Staffrider

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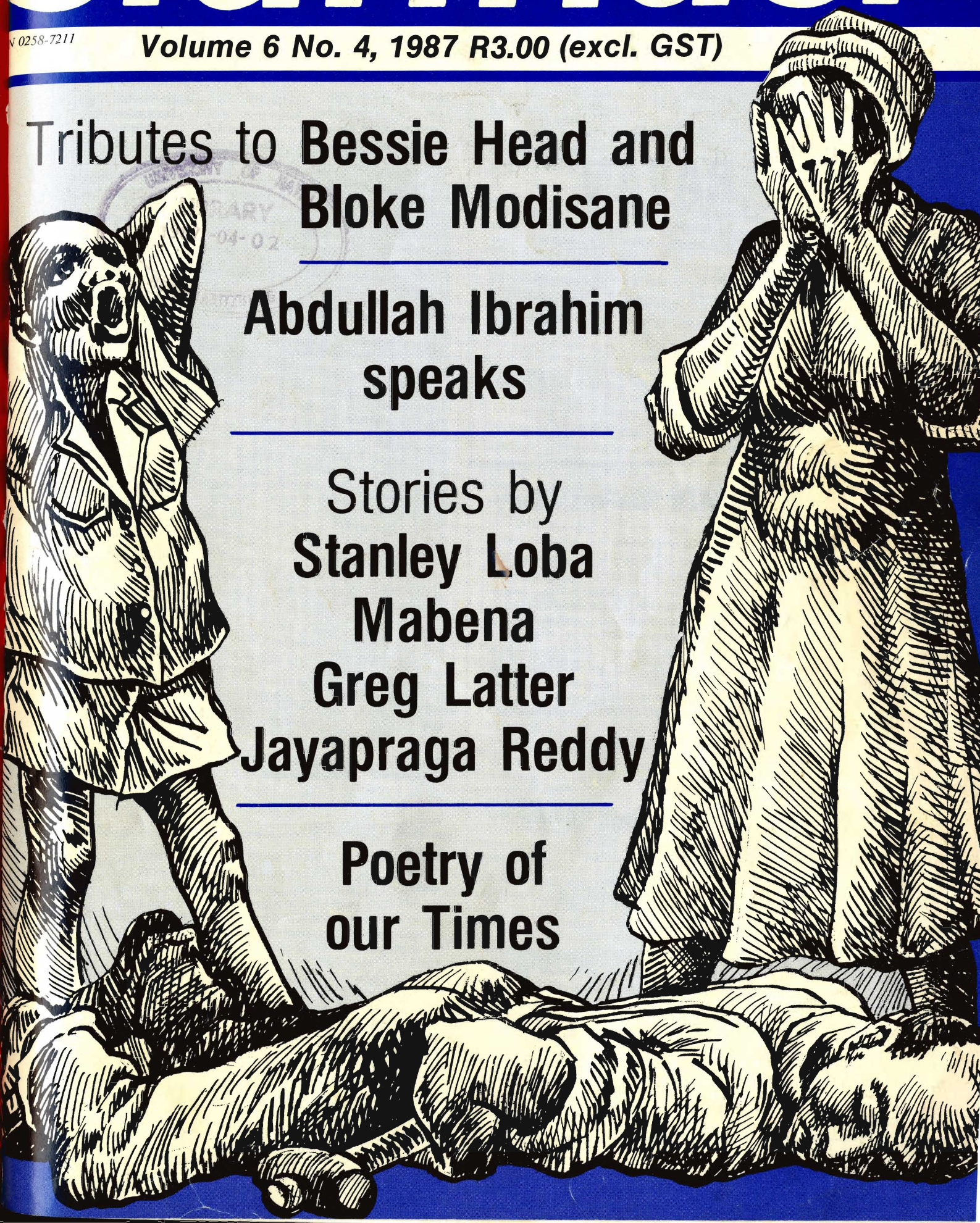

Tributes to Bessie Head and Bloke Modisane

Abdullah Ibrahim speaks

Stories by Stanley Loba Mabena Greg Latter Jayapraga Reddy

Poetry of our Times

NEW BOOKS

FROM

RAVAN

1987 COSATU Workers' Diary

Since the Durban strikes in 1973 the rapid growth of the workers' movement in South Africa has earned it a central role in the struggle for a new South Africa. Twelve years of experience lie behind the formation of COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Unions) founded on 1 December 1985. This attractive Workers' Diary is a response to this growth and draws on central themes of working class tradition. The Diary provides dates and illustrations of major events in the workers' struggle. Workers, students, activists and those interested in the workers' struggle in South Africa will find this a welcome daily resource.

200 pp. *approx. R7,00*

From the Pit of Hell to the Spring of Life

Staffrider Series No. 28

Daniel P. Kunene

The themes of bondage and freedom are central to Kunene's writing. His characters are often people facing significant choices, a man who must choose whether or not to join a strike, a young boy who must cross a swollen stream to reach his home, a man who sees the armed struggle as the only option left open to him.

Through careful observation of character and a subtle understanding of the relationship between the individual and his community, Kunene explores the complexity of the choice, its implications, its potential to enslave or liberate.

148pp. *R10.50*

Foe

J.M. Coetzee

When Susan Barton is marooned on an island in the middle of the Atlantic she enters the world of two men. One is a mute negro called Friday; the other is Robinson Cruso. The island is a society already at work. Its rules are strict and simple: survival, industry and order. Cruso is master and Friday is slave. Susan watches the creation of a barren world — an architecture of stone terraces above bleak and empty beaches — and waits to be rescued. Back in London, with Friday in tow as evidence of her strange adventure, she approaches the author Daniel Foe. But Foe is less interested in the history of the island than in the story of Susan herself, and battle lines are drawn between writer and subject. Sole witness to this contest, as he was to the mystery of Cruso's island, is the silent Friday. J.M. Coetzee's previous novel *Life & Times of Michael K* won the 1983 Booker Prize.

157 pp. *R23,00*

Mafangambiti

The Story of a Bull
Staffrider Series No. 28

T. N. Maumela

For the boys of a Venda village life revolves around the fortunes of Mafangambiti, a fighting bull whose victories are the talk of the countryside and whose rampages are destructive enough to bring his life into question.

Every page in this closely observed study of a cattle-herding boyhood vibrantly evokes the African setting. And there is no mistaking the epic quality of the story and the heroic stature of its protagonist, Mafangambiti — rugged, fearless, challenging, indomitable. Inevitably he becomes a symbol of Africa's will to endure, to survive, to *come back*.

Originally written in Tshivenda, Maumela's tale will challenge a place among the classics of South African fiction.

112pp. *R11.95*

The Novels of Nadine Gordimer

History from the Inside

Stephen Clingman

Nadine Gordimer is one of South Africa's most renowned writers. Yet few are aware of how deeply her work has responded to its immediate historical environment over the last forty years. Her novels provide a 'history from the inside' of her world in this period. In the most informed study on Gordimer available, Clingman traces a developing consciousness of history through Gordimer's novels, relating each to the moment from which it emerges, and which it in turn illuminates 'from the inside' — from the political triumph of the National Party in 1948, to the vibrant social and political world of the 1950s, to the Sharpeville massacre and beyond. Through all this the larger historical, social and ideological codes embedded in the novels are revealed in their wider significance. Finally a 'deep history' is investigated: the possibility that there is an historical unconscious in Gordimer's fiction, and the split position from which of necessity she writes.

288 pp. *R22,00*

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'When will they come home?' A mother at a DPSC meeting in Johannesburg listens hopefully for news of detained members of her family — photo by Eric Miller, Afrapix

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Front cover illustration: Mzwakhe Nhlabatsi
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Jayapragra Reddy

The Spirit of Two Worlds

The old woman pounded the spices in a wooden mortar. She sat on a grass mat in the sartorial position adopted by generations of women before her. It was cool under the mango tree and the gentle susurration of the breeze among the leaves was like the voice of God murmuring His comfort. Out here it was quiet and she could think her thoughts in peace as she prepared the mangoes for pickling. But today her thoughts were not very pleasant. They were troubled and she was forced to acknowledge the disturbing fact that there was rebellion in her household. Ever since Veeran, her youngest son, had married, there was dissension in her home. He hadn't heeded her advice and had obstinately followed his own desires. So now he reaped the consequences. A shadow hung over her normally peaceful household. Nothing pleased her new daughter-in-law. Nothing was good enough for her. She complained that the semi-detached house in the Indian township was too cramped and that there was not much diversion in the district. Her discontent and aloofness did not invite intimacy and she remained isolated. She kept to herself, joining the family only when necessary. The other daughters-in-law were tolerant at first but now there was open resentment. It was time, they maintained, that she took an interest in the family and did her share of the housework. She couldn't deny the truth of it. Sharda was headstrong and wilful. By bringing in her own ideas and an alien lifestyle, she had upset the smooth running of her home. In her day, oh her day, none of this would have been permitted, she lamented inwardly.

Radha, her eldest daughter-in-law, came out to her. 'You like some tea, Ma?' she asked, speaking in Tamil.

The old woman nodded and as she watched her go back in again, she thought how good and obedient a daughter-in-law she had been. She always wore a sari and her hair was still long and worn in a simple plait. No task was too much for her. Not when it came to doing things for her.

Radha returned with an enamel mug full of tea, which frothed like beer. Just the way she liked it, she thought, sipping it slowly. The hot fragrant brew dispelled some of her depression. She wished Radha would go away and leave her to her thoughts. But Radha lingered.

'There is trouble,' Radha informed her. 'Now she wants to go to work. He said she cannot go to work. She was very angry.'

The old woman sighed but refrained from comment.

She did not ask how she came by such knowledge. In the rather cramped living conditions of the council house, nothing was very private. Quarrels became public and one's tears, unless shed quietly, were heard by all. Radha went on, giving her all the details, but the old woman stopped her with a quelling gesture. She rose and went indoors.

Veeran stood at the window looking out vacantly. Sundays were usually so peaceful, the old woman thought as she studied him. Sundays were meant for outings attending weddings and functions and for visits to relatives. Now Sundays were torn by strife and tension.

'What is wrong, my son?' she asked softly. He did not turn around. She sensed his humiliation and hurt.

'She wants to work,' he said reluctantly.

'Then let her work, my son,' she said.

Illustration Mzwakhe

He turned and regarded her with disbelief. 'You want her to work!' he exclaimed.

She shook her head sadly. 'No, I don't want her to work. But if that is what she wants and if it will make her happy, then let her work.'

He turned away, his jaw setting in a grim, obstinate line. 'She doesn't have to work,' he pointed out.

'All women are not the same,' she reminded him.

'She says she is dying of boredom.'

Boredom. She left him then and went back to sit under the tree where she reflected upon this new and alien plague which afflicted the young. Her mind went back over the years searching for something which remotely resembled this malady, but there was nothing. There were hardships, countless sacrifices which had been made willingly, much pain and heartbreak and some rare and memorable moments of joy and happiness, but never boredom. She had married at thirteen, a child bride in an arranged marriage. In those days one did not question these things, one merely complied with one's parents' wishes and submitted silently to whatever was arranged. She had had nine children, six of whom had survived. An early marriage was followed by early widowhood and at forty she found herself alone at the helm. She hired a stall in the Indian market and so managed to keep the family together. Her struggle eased a little when her children were educated and settled in comfortable jobs. Soon she was able to give up the stall and retire, and so came to a quiet port. But there were so many lessons in one's life which one could not pass on to the young.

Sharda went to work as a hairdresser in an elegant new salon in Durban. The old woman wondered whether her new-found financial independence brought her any happiness. She bought a whole lot of new clothes, all modern and fashionable. Her short hair was styled often and in different ways. There were murmurs of jealousy and resentment among the other daughters-in-law. Even Radha fell prey to this.

'What does she work for? Only for her clothes and perfumes! While we stay at home and work like slaves she lives like a queen!' Radha observed acidly.

But that was only the beginning. Having got her way once, Sharda demanded other things. Her heart heavy with grief, the old woman looked on while Veeran weakly surrendered to her whims. Sharda learnt to drive and demanded a car of her own. Bus journeys were long and tedious, she maintained. With a car of her own she could get home earlier and have more time. More time for what? the old woman wondered. He was as malleable as clay in her hands. It was not right. No woman ought to have that much power over any man.

The car was small and sleek. The day she brought it home, the other daughters-in-law stood at their windows and watched her furtively.

The car was small and sleek. The day she brought it home, the other daughters-in-law stood at their windows and watched her furtively. She drove with an enviable ease, and they could sense her irrepressible excitement as she sprang out of the car. But her pleasure was short-lived.

At supper that night the family sat around the table in a grim silence, united in their resentment and disapproval.

For once, Sharda was not immune to their feelings. At first she ate in quiet defiance. Then a small knot of anger began to form at the pit of her stomach. It was unfair! What had she done that was wrong? Was it her fault that she could not fit in with their narrow conformity? Surely not! She rose abruptly and left the room. The silence around the table intensified. The old woman watched her go with a heavy heart.

In the weeks that followed the old woman tried to hold her disintegrating family together. But the task was too much for her. There were lessons in this for her too. She was discovering that her matriarchal authority had its limits and had to give way to a way of life that was rapidly becoming the norm.

The things her generation had cherished and valued were being replaced by an alien culture which sacrificed love and caring on the altar of Mammon and whose devotees foolishly pursued the things of the flesh.

The old woman took her troubles to her gods in prayer. But there were no answers. Her heart heavy with grief, she saw the rift between her and Sharda widen and was powerless to halt the inevitable. And the inevitable came one afternoon when Veeran announced that he was moving out on his own. The old woman received the news in a cold silence. Her initial reaction was one of grief. Then she felt anger. Anger because he was allowing it to happen. He didn't want it to happen but he was giving in to her once too often. She studied him for a long moment, undeceived by his outward composure. He did not meet her eyes directly for he feared the betrayal of his true emotions.

'Are you sure you want to do this, my son?' she asked quietly. It took him a long while to answer, and when he did it was with an effort.

'It is for the best.'

Surely he did not believe that! She rose and left the room and he did not see the naked pain in her eyes.

She sat in her room for a long while, her hands resting in her lap, numb with pain. He was the youngest son and her best loved. Perhaps that had been a mistake. Sons were not yours to hold. They were arrows to be released into the world.

The old woman read the surprise in her daughter-in-law's eyes. For the first time they were confronting each other directly. For a long moment their glances met and held. It was the young woman who looked away first. The old woman recalled the day Veeran told her of his wedding plans. He had met her at a party, he said. She was pretty and so full of fun. She hadn't objected to his choice but had merely advised him to wait. But he hadn't waited. Alas, the young wanted everything quickly and easily.

'So you are breaking up my home,' the old woman commented. The younger woman's glance wavered. Then she straightened and her glance steadied.

'No, that's not true. All I want is to live on my own. Is that wrong?'

Sharda looked up and met the old woman's eyes. There was none of the old defiance or antagonism. But in the wordless silence, the old woman read a quiet plea for understanding. The old woman studied her for a long while. There was strength in silence. She would not give her the satisfaction of having the last word.

'You came to this house in peace, so leave in peace. You are leaving this house of your own free will. All I ask is that you look after my son. You have my blessing and I hope you will be happy. If this is your wish, then let it be. But know this, you too will have children. And you too will need them in your old age. I hope when you do, that they will be there.'

Sharp words sprang to the young woman's mind then. She wanted to remind the old woman that her son's duty was now to his wife. That times

had changed. That she had tried to fit in with her family but had failed. But something within her checked her. Something in her mother's teachings came to mind. She looked away. The old woman's words touched a chord in her mind, and dimly, she recalled something about respect for the elderly and submission to one's husband. Did these things really matter in these times? Perhaps they did. Who was she to question them? Her world, her generation had all the questions but no answers.

Sharda moved into a flat in Durban. Occasionally they came to visit the family. With time the old woman came to accept the change. Some of the hurt was gone. But although she treated Sharda with the fairest consideration, she could not easily forgive her. Pride would not allow her to acknowledge defeat. There were some things she would not give in to. Like visiting Sharda.

On special occasions Sharda would try to get her to visit her, but the old woman always declined. When pressed for reasons, she maintained a tight-lipped silence. She was determined that nothing would make her yield to that.

On one occasion Sharda left in tears, chagrined by the old woman's obstinacy. The old woman watched her go and savoured the lone power of triumph. Let that be a lesson to them, she thought. She was not putty in their hands, to be moulded according to their will. Age did not mean easy capitulation to the whims of the young. She would not bend to their will. The winds of change were blowing down all the old pillars, but there were some things to which she would not easily give in.

There were times, though, when the thought came to her unbidden, that perhaps she ought to bow to change gracefully, while time and strength were on her side. But she harboured the thought fleetingly. The old unyielding core of obstinacy would come to the fore, and she would be strengthened in her resolve to remain adamant.

One morning Veeran came to see her. She wondered why he should call so early. She sensed his excitement and knew it meant good news.

'Ma, Sharda has a son,' he announced. 'You must come and see him.'

She received the news with mixed

The old woman watched her go and savoured the lone power of triumph. Let that be a lesson to them, she thought.

feelings. Her grandson. A new life, a new beginning. This was a time for rejoicing, for thanksgiving. For a long moment she struggled with herself, longing for the release of surrender. Her spirit was tired and she was strongly tempted to call a truce. Wordlessly, she followed Veeran to the car.

Later, as she held the child in her arms, she recalled another birth in the distant past, when she cradled her last born who had looked so very much like this child. She looked at Veeran and smiled.

'He's a beautiful child and he looks just like you did,' she said.

'Sharda will have to give up work now,' he pointed out. The old woman turned to Sharda. When their eyes met there was a new gentleness, a new peace in the old woman's eyes.

'No, she doesn't have to. I will look after the child,' she said serenely. She put the child down and rose. The spirit of two worlds had merged in a new beginning.

Sacrilege

King death and the law
have built themselves
special highways
to the cemeteries
every weekend

Tearsmoke
rubberbullets
or actual bullets
depending on emotions
or orders of the day

Where will we belch the pain
now
after burying our dead

Cemeteries
have long been
the only residues
of privacy
where we can
shed oceans and sigh

Lancelot Maseko

what i am
i do not really know
maybe a bird, wind
or a stone

my history is not in books
not at universities
or libraries
look for it in museums
on rocks and in caves
you are likely to find it there

what i am
is the question of my life
maybe i am a horse —
the black horse i saw at the
zululand show
carrying a young white boy
on its back
trying to jump over hurdles

Kaizer M. Nyatsumba

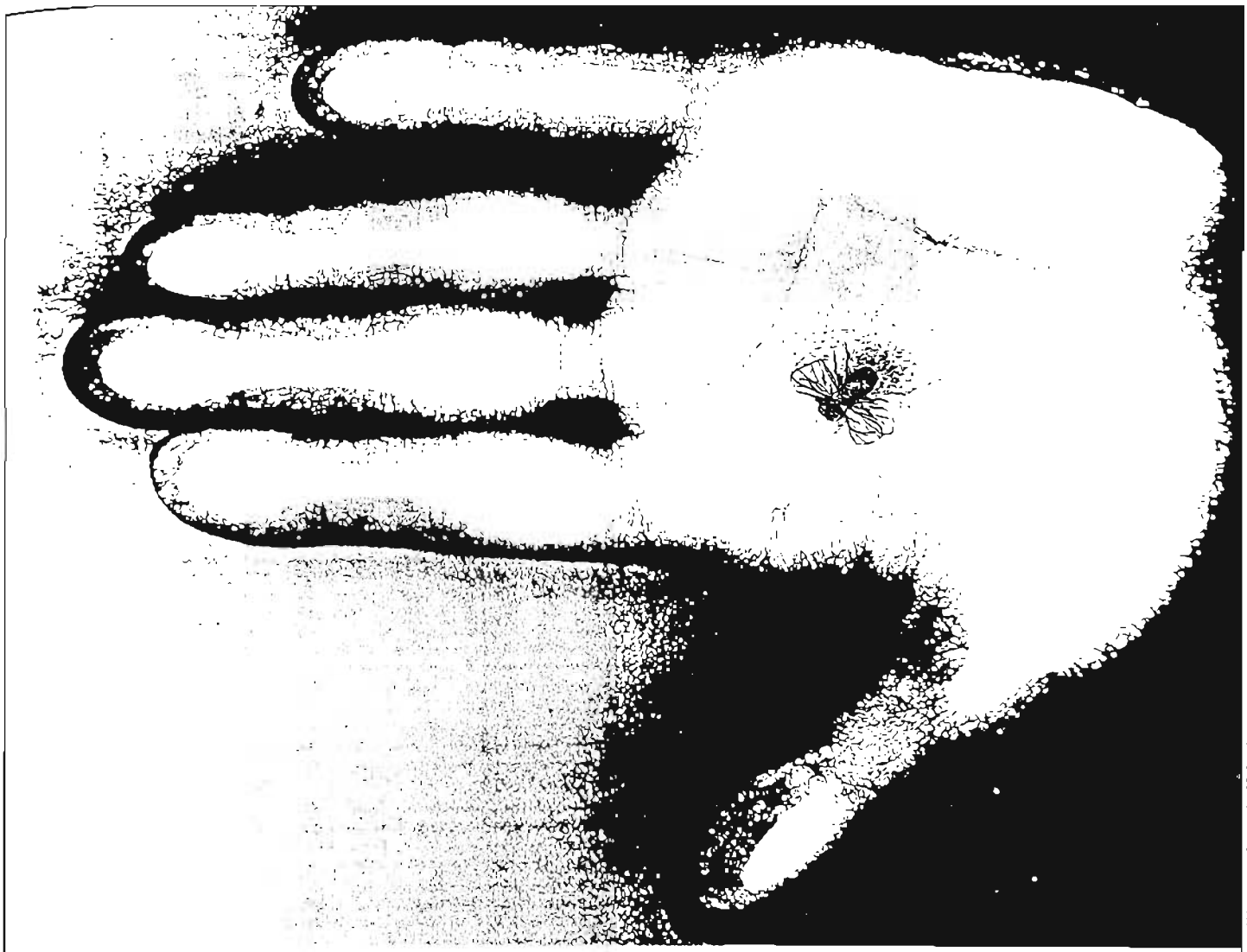


Illustration Jeff Lok

FROM the BACKSEAT

Greg Latter

We are in the Zephyr. A Ford motor car with four cylinders. It is turquoise on the outside and cream inside. Cream is a bad colour for kids although these kids don't mess.

I am in the back looking out the back window, holding onto the back-rest. The road is bumpy. My sister, two years my senior, is sitting alongside my mother. Their hair had been curled with curlers from the night before. We all ate very well. Father sat at the head of the table. If he took away the diningroom wall, the bedroom wall, the lounge wall and then the front hedge, he could look onto the main road. He ate slowly, deep in thought. Mother ate quickly. She still had some last minute packing to do. He reminded her to take some mango chutney. He had a special recipe.

The road is bumpy so I hold on tight. Mother is talking to the girl alongside her, her daughter. She tells her about Durban, the vast seas, the tall buildings, you'll love it, it's just right for you. I look out. Father rides behind us on his motorbike. His white helmet, his goggles, his mouth, bobbing up and down. The roads are bad so he'll only ride as far as the border. We'll say goodbye there. He'll make sure we get through all right.

Today is the day that Zambia comes alive. Yesterday it was Northern Rhodesia but the Queen gave it away. She had to. Mother told Father that she was leaving. She was taking the kids out. She told Father after Aunty Violet was attacked. Poor Aunty Violet, she thought she had been hit on the back but when she got home and took off her dress there was blood all over it. She stretched her arm and felt her back. There were small holes where the penknife had pierced her flesh. She fainted on the spot. The doctor said she was lucky to be alive.

Father had had to use his gun. He made his own bullets from a machine. He shot a wild cat and he shot a man. The police said that it was a good thing. They came to the door and stood there in their baggy khaki shorts and shirts with badges and took off their hats. They used to sweat into their hats and you could see the brown stains. Father invited them in for beers. They all shook Father's hand and asked him about his horses. He told them that Flaming Harvest was going to run in Lusaka and that they must put their money on him for a place bet. Flaming Harvest won. I think they phoned him to say thanks. That was last year.

Father is collecting dust. It hasn't rained for months and he is really getting dusty. He stops and I tell Mother but she just carries on driving. A little later Father catches up with us. He has a handkerchief tied over his nose. I think he stays behind the car in the dust because he likes it.

I'm getting car-sick. I want to vomit. Mother stops and I get out and do it behind a bush. Father waits on the motorbike. Mother gets me brandy from the boot and makes me drink three tablespoons. Then I get back in the car. Sister looks very worried but then we all drive off again.

When I sit properly in the seat I can't see out the front window. I can only see

the back of the front seat in front of me. I am even more car-sick.

The road is straight and bumpy. There are small hills off to the South and we head for them. Twice we have to stop and pull over to the left because of trucks. They are going up to the Copper Belt. That was where we lived. In Kantanta Street in Kitwe. Father worked in the Cobalt Plant. After work he went to the stables. He had four horses and they all raced in Lusaka, in Salisbury and also in Bulawayo. Sometimes, when they won, we went out to the hotel for lunch. There was a set menu with three desserts. I used to put all the desserts on one plate. Father didn't like it but Mother thought it was fine. She said that as long as we ate all our vegetables we could have dessert. I used to take a long time over mine so that my sister got jealous when hers was finished. Once I got a hiding because of that.

This car is using a lot of petrol. Mother tells me this but I don't know what to do. I feel a little better because my tummy is warm. I turn around and look back. Father is further away now. He has taken the handkerchief off his nose. He waves and then grabs the handlebars quickly because the bike wobbles. He hunches over the petrol tank. When I got my bicycle he took me for lessons on the road. I rode next to him and pretended that we were both on motorbikes and we had big packs tied onto the back and we were going to London across the desert.

A few years before, Father tried to ride to London with his friend Hans. We were going to fly to meet him but he came back suddenly after about a week because Hans had fallen over and the motorbike with all the packs had crushed him. We knew something was wrong and Sister heard the news through the bathroom door when Father told Mother in secret. We flew to London anyway but it wasn't nice because Father had got boils all over his body and they wouldn't go away for a long time. Mother told him not to blame himself for Hans. They left Sister and me with Aunty Ann in Sussex and went to Germany to see Hans's parents. Then we flew back.

Everytime I turned a corner on my bicycle I had to stick my arm out to show which way I was going. Father also taught me to hold it up when I stopped. He taught Sister also but then she had to stop because some men put a stick in her spokes and she fell a hard one. Father said he could kill them and Mother agreed.

Mother is driving fast. Her shoulders are bunched up, her eyes wide. My sister sings songs that she learnt at tap-dancing. She had been in a show at the scout hall and everyone said she was great. Mother said she followed after Granny's footsteps because Granny had sung in the Opera. Father took a photo of her in her tap-shoes and big bonnet. He put her next to the mango trees and then took the photo. I was Wee-Willy-Winky at the school fancy dress and I had to carry a stupid candle even though it was daytime. Father took a photo of me as well.

I lie down on the back seat.

At night, late at night, we were sent to bed. Sister and I would sneak back to the lounge door. They left it open to hear us if we cried. I sat on the floor and looked through the gap of the wall and the door. Sister stood up behind me and also looked. When we got tired we swopped over, quietly. We saw the adult films, we saw the love scenes, we saw fights, we saw babies being born and doctors holding them up for their first smack. We saw the late, late news. Once we saw Father and Mother on the sofa together. They cried out and we got scared and went back to bed. I used to check under the bed to see that no-one was under it. No-one was ever under it.

We stop and the four of us stand by the car. The sun is high and it's hot. This is the halfway point between home and the border. There are people and cars and buildings. Father and I go to the toilet. He washes his face and then helps me wash mine.

Outside we all talk quietly. Father goes and then he comes back and we all go and eat at the hotel next to the garage. Then we sit in the lounge and Father discusses the journey with Mother and they talk about furniture. We are sent out to play on the swings.

The swings are behind the hotel. There is a black boy on one of the swings. Sister gets onto the other swing and I push her. The black boy goes quicker and higher so I push harder. I am pushing so much that the swing gets slack at the top and then Sister yells and Father comes out with Mother behind him and he yells for me to stop it. Sister gets off. She cries to show Mother and I tell Father it wasn't me. We get back in the car and drive off again.

Father stays behind on the bike and Mother tells us that the border is not far away. I look out the back window all the time. I squash a fly on the glass and then try to put it between Father and me. If I put my eye close up to the fly and close my other eye, I can blot out Father but only until we hit a bump or take a corner. The fly gets hot and dries up and falls off. There is still a mark there, but.

After a while we get to the border. Some of the way I sleep but Sister wakes me up when we get there because she promised me.

We stay in the car and they go with the passports to the office. There are quite a few other cars with families in them also. There are soldiers with rifles. They talk to each other loudly and one of them laughs at Sister. I lock the car doors and we laugh back at them. One of them wags his finger at me but I just wave back.

We are here a long time and then Father comes out and gives us a glass of water. He goes back in and we wait again. I am fighting with Sister when they come out. Mother is crying and Father has her by the arm. They walk past the car to the motorbike. Father talks to Mother all the time. I have never seen him talk so much. She puts her arms around him and they kiss, in the open. Then they come back to the car and Father says goodbye to us. After kisses I get out and go back to the motorbike with him. It is very dusty and he lets me write my name with my finger on the petrol tank. We hold hands and then he tells me to go back to the car but I just wait with him by the bike. Mother comes over to us, her eyes wet from crying, and she takes me back to the car and Sister. I don't look up because of the soldiers.

The red and white pipe across the road is lifted and we drive over the bridge to the other side. I sit holding the back seat rest and I see Father getting smaller and smaller as we drive away. There is a h behind him that also gets smaller.

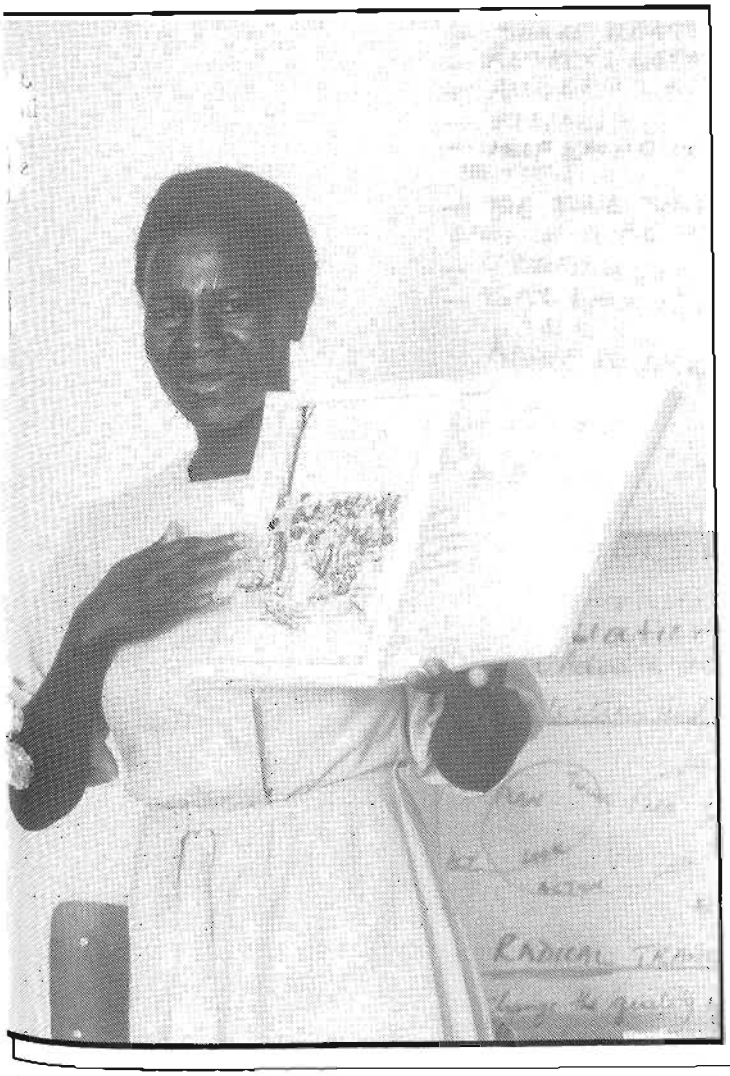
We stop at Kariba Lake. Kariba i part of the Zambezi — the biggest river in Africa. It is not as long as the Nile but it is bigger.

We stay at the Motel and watch Rhodesian Television. Because there is no more Northern Rhodesia, Southern Rhodesia just calls itself Rhodesia and Mother says it's safe here because now we are out of Zambia. Sister can't understand all the names so I explain and Mother says I am correct. Anyway, their television is almost the same.

Mother cries again but not in front of us. She is quiet all through supper and all through her drink afterwards. When I look at her she smiles and calls me her little man. Sister and I go to sleep early but I can't because I slept in the car.

I lie thinking about things. I think of the wild cat that Father shot and then I can remember him getting smaller and smaller until there is nothing left. Mother comes in. She thinks we're asleep so she is extra quiet. She closes the bathroom door and lets the water run. Then she comes out and gets undressed. She looks at herself in the long mirror for a long time. She says, softly, like it's a secret: 'I'm still young enough.'

Then it's morning.



Zimbabwean Women

Biddy Partridge

▲ *Ellen Nyamwanza and Linnet Mlambo, ex-combatants, dressed for a play to reconstruct the Chimurenga.*
Courtesy Young Women in the Liberation Struggle ZPH, 1984

◀ *Adult literacy tutor in ALOZ (Adult Literacy Organization of Zimbabwe)*

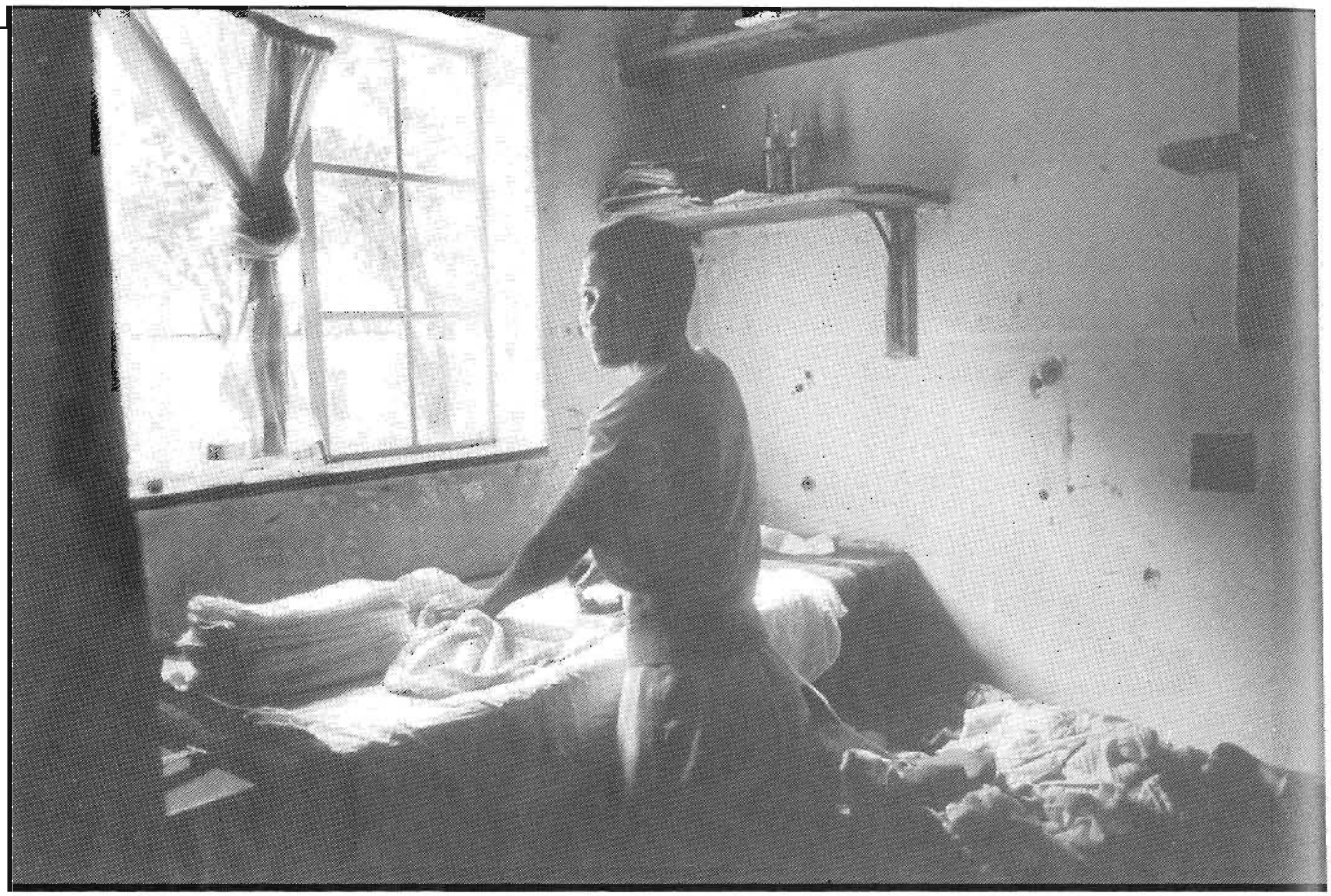
▼ *Ellen Nyamwanza — reliving the second Chimurenga.*
Courtesy Young Women in the Liberation Struggle ZPH, 1984

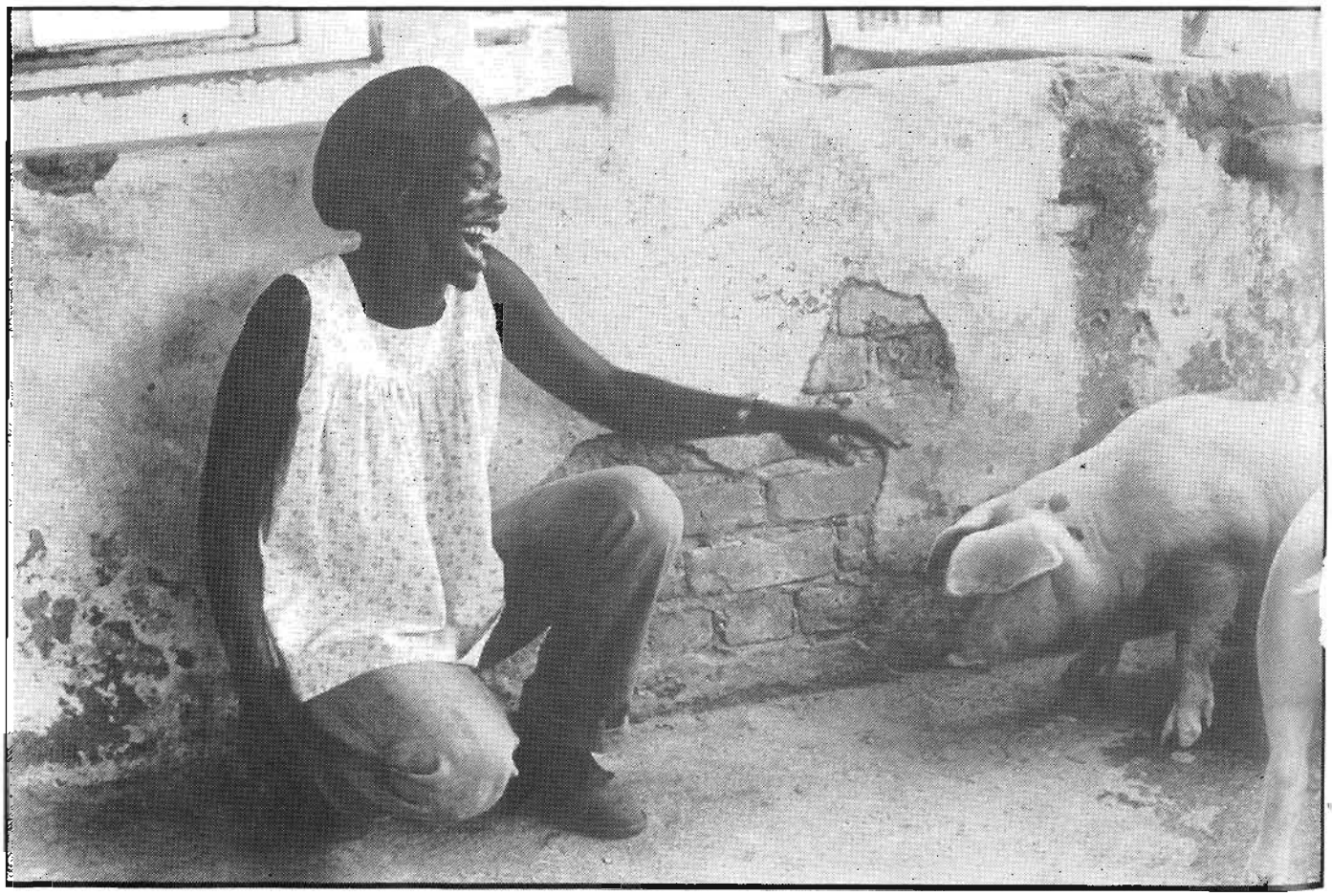
▲▲ *Picking spinach: Women on a commercial farm near Bindura have a collective vegetable garden as part of a primary health care scheme for better nutrition*
Courtesy of Save the Children fund, U.K

▲ *Longina Mhaka, Linnet Mlambo and Ellen Nyamwanza sharing a meal with their children*

MP and passerby, Harare 1983

Mrs Ruth Chinamano, ZAPU MP Harare, 1983



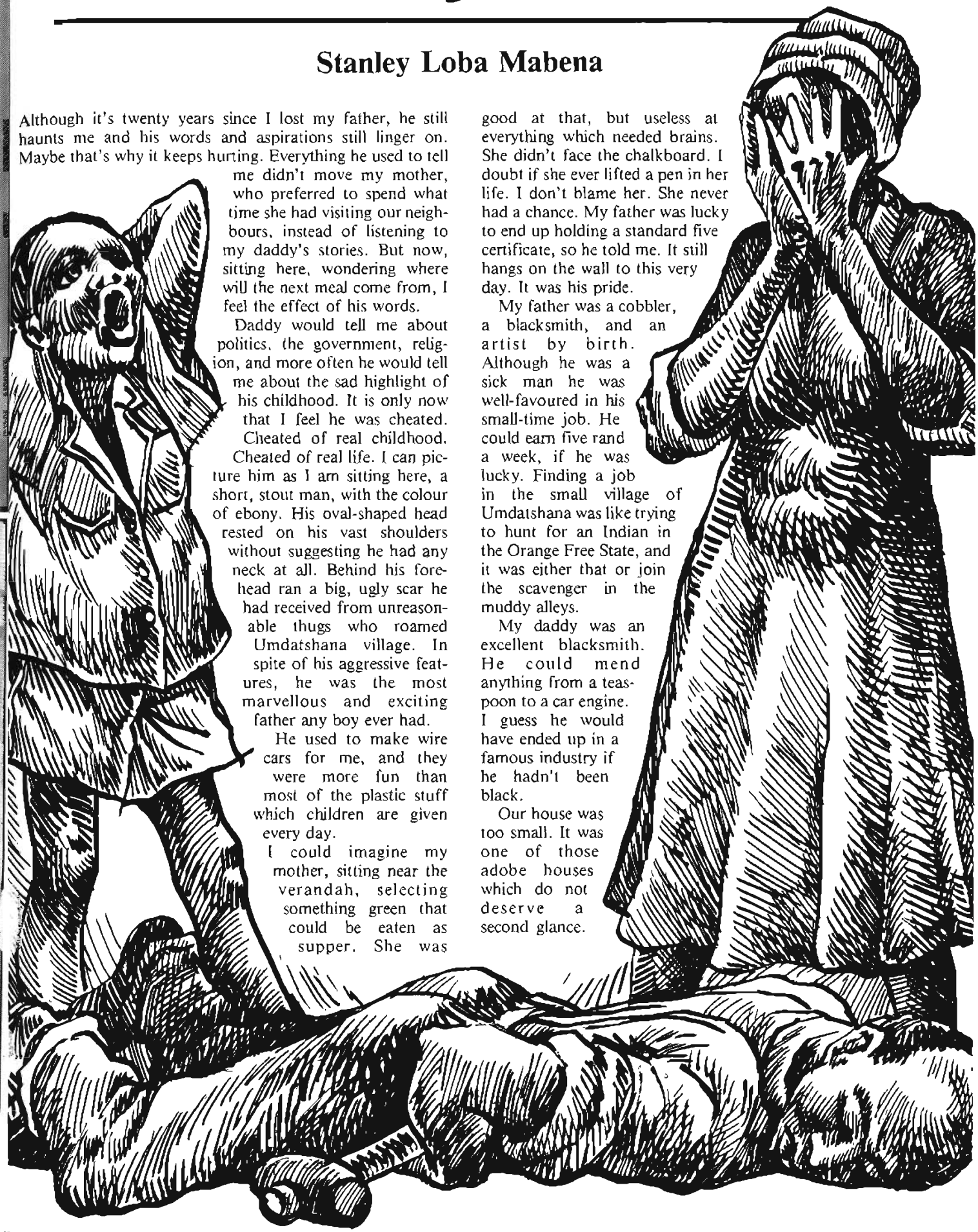


▲▲ *Ironing nappies at Simukai ('Stand Up') Co-op, 1982*

▲ *Comrade Trenah Dewa and the new pigs, Simukai ('Stand Up') Co-op, 1982*

BLIND JUSTICE

Stanley Loba Mabena



Although it's twenty years since I lost my father, he still haunts me and his words and aspirations still linger on. Maybe that's why it keeps hurting. Everything he used to tell me didn't move my mother, who preferred to spend what time she had visiting our neighbours, instead of listening to my daddy's stories. But now, sitting here, wondering where will the next meal come from, I feel the effect of his words.

Daddy would tell me about politics, the government, religion, and more often he would tell me about the sad highlight of his childhood. It is only now that I feel he was cheated. Cheated of real childhood. Cheated of real life. I can picture him as I am sitting here, a short, stout man, with the colour of ebony. His oval-shaped head rested on his vast shoulders without suggesting he had any neck at all. Behind his forehead ran a big, ugly scar he had received from unreasonable thugs who roamed Umdatshana village. In spite of his aggressive features, he was the most marvellous and exciting father any boy ever had.

He used to make wire cars for me, and they were more fun than most of the plastic stuff which children are given every day.

I could imagine my mother, sitting near the verandah, selecting something green that could be eaten as supper. She was good at that, but useless at everything which needed brains. She didn't face the chalkboard. I doubt if she ever lifted a pen in her life. I don't blame her. She never had a chance. My father was lucky to end up holding a standard five certificate, so he told me. It still hangs on the wall to this very day. It was his pride.

My father was a cobbler, a blacksmith, and an artist by birth. Although he was a sick man he was well-favoured in his small-time job. He could earn five rand a week, if he was lucky. Finding a job in the small village of Umdatshana was like trying to hunt for an Indian in the Orange Free State, and it was either that or join the scavenger in the muddy alleys.

My daddy was an excellent blacksmith. He could mend anything from a teaspoon to a car engine. I guess he would have ended up in a famous industry if he hadn't been black.

Our house was too small. It was one of those adobe houses which do not deserve a second glance.

There were only two small windows that could stay shut by means of a trick. There was a rusty wooden door which held stubbornly onto its hinges, but knowing very well it wouldn't hold much longer. Even the paint was slowly divorcing itself from the wall. Two wooden benches, a small table and a tiny, homemade chest of drawers were all the home comforts we possessed, in fact they were all we needed. We were content with them. We didn't have a car or a wagon. We couldn't afford one. My father owned only a bicycle, but that was all he owned in the world. He wouldn't have minded owning a car. Maybe he dreamt, like most blacks dream, of owning many things.

It was one of those cold evenings in July when papa died. Even now, I cannot understand the way he died. People simply laugh at me when I try to explain how papa died. Maybe you will too and add to the number of those who are still laughing at me. He was out there under the baobab tree, mending our next door neighbour's washing tub. As soon as he saw me, he called me with that familiar whistle.

'Will you sit down and warm yourself, son?'

'But papa,' I said, 'it's cold here outside, why don't we go inside? It's already late.'

'You know how mama is when I talk about the past,' papa said.'She always says I talk about things that are too big for young ears to hear. Well . . . this could be my last winter. What would you like papa to tell you about?'

'What about the bitter life papa always talks about?' I asked sitting myself stiffly on the wooden bench next to the dying fire.

'Do you mean my past?' papa asked, as if posing a rhetorical question. His eyes stared at his black hands that resembled burned wood. He made one final noise with his chisel on the enamel tub and put it aside.

'This planet was not made for us. We fell onto the wrong planet, my son. Maybe we belonged to Jupiter, or Mercury or any other planet, but not this Earth. I am certain of that. Sometimes I feel God has forgotten us, that, somehow we were missed.'

'How could you say that, daddy?' I asked surprised.

'You are too young to understand. Sometimes I wish I had not been born. I wish I could have been born forty or fifty years later. At least I could have known a better world . . . .'

'What is hurting about the past, daddy?'

'Our nation was happy and unscattered. We enjoyed the land God gave us, until . . .'

'Until what?'

'Until they came.'

'Until they came? Who?'

'The white man.'

I stared at the old man who was sick and tired. One of us must be crazy, I thought. He regarded me with a fixed expression.

'Maybe you think I am mad, my son,' he said. 'That's why you are suffering, and that's why your generation must suffer.'

'What is suffering, daddy?'

'Nice word, but different meaning,' he said and coughed. 'Imagine a hot poker burning in your face forever. That's the definition of suffering, in short.'

I couldn't analyse what daddy said. He liked to speak in riddles. He could resort to nice clauses. I admired him.

'But, papa,' I said. 'Our people could have fought them. All this could have been avoided.'

'This land was won with guns. White men only came to colonize. After a while they took over. After all, the war is still

on, the war which is silent. The war that sounds no guns, and the bodies that fall are only wishes that have died and the bullets are only words, and the blood is only chilled tears.'

'Papa,' I protested, 'white men brought civilization, they brought light to this dark continent.'

'Civilization? What has that brought?' father asked. 'Civilization has brought a congested world . . . pollution . . . misery . . . war . . . bloody hatred. The curse of modern life. I want none of it. I like the land God gave us, the land God gave to Cain . . . .

'The wind . . . the space . . . the land . . . .'

I was furious now. I couldn't help it. My father was now against reason, against nature, perhaps even against God.

'Papa, you can sneer at civilization, but it has bred finer men than you. Aristotle, Roosevelt, Smuts ... don't you know our Prime Minister Dr H.F. Verwoerd?
All were full of ideas. What then did you contribute to society, except those scraps of aluminium you are selling?'

'That's how the educated go wrong. They read things from a book, th don't experience them,' my daddy sa and coughed.

'You are telling me what the whi man has done for the maximum bene of the white power, don't you reali you're not in the picture? It's a whi man's history, you are not involved the whole white port of comfort, y won't understand it, unless you reason a black.'

I was shivering and yet I was sweatin I was scared of the truth or was it t truth? The chilly wind was blowing ha shly, as if trying to steal my father words.

'Apartheid has killed us! It h destroyed the image of a black man. has moulded and shaped us as black me into a raving beast.'

'What is apartheid?' I interrupte him.

'Apartheid is a living ghost Everybody is aware of its existenc apartheid is the division, it is the borde between two worlds, those with guns an those without, those with cars and tho who sit and wait, those with food a those with swollen bellies. Those wi clothes and those who go bare-footed. Those who live in skyscrapers and thos who sleep on pavements. Those who lov and those who cry. The powerful and th powerless. The rich and the poor. Blac and white. Do you realise where yo stand? Do you now understand what is apartheid?'

'Mavuso! You are shouting at th child!' my mother shouted. She wa standing behind me. I didn't realise tha father was shouting. I was completely absorbed into theorising about the world. The world of division. 'It's nonsense! Can't you understand what kind of a seed you are planting in our child?'

'I speak the truth, heaven be my witness,' papa said softly.

'Mavuso, won't you learn to forgive. Can't you see it's blind justice? If G allows it, you cannot change it.'

'Do you mean God allows it? Do yo mean to tell me that God allows all this? Oppression! Apartheid? And. . . .'

'It's blind justice,' mama said, almo in a whisper.

'No it's fair justice, even the matter justice. Who can summon them? W can summon the whites? Even if I a right, they will prove me wrong, becaus the people I must sue are the judges well.'

I could blame my mother who w illiterate, and I could blame my fath who was ill. I was lost in the world. T world which could only be understo by those who are masters of illusion a fantasy. Papa was shivering, his face w

very white and there were dark areas under his eyes. He was ill. It was all written in his black face.

'What is it?' mom asked, 'a fever?'

'I've got a headache,' papa answered. 'I've told you, it's killing me Mamhlongo.'

'What is it that is killing you, Mavuso?'

'Blind justice.'

'What?' mother insisted.

'The blind justice of this world is killing me.'

Papa suddenly fell forward. His body very painfully shoved his chisel forward, then I saw his eyes roll back, and I knew he was dead. The hero I worshipped. The only man I loved. I doubt if I shall ever get over the death of my father. We buried him next to the grave of my grandfather in our village churchyard.

When papa died things at home began to change. Mama no longer visited our next door neighbour and I couldn't play hide-and-seek with my friends any more. To make ends meet I used to mow our neighbours' lawn and sell newspapers after school.

I was ten years old when I left school. It was in the middle of October, two years after father's death. I liked school very much but was forced to leave. Let me explain how it happened. It was Friday and we were having our first lesson of the day with Mr Khoza. He had set for us a whole bunch of Religious questions to answer in our exercise books. I was sitting next to Mazambane Nkuna at the back. Mr Khoza was sitting at his desk, gazing suspiciously around with his hawk eyes, searching for trouble.

Mazambane covered his mouth with his hand and whispered very softly to me, 'What is the answer for question three?'

'Saul,' I whispered back.

Mr Khoza's finger shot out like a bullet and pointed at me. 'You!' he shouted, 'stand up!'

Mr Khoza never called any of us by our names. It was always 'you!' or 'boy!' or 'girl!' or something like that.

I stood up.

'You were talking!' he said. 'Whom were you talking to?'

He was shouting as if I was on another planet. I stood still.

'Don't stand there like a zombie, answer me!'

I kept silent. From where I was standing I could see the whole class sitting absolutely rigid, watching Mr Khoza. Nobody dared move.

'You are very stubborn, come up here!'

As I stepped out of my desk and began walking up toward the front of the class, I knew exactly what was going to happen. I had seen it happen to others many times. But up until now it had never happened to me. Each time I had seen it, it had made me feel quite sick inside. I had seen it happen to late-comers, noise-makers, those without school uniform and those who played truant. It was horrible.

I watched him as he reached up to the topmost shelf of the bookcase and brought down the dreaded white, shiny cane.

'Where will you take it,' he mocked, 'on the buttocks, or somewhere else?'

I lifted my hand palm upwards and held it there. The white cane went high up in the air and came down quickly with a crash. I remember grabbing my injured right hand with my left hand, ramming it between my legs and squeezing my legs together against it. Oh! It was painful. Tears poured down my cheeks.

'You deserve ten strokes, boy,' he said quietly. 'Come quickly.'

Ten strokes! I couldn't take it. I remember walking out of the classroom Then I began to run.

When I got home, my mother was in the kitchen.

'Hei!' she cried out, 'what happened? Why are you here?'

I showed her my hands. There was a long, ugly mark running right across my fingers.

'Who did it?' she shouted, 'who is the brute who did this?'

I told her.

'I will show him,' she cried 'I will show him a thing or two!'

I've never seen my mother so angry, her eyes were blazing like hell. She grabbed a small blanket and, before I could stop her, she was gone. I knew it was useless to run after her, she was as obstinate as a pregnant woman.

I heard from Mazambane, that same afternoon, that my mother nearly spoiled Mr Khoza's face with her long nails. The following day I was chased out of the school. I knew it was my mother's fault. I couldn't blame her. My future was now bleak, shattered and uncertain. I knew I had to support my mom who couldn't even knit a doll's jersey.

Life goes on, it changes. Maybe this world has been designed for the benefit of the few. I've always reasoned life is full of ups and downs.

Reluctant Neighbour

When the reign of the prison warder's lease
expires he will forsake the transparent doors
with a bleeding heart.

The jingle of the rustling chains and keys
will be a phantom cry of the past.

He is my neighbour in prison
and he walks the corridors with borrowed comfort.

When we like neighbours forsake our
dwelling place I'll write
a testimonial for him and tell
about his iron discipline.

Nhlanhla Paul Maake

16 December '84

The ghetto rumbles.
Converted by alien spirits
it rejoices too
the victory of the white god.
Oh my ancestors,
fathers of distorted sculptures,
whose children have gone with the western storm
their souls with the nightmarish twilight,
here I am,
Africa in its struggle.

Moritso Makhunga

Eloquence and Energy

A Tribute to Bessie Head

BY CHERRY CLAYTON

Bessie Head was buried in Serowe, Botswana over the weekend of April 27 1986. Her death, at 49, has had a low profile in the press, but those who knew her through her writing have registered the loss.

She was a vigorous storyteller, a novelist who swivelled her commentary to mirror the dehumanisation of South African black people in new ways, an 'exile' who rebuilt her personal identity amidst the multiracial benevolence and co-operative effort of Batswana society, and a writer who married the tradition of the novel, of literacy itself, to an older African oral tradition.

Born in Pietermaritzburg of a white mother and a black stablehand (after this alliance her mother was certified insane), Bessie Head's early history of literal rejection by foster parents and an institutionalised childhood — a classic history of emotional abuse compounded by the wider social abuse she then encountered in the racial structure of South African society — propelled her with great force into a life of creative reparation.

She worked briefly at The Golden City Post, *picking up the habits of prose economy which later served her well in fiction. But she could not get going as a writer in South Africa. The rigidity and despair of the system inhibited her essential gifts, which are humane, flexible, humorous, turning on joke, idiom and the unpredictable, which always signals individuality.*

After a brief and unhappy marriage, she left for Botswana in 1964, and settled in Serowe, where her work as a teacher and market gardener provided the economic base for her writing life.

She produced three novels: When Rain Clouds Gather *(1968),* Maru *(1971) and* A Question of Power *(1974). The first novel chronicles the process of transition from South African to African society. Despite its idyllic and pastoral mood, the vision is complex, taking into account the threat and darkness of tribalism as weighed against the racism left behind.*

Maru *is more diagrammatically structured, but is a moving account of how a prominent public gesture, and a love relationship, can trigger reformist currents in a wider community. Head was beginning to move into deeper areas of human identity in* Maru, *as the style indicates.*

Her concern with inner breakdown and healing emerged fully in her next novel, A Question of Power, *which drew mixed reaction. It is certainly the novel as inner nightmare, but its visions are subjectively compelling, and the hallucinations of the protagonist are set against, and finally contained by, the practical humanity of everyday village life.*

Head was always interested in the history of her adopted country (where she lived as a stateless person until Seretse Khama granted her citizenship in 1979). She drew on the memories and crafts of villagers for her book on Serowe, Serowe Village of the Rain Wind *(1981), which consists mainly of interviews, oral history which she presents simply.*

Her collection of short stories, The Collector of Treasures *(1977), which she seemed to undervalue as the overspill of her historical research, is in fact one of the finest collections of stories to emerge from Southern Africa. Its wide sociological grasp is insistently and repeatedly focused in individual lives, particularly the lives of village women, and its sense of growing tragedy is finely balanced by village resilience and the author's compassion.*

A Bewitched Crossroad *(1984), Head's last published book, was also her most signal service to Botswana. Finely researched and written it is strongly shaped and moralised history, positioning an old man, memory of the Bamangwato tribe, inside a modern narrative which is corrective of white conservative historiography. She explores the benevolent paradox (the bewitched crossroad) of Bechuanaland's history, which allowed modern Botswana to escape the fate of South Africa. The great chief Khama is rightly the hero of the narrative and she validates her admiration for him as the voice of enlightened African tradition.*

Head sought a 'compromise of tenderness' between opposed traditions in Africa, and her writing was one of the finest expressions of that compromise. She served her adopted country, which offered her self-respect, with great eloquence and energy. The values she celebrates are constructed on the corrupted base of her early South African life, and the urgency with which she sought them out provides a disturbing commentary on the country she left behind.

THE LOVERS

BESSIE HEAD

Illustration Percy Sedumedi

The love affair began in the summer. The love affair began in those dim dark days when young men and women did not have love affairs. It was one of those summers when it rained in torrents. Almost every afternoon towards sunset the low-hanging, rain-filled clouds would sweep across the sky in packed masses and suddenly, with barely a warning, the rain would pour down in blinding sheets.

The young women and little girls were still out in the forest gathering wood that afternoon when the first warning signs of rain appeared in the sky. They hastily gathered up their bundles of wood and began running home to escape the approaching storm. Suddenly, one of the young women halted painfully. In her haste she had trodden on a large thorn.

'Hurry on home, Monosi!' she cried to a little girl panting behind her. 'I have to get this thorn out of my foot. If the rain catches me I shall find some shelter and come home once it is over.

Without a backward glance the little girl sped on after the hard-running group of wood gatherers. The young woman was quite alone with the approaching storm. The thorn proved difficult to extract. It had broken off and embedded itself deeply in her heel. A few drops of rain beat down on her back. The sky darkened.

Anxiously she looked around for the nearest shelter and saw a cave in some rocks at the base of a hill nearby. She picked up her bundle of wood and limped hastily towards it, with the drops of rain pounding down faster and faster. She had barely entered the cave when the torrent unleashed itself in a violent downpour. Her immediate concern was to seek sanctuary but a moment later her heart lurched in fear as she realised that she was not alone. The warmth of another human filled the interior. She swung around swiftly and found herself almost face to face

with a young man.

'We can shelter here together from the storm,' he said with quiet authority.

His face was as kind and protective as his words. Reassured, the young woman set down her bundle of sticks in the roomy interior of the cave and together they seated themselves near its entrance. The roar of the rain was deafening so that even the thunder was muffled by its intensity. With quiet, harmonious movements the young man undid a leather pouch tied to his waist. He spent all his time cattle-herding and to while away the long hours he busied himself with all kinds of leather work, assembling skins into all kinds of clothes and blankets. He had a large number of sharpened implements in his pouch. He indicated to the young woman that he wished to extract the thorn. She extended her foot towards him and for some time he busied himself with this task, gently whittling away the skin around the thorn until he had exposed it sufficiently enough to extract it.

The young woman looked at his face with interest and marvelled at the ease and comfort she felt in his presence. In their world men and women lived strictly apart, especially the young and unmarried. This sense of apartness and separateness continued even throughout married life and marriage itself seemed to have no significance beyond a union for the production of children. This wide gap between the sexes created embarrassment on the level of personal contact; the young men often slid their eyes away uneasily or giggled at the sight of a woman. The young man did none of this. He had stared her directly in the eyes; all his movements were natural and unaffected. He was also very pleasing to look at. She thanked him with a smile once he had extracted the thorn and folded her extended foot beneath her. The violence of the storm abated a little but the heavily-laden sky continued to pour forth a steady downpour.

She had seen the young man around the village; she could vaguely place his family connections.

'Aren't you the son of Rra-Keaja?' she asked. She had a light chatty voice with an undertone of laughter in it, very expressive of her personality. She liked, above all, to be happy.

'I am the very Keaja he is named after,' the young man replied with a smile. 'I am the first-born in the family.'

'I am the first-born in the family, too,' she said. 'I am Tselane, the daughter of Mma-Tselane.'

His family ramifications were more complicated than hers. His father had three wives. All the first born of the first, second and third houses were boys. There were altogether eight children, three boys and five girls, he explained. It was only when the conversation became more serious that Tselane realized that a whole area of the young man's speech had eluded her. He was the extreme opposite of the light chatty young woman. He talked from deep rhythms within himself as though he had invented language specifically for his own use. He had an immense range of expression and feeling at his command; now his eyes lit up with humour, then they were absolutely serious and in earnest.

He swayed almost imperceptibly as he talked. He talked like no one she had ever heard talking before, yet all his utterances were direct, simple and forthright. She bent forward and listened more attentively to his peculiar manner of speech.

'I don't like my mother,' he said, shocking her. 'I am her only son simply because my father stopped cohabiting with her after I was born. My father and I are alike. We don't like to be controlled by anyone and she made his life a misery when they were newly married.It was as if she had been born with a worm eating at her heart; she is satisfied with nothing. The only way my father could control the situation was to ignore her completely . . . .'

He remained silent awhile, concentrating on his own thoughts. 'I don't think I approve of arranged marriages,' he said finally. 'My father would never have married her had he had his own choice. He was merely presented with her one day by his family and told that they were to be married and there was nothing he could do about it.'

He kept silent about the torture he endured from his mother. She hated him deeply and bitterly. She had hurled stones at him and scratched him on the arms and legs in her wild frustration. Like his father he eluded her. He rarely spent time at home but kept the cattle-post as his permanent residence. When he approached home it was always with some gift of clothes or blankets. On that particular day he had an enormous gourd filled with milk.

Tselane floundered out of her depth in the face of such stark revelations. They lived the strictest of traditional ways of life, all children were under the control of their parents until they married therefore it was taboo to discuss their elders. In her impulsive chatty way and partly out of embarrassment, it had been on the tip of her tongue to say that she liked her mother, that her mother was very kind-hearted. But there was a disturbing undertone in her household too. Her mother and father — and she was sure of it due to her detailed knowledge of her mother's way of life — had not cohabited for years either. A few years ago her father had taken another wife. She was her mother's only child. Oh, the surface of their household was polite and harmonious but her father was rarely at home. He was always irritable and morose when he was home.

'I am sorry about all the trouble in your home,' she said at last, in a softer, more thoughtful tone. She was shaken at having been abruptly jolted into completely new ways of thought.

The young man smiled and then quite deliberately turned and stared at her. She stared back at him with friendly interest. She did not mind his close scrutiny of her person; he was easy to associate with, comfortable, truthful and open in his every gesture.

'Do you approve of arranged marriages?' he asked, still smiling.

'I have not thought of anything,' she replied truthfully.

The dark was approaching rapidly. The rain had trickled down to a fine drizzle. Tselane stood up and picked up her bundle of wood. The young man picked up his gourd of milk. They were barely visible as they walked home together in the dark. Tselane's home was not too far from the hill. She lived on the extreme western side of the village, he on the extreme eastern side.

A bright fire burned in the hut they used as a cooking place on rainy days. Tselane's mother was sitting bent forward on her low stool, listening attentively to a visitor's tale. It was always like this — her mother was permanently surrounded by women who confided in her. The whole story of life unfolded daily around her stool; the ailments of children, women who had just had miscarriages, women undergoing treatment for barren wombs — the story was endless. It was the great pleasure of Tselane to seat herself quietly behind her mother's stool and listen with fascinated ears to this endless tale of woe.

Her mother's visitor that evening was on the tail end of a description of one of her children's ailments; chronic epilepsy, which seemed beyond cure. The child seemed in her death throes and the mother was just at the point of demonstrating the violent seizures when Tselane entered. Tselane quietly set her bundle of wood down in a corner and the conversation continued uninterrupted. She took her favourite place behind her mother's stool. Her father's second wife, Mma-Monosi, was seated

on the opposite side of the fire, her face composed and serious. Her child, the little girl Monosi, fed and attended to, lay fast asleep on a sleeping mat in one corner of the hut.

Tselane loved the two women of the household equally. They were both powerful independent women but with sharply differing personalities. Mma-Tselane was a queen who vaguely surveyed the kingdom she ruled, with an abstracted, absent-minded air. Over the years of her married life she had built up a way of life for herself that filled her with content. She was reputed to be very delicate in health as after the birth of Tselane she had suffered a number of miscarriages and seemed incapable of bearing any more children. Her delicate health was a source of extreme irritation to her husband and at some stage he had abandoned her completely and taken Mma-Monosi as his second wife, intending to perpetuate his line and name through her healthy body.

The arrangement suited Mma-Tselane. She was big-hearted and broad-minded and yet, conversely, she prided herself in being the meticulous upholder of all the traditions the community adhered to. Once Mma-Monosi became a part of the household, Mma-Tselane did no work but entertained and paid calls the day long. Mma-Monosi ran the entire household.

The two women complemented each other, for, if Mma-Tselane was a queen, then Mma-Monosi was a humble worker. On the surface, Mma-Monosi appeared as sane and balanced as Mma-Tselane, but there was another side to her personality that was very precariously balanced. Mma-Monosi took her trembling way through life. If all was stable and peaceful, then Mma-Monosi was stable and peaceful. If there was any disruption or disorder, Mma-Monosi's precarious inner balance registered every wave and upheaval. She hungered for approval of her every action and could be upset for days if criticised or reprimanded.

So, between them, the two women achieved a very harmonious household. Both were entirely absorbed in their full busy daily round; both were unconcerned that they received scant attention from the man of the household and Rra-Tselane was entirely concerned with his own affairs. He was a prominent member of the chief's court and he divided his time between the chief's court and his cattle-post. He was rich in cattle and his herds were taken care of by servants. He was away at his cattle-post at that time.

It was with Mma-Monosi that the young girl, Tselane, enjoyed a free and happy relationship. They treated each other as equals; both enjoyed hard work and whenever they were alone together, they laughed and joked all the time. Her own mother regarded Tselane as an object to whom she lowered her voice and issued commands between clenched teeth. Very soon Mma-Tselane stirred in her chair and said in that lowered voice: 'Tselane, fetch me my bag of herbs.'

Tselane obediently stood up and hurried to her mother's living quarters for the bag of herbs. Another interval followed during which her mother and the visitor discussed the medicinal properties of the herbs. Then Mma-Monosi served the evening meal. Before long the visitor departed with assurances that Mma-Tselane would call on her the following day. Then they sat for a while in companionable silence. At one stage, seeing that the fire was burning low, Mma-Tselane arose and selected a few pieces of wood from Tselane's bundle to stoke up the fire.

'Er, Tselane,' she said, 'your wood is quite dry. Did you shelter from the storm?'

'There is a cave in the hill not far from here, mother,' Tselane replied. 'And I sheltered there.' She did not think it was wise to add that she had sheltered with a young man: a lot of awkward questions of the wrong kind might have followed.

The mother cast her eyes vaguely over her daughter as if to say all was in order in her world; she always established simple facts about any matter and turned peacefully to the next task at hand. She suddenly decided that she was tired and would retire. Tselane and Mma-Monosi were left alone seated near the fire. Tselane was still elated by her encounter with the young man; so many pleasant thoughts were flying through her head.

'I want to ask you some questions, Mma-Monosi,' she said, eagerly.

'What is it you want to say, my child?' Mma-Monosi said, stirring out of a reverie.

'Do you approve of arranged marriages, Mma-Monosi?' she asked, earnestly.

Mma-Monosi drew in her breath between her teeth with a sharp, hissing sound, then she lowered her voice in horror and said:

'Tselane, you know quite well that I am your friend but if anyone else heard you talking like that you would be in trouble! Such things are never discussed here! What put that idea into your head because it is totally unknown to me.'

'But you question life when you begin to grow up.' Tselane said defensively.

'That is what you never, never do,' Mma-Monosi said severely. 'If you question life you will upset it. Life is always in order.' She looked thoroughly startled and agitated. 'I know of something terrible that once happened to someone who questioned life,' she added grimly.

'Who is this?' What terrible thing happened?' Tselane asked in her turn agitated.

'I can't tell you,' Mma-Monosi said firmly. 'It is too terrible to mention.'

Tselane subsided into silence with a speculative look in her eye. She understood Mma-Monosi well. She couldn't keep a secret. She could always be tempted into telling a secret, if not today then on some other day. She decided to find out the terrible story.

When Keaja arrived home his family was eating the evening meal. He first approached the woman's quarters and offered them the gourd of milk.

'The cows are calving heavily,' he explained. 'There is a lot of milk and I can bring some home every day.'

He was greeted joyously by the second and third wives of his father who anxiously enquired after their sons who lived with him at the cattle-post.

'They are quite well,' he said, politely. 'I settled them and the cattle before I left. I shall return again in the early morning because I am worried about the young calves.'

He avoided his mother's baleful stare and tight, deprived mouth. She never had anything to say to him, although, on his approach to the woman's quarters, he had heard her voice, shrill and harsh, dominating the conversation. His meal was handed to him and he retreated to his father's quarters. He ate alone and apart from the women. A bright fire burned in his father's hut.

'Hullo, Father-of-Me,' his father greeted him, making affectionate play on the name Keaja which means I am eating now because I have a son to take care of me.

His father doted on him. In his eyes there was no greater son than Keaja. After an exchange of greetings his father asked:

'And what is your news?'

He gave his father the same information about the cows calving heavily and the rich supply of milk; that his other two sons were quite well. They ate for a while in companionable silence. His mother's voice rose shrill and penetrating in the silent night. Quite unexpectedly his father looked up with a twinkle in his eye and said:

'Those extra calves will stand us in good stead, Father-of-Me. I have just started negotiations about your marriage.'

A spasm of chill, cold fear almost constricted Keaja's heart.

'Who am I to marry, father?' he asked, alarmed.

'I cannot mention the family name just yet,' his father replied, cheerfully, not sensing his son's alarm. 'The negotiations are still at a very delicate stage.'

'Have you committed yourself in this matter, father?' he asked, a sharp angry note in his voice.

'Oh yes,' his father replied. 'I have given my honour in this matter. It is just that these things take a long time to arrange as there are many courtesies to be observed.'

'How long?' Keaja asked.

'About six new moons may have to pass,' his father replied. 'It may even be longer than that. I cannot say at this stage.'

'I could choose a wife for myself.' the son said, with deadly quietude. 'I could choose my own wife and then inform you of my choice.'

His father stared at him in surprise.

'You cannot be different from everyone else,' he said. 'I must be a parent with a weakness that you can talk to me so.'

Keaja lowered his eyes to his eating bowl. There was no way in which he could voice a protest against his society because the individual was completely smothered by communal and social demands. He was a young man possessed by individual longings and passions; he had a nervous balance that either sought complete isolation or true companionship and communication and for a long while all appeared in order with him because of the deceptive surface peace of his personality. Even that evening Keaja's protest against an arranged marriage was hardly heard by his father.

His father knew that he indulged his son, that they had free and easy exchanges beyond what was socially permissable; even that brief exchange was more than all parents allowed their children. They arranged all details of their children's future and on the fatal day merely informed them that they were to be married to so-and-so. There was no point in saying: 'I might not be able to live with so-and-so. She might be unsuited to me,' so that when Keaja lapsed into silence, his father merely smiled indulgently and engaged him in small talk.

Keaja was certainly of marriageable age. The previous year he had gone through his initiation ceremony. Apart from other trials endured during the ceremony, detailed instruction had been given to the young men of his age group about sexual relations between men and women. They were hardly private and personal but affected by a large number of social regulations and taboos. If he broke the taboos at a personal and private level, death, sickness and great misfortune would fall upon his family. If he broke the taboos at a social level, death and disaster would fall upon the community.

There were many periods in a man's life when abstinence from sexual relations was required; often this abstinence had to be practised communally as in the period preceding the harvest of crops and only broken on the day of the harvest thanksgiving ceremony.

These regulations and taboos applied to men and women alike but the initiation ceremony for women, which Tselane had also experienced the previous year, was much more complex in its instruction. A delicate balance had to be preserved between a woman's reproductive cycle and the safety of the community; at almost every stage in her life a woman was a potential source of danger to the community. All women were given careful instruction in precautions to be observed during times of menstruation, childbirth and accidental miscarriages. Failure to observe the taboos could bring harm to animal life, crops and the community.

It could be seen then that the community held no place for people wildly carried away by their passions, that there was logic and order in the carefully arranged sterile emotional and physical relationships between men and women. There was no one to challenge the established order of things; if people felt any personal unhappiness it was smothered and subdued and so life for the community proceeded from day to day in peace and harmony.

As all lovers do, they began a personal and emotional dialogue that excluded all life around them. Perhaps its pattern and direction was the same for all lovers, painful and maddening by turns in its initial insecurity.

Who looked for who? They could not say, except that the far-western unpolluted end of the river where women drew water and the forests where they gathered firewood became Keaja's favourite hunting grounds. Their work periods coincided at that time. The corn had just been sown and the women were idling in the village until the heavy soaking rains raised the weed in their fields, then their next busy period would follow when they hoed out the weeds between their corn.

Keaja returned every day to the village with gourds of milk for his family and it did not take Tselane long to note that he delayed and lingered in her work areas until he had caught some glimpse of her. She was always in a crowd of gaily chattering young women. The memory of their first encounter had been so fresh and stimulating, so full of unexpected surprises in dialogue that she longed to approach him.

One afternoon, while out gathering wood with her companions, she noticed him among the distant bushes and contrived to remove herself from her companions. As she walked towards him, he quite directly approached her and took hold of her hand. She made no effort to pull her hand free. It rested in his as though it belonged there. They walked on some distance, then he paused, and turning to face her told her all he had on his mind in his direct, simple way. This time he did not smile at all.

'My father will arrange a marriage for me after six new moons have passed,' he said. 'I do not want that. I want a wife of my own choosing but all the things I want can only cause trouble.'

She looked away into the distance not immediately knowing what she ought to say. Her own parents had given her no clue of their plans for her future; indeed she had not had cause to think about it but she did not like most of the young men of the village. They had a hang-dog air as though the society and its oppressive ways had broken their will. She liked everything about Keaja and she felt safe with him as on that stormy afternoon in the cavern when he had said: 'We can shelter here together from the storm ....

'My own thoughts are not complicated,' he went on, still holding on to her hand. 'I thought I would find out how you felt about this matter. I thought I would like to choose you as my wife. If you do not want to choose me in turn, I shall not pursue my own wants any longer. I might even marry the wife my father chooses for me.'

She turned around and faced him and spoke with a clarity of thought that startled her.

'I am afraid of nothing,' she said. 'Not even trouble or death, but I need some time to find out what I am thinking.'

He let go of her hand and so they parted and went their separate ways. From that point onwards right until the following day, she lived in a state of high elation. Her thought processes were not all coherent, indeed she had not a thought in her head. Then the illogic of love took over. Just as she was about to pick up the pitcher in the late afternoon, she suddenly felt desperately ill, so ill that she was almost brought to the point of death. She experienced a

paralyzing lameness in her arms and legs. The weight of the pitcher with which she was to draw water was too heavy for her to endure.

She appealed to Mma-Monosi.

'I feel faint and ill today,' she said. 'I cannot draw water.'

Mma-Monosi was only too happy to take over her chores but at the same time consulted anxiously with her mother about this sudden illness. Mma-Tselane, after some deliberation, decided that it was the illness young girls get when they are growing too rapidly.

She spent a happy three days doctoring her daughter with warm herb drinks as Mma-Tselane liked nothing better than to concentrate on illness. Still, the physical turmoil the young girl felt continued unabated; at night she trembled violently from head to toe. It was so shocking and new that for two days she succumbed completely to the blow. It wasn't any coherent thought processes that made her struggle desperately to her feet on the third day but a need to quieten the anguish. She convinced her mother and Mma-Monosi that she felt well enough to perform her wood gathering chores. Towards the afternoon she hurried to the forest area, carefully avoiding her companions.

She was relieved, on meeting Keaja, to see that his face bore the same anguished look that she felt. He spoke first. 'I felt so ill and disturbed,' he said. 'I could do nothing but wait for your appearance.'

They sat down on the ground together. She was so exhausted by her two-day struggle that for a moment she leaned forward and rested her head on his knee. Her thought processes seemed to awaken once more because she smiled contentedly and said: 'I want to think.'

Eventually she raised herself and, with shining eyes, looked at the young man.

'I felt so ill,' she said. 'My mother kept on giving me herb drinks. She said it was normal to feel faint and dizzy when one is growing. I know now what made me feel so ill. I was fighting my training. My training has told me that people are not important in themselves but you so suddenly became important to me, as a person. I did not know how to tell my mother all this. I did not know how to tell her anything yet she was kind and took care of me. Eventually I thought I would lose my mind so I came here to find you ....'

It was as if, from that moment onwards, they quietly and of their own will had married. They began to plan together how and when they should meet.

The young man was full of forethought and planning. He knew that, in terms of his own society, he was starting a terrible mess, but then his society only calculated along the lines of human helplessness in the face of overwhelming odds. It did not calculate for human inventiveness and initiative. He only needed the young girl's pledge and from then onwards he took the initiative in all things. He was to startle and please her from that very day with his logical mind. It was as if he knew that she would come at some time, that they would linger in joy with their love-making, so that when Tselane eventually expressed agitation at the lateness of the hour, he, with a superior smile, indicated a large bundle of wood nearby that he had collected for her to take home.

A peaceful interlude followed and the community innocently lived out its day-by-day life, unaware of the disruption and upheaval that would soon fall upon it. The women were soon out in the fields, hoeing weeds and tending their crops, Tselane among them. She worked side by side with Mma-Monosi, as she had always done. There was not even a ripple of the secret life she now lived; if anything, she worked harder and with greater contentment. She laughed and joked as usual with Mma-Monosi but sound instinct made her keep her private affair to herself.

When the corn was already high in the fields and about to ripen, Tselane realised that she was expecting a child. A matter that had been secret could be a secret no longer. When she confided this news to Keaja, he quite happily accepted it as a part of all the plans he had made, for as he said to her at that time: 'I am not planning for death when we are so happy. I want that we should live.'

He had only one part of all his planning secure, a safe escape route outside the village and on to a new and unknown life they would make together. They had made themselves outcasts from the acceptable order of village life and he presented her with two plans from which she could choose. The first alternative was the simpler for them. They could leave the village at any moment and without informing anyone of their intentions. The world was very wide for a man. He had travelled great distances, both alone and in the company of other men, while on his hunting and herding duties. The area was safe for travel for some distance. He had sat around firesides and heard stories about wars and fugitives and hospitable tribes who lived far away and whose customs differed from theirs. Keaja had not been idle all this while; he had prepared all they would need for their journey and hidden their provisions in a safe place.

The second alternative was more difficult for the lovers. They could inform their parents of their love and ask that they be married He was not sure of the outcome but it was to invite death or worse. It might still lead to the escape route out of the village as he was not planning for death.

So after some thought Tselane decided to tell her parents because, as she pointed out, the first plan would be too heartbreaking for their parents. They, therefore, decided on that very day to inform their parents of their love and name the date on which they wished to marry.

It was nearing dusk when Tselane arrived home with her bundle of wood. Her mother and Mma-Monosi were seated out in the courtyard, engaged in some quiet conversation.

Tselane set down her bundle, approached the two women and knelt down quietly by her mother's side. Her mother turned towards her, expecting some request or message from a friend. There was no other way except for Tselane to convey her own message in the most direct way possible.

'Mother,' she said. 'I am expecting a child by the son of Rra-Keaja. We wish to be married by the next moon. We love each other . . . .'

For a moment her mother frowned as though her child's words did not make sense. Mma-Monosi's body shuddered several times as though she were cold but she maintained a deathly silence. Eventually, Tselane's mother lowered her voice and said between clenched teeth:

'You are to go to your hut and remain there. On no account are you to leave without the supervision of Mma-Monosi.'

For a time Mma-Tselane sat looking into the distance, a broken woman. Her social prestige, her kingdom, her self-esteem crumbled around her.

A short while later her husband entered the yard. He had spent an enjoyable day at the chief's court with other men. He now wished for his evening meal and retirement for the night. The last thing he wanted was conversation with women, so he looked up irritably as his wife appeared without his evening meal. She explained herself with as much dignity as she could muster. She was almost collapsing with shock. He listened in disbelief and gave a sharp exclamation of anger.

'Tselane,' Mma-Monosi said, earnestly. 'It is no light matter to break

custom. You pay for it with your life. I should have told you the story that night we discussed custom. When I was a young girl we had a case such as this but not such a deep mess. The young man had taken a fancy to a girl and she to him. He, therefore, refused the girl his parents had chosen for him. They could not break him and so they killed him. They killed him even though he had not touched the girl. But there is one thing I want you to know. I am your friend and I will die for you. No one will injure you while I am alive.'

Their easy, affectionate relationship returned to them. They talked for some time about the love affair. Mma-Monosi absorbing every word with delight. A while later Mma-Tselane re-entered the yard. She was still too angry to talk to her own child but she called Mma-Monosi to one side and informed her that she had won an assurance in high places that no harm would come to her child.

And so began a week of raging storms and wild irrational deliberations. It was a family affair. It was a public affair. As a public affair it would bring ruin and disaster upon the community and public anger was high. Two parents showed themselves up in a bad light, the father of Tselane and the mother of Keaja. Rra-Tselane was adamant that the marriage would never take place. He preferred to sound death warnings all the time. The worm that had been eating at the heart of Keaja's mother all this while finally arose and devoured her heart. She too could be heard to sound death warnings. Then a curious and t mporary solution was handed down from high places. It was said that if the lovers removed themselves from the community for a certain number of days, it would make allowance for public anger to die down. Then the marriage of the lovers would be considered.

So appalling was the drama to the community that on the day Keaja was released from his home and allowed to approach the home of Tselane, all the people withdrew to their own homes so as not to witness the fearful sight. Only Mma-Monosi, who had supervised the last details of the departure, stood openly watching the direction in which the young lovers left the village. She saw them begin to ascend the hill not far from the home of Tselane. As darkness was approaching, she turned and walked back to her yard. To Mma-Tselane, who lay in a state of nervous collapse in her hut, Mma-Monosi made her last, sane pronouncement on the whole affair.

'The young man is no fool,' she said. 'They have taken the direction of the hill. He knows that the hilltop is superior to any other. People are angry and someone might think of attacking them. An attacker will find it a difficult task as the young man will hurl stones down on him before he ever gets near. Our child is quite safe with him.'

Then the story took a horrible turn. Tension built up towards the day the lovers were supposed to return to community life. Days went by and they did not return. Eventually search parties were sent out to look for them but they had disappeared. Not even their footmarks were visible on the bare rock faces and tufts of grass on the hillside. At first the searchers returned and did not report having seen any abnormal phenomena, only a baffled surprise. Then Mma-Monosi's precarious imaginative balance tipped over into chaos. She was seen walking grief-stricken towards the hill. As she reached its base she stood still and the whole drama of the disappearance of the lovers was re-created before her eyes. She first heard loud groans of anguish that made her blood run cold. She saw that as soon as Tselane and Keaja set foot on the hill, the rocks parted and a gaping hole appeared. The lovers sank into its depths and the rocks closed over them. As she called, 'Tselane! Keaja!' their spirits rose and floated soundlessly with unseeing eyes to the top of the hill.

Mma-Monosi returned to the village and told a solemn and convincing story of all she had seen. People only had to be informed that such phenomena existed and they all began seeing it too. Then Mma-Tselane, maddened and distraught by the loss of her daughter slowly made her way to the hill. With sorrowful eyes she watched the drama re-create itself before her. She returned home and died.

The hill from then onwards became an unpleasant embodiment of sinister forces which destroy life. It was no longer considered a safe dwelling place for the tribe. They packed up their belongings on the backs of their animals, destroyed the village and migrated to a safer area.

The deserted area remained unoccupied until 1875 when people of the Bamalete tribe settled there. Although strangers to the area, they saw the same phenomenon, heard the loud groans of anguish and saw the silent floating spirits of the lovers. The legend was kept alive from generation to generation and so the hill stands to this day in the village of Otse in southern Botswana as an eternal legend of love. Letswe La Baratani, The Hill of The Lovers.

matter of factly

i like the blackman
who reeks of sweat
i like the blackman
with his odour sweet
when his sweat he licks
and feels the sweet
salty taste of it
matter of factly
he likes it
the blackman likes it

i. like the blackman
like the sweet
taste of my sweat
that flows
a bitter stream
of gall
drowning my cheeks
i also like the sweet
taste of sweat of toil
matter of factly

bitter salty sweat flows
down the blackman's cheeks
like a jelly of caked blood
of gaping dead men
strewn on pavements

the blackman
likes the sweat
of toil and burden
the blackman
likes the sweat
matter of factly

Norman Tshikovha

Crossing the Desert

This is the landscape of prophecy the ancient Namib
tilted sand from the mountains desert upon desert
from Okahandja Okazize Wilhelmstal Karibib

the N71 where the squat graves of the Mahareros assert
the honour of rebellion by a deep dry riverbed
where the municipal pool's wired in on blue alert

where towering koppies named for kaisers long dead
helmeted in ironstone clad in the yellow braid of acacia
commemorate colonial massacres and the railhead

the low of cattle now the meat-rack of Namibia
this is carcase land where blood is cheaper than rain
turning west we travel through rocks like a brazier

the tyres fry on the tar the highway leads where they came
there are crows which mean carrion bugs on the windshield
we are warned of kudu vaulting from Francoisfontein

over the foot-and-mouth fence the embankment the four-wheeled
vehicle like a capsule comfortable against the descent
down an escarpment hiding nothing all revealed

but once the marble hills fade the bushes relent
and only stones flower and the grasses thin
into the rubble of eternity piled and spent

there is Usakos corrugated white and buckled tin
and Ebony Arandis Rossing where the sky's red
Spitzkuppe to steer by on the planet's rim

at 80 kms an hour there I lifted my eyes from the dead
world into the next world saw instead of tortured lava flows
new courses geysers wells channels a fountainhead

there where we have been eroded and worn destroyed arose
exactly what mad visionaries see in the wilderness
a celestial city welcoming wide wondrous I suppose

by definition it must contain all qualities we in our viciousness
can never maintain floating as in a dream
caressed with the perfect hand of gentleness

I gather it held all knowledge all peace everything supreme
in short no armaments no sirens no hatred no police
it was the only place I knew where things were what they seem

I call upon Doris Lessing St John William Blake Nongqawuse
even without God they're all the same these heavenly projections
seen by prophets disgusted with the long tyranny of woes

when will this empire fall at last release subjection
when in the name of those who first challenged the status quo
did humankind first conjure this alternative perfection?

turning left a few degrees we go where we have to go
a Coke sign a palm-tree the sea-breeze rolling down mist
and in Swakopmund we find a tourist bungalow

tonight we swim in the sea drink beer get pissed
Eve they say rose from Adam's rib Christ from a herder's crib
we have crossed the desert to pink dunes foggy damp and blessed.

Stephen Gray

Renegade Blues

Seeing that most of us live day by day
and only a few impala-leapers
hurl themselves across weeks and months
across borders, fences, roads and seas
across drought and across hunger
from the one past to the multiple future . . .

what can we say, we pedestrians
stuck into the ground like thornbushes
eyed-out by these people and their cattle
too dumb to order ourselves a drink
too paralysed to know fear

a gun in trained hands is knowledge
its hinges and oily places intimate as a lover,
but now we must fight with bare-hands
against the monstrous spectacle of wasted time

Reading the newspapers we hardly even
look between the lines,
what happened to the times when our talking made sense
each newly lit conversation making ash out of the enemy,
and what happened to our leaders,
and what happened to our friends

hard men have taken over,
we are no longer consulted —
or hard women for all we know,
for we know nothing anymore
except this purple night and beyond it
the rotting pumpkin of our spirit

that chair, plastic and empty,
these cigarettes, those glasses, that brooding waiter,
all these things make us suspect each other
we feel it like the damp sweat running down our backs
one of us will soon be turning traitor
leaving us here alone

and joining the movement.

Patrick Fitzgerald

Tenjiwe Njikelana

I am happy
I am glad
I feel that I have done something
and, at the same time,
I do not yet know this thing so well
I am a little bit confused
at this new world
that suddenly
I can see
through eyes that are wet
I can feel
inside
warm
and can make
with hands that shake
and are not yet very sure.

To hold a pencil
is a strange thing
T-e-n-j-i ... w-en-N-ji-... k-e-l-a-n-a
It has so many words
I mean,
sorry,
It has so many letters
I want to write
so many letters
to my mother
who is still alive
I want to write
to her
about what they are doing to us
at KTC
there are so many things
I want to read
what stamp
they are making in my pass
I want to know
when they make the wrong stamp.
One day
I must read these laws.

'EACH ONE, TEACH ONE'
I will
I will
One day
My children will write better laws.

farouk stemmet

TALK

They had me on the floor.
The stick came down, down.
They had me crawling and licking
their boots.
'You can talk now,
or you can talk later.
But you'll talk.
Ja, you'll talk and you'll talk
and you'll talk.'

In the morning, the sun came up
(or
the sun came up and
it was morning).
They brought me a bowl of pap,
coffee,
cigarettes.
They said — 'you'll be a good boy.'

In the evening, the sun went down
(or
the sun went down
and it was evening).
I was left alone for an hour.
'Take a piss,' they said.
'Get comfortable.
Tomorrow's another big day.
Ja, you'll talk and you'll talk
and you'll talk'.

That night, a spirit the colour of ants
came through the window.
And we talked and we talked
and we talked.

Allan Kolski Horwitz

The Flame in the Fire

(Dedicated to Ben Moloise, another victim ...)

Moloise is dead
They hanged him one apartheid morning,
before the sun rose
before the sleeping lion awoke
before justice could protest
Even before the publicly announced time

Moloise is dead
Executed in the name of white justice
apparently he was a poet turned terrorist
apparently he turned his pen into a gun
apparently the swop was never made
Seems like someone's not telling the truth
Anyway he's gone now,
testimony and all

Moloise is dead
The Internal Security Act does that
to people:
the liberals say it's shocking
the intellectuals say his spirit lives on
the conservatives say it leaves them cold
the leftists say he's another victim of oppression
Ben's mother shed tears of pain, of anger,
Silently
saying more than all of them

Moloise had died
The spark became a flame
The flame has joined the fire
And the fires raging from angry hearts
into cordoned townships,
Seeking freedom.

robert van niekerk

Women's Day

On the 9th of August 1956 20 000 women from all over South Africa gathered outside the Union Buildings in Pretoria to protest against the pass laws which affect the majority of the country's people. These notorious laws were implemented to restrict and control the movement of black people.

These women — among whom were Helen Joseph, Lilian Ngoyi and Raheena Khan — handed over a petition to Strydom's secretary and waited for the Prime Minister's promised response. And waited ... and waited ....

Today, thirty years later, women are in the vanguard of the liberation struggle, resisting oppressive laws and fighting for a free, democratic South Africa. Staffrider salutes these courageous women.

Masechaba

Africa
mother of children
impatient
reluctant
to be like the rivers that
meander to the seas

Africa
mother of children
destitute
dying but
determined
to prescribe themselves freedom
to describe themselves free

Africa
your children no longer nestle in your arms
crawl on your belly
accept their fate (dumb, silent)
your children have rejected their garments
of indifference
of docile acceptance
your children no longer (your children) sleep and do not sleep

Africa
the voice of your children
erodes the mist-shrouded mountains
like hungry rain
and cuts through the valleys
like the pounding rivers
that ravage and rape your fields

Africa
today your rivers heal our wounds
your fields offer us refuge
and your mountains do not silence, no they hold and harbour
the sounds of warriors answering the call for justice.

Ilva Mackay

Women Arise

Women of our land arose
heard call of distant drums
summoning to unity
to war oppressive laws

1913 call
vibrated from eardrum to ear
they arose those warrior-women
and marched in the 'Free State' ...
eyes blazing they hammered forward
their path, and racists quivered.
The women blazed nearer and
nearer
forcing the final cowards
to burn that violent law
their special restrictive permits of paper
that arrested human movement.

Forty years later
we were there
holding the fort ... fiercely again, women
Lilian and Helen
who followed Charlotte Maxeke
leading our women to apex; August fifty-six

Women arose
thoughts bathed in sweat they marched
two's and three's of colours
coming, coming
torrents of defiance
to the very contaminated steps of Pretoria's Union Buildings
they marched
Petitions submitted
Strydom rewhitened
looked, then preferred to hide ...
taught his secretary lies ... 'Out on business!'

Bravery kept vigil
night transforming to triumph
how did their beings know
police dogs were watching waiting
for the slightest move to jump
against that victory!
Mothers can march to battle!
WOMEN OF AFRICA, ARISE!

Alice Ntsongo

Dedication

for Helen Joseph

Mother of freedom Helen
At seventy-three still a threat
What savagery aimed against her
Bullets, batons, shattering windows

Helen Joseph has defeated aggression,
Her soul is free from racial contamination,
Mother, lover of freedom
Dauntless ever,
Look at her refusing bread in old age
Eating rock
With the downtrodden,
Her heart grows fonder, profounder

Her face is carved from steel
Her eye is gentle and brave
She enters the dock, stands still
Listens carefully: the indictment read ...
It says nothing, nothing base about her
Not anything to brand her foe of the people,
The people she lovingly serves,
So she swallows and takes a deep breath.

We are winning the battle!
Down to the dark cell she strides
The Amandla trumpet behind her
Blowing, blowing, blowing ...

Susan Lamu

Ode to Aunt Mary

For seventeen years
she had to live in isolation
among her community

For seventeen years
she had to stay in the prison
that was the Transvaal

For seventeen years
she had to wear the heavy shawl
of a banned person

A banned woman
A banned wife
A banned black-mother

Up to her dying day
shown no mercy
up to her dying day

And some claim
this is a Christian country
and others claim
this is a Christian government

But we know it is not
and so does Aunt Mary Moodley
and all those restricted
and listed persons
hundreds and more
who wear the claw-marks
scratched crimson on their lives
by a 'Christian law'!

Anonymous

The Great Day — August 9th

Your mother, my mother
Our mothers,
Marching ...
They heard the call
They came together and shared ideas
They all had one aim in mind
To show the regime
They were not what the regime thought they were — robots.

One husband might have reprimanded his wife,
'What do you people think you are up to?'
And the wife might have answered bravely,
'We know our aims and objectives
We mean to carry them out'
Your mother and my mother.

The day dawned,
Staunch ...
'To the Union Buildings'
They had heard the commanding tone
And indeed they went
Carrying us on their backs
Gallant heroes of the time
Courageous they were
Women from all walks of life.
Your mother, my mother
Our mothers.

Jumaimah Motaung

Fighting Women

Brilliant daughter of Africa
Fighting woman of our land
Hunted across the country
Once
By ever frenzied Special Branch hiding behind laws
Who now have their pound of flesh behind bars
Their pound of flesh on scales of blood behind walls of writing
But still Dorothy, age-old African victim and victor
You still instill fear in their hearts.

Fearless sister
Locked in barbed Barberton prison
Where people live and die
Spending stabbing days
Entangled nights
In the silent cell of angered hell.

We are proud of you good sister
You whose light bathed the path
Whole-heartedly we tread the trail
Prepared to lay down our lives
For mothers of your mould.

Esther ka-Maleka the joining spear
A display of seasoning bravery
Pushing forward struggling
Militants born and mothered
Drawing in the fighting milk
That begot them

You dedicated your life
sacrificed your youth
Living the torture of 'solitary' in the crowding of dreams and memories
Alone in the cloud of loneliness
But still the chin uphigh
For this we honour you

Keep fighting, Dorothy, keep fighting
Tomorrow we'll stand united
Hand in hand comradely
Holding the dream by the hand
In a liberated South Africa ...

Duduzile Ndelu

Militant Beauty

Fragility, flimsy womanhood
flowers on her birthdays
luxurious apartments and flashy cars
have never been her aspiration

Distorted women's lib
refusing to mother kids
and provide family comfort
harassing a tired enslaved dad
have never been her deeds.

Attending to the needs
however meagre they might be
slaving for their well-being
pretending abuses don't mean a thing
her only aspiration
keeping candlelight burning.

Hardened by oppressive regime
she refuses to weep
even at death of innocents
who continue age-old fight for justice
her only aspiration ... liberty.

Standing defiantly
in face of brutality
resulting from corrupt illegal minority.

Flowering in natural beauty
through progressive ideology
she overcame imposed passivity
and became essence of militancy

Her beauty is not her criterion
but justice for all humanity, person to person.

Gloria Mtungwa

Refugee Mother

In a world of war and restless nights
words fill mouths like dictionaries
but they do not fill her heart
she squeezes blood out of a dream
and dry weeds tumble from her eyes
as black bark in a forest of ash

she forgets her name — forgets the clock
the scorching sun — the long dusty road
and remembers only that she is Mother
with a vacant mealie bowl in hand
and a swollen belly of sadness
in a desert of dark grieving

in the restless nights of war
a gape of hungry mouths
suck at her sagging breasts
for a morsel of freedom
lick her empty fingers
for the taste of peace

and she remembers only
that she is Mother
to the many children of hope
for the children of a new age
creating history from her hidden tears
writing history in the blood of our fallen heroes

Dee September

Photograph Kevin Humphrey

Jazz pianist and composer Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand) is South Africa's most internationally acclaimed musician. In December last year in New York, U.S.A, he spoke to South African poet Hein Willemse about his commitment to his art and to the struggle for liberation in South Africa.

WILLEMSE: Abdullah, can we start off from something you once said, namely that you see yourself as a 'delivery boy'. Explain that to me in terms of your music and your commitment to South African society.

IBRAHIM: In the traditional society, especially (in) Africa, the position or job of the so-called musician was never viewed (as it is today) in the western world, where the musician is an entertainer. In the traditional society if, at an early age, you showed any musical inclination you were immediately drafted in the field of medicine — traditional medicine. Because in the traditional society medicine and music were synonymous. A healing force. My great grandfather was a medicine man. I remember: he knew all the herbs. He was a stable-boy for Paul Kruger.

W: Do you really see your music as affecting society? I can for instance remember: I saw you singing the tribute to Solomon Mahlangu — unaccompanied. And I was greatly moved and touched by it. Do you see your music also fulfilling that role, namely a vehicle through which people can view themselves; an instrument through which they can react?

I: Oh, definitely. I couldn't have put it better. What is our role? As I've said: the West completely misinterpreted our music. What shall I do? Become a millionaire? Buy a house in Malibu Beach? That has no meaning. As delivery boys we are like the keepers of the books, the keepers of the keys of the society, the keepers of the knowledge of how the society should be structured. Our duty is just to remind. To remind ourselves and others what the true reality is, especially in South Africa with the political situation.

We have been playing this music for many many years. And all these waves come and go. Wat het Adam Small gesê: jy is Moses, jy loop met die stok/so Elvis Pelvis daai jailhouse rock/ jy skree Hosanna bly, maar jy moet skree teen Johnnie Ray.' We're trying to keep the purity and the innocence and rhythm of the community that they have now turned into a subterranean culture with this constant institution of cultural imperialism. What they make us believe is that what we have is inferior. That's all part of the strategy too, on a political level, make you feel inferior as a human being, make you feel inferior as far as learning is concerned. It's the same with the music and culture. Once they get you to do that, I think you've become completely subjugated.

W: I agree with you completely. We have to get to the stage where we dominate the cultural scene. Dominate the cultural scene in the sense that our language is the norm, our music is the norm, our poetry ... And I see your music, from earlier times onwards, taking elements of the community, taking elements of the downtrodden, the forgotten people, the working class and making that — almost in a raw form — accessible. Presenting it as their voice, their authentic voice. And I think that is necessary.

I: The music is playing out our tradition. Being aware of our tradition is the most potent way of looking within ourselves, truthfully. (People used to tell) me about 'this great musician', this 'great music' ... You know, Kippie Moeketsi always used to say, 'My friend, do you know Planet Earth?' He always used to ask, 'What is great music?' And I remember, when Kippie asked that question nobody answered. What shall they answer? I asked myself that question — many times. I've come to the United States and I went all over the world and listened to 'great musicians'. And then you hear 'that by general consensus this is supposed to be great music or great musicians.' So you just agree to it, you go with the stream. But deep in your heart you know this doesn't really move you.

Then I go home. I've stayed out for nine years in the United States. I go home. I go to the (Athlone) stadium on New Year's day with (the) Klops. And this troep comes by! Man! And the music! Right! it makes my hair stand on end, man! You know: daai tamboeriene en die banjo's en die bass. That's rhythm man! I feel tears come to my eyes. How am I going to deride this, because there is no music that does this to me. Except that. That for me is the yardstick. I don't care how intellectually it has been considered.

W: Coming back to that, Dollar. It is common knowledge that you see your roots essentially in the Coons. Some of your music refers to or is based on and reflects something of that old Coon element. A lot of people vilify that music saying it's 'only Coon music'. What you did was to take it, put a revolutionary content — almost — to it. Saying, 'this is the music of the people, listen to it.'

I: You want to say this is not traditional music? Then what is? If this is not the traditional music, what is? Jy kan nie vir die mense gaan vra, 'is dié traditional music?' Die mense gaan sê, 'Jy's 'n case, moenie vir my kom vra of dit traditional music (is) nie. Dis 'n vastrap of dis 'n square!' You know, the music functions as the music functions. And the music functions in society. Now you ask people in Cape Town en vra of dié Klopse traditional music is. 'Nee,' sê hulle, 'dis Diena-kanna-kiena!'

On the 26th March 1658 the Dutch ship, *Amersfoort* docked at the Cape with about 300 slaves from Angola. These slaves were captured by the Dutch ship from a Portuguese vessel, bound for Brazil. When we are playing this rhythm, nou sê hulle, 'dis samba, and samba comes from Brazil.' Do you know how it comes from Brazil? When you go to Brazil there's a large Angolan community. This is how the samba got to Cape Town. From Angola. Slaves. Jy weet — ons is so toegeweld met die history wat hulle vir ons vertel. And the people believe that (history), not knowing — really and truly — what happened.

W: Ek sien heeltemal daardie soort rol vir die kunstenaar. I totally see the role of the artist as being the facilitator of this new history of ours.

I: Sure, it's like the sage in West Africa. If you want to know what happened in 1215 he'll sing it for you. It's the same thing.

W: You're known, not only for your music, but also for your political commitment. You're not only singing about 'African Herbs' or 'Manenberg', you're also singing about the heroes of the struggle. What does that do to you as an artist?

I: It puts everything in perspective. If you haven't done that it is very hard to describe. How can I ask anybody 'how do you feel about commiting yourself?' It's something you cannot explain in words. It's a feeling. When you take that step it's such an incredible feeling because, like Allah says in the Koran, 'the devil threatens you with poverty'. That's how he gets you to do his work. You see? If you can say to him: wait a minute, I am not begging you anymore, as from today. One of our songs says: 'Final arrival, end of the line/ nowhere to look but your eyes in mine./ No, no not anymore, we are not afraid of freedom.' Because die probleem is ons is bang. Nie bang vir hulle nie. Ons is bang vir vryheid. Want wat sê hulle vir jou — hulle sê vir jou, 'jy meen ek moet onder 'n government bly waar jy vir ons gaan govern? Wat weet julle?' Afraid of freedom. The time must come when we say, 'We are not afraid of freedom'.

W: I think we have reached that stage — in the last three, four months, the last eighteen months especially have proved that we've reached a pinnacle in the development of a historical consciousness of South Africans. Now, we know: we can, it's possible for us to overcome. It's the marvellous thing of the committed artist. He is able to see himself and insert himself in society and see that his interests are coterminous with (those of the oppressed community).

I: That's why I've said, I'm a delivery boy. My function in the society is no more important than that of the street sweeper or a worker. The musician is no exception.

W: One way in which cultures function is that very often elements of the subjugated classes are adapted, co-opted into the culture of the ruling class. A strange thing is actually happening to your music. I am yet to learn about ruling-class musicians who are taking over your music and co-opting it. It seems to be very hard to adapt and co-opt. Why?

I: The music is only the ultimate expression of the intention. The music says exactly the same about the intention of the people. The intention is so concrete and so strong that it cannot be co-opted. Maar hulle try ...

W: Taking the point of a commitment a bit further. How do you see artists — people like yourself — struggling in the ghetto. Struggling to get out. What do you say to people like that about the need to express themselves? But now in order to express themselves they say, 'okay to be known I rather chose to play commercial disco,' rather than looking at the real roots of the people here. (That means) looking at my community. You know there are different choices and they opt for the one which is commercially viable. What do you tell people like that?

I: To come back to the previous question: it's the intention. When we started playing the music there was no question of importance, that we wanted to be known. It's by grace, by God's grace, that we are here. We accept it as it comes. But there is no intention that I'm going to be a superstar. If you're busy, if you work with this purpose it's going to take you at least twenty years to hone your art. Dizzie Gillespie says it takes thirty years to learn what to play and then it takes another thirty years to learn what not to play. We have arrived at the second thirty. There is no way that you can get in here by faking it. The admission fee is ...

W: honesty and truthfulness?

I: That's right ... and dedication. We can recognize it. That's how we met Ellington. There was that immediate recognition. We met Coltrane. We met Monk. When I first met Monk I introduced myself and told him that I'm from South Africa and all that. And I said, 'Thank you very much for the inspiration' . And he looked at me and said. 'You know, you're the first piano player to tell me that' . And I believed it.

W: Your own history is quite an interesting one. You went from the Cape to Sophiatown. En die boytjie van District Six kom in Sophiatown aan. At that time, what was the Fifties like, for you? What was it like to be in Sophiatown. To be there where you actually saw a culture being developed, being in struggle. Trying to get out against all the 'cultural imperialism' around you?

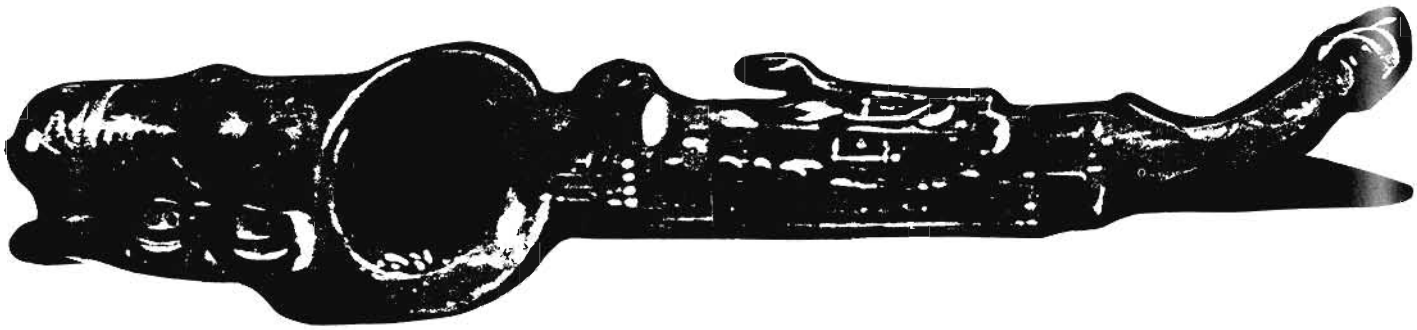
I: It was fantastic. But it was not just there. It was all over. All over South Africa. It was in the Cape as well. It was in Durban. It was in Port Elizabeth. It was all over the place. Of course you must remember now that we had counterparts in the United States. People like Charlie Parker, Monk. And like always the revolutionary spirit is contagious. So I remember as one example: I was with Kippie in Johannesburg one time. And Kippie was saying, 'Ja, you see, Dollar. You see people in South Africa they don't respect us, man. They don't respect us.' We were walking in the township — Western. Ou Kippie said, 'Ja, jy sien die mense vat ons nie kop toe nie. Hulle treat ons soos moegoes.' Hy sê, 'Jy dink ou Duke Ellington man — kyk ou Duke en ou Monk — jy dink dis ouens wat jy net by die straat kan meet. Those ouens, hulle is dignified, man. Daai ouens het offices. Jy moet phone, jy moet appointment maak. Dis nie net 'n ou wat jy kan meet by die straat nie.' And just at that moment a youngster walked by and he said, 'Hi, bra Kippie!' En Kippie sê, 'Voetsek, jy dink ou Duke is 'n ou wat jy net by die straat kan meet. Hulle't respect ...' You see it was that kind of awakening to say, 'wait a minute man, you are being recognized. We have something that is different and new.'

W: Perhaps the last question. How do you see yourself in the future? Your vision as an artist.

I: Perhaps on three tiers. Firstly there's the devotional aspect; then there's the personal aspect of the music, of working with oneself and discovering and working with new directions. And then there is the question of the struggle. And the struggle and the music is synonymous. Where the struggle goes, the music goes?

W: Doesn't the music sometimes lead as well?

I: The music is only coincidental, you know. The music is like a freedom fighter. One time it's a pen, another time it's a sword and at other times it's a stick. We're in a revolutionary situation. So we have to use revolutionary methods and flow with the wind.



Of a photograph in newsweek

I know this boy;
Bearing a people's sorrow
To the grave,
Clench-fisted with echoes of
military dress,
His action is not to save
The burning hostilities
Of a land always mad,
But to rave, rave, rave,
And yet,
I'm sad.

I'm sad that he might die,
Without the awakening eye
Seeing something new
Issuing through,
But die for other madnesses to prevail,
when people blindly hail
The moment's passion moulding them,
Returning to the past hostilities of past men.

Kriben Pillay

That Dirty Child

She walks the streets naked,
her peers prop her against the wall,
She gets nothing,
She knows nothing.

This is free training,
no paying, but pay in future,
This is enjoyment,
It will be business soon.

That dirty child,
What does she do with so many boys?
She'll get pregnant soon,
There is nothing she can do.

No money, No school,
No school, No money,
Sex, pleasure
Sex, money.

Jeremiah Masoga

Makeba Poem

Makeba Magic

Waves of dark ebony flair,
Transcend from one generation to another.
Beads of Zulu maidens.
Dazzling under the moonlight.
Hang all over the body
as if to cover mother Africa,
to protect her innocence.
I remember sitting on a mine dump
thinking of our lost gold,
when I first heard you sing
A PROMISE.
And as if in a Midas dream
my whole body was transformed
into a pillar of gold, pillar of resistance.
Then I remembered the promise that was made
in Soweto on June 16
when we died in our thousands,
when our mothers promised
to bear us sons and warriors
so the dream would never die.
Long live Makeba
and your magic.

The spirit moulds into vibrating notes
and envelopes darkness into space.
The voice oozes from the body
spreading motions into togetherness
as you sing of Kilimanjaro.
I remember the mountains
that separate me from Nonkululeko,
man created mountains.
I was sitting on top of mountains of dreams
when I hear you sing
INHLUPHEKO IPHELILE
and reminded us that
the dreams that make our future
are carved into the present
    in the yesteryears
    in the today years
    in the tomorrow years.
So build that dream
of a free tomorrow.
Sing your song
and bring melody to our sadness.
Mould our togetherness
into dreams of lost children,
forgotten masses, apprehensive people.
The silent souls.

Lelizwe linomoya
Lelizwe linomoya
Lelizwe linomoya
IZWE LAWOBABAMKHULU.

Masekela Poem

Home Is Where the Music Is

Been such a long time gone.
Even trumpets have echoed
the plight of the toiling masses
been such a long time gone
but the voice still shouts loud and clear.
home is where the music is.

Home
where the sorrow is,
home
where the tears are,
home
where the suffering is,
home
where the music is.

Been such a long time gone

Gone from home.
But the heart is still in place.
The music shapes a tradition,
tradition of good music,
tradition of beautiful music,
tradition of survival music,
tradition of struggle music.
Been such a long time gone,
but home is where the music is,
as the boys do their thing.

Home
where mahlabathini is,
home
where kippie is,
home
where the manhattan brothers used to be,
home
of the jazz epistles,
home
of zakes nkosi,
home
of hardcore mbaqanga,
home
where the music is.

Been such a long time gone
But the trumpet still echoes
from zimbabwe
from botswana
from lesotho
echoes the tears of the masses
echoes the cries of mothers and fathers.
Been such a long time gone
but home
is where masekela is,
    where the music is.
    where the heart is.

Dumakude kaNdlovu

Extracts from BLAME ME ON HISTORY

BLOKE MODISANE

Whatever else Sophiatown was, it was home; we made the desert bloom; made alterations, converted half-verandas into kitchens, decorated the houses and filled them with music. We were house-proud. We took the ugliness of life in a slum and wove a kind of beauty; we established bonds of human relationships which set a pattern of communal living, far richer and more satisfying — materially and spiritually — than any model housing could substitute. The dying of a slum is a community tragedy, anywhere.

It was especially true of Sophiatown, the most cosmopolitan of South Africa's black social igloos and perhaps the most perfect experiment in non-racial community living; there were, of course, the inevitable racial tensions, which did not necessarily flare up into colour-caste explosions. Africans, Coloureds (mixed-bloods), Indians and Chinese, lived a raceless existence. It is true that as racial groups, we were placed, socially and economically on different levels of privilege; white was the ultimate standard and the races were situated in approximation to this standard: the Chinese were nearest to white, they were allowed into white cinemas and theatres and some restaurants; the Coloureds, nearer white, and the Indians, near white. Social mixing was difficult, but community spirit was high.

As children, mixing was easier, and together we had our normal — by South African standards — racial skirmishes with the white boys from the adjoining working-class white area. There was a mud pool in the buffer strip which divided Sophiatown from Newlands, and as a lad I joined in the fights for the right to swim in the mud pool. Whichever group got there first imposed its right to use, and continue using the pool; we threw stones at each other. The white boys usually dominated the contest in the end, invariably resorting to pellet guns. At the beginning, it was for the right to use the pool that we fought, but this rationalisation soon lost its validity — it was for the sake of fighting that we went to the pool.

I was in the water when one of these

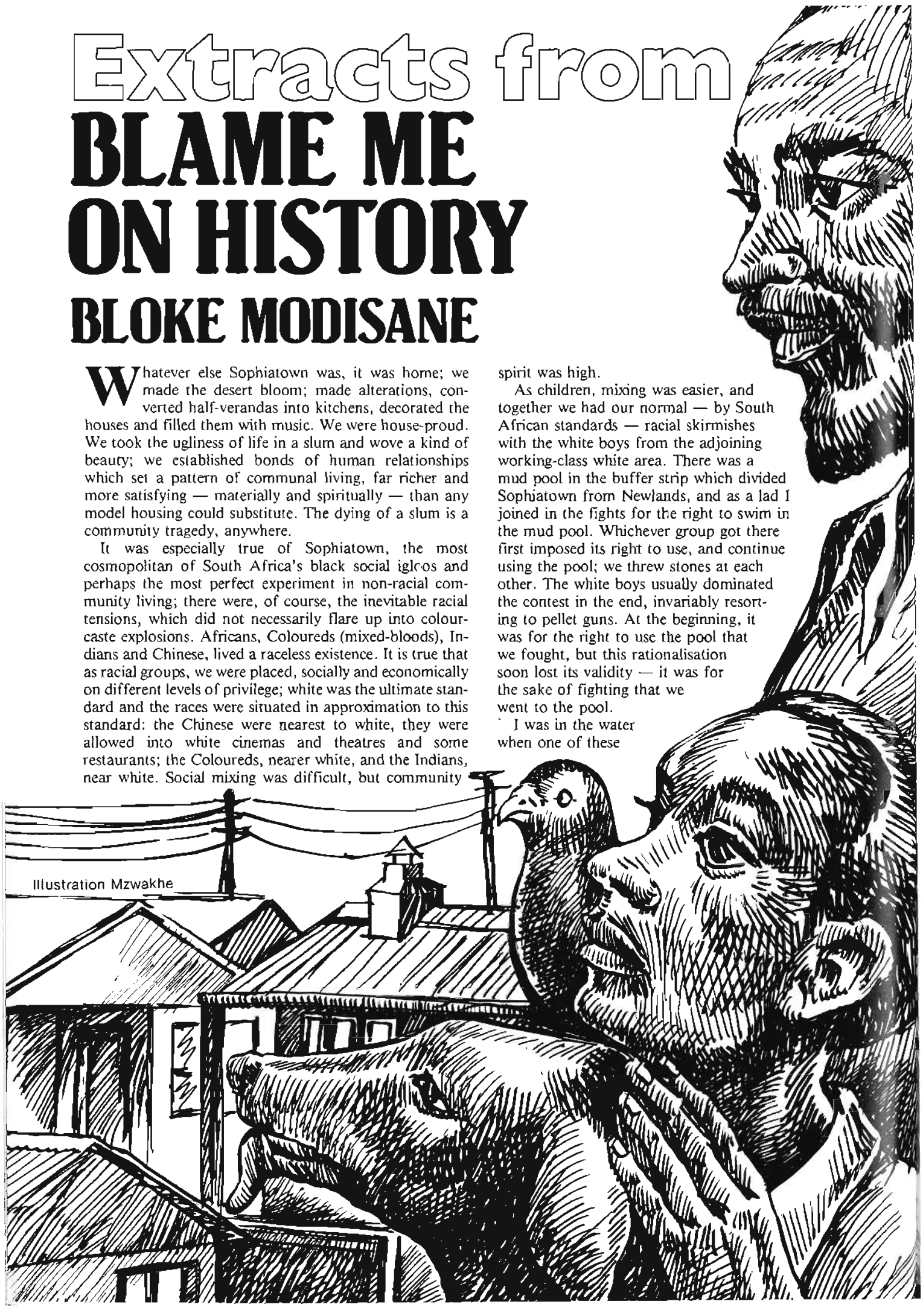


Illustration Mzwakhe

fights started, and they threw stones at me and trying to ward off the stones I was drawn deeper into the water, until suddenly the earth under my feet gave way. I struggled against drowning until I preferred death to the agony. My hands searched for a weight to keep me down. During the struggle to stay down I was grasped by a hand and guided out; and once out of the water I threw stones with one hand, at the same time as trying to pull my trousers on with the other. I have never learned to swim.

The African children, as a race group, did not fight Indian, Coloured or Chinese children, as race groups; but we fought each other in gang wars in which opposing factions would be made up of individual members of the group units. Yet we would unite as a Sophiatown gang — a non-white group — to fight the white boys from Newlands or Westdene; children divided by the race attitudes and group conflicts of our society

Like America, South Africa has a frontier or voortrekker mentality, a primitive throw-back to the pioneering era, the trail-blazing days, when the law dangled in the holster and justice was swift, informal and prejudiced. Instant justice, lynching and horse-whippings are deep in the traditions of these countries; both are compulsive addicts of horse operas, we are always playing cowboys and Indians. The mud pool was the Wild West of America or the dark interior of Africa; and to us, out there in the pool, the white boys were the Red Indians and we were the cowboys. The symbols were undoubtedly reversed in the white camp; and in the rivalry for the mud pool we ravaged each other, desecrating the sanctity of the body of our society; we, the colour pieces of a colour society, inflicted festering sores on each other, and on the society; rehearsing our roles, arranging and dividing ourselves into the colour groups determined by our society. We were the warriors of Dingane, commemorating, celebrating the victory over the wiles of Piet Retief; we were the heroes of Africa: Tshaka, Hintsa, Moshoeshoe and Sekhukhune.

As a boy growing up in the Sophiatown without playgrounds we improvised our own games, the games of the children of the streets; our repertoire included games like dodging traffic, stealing rides on horse-drawn trolleys, getting on and off whilst in motion, and the more proficient we became the more ambitious we got, graduating to the green Putco buses. During riots we would be in Main Road stoning cars driven by whites, and the red tramcars which carried white commuters between Johannesburg city and Westdene and Newlands. We were part of the riot programme, stoning the police and being shot at, and hit, like everyone else. I learned early in life to play games with death, to realise its physical presence in my life, to establish rapport with it. The children of Sophiatown died in the streets, being run over by the Putco buses and the speeding taxis and were shot during riots.

Standing over the death of Sophiatown, another death came into my consciousness; I remembered the room in Gold Street, the all-in-one room which was kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, maternity room and a room for dying; thoughts of my sister, Nancy, who died of starvation, delicately referred to as malnutrition. For twenty-four hours a day, every day for the days of one week, relatives, friends and neighbours mourned over the body, the hymnals were sung as a kind of religious ode to death. I was impressed by the ceremonial of the wake, by its symphonic solemnity; the women were wailing a chant of mourning, seemingly talking to each other, throwing phrases at each other; one group stating the melodic line of sorrow, the other singing the harmonic complement, a consolement almost causing a sort of unintentional counterpoint.

There was solemnity about the lighted candles over the body; they moved my sister, Suzan to tears and she was permitted to cry because she was a girl.

'A man does not cry,' an uncle stressed.

Seeing Ma-Willie, as my mother was called, crying was unbearable, and trying to be a man was difficult; the sight welled up that tear which I brushed off so discreetly; but death failed to horrify me, except that I hated it for what it did to my mother and perhaps blamed Nancy for dying. On the day of the funeral Ma-Willie was overcome with grief; the aunts, the other women and the girls broke down into weeping fits, a cousin became hysterical, seized by epileptic spasms, shrieking aloud and writhing on the ground and fainting. She was carried to another part of the yard and laid on a rug and fanned by a neighbour. the plain white coffin with silver handles left our house, irrevocably, and I was never to see Nancy again; it was this fact, alone, which emphasised the permanency of death.

If my father had not walked up to me at that precise moment I would have most probably disgraced my masculinity; he took me into the house of a neighbour; and thus death had made his first personal intrusion into my life.

I switched off the memory machine, but there was another kind of death gaping at me; I turned away from the ruins of the house where I was born in a determination not to look upon this death of Sophiatown. I removed my hat and stood still while a modest funeral train drove past; it was an open lorry carrying a small white coffin and not more than a dozen people.

Another child victim, another Nancy. Those of us who survived the clutches of malnutrition, the violence of the streets, lived with another kind of ugliness; the dry-breast barrenness of being black in white South Africa. There are times when I wish I had been born in a bush surrounded by trees, wild flowers, vales, dongas and wild life; to have grown gracefully like the seasons, to have been spring's simplicity, the consciousness of summer, but I became, as they say, a man before I was a Boy.

My father, Joseph, was always the signal of authority, unapproachable, the judge symbol; the only time he came close to me was to administer the cane or lay down the law of Moses, and this six-foot-two giant towered above my world, the only real force I ever feared, the authority I respected; perhaps I should have loved him too. One afternoon he came carting a rough bird-cage with seven pigeons and leading a dog which he presented to me, then wrung from me a pledge impressing upon me the seriousness of my responsibility for the protection, the maintenance, the sustenance of the pets.

I was excited and together we constructed a kennel for Rover, the dog, and a compound cage, the top half for the pigeons and the bottom for the fowls Ma-Willie wanted to keep; the working together brought us close and all through that time he became a friend I could touch, even if I pretended, with calculated casualness, that it was accidental. After the construction he retreated into his tree-top tower, to become again the symbol of authority. I prepared the feeds for the dog and the pigeons, and knew I would be punished if I fell behind with the schedule.

I resented having lost him, felt enslaved to the pets because the schedule made encroachments into my playtime; friends would whistle signals for me to join them in play, but the house duties; fetching water from a communal tap fifty yards away and having to fill two ten-gallon drums; washing dishes, cooking the feed for the dog, nursing the baby, kept me away from the streets, away from my friends until just on sunset, and after sunset I was not allowed out of the yard.

I risked the cane, disobeyed my mother, disappeared from home, neglected my duties and was away until an hour before sunset; then I hurriedly

started the fire in the mbaula, brazier, fetched the water, cooked the dog's food and washed the dishes, and by seven o'clock my dog would be fed; the tight schedule worked except that the time for my school work was wasted, all my energy would be sapped. This arrangement was disorganised the afternoon my father returned from work earlier than expected, and I was playing in Good Street when I saw the dread figure, a whip in his right hand; I disappeared into the nearest yard, jumping fences and cutting across to Gold Street, round into Victoria Road and into the yard. I preferred to be whipped at home.

I loaded three four-gallon tins on to my push-cart and hurried to the tap, rehearsing excuses, selecting the approach most likely to soften my father, the appropriate manner of apologising, begging for forgiveness; when I returned with the first load he was in the room with Ma-Willie who was ill in bed, and Suzan, realising the trouble I was in, was trying to start the brazier fire.

'Thanks, Suzie, I'll do it,' I said. 'Is he very angry?'

Little Suzan was too terrified to speak, she was biting her bottom lip, signalling with her head. I started the fire and rushed out to the tap again, when I returned I lighted the Primus stove and boiled water for tea which I served to my parents. My father remained silent. I heated more water and washed the dishes, and Suzan drank her tea between wiping dishes. Whilst the supper was cooking, the fowls locked in and Rover whining for his feed, I knocked on the door.

'I've done most of the work, father,' I said, with all humility. 'I'll wait in the kitchen.'

He joined me ten minutes later, locked the door and administered to me a whipping to remember, a whipping I took without a squeak, but with plenty of tears; and when it was over I dried my eyes and went into the bedroom to collect the cups.

'Would mama like another cup of tea?'

She shook her head, I looked at my father and he said 'No', then I started for the door.

'He's not a bad boy,' Ma-Willie said, as I closed the door behind me.

It was the statement which was to blackmail me all my life; I wanted to live up to it, to embrace the responsibility implied in that statement. It became important for me to have it changed to: he's a good boy. When my friends were pilfering I would conveniently be on an errand for my father, I chickened out of street fights, concentrating my efforts into being a 'good boy'. But one afternoon during winter vacations I fought Uncle Louie, the Gold Street strong man.

We had been playing marbles and I had won all his beautiful coloured marbles which we called glass eyes. Then suddenly he demanded them back and they had been the most beautiful I had ever owned; he was the street bully, so I gathered them into my marbles bag and handed them to him. He had hardly closed his fingers round the bag when I snatched it and dashed for home with him on my heels. About five yards from the gate where I lived he tripped me and I fell flat on my face. When I looked up Ma-Willie was looking down at me; the humiliation was unbearable, I lashed out at Uncle Louie flaying him with fists from all directions. He was so surprised that he put up a clumsy fight and when we were separated I kept my winnings.

There was a glint of pride in my father's eyes when the story was related to him; we began to grow closer, he spoke to me directly more often, and his image took on another stature. One afternoon he defended me when I had been punished unjustly by a stranger at the tap; I went home to report to him and without another word we returned to the tap together, with me carrying a fighting stick.

'I agree that a naughty child should be punished,' my father said, 'but my son says he was not impolite.'

'He tells lies,' the man said.

'My son does not lie,' my father emphasised. 'And if he has deserved a beating it is I who will give it.'

This demonstration of faith in my integrity filled me with pride and admiration, and almost as an objection to being called a liar I struck out against the man with the stick I had, and drew blood with the second blow.

'Don't do that,' my father said, taking the stick away from me.

My father apologised for me and the man apologised for having punished me; the image of my father ennobled itself in my mind. Our relationship grew stronger, he seemed to grow fonder of me, we talked about my school work, what I wanted to be, and when I informed him that I wanted to be a doctor his mind fastened on something else.

'A doctor is a man,' he said, with an abnormal emphasis on the word 'man'.

He had in the past punished me, not so much for what I had done, but for the lies I had told in the desperate attempt to escape the cane, and it took me a long time to understand this. I was seldom punished if I told the truth; we discussed what I had done, and I would usually be filled with a sense of shame, not a guilt complex. He insinuated into my consciousness the separation between the emotion of shame and the sense of guilt which he said was a sterile and introversive form of torture which dissipated itself rather than focused on the enormity of the wrong; guilt swamps the individual while ignoring the deed itself. My father fastened on the deed, exploiting the emotion of shame, and in this way I turned away in disgust because of the shame, and it was this sense of shame which has motivated me from hurting people by word or deed.

Then the wall of my world came tumbling down, everything collapsed around me, wrecking the relationship. My father shrunk into a midget. There was a Pass raid and two white police constables with their African 'police boys' were demanding to see the Passes of all adult African males.

'Pass jong, kaffir,' demanded the police constable from Uncle George, a distant relation of my father. 'Come on, we haven't all day.'

He would not dare to address my father in that tone, I bragged, my father is older than he.

'And you, why are you sitting on your black arse?' the constable bawled at my father. 'Scratch out your Pass, and tax.'

I was diminished. My father was calm, the gentleness in his face was unruffled, only a hardness came in his eyes; he pulled out his wallet and showed his documents, an Exemption Pass certificate and a tax receipt for the current year. My hero image disintegrated, crumbling into an inch high heap of ashes; I could not face it, could not understand it, I hated the young constable for destroying my father; questions flashed through my mind. I wanted to know why, and I think I resented my father, questioned his integrity as a man. I turned my face away and disappeared into the bedroom, searching for a parting in the earth that I could crawl into and huddle up into a ball of shame.

In my little prejudiced world of absolutes my judgement was cruel, imposing upon him the standards of my own world of fancy; we lost each other from that moment, and in his own way he tried to recover his son, but I was hard and monstrously unjust, and so he again became the harsh hand of authority, the authority I could no longer respect. I began to fear him, keeping out of his way and in the end I saw only the cruelty never the man. I grew closer to Ma-Willie and the four of us, Suzan, Marguerite and I arranged ourselves against him, united by our fear of him; he must have been the loneliest man in our little black world; I knew very little about him, never got to know whether he had parents, brothers and sisters; I knew vaguely that he came from the

Pietersburg area, that there were some kind of relations in Medigan.

Once when Ma-Willie pushed me he became very angry and threw a chair at her, and watching my mother shrink away from him filled me with a loathing for him and a sympathy and closer attachment for Ma-Willie who was the only parent that was real to us; she took us on shopping expeditions to town supervised and bought all our clothing, the school uniforms, the school books, took us on our first day to school and helped with the homework.

Walking up Toby street I passed the beautiful house of the Mogemi family, they had not yet sold their property to the Resettlement Board, but everything else around it was levelled with the dust; the Lutheran Mission Church, Berlin Mission, stood erect among the ruins, and a hundred yards up the road was the palatial home of Dr A.B. Xuma with two garages. I turned south at Edward Road and stopped at Bertha Street and the sight to the east was deadening, my eyes spread over a desert of debris and desolation. Suddenly I needed my father, to appeal for his protection, to say to him: Do you see, my father, do you see what they have done to our Sophiatown? But he was only a patch of earth with a number at the Croesus cemetery, he was a number I had burned into my mind that day we buried him.

It was on the afternoon of February 16, 1938, that he died, and I was at school unable to help him that moment when he needed it desperately; he had lived alone in himself and died so, alone and lonely, the children were at school and Ma-Willie had gone to visit her relations in Alexandra township. It was shortly after the lunch break when I was summoned to the principal's office. Mr G. Nakeni, headmaster of the Dutch Reformed Mission School, Meyer Street, Sophiatown, was waiting for me as I walked out of the classroom. I followed him to the fence next to the street.

'Was your father sick?' Mr Nakeni said.

'No sir,' I said, thinking it was a rather pointless question, not worth interrupting the history lesson.

'You better go home.'

'Now, sir?'

'Yes.'

I returned to the classroom, reported to the teacher and gathered my books; I walked home leisurely, playing with a tennis ball along the way. There was a crowd gathered outside the corrugated iron which fenced in our yard, I slithered through the crowd and standing next to the gate were two African police constables and between them was a manacled man. I walked through the gate and as soon as Dorothea, a neighbour saw me she started crying; she told it to me as simply and as gently as she could, leading me to the spot.

She informed me, between sobs and sniffles, that the battered and grotesquely ballooned nightmare, hardly recognisable as a human being, was my father; the swollen mass of broken flesh and blood, which was his face, had no definition; there were no eyes nor mouth, nose, only a motionless ball, and the only sign of life was the heaving chest. Recognition was impossible, I felt only revulsion and pity for the faceless man; he could have been anybody and the horror would have been the same, I shuddered at the brutality of the assault. I looked at the man back at the gate, who could have had the heart to do such a thing; he looked like other people, there was nothing visible which could set him apart from others, and I did not feel anything towards him.

The story was that there had been a quarrel with this man, that both parties had stormed away from each other in anger and later my father went into the extension of our yard in the hope that both of them had cooled down, but the man surprised him with a blow on the face which knocked him down; the man then proceeded to pound him with a brick until my father lost consciousness, from which he never recovered.

I returned to the blood-splashed spot where lay my father, and gazed at the distention, hoping to find something familiar in that mass, anything to bring the man closer to me, some mark of recognition, some sign of identification; and I could not cry, I wanted to break out and collapse at his side, but suddenly I could not remember his face and there was nothing to remind me; all through the interminable wait for the ambulance I did not, or could not bring myself to cry, I have never cried since that day when I was fourteen.

Bloke William Modisane ... A tribute to a great artist

In November 1985, Alex La Guma died in Cuba. Now it's Bloke Modisane. They've gone and joined the ancestors in the happy land of whispering silences.

Do they — those who run our lives here, whose system pitchforked these stalwarts of Africa into exile — know our deep sense of loss?

How could they know, even care! The machine of tyranny can only maintain its relentless thundering pace on the assumption that its victims are expendable.

Arthur Nortje, Can Themba, Todd Matshikiza, Nat Nakasa, Gwigwi Mrwebi — to mention only artists — already went ahead of Alex and Bloke.

And all of them in exile: more's the pity that they could not be buried on ancestral ground.

Henry Nxumalo, Jacob Moeketsi and other departed musicians were already exiles of a kind in their own land before death stole them from us. What a waste!

Bloke's passing reminds us all of these times. Cameraman Jurgen Schadeberg, former colleague on Drum, *says he and Bloke were utterly homesick in West Germany when they met.*

Bloke's short stories, his autobiographical book, Blame Me on History, *and his sketches of the Jo'burg social scene, for* Post *and* Drum, *will remain a vibrant record of South African life on this side of the colour divide.*

Bloke's style was a true product of the turbulent 50s, when sub-editors were liberated persons fired with a sense of adventure and reverence for the language that dredged the deep levels of a soul in torment. But also a soul that was reaffirming its own African dignity, its lust for life.

Volumes have been said about Bloke — the ultimate dandy, cool, unpretentious, sure of himself. He was an escapist who created a world of his own in his Sophiatown one-roomed pad — a concourse for members of all races.

His taste for classical music, which he privately treated us all to whenever we visited him — and his taste for jazz when he was news-hunting — will always be remembered.

The near-weeping ecstasy with which he often described feminine beauty in real life was like an artist whose head is turned around by his own model. All this is now legend.

Still vivid in my memory is Bloke Modisane — the artist of the written word, a man with exuberant feeling.

Es'kia Mphahlele

Nothing in my life seemed to have any meaning, all around me there was the futility and the apathy, the dying of the children, the empty gestures of the life reflected in the seemingly meaningless destruction of that life, the demolition of Sophiatown; my life is like the penny whistle music spinning on eternally with the same repetitive persistency; it is deceptively happy, but all this is on the surface, like the melodic and the harmonic lines of the kwela played by the penny whistle, or the voice of Miriam Makeba, which bristle with a propelling joyousness. But contained in it is the sharp hint of pain — almost enjoyed in a sense — as is at times heard in the alto sax of Paul Desmond, the desperation of a man in search of God; beneath all this is the heavy stormtrooping rhythmic line, a jazzy knell tolling a structure of sadness into a pyramid of monotony; the sadness is a rhythm unchanging in its thematic structure, oppressive, dominating and regulating the tonality of the laughter and the joy. My life, like the kwela, has grown out of the gutters of the slums, from among the swelling smells of the open drains, out of the pressure of political stress and the endlessness of frustration.

But there is always the kwela and the nice-time when we surround ourselves with people, screaming noises almost as if to convince ourselves of our existence, in a glorification of our living at a feverish pitch, on our nervous system; at our nice-times to the orgiastic rhythms of the kwela we conglomerate into an incestuous society where sex becomes promiscuous and friendship explodes into murderous hatred. The penny whistle band picks up a tune — a rhythm, to be exact — and the music swells, the emotions rise and the imagination waxes, then suddenly — for a brief moment only — the noise is stilled, then another kind of noise rises, first tentatively, then swells until the music can no longer be heard; it is a noise which is a mixture of Hollywood films and the sounds which are not words, but moods of the feeling required to transport us into an existence where white South Africa is another planet in another galaxy and apartheid becomes a sound in a nightmare.

Stuik uit.

Hop, man.

Shangri-La.

Veza.

Jika, rubber.

Heaven can wait.

Our bodies become obsessed and possessed by the rhythms; time is frozen, memory is obliterated as we enter into a cosmic existence; the dance becomes loaded with sex symbols, the suggestions in the gyrations become more explicit, the body surrenders to the music, to the nice-time, to the sensuous; still the rhythms multiply with a compulsiveness which enslaves the body, a mask-like trance encases the face, and we become dizzy; the gyrations become gymnastics, the body contorting spectral patterns which respond only to the noise. Then suddenly the music stops, the link with the spiritual world is broken; the real becomes present, and anger and revulsion break loose, we want to strike at something, the nearest thing.

You pushed me, spy.

So what, tsotsi?

You want to see your mother?

Make me dead, man. Kill me.

A woman screams and the people throw themselves against the walls, they fall silent; the musicians are packing their instruments, pretending a casualness. Three men walk slowly up to the bandstand.

Play!

It's two o'clock, the dance is over.

Play!

We are tired, friend.

Your mother's your friend. Play!

The musicians unpack their instruments, the mouthpiece is adjusted, the leader stamps the beat with the foot and the music rises, the dreams swirl and the nice-time continues.

This strange mixture of sadness and joy is perhaps the real heartbeat — the song of Sophiatown, whose destruction had shocked and angered me so profoundly in the course of one day; the Sophiatown which brought back so many memories on that Monday in July, and with them mainly the sadness.

I was back in the noise, having run from the screaming silence which surrounded me in Millner Road; I was again a piece in the human traffic, a part flowing into the whole. Victoria Road was writhing with the smell of human bodies as I walked back to my room behind the corrugated iron fence. My sister, Daisy, brought a cup of tea and placed it on the dresser, she revolved her body around the waist without moving her legs, throwing around feelers and sizing my mood; her eyes were furtively shooting glances at me and around the room, and I pretended not to notice that she was debating a decision as to the moment most appropriate to present her case, but she must have decided against it.

'It's dark,' she said, drawing the curtains to let in more light, and left.

I fought against the loneliness of being alone. I wanted to call her back and ask her what it was she wanted, but it was her game and I had to let her play it her own way; I wanted Fiki and Chris back with me, but the things which threw us apart were still real and present, perhaps during one of those moods of justification I preferred to believe that she did not understand the things which pumped and drove me on. I was trying to reconstruct the pieces, to find some sense, some meaning, some purpose, and all that I could find was the nagging monosyllabic Why? I could not frame the question, there was no single answer which could encompass the scope of the question; there was a moment of transference of guilt. It was nobody's fault, the whole thing was bigger than all of us. It was not my father's fault, nor that of his ancestors; it was not Fiki's fault, it was not the fault of any one single being. So the 'why?' was invalidated.

When?

The landing of Van Riebeeck was inevitable, the conflict of interests was inevitable, the clash of arms and the conquest of Africa were inevitable; the Act of Union in 1910 was inevitable, even the betrayal of the rights of the Africans was inevitable; the group attitudes and the discrimination was inevitable and yet somewhere the question has to be asked. Why? When? Perhaps an amalgam of the two will some day be necessary in the construction of a question which might be written in blood.

Why did I mutate into a hollow man? I hoped, there in my room, the white man would perfect his ultimate weapon and blow himself and his prejudice into the hell he has subjected me to; if he should fail, then I, who hate and fear violence, will be forced to appeal to the arbitrament of violence. What is it that will change men into beasts of destruction? I do not as a principle or a psychology hate the white man, but I do hate to see the death of children from causes which have been willed by man's greed; that these children shall not continue to die so horribly I must coolly and calculatedly force myself into acting out within myself the contradiction in the dilemma of the whole of modern man, who builds up an arsenal of weapons of absolute destruction on the moral of defending peace. I believe that no single life is more important or merited than another, and in a determination to save one life I may have to destroy the life endangering it. I want life for all South Africa, and if the greater safety of one life shall be purchased at the price of another, then I will take it. This morality is as pretentious as the biblical fact that with the help of God — the same God that both white and black South Africa worships — Moses closed the Red Sea over the pursuing army of Egypt. The white man in South Africa functions on the same principle, except perhaps arguing from the point that a black life deserves less; but I argue on the side of

Abraham Lincoln: 'It seems strange that any men should dare to ask a just God's assistance in wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces.'

I am disgusted by the men who have left me no other choice than to kill; I am not even sure that I sincerely want to kill them — perhaps if I could divest them of the power to injure others — but this is the precise point at which we are in conflict; the white man would rather destroy the perfect harmony of the whole country than surrender the power which strikes at children, and I would accept to destroy him rather than accommodate the murder of children of whatever colour.

Colour is fundamental in South African thinking, is the dominant factor in the making of our mores; but it goes even deeper than is normally realised. Perhaps Nadine Gordimer came closest to understanding this when she wrote that 'it is far more than a question or a matter of prejudice or discrimination or conflict of loyalties — we have built a morality on it. We have even gone deeper; we have built our own sense of sin, and our own form of tragedy. We have added hazards of our own to man's fate, and to save his soul he must wrestle not only with the usual lust, greed and pride, but also with a set of demons marked: Made in South Africa.'

It is impossible to be South African and without some shade of race attitudes, conveniently known as race prejudice, and the favourite question liberal South Africans love to answer is: Are you race prejudiced? Whereupon the answer is: I have no race prejudice at all. At this point we become noble and conforming and purged. Against the background of South Africa this question and answer is a bigoted oversimplification, and almost as loaded as: Would you like your daughter to marry a Native? The question which should be but never is asked is: How race prejudiced are you?

I am not suggesting there was no prejudice prior to the South Africa of 1948, but it was around then that the white man in South Africa decided to recognise the portentous presence of the black peril threatening his existence as a white man; it was that moment in history when he decided to rally round the flag of apartheid in defence of Christian principles, democratic ideals and Western civilization; the black peril was made to become synonymous with Communist infiltration.

Whilst the freedom-loving nations of the world, including the Government of South Africa, deliberated in New York to entrench the rights of man, to reaffirm for all time the dignity of man and to banish from the face of the earth the Hiroshima of wars, one single word was invading the imagination of South Africa; and whilst the free-world nations were smacking their lips over the eloquence of the Declaration of Human Rights, one word, — with no specific dictionary meaning — changed the South African scene overnight, and won the general election for the Nationalist Party; one word, three-syllabled, charged with an emotional intensity which suited the general temper of white South Africa; a one-word ideology which inflated the political life of Dr Daniel Francois Malan and punctured that of General Jan Christiaan Smuts, and unleashed the race monster of our age.

Apartheid, the one-word onslaught on the human dignity which the men in New York were so lyrical over, became a parliamentary joke the opposition members of the United Party made undergraduate witticisms about, whilst it entrenched white supremacy and relegated the Native to his place; and as they did this the non-white races were dehumanised and defaced. The pigeonhole philosophy of apartheid manifested itself when the segregation notices went up everywhere, particularly in Johannesburg: 'Europeans Only' and 'Non-European', but I noticed a peculiar — if not subtle — omission of the 'only' on the Non-European signs.

I was soon to find myself being forced — by the letter of the law — to use separate entrances into the post offices, banks, railway stations, public buildings; it became a criminal offence for me to use the amenities set aside for the whites, who were either indifferent or satisfied with this arrangement. There was no massive white indignation at this insult on the dignity of the black races. I found myself unable to use the Eloff Street entrance into Park Station, a habit I had cultivated over the years; I became resentful, it was a pleasing-to-the-eye entrance, there were flower-beds, a water fountain and other details I have not seen for so long that I have forgotten them; and, of course, the Non-European entrance, then still under construction, was dismal and bleak, and because I have been educated into an acceptance of the primacy of law and order I accommodated, rather than defied, this effrontery. Everywhere I turned there were these prohibitions taunting me, defying my manhood,with their arrogance, their challenge was driving me out of my mind: but I am only a man, afraid and apprehensive, perhaps even a coward. I should have walked past the notices and registered to myself a protest against that which offended my manhood, but I was afraid to go to prison, rationalising that it would have been a futile gesture. Dear, dear God,

The white man has laboured earnestly, sincerely and consciously to deface the blacks, with the result that the black man has ceased to be an individual, but a representative of a despised race; they hate me, not as an individual, but as a collective symbol; the African has been reduced to a symbol which has to answer to labels like Jim, John and boy, and when the whites feel any affection for him it is characterised by forms of endearment such as, My boy, which is intended to impress liberalism and fond possession. The operative word is 'my' which is used as an adjective of detached intimacy, something in the area of 'this is my Siamese cat', perhaps an unfair figure, decidedly prejudicial to Siamese cats, which, relatively speaking, enjoy a greater measure of attention and care.

White South Africa was morally disturbed, and with demonstrative indignation they protested with banners and solemnity when Russian scientists orbited Laika, the space dog, and when a signal was released that the dog would be poisoned because it could not safely be brought back into our planet; the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in South Africa and most of the world bodies conducted prayer meetings bubbling with Christian ritual; yet African children die in their hundreds, every day, because there is not enough to eat, and African prisoners and the labourers on forced labour farms are tortured, flogged and kicked to death by white farmers and police hooligans. This does not so much as raise a mascara'd eyebrow.

The de-personalisation of the African has been so thorough that I have no name, none of them care to know whether I have one, and since there was very little point in having a name — in any case, I have no name, the only one I had was buried on the coffin of my father — I adopted the label Bloke; it was a symbolic epitome of the collective thing I was made to be. The African is a collective which cannot be classified and distinguished apart, or hated apart, as an individual; this is perfectly justified, there are nine million of us, it is humanly impossible to hate nine million people individually, it is, however, less exacting to hate them collectively.

It is this collectivist mentality which has mutated me into a destructive monster which cannot, politically, see people as individuals, they have trained me not to. Because I am black I must conform to the needs of nine million blacks, it is not accepted that my individual needs may be different from that of other Africans; if Meadowlands is appropriate to the requirements of Africans, then it must accommodate the

individual requirements of every single African. By the consistency of this reasoning, if Italians like spaghetti, then every individual Italian must therefore eat spaghetti. There is the opinion that the English have an insulated sense of superiority, are contemptuous of other nations; the Americans are said to be loud and uncultured. The polemic therefore would be bigoted and prejudicial.

And because man learns by imitation the system of de-personalisation has transported over to the Africans; they have been trained and conditioned to see whites as 'baas' and 'missis', and in their collectivist reaction every white is the signal of authority, a symbol to be hated and feared. There are no individuals among the whites, and by their actions the Africans do not regard them as people.

'Don't worry,' an African will console a friend who has been injured or humiliated by a European. 'It's all right, they are not people.'

A human injustice is regarded with grave significance by Africans, the injured party will brood for hours, with incredulity and dismay, that such an act could have been committed by a human being. 'I would understand if this was done by an animal.'

During a riot in East London eight Africans were killed in a clash with the police, three of these were struck down by stray bullets whilst sitting in their homes which were built of wood and iron bars; the incensed Africans went on a vengeance prowl in the streets, seeking to avenge themselves on the whites. The first car they encountered — with two whites in it — was stoned, but they failed to bring it to a stop; the second car — driven by a nun from the Saint Claver's Mission — following almost immediately was stopped. The nun was outraged, killed and placed in the car which was set alight, and it has been suggested by white friends — probably in the hope of insinuating that there is a left-over savagery in all blacks — that the nun was desecrated and cannibalised in a ritual and parts of her body removed to reinforce medicines. They made it sound like an Edgar Allan Poe tale.

The desecration of the nun's body horrified white South Africa which was shouting the familiar platitudes: these Natives are savages, not fit to take their place in the white man's world; Western civilisation, culture, religion, everything, has failed to make an impression on them. Why the nun? She was their friend, devoted to their welfare. Why kill her like that? I listened to the individualists talking, it made me sick.

Why the nun? This was the precise point, and it held up two lessons of warning. White South Africans are not famous for the ability to think. The nun had been working in the only African clinic in East Bank location, she visited the sick in their homes, was a familiar sight in the location; every African in that location must have known her on sight, her figure was far more personalised — by dress — than perhaps any other white, but all this did not divert the vengeance from striking out at her. The Africans saw only the symbol of a hated race, the nun's dress became, itself, the mask of that symbol. This symbol which they saw must have conjured up another symbol of fear which man is seldom satisfied by mere killing of it; the thing must be annihilated, the memory of it obliterated from the face of the earth. It is how a man kills a snake, he continues striking at it long after it has ceased to be a danger.

None of us wanted to look this tragedy in the face, like Oedipus we blinded ourselves behind easy rationalisations, we determined not to look at this issue of our intolerance. The nun was killed because she was white, not any particular white, just white. The nun was desecrated, not because she was a white nun, she became a symbol of something they hated so much the only way it could be destroyed was to obliterate it physically and organically.

Such is the passion of the hatred which the gold and the diamonds of South Africa have purchased.

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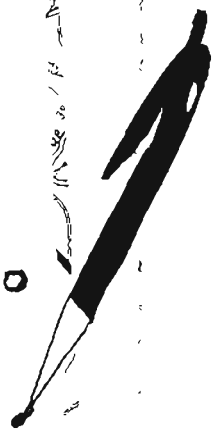
Such is the passion of the hatred which the gold and the diamonds of South Africa have purchased.

Illustration Mzwakhe

LIFE AT HOME.



Joel Matlou

How It Was On The Farm

Where we were, we could really feel what the life of a slave was like. Bought and sold like a piece of furniture, having no say over

1

where he went, whom he belonged to or what kind of a life he led. When wealthy people died, they left their slaves to other people, just as they left their other belongings.

A wealthy farmer outside De Wild near Ga-Rankuwa township . . . . He did not see it, but his staff were slaves.

He looked after his staff and saw around him only people doing work. But his staff were slaves. He built houses, fed the staff, transported their children to school and to hospital, and guarded them at night when they were asleep. The farmer thought he was doing well, that he was a good farmer and not like other farmers. But, in fact, his people were slaves and suffering.

It all went well and quiet for about ten years. Then a certain family on one of the farmer's properties became worried and unhappy about the life they led. It was a family with grown children. It was the family of 'Mr Matlou' as he was known. Matlou's family was so worried because after every two years there would come a new farmer on their land. The farmers were changing land

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after two years, but Matlou's family must always remain on the land with new farmers.

They were living in a two-roomed house. The house was fitted with a double door of the kind called a 'stable' door, and there was an oven in the house which they did not use. Their furniture was old and broken. There were two small windows like toilet windows. The windows were welded shut, not to be opened.

Matlou's family were worried. The families in the other five houses were not worried about their children. But they were slaves, and suffering. Mr Matlou was worried about his health. He wore Railway boots, Railway overalls and an old army hat from the boss. He wanted to dress in clean clothes during the weekend, but could not because he did not have enough money for his body.

He was a tractor driver, without a licence. He would wake up early in the morning to feed birds, pigs, cattle, cats and dogs. When the boss woke up at ten o'clock he would see that his staff driver had done well, feeding

3

the animals and watching over the property. But he could not see that his favourite staff driver was a slave. In the afternoon Mr Matlou had to lock all the gates and count all the animals in the yard.

For Mr Matlou and his grown family it was a hard work to unsuccess. He used to work seven days a week without any time off. The farmer did not want anyone to help him because, he said, Matlou was a hard-working man and a 'good boy'. He was working hard so he could feed his children and his wife. His wife was a 'kitchen girl' with a good old reputation. Also, she was a hard worker. Matlou did not drink or smoke.

Matlou's family were trusted because of all their hard work. His wife was so tiny and beautiful with a baby face, but he was old. There were many people working at the farmer's fields, women, men and children. But Matlou's wife was a 'kitchen girl'. When she was finished at the house she used to help the other workers at the fields.

Every Sunday afternoon Matlou grouped people to make a small church. He was a 'Moruti'. He would take an empty 25 litre

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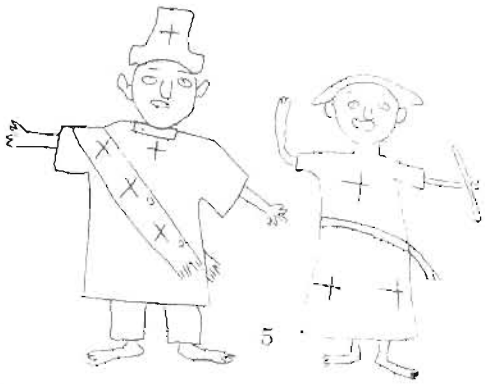
can and cover both sides with an old suitcase's leather, and beat it to make 'Moropa'. When the sound of the 'Moropa' started to 'blaf' people started to sing and dance around and around, wearing white dust coats with the cross embroidered at the back.

His wife was a 'MmaMoruti'. They stole red and green wool at the boss's house and tied the wool to people, around their necks, their wrists, their waists and their ankles, so that the staff churchgoers might be healed. Also, the Moruti baptised people with a cup of salt water, and prayed for them while touching their heads. His church was under a tree.



5

Illustrations by the author

Matlou And Family

But Mr Matlou and his family were slaves. *Life At Home* says Matlou's family were 'swop-shops'. The farmer was an old man. He used to walk using his stick. His head was not bald. His eyes were weak and he could not talk properly. He liked to wear bell-bottom trousers and velvet jerseys. He was 69 years old. Because of his age the days of his life were short. Anytime he could die. Matlou was just 45 years old and healthy. Feeding careless animals for Mr Matlou was a tough job. There he was, cleaning pigs' dungs all day without anyone to help him.

Life At Home says Matlou did not have a reference book, even his wife did not have one. But Matlou was a clever man. The boss did not know his favourite staff was a clever man. He started to steal small plants, chickens and tools and put them at a friend's

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house, somewhere in Ga-Rankuwa township, so that when he got a house he would be able to use them. His stealing of chickens was never found out. When he stole small chickens he would just take two and put them in his jacket pocket. Those chickens would cry all the way to Ga-Rankuwa from

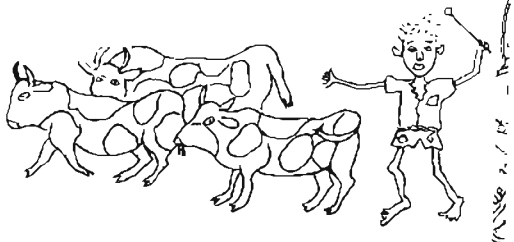
7

De Wild Farm.

Matlou did not have a clocking-off time for his work. Sometimes his 'boss' (the farmer) would call him at night, using the sound of a gun, to help him at the garages of their two old-model Ford station wagons. When Matlou heard the sound of a strong gun he would know that his boss wanted him nearer. The growing of his children without education and this working all day until late without extra pay made Mr Matlou to be a worried man.

His wife although she was old was still a 'kitchen girl'. The name of his wife was Annah. Her first son was called Moloko. Moloko was also a farm worker herding cat-

8



tle near the slow flowing river. Herding all those years in the bushes taught Moloko how to catch hares using wires on the small path, using two sticks. During the bad rainy days, Moloko did not go on herding and the cattle were fed with lucerne which the boss used to plant at his farm. Moloko did not have the mind that he was a slave.

Their second child was a daughter called Makoma. At that time Makoma was 12 years old. She was not working at the farm. She was cooking food for her parents and other children while they were at work. Makoma was a family cooker. She knew very well how to mix things and started the family fire.

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At Mr Matlou's house, Makoma was a quiet good girl. She did not like fighting. She was the only daughter at home in five boys. She was liked by most people at the family side. Makoma's favourite staple meal was 'putu'. Their third child whom they called him Medupe, was a boy. The fourth Kgashane, the fifth Andries, the last one was called Piet. All three were farm players. Not one of the three children were working.

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Matlou Makes Plans

Matlou was the scoop of the year? No, he was the slave of the year. It was on 24 September 1964 and in the early morning when Matlou met face to face with his favourite boss about their problems. Matlou was wearing his usual dirty farm clothes with black big plastic boots. His wife was wearing 'kitchen wear' and on her head was a

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'doek'. They knocked several times on the door. But the boss did not answer their knocks because he thought it was the dogs' tails knocking at the door. But Matlou called his boss by the name. 'Baas Dick! Baas Dick! Baas Dick! It is me.'

Without any problem the boss opened the old wooden door. He was wearing morning shoes and '1945 World War pyjamas'. His head was not bald but his feet showed us that he was old enough to be slow, no one to blame. The family told their boss that they wanted to apply for reference books, even their grown children wanted reference books. For the boss it was very simple. The following day they were taken to the commissioner for their books. They were fixed without any problems.

Now the family wanted to move to the township, to have their own house there and educate their small slaves. The boss, Mr Dick as he was called, did not know anything about their daring escape. As the years pulled away one by one, Mr Matlou was one of the forgotten days visited by his old friend who was living at Ga-Rankuwa where his

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stolen chickens, tools etc. were kept. He tipped Matlou that the new location called Boekenhoutfontein had been built two months ago near Hebron village. Without any wasting of days Matlou, accompanied by his friend, took to the location using their old bicycle as their transport.

The way to Boekenhoutfontein was long and was enjoyed by both. His friend wanted him also to leave the farm life and come to the location. At the government offices at the new township they met a man who gives people houses. Everything was fixed and written and Matlou was given a house which he locked using his friend's bicycle keys. On that day the boss at the farm was away and Matlou's only first-born son occupied his father's job and fed the animals.

Of course the slave was happy. Even he could not believe his friend's aid. On bicycle again, coming home, was Matlou and his friend. His friend took to Ga-Rankuwa where he was living and Matlou took to the farm where he was a living slave. The road to De Wild was sandy and old Matlou grew tired driving his machineless bicycle home.

He pushed his bicycle using his left hand all the way home. His face was sweating heavily without a handkerchief. The man arrived home safely, with a smile. He sat down on the old bench and his children were just around him.

What he could tell his family was that he had found a house. All was happy as the old man smiled for the last time with his missing teeth. Telling his family, he took out the receipt and showed it to his loving wife. He

said, 'This is my receipt, this is the date and here is the number of the house, 252A Boekenhoutfontein, here at the left are all my names. Now my children are going to be educated and some will be at the university. I am going to work at factories in Rosslyn or Brits or Pretoria. My wife will remain at home. That is all, I am happy. The farmer Mr Dick will not see me anymore and I will not tell him when I move from this camp of slaves,' said Matlou.

Bandits Are On The Run

Speech is silver, silence is golden. Back to his job again he worked without telling his boss what had happened. After two hard weeks he again took another lonely journey back to his friend at Ga-Rankuwa, using his special foot's bicycle. He told his friend to organize transport for his furniture because on Sunday he would not be seen at the farm anymore. Back at De Wild again he kept quiet and worked. During the week his friend arrived at the farm. It was daylight and Matlou was on top of the tractor. The tractor was making a big noise, and the friend approached Matlou. He switched off the noisy engine and took off his hat. With his slow voice Matlou said, 'GOO-D AFT-ER NOO-N.' The two were happy, and the news was that the transport would come on Sunday morning.

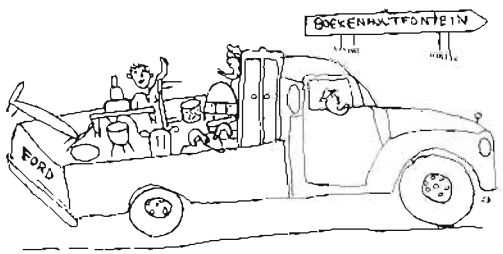
Back to square one - Matlou told his wife and children to be prepared, because the transport would come on Sunday morning. The house of the boss was very far off from the house of the Matlou family, nearly deep in the bushes. The day of the escaped convicts opened and the truck arrived, the driver accompanied by Matlou's friend. They broke into the jail and the daring escape was made. Now bandits are on the run. Detectives are watching on TV2. But Matlou's family is never seen again. That is how he escaped to educate his clever children.

The truck was full of goods like mbaola, mepeto, dikobo, holodoropo, sepilikase,

ditafola, ditulo, dibanka, disofa, dikotlolo, maupi, digarafo, dikatse, ditshwene, dikgogo, ditokolosi, maeba, masenke, dipala, matsetse, ditlhako tsa kgale, mafele, diruiwa, and other common things to the new township. The truck roared off at slow speed. The driver was a young man from Hebron. When the truck met the dust road and the dust road met the truck things began to shake and all the children especially were shaken by the truck. The driver, Matlou and his wife were sitting at the front. But the truck was open at the back and the dust was just flying high all over the road and through the bushes. The heads of the family were full of dust. The children were busy eating mielies which had been cooked by the daughter Makoma. On the mielies they put salt so that the mielies can be tasty. The mielies were in a small 25kg plastic bag. When they finished eating their mielies, they threw away the cobs of the mielies, which are called 'sekokothi' in Setswana.

During their journey to Boekenhoutfontein they passed wild animals crossing the road in every direction. They saw hares, im-

palas, wild pigs, ostriches, etc. Also they met small boys herding cattle at the bottom of the Hebron river. Also they passed the big building which used to be Mmanotshe school. Nowadays they called it 'Hebron College of Education'. The driver was talking about 'that' and 'there' using his hands with which he also managed the steering of the moving truck. Also, their favourite dog called 'Oubaas' was happy all the time, even smiling with its nose touching the mouth.



Croco And Impa

In the bush near the road there was a big dam and near the dam there were big rocks which looked like sleeping cattle or horses. The driver slowed down the truck for all to have a look. On the rocks there were two big crocodiles, resting there without movement. The driver stopped and switched off the engine. They looked at the two monsters. There was a movement between the two crocodiles. The one with its tail in the water moved back to the water slowly, followed by the second one which was on top of the rocks. Why did the crocodile move back to the water? Were they escaping because they had seen Matlou's family? No, the crocodile has seen its enemy. There were ten impalas moving in one group to drink water. They came nearer and nearer and started to have a sip. The water started to move like a wind

and all the impalas ran away. But there were still some which had not drunk enough water. They came back again and started to drink fast as they had been startled by certain moves in the water. In less than a second the two strong crocodiles jumped out of the water and grabbed the innocent impalas, and pulled them inside the big dam. They started chowing the two impalas.

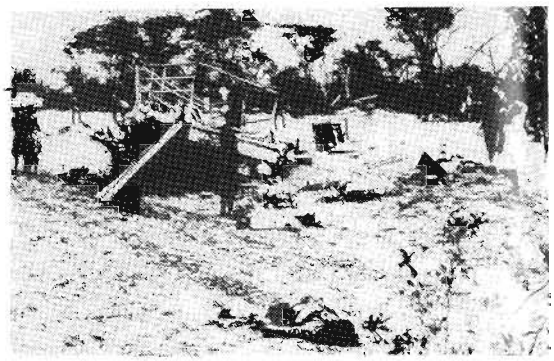
Fearing that it would be their turn next to be attacked, the family of Matlou told the driver to start the truck and take on their journey again. He put the key in the ignition and tried to start the old bully truck. But it did not start. No one was talking but they looked at the young driver with their wide opened eyes. At last smiles started to appear as the truck took on its journey. There were stories in the truck, talking about 'croco' and 'impa'.

Life At Home

They came near now to see the birth of their new place. Here they are now. Entering the new place was a lesson for them. In the first grassy street they came to was their house. The place looked like all the people were still 'visitors' but they were residents. Each house had its action. Small babies were crying. Dogs were barking. Parents were cooking, sweeping, washing and cleaning. People were extending their two-roomed houses. Some were fetching water from the local tap. Men were putting wire fences around their yards. Some were chopping wood to make fires. Really, the place was poor. No shops, coalyards, police stations, creches, schools, taxis, trains, clinics, hospitals, bottlestores, etc.

The truck now stopped in front of their new two-roomed house. They put furniture into the house. After emptying the truck the driver took the road again to Ga-Rankuwa. That was a good night to be at home. Being at home was like being at the game reserve of 'Manyeleti'. Life at home was really like at hell. But everything was all right. There was furniture all over the house and Matlou prepared to put everything in position. There was an outside toilet and the government had used the soil they got from digging the toilet to make the floor of the empty house. The soil from the toilet was red in the house. Matlou was the owner.

Ovamboland



Lake Otjikoto lies azure
round a bend in the road,
and wakens you
after miles of sleepy veld,
trees which gesture warnings.

There is a prehistoric frog
on four wheels
squatting in the carpark
a sick blotched brown,
its steel chassis canted up
into a v
to lessen landmine blasts.

At the lake they sit,
three policemen,
two white and one black.
Slowly they feed the fish
their sandwich crumbs.

We stare in wonder:
improbable peace has spread
its blankets
on the body of the morning

small tilapia
flick like solace to the surface
of our waking dreams
and disappear once more
slapping waves upon the edge:
a brigandage of jays
has shown up in the withaaks, start
to gabble for the bread.

Suddenly there's a
— SCREAM — like tearing paper
through the sky, and one Mirage,
no two, THREE! cleave
the air at tree-top height
in tight formation,
arrows of death, arrows of portent
directly overhead:

recoil.

The birds are gone.

The pictures on the lake scrubbed off.

And they sigh,
gather their remaining lunch
the peels and the eggshells
and climb back into the darkness

of their patrol

★ ★★

Roadblock. Figures
order cars off the road
between flashing red lights.

A crouching man in camouflage
prises our hubcaps with a bayonet

black passengers are jostled together
in long lines and searched

gets up with cracking knees
pokes our doors' lining an

old man is led away
protests in Ndonga[1]
his splayed feet pull
at the useless earth we're motioned

to the table.

'Jou naam?' to me.
— Ferrets in his ear
with the butt of a pencil
half listens

scratches his belly with his
non-writing hand then writes
with great care
tongue tip held between teeth

CALVIN SORE —
meticulously sketching the boils
onto my puritan soul

★★★

From the window of the car,
a burnt-out
car. We look at it,
and sweat.

★ ★ ★

So, late, we hurried
as the late afternoon flung grey
across the grey road
and covered with clouds
the sunset's flow and blister

we had no time to see
that Ovamboland is perversely beautiful:

arrived at Onandjokwe
just before the curfew

'Don't,' said our host, 'go
outside after dark. There's a path
here that people' (emphasized, a smile)
'sometimes use.'

Throwing belongings in a chest,
darkness pressing in, I felt
my bowels wrench and stiffen
dashed outside into the close evening
looking for an outhouse.

A drop of water on the thatch,
then another, and it seemed the heavens
must have opened like a sewer
the first downpour of spring

and me bemused,
too dry to run and too terrified to stay,
vacillated far too long.

By time the unending roar
of water began to ease
it was eleven o'clock. Outside
the blackness grew intense,
a mighty fist that clutched no moon.

A muscular spider pulled itself
into view on the cistern
and glared at me:

then, to my added horror,
footsteps crunched stealthily
past the door.

I sat in the dark and contemplated
this first heroic encounter
the passage of a leftist
in search of new experience

my first night in the war zone,
spent sitting on a toilet

★ ★ ★

— and the other space of fear:
'a landmine victim's face will freeze
so he looks like a laughing mule
his upper lip pushed up
by the fiery blast of air
and a betrayed grin
of surprise', he says

'landmine victims who don't die
usually lose their pecker and both legs
in any case.
    There are only two
ways to drive in this screwed-up country
watch the road in front of you
like it was your mother-in-law
or drive like hell'

(inching through the drifts of sand
more jumpy than you'll admit
where a half buried coke tin
's enough to cause you panic)

'— you'll get used to it'

(the crackle of shots in the night
firecrackers
cut short)

and the worst moment of all
drinking with three friends
at a bar in Oshakati
all red plush and flies

the door bangs open:
a drunk Home Guard
pushes a woman in, kicks and slaps her

she screams 'fuck off, go to hell!'

a large pink brassiere
flops from her torn t-shirt
SUN CITY BOPHUTHATSWANA

to our minds, he's polite enough:
a lover's quarrel, merely —
we gulp our drinks
carefully ignore

the rocket launcher strapped
to his sodden back

★ ★ ★

Here the policemen go barechested
and the makakunyas,[2] young boys, spit
on their country: last night
a store was destroyed by 'persons unknown'

the police blame the guerillas,
the guerillas blame the police;

and the small trader
caught in these sudden eruptions
like dog's vomit on the ground

sat up in bed (knowing which side he was on)
and wondered
which side
was on him

★ ★ ★

The bodies pile in the morning,
found in neat rows
next to the homestead palisades

In front of the sights —
a six-month child, its face
blown away by the careless
gesture of a finger:
a cast off doll
that was his mother,
her chest tattooed with bayonet thrusts

They are easy to delineate

Behind the sights —
a question mark

What did he think of,
afterwards?

★ ★ ★

The army, the headman says,
have taken to noting
those villages they think
feed the swapo's

plant landmines
under bushes in the area,
carefully smooth over
the disturbed earth

and strew the ground with sweets

★ ★ ★

Reimo Hakonnen, fifty, balding
with a wife and two boys, lives
in a pink sprawling bungalow of stone
under a huge fig tree
fifty yards off the dirt road.

You can hear his rueful laugh
        as the army convoys
        spread dust on its fitful leaves
        on winter days,
        wending their stubborn path
        to the north.
— It's not the best of times, here.
The school you can see
        from the west verandah
        is deserted now, students fled
        past the borders for military training
        or southwards to the mines.

Their lonely goalposts lean like drunken sailors
                on the plain.

    Once, he says, you could look
eastwards past the mission lands past forever
where the cucimbas[3] jewel the plain
to the wisping shouts of children fishing
lifting their flamingo legs in the water;
the cobwebs of skein nets raised and dipped
even real flamingoes
        — once, he says, young girls
would promenade on Sundays
twirl parasols as bright as parakeets
rest under the palm trees at noon
and politely refrain from gossip
only about each other.

Reimo Hakonnen is a builder,
and has lived here sixteen years.
The Hakonnens still eat cold meat and bread,
tomatoes and cheese for every meal
and say their grace seriously
while spiders watch from the thatch above.
There's a sauna in their yard.
        The children speak
        no Afrikaans, no English,
        but Finnish and Kwanyama[4].
Sometimes they dance in the heat
        round and round
        round and round
        then squint at the sky
        and try to not fall over.

He leaves early in the morning,
silently. His hands lead him
as if by instinct to the new school
the church is building further down the road.
Else he travels over the factious countryside,
instructing the need to listen to your palms,
the use of wood and stone.
When asked if he is ever scared,
he only smiles.

        Months later
        in neglectful Windhoek
I hear he finally drove his bakkie
over a double landmine:
the result looked
like a giant lizard took a bite
out of the engine block.
Reimo Hakonnen, however, stood up
and walked away from the wreckage
almost apologetically.

And still, from time to time,
        friends of mine
        journalists and voyeurs
speak of his wife, his hospitality,
the house's cool interior
and his inscrutable children. I hear

he lives on with his ordinary courage,
with patience and with forbearance
through the cursory war

★ ★ ★

I see your coloration, your ghost
much clearer than did yourself
when you traded sight for obedience
and the futile doctrines of your skin

so when your truck danced
on the road of your amazed innocence
and your death spat from the sand
in one enormous tongue
and the legs came apart from your body
and the blood ran, placidly
into the disregard of a foreign land
it was too late for questions,

too late a humbling, the rage
pulls back your lips now without speech
without a face
and the words lost from your tattered mouth
accepting flies like raisins:
the realization you were tricked
by a Humpty Dumpty parliament perched
on the spattered walls of its army.

Everything's the same.
It is too hot this summer
to mourn long for the ruptured dead
or the herd boy child you one day shot
who stood in the way of your heavy gun.

I mourn instead
the contempt of our false rulers
for all the flesh they crucify:

you're a victim too,
you fool.

From the tail of their eyes
(a blue set, and two brown)
two teenagers watch each other
surreptitiously

the one

is under orders,
hides from an ardent sun
in the shadow of the dugout roof.
Scope girls strew the sweating floor —

obsessed with them, he sighs
and tilts his machinegun embarrassedly
towards a distant road.

On the road
the other, laughing.
Her bike teeters with a load
of milk and oshikundu

the spokes wink bottletops

and from her saddlebag
three streamers wave behind

a defiant blue, red and green[4]

Kelwyn Sole

Explanation:

1. Ndonga, Kwanyama — dialects of the Ovambo language. (Oshivambo)
2. makakunyas — local slang for homeguards
3. cucimbas — shallow perennial pools in Ovamboland
4. blue, red & green — Swapo colours

A SWAPO rally to commemorate 20 years of PLAN — Courtesy Afrapix

Johannesburg 100

The big city
whose streets are lined with gold
celebrates a hundred years

Hot'omnyama celebrate
ululate and rejoice

celebrate a hundred years
of subordination

celebrate a hundred years
of oppression
repression
and more oppression

celebrate a hundred years
in injustice
not to mention the exploitation

you thankless
agitator
instigator
intimidator

you communist
you klipgooier

Leave your Molotov cocktail
at home and
join in the tikkie draai

celebrate. don't you realise
baas likes you
there's drinks and wors
but don't forget the curfew

celebrate Mnt'omnyama, celebrate
the big city comes of age
forget your dark cold home
in Soweto
you are lucky to have one anyway

Jabulani
Jubilate
Mlungu loves you

Remember when Paul Kruger
gave you the Bible
nevermind that he stole your land
in the process

Remember when Smuts
drew the human rights bill
for the international community
certainly you don't need one too

Remember when Verwoerd
so unselfishly designed
an education system specially
for you

Remember how well you were protected
from the communists
by J.B.
Jimmy Kruger
and them

Remember you can sleep peacefully
the trouble-makers are all
on Robben I. pleasure resort
in Pollsmoor
Diepkloof Sun

You still want cause to celebrate?

Mkhulu came to Jo'burg in his youth
he gave his all to this glorious city
now he is finished
he exits with nothing in his pockets
sorry! he doesn't have pockets

Celebrate mntanami celebrate
what little you earn
from this city you have to return to it
don't engage in consumer boycotts
Mlungu will not be pleased

Have more wyn en wors
and wait for the third Rubic ...

eat and be merry
forget the country bums
in Moutse, Siyabuswa
forget Khayelitsha, Leandra
forget Wilgespruit, Enkangala
forget Crossroads

Remember you won't have to
carry a big pass anymore
just a card
but you have to carry it
all the time
This is Reality
12-year-old refused bail
what's he doing in jail in the first place
12-year-old on a charge of intimidation

Yes, you heard right ...intimidation
This is Reality

Aag man celebrate
forget polotiks

Did you know
Rau celebrates twenty years?
Ja the universiteit
not the tribal college

the under-graduates spend
one year in the townships
practising marksmanship
then off to Angola
to protect you

You've got no worries
celebrate

CELEBRATE OR ELSE ...

Chipane L. Kgaphola

Staffrider, a landmark in new South African writing since 1978 is about to enter a new phase of growth.

New features — starting with Volume 7 Number 1 — include: an editorial page; 'Cultural Express', a feature on current cultural events; a major local story as well as a major world story; a music feature which will take the form of an in-depth look at South African music; 'Viewpoint', a cultural worker's views on one or other contentious cultural issue.

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