insidiously place the Black man in a dominantly acceptable socio-economic setting. Instead of brainwashing Department of Information pictures stuffed with Afrikaner ideology in their bid to oppress the Black man, these films portray an indigenous brand of sorts. The brutality of urbanization is not dealt with honestly... These films are subtle custodians of the back to the country move envisaged in homeland policy. Like the government, these pictures continually stress that city life is foreign to the Black way of life...<sup>2)</sup>

The White man's version of the Black man's cinema is predicated upon the twin premises of profit and ideology. In the context of South African social relations, these two elements articulate together to reinforce the dominance of the ruling class. This perception of reality does not come from the desire of the ruling class to deceive, but rather from the objective character of the economic system as such.

#### B. WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN CINEMA

This deformation of reality is effected through relations of production, class political relations, and the control of ideological materials. At the level of appearance, film is not an obviously ideological material. At a deeper level, which becomes apparent when a critical analysis is applied, the ideological content is clear.

Most South African films, particularly those in Afrikaans, have at the level of appearance, a key plot structure: the insider versus the outsider. This theme is typically found in the conflict-love type story where one of the lovers (usually the girl) dies an unnatural death, usually at the hand of the jilted party. This cultural indicator, that of the maimed heroine, indicates some sort of trauma ~~about the status of the boeredogter~~. The outsider is generally perceived to be a threat to Afrikanerdom, an urbanized Afrikaner or some other form of Uitlander. This recurring element has its roots in history. In 1942, Dr Hans Rompel, writing on what was desirable for a Volks-film warned film makers of the evils of the city or outgroup:

The fact that these qualities are not always typical of the city Afrikaner



changes nothing, because at the root of the matter the urban Afrikaner is not radically different from his rural fellow citizens; the (not always congenial) special qualities of the urban Afrikaner form a very small layer of the solid inherited Boere-character.<sup>3)</sup>

Like the Russian film maker, Sergei Eisenstein, Rompel saw film as subservient to the interests of cultural identity. But unlike Eisenstein who set out to create and manipulate an ideological perspective, Rompel claims that the Afrikaner reflects his true ideological perspective in film. He sees Afrikaans film as a bond for social cohesion to ensure that Afrikaners play their designated roles and act out their functions as members of the same social class within the web of social relations. The result is a concise cinematic formula. In order to achieve this the group must remain closed and differing ideologies must be subordinated to that 'of the will of God' and the ruling class. Hence the preoccupation with the outsider in Afrikaans film. The ideal social structure must be seen to be entrenched.

Some Afrikaans directors, however, notably Jans Rautenbach and Elmo de Witt, have made films which conflict with the sentiment expressed by Rompel. Debbie, for example, follows the traditional plot and systematically exposes the consequences of the urban-rural value clash, the social dangers of premarital sex, and the problems confronting the unmarried mother. Debbie's rural parents disown her, while the urban parents of the city-reared boyfriend even explore the possibility of aborting Debbie's unborn baby to prevent their son from having to marry her. The film continually stresses the social and psychological dangers inherent in this kind of situation. The director, however, perhaps aware of his digression from established and articulated Afrikaner norms, muffles the ending in an open and ambiguous cop-out.

Reaction to Debbie took the form of age restrictions, threats of banning, etc. mostly at the whim of the Publications Control Board. The recriminations were not unlike those heard some years later by Mario Schiess in response to his film Onwettige Huwelik. Jannie Kruger, then chairman of the PCB is reported to have said to Schiess, 'Hoe durf jy 'n film Onwettige Huwelik noem hier in Suid-Afrika? Hier in Suid-Afrika is daar nie iets soos 'n onwettige huwelik nie.' Debbie and other movies (e.g. Wild Season, In Beeld vir Jeannie, etc.)

digressed slightly from the acceptable systems of attitudes, social behaviour and social representations.

Film was to be seen rather on an ideological level with its own content, its own laws of operation and development. As ideological material, film had to abide by conventions and serve the interests and self-image of the dominant group. For example, the unspoiled mythical image of the rural Afrikaner remains paramount in Dit Was Aand en Dit Was More. Kom Tot Rus raises the issue of the ancestral farm, an intrinsic component of the South African cultural heritage; or 'the farm' as it is spoken of colloquially. Farming symbolizes the roots of the insider; the opposite of the outcast urban mentality. This distinction arises historically from the tumultuous period following the Anglo-Boer War when poverty-stricken Afrikaners were pushed off their land and forced to seek work in the towns. For most, their avowed aim was to accumulate sufficient capital to return to 'the farm' - an ambition realized only by a few. This issue also permeates other films like Wild Geese where the anti-Black South African mercenary is simply fighting to make enough money to buy a farm.

Looking at the functions of South African film in a wider context, it has a dual purpose: to convince the ruling class to accept as the will of God and moral duty their dominance and exploitation over other classes, and; to persuade the exploited to accept as natural their condition of exploitation. Blacks are notably absent in most local movies, a consequence of a dominant ideological reality. The dominant ideology as projected onto film is subordinated to the objectives of the ruling class. Robert Grieg has noted:

Whenever you see a Black in a film, he is a parodied Afrikaner. When he is a participating character, ~~he is funny, he is somebody below the Afrikaner,~~ he is a comic character, he is solid, trustworthy, faithful, respectful to authority - he is almost the negative image of the Afrikaner. 4)

In Wild Geese, for example, he is a 'kaffir', a seemingly necessary prefix to his being accepted as a competent President worthy of being rescued by an Afrikaner mercenary.

#### SOCIAL BREAKDOWN AND IDEOLOGICAL ADAPTATION

The present orientation is not far removed from the ideology originally stated by Rempel. This inherited ideological material, together with the machinery which helped it to develop, is however, unable to prevent new philosophical material seeping through which suggests visions of socio-cultural decay, particularly in Afrikaner society. The untouchable Aryan status of the boere-dogter has undergone a traumatic change. The stereotype offered by Rempel has disintegrated. Premarital sexual relationships, divorces and family breakdown, rape and assault are intrinsic to the plots of an increasing number of films. The issues which stalled Onwettige Huwelik and Debbie appear to be no longer important. The portrayal of individual deprivation, guilt and consequent social withdrawal which dominated Afrikaans cinema during the latter half of the 1960s and early 1970s in the conflict love-type genre have been diluted and transferred to a seemingly culture-free vacuum, but the ideology remains. This state, however, is itself indicative of a deeper structural relationship - not the dominance of one personality over another, but of one social role over another social role, for example, institutionalism versus individuality. Further, social integrity is prostituted in so-called 'international' films which cater for different truths and value systems perceived to exist in overseas markets suggest something of a crumbling value structure in South African society. The new social role of South African cinema is to presage possible future ideological states and integrate them into the national consciousness and cement the disintegrating social structure and to redefine roles, functions, and social relations.

One such state concerns the Angolan border war which has become part of our traditional linguistic patterns. The implication that someone is at 'the Border' is heard in an increasing array of films of all genres, even those intended for the overseas market where such references are meaningless (e.g. Some like you and Fifth Season).

#### THE IDEOLOGICAL STRUCTURE OF THE SIEGE MENTALITY

Cinematic treatments of the bush war are indicative of a society which confronts the complexities of reality by reducing it to binary opposites - good versus bad; war versus peace; black versus white; communism versus nationalism, etc.

Terrorist, Grensbasis 13 and Forty Days etc. project the following oppositions: terrorist (black) - bad; soldier (white) - good + bad (a sort of 'reformed' Black).

Grensbasis 13 superimposes the conflict-love type plot with a hidden unconscious Ideological perspective of 'the Border'. Like all other references, no motivations for this state of war are offered - its there, omnipresent and continuous, a state to be expected, inevitable - like sleeping or death. The conflict is not related to the larger politico-economic situation, the battle of opposing ideologies. The film departs slightly from the maimed heroine formula for the lieutenant is shot, not by his lover, but by the enemy. Hence the breakdown of the various relationships is implicitly blamed on the enemy and not on the personal foibles of the characters.

40 Days masks a deeper ideological tension. The dialectic is blatant: police (good) versus disco sub-culture (bad); Defence Force (good) versus personal chaos (bad), which in a broader context can be seen as Institutionalism (good) versus Individualism (bad). The film reveals a social dependence on the Defence Force and Police as the only viable agents of stability, law and order. In both Grensbasis 13 and 40 Days ~~the population back home are portrayed as uncaring,~~ disinterested and unable to comprehend the rigours of border life. These issues are best left to those who know - the Defence Force and Police Force. Institutionalism represents a form of social violence in the pursuit of the dominant ideology. The objective is the maintenance of White, and more particularly Afrikaner socio-centrality, and the dominance of one social role over another.

#### CONCLUSION

Conventional genre films generally condone the existing social structure and cultural orientations. Such films function to reinforce the ideological status quo, no matter how much the actual scheme of things differs in real life. Audiences feel comfortable in such celluloid environments and are hostile to any attempt which transgresses this reality. Despite the formal and informal mechanisms of control, breakaway films do occur (e.g. Jannie Totsiens, Land Apart, The Guest). By extrapolating present trends, such films explore possible future realities. Ideologically, these images are unpalatable and are

therefore susceptible to state interference, the condemnation of cultural watchdogs and low box office returns (e.g. Die Kandidaat, How Long and Land Apart.) A breakaway film has little chance of success where a society is not ready to delve into its psyche, its history and culture as it is, and not according to the official stereotype.

Whereas the ideological goal of South African cinema is that of anaesthesia, the socio-cultural function of local film appears to be the externalization of a disintegrating social structure, the result of inevitable forces arising outside Afrikanerdom. The constant degradation of the boeredogter coupled with the physical violence internal to the plots of most Afrikaans films reflect an unconscious set of social traumas. The cultural meanings carried by such films function as myths which relate to a perceived external ideologically determined reality and operate primarily to bring that reality into line with the social experiences of South African society.

In other words, the Afrikaner identity must be mythified and the Black man saved from himself. The English speaking South African will continue on the fringes of the South African social reality while the pertinent themes of a South African are stifled under the official version of reality.

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# The Right to Censor.

Peter Horn

The state which does not censor the arts, does not take the arts seriously. The state which does censor the arts, regards its citizens as minors, incapable of making rational choices. Any discussion of censorship and the relation of the state to the arts, which does not deal with both horns of this dilemma, will not come to grips with the complexity of the subjects, and will end up with the irreconcilable dichotomy between the liberal stance of laissez faire and the authoritarian imposition of censorship.

As a writer I am naturally deeply disturbed that the euphemistically so-called Publications Board (which published nothing but lists of unpublishable books) has banned nearly every word I have said and written in the last two years, so much so that it has become forbidden even to criticise me (as an anonymous writer in "Varsity" has found out to his astonishment, no doubt). Nevertheless it would be a fallacy to reject the right of the state to indulge in practical criticism of this kind, and to demand that "there shall be no censorship", as the basic law of West Germany does (while at the same time imposing a sneaky kind of indirect censorship which purports to protect minors against the ravages of pornography and brutal violence). It would be a fallacy, because it would mean one of two things: either that the words, images, and sounds which we call art have no effect whatsoever, and that it is therefore futile to pretend that they can do any harm to anybody, and should therefore be banned; or that the state as the representative of the people has no business to be alarmed about the potentially harmful effect of art, that the state should allow the poison of harmful art to circulate in society and bring about its harmful effect unchecked.

From its own point of view the South African state is merely performing its duty as the guardian of the public weal, and at least it does not pay us,



as some liberals do, the doubtful compliment of declaring the arts to be totally harmless. The censor board takes the arts seriously, deadly seriously one might say. It pays me the exaggerated compliment that my 'Plumstead Elegies' could endanger the state. They are exaggerating, I'm sure; they are much too optimistic about the possible effects of art, perhaps because they assume the readers of today are still the same slow readers of the bible only of a century ago, the intense readers, who weighed up every word they read and acted according to their judgement afterwards. Unfortunately for us, the artists, that is no longer true in a time when each of our potential readers is bombarded with an untold wealth of information, and even the professional readers in our universities have largely lost the ability to read other than superficially. They still hold to the old protestant respect for the Word and the old protestant abhorrence of the image (so much so that even after the reluctant introduction of T.V. we don't see much that is worth seeing on that image box). But given the idea that art has an effect on people, it is entirely consistent to ban all those forms of art, which can be assumed to subvert the basic pillars of the present South African society; i.e. that art which is blasphemous, pornographic, anti-capitalist and generally anti-South African.

The problem of tolerance is a tricky one, as the application of Michael Morris to become a student at U.C.T. has shown: in the name of tolerant liberalism he has to be admitted to an institution from which the intolerance of the state whom he served as a police spy has removed and banned and imprisoned liberal professors. The problem of those whose lectures he will be able to spy on, the problem of those whose critical remarks in a seminar he will report to the police are irreconcilable with the implications of his rejection by a university which builds its image around the concept of liberalism and tolerance and which sees itself on the eve of its 150th birthday in the image of Lessing's 'Nathan the Wise'. But if we are intolerant towards the intolerant, according to which standard do we apply this intolerance; and if we are tolerant to the intolerant, heaven help us in our folly! We have warning signals enough to show us that unlimited democracy is a marvellous breeding ground of fascist dictatorships.



who use the tolerance of democratic states to hoist themselves to power, in complete legality or on the borderline between legality and a coup. The attempt to escape value judgements, implicit in the liberal laissez faire, does not prevent the enemies of democracy using the play ground we are creating for their own bullying tactics.

The slogan "Everything goes!" in the field of arts, which is nothing but the abdication of the serious critical faculty, which is prepared to face the consequences of its judgement, does not get us very far, anyway. Our shrugging indifference merely means that commercial concerns take over, and remind our liberal indifference into multimillion profits: so we are for no censorship at all and the owners of Playboy, Mayfair and Men Only exploit the naked bodies of girls and their desire to become stars even for a month in whatever degrading a manner and the unfulfilled sexual desires of frustrated men; our liberal tolerance allows the Bildzeitung to besmirch the honour of someone like Katharina Blum with no possibility of redress; allows the producers of T.V. serials to portray brutal violence and reactionary authoritarian views as heroic and beam them into every home with a T.V. set. The argument that we are as free to buy or to reject the Playboy as the girls are to let themselves photograph or not in the nude, does not hold water; the concept of an ideally rational human being who decides according to his best and true interest, underlying the liberal fallacy, is constantly subverted in our society by subtle and crude economical and psychological pressures, which everybody who has ever been trapped by cunning advertising or by friendly precept into smoking and wants to give it up will know. The freedom to will good or evil is narrowly circumscribed by dependencies of our own and other's making; and to postulate that man is free (in contradistinction to: he ought to be free!) is either to delude oneself or a wilful confusion of the issue by those that profit from the helplessness of the "free" consumer.

In the same way in which the state asks itself whether it has not got a responsibility towards its citizens (it does so very haphazardly: it bans pornography but not tobacco-smoking, although the latter is proven to be much more dangerous); so I as a teacher have to ask myself whether I do not have a responsibility towards my students, equally grave, to protect

them from different dangers, perhaps, than those which the state protects them from. The questions which I cannot shirk are for example: Should I teach literature which furthers mythical, religious, political and social misconceptions? Should I tolerate religious art which only preaches acceptance of suffering, resignation and renunciation, which diverts us from a true fulfilment in this world, and is thus inimical towards the progress of humanity? Should I teach such openly heroic and militaristic texts as the Nibelungenlied, the Mahabharata or the Chanson de Roland, that is all those enormous slaughters in which heroism is often measured simply in the number of butchered opponents? Should I teach all the "courtly" art, which teaches fawning servility in the face of overwhelming power? Is the ideology of Beowulf so much more palatable than praise poems in honour of Hitler? Should I only approve of humanistic works like Nathan the Wise, Goethe's Iphigenie, Schiller's Don Carlos, Brecht's Caucasian Chalk Circle, or Peter Weiss' Lusitanian Scarecrow? Should I interpret only works which press towards a greater freedom of mankind and condemn all the works with an undesirable ideology to the orcus of oblivion? And if I were appointed by a truly democratic state to supervise the arts, would I not have to ban anything which undermined the future of the democracy, which contained in it elements of fascism, capitalism and authoritarianism? Would any leniency towards such works not be an open invitation to the enemies of the democratic state?

If anybody does not take this responsibility seriously, then he should ask himself what he would do, if one of his students told a court that he blew up a hundred people with a home made bomb, because he was made to read some anarchist text in his course on 19th century politics, or if he heard that one of his students committed suicide because he read Kafka while ~~doing German III. Naturally you can always get out of this poser by~~ declaiming that the young men were diseased before you inflicted that kind of book on them, that he would have thrown that bomb anyway, that he would have committed suicide anyway; but should mentally and historically unconditioned people be exposed at all to problems which they cannot yet master? Should they simply be thrown into the cold water so that they may learn to swim? What if they don't learn to swim? What if their infantile

egoism is only hardened by the required reading of Nietzsche? What if Zarathustra only strengthens them in an arrogant he-man attitude? Questions like these, asked in 1975 by Prof. Jost Hermand, in his lecture "Future in the past" need to be seriously pondered.

What I hope to have made clear is that the liberal concept developed against an absolutist and authoritarian state, has its historic merits, in that it opposed an uncontrolled state machinery, but it has its drawbacks, in that it disregards that freedom of expression is largely bound up with the means to express oneself with, and those depend in the last instance on the possession of capital: because, however free the publishing trade, the press, the trade in artistic products is from the interference of the state, it is in itself uncontrolled and can dictate its own terms both to the artist who needs these media to express himself and to the public; in fact, one can draw an analogy between the way the kings and princes of the absolutist age treated politics and the state as their private affair, their family business, and the way in which the media of art are now treated as the private affairs of the owners of the media. If we were to direct the cry "No censorship!" against the media themselves, they would reply indignantly, that a. they did not apply any censorship and that b. anyone dissatisfied with their handling of the affair could easily establish his own newspaper, journal, art gallery, (there we stop: because at least in South Africa we cannot establish our own radio, T.V., Schools, Universities). The editors of even a small circulation arts journal will testify how nearly impossible this is, in the absence of sufficient capital. What is important to remember, in my view, is that 'absence of censorship', 'freedom of the arts', 'free enterprise' all entail the absolute say of the private owner and no control by society at large. This privatistic view of the "freedom of the arts" is therefore about as doubtful as a privatistic view of the "academic freedom" of the university, with no concept of the responsibility of someone who at least in praxis acts on a public platform: the artist and the academic teacher; both publish, i.e. address a public, try to disseminate their views and their ideas, and therefore must take the consequences of entering the public domain, responsibility for their acts, deeds and words in the context of society. Conversely the owners of the media have to account for their

actions in the forum of a democratic state; their accountability being even more important than the artist's, who after all without the help of the media can at most indulge his harmful or beneficial urges in private.

A very troubling thought arises in connection with the concept of "privacy": the Puritans of the Glorious Revolution, the Jacobins of the French Revolution and the Socialists of the Russian Revolution all understood only too well that the delimitation of a private sphere fostered every shade of anti-social thinking; even if the freedom of religious art and philosophy is restricted to the private home, such a region excised from public debate creates the very breeding place of privatistic attitudes, which by necessity will eat like a cancer through society; thinking in terms of private spheres fosters that type of schizophrenic existence which splits man into a citizen of the state which is foreign to him, in which he is only a passive, administered object, and a private person, who as far as his actions in this sphere is concerned, owes nobody an explanation. The Greeks called a man who does not take part in the political life of the community an *idiotes*: sensing both the egoism and the limitations of a man who cannot or does not want to bear the responsibility for the whole. Confronted with the opaqueness of the private life of their citizens they made it a duty of everybody to spy on everybody else, in order that public values could penetrate into the private refuge of egotistical drives. Their ideal was the perfectly lucid society with no dark and hidden corners, inaccessible to public reason and morality. The puritans of all ages, Sokrates, Calvin, Robespierre and Lenin, saw no distinction between public and private morality, and no distinction in the duty of the state and the society to enforce both. It is from this concept that the South African state fundamentally derives its mandate to interfere in the private life of the individual, and it must be admitted, that in its origin at least, if not in its present perverted form, it was revolutionary, in that it substituted brutal irrational force, applied by an absolutist state, with democratic supervision of the mores of society and brotherly advice. Revolutionary repression tries to replace state terrorism; which maintains order by instilling fear and taking human lives, by some sort of mutual control and self-restraint, making force unnecessary and at the same time

blocking off avenues of private escape. Freud, in his Civilisation and its Discontents, sees revolution as the sharing of instinctual deprivation in the name of justice, the willing acceptance of repression by new social groups: "Liberty has undergone restrictions through the evolution of civilisation, and justice demands that these restrictions shall apply to all". What is revolutionary about this 'sacrifice' is that it calls into question the very necessity of government, that is, of the whip, the gallows and the bloody sword. It suggests that all these be replaced by self-government. Private man can be repressed from above; political man frees himself from that outer-directed repression, the inert state of subjection to a sovereign, by assuming responsibility for the whole in conjunction with his brethren.

The pledge or covenant creates a kind of mutual terrorism, which frees man from the coercion of the state but subjects them to that of their fellows. The claim to control oneself is the claim of revolutionary right, the claim to be free. The free no longer need a law-giver: they themselves give themselves their own law; they no longer need a law-enforcer; they enforce the law on themselves. State terrorism depends upon the customary inertia or the coerced passivity of the masses of men, and upon the activity and power of a relatively small number, assisted by a more or less efficient organisation of spies and informers, torturers and hangmen; it exploits the human fear of violent death and it offers to its subjects in exchange for their passivity and obedience security against all violence except its own; the great and only pleasure of its members, wrote Rousseau of modern society, "is the pleasure of not being dead". State terrorism thus depends on the state's ability to transform the public realm, and to the revolutionary everything is public, into two private realms: the isolated private realm of each of the citizens of the state, and the private realm of politics, excised from the res publica to become the region of the affairs of the powerful.

By insisting on the privacy of the realm of arts, by rejecting every interference in it by the state, the artist creates the very state power which allows the state to interfere in his 'private' affairs. The dialectics

of power are such that the artist, in order to free himself from the uncontrolled power of the state, cannot oppose the censor, but must ask for the censor; instead of withdrawing into his private snail's house he must be prepared to expose his art to the scrutiny of all. He must recognise that art, like making love and making profit is a public activity, for which he must be able to give an account to everyone in the commonwealth of men.

The fault of the South African system of censorship is not that it is public; that it is interference of the state in the private affairs of its citizens, as has often been argued, but precisely in that it is private, itself shielded from a public debate of the norms and values underlying its judgements. In fact, the South African system of censorship is private in a dual way: first it is private in that it is shielded from the public debate in court, even shielded from any debate, in newspapers or any other public medium; second in that the laws which determine its making are the private laws of a ruling minority forced down the throats of an oppressed majority.

And that brings us to the second horn of our dilemma, namely that the state who does censor the arts, regards its citizens as minors, incapable of making rational choices. The idealist belief in the inherent rationality of men, their willingness to make rational choices once they have been freed from the compulsion of the absolutist state, which underlies bourgeois attacks against any form of restraint on "private enterprise", the hidden assumption that if left to his own private devices, man by furthering his own private interests will necessarily further the interests of the commonwealth, has been utterly discredited by the development of capitalism in the 19th century. The pessimism of a Hobbes seems to be more adequate ~~to describe the state of human affairs than the optimism of either Rousseau~~ or the utilitarianists. The belief in the "essential" human goodness has disappeared with belief in the transcendental essences. And with it has disappeared the comforting thought that all human beings can and must escape the state of mental minority by the courageous use of their own rationality, which Kant and Schiller were advocating.



But that same pessimism confronts us with the choice of either cynically accepting as human nature the weaknesses, failings and irrationalities of all men, of preaching an understanding which is forgiving of all sins even those which brutally mutilate the face of man, or postulating that some men are more equal than others, and to appoint them (or allow them to appoint themselves) as the final arbiters over human affairs, reviving the Platonic dilemma, of who will supervise the philosopher-statesman, unless we want to subscribe to the reactionary belief of Goethe that people are born into their trades, and that the shoemaker should thus not meddle in politics, nor the politician in shoemaking.

Or maybe the alternatives themselves are wrong, the either-or logic of Aristotle, which is the last hidden trace of idealism subverting even the most courageous materialism, forcing it to impose the categories of the mind on the far more flexible dialectics of reality. It is a logic which forces us into a corner, where like Kafka's mouse we see no other exit but through the mouth of the cat into death. If we employ a logic which instead of the everlasting status quo implied in the phrase "human nature", assumes that human nature is not equal to itself, because it is not a stasis but a process, we may be able to create solutions which bypass certain shipwreck on either the Scylla of an anarchic concept of privatism or the Charybdis of an authoritarian Leviathan subordinating man to the machinery of the state. Let us conceive of human nature as of a process of collective becoming which constantly alters its being through time by the collective endeavours of co-operative individuals in a collective matrix. We will then fall neither in the trap of a permissive indifference denying all norms nor into the trap of an authoritarian assertion of one particular norm as the absolute transcendental norm of all times and places. Instead ~~we will learn to conceive of norms as crutches used by collective humanity~~ to lean on in its limping march into the future; to deprive the cripple of crutches does not necessarily make him leap faster, but most often condemns him through the dust. Norms are necessary but changeable, and the creative adaptation of norms, the invention of new norms of seeing, speaking, singing, judging and acting is what being an artist means. So why should the artist, being an agent of historical change, be surprised that he is involved in a



struggle, why should the artist demand that he be spared what every other agent of change (political, scientific, etc.) has to go through: the pain of changing? If he opposes the norms of society, why should he expect to remain unpunished where even school children are shot dead, if they don't like to be taught in the language of the oppressor?

In the end it is not the state which can grant him that kind of ritualistic freedom which he craves in order to create and re-form humanity in his own image: not even the socialist state: if he cannot convince the majority of all the citizens of the state that what he does is valuable, he must not complain that he is persecuted; unless he makes the masses his ally, he has no lasting freedom. In order to will his freedom he must will the freedom of the masses, their true freedom. Instead of presupposing the ability of all human beings to become master over themselves - this cherished belief of the eighteenth century liberalism - he must make the Enlightenment his praxis and his project; because only an enlightened humanity, where everyone is capable of making his own rational choices in consensus with everyone else, is the guarantor of artistic liberty.

The right of the people to censor ceases, when the right of the artist to an unfettered freedom to create ceases to endanger the production and the reproduction of society. The repression of the traditional, absolutist, authoritarian state serves to safeguard the rule of a tiny minority of rulers; it creates a traditional social structure in which the great majority of men did not control themselves or one another, but were passive, faithful members of an authoritarian church, loyal participants in an hierarchical order; there was artistic freedom even in this society: the conformist could thrive and paint his wild canvasses with the heroic deeds of a King Arthur, a ~~Parcival, a Tristram and Isolde, or enter into the religious ecstasy of~~ martyrdom and holiness. The liberal freedom of the bourgeois classes gave the artist a new framework in which to express himself, but it contained mechanisms of censorship nevertheless, repression as dangerous if not more so than the outward symbols of power, the whip, the gallows and the sword; more dangerous I would say because they tend to be as invisible as the ubiquitous and uniform symbol of capitalism, money; when you are

confronted by the pyre of inquisition, you at least know what you are fighting, and you will do it consciously, one hopes bravely, but when you die of hunger in the poet's garret you may not even be aware of the mechanism of repression invoked against you. And the artist who has been bought off by monetary success will even fall in love with his golden prison, and believe it to be freedom. The puritan socialist model again creates its own freedoms and repressions, which only the superficial observer can equate with the repression of other absolutist forms of state and other forms which call themselves dictatorships. Because they are dictatorships, if not yet of the people then at least for the people. People who never had the chance to speak, the mute masses, turn artists, encouraged, fostered, even bullied into articulateness by a state who must make good its claim of being a people's republic. Others, those who equate the bourgeois freedom with freedom itself, are silenced: not only the capitalists who made their profits from the craving of the exploited masses, not only the dealers in spiritual opium and imaginary marijuana, but also the apparently harmless dealers in art for art's sake, find their freedoms withdrawn, in the name of a people who themselves still feel the craving for these antisocialist poisons and resent the censorship imposed on them, like children resent the restrictions which their parents impose on their sex life and on cigarette smoking. In their zeal to protect the "helpless" masses from their enemies the good philosophers of the puritan Republic, may even censor those of their supporters, who mix their solidarity with the masses with healthy criticism. When socialists seize state power they must use it against their opponents, or their opponents will mercilessly slaughter them, as Franco did, as the Chilean and the Greek junta did; if they did not, they would betray the trust of those people who risked their lives to overthrow the old order. They must also use the state power against those passive, withdrawn or simply fearful people whom the Puritans called 'heutres', to short-cut those long and difficult processes by which men are brought to pledge themselves to collective repression and to reinforce the new and generally undeveloped mechanisms of mutual surveillance. Their dilemma is that in doing this they deny the possibilities of genuine self-government without force and re-establish the old patterns of public conformity and private vice. Revolutionaries in power justify their terrorism by statements which

are undoubtedly true: the majority of people in their country have not yet committed themselves to self-control and mutual surveillance; for these people they argue, external control and the bloody sword continue to be necessary. The Revolution needs time to win the hearts of its people, but until hearts are won, bodies must be constrained. But: the effects of this terror always is a frozen revolution, a failure to win the heart.

The problem becomes tractable only if we insist that the only one who has a right to restrict the freedom of the individual is the people as a whole, and that no freedom is secure except that which derives from the consensus of the masses. And a permanent consensus of the masses cannot but arise out of the pursuit of the true interest of the masses. And the true interests of the masses is to become the speaking subject of history in order to take care of its own affairs. What they need is not a state in which they consent to be governed, but a state in which they indeed govern. What they need is not a state in which others are the appointed guardians of their fortunes, but they themselves. That would mean, however, the assumption of adulthood, self-responsibility, discipline; something which the individualistic isolated man of liberal society shirks. There cannot be a relaxed, permissive, privatized society of self-governing citizens, who spend their evenings at home, or in the office, or in shops. To take responsibility means to give of one's time, evenings and evenings spent at meetings to help direct the course of the state as a whole; to refuse this "sacrifice" of the private life means to refuse freedom and to choose the bureaucrat, or worse, the hangman. It would also mean that the people would demand this right for everyone (because ideally then nobody can be excluded from the process of sifting good from bad) to have access to everything, every form of art, even the most consistently banned, the books from the dark cellar of the library, the morgue where the de Sades are locked away: in principle everyone becomes his own judge; every screening device between us and what there is, becomes a diminution of my adulthood.

Such freedom cannot be based on the illusions of freedom which Western democracies peddle to wean us from the real thing. Such freedoms must rest on the destruction of the "natural" inequalities among men and all the

repression necessary to uphold it, and on the institution of a cultural equality of all men by means of a truly revolutionary praxis, which submits every facet of collective life to the most searching scrutiny. To live in the glasshouse, as Walter Benjamin has stated, is virtue par excellence; any, even the slightest remnant of secrecy, is the dark corner in which authority can lurk unseen. State censorship of the arts is the creation of such unseen, inaccessible areas, just as our built in censorship creates the speechless realm of the unconscious and just as the private ownership of the productive instruments creates the locked offices of power, which the masses are not allowed to enter, leave alone permitted to take over. To demand that there shall be no censorship is as futile as the demand that there shall be no economic exploitation or sexism. Instead of demanding rights one must fight to create the objective conditions, to create a society which will need no unconscious, no sexism, no exploitation, no censorship.

It is need in the end which creates the necessity for censorship: insufficient resources, which create competition, scarcity, which brings about the egotism of the private sphere, shielded against the envious look of the poorer neighbour by laws and customs, the libertinage of the rich and powerful, which does not want to be exposed to the eyes of the frustrated. It is want which creates the rituals and repressive taboos, in order to guarantee the privileges of the chosen few. In order to maintain the invisibility of the true mechanism of privilege society has invented its true symbolism as cellars, prisons, mad houses and darkened bedroom of marital sexuality, which allow it, at least in Western democratic society to create the illusion of freedoms: but this "freedom" is the sterilised wound of being cut off from one's own other, of having lost and forgotten one's true rationality, which is now outcast as irrationality, crime, slime and dirt. The man in the prison cell is the virtual image of the bourgeoisie. He is, what the bourgeois has censored out of his own existence. But without this censored image he could not be what he is: privileged. He will therefore fight with all means at his disposal to uphold that censorship which obliterates the right of the criminal to his material possessions. And, because there is no other language available to him - if there were, he would be a revolutionary -

the criminal ironically agrees with him. Equally, the man in the madhouse: the nightmare of bourgeois society, inventor of new languages and silences, the ultimate self-destructive refusal of the bourgeois order; with cunning he turns the rituals of society against society and against himself, demonstrating in his own destruction the destructive effect of repression, frightening the wits out of cultured man, that he, too, is destined to go the same lonely road, making him aware that he is separated from madness only by the flimsy bubble of logic and ideology. The twisted reason of the madman is in himself: the urge to feel his own body and his own power, breaking out in futile and clumsy rituals in the darkened bedroom, the crushed gestures of love, the Satan in his unconscious, negating an incomprehensible world. And he draws the curtains and extinguishes the light so that society cannot confront him with what he is. Because what he is, he is only through the medium of public speech. What he is in the cell, the madhouse, the bedroom, he is unconscious of, and he resents to be told by the artist, by the psychologist by the marxist philosopher. That is the meaning of censorship. To end censorship without ending jails, madhouses, and the privacy of sexuality means to unleash the fury of both the privileged and the unprivileged, which is fascism in its various forms. Fascism is the need to censor that kind of reason, which is unreasonable enough to demand the end of privilege: as such it is the inability to change the order of the status quo, the underlying cause of it, need and want, and the anxiety of the haves to become have-nots, to lose their ekstasis, their quality of standing out from the mass, their privilege. Fascism is not the opposite to bourgeois liberty, it is bourgeois liberty itself showing its true face, when confronted by revolutionary force. The cellar, never aired, is full of combustible gases, which explode in the face of whoever dares to carry a light into it.

The process of eliminating censorship is a dangerous one, and we must not be fooled by the smug self-confidence of those who demand it, without knowing the consequences of it: they are whistling in the dark. To fully grasp what it means, one should read Freud's tortured doubts about the ability of humanity to handle an uncensored existence, Marx's analysis of the capitalist society, and most frightening of all, the most severely repressed

work of the Marquis de Sade, who postulated that in reference to pleasure, all human beings are equal, that there should be no privileged classes of happiness, and demanded, that nobody should recognise any chains except those of our own drives, no other morality except nature; insult the existing morality, as it does not bind the rulers; oppose a rationality which produces privileges for a minority; do not let yourself be persuaded by the wrong insights; abolish the despotic laws and gruesome punishments and you will see, that the wildness of man is without danger. See to an education which tears youth from the egotism of the family, the daughters from their fathers and husbands, who adapt them to their own lifelong egocentric desires. Show the grown-up girl its ability to be free, which is destroyed by the patriarchal-authoritarian constitution of the family: Nothing is as despicable and against reason, as the image of a girl, tormented by lust, which she must repress. Beauty is the image of erotic freedom. But de Sade also knows that this image of freedom can be realised only in its criminalised and perverted form - as prostitute - in a society in which sexuality is not exposed to the blinding light of reason, in which sexuality does not become fully public. And he also knows that under the conditions of repression the uncensored expression of the sexual urges become violent and destructive. In the obscene final scene of Philosophie dans le boudoir the young girl rapes and assaults her own mother in the most gruesome manner, her mother, a hypocritical bigot, pretending to abstinence and godliness, responsible for her repressive education. The terror of enlightenment freeing itself from its own shackles could not be portrayed more convincingly. Let us not be fooled by the liberal rhetoric of liberty, which portrays freedom, as if it were the wish-fulfillment of an eternal kindergarten: freedom is the negative catalogue of bourgeois morality: lust, orgy, free death, pain from lust and lust from pain, want of moderation, exaggeration, extravagance, exorbitance, vehemence, mania, addiction, shameless fouling and dirtying, the caricature, the obscene. Whoever wants freedom from censorship must understand that these are the most valuable norms and tendencies of culture. Freedom from censorship for the artist means, not to have anything to hide, to live in Benjamin's glasshouse and to demand that society as a whole does, too. Or more exactly, to create the conditions in which he can persuade society that all secrecy, which decrees that some pictures are not to be exhibited, and some words not to



to be spoken, must cease because it is no longer necessary. He must understand that privacy in a late capitalist society is the general praxis of those who alienate the collective product of work and who want to draw a veil over the privileges which they acquire in this process. In short, the artist must institute the praxis of total exhibitionism, must destroy the right to the last secrets, because these secrets destroy life, until such time that the ecstasy of exhibitionism becomes swallowed up in the greater ecstasy of a society without taboos.

Authentic art has no objection to the asocial, because the asocial is the socially repressed, which needs to be expressed, but it is opposed to the unsocial, which withdraws behind the shield of the individuality. The secret of the private person which the enlightened bourgeoisie has instituted as a right but which has been lost in the process of collective administration of industrial society anyway, cannot be blown up into an invariant and eternal law; to do this would mean to overlook that shame, discretion, virginity, screening and darkening of so-called private affairs plays into the hands of those socio-economic powers, who have a burning interest in the opaqueness of private life. Art desires nakedness, but the most which society allows it is nudity, which is nothing but another shamelessness, which is not equal to the lack of shame. Where art demands the exhibition of the self, it is at best allowed the strip-tease. In destroying the pair of signs - nude/dressed - art creates "nakedness" as an utopian symbol of freedom.

So what about the practical possibility of such a naked society? Freud remains sceptical: "it seems," he maintains, "that every culture must be built on force and the renunciation of the drives; it is not even certain that if force ceases the majority of human beings will be prepared to undertake the amount of work necessary to produce new goods. One has to take into account that all human beings harbour destructive, i.e. antisocial and anticultural tendencies... Just as force is needed to bring about cultural labour so is the rule of the mass by a minority, because the mass is lazy and without insight, they do not like the renunciation of their drives, they cannot be persuaded by arguments of its necessity and its



individuals strengthen each other in their unruliness. By the example of outstanding individuals, whom they recognise as their leaders, alone can they be moved to the work and renunciation which is necessary for the continuation of culture. Everything is fine as long as these leaders are persons of exceptional insight into the necessities of life, who have uplifted themselves to ruling over their own drives and wishes. But there is the danger that they, in order not to lose their power, give in more to the masses than it to them, and therefore it seems necessary that they be independent from the masses by means of force." So far no society has been able to reproduce itself completely without some such means. Freud's threat, the human natural forces, are a very real threat: the question is whether cultural repression is the only way to deal with the frightening naturalness. What he doesn't see is that most of that fright arises from the distortion imposed on nature by the repressive violence of society. That the id is a specifically and historically deformed id. What is needed is a controlled historical praxis to change that violent and authoritarian id, to reconcile it with the free ego.

Whoever believes that this historical praxis will be an easy process, whoever believes that man can be left to his own devices, that to remove the barriers is sufficient to make man free, must not be surprised, if he one day finds that he is unable to confront the uncensored society, which may be gentle, but relentless in its gentleness, which may be free, but terrifying in its freedom, which will demand that we throw away our crutches and walk. And one more thing: the artist may find that in the uncensored society there will be no more need for art, because life itself must become creative, innovative, unafraid.

"There shall be no censorship!" Is there no fear in you? Do you understand what you demand? There are no words in our language for it, except negatives: the expropriation of the private bodily and moral ego, the universal prostitution, the dispossession of all properties, the destruction of all imposed norms, the alienation of all privacy, the confrontation with all madness and criminality, the knowledge of sickness and death, the jubilation of perversity, the unlimited void of uncharted freedom.

Nevertheless, "There shall be no censorship!" - not because of what man is, but because of what man is in the process of becoming, and which he cannot become unless the tutelage of others over him cease, and unless he learns to cope with freedom.

# The Abortion of the Intellect.

KELWYN SOLE

Every coin has two sides. The bad side of the ideology of "Black Consciousness" is that it is not founded upon scientific thinking. Its starting point is reactionary. It is an effect rather than a cause... An effect of black consciousness that is not good is that it provides a smokescreen behind which the "non-white" middle classes hide; classes such as the black petty capitalist merchants in the "homelands", the middle class wage earners in the towns, the "coloured" supervisors and employers of black labour, and most important perhaps, the private landowners... One point about the good side of black consciousness is of course that it is a tactic of mobilization within an overall strategy of revolutionary struggle.

- Namibian Students' Organisation  
pamphlet, 1977

Black people seek for  
Intellectual freedom

The right to think to inquire and to learn  
the right to hold opinions  
the right to practice art freely  
to evaluate and to criticize  
the right to listen, to discuss and to publish and to read...

- Zoli Kota

Radio Bantu reaches 4.8 million Blacks in seven languages. Which makes it the most effective medium in Black advertising. Radio Bantu - where your money talks loudest.

- Recent advert in South African  
business journal.

The present crisis of the South African social formation can be seen not only with regard to the economic face of society but also as it affects politics and ideology. At the same time as the resistance of the dominated groups within the country has increased markedly, the state has swung between incorporationist stages (such as detente) and the use of its direct and violent repressive mechanisms in quick succession - a result to some extent of the struggles taking place within the power bloc itself. In this period of confusion and crisis, it is a difficult task to even begin to tease out the direction of those active in the interlinking ideological, political and economic struggles which continue daily.

In the shifting and complex scenarios which emerge from this crisis, those who study the literature emanating from Southern Africa will be aware of an inescapable fact: that critics are beginning to show an interest in literary expression which springs from the dominated sectors in the society. This new vista has by and large been opened up by the cultural and other initiatives emerging from various groups in these sectors themselves, rather than from any democratization of thought from within the spiritual power positions of South Africa's literary establishment. In particular, the work of black literary performers, writers and intellectuals as mobilized through the organisations of the Black Consciousness movement in the early and mid-seventies bears closer scrutiny. The latter half of the decade has, moreover, provided a host of political and economic struggles which literary considerations cannot ignore. Among these are the liberation of the former Portuguese colonies; the Soweto revolt of 1976; the banning of the Black Consciousness cultural and political organisations as well as the newspaper the World a year later; the Information scandal; the growing military confrontation in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa; and the ongoing fragmenting and polarizing of experience within the country.

Facets of what follows have already been discussed at greater length in my 'Problems of Creative Writers in South Africa: A Response Work in Progress 1, 1977; 'Class, Continuity and Change in Black South African Literature 1948-60' in Bozzoli (ed) Labour, Townships and Protest (Johannesburg, 1979); and 'Criticism, Activism and Rhetoric (or Armah and the White Pumpkin)' Inspan 1,1 1978.

1) P.G. Mare 'Ideology, Liberation and Revolution' Mimeo n.d. p.1. For instance, in June 1976 what started out mainly as an ideological protest - heavily influenced by the black consciousness of the previous few years - later attempted to link into economic issues such as strikes and rent boycotts. The response from the state shows that these protests were seen as a political threat to the status quo.

Writers have not been exempt from problems and pressures in a climate where most forms of dissent are seen as inimical by a state structure which started off the 1970s in an aura of confidence and is likely to end the decade as brittle, fractured and severely repressive. Removal or refusal of passports, harassment, bannings, exile and imprisonment have been part of the life of our writers within this time.<sup>2)</sup>

## 1.

For a while after the bannings of the ANC and PAC at the start of the sixties and the effective silencing within the country of most of the talented black writers implicated in the development of an English-language writing during the preceding decade, most visible cultural effects of South African origin were the product of white writers such as the Sestigers and English-speaking individuals such as Jack Cope and Nadine Gordimer. Even at its most political (the Sestigers with one or two exceptions had other concerns) the writing tended, especially among the Anglophone writers, towards a plodding realistic mode of expression and a fairly modish 'relevance' which sought to expose the iniquities and attitudes of racism and apartheid in South Africa without ever seeming to delve satisfactorily into the dynamics of either the social structure or the attitudes involved.<sup>3)</sup> The individualism of the protagonists in these books and plays was generally stressed as a necessary bulwark against the creeping conformity and lack of empathy engendered by the apartheid regime; where a community of feeling was drawn from, as in the Afrikaans literature of the time, a type of existential rebellion was the vogue. Publishing was regarded as the epitome of a young writer's success, and the apotheosis of the book as the ultimate in literary expression not contended. The tendency of the time

2) Some names: Breyten Breytenbach, Mongane Serote, Mafika Gwala, Athol Fugard, Siphiso Sepamla, Andre Brink, Wopko Jensma, Molefe Phetoe, James Matthews, Welma Odendaal, Lefifi Tladi, Manlenkosi Langa, Khaya Mqayisa, Gibson Kente, Johan van Wyk, Dumakude ka Ndlovu, Don Mattera, Andries Oliphant, Mathese Diseko, Vuyisile Mdleleni, Strini Moodly et al.

3) Despite Cope's uninformed and generalized comments (see Donga 6, 1977 p1), realism is merely one among many models for the representation of reality, and is not the only form in which 'committed' literature can be expressed. Adorno's criticism of Brecht: 'By thinking of Fascism as an enterprise belonging to a band of criminals who have no real place in the social system... you strip it of its horror and diminish its social significance' applies here. Aesthetics & Politics (London, 1977) p 157.

was, if anything, towards the further academicization and class stratification of literature, and the literary and academic cliques who 'knew their literature' had a powerful effect on aesthetic norms and their continuation. This sharp division between the small group of the 'artistically knowledgeable' and the kitsch masses was adhered to both by the white literary and the few survivors of black literature who remained to be touted in literary magazines.

However, synonymous with the rise of the Black Consciousness movements in the late sixties and early seventies one noticed that cracks started to appear in this edifice. The voice of black playwrights and actors and, slightly later, black poets began to be heard again in the townships. These literary performers began to make striking use of a powerful (and relatively unrepressed, although economically exploited) tool of township expression: music. Music groups such as Dashiki, Malombo and Harari flourished as well as a theatre combining dance, drama and music. This theatre varied from the commercial and popular work of Gibson Kenge and Sam Mhangwane to the more serious and politically conscious work of Mhloti and other radical theatre groups.<sup>4)</sup> Theatre, pop and jazz festivals spread. Stylistically an important influence to the young, angry poets who emerged was the poetry of the Black Power movement in the United States, particularly poets such as Robert Hayden, Langston Hughes, Imamu Amiri Baraka, Gwendolyn Brooks and others. Concomitant with this was a shifting away from standard English towards a feeling for the nuances of language as spoken in the townships and thus outside of the experience of white literature and academia. A concern for the language and rhythms of everyday speech can be seen in a racy 'slang' poetry which started to emerge from certain of the poets.<sup>5)</sup>

4) D. Coplan 'The African Performer and the Johannesburg Entertainment Industry: the struggle for African Culture on the Witwatersrand' in Bozzoli op.cit. p 210. Other radical groups active in the early seventies include Mdali, SABTU, Culcom and so on.

5) See M. Mzamane 'The 50s and Beyond: An Evaluation' New Classic 4, 1977 pp30-2, and J.D. Ngoepe's 'Extent of Foreign Acquisitions: Northern Sotho and Zulu' quoted in Elsa Joubert's 'Afrikaans het baie tonge' Rapport 17/9/78. For those who are interested in these poems, I would refer them to Sepamla's 'Statement: the dodger!' and 'Mnta kazibani-bani'; Mutloatse's 'Don't Lock Up Our Sweethearts'; Hlapolosa's 'Platform High-heeled Walker' and some of the work of Christopher van Wyk, Gwala, Patel and Johenne.

Thus in the period of time preceding and during the 1976 riots, a resurgence of cultural activity from the black community and its filtering through to a rather wider spectrum of people is noticeable. In line with the doctrines of black awareness, the focus of concern of black writers and performers shifted radically to a black listening audience in place of a white liberal or overseas one. A lot of the work which issued forth had an urgent political function. As much of the literature was used as a means to express social discontent, the value of the utterance was seen by some writers as temporary and more useful in spreading ideas than in a European 'art for art's sake'. Indeed, one of the foremost groups in this literary resurgence, the journalists, appear to have used literature in the absence of any degree of freedom in their profession. Thus a type of artistic production emerged which used any medium available to the situation at hand.

Multi-media shows and a type of urban oral poetry using drum and other musical accompaniment reached a high quality of performance: Dastiki's rendition of Cesaire's "Return to My Native Land" and the performances of Medupe Writers' Association come to mind. This shift from a reading audience to a listening one means that much of the important work which was heard at the time remains relatively unknown outside of its environment: at least two of the most influential figures in this poetry, Molefe Phetoe and Lefifi Tladi (both now in exile), are still almost completely unpublished.<sup>6)</sup>

The reasons for the use of this new form of dissemination are many. To some extent theatre and oral poetry are forms less vulnerable to censorship, due to the compression of language involved which allowed it to be a hiding place for meanings more accessible to the audience than the censors.<sup>7)</sup> Furthermore, a concern for appropriate literary techniques was given voice to. These poetry workshops and readings point to the fact that poets were now concerned to use

6) It is informative to note that both are jazz musicians, and knew very well the creative strength of both rehearsed and impromptu performance.

7) There is no doubt that this was consciously done by the poets and performers of the time: it was suggested, inter alia, that the microphone was a difficult instrument to censor.



literature as a means of direct communication rather than desiring publication as the way to circulate their work; indeed, there was a tendency among some of the younger Soweto poets during and immediately after 1976 to see all who published as suspect. This participatory and performed art emphasized the feeling in some circles connected with black consciousness that collective experience could enrich individual effort and enhance a degree of cultural unity. This emphasis on new techniques was coupled with a growing awareness of the control exercised by white liberal and overseas elements in most of the institutions and businesses connected with artistic output - publishing houses, the record industry, art galleries and so on. Gwala, for one, expressed a dislike for the limitations of books and saw the problem of control as not only one of white expertise, but also 'methods of operation that are based on white expertise'<sup>8)</sup>. This desire to break away from commercial enterprises aimed at exporting literature or influencing its suitability for audiences comprised of liberals and the educated black elite was at one stage discernible right from the educated and more politically articulate intellectuals involved to 'popular' entertainers and recording artists such as Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens<sup>9)</sup>.

This rehabilitation and restructuring of African culture and creative impulses - in short, a cultural reaffirmation - was made manifest in a situation where the dominant white culture was constipated and individualistic. A black ethos as challenger instead of challenged came into being and began an assault on the claims of relevance of the white literary establishment as a whole. It is informative to note, however, that whatever shifts in the degree of tolerance towards this new cultural initiative took place within the dominant classes, any

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8) M.P. Gwala 'Towards the Practical Manifestations of Black Consciousness' in Thoahlane (ed) Black Renaissance (Johannesburg, 1975) p 29, and the differentiation made between 'black drama' and 'drama produced by blacks' in Gwala (ed) Black Review 1973 (Johannesburg, 1974) pp 105-6, 111-2. It is interesting to note that a young Afrikaans poet, Johan van Wyk, distributed his poems in roneoed pamphlet form, at one stage immediately after the 1976 riots.

9) Criticism of entertainers such as Kente and Credo Mutwa and plays such as Ipi Tombi for their apoliticality and pandering to and control by whites or the commercial instinct by the more radical black intelligentsia is commonplace in the seventies. However, entertainers were not necessarily more malleable to control - not only did Dashiki reject commercial attempts to record their music, but in 1971 about 50 mbaqanqa artists staged a protest against white interference in their recordings. See Coplan op.cit. p 211, 'S'ketsh' Summer 1973 pp 8-10, Summer 1974/5 p 9, Black Review 1973 pp 206-8, 212.

attempts at control of the economic means of dissemination by the black intellectual involved has been suppressed<sup>10)</sup>. Attempts to break away from white patronage often found problems with venues and finances as well, as no proper facilities existed for black theatres, art galleries or other venues.

Despite a temporary hiatus caused by the banning of the World, UBJ and Medupe and the organisations of the Black Consciousness movement in October 1977, the evolution and power of cultural and literary activity by black artists has continued: in this sense the destruction has not been as great as that caused by the crackdowns and systemization of censorship in the early 1960s. This can of course partly be explained by the fact that the political bannings against the artists and writers themselves was less pronounced than in the earlier period; but in my opinion it also points to a possibility that techniques not wholly dependent on the printed page had allowed the habit of literary activity to sink in far deeper roots than before, with a possible filtering of the uses of literature from the educated elite down to petty-bourgeois and even working class elements not previously involved in literature<sup>11)</sup>.

The final effects of the aftermath of the Soweto revolt and the bannings and detentions have nevertheless been damaging enough. The flight of many young and promising poets and playwrights into exile, and the prolonged detention of others are phenomena which still have to be properly assessed. This has resulted in rather less emphasis having been placed subsequently on theatre and dramatic performances, while some of the poetry has moved to a slightly more conservative approach. Many of the most impressive musical and dramatic art performers have been driven into exile.<sup>12)</sup> Other developments have perhaps been more encouraging: the formation of a P.E.N. branch on the Witwatersrand far more represen-

10) ~~BLAC publishing house in Cape Town~~ is a case in point.

11) For a discussion of elitism in previous black literature see my 'Class, Continuity...' op.cit.

12) One thinks of Dashiki and Jabula, theatre such as Molefe Phetoe's Azanian Singers and Dancers, the literary organisation Pelculef started by Serote and Langa in Gaborone and the show performed by Ipi Tombi members who refused to return to South Africa after their overseas tour, Sounds of Soweto.

tative than earlier attempts of the cultural milieu generally<sup>13)</sup>, the rise of magazines more concerned with a South African than simply a white-inspired literature<sup>14)</sup> and a situation in which it is now definitely the literary output of the dominated classes which is more vital and arresting, as far as the more 'serious' literature is concerned at least: this can be seen in the grudging acceptance of at least some African literature into university curricula and establishment discussion.

Most interesting, perhaps, is the tendency of a far less exclusivist approach forthcoming recently from black writers: added to the adoption of slightly altered dissemination techniques. A general consensus of opinion has come into being that publishing is again an acceptable way of spreading literary output. A far greater and growing emphasis on prose writing is also discernible, most striking in the recently published short stories of Ahmed Essop and the influential Mtutuzele Matshoba. It must be pointed out that prose is in its production a far more individualized form than either theatre or participatory poetry. However, there are growing signs that the lessons learnt about technique during the past decade have not been totally lost. Small literary groups are again being formed (CYA, Madi, Bayajula to mention but a few) and multi-media performances are taking place. Dramatic performances of Matshoba's stories are also apparently being planned.<sup>15)</sup> Furthermore, a greater use of vernacular and slang forms of expression are now appearing in his prose, as well as that of other writers such as Narin Ayer.

Interestingly, some of these groups can be found in the heavily populated rural slums of the Bantustans (such as Guyo Book Club in Sibasa) or are beginning

13) Despite a certain amount of political naivety at its inaugural meeting in August 1978, when the various merits and demerits of several large business concerns and foundations were earnestly discussed as a source of sponsorship: naive in that it seeks to define in a simplistic moral manner the position of the writer in society.

14) I am thinking of New Classic, Staffrider, Inspan and the now banned Donga.

15) The Creative Youth Association (CYA) in Diepkloof, for example, staged a Free Art Festival late in 1978, and has already given rise to an accompanying music group (Bapupi) and a play Egoli.

to use a vernacular poetry far removed from the dictates of tribal culture or the segregated universities (Mpumalanga Arts in Hammarsdale). One can say that, although a 'community' cannot be brought into being by a literary organisation or magazine, the linking of artistic groups into these forms of publishing and forums of discussion has its encouraging side.<sup>16)</sup>

Such literary development has been paralleled by the increasing rationalization and extension of censorship control to cover wider areas of concern - and the urban oral poetry has suffered from a growing awareness on the part of the authorities after 1976 of its effectiveness as a medium - in some cases poets have been banned when their poems are not accessible to control. In addition several issues of Staffrider have already been banned, while the multilingual Donga was declared a prohibited publication in 1978. Despite the fact that black writers are according to the censors allowed a greater 'pain threshold' than their white counterparts, and the grudging concessions made about 'protest literature' and 'literary merit', it is difficult to see what criteria of judgement are actually being used.<sup>17)</sup>

## 11.

One of the effects of the expanded reproduction of capitalist production and the subordination of all other forms to the dominance of the capitalist mode of production; the huge boost in secondary industry and the concomitant massive urbanisation of blacks since the 1930s and 1940s in South Africa has been a growth in the numbers of the black petty bourgeoisie. This stratum now includes

16) The effective non-editing policy of Staffrider has at the same time meant that much uneven work is printed while a fairly comprehensive picture of general literary activity is brought to light. It is interesting to note that the burgeoning number of groups affiliated to P.E.N. cannot affiliate as a group - as Mike Kirkwood has observed "an interesting case of an 'atomised individual' type of membership structure conflicting with a practice based on concretely organised groups". (personal letter to the author).

17) See Publications Directorate letter Staffrider 2,2 1979 p 2. A significant section of this letter claims "the probable reader would mainly include persons interested in the development of Black literature" in tones which seem to say that this is regarded as a fairly small and ineffectual clique (???) I also have a notion (which I cannot substantiate) that the more stringent steps taken against Donga was a result of the fact that its multiracial policy involved far more Afrikaans writers. On the subject of small magazines generally, see "Is It Now Pointless to Carry On?" Star 2/5/78.

wage earners in civil, commercial, educational, health and media work as well as professional people and small-scale traders and producers in both Bantustans and urban areas.<sup>18)</sup> The African petty-bourgeoisie in this country is extremely heterogeneous and fragments of it exhibit a range of fluctuating positions and attitudes under different conditions, although the racism of the white power bloc often serves as a negative unifying factor. The individuals placed within it are in a relatively insecure position economically vis-a-vis their white counterparts, politically and (until recently) ideologically as well. In the face of continual harassment of their attempts at organisation, they present no unified political position; indeed, the narrow stance adopted by some segments of this class in the Bantustans shows their dependence on and ultimately vested interest in the functioning of the state which created their position. In urban areas their grievances are expressed in a number of ways, from the desire for removal of specific blocks to their betterment to more radical configurations.

As the apartheid system has proved by and large retroactive to their interests, the black petty-bourgeoisie has in various guises attempted political and ideological alliances with both urban and rural lower classes over the years. However, the precariousness of their position and the often myopic nature of their demands have, when encountering the coercion and refusal of their demands by the South African state, resulted in the frequent destruction of their attempts to organise a mass base for themselves during the last thirty years.

It has been pointed out that the petty-bourgeois poses his or her contradictions with the power bloc more easily at the political and ideological levels of society than according to the dominant relations of production.<sup>19)</sup> Moreover a powerful stratum of this class - the intellectuals, teachers, journalists and artists - have a principally ideological role in society. This category presents a decided unity of thought of its own because of the importance of education in its formation and reproduction.

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18) H. Wolpe 'The Changing Class Structure of South Africa: The African Petit-Bourgeoisie' Mimeo, 1976 p 18.

19) E. Laclau Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory (London, 1977) p 114 and E.O. Wright Class, Crisis and the State (London, 1978) pp 87-102.



The key rôle of students and intellectuals in the rise of the Black Consciousness movement and the importance of black consciousness as a reaction against the denigration of European cultural norms this decade is obvious. The end of the 1960s marks the end of the coalition with white liberals and the beginnings of new forms of organisation among blacks given a cultural focus but affecting all fields of activity. In the vacuum created by the bannings of the previous major political organisations inside the country and the exile and imprisonment of its leadership, the students of the urban elite on the segregated campuses and schools were instrumental in setting up organisations such as SASO and SASM and later on the BPC, the BCP, BPA and SSRC.

Linking significantly to the thought of the Black Power movement in America, black consciousness ideology based itself on an emotional rather than theoretical appeal for tackling such issues at hand as the white man's stereotype of 'blackness', a rejection of assimilation, a retrospective pride in African cultural heritage and a psychological emancipation and affirmation of colour.<sup>20)</sup> Due to the parameters and the forms of control employed by the South African state, such as the artificial maintenance of Bantustans and racial barriers against economic parity, the struggle for freedom by the oppressed is often expressed in racial, ethnic or national terms. The idea of racial or national difference in South Africa is fostered by the state; and various sections of the black petty-bourgeoisie have sought to appropriate this as a populist element in their discourse. The cause for oppression is thus not perceived to lie in the political, economic and ideological structures of control within the country but to be a factor of 'white' against 'black'.<sup>21)</sup> The black consciousness initiative in South Africa, although its leadership was undoubtedly petty-bourgeois and

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20) P. Horn "'When it Rains, It Rains": U.S. Black Consciousness and Lyric Poetry in South Africa' *Speak* 1,5 1978 pp 7-8. Other factors, of course, influenced the development of Black Consciousness: the image created of further employment opportunities for the educated and semiskilled operatives in urban and homeland areas had by the early seventies virtually disappeared, and resulted in this group being more open to radical demands. The defeat of the Portuguese colonies and the policy of detente, along with an economic recession after the boom of the sixties, had forced the South African state onto the defensive. The early seventies were marked by worker unrest (the Durban strikes, etc.) and growing discontent in places of learning.

21) *Ibid.* p 12.

most of its initial demands reformist and elite-orientated, had relative success because in the absence of traditional popular movements or a continuity of effective political organisation it took up some demands which affected the great majority of black people, such as the colour bar. Furthermore, because of a lack of theory or clear objectives it appeared at first malleable in its ethnic aspect both to white liberal and Afrikaner nationalist elements.<sup>22)</sup>

While to some extent oppression and exploitation are the common lot of all those with a black skin in South Africa, it cannot be assumed that at any one time the opposition to this oppression will be uniform.<sup>23)</sup> It must be stressed that black consciousness began mainly as a cultural and ideological expression and has in the final analysis been accepted as a rubric of 'legitimation by individuals and organisations with widely differing goals and stances.'<sup>24)</sup> No clear answer has yet emerged as to how to sustain an economic and political struggle using this means of cultural mobilization in the absence of workers' organisations and in the face of increasingly severe state suppression, especially recently.<sup>25)</sup> In addition the principal failure of the black consciousness impetus as it stands today seems to be that, now that its organisations have been banned, its predilections for a purely ideological and cultural matrix have been strengthened in some quarters. It has become a rallying cry for both radical and conservative elements in the black community and has, in certain

22) P. Horn 'Soweto 1976' Mimeo, 1978 pp 5-6.

23) Wolpe op.cit. pp 4-5.

24) In terms of literature, one can point to the difference between Gwala's powerful materially-based arguments and idealist or existential statements such as Moodley's "And what is blackness? It is not a matter of the colour of the skin, it is a matter of the projection of the beingness". (SASO Newsletter May/June 1972 p 18) and the work of N.C. Manganyi.

25) It is interesting to consider, as Horn suggests, that the initial cause of the 1976 riots was the issue of Afrikaans, an issue which could only be significant to an educated elite. It was two months before the SSRC first called a three day strike. Despite the initial reaction of the hostel-dwellers, the strikes in August and September of that year were very successful indeed, with absenteeism as high as 80-90%. The lack of penetration of these demands into the mines and Natal show, however, that the gap between workers and students was not fully bridged. Horn, 'Soweto' p 7.



instances, become simply a mirror image of the ideas it is opposing.<sup>26)</sup> Cultural movements are important elements of the struggle of any people for advantage but cannot, strictly through their own discourse on the ideological level, create any permanent change in the society at large<sup>27)</sup>; and there has been a tendency among some writers attracted to the doctrines of black consciousness to avoid material reality and set up absurd connections based on supposedly psychic or somatic racial characteristics.<sup>28)</sup>

III.

Although all literature need not be overtly political, it cannot be free of ideological and sometimes political implications and will, because literature is usually an individual or group activity, not only express these implications but also form and reform them anew. What subsequently emerges is not so much an expression of ideology as a production of ideology, often full of conflicted and contradictory meanings and silences.<sup>29)</sup>

26) A quote by Regis Debray is of interest here: 'One need only consider the fate of the Black Panthers. The system against which they were protesting contaminated their protest by transforming it into a show, thus reabsorbing it and finally treating it as entertainment. A number of Black Panthers ended up by showing the dominant white world a mirror image of itself, its own reactions, reversed but in substance the same: hence both the ease with which they captured the world's attention, and their inevitable evanescence. The world of the show is the world of the moment. Permanence means boredom.' A Critique of Arms Vol. 1

27) See L. Althusser 'The 'Piccolo Teatro': Bertalazzi and Brecht' in For Marx (London, 1969) p 143.

28) A. Cabral 'The Role of Culture in the Liberation Struggle' Mimeo n.d. p 24. An example of this: "South Africans who are in this category are actually people whom Mbella Sonne Dipoko, the poet from the Cameroun, would call "lost souls"... How many of us have ever heard of Ali Mazrui or John Mbiti, whose writings reflect our souls as Africans?" M. Mzamane 'The Study of Literature in Africa' Donga 4, 1977 p 1. It is possible therefore for the individual to justify a variety of actions as potent politically. Witness Tsietsi Mashinini's reported statement on his marriage to a Liberian beauty queen: "This is a bold pan-Africanist act." The Voice 2,20 1978.

29) "Ideology is not, prior to the work, like a system which can be reproduced: it is resumed, elaborated by the work..." P. Macherey A Theory of Literary Production (London, 1978) p 232. Although ideology in literature is always mediated by the ideologies articulated by various groups and classes and is,

The relative importance of minor forms of ideological mobilisation such as art, literature, journalism etc. can fluctuate according to circumstances: as the ideological struggle becomes more acute in South Africa, for instance, the absence of direct political organisation means that ideological effects can become in a sense free-floating and 'activist' or 'committed' stances in art need to be subject to a closer analysis before their potential can be measured. In this country the continual smashing of organised opposition to the government has led both to writers not referring to a sustained active base and to them being regarded as significant sources of anti-government attitudes by the state. Situated in a society where popular discontent against the ruling regime is rife, disaffected intellectuals and artists, even when possessed of highly personal motives, may see a mobilizing role for themselves in their art. Where overt political expression is suppressed, their utterance can take on added relevance to those oppressed by the system. In many countries of Africa artists and writers are more connected, willy-nilly, to the political events of the day (even if they choose to try withdrawing). The relative shakiness of the state apparatuses and the discontent of large numbers of people makes their work more potent than in Europe, where it is contained more easily by the 'tolerance' of the society for individual artists.<sup>30)</sup>

It is never acceptable for the critic to accept literature on the level at which it itself operates<sup>31)</sup>: 'commitment' and 'relevance' have indeed become prescriptive and unwieldy terms in South Africa today. To see any literary activism in the context of moral or reflective imperatives, where it is believed

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finally, a minor terrain of ideological class struggle, the uneven relationship of art with the economic infrastructure of society assures that aesthetic and biographical considerations must play their part. The individual is the bearer of an accumulation of ideological considerations, not all of which are class contradictions, and it is impossible for a work to produce the totality of an ideology. Laclau p 163.

Ideological considerations can remain, in a dislocated state, once the material conditions which brought them into being have altered. A prevalent example in South Africa today is the unshakeable faith in 'free enterprise' in some quarters in these days of monopoly: for an amusing example of this see 'Do SATV choices reflect a bias to the economic left?' Sunday Times 27/5/79.

30) The developed world absorbs its ideological crises through its complex mechanisms of ideological and technological control, but the dependent Third World structures are brittle under popular manifestations and pressure. One could point to the rigidity of many state structures in Africa, frequency of coups etc.

31) T. Eagleton Marxism and Literary Criticism (London, 1976) pp 48-54.

Literature should project an ideal world and agitate men on to fresh values, is to miss nearly all of the constituents of the making of activist literature.

All too often value is awarded to works which fill certain categories selected and presented beforehand in the social and artistic milieu; Gwala, for one, has pointed to the way Doris Lessing was ignored by liberal South African purveyors of literature for many years.<sup>32)</sup> The ideological presuppositions and concerns of publishers and critics, dependent on the dominant aesthetic (and indeed, political) ideologies active at their time, tend to inflate and disparage the works they come across in an haphazard way. The manner in which an eminent white doyen of literature in this decade rejected the early stories of Mango Tshabangu for supposed inferior quality is indicative and illuminating, as is the awarding of prizes overseas to the strident yet unconvincing Andre Brink.

Objections made by African writers about the culture-bound judgements of Western critics of African literature are fully justified.<sup>33)</sup> However, all too often criticism from African critics has appeared to follow the formal and subjective techniques of the very same Western critics who are dismissed.<sup>34)</sup> The type of comment which does not realise that the 'committed' stance put forward in a work of literature cannot merely be accepted in a superficial manner but must be subjected to other considerations of an historical, social, ideological and technological nature, can assure no relatively exact placement of the work in the complex ebbs and flows of thought and action of its time.

The devotee of South African literature must therefore reckon with the techniques and forms specific to the literary actualization under study as well as the historical and social parameters of the work. We are surrounded today with favourable prejudices towards dominant literary modes and tastes inherited in this country from Europe and disseminated by the ideologically controlled places of learning. It cannot be accepted that literary formulations and their relationship to society are identical the world over, even when individualized and

32) Staffrider 2,2 1979 p 52.

33) A.K. Armah 'Larsony, or Fiction as Criticism of Fiction' New Classic 4, 1977.

34) Such as Abiola Irele's statement that the critic has the choice between judging 'the aesthetic value of the finished product' or get involved in 'legislation for the writer about his raw materials'. 'Negritude - Literature and Ideology' in Middleton (ed) Black Africa: Its Peoples and Their Cultures (Toronto, 1970) p 390.

imported forms like the novel and published poetry are used.<sup>35)</sup> Moreover, in such a situation the relative separation of writers from a public used to other forms of cultural expression, difficulties of education and language and the influence of traditional and oral forms all bear consideration.<sup>36)</sup>

Ideas change meaning as the historical context changes meaning: in fact, the 'angry' poetry now emerging in South Africa seems to bear little relation to the vitality of black theatre and poetry of the period up to October 1977; and a certain amount of posturing is now evident. Literature is at all times an activity, and the writer is part of a living social context and the bearer of the weight of its beliefs, conformities and rebellions.<sup>37)</sup>

The stance of the literary establishment and its criticism when faced with these type of problems is indicative of its shortcomings.<sup>38)</sup> One finds a predominantly textual criticism which can neither explain change nor see beyond its obsession with individual literary artifacts to the field of myriad cultural activities from which art or literature emerge. Thus, Cyprian Ekwensi is to them a worthy object of study but Onitsha Market Literature is not; King Kong rates critical reviews while mbaqanga does not.

Neither is it easy to find much evidence of more complex (if also text-bound) projections such as linguistic or structuralist methods of criticism. Elize Botha has admitted that "die groter teksgerigtheid wat die Afrikaanse letterkundige kritiek van die vyftigerjare nagestreef het, is nie deur enige "nuwe rigting" of "nuwe metode" oorstem nie".<sup>39)</sup> When literary criticism is seen in such a light

35) Dan Izevbaye in T. Vincent (ed) The Novel and Reality in Africa and America (Lagos, 1973) pp 17-20.

36) Oral literature often uses rather than is superseded by written literature in Africa. The developments of oral and written literature in such a setting are not independent or parallel, but constantly interactive (through radio, newspapers etc.). See R. Finnegan 'How Oral is Oral Literature?' Bulletin SOAS 37,1 '74.

37) One notes that technical advances in art are in a sense neutral, and their effects depend on how they are utilized and referred. It is not possible to deduce political positions from the formal or technical properties of a work of art, Benjamin notwithstanding: such technical progress can also mean increased specialization and lack of participation past a select few.

38) Isabel Hofmeyr shows that this criticism has not changed much in universities for some 100 years. "Problems of Creative Writers": A Reply WIP 2, 1977 p 36.

as a mirror exalting literature and reflecting its moods, analysis of any but the most culturally acceptable of the dominant class' literary productions becomes difficult. Couzens' view is harsh but exact:

...the unaware South African literary critic is white, is middle-class. Unaware of its own parochialism, it must create South African literature in its own image. South African literary criticism is in a state of original ignorance. This manifests itself in at least three ways: The ignoring of the field, the paucity of in-depth research, the narrowness of vision.<sup>40)</sup>

The rhetoric of this type of criticism is remarkably uniform. The naive sensuous empiricism of its practice protects itself by legerdemain (the references to 'universality') from any critical discourse at the same time as the split between high and low culture is nurtured and pronounced. Work based on different premises is not analyzed in concrete terms but is dismissed with reference to 'buite-literere oorwegings'.<sup>41)</sup>

What has eventually emerged from this established criticism is a passive stance to a bewildering and alienated century. In South Africa, this way of avoiding social concerns has usually resulted in an implicit affirmation of the status quo.<sup>42)</sup> Politically it has kept faith with universality only by straining to remain uncontaminated by any sort of ideology, despite the fact that all literary theory issues forth from the dynamic relationships and interactions which

39) Standpunte 133, 1977 p 9.

40) T. Couzens 'Sebokeng, Doories and Bra Jiggs: Research in South African Literature' in New South African Writing 1977 (Johannesburg, 1978) p 29.

41) The phrase is Malan's. Further propaganda of this position is common: work based on different premises is dismissed as 'indoctrination' (Ulliyatt), or with reference to 'politieke oorwegings' (Muller) and 'the simplicity of the left and the right' (Abrahams). These are weighed against such admirable self-explanatory concepts as 'die literere gehalte van 'n werk' (Smuts), 'the old concept of universality' (Ricci), 'authenticity' and 'intrinsic poetic merits' (Ulliyatt), 'belesenheid en leeservaring' and 'voortdurende opskerpings van norme' (Botha) etc. Criticism is there 'om die literatuur te dien' (Smuts). Quotes from Standpunte 133, 1977 and Contrast 44, 1977 among others. Frederic Jameson observes: "Such thinking is characterised by a turning away of the eyes. A preference for segments and isolated objects as a means to avoid observation of those larger wholes and fatalities which if they had to be seen would force the mind in the long run into uncomfortable social and political conclusions." The Prison-House of Language (Princeton, 1972) p 24.



constitute the ideological. Instead a sterilized criticism is put forward wherein the critic is not aware of the boundaries and limitations of his or her own point of view; and the concern with a present meaning empty of historical and social perspective blurs the very fact of the subjectivity of the critic's response.<sup>43)</sup>

Without a dynamic critical and cultural basis all reflections about literature are doomed to sterile debate and class-bound stasis. Ideological censorship through patronage and selection and suppression of literature not part of the standards of dominant culture has historically often been the case in South Africa, resulting in the destruction of much that was valuable, particularly in the cultural crucible of the townships.<sup>44)</sup> Furthermore, the transposition of European critical standards without thought onto a country where differing cultural experiences and literary traditions have always influenced each other, has been especially retroactive to finding methods of approach suitable to cultural and literary study. Even if European formats are used by the writers themselves, these will be altered in changed circumstances.<sup>45)</sup> The adaptation of European languages by black writers to express fresh concerns poses a

42) In an atmosphere of increased repression and bannings, witness H.C.T. Muller's desire to keep literature 'free' from political prescription! Rapport 6/8/78. It is now possible that the real political sympathies of the 'teksgerigtes' are becoming clearer. An example is the letter of J.C. Steyn and H.C.T. Muller in Die Republikein (Windhoek) 4/7/79, containing statements like: "'n verbetering het b.v. eers gekom toe die Nasionale Regering in 1954 and 1955 Meadowlands laat bou het - 'n beurt met moderne huise en behoorlike dienste. Ondanks 'n hewige agitatie deur die Engelse Pers en Engelse geestelikes, het die swart mense met blydschap die beurt binnegetrek..." which is informative, in the light of what the Black writers of the time thought of the Sophiatown removals (their work is, of course, banned in South Africa).

43) Thus, a cogent criticism of Jameson's about structuralist criticism ("It cannot perform the most basic function of genuine self-consciousness, which is to buckle the buckle, to reckon the place of the observer into the experiment") is applicable. op.cit. p 208.

44) See Couzens/Dikobe 'Nobody's Baby: Modikwe Dikobe and Alexandra 1942-6' in Bozzoli op.cit. pp 95-6.

45) John Updike has pointed out that even American novels cannot be seen as having the same 'form' as their European equivalents. This is, of course, much more the case where the European influence is much weaker - an immediate example is Amadi's The Great Ponds from Nigeria, where no individual protagonist appears in the story.

problem for the Western-trained critic, as does the expectations and position of South African writers vis-a-vis their society and the overtly political role accepted by many. The different divisions within South African literature have always emerged from a common economy and body politic, and the complex influences between different 'streams' of this literature are now only starting to be appreciated. For instance, the Soweto revolt had a powerful effect on the white literature of the time, and the literary standards and values of the established critics only then began to look tattered around the edges. The rise of the 'betrokke' Samentigers as well as English writers such as J.M. Coetzee, who seeks to explore new modes of prose expression, is implicitly underpinned by an awareness of the necessary politicalness of individual experience in South Africa today, even when writers are (as Coetzee) exploring psychological and mythical foci.

It is necessary for artists from the dominated culture in South Africa to take the next step beyond this abortion of the intellect, this emotional self-involvement in the literary work itself and a 'relevance' connected to moral imperatives rather than analysis: In this connection the recent interest shown by some black writers towards literary conceptions and historical perspective can only be helpful in releasing them from the negating, back-slapping approval of the South African literary establishment.<sup>46)</sup> An awareness of the actual possibilities of cultural opposition to the dehumanising effects of the existing system is now clearly essential, as is a calculating of the parameters of the struggle of cultures involved.

#### IV.

The word 'culture' has, in the African context, always been used as a weapon: originally as a means for the European powers engaged in the scramble for the continent's wealth of justifying this violence by pretending a civilizing and philanthropic mission. In order to facilitate the flow of raw materials out of

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46) See letter from Guyo Book Club, 'Profile of the Historian Walter Benson Rubusane' by Risimati Jamathonsi and Gwala's review of Honwana's We Killed Mangy-Dog, all in Staffrider 2,2 1979 pp 21,31,52.



the continent with as little expense as possible, ideological as well as political and economic means of control were used - the denigration of traditional oral literature and art, the use made of newspapers, an education system geared to fostering the values of the colonial power and to train individuals for service, a powerful new religion, and so on. Colonial ideology informed the structures of colonialism as made manifest in the trader, the soldier, the administrator and the missionary: those bearers of 'light' to 'darkest' Africa.

Because of the use made of it by conflicting groups, it is more easily apparent in Africa that 'culture' is best situated as a strategical term, used as a means of mobilization and placement of the individual into a wider social group in terms of identification.<sup>47)</sup> Culture has no meaning apart from the social organisation of life into which it is built.<sup>48)</sup> That is not to say that general references to culture are empty: as an expression of social order and difference

47) 'Culture' is generally used by the layman in South Africa today with two distinct meanings. One refers to the 'cultivated' pretensions of the middle classes and makes the distinction between the civilized few and the ignorant masses who are not the recipients of its blessings: the second, as popularized by social anthropologists, refers to the totalized social effects of any pre-selected and distinct society. Both uses have become the tool of the dominant sections of society; what was, in the first case, originally conceived as a defensive aestheticism reacting against the subordination of mankind to commodity production, has been transmogrified by the cumulative weight of literary and cultural theorists into an element of ideological control and implicit celebration of the status quo. Anthropological usages have generally been unable to deal with social contradictions (other than in terms of 'sublimation') and were often linked to colonial and neo-colonial endeavours. See R. Williams Culture and Society 1780-1950 (Harmondsworth, 1958); J. Fekete The Critical Twilight (London, 1978) pp 11-21; F. Jameson op.cit. pp 161-2, 196-9, 209-11; P. Anderson 'Components of the National Culture' New Left Review 50, 1968 pp 49-56. It emerges clearly that all cultural debates must be inserted in their specific situations.

48) I would suggest the terms 'culture' and 'ideology' differ from each other but are often used to denote many of the same factors. Ideology has a more specific definition and tends to be used where the functionality of the social organisation of beliefs and thought is concerned. The term 'culture' seems to appear where the focus is on the content of such beliefs and thought.

It is experienced by individuals and groups as a series of ... and ...  
... and divides people in their beliefs, actions and values. There is a strong  
reciprocal and dependent relationship between ... a profound manifestation of the  
ideological level and the economic and social reality. This way, the ... of  
cultural formation exhibits plainly the attempts and ... undertaken by  
specific classes and groups to change, correct and project the ... of  
conceptions of the world to inform their practical actions and ...

historical experience always plays a large role in determining culture, which  
is a formative and flexible process. Culture is simultaneously the product of a  
people's history and a determinant of history.<sup>45</sup> Any society, ...  
several different, conflicting points of cultural focus, one more or less  
usually dominant through its linkages to the dominant power structures and the  
diffusion of its interests through ideological state apparatuses such as the  
school and media.

In order for a ruling group to become hegemonic over the society as a  
whole, however, it needs to interpose its various codes of differentiating discourses  
and ideologies into its discourse. In South Africa the great ... of apartheid  
ideologically is that it does not have ... consequences of  
necessary inclusiveness; a great majority of people are excluded from the  
ideological structures of legitimation. The wider South African context and the ...  
has been a concomitant increase in the role of ideological relations ...

In a period of generalized social crisis such as the country is now undergoing,  
ideological contradictions have been exacerbated at the same time as a retreat of  
certain elements of the dominant culture has been ... would suggest  
that many urban groups experienced a type of ... during the 1970  
crisis and such ideological ... assumes great importance for ...

45. ... and ... Journal of ... ...

46. The use of ... Journal of ... ...

petty-bourgeois strata. Until well into the seventies the liberal establishment active on the literary scene defended itself against black cultural activities by reference to ideals which stressed the primacy of European views and models of literature; but in the last few years has emerged a recognition, even if based on the same faulty principles, that black art is a subject to be taken cognisance of. The stage has been reached when agents of the establishment are seeking to assimilate members of townships cultural movements into the sphere of 'art' acceptable to the cultivated- witness the commercial success of Oswald Mstahli's first book of poetry a few years ago, and the rave reviews of shows like Ipi Tombi and Umabatha. There lurks the ever-present danger however that such cultural products will be assimilated in the dominant culture's own terms (protestation of 'ethnic innocence') or distorted to fit its digestion (the reduction of the nuance and skill of dancing in many commercially successful shows to that which is most provocative and spectacular, such as ukufenda movements).

There is, in my opinion, a danger in regarding with too much complaisance at this stage this partial retreat by the dominant culture. It has so far tended to be restricted to that portion of the dominant classes which is artistically more knowledgeable. So, while such retreat and assimilation might be the case in verligte or liberal literary and artistic circles, it cannot be claimed for most of those under the sway of the ideology emanating from the power bloc. Along with the proliferation of state apparatuses and large monopoly conglomerates over the last decades, an attempt has been made to harness all spheres of social and cultural life to spheres of domination. The ideological structures of the state and the private sector continue to generate a widening variety of artificially created needs from Lux soap to Kung Fu films. The state control of the press and other media in this country is awesome: educational books, the mass media, and products of mass culture (comic books, advertising, records and magazines) are used for purposes of directing and controlling consciousness, even when their subject matter is not ostensibly politics.<sup>51)</sup> Indeed, the names of newspapers and both black and white magazines have featured in the Department of Information

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51) It is generally conceded that SABC and SATV are powerful monopolistic means of cultural dissemination. One thinks of magazines such as Bona and Pace (it is interesting to note that Pace's primary target is the literate, urban higher-income bracket of blacks in the 16-34 age group resident in the Soweto/Johannesburg complex), the recordings of 4) Battalion in Namibia, etc. For a look at the use of comic books see A. Scholtz 'Mirror of Real Life: The World of Photo-Comics' Speak 1,4 1978.

exposes (featuring also an unsuccessful attempt to buy Drum magazine). Efforts have been made to control the burgeoning black film industry.<sup>52)</sup> These attempts at control have been matched by the overtly political platitudes of 'popular' ideologues of the ruling class, evident in patriotic songs, the 'terrorist' stories of Tippetts, Carney, Early and Stiff and a plethora of films from Captain Caprivi to Grensbasis 13. Neither is it tenable to sneer at the artistic ineptitude of much of this propaganda; it is, for a certain section of the South African public at least, effective enough.

It must be noted that petty-bourgeois groupings, while rejecting a political and educational system which denies achievement of their interests, are susceptible to commercial imperatives which are potentially rewarding; while the power of mass media is such that both petty-bourgeois and working class elements have accepted, perhaps, attitudes thrust upon them which are not so obviously political. In terms of art and literature nevertheless most efforts to systematize state control up until now have relied on censorship and bannings rather than subtler means of diffusing potentially dangerous utterances; a censorship which now not only embraces writers but editors and publishers as well.

In such circumstances of dependence and control the stance of the politically committed artist and the way in which he or she mobilizes the artistic medium available assumes great significance in any effects such art might have. While activist art can be used as a means of psychological support for those disaffected and dominated, it also implies future concrete action - if not on the part of the artist, then on the part of the recipient. It is not correct to imply that the committed artist in Africa or anywhere else need make no decisions past the acceptance of a few slogans, and simply throw these around in the relative sanctity of poetry readings or on the printed page.

There is a danger that if too much attention is paid to the creation of an isolated and elitist literature of opposition in such a situation, the struggle for a viable popular culture to underpin and inform this literature will be lost

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52) See Rand Daily Mail 13/12/78 and 26/12/78; Sunday Times 8/10/78 and 12/11/78; Sunday Express 10/6/79.

by default. Thus, an illuminating comparison can be made with the cultural initiatives accepted by the dominated in the African Lusophone countries, and in particular the use of culture by the African nationalist organisations. While the importance of culture as a factor of liberation has been emphasized in a similar way to South Africa, it has been stressed only as one ingredient in a total campaign for liberation which includes military, social, political and economic initiatives as well.<sup>53)</sup>

It has moreover been especially informative that this emphasis on the cultural aspects of liberation has been away from the cultural renaissance of intellectuals, and into the use of those facets of culture least distorted by colonial rule: the rural and urban peasantry and proletariat which the colonizing power had least interest in acculturating and assimilating.

... a distinction must therefore be made, at least in Africa, between the situation of the masses, who preserve their culture, and that of social sectors which (are) more or less assimilated, uprooted, and culturally alienated.<sup>54)</sup>

Although, in distinction to the petty-bourgeoisie, these people have no need to reassert their identity to become aware of its value,<sup>55)</sup> it is insisted that the divergent popular and traditional cultures found in any country are necessarily altered and forged into a 'national' identity during the period of struggle itself. A highly regarded part of cultural life in these countries after independence has been the use of linguistic expression, music and dances as well as pageants to build a culture transcending both colonial and tribal forms of identity.<sup>56)</sup> This process undertaken aims also at a destruction of colonial state structures and the reharnessing of education to serve, not just an elite, but the society as a

53) Cabral 1973 p 101.

54) Cabral n.d. p 17

55) Due to their better education and recurring ideological interests, the radicalization of many black petty-bourgeois elements in Africa has historically been marked by a reaction against the inherited European cultural imperatives and towards identifying with their African heritage. A relatively alienated stance therefore precedes this search for 'roots'. It is not strange that movements such as Negritude were often started by African intellectuals overseas, nor that such expressions are based on the premise that all Africans are culturally identical and little emphasis placed on the divisions which had emerged due to colonialism. Indeed, a nostalgic communalism and classlessness in African history is insisted upon, even though divisions existed before colonial times (Soyinka and Armah have given voice to this tendency.).



whole.<sup>57)</sup>

In South Africa the extent of urbanisation and proletarianisation is so wide and has gone back so far in history that it is impossible to talk of the mass of people as having been unaffected by the state structures. Despite the cultural complexity found, the class character of culture is extremely evident both in urban areas and the so-called 'Homelands'.<sup>58)</sup> In such a social situation cultural assimilations and transformations have been the order of the day, despite the attempts of the state to reconstruct a synthetic 'traditionalism'. Furthermore, due to the increasing control exercised by the power bloc over the techniques and technology available to cultural 'industries' such as advertising and the media, the dominant groups have attempted both to use culture as a profitable enterprise for themselves and a divisive and controlling factor:

The urban South African situation... illustrates what happens when the means of production and distribution of expressive culture pass out of the community of origin and into the hands of interests antagonistic to, or at least separate from, the social development of that community. Africans in early Johannesburg had access to a variety of cultural resources, which could be blended to express the dynamics of cultural identity and social change affecting various groups. Before long, a class-oriented, self-conscious urban African community had developed, in which performance events played an important organisational, recreational and symbolic role.<sup>59)</sup>

Partly because of its ephemeral nature and partly because the dominant culture has

56) One thinks of the revival of traditional dances such as the Mussituro in Mozambique (suppressed by the Portuguese), and the use of popular forms of dance, theatre and poetry in factories, schools and villages by cultural groups like Grupos Culturais Polivalentes and the Grupo Scenico. Spectacles such as the Mueda pageant commemorating the shooting of 600 people in 1960 by the Portuguese, the Mussituro and the National Dance Festival held in late 1978 were expressly aimed at overcoming tribalism. One critic has remarked on the striking mixture of borrowed, traditional and impromptu styles in these performances. See New African August 1978 pp 72-3; R. Salutin 'The Culture Vulture in Mozambique' This Magazine 13, 1 1979 and Development Dialogue 2, 1978 p. 36.

57) At the same time the separation of mental and physical labour - a powerful force in the creation of professional intellectuals - is de-stressed. Carlos Dias: "It would be impossible to conceive of work apart from education as though it were something to which we aspired or which we were preparing ourselves to do in the future instead of understanding it as the very centre of the formative process."

58) A. Mafeje 'The role of the Bard in a Contemporary African Community' Journal of African Languages 6,3 1967. Illustrated with the example of the mbongi Melikhaya Hbutuma in the struggle between the chiefs Sabata and Matanzima in the Transkei in the 1960s, Mafeje shows that in such cases the bard can no longer play the traditional mediative role and is forced to take sides.

always repressed and ignored it, the culture of the great majority of people in this country is a virtually unknown area. Much of this working-class and peasant activity has also been crushed when its means of existence was destroyed - such as the decline of marabi with the removals from Marabastad, Doornfontein and Prospect Township in the 1930s- and the disintegration of the doggerel poetry and pamphlet-eering of the diamond- and gold-diggers with their absorption and destruction as a stratum of society.<sup>60)</sup>

It is instructive to look at the forms of these complex cultural activities. Writing has not been a means of expression much favoured by the lower classes in South Africa up until now: during this century other forms such as music, broad-sheets, dances, speeches and protest songs have been preferred.<sup>61)</sup> Instead of a use of literature, the growth of literacy in South Africa has resulted so far in the most popular written artifacts being Drum in the fifties and, since its transformation into a newspaper appealing to a mass readership in 1960, the World and later on Post. Thus journalism has been until recently a more rewarding form of dissemination than relatively expensive books, and has been used by writers as such.<sup>62)</sup>

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It is, perhaps difficult in these circumstances to talk of a 'traditional' culture at all. What traditional elements have remained have tended to have been artificially preserved for the tourist trade, such as the Ndebele villages near Pretoria. The stratification and class-oriented social networks in existence in the townships have resulted in a number of diverse artistic and cultural tastes evolving, bound in a mediated way to the social identity and aspirations of their participants.<sup>63)</sup> It must be stressed however that an implicit or explicit element in many of these different styles is resistance to the status quo.

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59) Coplan op.cit. p 208.

60) See T. Couzens 'Sebokeng, Doories...'; 'Criticism of South African Literature WIP 2.1977 and I. Hofmeyr 'The Mad Poets: An Analysis of an Early Sub-Tradition of Johannesburg Literature and its Subsequent Developments' in Bozzoli op.cit.

61) Couzens/Dikobe op.cit. pp 97-8.

62) The continuity of writers who are also journalists in South African history is remarkable; right back to the days of William Gqoba in the last century. One thinks of Plaatje, the Dhlomo brothers, Ngubane, Themba, Matshikiza and Motsisi and recent writers such as Mthobi Mtshali.

63) Coplan p 188.



Musical and other performances, as well as the published work of the petty-bourgeoisie, can be seen as a means of orientation and resistance in the urban environment through a stress on shared identity and values.

It has always been the case that cultural and ideological aspects have played an informing role in the struggles for advantage and control over the means of production in Southern Africa: the cultural organisations set up by Afrikaner nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s, the protest songs of African nationalist movements, the recent 'terrorist' war novels and films and many of the expressions of black consciousness itself. It is thus on the political and ideological levels that the struggles between classes and races are usually most easily identifiable. In these struggles, the concept of 'the people', though varying in subject, has been used time and time again as a principle of identity through which differing groups attempt to rally support, using a variety of values and symbols to gain relative advantage of a popular-democratic kind. These popular-democratic ideological initiatives are, however, always articulated with class interests, even if these latter are deliberately blurred over.

Due to its lack of precise class content, the claim for popular legitimacy ~~is the domain of ideological class struggle par excellence: each class tries to present its objectives as the consummation of popular objectives.~~ Thus, ideologies are taken up and transformed by various organisations and groups in participating in the conflicts of their time, and it has happened that political movements with divergent aims have appealed to similar ideological symbols.

It therefore follows that the literary critic must refer symbols back to their concrete situation to recognise the actuality of these divergent meanings, as well as how they will function in changed contexts. Such is the case with the urban 'oral' poetry popular in Soweto among certain groups this decade: one finds an urban elite using peasant and traditional symbols and techniques which express, at this particular stage, a confrontation with the power bloc. In this urban setting symbols will be transformed, by losing reference to their concrete social base and transferred into a novel confrontation.<sup>64)</sup> Furthermore, this type of poetic dissemination has been relatively successful with other sections of the

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64) Laclau pp. 104, 171-2. Among groups who are separated from the dominant relationships of production (such as the petty-bourgeoisie) the evolution and conflicts of the present crisis they experience will be most discernible on the ideological level.

population, but this success cannot be attributed to the 'Africanness' of the symbols themselves.

The historical context and class nature of all forms of artistic expression and dissemination are informative. What is presented on the surface as radical and popular literature can in actual fact present the very antithesis of any conscious placing of the work in the struggles of the time: there have emerged a series of novels from both Africa and Afro-America which are opaque, past a few generalities, to any deeper exploration of the structures of oppression and control which underlie so much of the reality of contemporary life in Africa.<sup>65)</sup>

Intellectuals in South Africa in the 1970s have, in their attempts to forge an art and identity of 'blackness' or 'commitment', been unsympathetic to the overriding commercial orientation, political innocence and vulgarity of truly popular entertainers such as Kente and Mhangwane.<sup>66)</sup> I would suggest that this is not only a falling of the content of such entertainments, but also a partial failure of the more radical writers and intellectuals themselves. Their lack of recognition of their own class discourse and placement in society and acceptance of various generalized and sentimental ideological facets has led to the very area which is now important for literary artists - an awareness of their own contradictions with the people they claim to speak for and the need for their work to aim at overcoming these contradictions to forge a genuinely popular culture - being largely ignored.<sup>67)</sup>

65) I am thinking of Ayi Kwei Armah and Jacqueline Pierce. Compare this existential posturing to, say, the work of Ngugi Ousmane and Mwangi (or closer to home, compare Brink's output to Yvonne Burgess or the recent work of Etienne Leroux.

66) Coplan p 211. He suggests that the mode of their performances assists their popularity - satire, use of music, and a strongly visual impromptu art.

67) And this is not only a problem in South Africa: the two recurrent poles of 'popular' and 'advanced' art bedevils many writers who are more politically inclined.

The use of publishing by writers opposed to the state in South Africa today would, in the absence of other forms of literary realisation at the same time, ignore much of the valuable advances in literary expression made by the black poets and dramatists of the seventies. Published literature is perhaps the most class-divided of all art forms because of its ratiocination in language, its ignoring of the predominantly semi-literate sectors of South African society and its methods of production<sup>68)</sup>, a tendency which the purgear rigour of books can only complement. The committed artist, then, must of necessity become aware of the limitations and control imposed by some literary techniques at the same time as participating in the ideological and cultural conflicts of the time.

A literature supposedly dedicated to political change can, without a sense of its own actualization and audience, become trapped in sentimentalizing populist myths.<sup>69)</sup> To withstand the present onslaught against it, South African literature needs to dig its roots in deeper than an elite audience and self-propagating group of devotees. It needs to experiment and find forms and techniques which will make it a more potent weapon of individual and social resistance. And stress must then be placed on the fact that culture can never be meaningfully transformed into a prescriptive and immutable goal. There is a complex and shifting set of relationships between the popular and the avant-garde between 'high' and 'low' culture.<sup>70)</sup> The process under discussion is not so

68) Aesthetics and Politics pp 108-9; Eagleton Criticism and Ideology p 17. The literary text is, moreover, always selected, deemed readable and deciphered by certain conventions deeply embedded in educational and aesthetic practices and the act of reading is similarly ideologically controlled.

69) One thinks of the work of Miriam Tlali, despite its political and social pretensions. Her work shows clearly the dangers of these myths. See 'New Horizons' Staffrider 1.4 1978; 'You Can't Just Sit Back' Rand Daily Mail 19/6/78 and her story 'The Point of No Return' Staffrider 1.2 1978. "He unclasped his thumb slowly from the baby's instinctive clutch, stroked it tenderly for a moment. He walked slowly towards the dim dusty window. He looked through into the bare, visible yard, over the roofs of the nearby buildings, into the clear blue sky above. He said: 'It is because I have the belief that we shall meet again, Bongi, that we shall meet again, in a free Africa!' The music rose in a slow crescendo. 'That song is so sad. It sounds like a hymn' etc etc.

70) There is a need to resist forever the fable that complex techniques are comprehensible only to the elite few. On different levels, one can point to the Mueda pageant in Mozambique and the popularity of Mole Solonka's extremely difficult play 'The Road' among lorry and taxi drivers in Lagos and Ibadan a few years ago.

much being popular as becoming popular, analogous to the way a writer does not so much deal with meanings as alter them through their activity.<sup>71)</sup>

Whether the writers and artists who identify with the dominated classes can widen the scope of their work from its present existentialist and elitist pre-conceptions and tendencies is a moot point at this time. During the early seventies especially, as has been shown there was a movement in this direction. Yet it can still be stated that the cultural expressions propagated by our writers will become progressively weaker critiques of the status quo if the duality of 'real culture' and 'popular culture' is not comprehensively overcome.<sup>72)</sup>

There is no inevitability in art and culture, no matter how much they are finally determined by the social context and struggles of their day. Neither has culture, despite its mass aspect, developed evenly through all sectors of society. The attitudes and behaviour of social groups, classes and individuals towards the present are clearly mediated by cultural, political and ideological aspects which explain differences among people in the same social category towards change.

Art and literature change in nature and context through practice, and are frozen into immutable forms only when their vitality of formations is denied or atrophied. How literature is forged, how meanings are reclaimed and altered, and the manner in which elements of technique and ideology are interwoven in works of literature can never be fixed beforehand. The problem of how individuals and small groups of literary activists can link into and influence the growth of a popular and dynamic culture appealing to as many people as possible is therefore now a crucial one. The unanswered questions of a committed literature lie in a discovery of how best to use it in the dark times and gathering conflicts ahead.

71) The Lukacsian equation of 'experiments in demolition with a condition of decadence' is unacceptable - one would have to dismiss, for instance, the immature but brilliant young Zimbabwean Dambudzo Marechera; whose highly idiosyncratic and personalised stories project most forcefully the fragmentalization and schizophrenia of a society at war with itself. In our situation the opposite effect can be dubious: witness Watson's accurate criticism of the white Anglophone South African poets of the seventies. "In general one would think that separation, division and alienation would be themes literally haunting the work of these poets...The English, however, have always evaded this fact through a wadding of dinners and ideas; anything but that radical ultimate, pain itself." S. Watson 'Palefaces - Some Comments on White English South African Poetry of the 70s' WIP 4, 1978 pp 33, 36.

72) H.M. Enzensberger 'Constituents of a Theory of the Media' New Left Review 64, 1970 pp 8-11.

## Appendix.

### We All Sat Round A Faia.

PETER HORN.

Sociology of literature is still widely regarded as one of those "sciences" which straddle the boundary lines of various disciplines, and which, while they are acknowledged to have a certain value as hand maids of their constituent disciplines, are rarely ever taught at undergraduate level. Despite the recent upsurge of "sociological" studies of literature and the rising interest in such subjects as mass media, consumer literature, studies in the reception and effect of literature, sociology of literature is still a discipline at the periphery of both literary criticism and sociology as taught at the university. This reluctance to deal with the sociology of literature is all the more surprising, if one considers a few undeniable facts about literature:

If one understands any literary text as a SIGNAL in a communications process between a sender and a receiver, then literature is a social process involving at least two people, and more important, a socially determined code of transmission which must be known by both partners. The basic competence of literary interaction, or knowledge of the code in the most general sense of the word, includes not just the knowledge of the language as such (even that is sociologically differentiated) but more importantly the knowledge of social norms (e.g. the way of typifying person's actions and objects), communicative norms (what may be verbalised, what may not be, depending on the social context), choice of style (ironic, metaphoric, quotations etc.)<sup>1)</sup>.

To go further: If we grasp ideology as the way a subject is produced in language so that he/she is able to represent his/herself and therefore able to act in the social totality, the very fixity of those representations, which we call a subject, is the function of the ideology through which he has been constituted as a subject. The subject, the individual is therefore itself a social fact and results from its construction in

sociality. The notion of the poet who is an individual and the notion of the individual as ineffable, i.e. non-translatable into general terms, theoretical concepts, which informs prac. crit. and other similar forms of literary analysis is therefore idealistic. Idealism depends on notions of human essence which somehow transcend and operate (indeed, cause) the social system, and are not constructed in this system. The lesson of structuralism was, indeed, that man is to be understood as constructed by the symbol and not as the point of origin of the symbol. It is perhaps significant that structuralism is largely excluded from the study of English literature and S.A. Literature in English, and that in this way its theory of meaning - if T.A. Richards can be credited with constructing such a theory - formed the hidden assumption of much of practical criticism methods of dealing with S.A. poetry. No wonder that most of such analyses never progressed beyond the "insight" that S.A. poetry is second-rate, and never subjected it to an analysis which was adequate and suited to the object under discussion.

The present paper can obviously not fully explore this trend of thought and create tightly constructed models of dealing with S.A. texts but it can explore some of the dimensions within which such an edifice would have to be built. If on the other hand we accept that the human subject, is not homogenous and not in control of itself, (as Brecht does) that he is constructed by a structure whose very existence escapes his size, then the analysis of poetry cannot treat poetry as the expression of a unified and unique individual but as a structure which reflects the structure, to whose transformation the subject is subjected.

If we compare Wopko Jensma's "Jo'burg Spiritual" with Sydney Clouts' "Within", we become aware of a number of linguistic and stylistic differences, which cannot be accounted for as personal idiosyncrasies, but which must be analysed as to their sociolinguistic significance. While Clouts' poem is written in standard English, Wopko Jensma adopts as his medium the "corrupted" jargon of the slums of Johannesburg. While I don't want to draw any overhasty conclusions from this, it seems obvious to me that the two poems demand from their readers a different kind of linguistic competence. Words such as "intent" and "dimensions" in Sydney Clouts' poem presuppose a



fairly educated reader; while words like "squadcar," "white" in Wopko Jensma's poems, in order to be understood in their meaning, presuppose a familiarity with the facts of life in an apartheid society. Even more extreme is Howard Eybers' reproduction of the Cape Flats dialect in his poem "Mess Riemowil":

Waar die big bosses expect os moet  
heppie wees.

While most people are able to understand (and sometimes even to speak and write) more than one sociolect, most people do not share, most of the time not even understand the hidden assumptions, evaluations and conventions of any sociolect other than their own. The implied assumptions of Sydney Clouts are, by example, those of the liberal English individualism: in his poems he laments (projected metaphorically on objects in nature) the loss of the experience of being oneself in the South-African situation:

Your eye cannot go in.  
And it cannot find a tree  
Standing generous and full,  
Or a house or flower  
With individual power.

For those who share the view that the fullest development of one's individual self, disregarding any economical constraints or social obligations, is the highest good (which implies economical competition as a means of self-realisation), and who further share the view (first promulgated by the European Romantics) that nature is not an opponent but a mirror of the human being, the language of the poem is perfectly understandable. To a Zulu, however, even if he had no linguistic difficulties, the poem is meaningless, unless he had become completely acculturated to Western European thought. The speech act (e.g. the individual poem) is comprehensible on the basis of the whole system from which it gains its validity; and the system only exists in the multitude of individual speech acts. The structure of the language is the systemacity which informs every individual speech act: but the system exists only in the fact that the potential infinity of individual utterances is comprehensible. Thus to the colonised experience certain statements are devoid of meaning even if they share the "language" with the coloniser: they



do not share the assumptions which make the statement "a flower/ with individual power" a natural statement; within the context of their language (always provided it has not from the beginning been hegemonised by the coloniser) this statement is "odd", "irrelevant", "esoteric". Within the language of individualism and within the framework of a Romantic notion of nature it functions perfectly "natural"

Both Jensma and Eybers, on the other hand, built their poems on the assumption of human beings as communal and collective: their implied highest good is social harmony and co-operation. Wopko Jensma's lament is the loss of the uncomplicated communality of the slum by means of violence, in the form of cops who interfere:

i saw'm  
thump da nightwatch down  
his head a ball o'blood.

Individuality, i.e. separation from the collective, is experienced as isolation:

Na die Cape Flets  
die lekker lekker Cape Flets  
waar die wint waai soes in the Sahara  
waar 'n boentjie refuse om  
in die dooie gront te goei  
waar die skollies djou afwag met djou  
only paypekit Vrydagaant

Even if we assume with Adorno that a sociology of art "should not lead away from the work of art, instead it should lead deeper into it",<sup>2)</sup> it can be shown that no work of art, its form, its structure, its content is fully intelligible without a complete analysis of the communicative situation within which it functions - and that goes not only for such poems whose assumptions are unfamiliar to us, but even more for poems whose hidden evaluations and assumptions are so familiar to us that we do not dream of questioning them. Only an interpreter who is completely enlightened about the communicative and social norms which he applies, will become aware of the hidden bias in favour of his own unformulated norms, when it comes to

evaluating the aesthetic value of a poem.

As long as the norms remain unformulated, they are myths. Myths (and the intuitive evaluative methods of practical criticism are myths and create myths) makes the ruling ideas of social formations come to seem universal and natural. As such it represents the interests of a class within society as the common interest of all members of that society. It has to give its ideas the form of universality, and represents them as the only rational, universal values' (Marx, Engels, *The German Ideology*, p.64). The class most prone to fall prey to the mystification by means of such myths is the petty-bourgeoisie which does not live the material reality of the bourgeoisie because they do not own the means of production; yet they live the bourgeois ideological reality as the natural, unacknowledged limits of their universe. Petty-bourgeois norms are residues of bourgeois culture, they are degraded, impoverished, commercialised truths. By means of these norms the bourgeois class ceaselessly absorbs into its ideology a whole mass of what can be the bourgeois reality only by means of their imagination. Instead of the reality of individualism - the ruthless self-assertion of the big industrialists, businessmen and bankers is denied to them - they fast on the dream of a more genteel individualism which lacks the power and therefore the substance of such reality. They dream of Shakespeare's Renaissance heroes and live the reality of wheels in a machine, with a fixated and impoverished consciousness the myth of the individual (which appears so self-evident to their commonsense makes the world appear as free from contradictions, makes the world more and comforting, makes it a world of sameness, of endless repetition of ever the same comprehensible and identical forms. The mechanism of myth is the natural representation: such that the ideological meanings come to seem natural, the commonsense reality of that object or practice. Myth comes about by the necessity for a dominant order (its law and its thought) to represent itself as a natural order.)

All three poems which we have considered, show characteristic differences when it comes to select and transform phenomena of human reality. While some of the differences can no doubt be ascribed to individual differences of the poets vision, a global view of the literary scene of a nation like South



But the sea flames hard,  
 It is rumped like tin,  
 The sun is burning  
 Dimensions away...  
 If you cast a pebble down  
 It will clatter on the waves;  
 Your eye cannot go in.

The psychological equivalent of this "hardening" of nature is the line "Hardness afflicts you"; again hardness has no visible cause, it afflicts you like a virus. The poet feels threatened in his humanity and individuality by his surroundings, but he cannot locate the threat.

The suppression of the agent of the threat from the consciousness of the poet is in itself highly revealing; the poet cannot name or personalise the threat, because in a way he is not only the threatened but the threat: being a member of the privileged white minority and not having rejected this status (as Jensma does, at least partially), yet at the same time being threatened by the measures necessary to uphold this privilege; he projects his own guilt on to nature. This externalised and depersonalized threat can then no longer be overcome: any attack against it lacks a clearly defined goal. In this concealing the cause of the destructive and self-destructive tendencies of his society from himself, the poet gains an insight into the imminent demise of his society, but has to remain passive and pessimistic:

Flat is the world you'd find:  
 A row of wooden rooftops  
 That can easily topple  
 And can bring the heart down,  
 And bring down the mind.

Sydney Clouts' poem is for the purposes of our discussion perhaps the most interesting of the three, because it reveals the necessary inner contradictions of a writer, whose sympathies and convictions are obviously liberal, yet whose rational and emotional apperception of reality is limited by socio-psychological structures, habits and attitudes, which make it impossible for him to confront the true nature of a society, which thwarts his liberalism.

If we do not accept the rather vague and confusing concept of social strata, as developed by American sociology, but the theoretically much clearer concept of classes as groups of people, which differ from each other in their relationship of social work, and thus in the way of obtaining and in the size of share of the social riches, then the objective content of Sydney Clouts' poem aligns him on the side of the ruling minority, which own the means of production, despite the fact that he is opposing some of the manifestations of this his own dominating group: the essential fact is that he does not name this very group as the origin of the disturbing development he describes in his poem; instead, by describing it as "universal", and in an abstract way, he obscures the real social relationships in our society, and becomes a (perhaps unwilling) apologist for the existing system. Both Jensma and Eybers align themselves on the side of the working majority of the nation; but they, too, cannot completely escape the contradictions of an ambiguous situation, if for other reasons. Superimposed on the class structure of South Africa we have a race structure, which partly coincides but also partly obscures the existing class division. The 'os' of Eybers' poem refers to a racial community created artificially by government decree (labelled "Coloured"), which includes workers as well as owners of the means of production. The thoughts of the ruling class - the apartheid system - because the ruling class possesses the means of material and ideal production, are at the same time the ruling thoughts, and even the opponents of the ruling class can escape the dominant structure of ideas only with difficulty: in a society dominated by the clergy, the opponent must argue in theological terms, thereby giving the ruling classes the advantage of choosing the battle field and confusing the issue. Eybers takes over two argumentative structures from the ruling class: he accepts the unity of the racial group, based on a superficial criterion like skin pigmentation, as his point of departure; and he argues with reference to the Bible, i.e. he uses part of the ideological superstructure of the ruling class in an argument against the ruling class. In this way he imbues the "mass removal" of the contemporary apartheid society with a mythical aura borrowed from the Book of Books. Consequently, despite the antithetical structure of the poem, which seems to differentiate the biblical mass removal from the contemporary one, he opens his poem with this reference to a vision of cyclical, ahistorical, mythical repetition of events

in history:

Hulle se  
 histerie repeat homself  
 soe se hulle dja  
 Daar was mos 'n mess riemovil  
 in Bibliekil histerie  
 yt Edjip  
 oor die Ret Sie.  
 toe die mense van Faroe gevlug het

Despite the "maar" at the beginning of the third stanza of the poem, the parallelism is established:

Maar os het gemoeve  
 met perrekarre en krywaens  
 met vislorries en ou krokke  
 met al onse se furniture

Both the Jews and the "Coloureds" were forced to leave the 'Egyptian flesh pots', "al the nice areas war ons geken het" and to move through the desert "in merciless sunshine", which is duplicated by the "Cape Flets/ waar die wint war soes in die Sahara".

While Clouts' class position can be shown to be that of the politically disinherited English individualist and liberal, who feels threatened by the pragmatic political means the ruling party of this country uses to uphold the privileges which as a white man he enjoys, while Eybers can be shown to have fallen prey to a kind of reverse racialism, an identification with a racial group instead of a social class with the consequent distortions in his vision, Wopko Jensma in his poem clearly rejects his classification as "white" and regards the working class, regardless of colour, as his 'pals'. Yet even he cannot completely escape the distortion of vision imposed by the ruling classes: this can be clearly seen from the direction of his attack; it is not a critique of the society which makes violence necessary in order to uphold an unjust distribution of the social wealth, but a critique of those employed to be violent. Consequently he also falls prey to a mystification, which perverts yet at the same time preserves an essential part of the ideology



of the ruling classes - the glorification of the victim as the saviour:

i see her cut her own throat  
 i see her corpse lie in the Dark City  
 i see her save a multitude

In analysing the class content and the point of view from which an author sees the world, the important thing is not a collection of biographical facts, but an analysis of the poem itself.<sup>4)</sup>

The literary representatives of a class can be far removed in their education and their individual position from the class they represent. What makes them representatives of that class is that they cannot surmount the barriers in their head, which their class cannot surmount in life, and that they thus choose the same problems and solutions, to which their class is driven in real life by their interests and their social position.<sup>5)</sup> Every single literary text is the ideological expression of sectional or class interests, and to assume that there are great works which transcend the boundaries of their historical and sociological origin, is to pretend that certain forms of ideology (obviously those which are near to one's own) are universal while others are ephemeral (because expressing the view of opposing factions).

Some of the difficulty of the academic non-discussion of South African lyrical poetry stems undoubtedly from the double unacceptability of South African poetry: the poetry which is acceptable on ideological grounds to the majority of white English-speaking South Africans, does not extend the sensibility of the main stream of European poetry, and is thus superfluous for the ideological process of white English-speaking South Africans who still derive their consciousness from the colonial situation and their identification with the colonial metropolis; for them anything which derives from the colonial periphery must be inadequate and second rate, a fact which can easily be "proved" within a critical terminology which relies on sensitivity rather than on a rationally developed critical terminology; a small minority of white English-speaking South Africans however, are beginning to understand the fact that they are, like their Afrikaans-speaking compatriots, inhabitants of Africa; resenting the intellectual snobbery of Oxford and Cambridge, they begin to assert

aggressively their Africanness and denounce the non-relevance of an English-based culture; the pressure for courses in African and South African literature corresponds with the rise of a new consciousness among this group. This new group is therefore prepared to identify at least partially with that kind of poetry which is most "African", "Black" poetry, the recent poetry of "Black Consciousness". But they have understandable difficulties with a poem like Dennis Brutus "The Guerillas":

There is such a pleasure at last  
 In handling a cool and efficient weapon  
 Most modern, highly automatic  
 And moving off at the ready-  
 wishing they could see at home - the friends  
 and especially the children  
 and imaging the deed of flame and terror  
 - terror from this weapon, terrible and cold.

For the majority of even those readers, who accept South African poetry as a worthwhile object of study, poetry such as this is repugnant because of its content. While they have completely integrated and internalised the poetry of the struggle of the bourgeoisie against the feudal nobility and the church as part of their European heritage, they find it difficult to identify with the vital necessity for the majority of South Africans to emancipate themselves from apartheid and capitalism. But this inability does not extend only to South African poetry of this kind but extends to socialist poetry from wherever it comes, except where it has been robbed of its content and been made aesthetically palatable, as it is the case with a lot of Bertholt Brecht's and Pablo Nerodas poetry.

While a consciousness of the here and now, of the social and political conditions under which poetry is produced and received, does assist in destroying the false consciousness of immutable and eternal human values which mythifies the human values of a particular class, such a sociological consciousness of literature alone does not yet necessarily allow us to transcend the boundaries of our own class. The mere fact that we recognise that not only the contents but also the forms of poetry are always related to the class and the class interests of the class producing them and consuming them, liberates us from the narrow

subjectivism of aestheticism. It does however expose us to the dangers of a historicist relativism, which while rejecting the norms of a particular class rejects any norms and standards. Much of the sociology of literature while trying to base itself as an empiricist science of literature, relegates the question of value to a region outside the scientific debate. While such a sociology of literature would study Dennis Brutus' poem as a literary text deserving equal scientific study as Shakespeare's sonnets, it would with the same valueless objectivity study any one of the veld and vlei poets and their sociological significance to a certain white South African middle-class.

Such a sociology of literature while highly critical of the ideological content of the poetry it studies would be totally uncritical of the poetic merit, and while not perhaps expressing an overt preference for "black" or "socialist" poetry, would nevertheless tend to create the impression that the political stance of the poet is to be identified with his poetical ability. Such unspoken assumptions would be equally damaging both to the development of an emancipative poetry and a progressive criticism of literature in this country as the unspoken assumptions of practical criticism were. Not only would such a sociology of literature hinder the development of a radically-democratic and revolutionary poetry by allowing it to wallow in a sectarian self-satisfaction instead of subjecting it to the most stringent criticism, it would furthermore miss the very mode of the existence of literature: the fact that in literature the excellence of thought exists only in the excellence of the linguistic and artistic form which expresses it. A dualism which separates the form from content and concentrates on the analysis of the content and its ideological base would be as pernicious to literature and criticism as one which concentrates on the analysis of form to the exclusion of the concrete content of every literary form. The exclusion of evaluative criticism from the scientific analysis - even if this were possible - can only hand the job of criticism to those who use their schemata of critical norms without an understanding and reflection necessary for the task. We end up with a valueless sociology of literature analysing literature as a sociological document and unscientific critics who try to assess value. Even if they have recourse to what sociology of literature does, they will come up with such questionable judgements as: "politically backward, but what mastery of language" or "artistically weak, but the content makes it a work of the highest significance" Such a criticism will stumble through the phenomena of contemporary poetry (and not only contemporary poetry) with the same blindness as much of practical criticism.

A more satisfying sociological approach to literature will have to understand that value is not an epiphenomenon of literary creation and consumption, but that it is basic to the process of creation itself; each work is, if it is not merely epigonic, an implied critique of the canon of existing literature. It is what it is as a rejection or modification of all that went before, insofar as it takes up new themes (not treated beforehand or treated in a different way) and thus has to find new forms to embody this innovative content (which does not exist apart from this form which embodies it.). In the same way it is clear that criticism in the moment it is confronted with this creative and innovative effort of the poet has to re-think its relationship to the existing canon of work of art. It reforms the canon of literature, it does not leave it as it was beforehand. Thus e.g. the institution of courses in African and South African literature must by necessity reform the study of British poetry.

There is, however, one factor which complicates the issue, but which once fully grasped, shows more than any argument so far, the necessity of a Sociology of Literature for a critical appraisal and for the full understanding of literature of the past and the present: the phenomenon of the formation of canons. Each sociological class, after it has achieved cultural, not necessarily political dominance, enthrones the works of those writers who at the same time express the ideology of that class most clearly and whose professional ability to write is most outstanding as cononical: these are the Sophocles, the Virgils, the Chretien de Troyes, the Chaucers, Shakespeares, Goethes and Brechts which are said to speak eternal human truths. While a new class on the whole finds it fairly easy to dismiss the lesser lights of a previous culture to the limbo of literary history, they rarely succeed in completely ousting the classical authors of previous periods. It is here that the concept of heritage comes in: each class claims, that it represents the most human, progressive and beneficial ideology, and that while the previous class is obviously decadent, reactionary and incompetent, some of its members have aided the progress of humanity, and their valuable contribution deserves to be preserved; but since the class which produced these individuals is now a hindrance rather than a help in the progress of humanity, the rising new class deserves to inherit the entire cultural heritage of the past, because it and it alone can build upon this basis. Such an inheritance is, however, never without its problems: in order to assimilate the inheritance of the

past, the rising class must purify it of its partisan aspects, While one cannot re-write Dante or Shakespeare, one can re-interpret him in such a way, that the topical, political and social comments of the author are first de-emphasised as ephemeral, later made incomprehensible and thus easily to be overlooked by taking them out of the context of their origin, while the universal components, i.e. those which are assimilable by the new and rising class, are taken out of the context in which they function and given a disproportionate emphasis. While this process is the natural, unreflected and uncritical process of the growth of a culture, it cannot be denied that it is unscientific, because ahistorical. It neither deals critically with a product of the human mind nor explains the genesis, function and structure of that product, but makes this product consumable. For this reason the term "Practical Criticism" seems to be a misnomer: while claiming to provide criteria for the analysis and evaluation of literature, it has in fact neither critically analysed these criteria nor ever consistently formulated them.