DOKUMENTE TEXTE UND TENDENZEN

South African Literature

From Popular Culture to the Written Artefact

**Second Conference
on South African Literature
December 11–13, 1987
Evangelische Akademie Bad Boll
Federal Republic of Germany**

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SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE

From Popular Culture to the Written Artefact

Second Conference on South African Literature December 11–13, 1987

Evangelische Akademie Bad Boll

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Foreword

All cultural workers and writers present at the Second Conference on South African Literature have, in one sense or another, concluded that writers generally seem handicapped in finding meaning and workable alternatives to the growing "crisis of representation" which has enveloped them in contemporary South Africa. That the present state of emergency has excarcebated this situation, is undisputed. So, too, the recent restrictions placed on some 17 organisations and a further 18 individuals.

There was general agreement, however, that a platform such as that offered here in Bad Boll, serves to facilitate meaningful and vital communication and an exchange of views and strategies of, for instance, how to react to the above-mentioned crisis. This was especially apparent in the often heated, yet constructive debates during the plenary sessions.

"Where do we go from here?" - was a question often implied in the papers presented. This should not, however, be misconstrued as reflecting a general sense of resignation. Especially the speakers from "inside" reiterated, both individually and collectively, that solid grassroots work in propagating a "people's culture of resistance" continues unabated despite the constant harassment by the agents of the state. - See, for instance, the growth of cultural locals within the COSATU structures.

That conferences such as this cannot, then, be mere exercises in academic virtuosity, is self-understood.

That South African writers need and have appealed for an engaging and constructive debate, is one of the reasons for this publication. We trust that readers of this (second) report will engage themselves both academically and actively in the struggle against apartheid - as was, for instance, called for in the debate on the cultural boycott!

It remains to thank all those who ensured the success of both the conference and of this publication and, in conclusion, to announce the

THIRD CONFERENCE
ON SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE
OCTOBER 28-30, 1988 IN BAD BOLL.

Robert Kriger, convenor
Bad Boll, June 1988

EVANGELISCHE AKADEMIE BAD BOLL

SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE:

From Popular Culture to the Written Artefact

Conference in the Protestant Academy Bad Boll,

December 11-13, 1987.

Friday, December 11, 1987

15h30	Robert Kriger	Opening Address
16h00	Mavis Smallberg	"Interaction between and Experiences of Writers/Artists and the Community"
		- with Plenary Discussion -
19h30	Oswald M. Mtshali	"South African Literature - The Poetry without Platitudes"
20h30	Lewis Nkosi	"Resistance and the Crisis of Representation"
		- with Plenary Discussion -

Saturday, December 12, 1987

8h00	Wolfgang Schäfer	Meditation
9h00	Neela Alvarez-Péreyre	"The Multicultural Encounter: On Asian South African Writers"
		- with Plenary Discussion -
11h00	Vernon February	"Thoughts on the Language Question"
		- with Plenary Discussion -

13h00 Screening of Video Films.

15h30 Group Sessions -

Group One:	On Popular Culture
Group Two:	Poetry of Resistance
Group Three:	On Black Writers: Novels + Short Stories
Group Four:	Case Studies on Languages: Sepamla, Vilakazi + La Guma
Group Five:	(see below under 19h00)
Group Six:	Theatre and Politics in South Africa

19h00 Ntongela Masilela "The Moments of 'Voorslag' and 'Sestigers' in our Literary History

- with Plenary Discussion -

20h30 Evening of Readings, Tales and Anecdotes with South African Writers -Farouk Asvat, Mavis Smallberg, Vusi D. Mchunu + Lefifi Tladi, Neela Alvarez-Péreyre, Oswald M. Mtshali, Alfred Themba Qabula, Lewis Nkosi, Vernon February.

Party.

Sunday, December 13, 1987

9h00 Robert Kriger Meditation

9h30 "The Implications + Challenges of the Cultural Boycott"

- Panel + Plenary Discussion with panelists Mtshali, Nkosi, Smallberg + Masilela. -

12h30 Close.

OPENING ADDRESS by Robert Kriger

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Comrades and Friends,

1.1. Those of you who attended our first conference on South African Literature in November last year may recall that mention was made of the Arts Festival '86: "Towards a People's Culture" which had been planned to take place in Cape Town between December 12-21. This noble venture never happened, because - as you've probably noticed in your reader - it was banned by a cog in the machine of Apartheid oppression. Twenty-four hours before the official opening, the divisional commissioner of police for the Western Cape prohibited the festival and several members of the executive and organising committee were detained under the (state of) emergency regulations.

1.2. The minister of law and order (sic) had established beyond doubt, that "people's culture" could contribute to the fall of the fascist state. For once we may laud his insight and sensitivity, though simultaneously rejecting his misguided and heavy-handed attempts at stifling "the voice of the people". We have to agree with him that fascism is threatened by township music, people's theatre, worker poetry and the like. - And yet we would like to ascertain how he endeavours to dam the flood, which is here the cultural expression of the will of the people, viz. "freedom in our lifetime"!

1.3. Has fascism ever succeeded in stifling the collective voice of a people in bondage? "Cry Rage", was the call of poet James Matthews at the beginning of the Seventies; now we hear of the "Black Mamba Rising". An affirmation emanating from Black workers, exploited and oppressed by a form of racist capitalism unequalled in its ingenuity and brutality elsewhere in this world. And yet, out of the ashes of temporary defeat rises the phoenix of determined resistance, for it is questionable indeed, whether the banning order in any way served to quell the resurgence of revolutionary cultural activity by and of the people in South Africa. Reports, experiences and activities of cultural workers would serve to dispel this fear. We are especially grateful to have such representatives amongst us at this conference.

2.1. Much has been written about the student uprisings of 1976/77: personal testimonies, documentation, analyses - and several accounts, both realistic and fictional. Until proven otherwise, it remains undisputed that the past decade has been and still is a watershed - in more sense than one - in the South African revolution. It is most significant, I believe, that the present mass mobilisation of the oppressed, whether urban or rural, township- or bantustan-based, originated in a scholars' rebellion against a primitive form of cultural imperialism!

2.2. Coupled with the "mass mobilisation" of the past decade in "democratic, non-racist and unified action" has been and remains the emergence of what is commonly termed "a people's culture".

2.3. Many of those in our midst may recall the sense of exuberance, of excitement and anticipation at the launching at the end of the Seventies of a literary magazine like Staffrider. Mention should be made too of the proliferation of community newspapers, eg. Grassroots, Speak, Saamstaan, which similarly, albeit on another plane, function as vehicles of "communal expression", i.e. serving as platforms for the often unheard voices of the ghettoes.

3.1. Needless to say, many literary critics, Sunday-paper reviewers, university professors, teachers and their likes, have had many unkind things to say about this "dabbling in the arts", this "desanctification of the haven of the (solitary) artist" by "bringing down literary standards, forms" and, that is, literature on the whole.

"Down where?", we should inquire.

3.2. In his introduction to Literary Theory, Terry Eagleton offers the following perspective - which is no answer... yet!

"Those who work in the field of cultural practices are unlikely to mistake their activity as utterly central. Men and women do not live by culture alone, the vast majority of them throughout history have been deprived of the chance of living by it at all, and those few who are fortunate enough to live by it now are able to do so because of the labour of those who do not. Any cultural or critical theory which does not begin from this single most important fact, and hold it steadily in mind in its activities, is in my view unlikely to be worth very much. There is no document of culture which is not also a record of barbarism. But even in societies which, like our own as Marx reminded us, have no time for culture, there are times and places when it suddenly becomes newly relevant, charged with a significance beyond itself. For such major moments are evident in our own world. Culture, in the lives of nations struggling for their independence from imperialism, has a meaning quite remote from the review pages of the Sunday newspapers. Imperialism is not only the exploitation of cheap labour-power, raw materials and easy markets but the uprooting of languages and customs - not just the imposition of foreign armies, but of alien ways of experiencing. It manifests itself not only in company balance-sheets and in airbases, but can be tracked to the most intimate roots of speech and signification. In such situations, which are not all a thousand miles from our own doorstep, culture is so vitally bound up with one's common identity that there is no need to argue for its relation to political struggle. It is arguing against it which would seem incomprehensible."

Was it not Frantz Fanon who wrote that the liberation struggle against colonial oppression and exploitation is in essence an existential struggle against cultural domination (a truth, in my mind, reiterated by Amilcar Cabral and Agostinho Neto). The two are inextricably intertwined, a reflection of the same phenomenon, viz. anti-imperialism!

3.3. Returning to "Staffrider" and other such magazines, we can contend the following:

3.3.1. The rise in militancy within the oppressed sections of the South African population has been accompanied and facilitated by a militancy of expression, of cultural activity.

3.3.2. Poetry recitals, "poemdra", funeral oratory, the resurgence/revival of the traditional (i.e. African) praise poem, are integral parts of the struggle against imperialist-inspired, submetropolitan, boer-nationalistic, i.e. fascist oppression. Could we then argue that these "literary forms" are both vehicle and motor of the revolution?

3.3.3. See too, the proliferation of "Black Theatre". Plays, if that's what they are to be termed, like "Bhopa", "Asinamali", "Woza Albert" have recently taken the breaths of West-European, US-American and (White) South African audiences. Not the pace of performance or the streams of sweat produced by the players was the cause of this "breathlessness"; instead, it was the clinical precision, the "laying bare of inhumanity", the flagellation of fascism and, by implication, the co-responsibility in guilt (das "Mit-Schuldig-Sein") of the audiences mentioned above in the brutalities of Apartheid, of racist capitalism, of racism per se, that "stole their breaths", caused speechlessness and shame.

And what do they do the next day?

- They return to their jobs at the Stock exchanges in London, New York, Frankfurt/Main;
- They return to their posts at the centres of internal security;
- They return to their offices in the headquarters of the Trans-national Corporations;
- They return to their suburban homes in the capitals of "the North";
- They return to their White suburbs protected by the Group Areas Act;
- They return to their colour-bar sanctified employment.

But surely, you may rightly contradict, that is not the way the Black audiences react. No! For where the members of the White audiences sigh, gasp or shed crocodile tears, their Black counterparts are roused to anger, let off nervous sniggers or, in true identification with the subject or emotion shown, revel in this reflection of their own predicament and - here is where the "agitation" is normally correctly discerned by the cencors - START TO THINK, OR MAKE A RESOLVE...!

No longer do we have to clutter our thoughts with the pathetic, half-drawn images or fugardesque comics of the "searching-Jim-comes-to-Jo'burg". Here we are confronted with resolution even if the "final solution" is not yet in sight.

3.3.4. As one-dimensional as they may seem in the eyes of some, the central characters of much of the Staffrider-type short-stories reveal a similar search for fulfilment, of humanness in terms of struggle - be it interpersonal, communal, at work, in church or in the political sphere. Black Consciousness may have taught the lesson of "Black man you are on your own" effectively, but it seems to be that only in the past few years a new sense of "being" (sein) is fermenting in this process of struggle, of revolution, of success and defeat.

4.1. Lest I be charged of romanticism or academic idealisation, mention should be made that all activities mentioned above are happening <u>in the midst of inconcievable brutality:</u>

- There are the vicious forced removals (of the Potsdam community in the Eastern Cape, violently shoved between South Africa and the Ciskei);
- There is the genocide implicit in the Bantustan ideology and policy (eine Endlösung?);
- There is the harassment, incarceration, rape, torture and murder of tens of thousands of children;
- There is the blatant disregard of what's left of the rule of law in South Africa and Namibia;
- There is, meaningful to some, the absurd and criminal claim of defending Christian principles and values and the Gospel and, in so doing, summarily and judicially executing those striving to realise basic biblical principles of justice and peace;
- There are the protracted wars being waged in Angola, Namibia and Moçambique by White South Africa and its reactionary surrogates, causing untold suffering, displacement and death to millions, while the Thatchers, Reagans, Kohls and their likes remain "true to their (racial) kind".

4.2. To recall Eagleton's words, this resurgence, this revival of popular culture, a culture of struggle for existence is in essence a revaluation of literature and of literary theory. A new culture is being born. This is not to claim that all else has been "dabbling in the arts". More so, what is needed is a fresh look at the modes of expression of those involved in reshaping the present for an egalitarian, democratic, non-racist future. That these are indivisible, is, in my opinion, unquestionable. Are we prepared to, are we equipped to face and take up this task? Yes, I say, provided it is a conscious choice for and an identification with the just cause of the oppressed and exploited.

5.1. In conclusion: Where is the writer to be found amongst all this? That the South African situation has created a crisis of writing, is what we will certainly hear during this weekend. But what are the nature and effects of this crisis? How does especially the Black writer cope with and answer to the challenges? What are his responsibilities? His loyalties? And those of the White writer?

5.2. "From Popular Culture to the Written Artefact" is the theme of our conference. I sincerely hope that in our discussions and disputes with those writers present, we shall be able to say at the end of the conference that we have gone some way in reflecting and answering these questions.

I wish you a fruitful conference and a memorable stay in the Academy.

Thank you.

Mphathi Gocini, 'African Wedding', Lino-cut

For James
(and Nadine, after reading: The Black Interpreters)

So James Matthews is not a poet.
what
is a poet
'A writer in verse' - James, the un-poet,
perversely not versing
and thus not deserving the title of poet - or
what?
is a poem
'A metrical composition especially of elevated character'

Ha!
there is no pulse
there is no beat
there is no rhyme
or reason in
the following:

'democracy
has been turned
into a whore
her body ravished
by those who pervert her
in the bordello
bandied from crotch to hand
with her breasts smeared
with their seed...'*

Indeed!
indeed indeed indeed

Why is it that those lines
pull -
why is it that those
beatless
rhymeless
words strung together
hither thither
helter-skelter
tug
at that place within me
makes that place contract
and then relax with the
gentle shuddering of a
breath held
and released in
tiny soft just-audible
gasps
Yes!
yes yes yes yes

* The words of poet, James Matthews

Perhaps, James, your poems do not have an 'elevated character'
but then
does that matter, and
what
does that make me -
a poetaster?

Mavis Smallberg
14 October 1985

School Staffroom during School Boycott

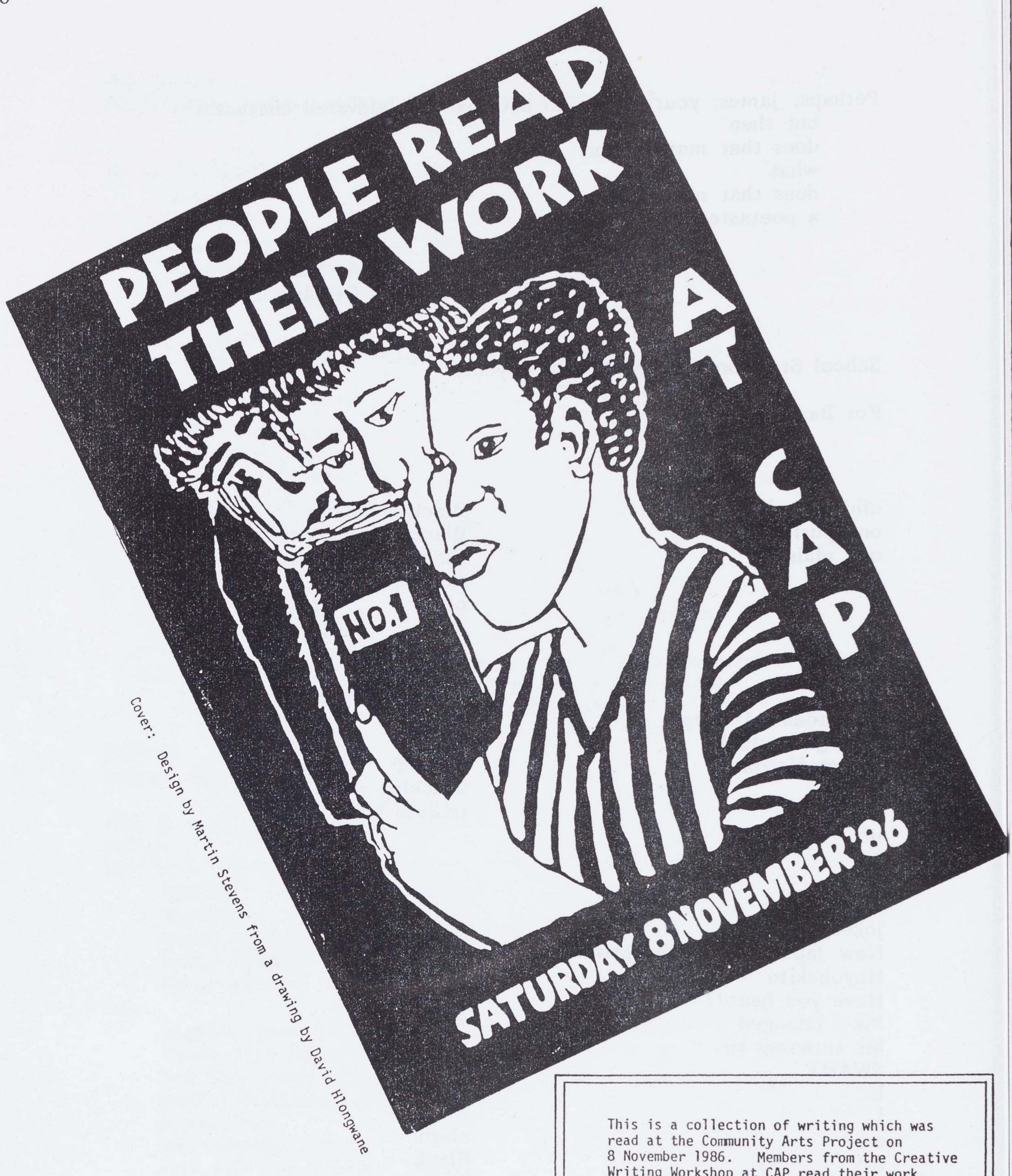
For Barbara and Gail

clickety-click
one purl
one plain
s
h
a
d
e
s
of Madame Defarge
tear-gas outside
the staffroom
purls
l
u
r
i
d
jokes
New Japanese Contraceptive:
Hoyokukitu
Have you heard?
Pik's changed
his surname to
SWART
b
l
a
c
k

clickety-click
one purl
one pain

Black Humour
Black Oppression
Black Confrontation
the small ball
of w
h
i
t
e
s
curl up
purl up
knuckles white
tension gone
a
s
t
r
a
y
long strands
of yarn
w
e
a
v
e
clash
Black
White
Red
Pink

Mavis Smallberg



Cover: Design by Martin Stevens from a drawing by David Hlongwane

This is a collection of writing which was read at the Community Arts Project on 8 November 1986. Members from the Creative Writing Workshop at CAP read their work, accompanied by Tyrone Appollis on flute and Henning Mfolo on guitar. Several members from the audience also read their work.

CAP Creative Writing Workshops take place monthly, in Woodstock. The workshops are mainly to explore one's writing, read new writing to others for response and have fun. Anyone who is interested is welcome - phone Anne at CAP 45-3689 for further information.

INTERACTION BETWEEN AND EXPERIENCES OF WRITERS/ARTISTS AND THE COMMUNITY

by Mavis Smallberg

Introduction

Human beings have always created artifacts which interpret their life-experience in relation to the environment. The San rock-paintings tell the story of the hunt, but its purpose was to "capture" the animal beforehand and to serve as an omen of good luck. In various parts of the world we find rain-dances, work-songs, religious rituals, initiation rites, all of which serve the community in some way. Patterns of community behaviour became set, for example, communal meals, and hospitality towards strangers. These community traditions and interpretation of the environment are what one can roughly define as culture.

Ironically it was certain aspects of indigenous people's culture such as generosity, hospitality, the absence of land ownership, which led to their exploitation by capitalists. The Inca, the Red Indians, the Maoris and the Black people of South Africa, amongst others, have all shared a similar fate at the hands of the colonizer. As we all know, the colonizer sought to control the mode of production and ultimately the wealth of the colonized land. But to complete the process of domination, not only was political and economic control important, but cultural, and hence ideological control as well.

Aspects of western culture, such as the Bible, Shakespeare and Mozart were introduced and held up to the natives as standards of so-called civilized culture. The culture of the indigenous people was denigrated, ridiculed and banned. Educational systems were introduced to promote the master-slave relationship. This is clearly illustrated by the four different departments responsible for educating the four "race groups" in South Africa. History was written in such a way as to deny the broad mass of people real knowledge about their resistance to colonial domination. According to Frantz Fanon, "Colonial domination, because of its total tendency to oversimplify, very soon manages to disrupt in spectacular fashion the cultural life of the conquered people. Colonialization is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures and destroys it."

Listen to what Oswald Mtshali says in his poem "Back To The Bush":

You told me not to slaughter
the black ox for my ancestors
and not to wear its hide
which I turned into a beshu

Instead you taught me how to chop
and pluck a Christmas turkey
because all civilized people do that.

You told me that people
who wear beshus are barbarians
and those who smear their faces
with ochre are savages.

I heeded your fatherly advice
I exchanged my skins
for a Saville Row suit.

I wiped the ochre from my wife's face
and gave her Helena Rubinstein's cosmetics
then we went where other people go,
and there we were turned away.

An emergent People's Culture

In South Africa today, despite the powerful organs which the government has at its command, such as television, radio and the press, there is an attempt being made to overthrow the dominant culture. The government is also aware of this and is becoming more subtle in its attempts to subvert the growing people's culture. We only have to look at the approximate one and a half million rands spent on the notorious "Information Song"! In addition, a member of the Security Branch is known to have to remarked to someone under interrogation: "Die f...g culture is 'n gevaarlike ding!" ("This fu...g culture is a dangerous thing!")

What is this dangerous people's culture then?

Ivor Powell, in an article in the "Weekly Mail" of 29 September - 1 October 1987, writes: "In one of those sublime ironies of which history is capable, 'culture' has ceased to be the preserve of the ruling classes in South Africa and its ownership has been transferred into the hands of the proletariat. When one talks about 'culture', one is talking - in relation to the political agendas of the democratic movement - about the overthrow of those traditional Eurocentric norms which fall under the rubric of 'culture' in the old sense."

More and more youth groups, women's organizations, trade unions and community organizations are becoming involved in cultural activities which interpret their environment and express their experiences of struggle and their vision of a non-racial, democratic South Africa. The voice of the oppressed is being heard in the toyi-toyis; people's heroes are being sung about; and poetry is being written by the martyrs in the struggle. Plays depicting the rigours of township life or urging workers to join a union or wipe out gangsterism, are being workshopped and are received with great enthusiasm. Graffitti announcing venues and times of meeting places, or urging people to "dial AK 47 for freedom" is all evidence of this new emerging culture which is challenging the status quo.

There is a hive of creative, dynamic activity being done by mothers, children and youth groups who have suddenly discovered their previously hidden capability. T-shirts, buttons, banners, posters, pamphlets, newsletters and earrings in black, green and gold are the order of the day. The mothers of the people detained under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act, have organized themselves to jointly confront or negotiate with the security police. They have painted a big, beautiful banner on which the names of the "Section 29-ers" appear which takes its place amongst all the other banners at meetings. Some of them have started to write really good poetry. They produced their own placards for a demonstration which was held in the heart of Cape Town, outside the gates of Parliament, in the heat of the state of emergency. Bear in mind that these women have not previously been involved in the struggle for liberation. They are middle-aged, conservative, ordinary mothers who through the detention of their children have become involved. They now want to learn how to chair a meeting and are demanding political education.

At the Congress of South African Trade Unions' festival of people's culture held in Johannesburg in July 1987, five venues with non-stop performances were needed to accomodate 20 plays, 27 poets, 16 choirs and 6 dance groups. Each theatre was packed. John Pierman reported in the "Weekly Mail", 24 July - 30 July 1987, that the "...poems, songs, dances were about workers who were Black and organized and at the end of the second annual conference of the country's largest ever trade federation, that is precisely what the audience were."

All these various emerging art forms, coupled with the vigourous resistance to the government (which in fact means fighting and dying in the attempt to overthrow the oppressor) are forging a new way of life, a new norm, a growing mass-based culture of resistance.

Poetry and Community Drama

In the following section I would like to look more closely at two aspects of people's culture in the Western Cape, namely, poetry and community drama.

In an essay on the literature of liberation, Kofi Buenor Hadjor says: "The literature of Resistance is not merely good literature. It is in itself a declaration of freedom. That's why it is inherently subversive and a threat to the status quo." He adds that "liberation literature is not simply the product of an isolated individual" and that "the literature of resistance presupposes the spirit of resistance. This spirit cannot be artificially invoked. It is the spirit of resistance based on the experience of the struggle that gives liberation literature its appeal. The literature is based on the experience of the individual but its focus is social."

And so, in the Western Cape and indeed in the rest of South Africa, we find that the individuals who read poetry at mass meetings, rallies and cultural events, share the same basic theme or message, i.e., identifying the source of oppression (recognition is probably the essence of culture), resistance to the oppressor, and liberation. Resistance might take the form of urging people to join trade unions, youth or other organizations or even taking up or justifying the armed struggle.

At this point I would like to quote a poem by an unknown poet. The title of the poem is "Guava Juice". I cannot reproduce the poem (in writing here), as I do not have his or her permission to do so. The poem glorifies the dangerous "guava juice" made in bottles and flung at the enemy. Lesser, but related themes might be unemployment, women's issues or even poems about culture itself.

Writers to whom I have spoken, all agree that there are other themes such as love and nature which they can and do write about. However, these are classified "personal" and are not read at public meetings. Apartheid, injustice and violence control such a large part of people's lives that these themes override the personal aspects of poetry. So the poet's role is that of an "ideological combatant", challenging bourgeois values, urging and trying to unify the broad masses of people to resist the dominant culture of the oppressor.

The popular movement has become more defensive and centralized because of the increased political tension between itself and the organized, repressive state machine. The latter could retard the growth of cultural potential and (therefore) necessitate cultural centralization as a means of defense. This has been one of the reasons for the formation of the Congress of South African Writers. Other art disciplines are in the formative stages of being organized along similar lines.

The state of emergency and the arrest and detention of people belonging to political organizations, pushes the poet into the role of a politico. In this way the current historical situation directly affects the individual/artist/poet.

Then again, more particular events in the community influence writing. For example, the march to Pollsmoor (Prison), or the "Trojan Horse" incident, in which three young boys were shot (and killed) by the police have given rise to drama sketches, poems, songs, etc. The writer becomes a recorder of people's suffering as well as of their history of resistance. Although accusations have been levelled at this kind of writing, I personally feel that such recordings are necessary.

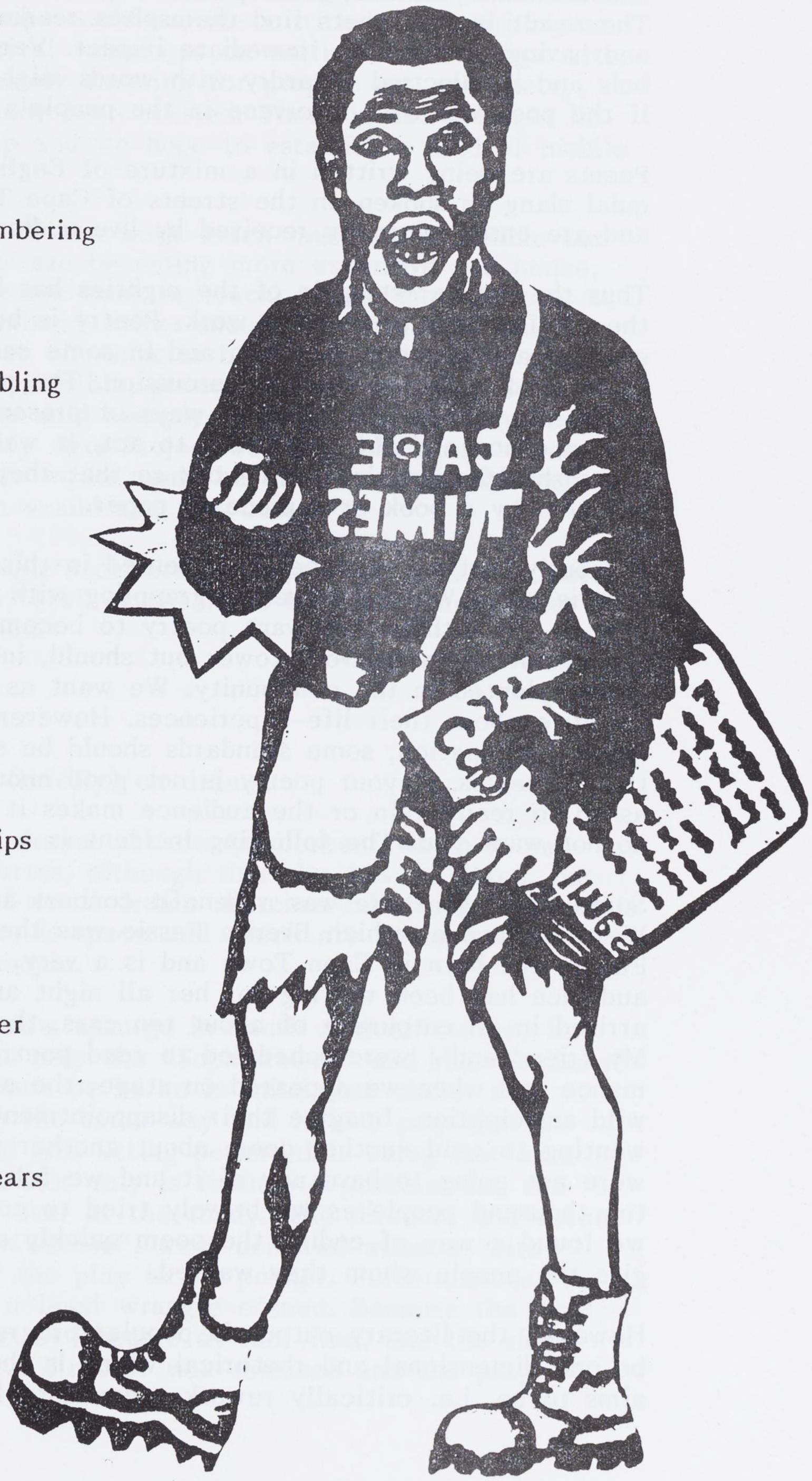
A poetic recording tends to have a longer life than a newspaper report and in a future democratic, non-racial, single education system, children could learn and read about their history in prescribed literature instead of the reams of English (as in England) poetry which is currently prescribed. I feel quite strongly about this and have written a poem about how I see myself as "a writer of verse":

I'd like to think
myself a poet
I loved the poetry
learned at school
If I am able
through my work,
to instil the love of words
in some child's soul -
the love of words
marching
the love of words
soaring
the love of words
striking that deep and slumbering
chord inside
so that reams of quiet
gentle words
are hugged and cherished
and strings of leaping tumbling
dancing words
bounce or tiptoe
in rhythm of the brain
to be repeated again
and over again
for the joyous feel of it -
I would be more
than merely pleased

I'd like to think
myself a poet
But if I am not,
I'd like to be the recorder
of my people's woes
the recorder of the hardships
we have suffered
the recorder of the fight
the resistance
which led the way
to freedom
The recorder of the laughter
the recorder of the tears
the recorder of the
jokes
the songs
which marked the bitter years

Perhaps then,
when freedom's ours
to hold
perhaps then
I'll be

(3 December, 1985)



Challenges to the Writer/Performer

The new interest and importance of the cultural revolution in South Africa present a challenge to the writer/performer. Because of problems relating to publications of the movement, such as censorship and economic reasons, some poems might not be printed in book form. The result is that poets find themselves reading to large audiences and having to make an immediate impact. Very private/personal symbols and intellectual wizardry with words might have its place but not if the poet wants to intervene in the people's culture.

Poems are being written in a mixture of English, Afrikaans and colloquial slang as spoken on the streets of Cape Town or Johannesburg and are enthusiastically received by live audiences.

Thus the popular struggle of the eighties has had a positive effect on the possibilities for cultural work. Poetry is being put to music, sung, enacted and danced. One, two and in some cases, several voices are being used with and without percussion. The poet not only has to write, but also has to think of ways of presentation; the musician has to dance and the singer has to act. It was once suggested that poets should memorize their work so that they could present it unhindered by a book or a piece of paper.

Obviously, not all the poetry presented in this emerging people's culture is good. We are presently grappling with literary standards and how to apply them. We want poetry to become demystified. The poets should not be in an ivory tower but should, indeed, have their feet firmly planted in the community. We want as many people as possible to write about their life-experiences. However, in the light of live, mass participation, some standards should be set. This is less difficult than it seems. If your poetry is not good enough, you are simply not asked to read again or the audience makes it very clear that they do not want you. The following incident is a good example.

Some time ago there was a benefit concert at the University of the Western Cape at which Brenda Fassie was the main attraction. Brenda Fassie was born in Cape Town and is a very, very popular singer. The audience had been waiting for her all night and when she finally arrived in an entourage of about ten cars, there was almost a stampede. My friend and I were scheduled to read poetry just before her performance and when we appeared on stage, the audience screamed in wild anticipation. Imagine their disappointment when it was only us wanting to read another poem about another person in detention. They were not going to have any of it and we felt the "bad vibes" of about ten thousand people as we bravely tried to continue. Needless to say, we found a way of ending the poem quickly and scuttled off-stage to give the people whom they wanted.

However, the literary output in popular progressive culture can often be one-dimensional and rhetorical which is the opposite of what poetry aims to be, i.e. critically rework values into feelings and to deepen

peoples' sense of themselves. One must remember that the large number of budding new poets are those who do not have English as their mother-tongue. They do, however, have something to say and use English in order to reach as many people as possible. Thus, the Congress of South African Writers (Western Cape branch), has established a poetry committee which will run creative writing workshops for interested people. The workshops could provide a stimulus for writing as well as run collective critical workshops on writing. (At Nyanga Arts, a cultural organization, mainly catering for graphic art and poetry, these workshops have already been started. There is not a single library in the whole township and we hope to establish a kind of mobile library.)

It is not only the content of the work which must be accessible but also the work itself. Books are becoming more expensive and hence, inaccessible for the people we want to reach. In the move toward a people's culture, the committed writer should accept that it might no longer be possible to see his work in book form. The book could be published as cheaply as possible, photocopied or reproduced in magazines which could also be sold cheaply. Examples of this are the Vakalisa and the Community Arts Project (CAP) publications which cost one Rand a piece. The works could be distributed via the community organizations which would also cut costs.

The growing, emergent people's culture, itself, serves as a distributor since the poems are given "life" at the mass-based cultural rallies at which they are performed.

Drama

I would now like to focus (briefly) on drama.

By this I do not mean the drama of relevant content which is performed at mainstream theatres, although this also has its place, but instead the mushrooming of small drama sketches rehearsed in people's backyards or wherever there is space and which are performed at cultural concerts for the people.

It is a pity that with this new upsurge in South African culture in both drama and music, it is only the "Sophiatowns" and the "Bopha's" which are referred to. It must be borne in mind that these, now famous plays started off in the same way and it is a pity that a wealth of dramatic material and acting potential is being lost as a result of the lack of funds. Not only is finance a problem but the repressive state machine is ever at the ready. The director and actors in the Nyanga Arts play, "Kwanele", were arrested when a "kits-constable" found a copy of the play in his pocket. Performances had to be cancelled whilst a legal wrangle ensued. Because the play was having a run at the Baxter Theatre at the time, and the right people could pull strings, the director was released and the play could continue.

An organization which played an important role during 1985, was the Students' Union for Christian Action (SUCA). This is an organization for Christian students on both the University of Cape Town as well as the University of the Western Cape campusses. In 1983 they took a firm stand by adopting a policy of "SEE, JUDGE, ACT". They took up the campaign against the removal of squatters from KTC to Khayalitsha and took to the streets with placards, posters and performances. They used few props, unexpected jingles, rhymes, songs used in advertising as well as pop songs to gain people's attention. During or after the performance, they would hand out pamphlets which highlighted and explained the situation in which the squatters found themselves. They were arrested in Claremont for ostensibly holding and illegal gathering. This, coupled with the interest displayed by the public, demonstrated most clearly to them, what the power of street theatre is. Requests from community organizations poured in and SUCA was on the road. They performed at mass, political rallies, in churches and at various commemorative events - in fact, everywhere and anywhere. All their sketches dealt with some aspect of the struggle: June 16 - Ten Years of Resistance; Minutes of Silence; Sexism, etcetera. Unfortunately, SUCA does not play the important conscientizing role any longer. When the leadership changed, the direction of SUCA changed as well. It was felt that drama was taking up too much of their lives and that the aim of the organization was not to only provide people with dramatic skills.

This proves that no matter how relevant the material, nor how hungry the community is for this kind of theatre, if the organization is not deeply politically committed or accountable to some constitiuency, their fight fizzles out to nought.

An organization which grew out of the 1984 anti-election campaign, Action Workshop, has not suffered a similar fate. A few UDF activists and volunteers workshopped a 60 minute production, called "Time to Act", in order to campaign against the tri-cameral elections. Once again, requests for the play streamed in and Action Workshop was born. They mainly serve a Cape Flats community, including Lavender Hill, Hanover Park and even as far afield as Atlantis.

In Lavender Hill, a play was workshopped around the issue of washing lines. Lavender Hill comprises approximately 2 000 sub- and economic dwellings in which about 13 938 people are officially listed. The actual figure is higher. The dwellings mainly consist of 2 storey flats and maisonettes. Because of the close proximity of people and the fact that the backyards face each other, squabbles over the use of washing lines and the theft of washing were rife. UDF activists mobilized people around this issue. The residents workshopped the play and performed it in the various courtyards. The play was an instant success and a civic association was established as a result.

In Atlantis, a fairly new township, built especially for people classified as Coloured and dubbed "the new city", Action Workshop also

played an important role. Government policy once again backfired. They had hoped that because of the various perks offered, a number of industries would establish themselves in Atlantis thereby providing employment in a place located about 50 kilometres outside Cape Town and without any infrastructure. This failed and unemployment was and still is a serious problem in Atlantis. A UDF advice office was set up. The chairperson was Noel Williams. He was detained in 1986 and as far as I know he is still in detention. The Atlantis Youth Congress wanted to produce a play concerning unemployment. In addition, they wanted it to be both informative as well as humorous. The idea was for it to be performed at the "Towards a People's Culture" festival at the end of 1986. During the rehearsals the group was extremely harassed and the fear of detention descended upon the cast. They worked in members' backyards but everytime a car stopped everyone scattered. Finally, they resorted to rehearsing on Sundays when the Advice Office was free.

The festival was banned, but effective gains were made:

- under trying conditions an effective play on unemployment was produced;
- the Atlantis Youth Congress (AYCO) members learned about community theatre and how to use it in organizations;
- they learned how not to dominate each other and use drama in order to build their own ego's; and
- youth members wanted to start a cultural wing of their organization.

In this way, through organization and consultation with community organizations, the culture of liberation is spreading very rapidly and can only contribute very positively to liberation itself.

Mavis Smallberg,
Vice-President, Congress of South African Writers, Cape Town
presented Friday, December 11, 1987 in Bad Boll.

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Special thanks to Donald Parenzee for the use of his notes on poetry made in preparation for the Literary Week organized by the WEEKLY MAIL and to Gertrude Fester for the use of her paper entitled "Towards a People's Culture".

June

She sat upon the floor,
Her red dress bright against
Her dark and gleaming skin.
Her voice was husky, low
But strong;
Her eyes still held a trace of pain.
There was a tenseness in her face,
And every now and then
Her tongue flicked out to lick
The corners of her mouth.
The room was quiet,
Shadows loomed;
Everyone remained quite still
When slowly, out of nowhere,
Her tale this pregnant space
Began to fill.

'They came at night,
At dead of night
Two huge men
With deadened eyes.
My name was called
And dazed with sleep and fright,
I was taken from my cell
And thrust into their car that night.
They did not state my destination.
I did not ask.
But the warning flashed into my mind:
If they take you from the prison
To the Square,
Beware!
I had ten kilometres to prepare.

We got into the poky lift:
One, two, three, four
Fourth floor!
The room was tiny
The window small and high against the wall.
There was a desk, two chairs,
Six huge and cruel men,
And me -
That's all.

I was pushed inside a corner
Face up against the wall.
They grabbed my hair
They jerked my neck

And sent me sprawling
Smack into the other wall.
My hair, in tufts, lay
Spread upon the floor.

I screamed
I cried of hurt and pain.
But I never begged for mercy.
I did it through the people
I did not do it on my own.
The people inside
The people outside
I could never do it on my own.

They made me stand for hours,
While they lay sprawled across the desk.
They questioned me for hours,
Hours.
My legs swelled up in protest
My knees wobbled in sheer pain
My back was sore and aching
My head was cracked and bleeding,
Bleeding
Yet still I stood
And still they glared
Or sometimes snarled
The hours passed and slid into the morning.

They had drunk their wine.
They had had their drink.
My throat was parched and wracked with pain.
"Come on, June,
Tell us what we want to know.
You have been here since yesterday
This day is long,
Tell us what we want to know."

Their mouths were grim,
Their faces pale,
Their eyes were dead.
Their hearts unclean.
Their minds like rats inside a cage;
And the filthy, rotten
Vulgar words
From cesspit pools
Leaked from out their sickened brains.

My mind was filled
With one pure thought:
Please God, do not let me break.
Please

Please God, do not let me break.
The cause I fight is just.
I do it through the people
I cannot do it on my own.
For the people inside
The people outside
I could never do it on my own.

He unwrapped the paper from the bottle,
He threw the paper at me.
He drank the beer from out the bottle,
He threw the bottle at me.
He lit his cigarette,
He threw the burnt out match at me.
He lit a match, and held it to my head.
He pushed my head
Between my knees
And hit my neck
And hit my neck
I screamed. I cried.
And one of them, to calm my nerves
Shouted and banged
His fist repeatedly against the door
Just as he did my head
Several times before.

I did not do it on my own.
I did it through the people
The cause I fight is just
I could never do it on my own.

When their stinking work was done
When they had had enough,
When my trembling hands could not erase
The pain within my neck,
They drove me back at breakneck speed
To recover in cold cells.

I moaned, I cried;
My comrades cried and wept
Until the warders knew
That I could not be kept
Alive inside that cell.
Thus forced,
They sent me into hospital.
In answer to a question,
The guard replied in peevish tones:
"These women always fight amonst themselves,
And then complain,
Trying to give us the bloody blame!"

I had heard his voice from far away.
My eyes refused to open,
But I gripped the iron railings
On each side of the bed
And slowly, very slowly,
Pulled myself upright
And weakly said:
"They did it, doctor."

I identified my torturers
Out of forty standing in a row.
Their eyes were dead.
Their mouths were grim.
Forty men, standing to attention,
Forty of them.
There was only me against
Those forty-odd blue-uniformed men.

But I walked along the rows,
I stopped and looked them
Straight into their sullen eyes.
One of them returned my look,
And slowly drew his finger past his throat.
But my mind was calm;
I felt so calm!
I did what needed to be done
And placed my hand upon the shoulder
Of each and every guilty one.

And now my life is threatened
As we await the trial.
I never stay alone.
I do not ever go out only on my own.
I fear the guardians of the state.
But the cause I fight is just.
I do it through the people
I could never do it on my own.'

Throughout her tale
We had remained quite still,
And now in the flickering light
of that candle-lit room,
the silence stretched...
In each heart, gloom.
Until, the silence broken
By her shuddering sigh
As she at last began to cry.
We rocked and held and hugged her
And slowly grew our song.

The gloom dispelled within our hearts.
Someone switched on the electric light.
We blinked and sang the louder
And echoes of the people's song
We sang
Permeated through the air,
Out into the Cape Flats night.

Mavis Smallberg

SOUTH AFRICAN LITERATURE
THE POETRY WITHOUT PLATITUDES by Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali

Introduction

To begin, perhaps we need to remind ourselves what a platitude is. I have chosen a simple definition found in an American dictionary, rather than the convoluted subtlety of the description of this word in the Oxford dictionary.

The American dictionary describes a platitude as a "dull or commonplace remark, especially one spoken or written solemnly as if it were fresh and important". Platitudes have the quality "of flatness, dullness, insipidness", the dictionary adds. If Europeans had not taken unto themselves the title of "First Worlders", as if they had founded human civilisation, one could have sworn that platitudes were invented by the Americans.

For us to understand why we in South Africa are mired in platitudes (cultural and especially literary platitudes), we need to understand and accept what our present cultural heritage is. If we define culture, broadly, as a total human pursuit, which includes our education, our literature, the way we eat and dress and ultimately, the way we think - then we would be compelled to acknowledge that the cultural heritage of the people of my generation, and yours, is without doubt western.

And again for "western", read Europe and the United States. However, this heritage has not been one of equality. It has been a heritage based upon subjugation - the colonial ethos of transforming colonial subjects into less educated, less articulate, less capable versions of the colonisers. To make better slaves of those subjects by equipping them with the tools to cope with that dominant colonial culture, but never to exceed that culture and therefore, never to overcome it.

In order to cope with this emasculation, the people of the Third World have developed an elaborate system of platitudes, so that we could be seen to be asserting ourselves without having to acknowledge that this assertion is often a form of futile self-deception.

So we learn to say things platitudinously in order to salvage our pride, so that the confession that the Third World is still colonised, economically, militarily, and therefore politically, becomes less painful.

Let us examine some of the platitudes we use:

- Firstly, in accepting the definition of the concept of "Third World", we are endowing Europe and America's continued economic colonisation of Africa and Asia with a historical justification. They were here first and second, economically speaking. And we came third. Therefore their banks have the right to impose impossible conditions for lending us money, and therefore the right to impoverish us.

- When we tell oppressors around the world that we want our freedom, and that we will use effective but peaceful means to achieve that freedom, we do so with the knowledge that that is impossible.

- When someone comes into our country and steals our music to enrich himself, we say that he is helping to put us on the map, helping to discover our cultural wealth. Just like Van Riebeeck was supposed to have discovered South Africa.

But how, you may ask, has all this influenced the literature of the so-called Third World, and South African literature in particular? Europe and the United States have used their economic and military/political power to define not only the validity of political and economic systems in the Third World, but also to try and shape the cultures that underpin those systems.

There is no necessity to dwell on the self-evident reasons why the West regards countries such as Nigeria, Kenya and Pakistan as moderate, stable states, even though their governments are ruthless dictatorships, while states such as Angola, Cuba, Iran, Libya and Nicaragua are regarded as dangerous and whose governments need to be overthrown. What is important is to realise that Western powers not only want to remove a government such as the Sandinistas from power, but to remove the very soil which makes it possible for such movements and governments to emerge.

To do that it is necessary, among other things, to tamper with the very culture of a country such as Nicaragua. Let us also examine how our culture - and therefore, as a natural consequence - our literature is being tampered with, shaped and nudged in a direction that conforms more closely to the West's notion of reasonableness, moderation and civilisation.

The written literature of South Africa can broadly be divided into three phases:

Reaction

The first is the phase that spanned an era from about 1891 to the mid 1940's, when writers such as Sol Plaatjies, H.E. Dhlomo, and many others functioned as a relatively small and elite group of literate, educated blacks. In the introduction to the anthology of Black South African poetry, "THE RETURN OF THE AMASI BIRD", Tim Couzens and Essop Patel describe the poetry of this era as "reactive". "...The early poems ...in this section, 1892 - 1948 are not presented with any exaggerated claim to their literary merit", the editors of this anthology wrote. They presented the poetry of that era for its historical value, a record of black "reaction".

However, a reaction to what? To colonialism, economic exploitation, racism, without doubt. But it was in essence a reaction to the refusal

of the racist and colonial powers to recognise those educated black people as equals in the status quo. Let us remember that most of the writers who functioned then, had received their education in mission schools. Institutions that were founded to transform the "colonised native" into something more useful.

John L. Dube wrote a ballad which was sung at the opening of a new school in honour of "our King across the sea":

"We thank and appreciate
For this honour given us
Sympathy we see in you
Our far away white king."

Of course, this early era was filled with platitudes, with black intellectuals seeking to overcome their oppression by trying to obtain "equality" within an oppressive system. But this is the natural result of people being "transformed", being absorbed as unequal partners into the very system that oppresses them. And then only to serve that system. The era did of course provide some basis, some traditions that still contribute towards our literature today.

Defiance

The second phase, which loosely existed between the early 1950's until about 1960, played a more definitive role in laying the still fragile foundations of the literary tradition of the written word. It began to change "reaction" to "defiance". Writers such as Can Themba, Lewis Nkosi, Alex LaGuma, Eskia Mphalele began to write about themes that had been taboo, like love across the colour line, political repression and political aspirations.

The writers of this era also used language and imagery that were tough, "streetwise". They employed the terse techniques of the journalist; narratives and dialogues that sped along with a healthy disregard for the literary conventions established by the "purists".

Can Themba could write:

"If only the guys with the burning meat
and the slick restaurants where stomachs smart
did not agitate against that dinner in the street
you'd meet me at lunch at the Coffee cart."

The literature of that period was not allowed to flourish; the age of ribald hope ended with the age of exile. The most talented of our writers were driven into exile. Life, as Arthur Nortje described it, life became "ash on a sleeve". In exile.

Black Consciousness

It is the third phase, that is perhaps the most interesting. It began

with much hope, and ended in the greatest disillusionment. It is the period in our literature, I believe, that gave rise to the platitudinous age we are now struggling to emerge from. It was the age of Black Consciousness.

Who, and what organisation (in South Africa) first articulated the concept of human pride is not material to this discussion. Let it suffice to say that Black Consciousness found immediate and widespread acceptance among black youth and black intellectuals, and had profound consequences politically and culturally.

The literature that Black Consciousness gave rise to, was like its politics, hard and uncompromising. Perhaps that was because what was being written, was not separate from its politics, but an integral part of it.

The poem "Getting off the Ride", by Mafika Gwala, characterised the exuberant but unequivocal assertion of Black pride and anger:

"I am the youthfull Black with hopes of life
standing on file, queue for a job
at the local chief's kraal
This chief who has let himself and his people
into some confused Bantustan kak
..... I am the lonely poet
who trudges the township's ghetto passages
pursuing the light
the light can only come through a totality of change
changes of mind, change."

Sipho Sepamla published a poem called "Darkness":

"yes sir I have arrived
walk the night if you dare
there I reign over death
'swonder you legislate the night
you crouch in retreat
crowding each nook in fear
of the stench of my blackness
agitated by the darkness."

Black pride and Black menace. Always strident, always articulate. Shifting the psychological barriers at every turn, politically and culturally. No longer did we write to be published and to be read by those who could read and afford to buy books. Mostly white and affluent. What we wrote was being performed clandestinely in schools, in community halls, before audiences of ordinary people, eager and hungry to hear the voice of their own anger in words that were not minced, that reeked of blood. The blood of both our own fallen heroes, and for the blood of the oppressor that poets, dramatists, novelists were calling for.

In the midst of all this, came the uprising of June 1976. Now poetry became a weapon, and a salve to soothe the wounds of our outrage. The list of writers who wrote and read, and participated in being the "voice of the nation" was impressive. Don Mattera, Mongane, Serote, Sipho Sepamla, Ingoapele Madingoane, Mafika Gwala, James Matthews, Oswald Mtshali, Chris van Wyk, and many others.

The cry of the Black man was no longer one of mere guttural pain, it was an articulate and exuberant expression of self-discovery. An Azanian love song.

But there was also something seriously wrong with what we were doing. Our literature was full of heroic black people, nobly enduring their suffering. All that was black was good and wholesome. All that was white was false. There were no ordinary people in our literature, with human aspirations, and human failings. Our writing had become exotic.

At this point, let us pause and examine the meaning of the word exotic in relationship to the Western world and its attempt to recreate the cultures of the rest of the world as poorer and less accomplished versions of their own. It is thus deprived of the political enablement of culture. One that enables a people to go beyond the choices laid out for them, so that in wanting to depose Marcos, Cory Aquino does not become the only and therefore natural choice to Philipinos. To be exotic means being strange and foreign, interesting and fascinating.

In the early 1980's there were many of us who were still writing about June 1976, about the agonies of our deprivation, about a philosophy that had been a powerful tool of self-realisation and personal liberation, but could not sustain itself in order to become a strategy for national liberation. In any case a literature that depends on self-sustenance for its development is doomed to sterility. Literature is a dynamic, living creature that constantly needs invigoration and the infusion of new ideas.

The literature of Black Consciousness had far outstripped its political source in terms of growth and development. It had developed into a rarified arena, no longer in touch with the constituency that had created it: the angry black masses. For the angry black masses had gone beyond agonising over their plight - they were organising to overcome it.

While mass-based grassroots organisations, such as the UDF (United Democratic Front) were being formed, and while workers had galvanised themselves into a potent collective force, black intellectuals were still contemplating their own powerlessness. Even the politics of resistance had given way to the politics of empowerment. We, the black intellectuals had been left behind.

The literature of Black Consciousness had become like its political counterpart, a form of exotica. Here was a philosophy that loudly

articulated Black anger, but had no pretensions to seeking the fundamental transformation of the things that caused this anger. To replace it yes, but with a black version of what already existed.

Well into the 1980's black writers were still being urged - indeed induced - to continue to write about the 70's as if all our history ended there, and indeed began there. Exclusive black publishing houses were being established to give momentum to what became known as "Soweto" writing. This incidentally is a term coined by a white academic, who for example called Mafika Gwala a Soweto poet, even though Gwala had never, to my knowledge lived in Soweto.

In 1980 Pitika Ntuli published a poem entitled "The Face" in INDEX ON CENSORSHIP:

The face
Behind my face
Twists in agony at the thought of our people
Twisted by various forms of constriction
The mirror
Behind the mirror
Reflects me in my deeper crisis
Of being, unbeing, and becoming
Tasting the bitter pill
Of unhappy happiness
I tell myself stories
Of my ancestral heroes who
Fought undaunted until
I feel bitter
Till itchy fingers and feet sprint
In the arena of change
On the bleeding edge
Of experience
From these narrow confines
The voices I hear
Are whips on my back
Urging me to survive
To maintain my sanity

The face
Behind the face
The mirror
Behind the mirror
The voice
And the echo
Which is the voice repeating
The cry of my people's struggle...

This poem is a fitting epitaph for the age of Black Conscious writing. It is the face of agony and struggle, and alas, little else. There is ho hope or hopefulness. No confidence in possibility of liberation, only cries of despair. I am not surprised that those in the Western world,

in the liberal universities, did their utmost to encourage this exotic exposition of unrelenting pain. For people overwhelmed by pain are paralysed, unable to act.

Of course, there were many who were acutely aware of the morass into which South African writing had sunk, but suffered from a curious inability to acknowledge that the philosophy that had spurred on the outpourings of the 70's was no longer able to sustain itself or its cultural foundation. And so sought refuge in another form of exotica.

"Third World"

Suddenly, like a thirsty person in a desert, writers discovered an oasis called Third World literature. And drank deeply and uncaringly and uncritically, not caring that the water was sometimes muddy or brackish. It was after all, the well of oppressed brotherhood. What was more, the Third World began and ended in Latin America.

Garcia Marquez, Pablo Neruda, became the beacons of literary light. The absolute standard to aspire to. In the wake of these and other magnificent writers came a host of rather average and unreadable writers. They too were avidly read and emulated, simply because their writing bore the magical and exotic title of "Third World". Publishing houses perpetuated this romance with third world writing, refusing to publish indigenous South African writing that did not aspire to the "universality of concepts such as magic realism".

All of this at the expense of our own writing. Of course, some of the achievements of writers in Latin America, Asia and other parts of Africa were indeed superb. The attempt to transpose their experience into the South African environment was patently false and misleading. Who can expect readers in our country to grapple with the complexities of Garcia Marquez's "100 Years of Solitude", when at least half the adults of our country cannot even read?

No meaningful research was and is being done on how to make our own literature accessible to the people of our own country, to free them from the tyranny of having to contend with languages that are not their own, on how to distribute the written word more effectively, on how to tap the vast reservoir of oral literature and make it available to a generation whose memory of our own past is growing dim.

Those who brought the literary manna from the third world for others whom they thought were lost in the desert, did our literature no good. Nor did they do it to escape from the intellectual prison that we found ourselves in during the early 80's, but to extend that prison. After all, looking to the East and to Africa for the exclusive solution to our problems, was after all seeking salvation at the hands of "brothers", who were in the end not white.

It brings us back to the platitude. We have sought all sorts of easy devices with which we could evade what is to me the cardinal issue: until there is a radical transformation of our country, and until there is political liberation, there is no such thing as a "liberated literature". It is an intellectual illusion to think that writers can function in the practice of their art as if there was no unemployment in our country, as if there is no state repression, as if there is no vast illiteracy.

We should not use our literature as a platitude to escape having to come to terms with the political struggle in our country.

There is a poet, an intellectual, who recently criticised a book called "Black Mamba Rising", because, as he put it, the book did nothing but "praise certain organisations". The two co-authors of the book are workers, and the organisation they were "praising" was COSATU. The intellectual poet's attitude is typical of the malaise that many intellectuals suffer, described, curiously enough, by someone called Saths Cooper, as "snivelling".

It seems that it is alright to write praise poems about our suffering, but not to write praise poems about entities that wish to remove that suffering.

Finally, if we are to get beyond the platitudes in our literature, then we should do what the political organisations are doing: they are striving for people's power, we should be striving for people's literature, which is no more and no less that a part of people's power. People's literature, in simple terms, is literature that is indigenous to a people, is a literature that they can understand and that is accessible to them.

For those who say that this is either an impossible dream, or even undesirable, since the word "people" often infers control and dictatorship, I would say, you do not know your people, and do not have trust in them. Go and listen as one poet said, "to the sound of freedom songs", their freedom songs.

In Conclusion

There is a current view in South Africa which is prevalent among intellectuals, namely, that writing is becoming a pursuit of the few dilettantes and aesthetes.

As the struggle for our liberation intensifies and more repressive measures are taken by the minority white regime, writing, is more of a luxury pastime.

There is so much turmoil in our townships, it is extremely difficult for a person to sit down and write with concentration. Disturbances

by police and the military raids have made life in the ghettoes very precarious and unpredictable. There is no security. No stability as vigilantes run rampant burning, maiming and killing political activists.

Writing under such conditions, as can be imagined is almost impossible. Yet it is imperative for all committed and dedicated writers to capture events and experiences of the day as the drama of struggle unfolds.

It is important to describe and portray all facts of life under the present system of apartheid. The writer is the mouth, ears and eyes of his/her people. The community shapes the perspective of the writer. The environment determines the writer's authentic voice of relevance. The writer's credibility and integrity are more important than the number of books published.

Consequently, the current South African writer is faced with many challenges which must be met if those ideals are to be realised. The writer cannot and should not operate in a vacuum of isolation. In fact most activists make good writers. Yet sad as it may be, very few writers really make dedicated activists.

Therefore, it is on that score that the formation of the Congress of South African Writers (COSAW) was a milestone in South African writing. Its launch by a wide range of committed activists and prominent personalities brought about an organisation whose potential in shaping and giving direction to our struggle has dimensions of stupendous proportions.

COSAW's future role can only be measured by the level of response and reaction on a national level. The organisation was launched at the Great Hall, Wits University by U.D.F. President, Mrs. Albertina Sisulu, to the widest political spectrum. Youth movements, labour movement, women's movement, church groups, progressive organisations, cultural movements and mass democratic movements.

In pursuit of a goal of mass mobilisation and organisation COSAW is destined to play a very important role. As the constitution stipulates, every writer who subscribes to the Freedom Charter is welcome as a member. It is therefore axiomatic to look at the future of COSAW and its members, and see the direction which needs to be followed towards the creation of a democratic society. (See Annexure)

The black writer in particular, must guard against succumbing to racist cliches and stereotypes. A writer who undergoes suffering of his/her own volition, is manifesting a vital commitment to the struggle. By plunging into the problems and suffering of his/her people, his/her community, his/her country and facing the conflicts that afflict the South African society, the writer achieves his/her own transformation and experiences independence and personal freedom to devote whatever time is available to creating a people's culture and getting rid of the dominant racist minority culture.

Having found time and the medium of communication, be it drama, poetry, fiction, song and dance, painting, sculpture, photography, the whole process of development is nurtured.

In our present high technological age, it is very important for the writer to develop a high level of sensitivity and perceptiveness. It is vital to exploit the inherent treasure in every aspect of human life which the writer must interpret with honesty.

An inner spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, human revolution should take place in every committed writer so that he can detect visually every strand of detail that goes to make the fabric of human life and experience.

That ability in the long run makes itself strongly felt in every person, particularly, the writer who feels very strongly, in gradually transforming the environment and society in which we all live.

Any dedicated writer cannot afford to feel small and powerless in his/her heart and soul. He/She cannot stifle the voice of dissent and protest to speak his/her mind. He/She cannot remain negative and passive. The youth in our society have set the pace and example to fight and destroy apartheid and create a democratic, non-racial society.

The writer must do this activity with wisdom, sympathy and love for his fellow-men irrespective of race, colour or creed. There must be a manifestation of compassion. As one Oriental philosopher said "Compassion is the supreme activation of the human life force and the embodiment of the highest values in human life".

The writer has to grapple with the analysis, explanation and interpretation of this enigmatic subject called human life. And, like Ella Wheeler Wilcox, the poetess, the writer should sing:

"Yet in this intricate great art of living
Guide me away from misdirected giving,
And show me how to spur the laggard soul
To strive alone once more to gain the goal."

Indeed, the writer must inspire through his/her writing. He/She must educate. He/She must also entertain through the use of humour without being trite or trivial. Life is too grim and dangerous these days. Apartheid has brutalized us so much, we have become a bunch of glum and cold pieces of marble statue.

If we allow that to succeed we shall be letting apartheid triumph over our humanity. Our decency and dignity. We cannot afford to lose these great attributes and become soulless brutes.

Finally, as the poetess says:

"When we who sleep and dream that we are slaves,
Shall make and know that liberty is ours?
Mark well that word - not yours, not mine but ours.
For through the mingling of the separate streams
Of individual protest and desire, in one united sea of purpose,
Lies the course of Freedom."

The current political, social, economic, cultural and religious revolution that has been sweeping the country since the 1984 Vaal upheaval is a manifestation of what the Black Consciousness era ushered in during the early seventies.

The revolution has taken on a much broadly based democratic direction where race, colour and creed are no more the relevant criteria in determining the artist's commitment to the oppressed people of South Africa.

In this paper I have confined myself to poetry for obvious reason that I use poetry as a medium of expression. I might use other forms of literary expression in future - perhaps fiction or drama.

I suppose it is a deliberate choice for a writer/artist to choose the genre for self-expression.

In his book "Commitment to Poetry", James Reeves mentions this point in his essay on D.H. Lawrence. Reeves says: "Lawrence was not a great poet - if only because poetry was not his main concern as a writer; he was not a good poet in the technical sense."

Therefore, it is in that context that I wish to discuss my involvement with poetry as seen from a black man's perspective.

The choice of my themes are universal in the broader sense of the word and I hope my poetry reflects this. My poems might be set, based and portray life in Soweto and in South Africa. But they are not Soweto Poetry as Michael Chapman has chosen to label them. Each poem of mine is a miniscule of my life and a microcosm Soweto, South Africa and the whole world of my experience.

Michael Chapman says in his "Soweto Poetry, Introduction": "Soweto poetry began appearing in the mid-1960's mainly in the Johannesburg-based literary magazine 'The Classic', and has continued to reflect an increasing post-Sharpeville racial polarization in South Africa."

This statement is not factual. Black poetry began much much earlier. That is why I take umbrage when Chapman, who is a professor of English at the University of Natal, Durban, says: "The work of poets such as Oswald Mtshali, Mongane Serote, Sipho Sepamla and Mafika Gwala took its impetus initially from the South African Student's Organisation's

(SASO) Black Consciousness reactions to apartheid legislation and subsequently from 1976 Soweto disturbances." Mafika is a poet from Hammasdale in Natal. James Matthews is from Cape Town.

If Chapman's Soweto poetry stands for Black Poetry then he is totally wrong. There were many poets of colour long before the names he names. Was there no Dennis Brutus, no Mazisi Kunene and then as early as the H.I.E. Dhlomo era of "Zulu Folk Poetry", where B.W. Vilakazi and W.I. Mqhayi were even much earlier.

I therefore reject Chapman's tag of reducing our poetry to "Soweto". I want to claim that it is universal in its emotional intensity and thematic in scope. It is a poetry that sings and cries of man's cruelty to man through oppression for ideological reasons, for religious and cultural intolerance, for political domination and for economic exploitation.

Apartheid to me is an elevation of universal racism onto the altar of white supremacy. The sacrificial lamb is a man of colour whether he be an Aborigine in Australia, an Eskimo/Indian in Canada, a "wog" in Britain, a "nigger" or "Red Indian" in U.S.A. or a "Kaffir" in South Africa. Those derogatory words are in quotation marks for obvious reasons.

The oppression and exploitation of man by man is a universal abomination. The poets who sing and cry about it, know it is a reality. Consequently, see every poet here in this country joining them as an act of solidarity. Because a shared suffering is a burden lessened.

Poets are supposed to be so hyper-sensitive as members of the cultural workers, that their sensitivity should reflect the masses of oppressed people to whom they belong. They are not separate so-called artists who operate in a vacuum of isolation as political hermits and social recluses. No! They are part and parcel of the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed masses and setting up a democratic non-racial South-Africa.

That is my vision for a future South Africa as a black man as well as a member of the cultural workers' movement.

And this brings me finally to the question of "Why write poems in these turbulent days?". The simple answer is that poetry is urgent in the message it has to deliver to the audience it is meant for. It is faster than an express letter for special delivery.

Reeves describes poetry thus: "Peotry like life itself or the circulation of the blood, is neither rational nor anti-rational."

While our blood is spilled daily in the township streets and our lives are sacrificed in the cause of struggle for our liberation we should not forget to use and look at poetry as the vehicle for the expression and articulation of the revolution that is sweeping this country.

Finally, like all other cultural workers, the poet is a human being with emotions and feelings. In all this darkness, gloom of death and destruction, he should raise his voice in singing about the future. He should give the oppressed masses hope that they are assured of victory from the oppressor. The poet should proclaim love in its fullest intensity and range for the democratic and non-racial orientated people irrespective of colour, class, creed or religion.

It was the poet, singers and dancers who brought reconciliation, forgiveness and understanding to the villages, towns and cities of Nigeria after the Biafran War. Lastly, the cultural worker treads where the politician fears to express his views, feelings and convictions because he is hidebound by colour-blind ideology. Everything is seen as black and white negatives with blurred images of the bright future where race, class and colour will be discarded.

Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali,
Gen.-Secretary, Congress of South African Writers, Johannesburg
presented Friday, December 11, 1987 in Bad Boll.

This poem is for Ben by Oswald M. Mtshali

Some poems are conceived in the womb of pain;
Others have their gestation in the placenta of hope;
A few flash through the mirror of the mind in
a sweet moment of madness;
(Young poets begin in gladness and end in madness;
the rest are nurtured in the plastic incubator of despair.)
This short one is germinated in the seedbed of seething fury,
the fury of an endless search -
relentless for the truth -
though no truth will ever alleviate the sorrow
at the loss of my brother, Ben.
It is to him that I dedicate my entire life.
It is to him that I devote my whole being,
to ferret out every fact
that will lead me to the skulking perpetrators
of the dastard deed,
that rendered my two beloved nieces,
Thembi and Zanele, fatherless.

The nude body of my brother, Ben

by Oswald M. Mtshali

The nude body in that coffin belongs to my brother,
although he is clothed in a three-piece suit
that will never cover the naked truth
that he is a victim of murder -
murder by poison from a white whore.

The twisted face in that casket
once laughed at our childhood jokes;
the lips now burned and scorched
once smiled and kissed our beloved mother.

The closed eyes are silent lanterns of many vigils
and harrowing experiences in the land of apartheid,
incandescent bulbs burnt out in staring back
at the scowls of the Boers,
ever-watchful in warding deadly blows
and curses erupting in volcanoes of hatred.

The terraced eyebrows are wrapped in perpetual frowns
of defiance, hurled at the daily torments of a vicious society
which drove you out as an outcast from the land
of your ancestors.

Let the temporary celebrations of victory
descend to a dark hole,
where the inferno of our furies
will swallow them in their million tongues.

Whether we are in the mid-sea of our struggle,
there must be no stopping;
the voyage of your contumacious nature lies above
the furloughs of the future,
the manifold cries of children are reduced
to a state of wandering waifs and strays in the whole wide world.

The corpse in the dead polished wood will rise soon;
it will walk the paths of germinated dreams,
where blossoms sprout in a frenzy of colour.
The white clown's crumbling empire was theirs;
ours is the rising baobab tree,
black and stalwart, reaching to the bowels of our original state.

For my brother, Tom — by Oswald M. Mtshali

(who lost an arm in a Soweto car accident)

When the frog cries in lamentation
its tears fall into the river
and turn into algae;
the eel slides through the mermaid's hair,
it slithers into its hole
where it draws the drapes
from the leaves of the water lily
and shuts itself off from our mourning;
the frog and I are the bereaved.

Even the chirping of the finches cannot cheer me up,
the million melodies of the lark cannot lift
the shroud of sadness
that engulfs me;
the mbira in the starling's voice
cannot play a tune sweet enough
to make me smile.

How can I smile?

My dear brother, how can I smile?

A smile on my face is as painful as toothache
and laughter is as hollow as the Magudu caves,
because you are only twenty one years old
and you have lost your right arm;
the infant's arm you hugged
as tight as the nest of a woodpecker,
the hand whose palm kept all the mysteries
and secrets of your life;
the little fingers with which you grabbed Mama's teats
and squeezed them hard
when you were thirsty and hungry and bawling for a feed.

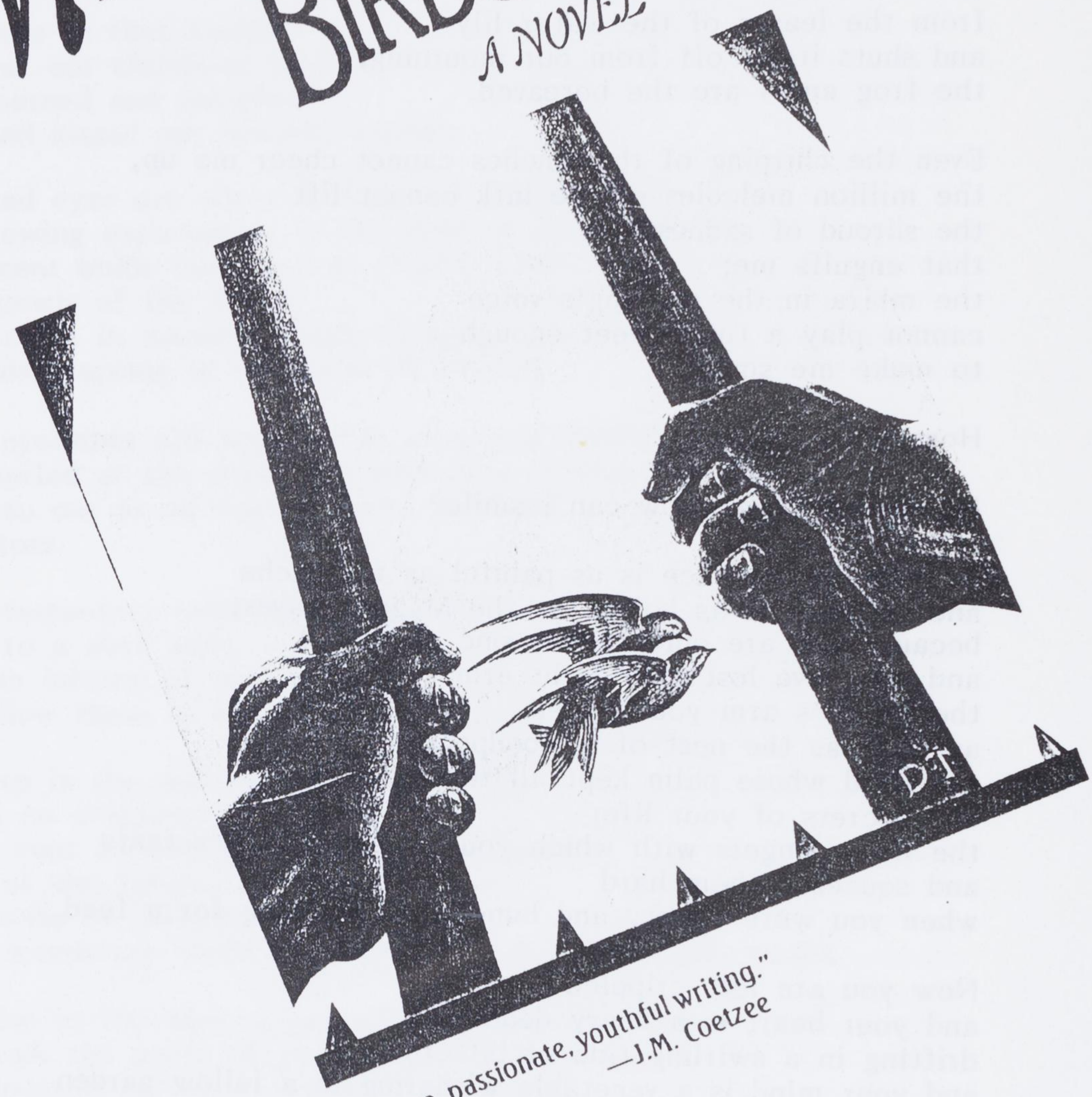
Now you are left crippled
and your heart is a heavy deadwood
drifting in a swirling tide of bitterness,
and your mind is a vegetable withering in a fallow garden
of frustration.

Let your soul not sink into a barrel of despair.

LEWIS NKOSI

MATING BIRDS

A NOVEL



"Fine, passionate, youthful writing."
—J.M. Coetzee

For my grandmother, Esther Makatini,
who washed white people's clothes
so that I could learn to write

South African Literature
RESISTANCE AND THE CRISIS OF REPRESENTATION by Lewis Nkosi

Black and White Writers.

Mr. Chairman: When I received the invitation to speak here at the Evangelische Akademie in Bad Boll I read carefully the documents from the conference on South African Literature held here in November 1986 under the stirring title of "Liberation & the Art of Writing". The themes which emerged from this conference I immediately recognised as similar to those which have agitated my mind in the past quarter of a century or so, as the much discussed essay[1] in my book Home & Exile (1965) will show.

From the middle of the 1970s and for the better half of this decade, the deepening crisis in South Africa and what André Brink calls the "state of siege", has merely served to exacerbate rather than diminish my interest in that initial question of the relationship between art and politics, between the act of political resistance and the act of writing; or to put it another way, the question as to the possible effects writing may be supposed to have on the country's political life.

The fact that these questions have been posed before, and that in Western culture at least they have exercised the minds of social thinkers from the time that Plato banished the poets from his ideal republic, has done nothing to exhaust our interest. Out of each country, out of each epoch and fresh situation, the political challenges to the writer not only resurrect anew the question of the writer's political commitment but raise yet another, no less crucial question, regarding the relationship between that first commitment, which is political in nature, and the second commitment which is aesthetic.

It is not my intention to deal with these two kinds of commitments as being necessarily opposed, but it has been my sad experience in the past to find that one kind of commitment is valorised at the expense of the other, the political or ethical over the aesthetical. Such an approach carries immense risks for the development of our literature since without those unique attributes which a writer's discourse is supposed to bring to the political process it is difficult to see why we should have a special need for his or her talents.

My particular brief at this conference is to present "A View from Outside" of the current literary situation in South Africa, with a special attention to the novel. I have chosen as a theme to speak on what I call "Resistance & the Crisis of Representation", by which I mean not only the ways in which our writers, black and white, through the instrumentality of the written word seek to present to itself and the world South African society, which by all accounts is a society drifting increasingly toward a state of civil war; but I also mean the ways in which writers as concrete subjects in history, supported by a network of institutional props, both visible and invisible; supported - and this is crucial -

by their authoritative hold on discourse, can collect, process information and promote certain views which, though almost partial by definition, once presented to the world under the sponsorship of their powerful "personalities" as speaking subjects, can profoundly alter perceptions of South African society and the nature of its problems. After all, who authorises me to speak at this conference, who is no political activist or elected representative, except the nature and power of my own particular discourse as a writer and an academic. This places upon me and those like myself who occupy a special position within the sphere of discourse and discursive formations a tremendous responsibility.

For that very reason this conference on South African literature will have failed if we content ourselves with the customary paraphrase of the poems and stories in search of the congenial theme, the appropriate phrase or plot which somehow proclaims the writer to be a progressive fellow, dedicated to the overthrow of the racist apartheid regime. In the brief time that we have until the conclusion of this conference we ought to make a serious effort to consider in what way, with what means and what successes, South African writers have deployed their talents in representing a society in crisis. In my view, it is not enough to come here to discuss in notional terms what Martin Trump calls "a single national literature"[2]; we must ask ourselves what meaning we are to assign to an entity called the "national literature of South Africa". Inter alia, we must pose the question in broad cultural terms how this "single national literature" is disseminated at home and abroad, who speaks in its name, what cultural institutions support it and how it is used and to what ends.

It is quite astonishing, for example, to read in a review of Sheila Fugard's novel "A Revolutionary Woman" that the main source of its interest, as Katherine Fishburn, an Associate Professor at Michigan State University, explains it "is the question it asks about whether the South African revolution can originate among the whites or whether it must originate among the blacks themselves. In asking this, the novel also raises the related question of whether or not white liberals have the capacity to effect meaningful change in their country's political system." Fishburn confidently states:

> As its title implies, the source of revolution in the novel is not the country's disenfranchised blacks, but an individual white woman who has become impatient with the new barbarians who run her country.[3]

To understand the extreme but malevolent naivety of such commentaries, or even how such questions can be asked, it is necessary not to see them as mere instances of aberration but as part of an entire critical consciousness in the West which provides the framework in which the works of white South African writers are inserted, coddled or massaged, a state of affairs which places a disproportionate burden upon white writers and critics as the articulators of a new ethos which, if we are not careful, will overflow and persist into a post-revolutionary future.

It is extremely significant, for example, that in his keynote address at the Jubilee Conference of the English Academy of South Africa, Njabulo

S. Ndebele, one of the most intelligent critics of the current cultural situation in South Africa, begins by commending the organisers of the Academy for having held extensive consultations with varied individuals and groups so that "a diversity of interests can be accomodated", but in an exemplary display of caution he then calls for a state of vigilance which, as he argues, "would enable us to express tactical reservations if only to ensure that all the relevant issues have been brought to the surface so that we can make pure motives even purer."(4)

> For example, it should never be forgotten that behind the hand of friendship is the presence of the Academy's solid institutional history: a history that has left its marks on habits of thought in the literary culture of this country.(5)

The weakness of the current commentaries on the cultural scene in our country is to leave out of account, and therefore to make invisible, the nodules of power relations which operate everywhere, even within the progressive camp. One way of doing this is to treat the literature of black and white writers as constituting a unified whole in a tense effort to "offer a composite view of a single national literature of South Africa" (Martin Trump) without examining the material conditions of their productions, the intense pressures exerted by their specific ethnic filiations and the tactical alliances between the development of white writing and very powerful cultural institutions in and outside the country. (Oddly enough, in his description of the development of Afrikaans writing Trump does precisely what his main thesis is intended to overrule.) This allows the cultural hegemony of the white writers to continue at precisely the moment that they proclaim loudly their solidarity with black writers.

It is little known, for example, that papers belonging to some important African figures, the access to which African scholars were denied, became the exclusive property of certain white South Africans but were later made available to white academics. Without wishing to promulgate any generalised conspiracy theories, I think it will be fairly obvious that free access to such material would enable these white individuals to make powerful interventions in defining our cultural circumstance for many generations to come. Nor is it widely noted that the selection and editing of South African anthologies is usually entrusted exclusively into the hands of white specialists by Western publishers, not that most Western media do not review works by black writers but are only too willing to focus disparate attention on any work by a white writer who is touted as a new dissident voice against apartheid. As Dr. Vernon February put it in a paper presented at your conference last year:

"Critics abroad prefer to accept as truthful the portrayals of those novelists and writers who are, ironically, mostly white."

To conclude this section in which, as you will have noted, I deal only tangentially with the complex issue regarding the kind of institutional supports which place white writers in a strategically powerful position in the control, definition and dissemination of South African literary

culture, let me call your attention to an anthology of South African literature - a version, I suppose, of the so-called "national literature of South Africa" - which came into circulation last year. "A Land Apart" is edited by André Brink and J. M. Coetzee and it is, to say the least, a very odd collection. In the old days white South African editors used to exclude almost routinely from their anthologies any works by black writers. These days the South African "revolution" is a hot commodity in the international markets (note the rapid succession of theatre offerings with their exigeant white collaborators) and white writers are keen to be associated with it. All the same, old habits die hard and the need to play the traditional role of what the now defunct United Party used to call "white leadership with justice" is hard to subdue.

Thus out of the thirty-six entries in this anthology only ten are by black writers. At the same time, except for the Zulu poet Mazisi Kunene, almost all black writers who have been driven into exile are excluded: "For them", the two white anthologists confidently inform us, "history froze when they departed."(6) On the other hand, Christopher Hope, a South African émigré who has lived in England for the past thirty years or so is included while the late Alex La Guma, an excellent novelist and short story writer who died in Havana about two years ago, is not. Dan Jacobson and C. J. Driver are rightly mentioned as among the writers who might well have been included had the net been cast wide enough but there is no suggestion that history had "frozen" for them. For some unexplained reason, history (whose "history"?) froze only for black exiles. "They can no longer be said to give voice to contemporary South Africa."(7) And since some of the exiled writers are also some of the most talented, wiping them off at a stroke like that tends to give a clear field to our new dissident writers to act as spokes-persons for "contemporary South Africa".

That they are no longer relevant to the South African experience will come as a surprise to such active poets and novelists as Willie Keorapetse Kgositsile, Mandla Langa, Cosmo Pieterse, Dennis Brutus, Tim Holmes, Lauretta Ngcobo and many others; it certainly came as a surprise to me. How writers become relevant is probably more troublesome than our two white anthologists even wish to imagine, though I had always thought that even André Brink who has excavated 17th and 18th century history for two of his novels was being relevant to "contemporary South Africa". (In his Harvard lectures on Modern German Literature, Henry Hatfield has reminded us that "Hitler's accession to power caused the greatest exodus of gifted persons in modern times... The story is a harrowing one: many exiles went through excruciating trials. Suicide was frequent: among the noted writers Hasenclever, Toller and Stefan Zweig took their lives...Heinrich Mann had to walk over the Pyrenees when he was almost seventy...It is all the more remarkable that admirable works were written: not only by masters like the Manns and Brecht. Anna Seghers, for example, wrote her finest novel, Das siebte Kreuz in exile." Clearly there is a useful parallel here we ought to ponder with some profit.) Quite clearly the problem of how to

represent South African society, apart from what is reflected within the texts themselves, extends far beyond their textual limits to the circumstance of their textual production and the mode of their dissemination. In The World, the Text & the Critic, the Palestinian scholar Edward Said, commenting on a not too dissimilar situation, argues that: "Oriental texts come to inhabit a realm without development or power, one that exactly corresponds to the position of a colony for European texts and culture!"(8)Said quotes the statement of Marx and Engels in The German Ideology to the effect that

> in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality.

The "Crisis" Within the Text.

I wish now to leave in abeyance and rather inconclusively for the time being the question of the writer's position as speaking subject within the universe of discourse and focus rather belatedly, some will feel, on the texts themselves. Before I do this, I want to offer two propositions or theses for your consideration.

The first emerges quite naturally from my preliminary remarks; and it is that until apartheid has been abolished there is no such a thing as a South African national culture but only a patchwork of national group cultures, a state of affairs recognised by The Freedom Charter of South Africa; and to that extent there is therefore no such a thing as a national literature of South Africa but only the literatures of various national groups. Nevertheless, I think we can agree with Prof. Daniel P. Kunene that a major division is between black and white; that "the widest gap, both linguistically and culturally, is that betwen white and black South Africans... This division between white and black is how all discussions of the South African socio-political situation begin, or should begin." (9)

As part of that thesis or proposition I want to add another, more questionable one, but one that we could explore with some profit: and this is that white writers, whether liberal or illiberal, are attached, perhaps through no fault of their own, to a decaying ruling group in South Africa; and that white writers speak more persuasively to us, tell us more about the nature of the South African malaise, about the fear and the paranoia, when they expose the nature of this anxiety and panic, including the cruelties they instigate, than when white writers affect to be spokesmen or spokeswomen of the black oppressed, more dangerously when they affect to describe black society from inside or try to mimic the township voice. That is why the best moments in the works of novelists like Menan du Plessis or J. M. Coetzee are during those times in which they portray the nervous dislocation at the very nerve centres of the power of the dominant ruling class. I think we recognise those moments in the Life & Times of Michael K when having chosen to live in the wild, the degraded eponymous hero of the novel is discovered

by an army patrol who suspect him of "running a staging post for guerrillas":

> "Spread out!" One of them shouted: "I want the whole area searched! We are looking for footpaths, we are looking for holes and tunnels, we are looking for any kind of storage site!" He dropped his voice. He was dressed in camouflage uniform like everyone else; there was no badge K could see to tell he was in charge. "You see what kind of people they are", he said: his eyes moved restlessly, he did not seem to be speaking to anyone in particular. "You think there is nothing and all the time the ground beneath your feet is rotten with tunnels. Look around a place like this and you would swear there wasn't a living soul in miles. Then turn your back and they come crawling out of the ground!" (Michael K, p. 167).

Not only is this exposure of the inflamed nervous centres of established power valuable in itself; having shed all illusions about any possible permanent safeguards for white domination, this kind of fiction is also able to give answers to such questions as to where the revolutionary impulse is supposed to originate. After Michael K has finally escaped from the army camp at Kenilworth, one of the medical officers reflects on his own state of unfreedom:

> The truth is that the only chance I had is gone, and gone before I knew. The night that Michael made his break, I should have followed. It is vain plead that I was not ready. If I had taken Michael seriously I would always have been ready...and followed him down the avenue of oaks under the stars... (Michael K, p. 221-2).

My paper is titled: Resistance & the Crisis of Representation. Such a title requires some justification. Is there a crisis then confronting South African writers? At a glance, the present increase in the level of resistance seems to have released a cataclysm of literary energies among both black and white writers; much work, some of it of exceptional quality, is being produced, and yet alongside this great upsurge of literary activity there are confusions, distortions, incapacities, uncertainties; and it will require all of our critical energies to clarify what is happening now in the cultural sphere in our country.

In recent months, in two addresses in Harare and Montpellier, and in at least two published articles in Third World Review (Vol. 2 No. 1 & 2, 1986) and in Rixaka, the cultural organ of the A.N.C., I have made it clear that I think there is indeed a crisis as to what artistic means of representation would be commensurate with this increase in political consciousness and the level of resistance, and I also made the point that though this crisis confronts mainly black writers it is my view that white writers are no more immune to it than black writers are. I also make the further point that, ironically enough, it is the extreme effectiveness and visible potency of direct action, of the rock and the petrol bomb, which has plunged South African literature into its worst crisis

in years. For if the rock and the petrol bomb become material signs, communicating directly the new message of impassioned resistance, the word as such becomes slightly devalued, loses its potency at its very displacement by direct action (for what activist in the middle of insurrectionary burning and looting wants to take a sidelong glance at the pages of a novel!) unless the writer can exert herself or himself, from the depths of what Barthes has called "the author's personal and secret mythology, that subnature of expression where the first coition of words and things takes place", to discover there new stylistic resources with which to close the gap between action and artistic representation. My view, for whatever its worth, is that this gap can never finally be closed; that writers do themselves an injustice when in a moment of desperation they want to pretend that words can perform the work of bullets. Always words do more and they do less.

Nevertheless, I can understand the nature of that fear of being made to look redundant and the attendant shrillness with which writers proclaim themselves - even if metaphorically speaking - of acting as an extension of the rock and the petrol bomb, what Nadine Gordimer in her brief but most eloquent statement describes as being "more than a writer". After all, for many writers the tragedy and their most pressing anxiety during times of great social upheaval is to be thought not to be speaking in the sensuous proximity of the cathedral where daily proclamations are issued or from the public square where the choking smoke of gunfire tends to envelop every rhetorical gesture with a halo of revolutionary legitimacy. As Gordimer puts it:

> Outside is a culture in sterile decay, its achievements culminating in the lines of tin toilets set up in the veld for people "resettled" by force. Whether a writer is black or white, in South Africa the essential gesture by which he enters the brotherhood of man - which is the only definition of society that has any permanent validity - is a revolutionary gesture. (10)

Not surprisingly, Gordimer's work has moved increasingly away from its earlier preoccupations with careful annotations of that "sterile decay", with the careful examination of all those concealed psychic fissures which became suddenly exposed at the moment of her white characters' confrontation with the Other ("The Train from Rhodesia", "The Smell of Death and Flowers"), to her more recent fiction ("A Sport of Nature" is a good example) which seems to yearn more and more toward the politics of public gesture, even representation, of what may be called the revolutionary moment. We have it on Martin Trump's authority that Gordimer's work marks the "demise of passive resistance and liberal ideology", that her novels describe "the move to various formulations of socialism for a liberated South Africa."(11)It would appear that Gordimer has settled for nothing less - I confess my uneasiness at this - than becoming the voice of revolution.

I hope it is not necessary for me to state here that I do not consider that to be a good writer it is necessary to be a member of the A.N.C.

or the South African Communist Party. I also wish to put on public record my great admiration for Gordimer as a writer and a personal friend from whose work, especially her earlier fiction, I have personally learned a great deal; but in my opinion it is not sufficient merely to report on the viccissitudes of the liberation struggle or to allude to important figures in that movement to become the voice of revolution.

Indeed, one of the most irritating features of A Sport of Nature is the way it presses its credentials upon us by the use of quotations from the speeches of Mandela or by dropping the great names of African history on every other page: Tambo, Luthuli, Mandela, J. B. Marks, Joshua Nkomo, Agostinho Neto, Samora Machel, Abdu Diof of Senegal and a host of others; they all traverse the pages of this novel without leaving any appreciable mark. Of Hillela, the novel's heroine, we read: "Her old friendship with Tambo dates from those days when she used to serve him tea at Britannia Court." (A Sport of Nature, p. 239) Pauline, one of the pivotal characters in the book probably speaks as much for herself as for the author when she fiercely cries: "I wish I had joined the C.O.D. when I nearly did, after Maritzburg. Then I would be in it up to the neck now." A great liberal cry of regret and sense of personal loss at having been overtaken by history; but you cannot imagine a black character making that cry, whatever it is that he or she might have failed to join "after Maritzburg", for the simple reason that he or she is "in it up to the neck" the moment he or she is born. At any rate, a great part of the motivating force of this fiction is its fear of exclusion, the fear of loitering without intent in the vicinity of revolution. I think it was the West Indian poet Derek Walcott who said, speaking of the New World - but he might have been speaking of South Africa - that: "In the New World servitude to the muse of history has produced a literature of recrimination and despair, a literature of revenge written by the descendents of slaves or a literature of remorse written by the descendents of the masters."

As the revolutionary process gathers momentum Gordimer's fiction has become obsessed with the theme of white participation; the theme of escape (July's People), the theme of "staying or running away". In A Soldier's Embrace the story concludes with the most preposterous piece of self-consoling psychological contrivance which, as I pointed out in my review of the book, seems calculated to still liberal panic at the possibility of being considered by both sides irrelevant to the final outcome. The scene portrays a former guerrilla who, weeping inconsolably, attempts to persuade a departing liberal lawyer and his wife to stay in the now liberated country. In that sentimental scene of the weeping freedom fighter I see an example of the "liberal ideology" refusing to lie down and accept its demise. This kind of fiction cannot bring itself to even imagine the murderous, tumultuous confusion that is likely to disrupt, if not entirely overwhelm, the kind of personal relationships that bind July, even in his most caustic moments, to his ex-madam and employer; for not only is July sentimentalised, his malevolence implausibly muted into fatherly concern

for the Smales' children, but Maureen's finicky worry about lack of such items of civilisation as toilet rolls in the middle of what is, after all, the biggest upheaval in their lives, makes July's People unable even to suggest, as in a few pages of the riot scene in Life & Times of Michael K the "hallucinatory horror" which the novel invites us to contemplate. More convincing even in its irrepressible paranoia is that cry in Christopher Hope's poem "The Flight of the White South Africans":

> Our demise
> Is near, and we will be gutted where we fall.

If it is true as Martin Trump tells us, that Gordimer's fiction marks a "demise of liberal ideology" what the traditional kind of South African fiction, of which A Dry White Season by André Brink is a good example, has yet to face up to is what Lacanian textualists call "the dissolution of the Subject", in this case the subject of the great liberal ideology, which in turn is paralleled by a fissiparous dissolution of authoritative characters as centres of consciousness. Helen Cixoux has shown how the traditional novel has always assumed the stability of the ego as its major prop.(12) Similarly, the Marxist American critic, Frederic Jameson comments on the aesthetic of Deleuze and Guattari as describing "a trajectory that leads from dissatisfaction with traditional representants of character to the overt celebration of schizophrenic dissolution of the personality in general."(13) Much of the power of the recent fiction by younger or more recent white writers in South Africa is due to this embrace of what Catherine Belsey calls the ideological scandal of psychoanalytical thought - "the split subject, no longer master in its own house."(14) Everytime the narrator of these stories attempts to interpret for the reader what is going on the result is so preposterous that the effect is to focus on the illness of the interpreter/narrator. I want to read for illustration two passages, one from The Weekenders by Sheila Roberts and the other from In the Heart of the Country by J.M. Coetzee:

> They first put me to work at this small inn at Umhlanga Rocks and then offered me the job at the new inn out here. I was tired of the heat and humidity of Natal, so I said yes. I was one of the first women they sent out - and I really enjoyed myself. There was the construction team and all the contractors all over the bloody place. I was a driver they used to send out to the airport to fetch Venner and Robinson and the others whenever they flew in. We all used to have a lot of fun at night, especially when they started installing the roulette tables. We gambled for small amounts, just for fun - and, God, we used to drink!
>
> Once they tried to start training Black staff things weren't so good. I was telling the others this when we were going to drive those people to that stupid picnic. I can't associate with a Black on equal terms. I don't know why, I'm just uneasy. As soon as they talk right and smarten up they seem to be thinking themselves great, and it gets my back up. I hate it when Tshithaban men make passes at me in the street, I could kill them. I'll soon be transferring to Milner Park, I hope.

This was one narrative voice of this new kind of fiction which doesn't pretend to tell us what happens in the townships, but tells us what is going on down there in the citadels of white power.

This one is from the novel by Coetzee called In the Heart of the Country where a spinster, who sees her father getting together with a "coloured" woman who is already married to one of the workers on the farm, thinks "this is the ultimate dissolution of that personality or that subject". The man who is married to this "coloured" woman, who is also a "coloured" person, and his wife is being used by the white farmer because he has power over them. The daughter who is not married, is listening to them from time to time making love. The man is called Hendrik:

> Is Hendrik the beast, the insulted husband, the serf trodden under his master's boot, rising to roar for vengeance? Anna, with her sharp little teeth, her hot armpits - is she the beast, the woman, subtle, lascivious, insatiable? I talk and talk to keep my spirits up while they circle me, smiling, powerful. What is the secret of their power over me? What do they know that I do not know? Whatever way I turn I'm blocked. In a month's time, I can see it, I will be bringing my father and my maid breakfast in bed while Hendrik lounges in the kitchen eating biscuits, flicking his claspknife into the tabletop, pinching my bottom as I pass. My father will buy new dresses for her, while I wash out her soiled underwear. He and she will lie abed all day sunk in sensual sloth while Hendrik tipples, jackals devour the sheep, and the work of generations falls to ruins. She will bear him olive-skinned children who will pee on the carpets and run up and down the passages. She will conspire with Hendrik to steal his money and his silver watch. They will send for their relatives, brothers and sisters and distant cousins and settle them on the farm. Through a crack in the shutter, I will watch them dance hords to guitar music on the werf on Saturday nights, while the old master sits like an idiot on the stoep, smiling and nodding, president of the festival.

Characters like these, speaking from the profound depths of their manic depression of schizophrenic euphoria, tell us a great deal about the social decay which menace South African society; they cannot misrepresent anything because their misrepresentations are themselves a kind of truth. On the contrary, it is those liberal white narrators, attempting to persuade us of the essential integrity of their personalities, consequently their view and interpretation of events, who must arouse our initial suspicion.

The mere positing of Ben du Toit in A Dry White Season as not merely another struggling consciousness in the centre of this "sterile decay" but as the bearer of political morality, puts a disproportionate burden upon his shoulders. The questions swarm in our heads about his political status: who is he working with? In his search for Ngubane, presumed murdered by the Security Police, he forms an undefined alliance with Stanley Makhaya, with the girl Melanie, with a white lawyer who happens to be a shyster, but there is a vacuum where political structures should be. Yet Ben du Toit's point of view is the point of view of

the novel; his failures, which politically speaking are ignorance and lack of imagination, leave certain chasms in the novel which are papered over but keep opening up. The crisis at the core of this kind of realistic representation is that the novelist must convince us of the essential innocence of a hero whom we are likely to convict of merely slumming in the neighbourhood of revolution. Even his adulteries have been accounted for and paid for in advance in the form of a morally obtuse woman. That is why when Stanley Makhaya turns up drunk on Christmas Day at the Du Toit's family dinner it is like the Freudian "return of the repressed". Though degenerating finally into slapstick comedy, it has a certain objective truth in the dissolution of the phoney alliance between Ben du Toit and Stanley Makhaya, forged and nourished in a backyard garden, which perhaps has an unintended correlation between certain white "fixers" and such movements as Inkantha and other fly-by-night leaders. The disintegration of that Christmas party is a signal indicator of how black and white alliances founded on such temporary truces cannot survive even a case of bad manners from a drunk, let alone concerted attack from bombs.

Black Writers & Their Crisis of Representation.

Mr. Chairman, I had intended to say something about black writers and their own particular crisis, but when I looked at the documentation you are circulating I realised that you had included in it my article "South African Fiction Writers at the Barricades" and Njabulo Ndebele's most important contribution on the subject: Some Thoughts on South African Fiction. I shall also be making my views known on Black fiction at the group session on Saturday. However, I wish to present at least the main thesis I intend to bring forward at that session.

In its broad outline it is this: up to now our fiction has been a fiction of witness - doing a useful job in bearing witness to the immense suffering of our people and the sacrifices they have been and are continuing to make in resisting this oppression, but the nature of our crisis as black writers is where to go from here. Many people have become only too aware of our anguish; a mere reproduction in our fiction of our own social mutilations, without the mediation of strong artistic form, runs the danger of reifying in our aesthetic works the very social relations that our political practice is intended to disrupt. What has long become apparent is that black writers are confronted with a crisis of how to forge new instruments of representation out of tired old realistic forms in order to close the gap between style and content.

In his study of Wyndham Lewis's fiction Jameson's description of the crisis of Western realism in which he speaks of "the increasing reification of social life", "the exhaustion of form" or "the way in which older realistic paradigms ceaselessly consume their own primary material and render it obsolete",(15) applies with even greater force

to black South African fiction. In this situation in which "dead story-telling conventions... remain massively in place", Jameson suggests that "the novelist is less a creative than a performing artist. His primary text, his 'book' or script, is given him from the outset, in the form of the banal situations and stereotypes of a degraded everyday life", so that "composition of the scenes proves in reality to be an interpretation of them in much the same way that an actor's voice restores vitality to a faded text."

In the case of South African black fiction the "faded text" are those stereotypes of plot and mechanical characterisation, unredeemed by that analytic or textual production which can restore to the humdrum the glow of new pigment. After all, in South Africa there are no new stories to tell, which is why attempts at periodisation in terms of the Fifties', the Sixties' or Seventies' writers can sometimes seem so peculiarly sterile if one places their respective texts alongside one another. Our single epic theme is still apartheid and only new ways of telling the story of apartheid and resistance against apartheid can dust up the old plots of township removals, resettlements and police shootings and make them seem new. In saying all this, I do not wish to suggest that any sort of realism or naturalistic representation of our condition is now completely bankrupt; after all, we have the example of Alex La Guma's short stories and his short novel A Walk in the Night, in which the writer succeeded in performing what most literary theorists of realism say can no longer be done. It was acting as if the representation of reality exactly as it is was still possible which turned La Guma into an enormous enigma of South African literature.

La Guma who died in Havana in November 1985 at the age of 60, was an impossible subject for academic theses or for those critical exegeses which keep most of us in business. Behind his fiction there lurked no obscure symbol or tropic snare. The farthest he ever ventured into the field of the trope was in his massive deployment of the simile and metaphor. What he aimed for in his fiction was a linguistic transparency which made the object seemed limitlessly visible, fixed to the eye in its minutest detail; the plots worked with a flowing naturalness, an absorbing chronological compulsion, say from the moment that Michael Adonis is fired in A Walk in the Night to the moment that Willieboy is gunned down by the police, which offered few obstructions to even the most inattentive reader. Finally, La Guma's materialist philosophy (he was an admitted Marxist) was so assimilated to the matter, to the unerased contours of the crudely social and the commonplace, that his fiction discouraged any attempts at the sort of explication de text which is grist to the mill of traditional criticism. Such a workmanlike approach to the craft of writing fiction in which art seems shamelessly to display its sinews while it grapples with reality, must be the despair of thesis-mongers; only the most determined zeal for interpretation can volunteer to offer us more than the banal paraphrase of the novels or short stories.

In ending, therefore, my thesis is quite simple. It argues that the level of increased resistance to apartheid in South Africa has created a crisis

for writers, both black and white. Increasing pressures to find adequate forms of representing this political crisis in fictional terms are reflected in a number of ways, but anxiety not to be considered sufficiently militant or "revolutionary" has compelled some writers, mostly black, to substitute slogans and mechanical reproduction of everyday reality for the creative exploration of character or search for fresh forms of narrative representation. Lastly, I recall Imamu Baraka's (LeRoi Jones's) dissatisfaction with black poets as not telling us with sufficient artistic force what it is like to be oppressed compared with how well poets of Western imperialism (Kipling et al.) tell us what it is like to do the oppressing. My anxiety is that in South Africa, out of expediency or out of opportunism, some white writers are now very keen to tell us what it is like to be oppressed rather than what it is like to do the oppressing!

Reference Notes

1. See "Fiction by Black South Africans" in Home & Exile (Longman, 1965).
2. See Martin Trump: "South African Writers & the Courage of Resistance" in Third World Book Review (Vol. 2 Nos. 1 & 2) 1986.
3. Katherine Fishburn: "Sexual Panic and the Failure of Liberalism" is also in Third World Book Review (1986).
4. Njabulo S. Ndebele: "The English Language and Social Change in South Africa" is reproduced in TriQuarterly 69, Spring/Summer 1987 (New Writing, Photographs and Art from South Africa) edited by David Bunn and Jane Taylor (Northwestern University).
5. Ibid., p. 217.
6. See Introduction to A Land Apart (A South African Reader) edited by André Brink and J. M. Coetzee (Faber, 1986).
7. Ibid.
8. Edward Said: The World, the Text, and the Critic (Faber, London, 1984), p. 47.
9. Daniel P. Kunene:"Language, Literature and the Struggle for Liberation in South Africa" in Staffrider Vol. 6 No. 3, 1986.
10. Nadine Gordimer: "The Position of the White Writer in S. Africa" is contained in The Reader prepared for the conference on S. African Literature at the Evangelische Akademie, Bad Boll, 1987.
11. Martin Trump's bibliography "South African Literature Against Apartheid Since 1948" in TWBR, Vol. 2, No. 1 & 2, 1986.
12. Helen Cixoux: "The Character of 'Character'" in New Literary History (Vol. V. Winter 1974 No. 2).
13. Fredric Jameson: Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist (University of California Press, 1979), p. 51-52.
14. Catherine Belsey: "The Romantic Construction of the Unconscious" is contained in Literature, Politics & Theory (Papers from the Essex Conference 1976 - 84, edited by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen, Diana Loxley (Methuen, London, 1986) p. 59.
15. Jameson, op. cit., p. 65.

THE MULTICULTURAL ENCOUNTER: ON ASIAN SOUTH AFRICAN WRITERS

by Neela Alvarez-Péreyre

As far as I have been able to ascertain, nothing comprehensive has been written so far on Asian South African writers in the field of creative literature. This should not come as a surprise as it represents a new development. In a little under two decades, one has become aware of the names and works of Ahmed Essop, Enver Carim, Ronnie Govender, Farouk Asvat, Essop Patel, Mewa Ramgobin, Farida Karodia, Kriben Pillay, etc. (see appended bibliography). It is a literature in the making, precisely at a time when, more than ever before, the Asian community in South Africa finds itself, politically speaking, at a crossroads. Being myself a fourth generation South African of Indian descent, and having studied Asian South African literature as part of an academic research, I feel I can perhaps bring my contribution to the subject. Besides, in the process of relating my own youth and adolescence in the Pietermartizburg area just before and after World War II - in a still unpublished autobiography, ACACIA THORN IN MY HEART, I discovered that I was not only expressing myself but contributing also to the knowledge of the Asian South African community. Thus the encounter and the sharing we, as South Africans of different backgrounds, are experiencing here in Bad Boll, are in themselves part of the process of putting together our efforts towards a national culture. Apartheid has erected artificial barriers between us, we must bring them down because we need to be seen as people, and not numbers or colours in our country.

Kriben Pillay, who is at the same time poet and philosopher, has described graphically those very prejudices which ignorance - when not downright racialism - has fostered among many people, mainly among the dominant culture:

I remember your eyes
when they spoke of me
of my race, of my god,
of the way I danced.

They were not your eyes
but the eyes of years gone by,
shaped by sights of images
too big to see
and left alone...
in the dark.

Those eyes, archaic,
of years gone by,
had to be plucked,
and in the unwanting sockets
I put mine in yours,
yours in mine.

I remember my eyes now,
when they spoke of you
of your race, of your god,
of the way you danced.

The last stanza insists on the effort on the part of the victim of the prejudices to act and to force the other one to see him/her. A big task, indeed, if we judge by some excerpts taken from a textbook used in the mid-seventies to form recruits at the Police College in Pretoria. The course was apparently designed to equip the police for work in a society where, according to the textbook itself, "knowledge of ethnology is indispensable to the person who is to guide culturally backward people (sic) to the level of civilisation." After a sweeping statement that "Blacks in South Africa cannot think or talk logically", and that "Whites are in a leading position as guardians and superiors", the texts proceeds:

"... Indians are an advanced outpost of countries struggling to get rid of their excess population... From the political point of view, the Indians must be regarded as a population group with strong capital resources who are... acting as instigators and organisers in passive resistance campaigns... and serving as an advanced post for the mother countries, India and Pakistan... This Asian group still recognises the governments of the mother countries as their own and are loyal to them... yet insist on being regarded as full and equal citizens of the Republic of South Africa." (1)
("What goes into the mind of the man in blue", The Star, Saturday December 4, 1976.)

Vis-a-vis this attitude, the oppressed have reacted in different ways. Some have internalised the prejudices and developed a sense of inferiority, others have mocked at such utter nonsense. Asian South African literature, along with works by other Blacks, helps us to visualise those phenomena from the inside.

Here is, for instance, an excerpt from one of Ahmed Essop's short stories, "Gladiators". Mr. Rajesperry, the principal of the Tagore Indian High School, is having a heated discussion with Mr. Rajah, a neighbour, who has just said that "we, Indians, have a culture. What have your superiors?" (an allusion to the white school inspectors who pay visits to Mr. Rajesperry):

"...Mr. Rajesperry asked. 'Culture? If you call eating foul-smelling curry culture, eating betel-leaf and spitting all over culture, living in filth culture! Has anyone in India ever invented such a thing as a bicycle, not to speak of an advanced machine like my Citroen? Indians are a lot of unproductive morons. Yahoos.'"
(The Hajji and Other Stories, pp. 63-4)

On the other hand, in Ronnie Governder's popular play, The Lahnee's Pleasure, we find a scene where "Stranger", the more politicised character, is taking the other people in the non-white section of the

bar to task for their subservience to the white man and for the fact that they place him on a pedestal:

"Just who the hell do they think they are? What makes them so superior? You know something, when these guys were walking around in caves and wearing animal skins, our people were building temples in India. When they were hanging to raw meat, our people were cooking food... and... and... and you know something else? Counting numerals - where do you think they learned it from? They learned it from the Indians. Now they walk all over us and you guys sit there - yes, sir, no sir, God, you make me sick!"
(op. cit. p. 34-5)

A good lesson in the relativity of cultures and of "progress", all the more necessary when the rulers use the yardstick of "civilization" to impose second-rate citizenship on all "non-whites".

There are many other good examples of the multi-cultural encounter in Essop's stories. Although this is neither the place nor the time to make a typology of all of them, two examples will suffice: the first one underlines its violent side, the second one shows the subtle, tender way of dealing with such a subject.

In "Black and White", Shireen, a flirtatious girl, plays upon the black/white antagonism first to please her ego - her newest lover is a white boy, albeit a "poor white" one, - then to get rid of him when she wants to break with him. In the following scene, we witness what she has designed with her Indian friends to spurn Harold, and the unexpected consequence of it:

"When Harold arrived that Friday evening, we clapped our hands. 'The hero is here!', Shireen shouted. 'From the gutters of Mayfair!', Nizam screamed. Harold looked at us without saying a word. He got off his motor-cycle and Shireen went towards him. We saw the two go into their usual meeting-place. After a while, Shireen came running towards us grouped on the opposite pavement: 'Boys, give me a kiss!' And we kissed her. 'I belong to everybody', she declared, facing Harold. 'To everybody, you understand. That is, to blacks only, blacks only. Whites are not allowed.' She burst out laughing. She had routed Harold. He remained in the recess, caged, humiliated."
(The Hajji and Other Stories, p. 58.)

Humiliation is the key-word, but this time the target has changed. The scene eventually ends up in violence: Nizam unexpectedly pushes Harold's motor-cycle into the gutter where it crashes. When Shireen crosses over the street to apologize, Harold strikes her and leaves her with blood in her mouth.

Still from The Hajji and Other Stories, there is "Gerty's Brother", one of Essop's best stories. Gerty, the daughter of a poor white, alcoholic father, and her little brother Riekie go to live with Hussein but their relationship is broken by the imminence of police action. Worse, Riekie,

who is too young to understand that there is a law that forbids the development of affection between people belonging to different ethnic groups, is left wondering why the man he considers like a surrogate father has "deserted" him. The way the law actually destroys basic human relationships is depicted in an incident, the simplicity of which makes it more poignant. Hussein's friend, the narrator, has taken Riekie to the lake and hired a boat while his friend and Gerty go and have a nice time in the park nearly deserted at this time of the night. Here is how Essop relates the ensuing scene:

"I told Riekie to jump in, but he hesitated. So I lifted him and put him in the boat. He was light in weight and I felt the ribs under his arms. A sensation of tenderness for the boy went through me. You must understand that this was the first time I had ever picked up a white child."
(op. cit. p. 92)

Here, nothing is said explicitly about "race relations", but the words of the narrator and the "You must understand..." reveal the possibility of another type of world where persons relate to persons as individuals.

This theme of barriers creating misunderstanding between people or lovers forcibly separated by law, recurs in the works of several other Asian South African writers. In "An Act of Immortality" (this is the correct spelling), Farouk Asvat speaks of the impossibility of sharing the same experience and being able to speak of humanity in the same way. Eventually, when it comes to the crunch, the lovers will side with their own people, a clear indication from him of future strife and the tribute of blood which will have to be paid for the eradication of the system:

"...For some day soon
We shall stand face to face
Your kin and my kind
With hate in our holsters
Theirs greased by greed
Ours by love
Born of hatred
For blue-eyed sons of the gods
Masters of evil."
(The Time of Our Lives, p. 50)

We find the same echo in Essop Patel's "In the Shadow of Signal Hill":

"in the howling wind
by the murky waters
of the sea
children of colour
gather shells
and hold them to their ears
and listen to the lamentation of slaves
in the dungeon of death

in the howling wind
by the murky waters
of the sea
sons of langa
gather at the ruins of district six
and sharpen the spears of the night
and the heroes from the island urge
go towards the fiery dawn..."
(They Came At Dawn, p. 19)

The examples given above show clearly where the writers stand politically. They definitely belong to South Africa, even when, here and there, Indian words creep in, be they of Muslim or other origins. "This land is my land / From the Limpopo to Robben Island", proclaims Farouk Asvat (op. cit. p. 63). And Shabbir Banoobhai, apparently the most attached to (pan)Islamic traditions, has this to say in his second book of poems, Shadows of a Sun-Darkened Land:

"it is the newly rooted grass that worries me
how tenuous is its hold on life
how much more tenuous I ask
is the hold on life of people living at the
crossroads
crossroads of life and death,
the would-be cultivators
of the land (if there was any), the would-be
workers of the city (if they be allowed there)
the grass people
clinging desperately to a loosening earth
it is the rain that worries me...

if you are prepared
to overlook a stain here and there
it is not so much the rain I fear
the grass can grow again
it is the loosening of far-more precious soil
the ritualistic scouring of people from my land."

Unequivocal too in his stand is Ahmed Essop in his two novels, The Visitation and The Emperor. In the former, Mr. Sufi, a well-known proprietor of several blocks of flats in Fordsburg, uses the apartheid system to enrich himself at the expense of his "own people" by investing money in Lenasia, ironically dubbed Elysia, to which the Indians, evicted from Fordsburg, will have to forcibly go. On the other hand, Dharma Ashoka, the headmaster of an Indian school in Lenasia and the main protagonist of The Emperor, is a zealous collaborator who wants to propagate the system among his pupils and teachers. He is helped by a couple of teachers and given the support of the white inspector, Mr. Whitecross, while another teacher, Zenobia, strongly opposes Ashoka's teaching methods and forms of indoctrination. Here again, we have a whole gammut of attitudes from implicit or outward collaboration to confrontation. Here, too, a faint distinction between what is "strictly" political and "strictly" cultural in the encounter between the communities.

This being said, I have had no time to examine the reasons - economical, sociological and educational, cultural and above all political - as to why we are witnessing this late emergence of creative writing - in English at least - among the Asian South African community; at least at this particular time in the history of the country where their forebears settled well over a century ago. On the other hand, if their "Indianness" shows here and there, more among certain writers like Essop and Banoobhai for instance, it would be interesting to go into more detail and see if it expresses itself in the idiom, the choice of characters, milieu, words, or other factors (2). There are at least two things they have in common: their South Africanness and their political stand. They do not belong to the "wavering minority" to which Kogila Moodley devoted a study some ten years ago (in Change in Contemporary South Africa , L. Thompson and J. Butler edits, University of California, Berkeley, 1975). They, at least, have taken a firm stand in favour of a non-racial society. If they may still be a minority within a minority, one should not forget, nevertheless, that the tradition of resistance to apartheid, from Gandhi to Mewa Ramgobin for instance, is long established in the Asian South African community. Some have paid dearly with their lives - the Immam Haroun and Ahmed Timol, among others, or with their freedom. It may be fitting to end up here with a poem by Farouk Asvat who was banned for five years (1973 - 78) for his political activities. It is at the same time a homage to all those who have dared to speak up:

"We could have
Remained silent
Listened
To the nippy evening
Felt
Peachblossoms in our nostrils
Let the shimmering stars play
Upon the shimmering waters
Heard the echo
Of a faint cry in the distance
Before we fell off to sleep
In the wilderness

We could have"
(The Time of Our Lives.)

Notes

1. It may be of interest to remind the reader of how Indians came to settle in South Africa. The British planters discovered in the 1850's that the soil and climate on the coastal belt were ideally suited for the cultivation of sugar cane. As the Zulus were reluctant to work on these plantations and as both Natal and India were under the British crown, it was easy to negotiate the importation of Indian labour to Natal. From 1850 onwards several waves of

Indian immigrants came to work and eventually settle there: most were indentured labourers, others who came later on, called "passenger Indians" belonged to the merchant class.

The immigrants did not constitute a homogenous group. They spoke different languages - Tamil, Telegu and Hindustani among the indentured labourers, Gujarati and Urdu among the merchant class. They belonged to different castes, although differentiation on this basis disappeared quickly. Most of them were Hindus, but there were Muslims too and Christians. There also existed class distinctions.

Yet they shared a number of things. There was a common culture which expressed itself in various ways. Outwardly: in dress and food habits. At family level, the extended family system prevailed, with its duties but also its solidarity. The respective role and status of women were clearly defined, with a marked dependance of the latter on parents and the husband. The dead were revered, and religion formed a strong cement.

When their contracts expired, many of the indentured labourers chose to remain in the country, for there were provisions for doing so. Many of them became market gardeners. Their status, however, was fragile. I remember my own mother saying when I was a child that if the Nats came to power, we, Indians, would be repatriated:

"'How were we to survive in a strange land?', she asked. 'Our home and country was here. What were we going to do if the Government forced us to leave? And if it did not, where would we go if this strange new policy, the Group Areas Act, was enforced? We'll not be able to live on this land any longer', she concluded, 'because it belongs to a white man.' It seemed as if our world was crumbling around us."
Acacia Thorn in My Heart, p. 31-2.

2. Not all Asian South African writers have spoken of their community: Enver Carim (A Dream Deferred), M. Ramgobin (Waiting to Live).

Delivered at Bad Boll,
Saturday, December 12, 1987.

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In the silence of the dark night
A praying mantis marched
Eyes protruding like beacons

Forelegs held out
It probed the alleys
Up and down,
While hypnotized I gazed
And heard a voice
Salaam baba, salaam baba
Salaam baba

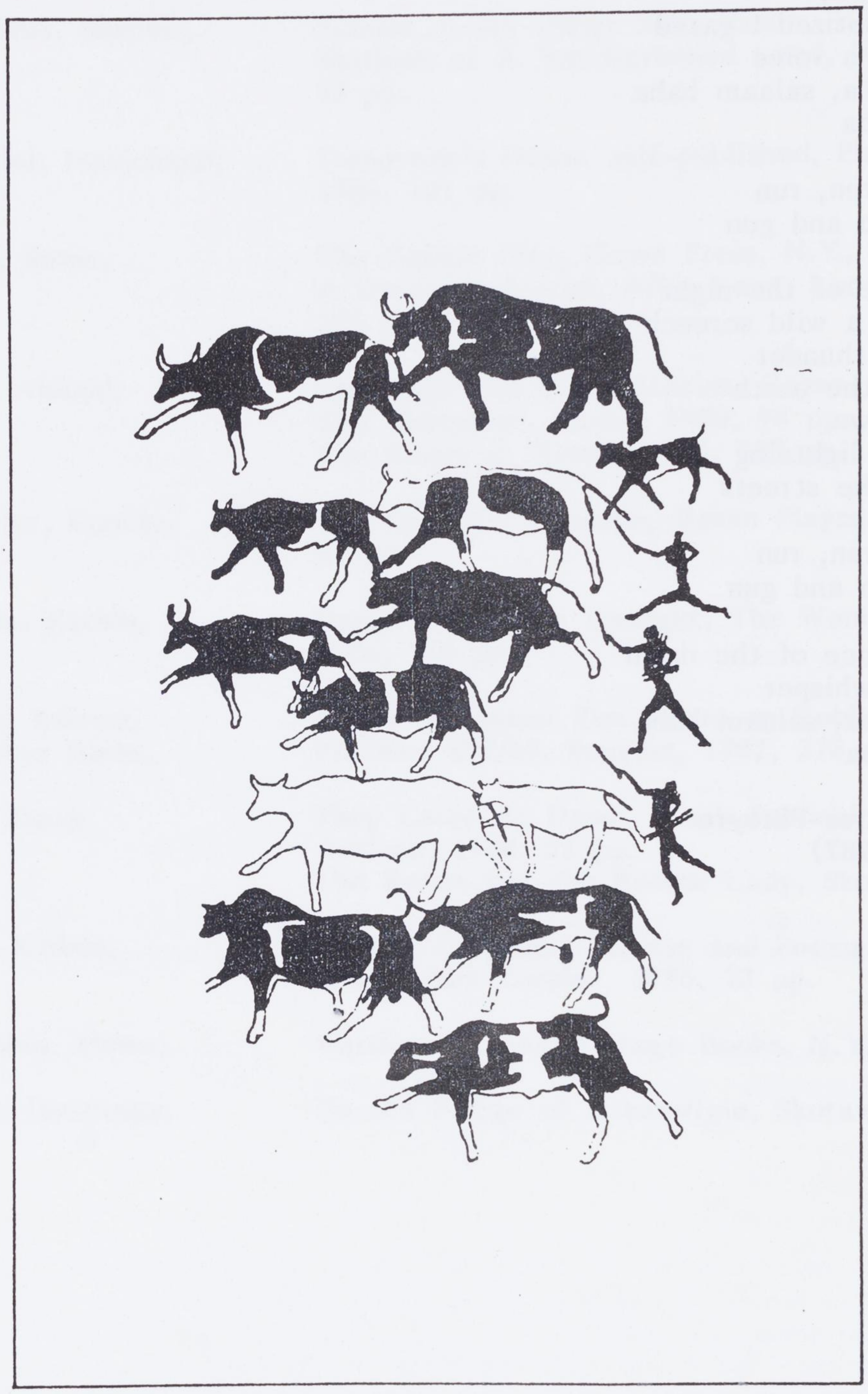
Run, children, run
From hippo and gun

The silence of the night
Broken by a wild screech
Blood and thunder
Spattered the earth
Up and down
Flashes of lightning
Searched the streets

Run, children, run
From hippo and gun

In the silence of the dawn
I heard a whisper
Salaam baba, salaam baba
Salaam baba

Neela Alvarez-Péreyre
(January 1987)



ILIZWI LIKAJAKOBI (KODWA ISANDLA SIKA-ESAU.*
- The Voice of Jacob but the Hand of Esau - Thoughts on the Language Question .

by Vernon February

During the late fifties (1957-1959), the celebrated Nguni-scholar, Dr. A.C. Jordan, author of the novel Ingqumbo Yeminyanya (1954, Wrath of the Ancestors) and a wellknown political figure in the Cape, using the pseudonym of V. Rylate (1), were involved in a series of polemics on the language question inside South Africa. These articles were all published in the Educational Journal of the Teachers' League of South Africa, a body which catered mostly for the needs of those people, referred to in South Africa as "Coloured".

In the very first article Rylate wrote of language in general:

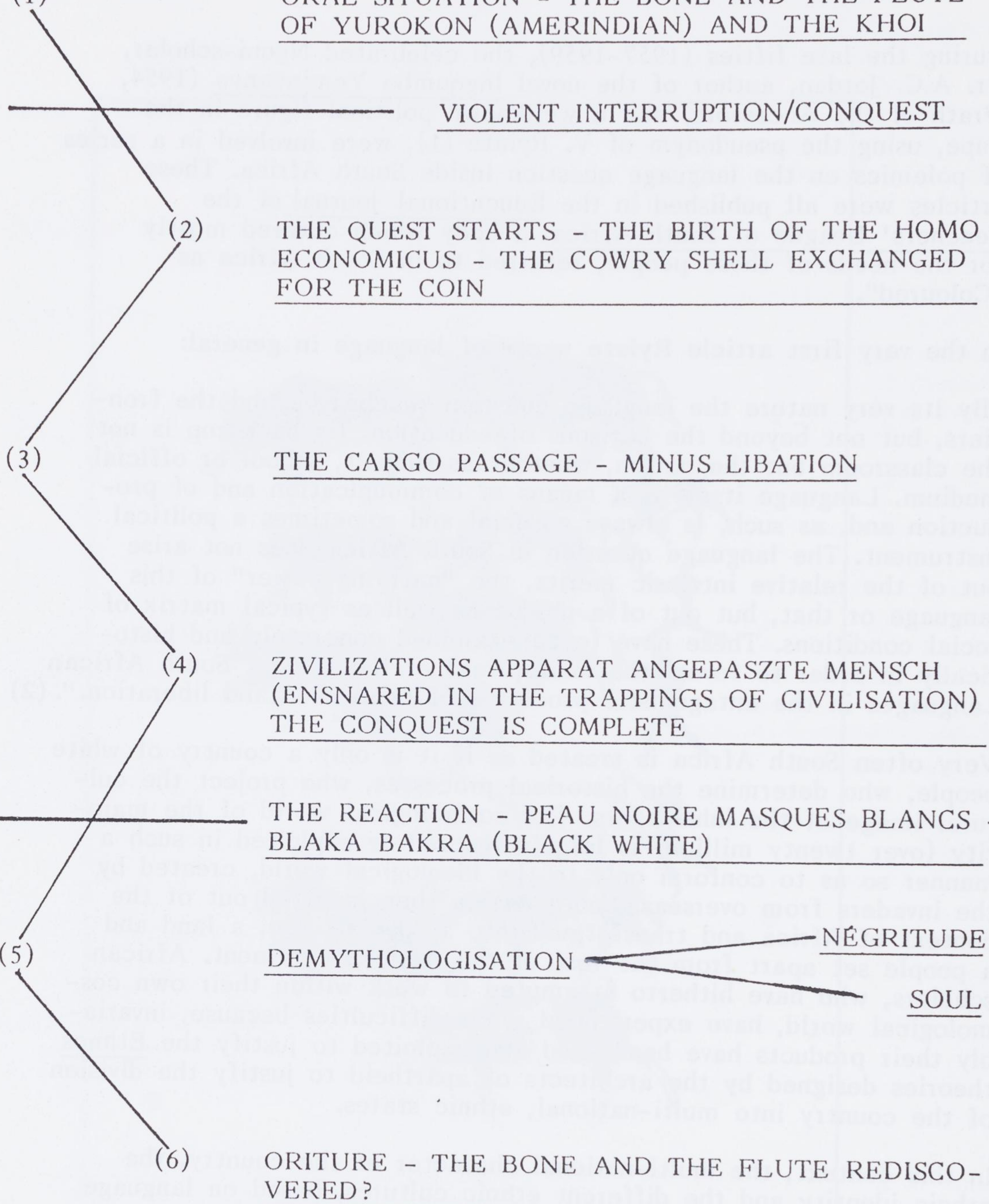
"By its very nature the language question reaches beyond the frontiers, but not beyond the horizons of education. Its backdrop is not the classroom but the nation, whether as subject, school or official medium. Language itself is a means of communication and of production and, as such, is always a social and sometimes a political instrument. The language question in South Africa does not arise out of the relative intrinsic merits, the "carrying power" of this language or that, but out of a unique as well as typical matrix of social conditions. These have to be examined concretely and historically in order to reveal the mainsprings of the role of South African Languages in the antagonistic processes of oppression and liberation.". (2)

Very often South Africa is treated as if it is only a country of white people, who determine the historical processes, who project the cultural image of the inhabitants. The cosmological world of the majority (over twenty million) is largely ignored or exploited in such a manner so as to conform only to the ideological world, created by the invaders from overseas. South Africa then is lifted out of the context of Africa and transformed into a special case, a land and a people set apart from the rest of the African continent. African scholars, who have hitherto attempted to work within their own cosmological world, have experienced great difficulties because, invariably their products have been used and exploited to justify the Ethnos theories designed by the architects of apartheid to justify the division of the country into multi-national, ethnic states.

In this context, the multi-national character of the country, the ethnic identity and the different ethnic cultures, based on language classification and customs and norms within the apartheid nexus of the invaders is emphasized. No attempt is made to see South Africa as an integral part of Africa, to view the struggle of the oppressed as part of the overall struggle against foreign domination and colonialism. It is against this background that I would like to trace the position in which the African finds himself as a result of conquest.

*This paper is from my book "AND BID HIM SING - Essays on Literature, Language and Cultural Domination", Kegan Paul Int., London, due for publication 1988.

My typology would resemble the following pattern:



The first stage in the graph represents the "vestiges of legend and enigmatic proportions" and is essential in the reconstruction of the original situation. These are, what the Guyanese novelist Wilson Harris calls, "the forgotten perspectives which ... may provide a personal scale of imagination or as far removed in time as the twentieth century is from Yurokon!"(3) This is also the chart of the destruction of the world of the colonised.

The second stage will largely be determined by the status of conquest of the colonised. To quote Wilson Harris once again: "The force of ritual bounty lies in the status of conquest within which the victorious side apparently succeeds in pressing the face or faces of the vanquished into the dust of uniform conviction so that the reality or play of contrasts is eclipsed within an order of self-deception!"(4) In such a state of "self-deception-in-self-definition" the vanquished abandons or forgets his own situation and starts aspiring to the ritual bounty of the vanquisher. This forces him into becoming a Homo Economicus, that is, he abandons his cowry shell for the coin. It is now, like the cargo cultists that he leaves, but this time without a libation, and with no prospect of ever returning, to contribute to a form of harmony in his community. The journey takes place without any ancestral blessing.

It is however, when the return becomes impossible, that he becomes a slave of, and completely ensnared in, the trappings of civilization. This stage I have labelled with a term used by the German educationist Freier, Zivilizations Apparat Angepaszte Mensch. Ironically, it is in this state of exile that the vanquished recognizes his own "self-deception-in-self-definition". However, often this stage is responsible for a duality. Thus, the revolt is halted by a desire for "roots" and an unwillingness to abandon the "ritual bounty". This has led variously in the 1930s to an anomic situation among the French speaking Antilleans and West Africans, studying in Paris, culminating ideologically and culturally in négritude. Soul-brotherism in America some decades later appears to have its roots in similar conditions.

Finally, in the typology presented here, cargo is only possible if there is the recognition that the African finds himself in a state of Oriture (a term used by the Kenyan writer Micere), which I have defined as a recognition of his cosmological world order, as found in the oral tradition and, of the road travelled away from the oral world as a consequence of the invasions. This term covers the Syncretistic meeting point between the oral and the written.

The early invaders who came to South Africa had decided ideas about the original inhabitants of that country, the Khoi and the San. They called the Khoi "Hottentots", a term of derision, and the San, mockingly, "Bushmen"!(5)Travelogue after travelogue called these people "brown apes", people who smelled a "fathom in the wind" - creatures (from the Dutch "schepselen") with disgusting eating habits. In fact, in one publication concerning the Cornelius de Houtman-voyage in 1597, one reads that the Dutch sailor considered himself superior to these "Hottentots", whom he could split apart with one kick of his boots.(6)

The language of the Khoi was labelled "clucking like turkeys"; they were compared to people in Switzerland with apparently similar speech impediments as a result of the hardness of the snow. That is, they had a goitred manner of speaking. One example will suffice. In the very important Verhael (1597), an anonymous writer aboard the ship made the following observation of the Khoi language: "They also spoke very strangely with gestures like children at home play with their mouths, clucking like male turkeys (als clockende als calcoensche hanen)!"(7) At the risk of being facetious, I would graphically like to demonstrate what could conceivably have happened at this first traumatic and linguistic confrontation between Khoi and invader at the Cape during the 16th, early 17th centuries. Imagine two robust, ruddy-faced, big-boned Dutchmen, confronted by the Khoi, who were fleet-footed, small in stature and of a colouration ranging from "brown to peach-coloured". The first reaction of these Dutchmen (let us call them Jansen and Pietersen) could have been: "Godverdomme Jansen moet je dat zoodje bruine aapjes zien."(8) (God dammit Jansen, just look at these sods of little brown apes.) Mercifully we have no written record of the Khoi reaction to the first Dutch spoken at the Cape. The fate of the Khoi is of course wellknown. They were either felled by epidemics or, as Shula Marks observed, miscegenated out of existence.(9)

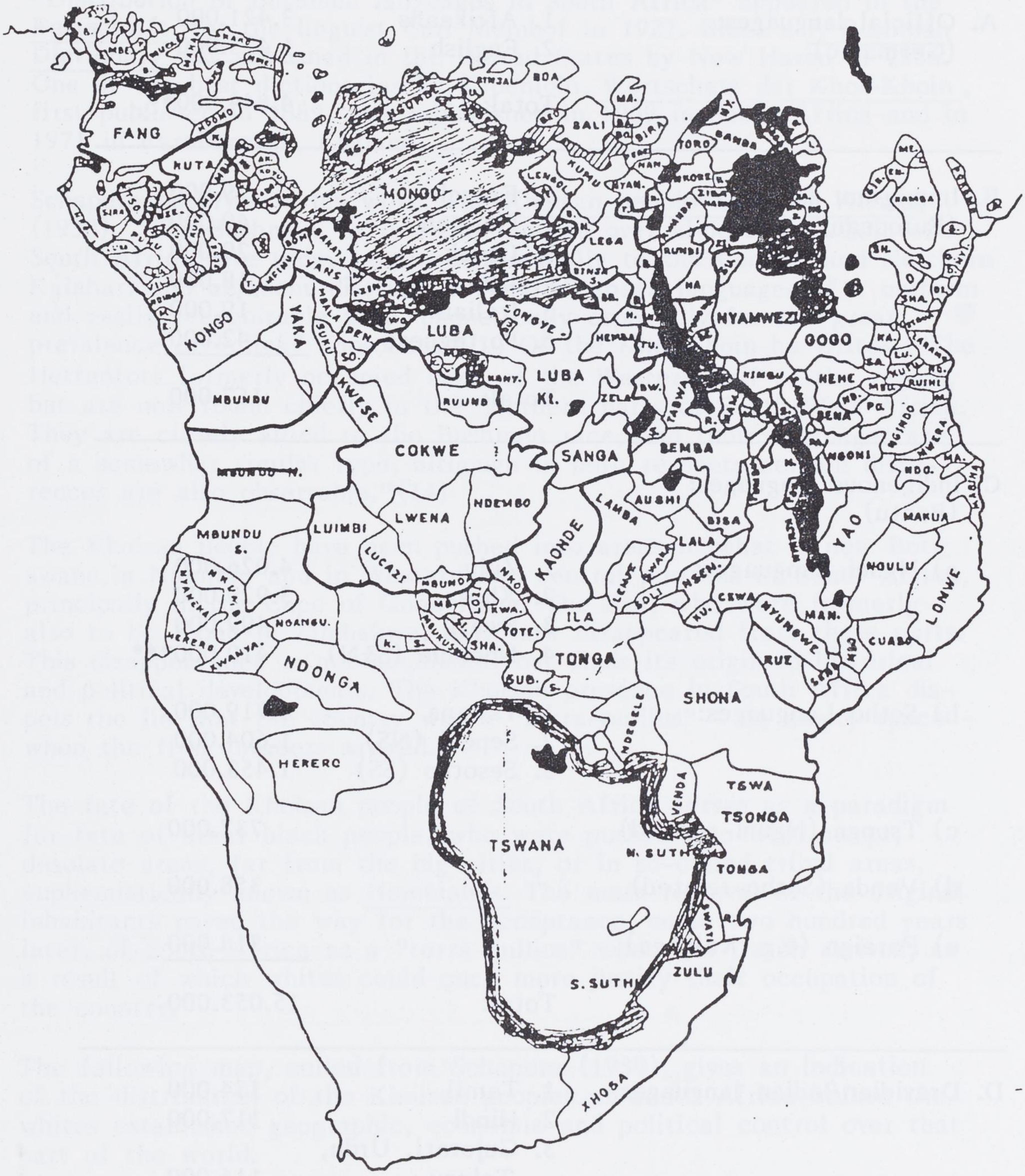
This linguistic arrogance was to repeat itself in 1857 by an American missionary, the Reverend J.L. Döhne who, according to his own testimony, had spent twenty years among the Nguni, when he wrote in his Zulu-Kafir Dictionary:

"Some have expected to find much poetry among the Zulu-Kafirs, but there is in fact none. Poetical language is extremely rare and we meet with only a few pieces of prose. The Zulu nation is more fond of ukuhlabelela, i.e. singing, and engages more in "ukuvuma amagama ezinkosi", i.e. singing the praises of the chiefs, than any other Kafir-tribe. But their capabilities in this respect are very limited. The highest song of praise for their King is composed entirely of a few hyperbolic expressions (see uku-kuleka)... But nothing like poetry or song exists, no metre, no rhyme, nothing that interests or soothes the feelings or arrests the passions, no admiration of the heavenly bodies, or taste for the beauties of creation. We miss the cultivated mind which delights in seizing on these subjects and embodying them in suitable language."(10)

This holy and learned missionary, Döhne, was a dupe of his own Eurocentric approach. In his inability to find metre, rhyme, abba's, abba's, Shakespearean sonnet schemes, Petrarchan sonnets, he boldly concluded that the Nguni had no poetic traditions. And in the process he failed to come to grip with, let alone understand, that wonderful phenomenon known as praise poetry in Nguni.

The important point is that African languages were not considered "cultured", "civilized" or a suitable or noble means of communication. Again, A.C. Jordan reminds us in his article that language cannot be seen outside the social context in which it occurs. Language is not just a question of phoneme, word, idea, combined in certain contexts

to communicate ideas. "These sounds are combined in systems and evolved and conventionalised and recognised by common usage at any given period in the history of the human race within a given community that they are mutually intelligible to all normal members of such a community!"(11) The map included here gives an indication of the spread of Bantu Languages in Africa. Extant Khoi languages are NAMA and KORANA.



A table of languages spoken inside South Africa and the number of speakers of the language in question gives a clearer insight into the situation. The following table is taken from D. Makhudu (1984), in which the languages spoken in South Africa are clearly indicated.

LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN SOUTH AFRICA.(12)*

Type of language	Language	No. of speakers
A. Official languages: (Germanic)	1. Afrikaans	3.421.000
	2. English	1.423.000
	Total:	4.844.000**
B. Immigrant languages: (European)	1. French	9.000
	2. German	49.000
	3. Greek	20.000
	4. Dutch	18.000
	5. Italian	19.000
	6. Portuguese	42.000
	Total:	157.000
C. Indigenous languages: (Bantu)		
a) Nguni Languages:	1. Zulu	4.026.000
	2. Xhosa	3.929.000
	3. Swazi	499.000
	4. Ndebele (S&N)	410.000***
b) Sotho Languages:	1. Tswana	1.719.000
	2. Sepedi (NS)	1.604.000
	3. Sesotho (SS)	1.453.000
c) Tsonga (Nguni-related)		737.000
d) Venda (Sotho-related)		358.000
e) Foreign (e.g. Kalanga)		318.000
	Total:	15.053.000
D. Dravidian/Indian languages:	1. Tamil	154.000
	2. Hindi	117.000
	3. Gujerati, Urdu, Telegu	116.000
	Total:	387.000

*Based on the "latest official figures to the nearest 1.000".
**This figure also includes the Coloureds, a fraction of whom use English as a first language. Bilingual speakers are 1.022.00.
***S means South, N means North; therefore: Southern Ndebele, Northern Ndebele; Northern Sotho, Southern Sotho.

Unfortunately there is no mention in Makhudu's table of the Khoisan languages in South Africa. For material on these languages we are largely dependent on the works of linguists (mostly from abroad) and anthropologists. The outstanding name in this respect is the German scholar Carl Meinhof, who became known in this field through his book, Die Sprache der Hamiten (Berlin, 1912), and Lehrbuch der Nama Sprachen (1909), which contains texts, a grammar and a bibliography. For the languages of the San the name of Dorothea Bleek is of importance. It was Bleek who distinguished three language groups, namely the Southern, the Northern and the Central groups. Her "Distribution of Bushmen languages in South Africa" appeared in the Festschrift for the linguist Carl Meinhof in 1927. Bleek's A Bushman Dictionary was published in the United States by New Haven in 1956. One of the best dictionaries by Kroenlein, Wortschatz der Khoi-Khoin, first published in 1889, was republished in 1969 in South Africa and in 1971 in Farnborough, England.

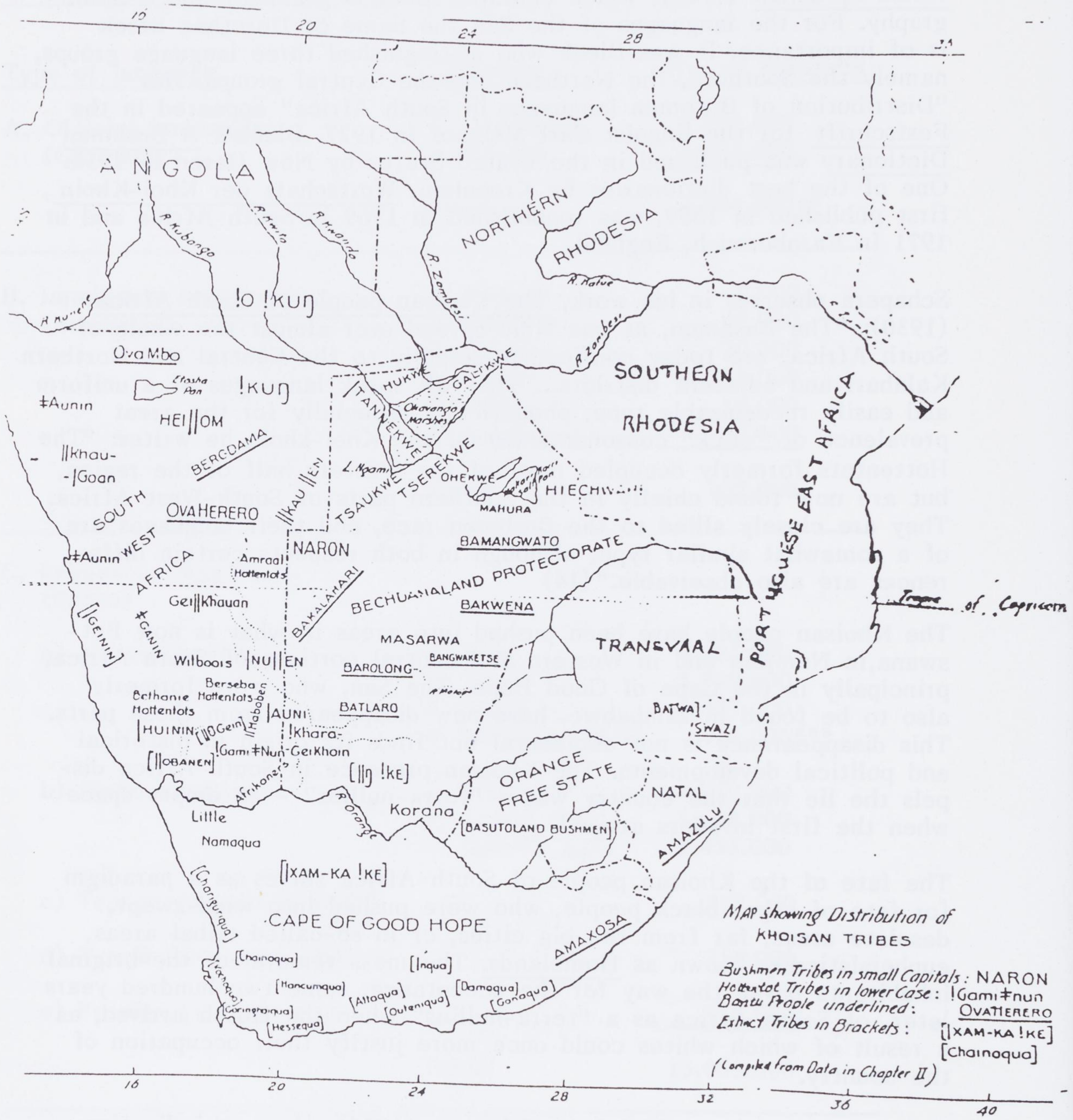
Schapera observes in his work, The Khoisan people of South Africa, (1930): "The Bushmen, at one time spread over almost the whole of South Africa, are today confined principally to the Central and Northern Kalahari and adjacent districts... They all speak languages of a uniform and easily recognizable type, phonetically especially for the great prevalence of "click" consonants!"(13) Of the Khoi-khoin he writes: "The Hottentots formerly occupied most of the Western half of the region, but are now found chiefly in the Southern parts of South-West Africa. They are closely allied to the Bushmen race, and their languages are of a somewhat similar type, although in both respects certain differences are also observable."(14)

The Khoisan people have been pushed into areas in what is now Botswana,in Namibia and in Western and central portions of South Africa, principally in the Cape of Good Hope. The San, who were formerly also to be found in Zimbabwe, have now disappeared from these parts. This disappearance is not accidental but finds its origin in historical and political developments. The Khoisan presence in South Africa dispels the lie that the country was a "terra-nullius" - an empty space - when the first invaders arrived.

The fate of the Khoisan people of South Africa serves as a paradigm for fate of other black people, who were pushed into wind-swept, desolate areas, far from the big cities, or in so-called tribal areas, euphemistically known as Homelands. The mass removal of the original inhabitants paved the way for the acceptance, some two hundred years later, of South Africa as a "terra-nullius" when the Dutch arrived, as a result of which whites could once more justify their occupation of the country.

The following map, culled from Schapera (1930), gives an indication of the distribution of the Khoisan peoples of South Africa before the whites established geographic, economic and political control over that part of the world.

MAP SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF KHOISAN (15)



MAP showing Distribution of KHOISAN TRIBES

Bushmen Tribes in small Capitals: NARON
Hottentot Tribes in lower Case: !Gami‡nun
Bantu People underlined: OVAHERERO
Extinct Tribes in Brackets: [|XAM-KA !KE] [Chainoqua]

(Compiled from Data in Chapter II)

The following examples, culled from Meinhof (1912) and Schapera (1930), are given as an illustration of some features of Khoisan languages, and, where possible, the examples are taken from Nama, one of the extant Khoisan languages.(16) Schapera notes that "... extensive use of suffixes is one of the most characteristic features in the grammatical mechanism of the Khoisan languages and the number of different suffixes as well as the variety of uses to which they are put is extremely great!"(17) In Nama, for example, sexual gender is generally dependent on the form of the suffix.

Suffixes in Nama

	Masculine	Feminine	Common
Singular:	-b	-s	-i
Substantive: KHOI	KHOIB (=Man)	KHOIS (Woman)	KHOII (Person)

The Plurals in Nama are again dependent on the sexual gender.

Plurals:	-gu	-ti	-n
Substantive: KHOI	KHOIGU (Men)	KHOITI (Women)	KHOIN (People)

The following are the Plural Suffixes for the Languages, AUEN, !KHU and HIE.

Language	Plural Suffix	Substantive (Sing.)	Plural
AUEN	si	!NUM (Stone)	!NUMSI (Stones)
!KHU	-Siŋ - ŋ	GAOX (Chief)	GAOXIŋ (Chiefs)
HIE	-re or ra	KXAM (Lion)	KXAMRE (Lions)

The exception is /XAM, the language of the "Cape Bushmen", where the plural is formed by means of reduplicating the singular.

Examples: /XAM

Substantive: KOU (Stone, Sing.) = KOUKəN (Stones, Pl.)
//GO//GO (Whirlwind, Sing.) = //GOGəN//GOGəN (Pl.)

In all Khoisan languages three classes of persons are recognized. These are:

1. The person speaking, and,
2. the person speaking to, as also
3. the thing or person spoken of.

We learn further that Nama distinguishes between persons present and persons not present or persons about whom one is speaking (i.e. in the third person).

"The notion of time in all Khoisan languages is to a very large extent expressed mainly by means of special auxilary particles, which generally precede the verbal root, except in Naron and Nama where an inverted form is found."(18)

The important Auxiliary Particles for Nama are:

Present Time: Ta:
Example: You see = Sats ta mũ
(Note that ta = ra after a vowel, e.g. I see = Tita ra mũ.)

Recent Time: expressed by GO:
Example: I have seen = Tita go mũ

Perfect: GJE, GJEGJE:
Example: I saw = Tita gje mũ or Mũ ta gje

Pluperfect: The rule is that you place hã ĩ after the Perfect form of the verb:
Example: I had seen = Tita gje mũ hã ĩ

Future Tense: Ni:
Example: I shall see = Tita ni mũ or Mũ ta ni

Future Perfect: formed by placing hã ĩ after the future tense
Example: I shall have seen = Tita ni mũ hã ĩ

Continuous Action: Here suffixes are used which are not attached to the verbal stem but to the Auxiliary Particles.

Examples:
(Imperfect) -Ro :
I used to see = Tita goro mũ

(Perfect and Pluperfect) 'Re:
I had the habit of seeing = Tita gjere mũ hã ĩ

Many words in Khoisan languages are only distinguishable according to their tone. According to Schapera there are "five significant tone levels... high level, mid level, low level, falling and rising". (19)

In Carl Meinhof's Die Sprache der Hamiten (1912) one reads: "Im Hottentotischen spielt der musikálische Ton eine grosse Rolle. Ich glaube nicht zu irren, wenn ich das darauf zurückführe, dass eine grosse Menge Sprachgut aus den Buschmannsprachen in die Hottentotische eingedrungen ist, und dass die Tonhöhenunterschiede hauptsächlich daher kommen". (20)

In this rather too cursory look at one or two features of Khoisan languages, it would be an oversight not to refer to the much-discussed Clicks, which eventually also surface in Bantu languages in Southern Africa as non-Bantu Phonemes drawn from Khoisan languages. These Clicks occupy four different positions, namely:(21)

Position:	Symbol:
DENTAL	/
ALVEOLAR	≠
PALATO-ALVEOLAR	!
LATERAL	//

The implosive consonants are a characteristic feature of South African languages. Westerman and Ward define implosive consonants as "sounds of a plosive nature i.e. made by a stop and a release, in which the air is sucked inwards instead of being expelled!"(22) The following diagrams, also in Westerman and Ward illustrate the formation of some of the most commonest clicks in Bantu Languages, namely, the Dental (fig. 42), the Palato-Alveolar (fig. 43) and the Lateral (fig. 44):(23)

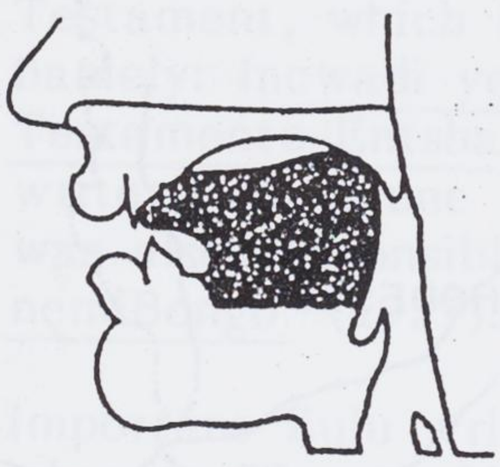


FIG. 42. Dental Click.

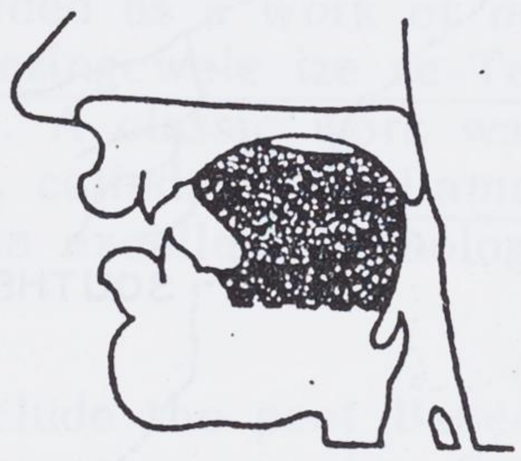


FIG. 43. Palato-alveolar Click.

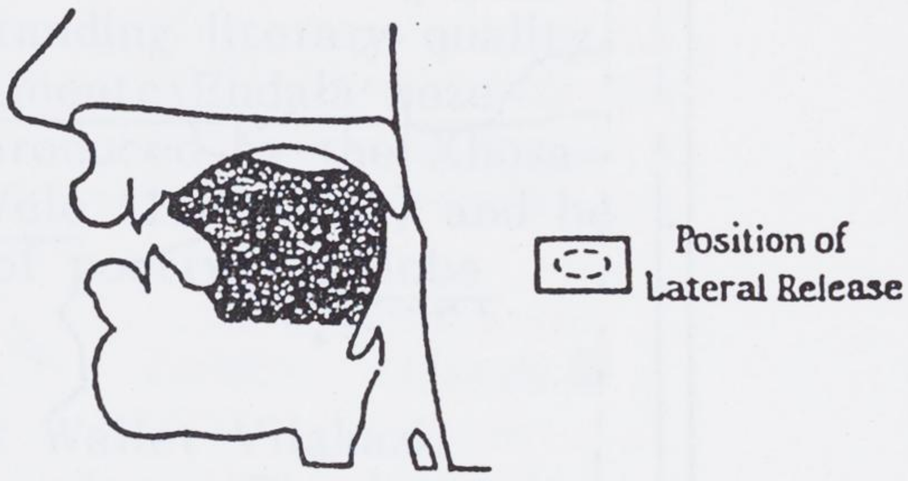


FIG. 44. Lateral Click.

The Clicks are a convenient point to make the transition to Bantu languages, for not only were they incorporated into these languages, but they also serve as a living symbol of the meeting point between Bantu-language-speaker and Khoisan-speaker in South Africa. The first Bantu language publication (24) of which we have a record is Cardoso's translation into Kongo of Jorge's Doctrina Christaa, which was printed in 1624 in Lisbon. The second book in a Bantu language was Pacconio and de Conto's Gentio de Angola (1643), which was a catechism in Mbundu or Kimbundu. Between 1650 and 1660 there were numerous works and references to works in Bantu languages. One of the early pioneers was Giacinto Brusciotto who published two books in 1650, namely his Quadrilingual Dictionary and his Christian Doctrine. He established his reputation with the publication of the first Bantu language study, the first grammar, in 1659, which was entitled: "Regulae quadem pro difficilius Congensium idiomatis faciliori captu ad grammaticae nomen redactae", translated in 1882 by H. Grattan-Guinnes as Grammar of the Congo language as spoken two hundred years ago translated from the Latin of Brusciotto.

For South Africa, the Swede Sparrmann's Vocabulary of "Caffre" in his voyage to the Cape of Good Hope... in 1776, was the first of its kind for a South African Bantu Language - in this particular case - Xhosa. Let me clear up one or two misconceptions concerning the use of the word Bantu, as used in South Africa in twentieth century political context. The word is nothing but a class two noun, being the plural form of the singular umntu, meaning a person. Bantu is therefore the word

for people. As one scholar facetiously pointed out, to the Xhosa and the Zulu, even the Afrikaners and the English are Bantu, that is, people. The word has acquired a deliberate racial connotation (often with the implication of inferiority) applied only to Black people within the socio-political context of apartheid. As I point out in Mind Your Colour (1981), the Afrikaans word Bantoevolk (lit. meaning People-Nation) is nothing else but tautological nonsense.

The following map gives an illustration of the language distribution of the Nguni- and Sotho-speakers in South Africa (Schapera 1946). Note that Bechuanaland, Basutholand and Southern Rhodesia were all still under colonial rule. They are now independent and known respectively as Botswana, Le Sotho and Zimbabwe.

In this paper I shall use as my example Xhosa, as the language I am more familiar with grammatically and otherwise. The Cape Nguni (Xhosa) are to be found in the entire Cape Province. The Nguni speak nine mutually intelligible dialects. Xhosa constitutes the literary dialect of the Cape Nguni. The language was first committed to writing in 1823 at Gwali, which used to be old Lovedale. Missionaries in particular were responsible for the spread of the language. The most important were the Presbyterians, the Anglicans and the Weslyans. The first Xhosa-speaking preachers were from the Cape Province. Primus inter Pares was Tiyo Soga (1821-1879), a product of Lovedale and who also studied in Scotland. He was the first Xhosa-speaker to be ordained as a Minister of the church in 1856. Soga translated Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress and was the author of Lizalis' Idinga Iakho Tixo We Nyaniso (Fulfil Thy Promise God of Truth). Soga also cooperated with Kropf, Bryce Ross and Rubusana to produce a translation of the New Testament, which is regarded as a work of outstanding literary quality, namely: Incwadi yezibalo ezingcwele ize ze-Testamente Endala neze-Testamente Entsha (1931). A classic work was produced by the Xhosa-writer S.E. Krune Mqhayi, called: Ityala Lama-Wele (1914/1931) and he was also responsible for an excellent anthology of poetry: ImiHobe nemiBongo (1927).

Important Zulu writers include the poet Benedict Wallet Vilakazi, whereas Thomas Mofolo towers over other Sotho writers. The latter writer is especially remembered for his book Moeti oa Bochabela (1907/1925) and for the novel Chaka (1925), withheld from the general public because the missionary press at Morija did not consider the theme and the treatment of the subject matter as being consonant with their ideas of good, clean Christian writing. Solomon Plaatje was responsible for the translation of Shakespeare's Julius Caesar into Tswana, that is Dintshontsho tsa bo Juliuse Kesara (1937).

One of the charges against African languages was that the languages were not economical, that they could not express succinctly that which the Westerner wishes to say, etc. A.C. Jordan clears up some of these misconceptions in his excellent series on language, referred to earlier. He shows how the internal structure of Xhosa is of such a nature that a single word can express what in a Western language requires several words. He uses as example the Xhosa word for sleep, which is LALA (25).

LALA (Sleep)
ULELE (He is asleep)
ELELE (He being asleep)
EZAKULALA (He being about to sleep)
WALALISWA (He was put to sleep)
ELALISIZWE (He having been put to sleep)
EZAKULALISWA (He being about to put to sleep)
MA KALALISWE (He had better be put to sleep)

"But all that this reveals", he comments, "is that Xhosa in this one respect is more economical than English". He continues with this very

telling observation: "It was a failure to grasp this principle that led some philologists to believe that in the languages of savage peoples the vocabulary averages about three hundred words!"(26) Other charges were, according to A.C. Jordan, that "in the Bantu-languages adjectives are very few and various devices have to be employed in order to make up for this deficiency".(27)

Jordan points out the great incidence of bilinguality in the areas of Herschel, Matatiele, Aliwal North and Mt. Fletcher, where Xhosa-speakers and Sotho-speakers conversed freely with one another despite the fact that these two languages are not mutualy intelligible. A similar incidence of bilinguality was to be found between Zulu- and Sotho-speakers in the areas of Bethlehem, Harrismith, Hindley and Reitz.

As in the case of Khoisan languages, certain features of Xhosa will also be identified here. The noun generally consists of a Prefix and a Stem. For example, the word for person in Xhosa = UMNTU. In the third person an article precedes the prefix:

1. An article - U.
2. = Prefix - M.
3. = Stem - NTU.

Nouns in Xhosa are divided into various classes according to their prefix and the concords related to the prefix. Examples:

Singular	Plural
(U) MNTU (person)	(A) BANTU (people)
(I) SINTU (human style)	
(U) BUNTU (human nature)	
(U) LUNTU (mankind).	

All these words belong to five different classes for, although they all share a common stem, NTU, they have different prefixes. Proper names in Xhosa do not have a prefix. Thus one simply writes Nomsa, Themba. In a sentence, any word related to any of the nouns stands in relation to that noun by means of concords, which are related to the prefix. Thus, the following sentence is expressed in Xhosa as follows:

All people want freedom = BONKE ABANTU BAFUNA INKULULEKO.

The whole of mankind wants freedom = LONKE ULUNTU LUFUNA INKULULEKO.

It follows that each noun has its own set of concords, especially since concords are related to the prefixes. Xhosa distinguishes 16 noun classes. Class 16 is, however, no longer in use and that which remains functions as adverb, for example, PHANTSI (ground-side), PHEZULU (sky-side) and PHESHEYA (further-side). Classes 12 and 13 do not exist in Xhosa. A tabulation of the noun classes in Xhosa

would reveal the following pattern:

		Article:	Prefix:	Stem:	Meaning:
Class 1	(singular):	u	m	ntu	person
Class 2	(plural):	a	ba	ntu	people
1a	(singular):	u	-	Nomsa	proper name
2a	(plural):	oo	-	Nomsa	proper name
Class 3	(singular):	u	m	thi	tree
Class 4	(plural):	i	mi	thi	trees
Class 5	(singular): The prefix Li is found before monosyllabic stems:	l	li	tye	stone
	before disyllabic and polysyllabic stems the prefix Li is silent:	i	li	haʃe	horse
Class 6	(plural):	a	ma	tye	stones
		a	ma	haʃe	horses
Class 7	(singular): Before stem starting with consonant:	i	si	fundo	lesson
	Before stem starting with vowel:	i		sonka	bread
Class 8	(plural): Before stem starting in consonant:	i	zi	fundo	lessons
	Before stem starting in vowel:		i	zandla	hands
Class 9	(singular):				
	(i)n-before	t	i	nto	thing
		d	i	ndawo	place
		z	i	nzulu	depth
		j	i	nja	dog
		k	i	nkomo	cattle
		g	i	ngubo	blanket
		c	i	ncwadi	book
		x	i	nxhanx-hosi	secretary bird
		q	i	nqawa	pipe
	(i) before	p	i	mpumlo	nose
		b	i	mbila	pot
		f	i	mfazwe	war
		v	i	mvu	fat-tailed sheep
	(i) before vowels		i	nyama	meat
	(i) before n & m		i	namba	python
	n & m		i	mini	day-time
Class 10	(plural): Before mono-syllabic stems in t, d, z, j:	i	zi	nja	dogs
	k, g, c, x, q:	i	zi	nto	things
	Before disyllabic and polysyllabic stems in	ii	-	ntombi	girls
	t, d, z:	ii	-	ngcango	doors

		Article:	Prefix:	Stem:	Meaning:
	Before monosyllabic stems in p, b, f, v:	i	zi	mpi	armies
	Before disyllabic and	i	zi	mfe	sugar canes
	polysyllabic stems	ii	-	mpuku	mice
	ending in p, b, f, v:	ii	-	mbiza	pots
Class 11	becomes ULUTHI = stick before monosyllabic stems. Before consonants starting in "a" or "e" it becomes ULWAZI UL + WAZI and before "o" it becomes ULOYIKO (LU + OYIKO)				
Class 14:		u	-	busuku	night
Class 15:	These infinitives or verbal nouns all belong to class 15.	u	-	kutya	food

In these pages I have given the Noun Class system as it is found in Xhosa. For comparitive purposes, the noun class system of Zulu and Southern Sotho, taken from Meinhof and used by Doke in his article (1946) is reprinted here. (28)

	Zulu:	Southern Sotho:
Class 1.	umu-umunto (person)	mō-mōthō
2.	aba-abantu (people)	ba-bathō
3.	umu-umuzi (village)	mō-mōtsē
4.	imi-imizi (villages)	mē-mētsē
5.	ili-, i-izinyo (tooth)	lē-lēinò
6.	ama-amazinyo (teeth)	ma menò
7.	isi-isifuba (chest)	sē sēfuba
8.	izi-izifuba (chests)	li-lifuba
9.	im-, in- into (thing)	n-nthò
10.	izim-izin-iznto (things)	lin-, li-linthò
11.	ulu-u-uthango (fence)	.....
14.	ubu-ubuhlunga (pain)	bō-bōhlōkö
15.	uku-ukudla (food)	hō-hōja

In the long form, one substitutes -ile for the final vowel of the present stem. Example: Hamba = Hambile; Sebenza (work) = Sebenzile.

In the short form one substitutes -e for the final vowel of the present stem. Example: Hamba = Hambe; Sebenza = Sebenze.

The following exceptions take place: those ending in ala with High-Low intonation and Ana: 'Al,a as in 'la,a (sleep) = 'lel,e/ 'An,a = 'En,e.

Verbs with a different intonation pattern ending in ana and ala follow the general rule. Example: v,ala (close) = v,alile; q,ala (begin) = q,alile.

The Recent Past tense is formed from the perfect of the verb stem. The -i of the suffix -ile has a high-falling intonation. Example: ndiphumi,le.

The negative is formed by substituting -anga for the final -i as in the following example: Engatheti = Engathethanga (he not speaking - he not having spoken).

The remote past has a similar formation to primary modality, except that -yo is suffixed to the verb stem. Example: ndaathetha (I spoke ... long ago). Remote past = Nd,aathethayo, with a low intonation of the subject concord, meaning I have spoken ... long ago.

Strong adjectives in Xhosa consist of an adjectival stem and a class prefix which is placed before the stem. In this case, the class prefixes are identical to the noun class prefixes. Since there are 16 noun classes in Xhosa and since the class prefixes of the strong adjectives are identical to the noun class prefixes, it follows naturally that the class prefixes of strong adjectives will vary according to the noun class to which the adjective is related.

Strong Demonstratives have three positional types in Xhosa, the first position indicating something nearer the speaker, the second something nearer the hearer than the speaker and the third, remote from both speaker and hearer. The last feature in this rather cursory look at some of the features of the Xhosa language is known as Ideophones. They have been defined by the late Dr. A.C. Jordan as half-adjectival and half-adverbial with onomatopoeic sounds.(29) Example: Uboya bekathi Bumfumfum (the hair of the cat is soft-silky); Isela Lathi Qumpu, Qumpu, Qumpu (the frog splashes in the water); Xhwegazana phek' iphapha! Xhewegazana phek' iphapha!, resembling the sound of the steam-driven train through the veld and the mountains.

With the trains rushing through the African landscapes, we finally arrive at a point where the presence of Afrikaans as a language in South Africa can not be ignored. There are several important aspects to discussing the Afrikaans language situation inside South Africa. No matter from what particular angle one looks at Afrikaans, the political issue always rears its head. For the Afrikaner, Afrikaans is historically and emotionally tied up with Afrikaner nationalism and the search for identity. The first Afrikaans language movement (1875) (30) has its origin just before the first war between the English and the Boers (1881) and the second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1901).

Understandably the aim of the Genootskap vir Regte Afrikaners (The Society for Proper Afrikaners) in 1875 was to stand for "our language, nation and our country". Black people did not feature as human beings in their early poetry and culture. They were only decoratively functional. The Afrikaner was only pre-occupied with one thing: to gain control over South Africa, culturally, politically and economically. The basis for

this was laid in their early language struggles. It is no accident that one of the leading figures in the second language movement was Dr. Malan, the first Afrikaner National Party Prime Minister in 1948. The second language movement was started in 1905 and achieved its reward in 1925 when Afrikaans was officially recognized.

Afrikaans as a potent weapon in the Afrikaner struggle for identity is a factor which cannot be ignored in Afrikaner nationalism. Another significant factor is the exploitation of Afrikaans by the Afrikaner to enforce the Ethnos concept in which South Africa is looked upon as a country consisting of many nations and different ethnic culture, which do not form a single State but a multi-national state. This ideological approach is used to justify Bantustans(31) and the Group Areas Acts in South Africa, whereby Blacks become non-citizens in the country. The policy of Christian National Education(32)paved the way for Bantu Education(33),whereby the Afrikaner was assured of a regular and cheap source of labour. Naturally, the foisting of Afrikaans on Blacks was important in this respect. One analyst of the situation observed: "Moeder-taalonderwys is masqueraded as 'mother-tongue' instruction, whereas in fact it is no more than the political enforcement of Afrikaans as medium in schools."(34) The enforcement of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in black schools was a direct cause of the revolt of the youngsters in Soweto and elsewhere in 1976. It culminated in the blunt "Asingeni" (We shall not enter) by black pupils, which in turn was answered by the regime with brutal repressive methods.

But, there is yet another facet to Afrikaans. White Afrikaners look upon their language as a pure Germanic language. Blood-mixing of the various European groups at the Cape, e.g. Dutch, German and French, was used as a linguistic determinant. Thus, Afrikaans in the eyes of Afrikaner linguists could only be a "Diets" language with Romance influences. It is therefore not so surprising that the linguist, Marius Valkhoff, who is one of the propounders of the theory that Afrikaans is a creole language, should accuse Afrikaner linguists of synchronistic purism, the tendency to "transfer their ideal of purity of the white race to their mother-tongue and its history!"(35) The debate concerning the creole nature of Afrikaans is still very much alive. The latest thesis of the South African, Dennis Makhudu, in which he deals with Flytaal, formerly referred to as Tsotsitaal as used by blacks in the country, is significantly called: Is Afrikaans a Creole Language? (1984).

February observed in his work Mind Your Colour (1981): "Historically it is an indisputable fact that the Khoi, the slaves and later the so-called 'Cape-Coloured' have all contributed to the rise of Afrikaans as a language!"(36) The earliest attempts to explain the origin of Afrikaans came from Dr. Th. Hahn in 1882 at a lecture in Cape Town, in which he clearly stated that Afrikaans was "psychologically an essentially Hottentot idiom".(37)

Research in the archives reveals many examples of Afrikaans spoken by the Khoi (referred to in books as "Hottentots-Afrikaans"):

"In 1672, for example, two colonists were threatened by a Khoi with the following words: 'Duytsman een woort calm, ons U kelum' (Lit.: If white man one word speaks we you kill). In 1710 the following sentence was reported verbally: 'Ons denkum ons altijd Baas, maar ja Zienom Duitsman meer Baas' (Lit.: We think we are always Boss, but we have seen White man more Boss)...".(38)The verbal suffix -m, -um, -om, which is no longer found in the actual language, is, according to the Leiden linguist J. Voorhoeve, "a general characteristic of Pidgin, found for example in Cameroun Pidgin English and Melanesian Pidgin English. It also formally resembles the prominal object in Dutch".(39)

Similarly, the Romance origin of the Afrikaans double negative is now rejected by some linguists and its origin is sought in Khoisan languages. The incidence of spoken Malayan-Portuguese at the Cape during the 18th century (in 1820 the Weslyans were still preaching in church in this language to the slaves) and the demographic picture of Cape Town in the 18th century throw new light on the language situation at that time. From Opgaaf lists we know that Cape Town was a male-dominated society in the 18th century. The list is as follows:

4.871 Male adults made up of 1.243 Burghers, 75 Free Black, 83 Knechten (i.e. soldiers and sailors released by the D.E.I.C. to work for Burghers) and 3.470 slaves. The opgaaf lists 1.728 adult women made up of 774 Burghers widows and 91 free Black women of whom 23 were married, 3 widowed and 856 slaves. This figure does not include the company slaves (approx. 650) and the Khoisan who found themselves within the orbit of the Company. The slaves at the Cape came from various shores of the Indian Ocean, namely Indians, Sinhalese, Mozambiquans, sometimes even Phillipinos and Thai. According to the figures in 1831 the Free population was more than double that in 1806. The number was 13.359. In the South-Western Cape there was also a definite interplay between Khoi and whites. These demographic figures serve to dispell the lie of purism which surrounds the question of the Afrikaans language.(40)

Two other aspects concerning Afrikaans would have to be mentioned here: one, the emergence of Fanakalo and the use of Flytaal (Flaaitaal). Of Fanakalo the late A.C. Jordan wrote in his series of articles: "Fanakalo (or 'Kitchen Kaffir') is confined to the Rand Mines and Durban kitchens, despised and hated by those who have to use it, never used in the 'married quarters', where the mine clerks live a relatively normal life with their families... Fanakalo basically employs Nguni words but ignoring both morphological and syntactic structure of Nguni, it transplants isolated Nguni words into an English syntactic word order. E.g. Yini wena funa? for Ufuna ni? (What do you want?), Iphi wena hamba? for Uyaphi? (Where are you going?)... In the 'twenties', an Anglican minister 'translated' the Lords prayer into Fanakalo to use among the mineworkers. His church was deserted.".(41)

To my mind, the M.A.-thesis by Dennis Makhudu (1984) is the first full-scale study by an African from South Africa to come to grips with creolization processes linguistically within the socio-political context of South Africa. His is one of several critical studies by Black South African themselves. Of Flytaal (spelt Flaaitaal by Schuring) Makhudu says: "Another variety of Afrikaans is known to have existed for some time among the putative Bantu-speaking groups... there are stable varieties of Afrikaans among the Blacks to a greater extent than has been previously supposed. In actuality, South African urban societies thrive on the constant interaction among different language groups. The most vibrant contact comes about between the Indo-European and Bantu languages".(42)Makhudu continues: "The dominance of Afrikaans as an official language has resulted in its use in the domains of school, labour market and government circles, such as post-offices and railway stations. It is not surprising, therefore, that in Black residential areas and urban townships a new form of communication has arisen. In order to survive in the urban cauldron, Bantu-speaking Blacks have created a communication system that combines Afrikaans, several Bantu languages and some English.".(43)Makhudu refers to the stigma clinging to Tsotsi taal, often looked upon as "an esoteric jargon" of an Afrikaans interlaced with Bantu and English words, and spoken by young men of a criminal bent... but that is not the whole story. Black South Africans of all the social classes use it frequently among themselves to identify themselves as city-dwellers or "the city-wise". The stigma that attaches to Tsotsi-Taal has lately disappeared and speakers nowadays prefer calling it Flytaal or FT. (44)

The writer and poet, Sipho Sepamla, demonstrated this in no uncertain terms when he read his poem, "Come Duze Baby"(45),i.e. Come Closer Baby, written in Flytaal, at the English-language festival held at Grahamstown in 1974. And, he added rather mockingly, in front of his largely English-speaking audience, that if there were people present who did not understand the language used by him in his poem, then they should perhaps seriously reflect on the extent of their South-Africanness. The basi-lect of the poem which follows is Afrikaans. G.K. Schuring (1981) comments as follows: "The poem consists of 167 orthographic words. Of these 114 are comparable with Afrikaans and 40 with English. The 40 in English also include some in slang. For the rest, it contains 13 words from South African languages spoken by Blacks, namely, ten from Zulu, two from Southern Sotho, and one from Tsonga...".(46)

COME DUZE BABY (47)

COME DUZE BABY	Translation:	COME CLOSER BABY
Hela baby!		Hi! baby!
Zwakala daarso		Listen here
Of hoe sê ek?		Or what am I saying?

Jy moet my notch	Notice me
Kyk my mooi sweetie	Look pretty sweetie
Ek is nie een van hulle	I'm not one of them
Jy ken mos	You know me mos
Die Hillbrow type.	The Hillbrow type.
Hela Sisi!	Hi! Sister!
Look sharp	Be clever
Otherwise sal jy val	Otherwise you'll fall
Met my „M"	With my „M" (mother)
Jy sal val soos 'n sak kool.	Like a bag of potatoes.
Ek wil jou weedie	I want to talk to you
Of praat jy net met situations	Or do you only talk to well-situated ones
Die manne met 'n ntanjana	The men wearing ties
Die Stetson oukies	The ones with Stetson Hats
Die Mpala-mpala outies	The okes driving Mpala-Chevvies
Wat jou rwa	who turn your head with promises
Met Manyeledi	of the wild gamespark at Manyeledi
And Mgababa	the holiday resort at Mgababa
Of hoe sê ek?	Or what am I saying?
Baby jy's 'n washout	Baby you're a washout
Hulle vang jou	They catch you
Sluit jou toe	lock you up
For Immorality	For Immorality
'Strue met my „P"	'Strue as my „P" (Father)
Jy's 'n has-been	You're a has-been.
Kyk, ek mca jou baby	Look, I love you
Ek is serious	I'm serious
My hart maak shandies	My heart is bouncing wildly
Jy ken mos.	You know mos.
Die downtown beat	The downtown beat
Van Jimmy Smith se mojo	Of Jimmy Smith's magic
Ek praat die real ding	I'm talking about the real thing
Moenie dink	Don't think
Ek wala-wala net stof	I'm just kicking up dust
Ek wil jou cover	I want to hold you
Ek wil jou smekana	I want to give you protection
Jy ken mos	You know mos
Die movie-star ding.	The movie-star thing.
Jy's my number one mbuzana	You're my number one sweetie-pie
Die neneweet	The good Lord knows
Jy's my eie ding	You're my one and only thing
Met my ma!	'Strue as my mother lives
Baby come duze!	Baby come closer!
Come duze baby!	Come closer baby!

I have made no attempt to re-create the "colour locale" of the poem. All the elements necessary for pidginization are there. The language of the dominant group - in this case Afrikaans - acts as the base. This type of language draws heavily - at least lexically - on various African languages e.g. Nguni (ZULU). To what extent it will act as a means of communication between various language-speaking communities who cannot communicate with one another in their respective languages, is as yet, hard to tell. It is certainly not the new brand of South African English as one writer not familiar with pidginization would have us believe. Flytaal can, possibly, indicate the way in which Afrikaans can survive in a post-apartheid South Africa. As such, it might already carry within it the seeds of a future language form which was once only associated with apartheid. G.K. Schuring comments: "Flaaitaal (or tsotsi language) is the slang spoken by urban Blacks... (it) was used as early as 1935 and probably earlier!"(48) In this respect the language of the people in the Cape is also an important facet of the Afrikaans language within the African context.(49) There are no indications that any of the Dravidian/Indian languages in South Africa have undergone similar changes to those undergone in, for example, Surinam, where Sarnami in the case of the descendants from India in that part of Latin America is now looked upon as a language with creolizations and of which the origin was either among the depots before shipment to Surinam or in Surinam itself.

The language question in South Africa cannot be discussed as an isolated phenomenon. The pressure of the socio-historical and political climate is visible everywhere. The South African regime has exploited the existence of various language communities in the country to find justification for their Ethnos theories of divide and rule. The language situation has been politicised to such an extent that honest research is sometimes well-nigh impossible. Everything is geared to the fallacious notion that South Africa is a white man's country and not a part of Africa. When it is seen as a part of Africa, then it usually becomes a special part, set aside from the rest of Africa.

It is not without significance that Caliban is made to say: "You taught me language and my profit on't/Is I know how to curse."(50) Perhaps the cri de coeur of the Khoi in 1710 is just as relevant in 1985 when he called out: "ONS DENKUM ONS ALTIJD BAAS/ MAAR JA ZIENOM DUITSMAN MEER BAAS" (We think we are always the Master/but we see the white man is Master more than us).(51)

In a discussion of the language question of South Africa, as indeed in the discussions of all forms of oppression in that country, it is essential to remember that a people desiring to emancipate itself must first know the bonds of its enslavement. This paper has attempted to come to grips with some of those bonds. The tendency of the dispossessed to avoid serious debates about the language question inside South Africa is largely the result of the "self-deception in

self-definition", referred to earlier. A.C. Jordan's plea in 1958, some thirty years ago, is still valid to this very day. He stated at that time:

"Then we shall hear no more of herrenvolk and mental slaves who admire and profess to appreciate Austrian folk dances, but condemn Zulu folk dances as 'tribal antics', and no more of those progressives who readily accept the myth of the Quest of the Golden Fleece but sneer at the African myth of the Quest of the Nabulele because to retell it is to 'revive tribal mythology'." (52)

For already in the streets of the South African urban ghettoes, the youngsters are re-echoing the words of one of the original inhabitants of South Africa, a Khoi, who in 1672 uttered these words: "Duytsman een woort calm, ons U kelum " (which means "White man one word speak, us you kill").(53)And ironically, the use of Ons instead of the Dutch wij can even as early as 1672 not be attributed to those who regard Afrikaans as their greatest cultural achievement - the Afrikaner - but comes to us via the Khoi.

NOTES:

1. A.C. Jordan, eminent Nguni scholar and author of the novel Ingqumbo yeminyanya (Cape, Lovedale Press, 1954). V.E. Rylate (i.e. very late) was the pseudonym of Hosea Jaffe, a prominent opponent of the apartheid regime and closely associated with the Unity Movement in the 1950's.

2. See also V.A. February, From the Arsenal (Leiden, Afrika Studiecentrum 1983), pp. 232-277.

3. Wilson Harris "The Native Phenomenon", paper delivered at conference on Commonwealth Literature, Aarhus, 1971.

4. Wilson Harris, ibid, p. 4.

5. The terms "Hottentot" and "Bushmen" are regarded as derogatory terms by the dispossessed in South Africa. The preference is for the terms KHOI and SAN respectively.

6. See G. Hooijer, De eerste schipvaart der Nederlanders naar Oost-Indië onder Cornelis de Houtman 1595-1597 door Willem Lodewycksz. In opdracht van het Koloniaal Instituut... (Amsterdam, De Bussy, 1921), p. 11.

7. G.P. Rouffaer & W.J. Ijzerman (eds.), De eerste schipvaart der Nederlanders naar Oost-Indië onder Cornelis de Houtman 1595-1597 ('s-Gravenhage, 1925), p. 7.

8. Literal translation of the Dutch sentence is: "God dammit all, Jansen, just look at these sods of brown little apes."

9. Shula Marks, "Khoisan resistance to the Dutch in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" in Journal of African History, 1972, 13,1:55-80.

10. J.L. Döhne, Zulu-Kafir Dictionary (Farnborough Hants, England, Gregg Press, 1967, originally published in 1857).

11. A.C. Jordan. In V.A. February, From the Arsenal (Leiden, 1983), p. 255. See originally "The Language Question" (1). In: The Educational Journal, vol. XIXIX, 2 September 1957.

12. Dennis Makhudu wrote a thesis on Flytaal (Flaaitaal), the language used in an urban setting by Africans. It was formerly referred to as Tsotsi-taal (with a derogatory connotation). He is to my knowledge the first African who has written an M.A.-thesis on this subject: Is Afrikaans a Creole Language? (Carbondale, Illinois, 1984). See also G.K. Schuring, "Die basilek van flaaitaal". In Tydskrif 21, 2, 1981, pp. 122-130.

13. I. Schapera, The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa (London, George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1930), p. 3.

14. I. Schapera, op. cit., 1930, p. 3.

15. I. Schapera, op. cit., 1930.

16. Carl Meinhof, Die Sprache der Hamiten, Hamburg, L. Friederichson, 1912.
I. Schapera, op. cit., 1930, see chapter on Language, pp. 419-438.

17. I. Schapera, op. cit., 1930, p. 422.

18. I. Schapera, op. cit., 1930, p. 432.

19. I. Schapera, op. cit., 1930, p. 422.

20. Carl Meinhof, op. cit., 1912, p. 16.

21. I. Schapera, op. cit., 1930, p. 421.

22. D. Westermann & I.C. Ward, Practical Phonetics for Students of African Languages, London, O.U.P., 1964[4], p. 92.

23. D. Westermann & I.C. Ward, op. cit., 1964[4], p. 99.

24. C.M. Doke, "Early Bantu Literature" in: Bantu Studies, 9,2 June 1935, Johannesburg.

25. A.C. Jordan in V.A. February, From the Arsenal (1983), p. 259. See also: A.C. Jordan, "The Language Question" (1). In The Educational Journal, vol. XXIX, nr. 2, Sept. 1957.

26. A.C. Jordan in V.A. February, op. cit., 1983, p. 259.

27. A.C. Jordan in V.A. February, op. cit., 1983, p. 260.

28. I. Schapera, op. cit., 1930, p. 320.

29. Culled from lecture notes of A.C. Jordan while his student during 1959-1960 at the University of Cape Town.

30. See V.A. February, White Minorities, Black Majorities, Leiden, Afrika Studiecentrum, 1976/1, see especially the article on the Afrikaans Language, pp. 11-23.
See also P.J. Nienaber, Mylpale in "die geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse taal en letterkunde", Johannesburg, Afrikaanse Pers, 1951).

31. Bantustans: In South African political ideology, Bantustans are those areas set aside since the 1913 Land Act, for Africans of various language groups. These areas, according to the whites, coincide with the traditional areas of settlement of the Africans in South Africa. No account is taken of the wars of dispossession in which the African lost much of his land to the whites invading his territory. Bantustans are also referred to as Homelands. According to the government, Africans can only realise their political aspirations in the Bantustans set aside for them. Inside South Africa he can only be a visitor. The large majority of urban blacks makes a mockery of this claim. The Bantustan areas are generally impoverished and totally dependent on South Africa.

32. Christian National Education: This policy was devised to provide the Christian basis for the ideology of apartheid. For a fuller account see V.A. February, Mind Your Colour, London, 1981. See especially note 6 of Chapter 6, "A Voice in the Wilderness", p. 208.

33. Bantu Education is a special system of education, designed for blacks by whites, to ensure that they have a regular labour reservoir and a docile black man. See: Bantu Education. Oppression or Opportunity, published by the pro-government group SABRA (South African Bureau of Racial Affairs), Stellenbosch, 1955. For an African voice read: I.B. Tabata, Education for Barbarism, n.d.

34. For "Moedertaal-onderwys" see: V.A. February, op. cit., 1983, p. 277. Also: The Educational Journal, Vol. XXVIII, nr. 3, Sept. 1956.

35. Marius Valkhoff, Portuguese and Creole with special reference to South Africa, Johannesburg, Witwatersrand University Press, 1966.
See also: V.A. February, op. cit., 1983, p. 22.

36. V.A. February, op. cit., 1981, p. 20.

37. For Dr. Th. Hahn see V.A. February, op. cit., 1981, p. 21. Also D.B. Bosman, Oor die ontstaan van Afrikaans, Amsterdam, 1982 (2), p. 16.

38. V.A. February, op. cit., 1981, p. 21.

39. V.A. February, op. cit., 1981, p. 22.

40. Robert Ross, "Oppression, Sexuality and Slavery at the Cape of Good Hope". In: Reflections Historique, 6, 1979, nr. 2, pp. 421-433. See also: Robert Ross, "Cape Town 1750-1850: Synthesis in Dialectic of Continents". In: Robert Ross & G. Telkamp (eds.), Colonial Cities, Dordrecht/Boston/Lancaster/ Nijhoff, 1985.

41. A.C. Jordan, in: V.A. February, op. cit., 1983, pp. 262-263. See also: "The Language Question". In: The Educational Journal, Vol. XXIX, nr. 3, Oct. 1957.

42. D. Makhudu, op. cit., 1984, p. 31.

43. D. Makhudu, op. cit., 1984, p. 32.

44. D. Makhudu, op. cit., 1984, p. 32.

45. See G.K. Schuring, "Die basilek van flaaitaal". In: Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe, 21, 2, 1981, pp. 123-124.

46. See G.K. Schuring, 1981, note 45 above, p. 124.

47. Duze = Zulu from eduze = closer
Hela! = South Sotho interjection = Hallo, Hi!
notch = slang = notice
wietie = weedie = to talk to
ntanjana = from Zulu, Intanjana = string; Rwa is derived from English "rob" or from Xhosa "rwaya"
Shandy = from English shandy (beer)
Zwakala = Zulu = Be heard, in this context: Listen here!
M = mother; P = Pa
See in this context the Sotho "kamme! Mpala-mpala = a reference to the Chevrolet-Impala model.
Manyeledi (Manyeleti) = a Tsonga word = a gamespark for Blacks near Acornhoek.
Umgababa = holiday resort for Blacks near Durban
Mca = I love you
walawala = to kick up lots of dust, to kick up a racket
mojo = magic
cover and smekana = both with the meaning of wanting to protect.
mbuzana = sweetheart
Nene = from Zulu Inene = gentleman, Sir; in Xhosa inene means the truth. Here = The Lord knows.
Come Duze Baby = not only Come closer Baby (sweetheart), but a plea to stop resisting - give in, surrender to the lover's charms.

48. See G.K. Schuring, "Die basilek van Flaaitaal", In: Tydskrif vir Geesteswetenskappe, 21, 2, 1981, p. 122.

49. See V.A. February, op. cit., 1981, pp. 89-100.

50. You taught me Language, and my profit on't is, I know how to curse. F. Kerkmode (ed.), The Arden Shakespeare: The Tempest (1954), Act. 1, scene 2, 65-6.

51. V.A. February, op. cit., 1981, p. 21.

52. See V.A. February, op. cit., 1983, p. 276. Also: A.C. Jordan, Towards an African Literature, Los Angeles, 1974 (2), first in Africa South in the 1950s.

53. V.A. February, op. cit., 1981, p. 21.

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The abundant health enjoyed by these people must undoubtedly be ascribed to the simple food on which they live — Ludwig Alberti, 1807
Picture drawn and engraved by C C Mitchell

AB HEUTE WIRD GESCHOSSEN

Sie erschießen Kinder, nicht wahr?
Die neueste Inszenierung
des antiken Kindermords.
Siehe Kapitel so-und-so,
Vers so-und-so
aus irgendeinem Testament.
L'histoire se répète.
Die Chronik des uralten "Guck-guck!"
läßt sich wie ein Märchen lesen.
Aber nie hat ein Kind mit einem Stein
eine Kugel wehren können.
Kinder werden verstümmelt, nicht wahr,
weil der Hohepriester des Stammes
die Kunde verbreiten ließ:
Jeder Stein eines schwarzen Kindes
soll auf eine Kugel stoßen.
Man schießt doch Kinder?
Im sonnigen, sonnigen Süden.

by Vernon February
translated by Thilo Schadeberg

THE MOMENTS OF 'VOORSLAG' AND 'SESTIGERS' IN OUR LITERARY HISTORY

by Ntongela Masilela

"Always historicize! ... But, as the traditional dialectic teaches us, the historicizing operation can follow two distinct paths, which only ultimately meet in the same place: the path of the object and the path of the subject, the historical origins of the things themselves and that more intangible historicity of the concepts and categories by which we attempt to understand those things."

Fredric Jameson, THE POLITICAL UNCONSCIOUS, p. 9.

Since this presentation has been requested by the Conference Organizers, especially Robert Kriger, as a statement to facilitate a discussion, rather than as an exposition defining a particular literary problematic and in relation to which develop a thorough thesis or definitive statement, it will be short and elliptical and throwing out ideas for consideration.

In many ways, to consider the literary moments of 'Voorslag' and the 'Sestigers' from the perspective of today, that is, from the perspective informed of the political certainty that the victory of the democratic forces in South Africa is just around the corner, though complicated and complex, is to consider the theoretical constructs and cultural forms in the writing of a particular era of our literary history. How can one possibly theorize the cultural processes and cultural formation of South African literary history? The structure of South African literary history in the twentieth century is characterised by disconnections, discontinuities, abrupt breaks and seemingly irreconcilable ruptures. It is not difficult to see that the political determinants of this tragic process in our cultural history are largely and wholly determined, in their form and effect, by the political philosophy and ideology of Apartheid. Unquestionably, among the many horrendous consequences of the ideology of Apartheid, one of them in the cultural sphere is the dessication and dislocation of the landscape of our literary history. Just limiting ourselves for the moment only in the literary sphere, the effects of Apartheid politics in this domain, makes it all the more historically imperative that this ideology, whose resemblance to Nazi ideology is apparent to all, ought, should and must be destroyed, and should be buried together with its carrier, capitalism. From all this, one question I pose for discussion is: Can one speak of a South African national culture or South African national literature within the context of Apartheid, or can they both only come into being in a post-revolutionary and democratic South Africa? What are the possible cultural coordinates of a unified national literature or a unified national culture? What could possibly be the political determinants of this unity?

From the perspective of today in 1987, when dusk has irreversibly descended on the Apartheid State and when the light of a democratic South Africa is dawning and shining brighter and brighter as we

approach closer and closer its centre of great illumination, it is more than apparent that the 'Voorslag' literary school, in the main, consisting of Laurens van der Post, William Plomer and Roy Campbell, has left us two undeniable and perhaps unsurpassable, interconnected legacies: in William Plomer, through Turbott Wolfe, we find a consolidation of a particular literary tradition and literary consciousness, founded by Olive Schreiner with The Story of an African Farm; in Laurens van der Post, through The Lost World of the Kalahari, we discover the first comprehensive attempt to trace the formative structure and processes of our national culture, or perhaps one should cautiously say, an attempt to theorize the ancestral forms of the national components that are necessary for the construction of a South African national culture. The importance of Roy Campbell in our literary history lies not so much in the mutative change he may have effected in South African literary relationship, as that his writings are a crucial component of the literary geography of Modernism. It is through his poetry that we can assess Africa's contribution to this century's greatest literary movement. Perhaps Roy Campbell represents Africa's first active participation in an international literary movement. But our great misfortune is that Campbell participated in the component represented by English literary Modernism, which was politically reactionary and culturally consciously anti-avant-garde. Wyndham Lewis, D.H. Lawrence, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound were leading members of this reactionary literary Modernism, which can be contrasted to the revolutionary literary Modernism of Cesar Vallejo, Pablo Neruda and Juan Marinello in Latin America, or that of Mayakovsky, Paul Eluard and Nazim Hikmet in Europe. As a consequence of Roy Campbell's participation in reactionary Modernism, that is, in its protofascistic tendencies, he was unable to make any kind of historically and critically informed evaluation, judgement and assessment of cultural politics in South Africa. Campbell's autobiography, Light on a Dark Horse, is a product of this cultural catastrophy and political disaster. His psychotic hatred of his black compatriots is utterly astonishing and profoundly depressing. Elsewhere I have indicated the magnitude of this colossal mishap.[1] Alan Paton's recent statement, in an essay commemorating the hundred-year anniversary of the publication of The Story of an African Farm (1883), that Campbell's cultural politics were insignificant, is incomprehensible, which merely indicates Paton's own limited and confused perspective on South African literary history.[2] What Fredric Jameson has said of Wyndham Lewis equally applies to Roy Campbell within our South African cultural context: "A consistent perversity made of him at one and the same time the exemplary practitioner of one of the most powerful of all modernistic styles and an aggressive ideological critic and adversary of modernism itself in all its forms."[3] To write a literary history of South Africa with such a figure as its central component is truly a fascinating, even perhaps enhancing, political and cultural challenge.

Given the remarkable cultural and literary mutations being effected in South Africa today because of the political challenges being mounted against the status quo and the Apartheid State, it is more politically

responsible for South Africans in exile to examine, even if schematic, the historical structure of our cultural politics, than to effect a form of practical criticism. The really new forms of cultural and literary production in our country can be witnessed in the recently published double-issue of TriQuarterly called, From South Africa: New Writing, Photographs and Art.[4] Hence, from the perspective of the present, a book like The Lost World of the Kalahari is much more significant than Turbott Wolfe or Campbell's Collected Poetry. The significance of the former book over the others is not immanently determinable by the form of its textuality, but rather, externally determined by the political forces mapping a new cultural space of South African literary history. Tomorrow, The Lost World of the Kalahari may exhaust its significance when the present necessities giving it paramount importance would have dialectically moved on to a different historical plane. Then, the other two qualitatively superior books, Collected Poetry and Plomer's Turbott Wolfe, would display their immanent brilliance. Paradoxically, the literary brilliance of Turbott Wolfe raises one of the fundamental issues of our literary history: that is, what accounts for the literary hegemony of the women writers in the genre of the novel, far exceeding their male counterparts in quality and productiveness, notwithstanding the recent postmodernist challenge mounted by J.M. Coetzee: why is the literary line from Olive Schreiner through Nadine Gordimer to Bessie Head more muscular, tougher and more robust than anything mounted by the literary line from William Plomer through Mphahlele and Alan Paton to André Brink: in other words, why, for all intents and purposes, are we living in a literary movement which with all justification could be called The Literary Era of Nadine Gordimer. Can this designation, of the pre-revolutionary period, survive the revolutionary storm gathering just beyond the horizon? Will the moment of the revolutionary storm be known in history as The Literary Era of Mazisi Kunene? But these are a set of questions for another occasion.

From the perspective of the cultural and literary struggles being waged back at home today, undoubtedly the book of the moment when we want to use the 'Voorslag' writers in our present political struggles, taken as a truism that political struggles and cultural struggles are inseparable and indissoluble, is Laurens van der Post's The Lost World of the Kalahari. Internationally, this book indicates a different qualitative nature of Modernism than that signalled by Roy Campbell, in that it is related to its ancestral cousin, People of the Puszta, the very great book by the equally great Hungarian poet, Gyula Illyes. This tremendous book of 1936 has many parallels with our national book of 1958. It would be culturally beneficial for our cultural history to draw the sociological and literary contrasts drawing these two exemplary books together. What do these two books respectively, reveal about the literary imagination of the South African state, state and not nation? Such a comparative contrast would reveal to us in South Africa a magnificent literary structure of the Hungarian cultural imagination in a form of a historical question: Why

does Hungary seem to have produced a consistently high quality of poetry in the twentieth century? Can the Spanish poetic tradition and the Russian poetic tradition, both of which come closest to challenging the commanding position of the Hungarian poetic tradition, - represented by figures stretching from Endre Ady through Attila Jozsef and Gyula Illyes to Sandor Wöeres - can not an understanding of these critical issues at the international level affect nationally the writing of our own literary history?

Nationally, The Lost World of the Kalahari designates a certain pattern of literary relationships which constitute among themselves the regulative principles of the literary history of the 1950s. The most fundamental among these, is that Laurens van der Post's book together with a series of essays written in the 1950s by A.C. Jordan and posthumously collected in Towards an African Literature: The Emergence of Literary Form in Xhosa (1973), unknown to each other, conceptualized and attempted to theorize a new intellectual domain in our cultural history. The convergence between these cultural and literary projects of these two writers had more to do with the necessities of our dialectical history and their Utopian aims, than the accidents of birth and skin colour which seem to have been the unifying forces of the 'Voorslag' writers' collective, though different, literary projects. With the passage of time, it may turn out that the relationship between A.C. Jordan and Laurens van der Post had been more decisive in the forging and formation of a national culture that makes it possible for the peoples of South Africa to pass through the coming firestorm and thunderstorm to the other side totally intact, than the dynamic between the author of Venture into the Interior, Roy Campbell and William Plomer.

Both A.C. Jordan and Laurens van der Post, separate from each other and unknown to each other, undertook the monumental task of, respectively, tabulating the historical forms of a particular sedimentation of our national literature and scrutinizing the structural modes of a particular formation of our national culture. Each of them, in their singularly individual ways, attempted to theorize the constitutive components of our unified national culture. A.C. Jordan examined the origins and ancestral lineages of Xhosa literature from Ntsikana to S.E.K. Mqhayi as to their central importance for our national literature. On the other hand, van der Post forcefully argued for the fundamental importance of the Khoi-Khoin and San cultures for South African national culture. Elsewhere, I have argued for the interrelatedness of these historical projects.[5] In the main, then, the great importance of the 'Voorslag' literary generation lies in their defining a hierarchical structure of our national culture.

In contrast to this literary generation of the 1920s, the literary generation of the 1960s encountered a different set of historical conundrums and cultural issues. In broad categories, it could be said that if the 'Voorslag' writers in the main concerned themselves with establishing the structural components of our national culture at the very moment when the ideology of Apartheid was emerging

and beginning to exercise its hegemony over various liberalisms (aligned with English imperialism) which previously were dominant, then the 'Sestiger' writers were preoccupied with the role of language in a national culture and the patterns of writing literary history at the very moment when Apartheid ideology was beginning to disintegrate. These cultural formulations or cultural struggles were in fact hidden forms of political struggles. In South Africa cultural struggles are in fact political struggles. What really concerned Roy Campbell, William Plomer and Laurens van der Post was a serious political problem formulated in cultural terms: namely, the retreat of English imperial and political domination of South Africa and the emergence of Afrikaner white nationalistic political interests. It was this structural trough or fault-line in the political State reverberating in the cultural spheres, which was their main concern. Collectively, Roy Campbell being the exception since he was moving towards protofascism, they utilized what they perceived to be the internationalism and universalism of liberalism in their fight against the particularism and nationalism of Apartheid. Their attempt to articulate a unified structure of our national culture was a rearguard political action, all the more noteworthy and commendable. It is not accidental that when they lost this political and cultural battle against Apartheid, they all went to self-imposed exile in England and Spain by way of Japan.

On the other hand, equally, the 'Sestiger' writers, constituted in the main by André Brink, Breyten Breytenbach and Etienne Le Roux, have been preoccupied with a central political problem couched in cultural terms: namely, how to prevent or forestall the disappearance of the Afrikaans language as the ideology of Apartheid begins to ebb and as the days of Afrikaner state control and hegemony in South Africa are numbered. Their recent cultural and literary writings is a desperate attempt to save the Afrikaans language from the collapsing mad-house of Afrikanerdom and the fascism of Aparatheid ideology. This is a noble task, since all of us South Africans want this great language to be saved and be used to democratically enrich our cultural landscape, rather than as an instrument of oppression as is presently happening in our troubled homeland. It is this desperate attempt to save the Afrikaans language which has made André Brink to write a very questionable, in fact very bad, literary history of our country in Mapmakers: Writing in a State of Siege. Though I have expressed myself elsewhere on this matter, I wish to say a few words here.[6]

The first fundamental point that should and must always be raised whenever the Sestigers literary phenomenon is at the centre of any literary and cultural discussion, is that it is a direct product and beneficiary of one of the most cruel cultural crimes ever committed in our literary history, namely the total elimination and complete excision from our cultural landscape of the Sophiatown Renaissance or the Drum writers by the repressive state apparatus of Apartheid, following the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960. This cultural genocide, in

fact, this unending haemorrhage, caused the black South African literary landscape to become a graveside. This lasted approximately sixteen years, that is, until the Soweto Rebellion of 1976 made possible the emergence of the Staffrider literary generation. The magnitude of the tragedy is all the more enormous when it is recalled and recognized that the Sophiatown Renaissance was the most brilliant literary movement of the 1950s. It is the State that eliminated the Drum writers, thereby facilitating the coming into literary hegemony of the Sestiger writers. There was never any intellectual confrontation between the two literary schools, which undoubtedly would have enriched our cultural texture in many immeasurable ways. When the Sestigers literary school came to dominance in the early 1960s, riding as they did then on the back of the Apartheid State, they were totally unconcerned that a cultural catastrophy had befallen their black compatriots, caused by the very monster they were then mounting. Why were the Sestiger writers utterly oblivious of this tragedy? One day posterity will have to provide us with the answers. For the moment, it is not surprising at all that Lewis Nkosi, in his book, Home and Exile and Other Selections, expresses utter contempt, in fact, one could say, unmitigated hatred for the Sestigers literary phenomenon. Today also, one of its then leading members Breyten Breytenbach, in one of his recent books, The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist, has violently disowned this literary school as lacking originality and intellectual depth. It is the absence of historical awareness on the part of Sestiger writers in relation to the structural form of our cultural history, especially as to their obliviousness to the cultural tragedy that had befallen their black compatriots, that has made the writing of literary history on this particular moment a difficult enterprise.

André Brink's book, Mapmakers, which is a collection of selfcongratulatory essays on the supposed genius of the Sestiger writers, has undoubtedly to be seen as one of the most disastrous books ever written on our cultural and literary history. Its catalogue of failures and misapprehensions is too vast for all of them to be enumerated in this sketch. I must register self-criticism here. In an essay written a year ago called, "The White South African Writer in our National Situation", which is to appear in the April 1988 double-issue of the recently launched journal, Matatu, I was too kindly disposed towards this book. Though I did then indicate my strong disagreements with many of its critical perspectives, on second reflection, I feel now that my criticism was not strong enough. What prevents me in the present context from making even harsher criticism is the role of André Brink early this year surrounding the Standtpunte journal. His role concerning this magazine makes clear that he has totally broken with Afrikanerdom. In this book of 1983, he mainly saw himself as a "... dissidence within Afrikanerdom..." (p. 14)[7]. In its many directionless wanderings over our cultural landscape, with its many references from Eugene Marais through Uys Krige to Breytenbach, it passes over in silence on the matter of the Sophiatown Renaissance, which should have

been a critical point of self-reference on the part of André Brink, not only because it was a literary movement preceeding his own, but also because it would have given him a much richer cultural plane from which to penetratively gaze at the genealogical structure of our own literary history.

There are many other things unacceptable and untenable in André Brink's book: among the most shocking, is the tendency to write of the history of Afrikanerdom as if it were the representative history of all the people which comprise the totality of South Africa today. Brink is capable of writing such an astonishing sentence as the following: "It took four great events during the next three and a half centuries to forge the national consciousness which today determines the concept of Afrikanerdom: ..." (p. 14). Now, this is a totally false understanding of our political history, because it is not national consciousness, but rather, white nationalism, racism, white supremacy, the ideology of Apartheid and cultural chauvinism, which determine the concept of Afrikanerdom today. Afrikanerdom can never, and I repeat can never, be a vessel of any kind of national consciousness. This is equally true of the Inkatha movement, for it is also a cultural madhouse of Zulu nationalism. Is it accidental that Inkatha and Afrikanerdom are on the brink of forging a rapprochement against the democratic forces as the revolutionary storm is approaching and gathering momentum? Only organisations like the African National Congress and the United Democratic Front can be the democratic vessels embodying the national consciousness and the national aspirations of the peoples of South Africa. Here we see again, as we saw earlier in relation to the 'Voorslag' literary generation, that cultural struggles in South Africa are fundamentally political struggles. Afrikanerdom is nothing but the cultural pillar of Apartheid, as much as the Broederbond is the ideological pillar of this neo-fascist philosophy. When the day of reckoning arrives, which is just around the corner, that is, when the total destruction of capitalism and Apartheid will be on the peoples' agenda, it will then be a vessel of national consciousness. Brink's understanding of the "four great events" in the making of the chauvinism of Afrikanerdom is historically very questionable. But time and space prevents us from articulating their questionable nature.

One could go on cataloguing a series of misapprehensions which this book generously exemplifies. For instance, there is not a single appreciation or, for that matter, confrontation with a black South African writer or a literary period and literary school of black writers. Why is this so? Just compare this erie silence, which in many ways is frightening, with the great literary and cultural essays of Nadine Gordimer theorizing the intellectual configurations of our literary and cultural history. On reading Mapmakers, one sometimes has the impression that Afrikaans literature exists in a State called Cosmopolitanism, and not our beloved South Africa, which today is undergoing a traumatic crisis. At the most, André

Brink relates Afrikaans literature to white South African English literature, and there is no mention at all, at all, of black South African literature whether written in the European languages or in the African languages. A clue to this whole cultural mess lies in a revealing sentence on page 107: "That is why most Afrikaans writers have found it impossible to write in anything but Afrikaans. English still proved too 'European', often as remote from the realities of African experience as Dutch or German, whereas wholly indigenous languages like Zulu or Xhosa lacked the European dimension which, for white writers, continued to form a vital part of their experience.". How should one understand and interpret such an astonishing sentence?

On the question of language itself, especially on the origins and gestation of the Afrikaans language, André Brink leaves much to be desired. It is interesting here to compare his position with that of Breyten Breytenbach. For Brink the Afrikaans language is the sole creation of the Afrikaner nation, and it represents its true genius. On the other hand, for Breytenbach this language is a product of a multinational creation: "Afrikaans is a Creole language. (For this contention I'll be eaten alive by Afrikaans linguists and historians)... The language, however, was born in the mouths of those - imported slaves, local populations - who had no command of no European tongue and who needed to communicate in a lingua franca among themselves; who had to be able also to understand the Master. Not for nothing was it referred to as 'kitchen Dutch' for so long. In its structural simplifications it was influenced by the language spoken by the Malays; in its vocabulary by those of Khoi-khoi and Blacks." (p. 353)[8]. André Brink, who calls Verwoerd a "great theoretician" (p. 139), one can safely assume, would find such judgement totally disagreeable. *

The difference between these two former literary siblings of the Sestigers literary school go deeper and wider than can possibly be formulated and postulated in this short sketch. Their contrastive historical appraisal of the literary moment of Sestigers is remarkable, though not surprising. Breytenbach has been unsparing in his condemnation of this literary period: "Similarly I have felt for some time now that the attention paid to the contestation of Afrikanerdom, within limits of loyalty and fealty, by the so-named Sestigers (writers of the 1960s), the self aggrandizement and the bloated self-importance of these authors, have helped entrench the reactionary forces in the country. This happened first of all because the debate around and by the Sestigers obscured the far more important political issues of the time (suppression of Black parties, impoverishment of the majority, militarization and 'securization' of the country, the start of aggressive military foreign policy), including the wiping out of a decade of Black writing which was of greater significance for the future than the 'existentialist' deviations of the youngish Afrikaners..." (p. 355). It is clear from this long quotation that Breytenbach was criticising

*(See also paper by Vernon February in this volume, ed.)

André Brink, for Brink has written: "The generation of the Sestigers broadened the base of contestation in Afrikaans literature. ...It was a movement - inasmuch as the work of a small group of such widely divergent temperaments and talents can be termed a movement - with purely literary origins, starting as a revolt against hackneyed themes and outworn structures in Afrikaans fiction." (p. 26). These two statements make it clear that the literary stars of the Sestigers phenomenon have moved in different directions to occupy conflicting positions in the African political sky.

Breyten Breytenbach has moved deeper into the black political sky. In fact, his book, The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist, together with Ngugi wa Thiongo's Detained and Wole Soyinka's The Man Died, have founded a new African literary genre: namely a new form of prison literature. Elsewhere I have attempted to sketch the historical and political relationships which constitute the unity of these three books.[9] Probably what makes Breytenbach's book very controversial is its unrelenting criticism and attack on the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party. For us, who are members of the former organization, there is nothing scandalous about this assault, for our developing revolution is a democratic process open to all forums of discussions, especially when initiated by its sons and daughters. Though I have indicated elsewhere that these criticisms are on the whole historically unfounded, they nonetheless constitute a salutary warning. It is not accidental that these criticisms were launched from Paris, which today is the capital of intellectual reaction. It was here that in 1977 Marxism was defeated and expelled from the intellectual forums of French culture by the combined forces of structuralism and post-structuralism. It is here also that post-modernism has found philosophical justification at the hands of Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard. This defeat of historical materialism has had profound effects on French intellectuals as well as on émigré intellectuals, like Breyten Breytenbach, who are resident in Paris. This defeat facilitated the emergence of anarchism in French intellectual circles: the late Jean-Paul Sartre abandoned post-structuralism for anarchism, and our own Breyten Breytenbach abandoned the socialism of liberterian provinence for full-blown anarchism. In many ways, his criticism reflects the crisis of French intellectual culture. But, it does not follow therefore, that we should minimize the importance of his reservations about the ways in which our political destiny is being pursued. It only means that it should be mediated through the circumstance of its geographical location and intellectual affiliations. The present position of Breyten Breytenbach confirms what this sketch has sought to indicate, that unavoidably and inevitably cultural struggles in South Africa are invariably and simultaneously political struggles. The cultural arch of our intellectual history from the liberalism of Laurens van der Post to the anarchism of Breyten Breytenbach is profoundly dialectical with the presentness of its context.

"We are not the driftwood of distant oceans.
Our kinsmen are a thousand centuries old.
Only a few nations begat a civilization
Not of gold, not of things, but of people."

Mazisi Kunene, "A Note to All Surviving Africans".

Presented Saturday December 12, 1987 in Bad Boll:
Second Conference on South African Literature

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Upon Seeing You In The Dark

by Farouk Asvat

Hearts open
Like purple four o'clocks at dusk:
Wind upon the sail
Atlas for the floundering ship

Illusions, mirrors of youth,
Lie shattered on the floor:
But your voice picks up the wind
Sings through bamboo reeds
Through horn of the antelope

Like me
You gathered the sorrows of our people:
Tenderness has forged a sigh into my laughter
There are gifts in your gentleness
And still you come
Eternally like the wave

Dancing rainbow of butterflies halo your black crown.
I see you in the dark light of the room
Sensitive theatre of the lips
Happy like the khaki grass
Dancing in the highveld wind
Dressed in a splash of pink petals.
Oh the warmth of the abdomen
The ice of the Karoo night:
In my naked land
You are the protea:
Beauty, and terror in losing you

Child full of laughter
Natural as the water and the stars
Come with me
Lead me
So that I will regret
Forgetting your caress,
Or just a kiss.

I grow tired,
Venturing to no purpose.
Here in the wilderness of this war
You are the heir
To the songs of my heart
Oh sad and beautiful one
Natural as the wind

These Dusty Years

by Farouk Asvat

We burn ourselves
In dancing effigies
Of our own desires
In the shadow of a soldier
Around ululating carousels
Where rusted braziers burn
Into cold ashen streets
Where the smell of white smoke
And bluegums burning
Mingle with the grotesque dance
Of ebony children
Burning
In the embrace
Of writhing skeletons:

In a celebration of yellow carnations
And red flames
We devour souls
In one cold swoop
Of determined rhetoric
As we live on dreams
Poltergeists
In the guise of revolutionaries:

From Tigani to Thekwini the lands are dry.
And the rain is in my heart.
The rain is in my heart:
Pienaarsrivier is an undulating snake, crack-skinned,
Where the highveld grass is aflame with dryness;
In Khuma a bullet riddled corpse
Lies in a broken, bullet ridden coffin;
In Zinyoka Biko walks amongst the hungry,
And Alexandra smells of fresh shit,
Sewerage flowing between the toes of children;
In Matlosana mohair veld sways in the breeze
Amidst the burning matchbox houses of Joubertina;
While Gauteng spits its bloody lungs out,
Crossroads celebrates its charred skeletons
Of burning shacks and broken hovels;
In Mgungundlovu poverty stalks
Like a hungry lion seeking children for heaven,
Even as Mandela paces in his sickly cell.
For here death is a constant song:
We have learnt that.
There is no patience
In our patience

Life attacks
Like teargas
As if batons are stopped
By crunched skulls
As if you didn't know
Death sleeps here
Creeping up like a reality of ghosts

Here, amidst this pilgrimage and exile
This promise of the fair
The foulest stench of sewers
This taste of blood and teargas
This muscle and air of my body
This city promising gold
Smelling of tshwala

Here there are no afternoon rains
To cool the mind,
Heatwaves of desire
And shattered dreams of hope
Spiral up from the steaming tarmac
As pedestrians emerge from shops
Like whores after a raid
Weighed down by life:

For our lives are precarious,
And precariously
We hold on
To so many lives,
Shattered,
Poised between laughter and death
The tension of living
And dying within,
Exiles on the periphery of death

Learning
With hardened sensitivities
That there's always
Another side to a story
That friends,
Like laughter,
Come knocking,
Like death,
On your skull
In a carousel of dreams
In a celebration of slogans

The rain is in my heart.
The rain is in my heart.

The Death Of Steve

by Farouk Asvat

This yearning for life
Is like death, my love:
The death of Steve
Who brought a shift in our consciousness
Whose hovering face
Still haunts our waking memories.

But your death is the last anger.
We'll stand no more like Christ
Our backs to the wall
Crucified by a bullet
Through the head.

We'll speak in silence
Slither in subterranean streams
Announce ourselves unannounced
In whispers that explode
Into silence

Nirvana Park

by Farouk Asvat

Azaan calls five times a day
Turtle doves coor-coor on the roofs
And you can hear the crunch
Of a hand crushed by a shoe.
White mansions serene in the sun
Ooze sweat from their pores
And mielies grow stealthily in the backyard
While tears drop like dew without pain,
And the trees over the front lawn
Drip blood like blossoms
Falling in the night

Effigies are falling

by Oswald M. Mtshali

Over three centuries have passed in our land,
leaving feeble strings of our history
to hold the decaying effigies of our past.

Storms have come and abated,
only the fern leaves have not lost their sharpness;
they still stab the sky
to draw tears from the clouds
which fall as rain
that washes the dust from our feet.

Every other tree has shed its green emulsion,
every stem has grown thinner at the girth,
every branch lies shrivelled with palsy,
the leaves have lapsed into dormancy.

Who hung those effigies there?

Let him take them down
before the thunderstorm blows them into shreds;
let him set them on fire,
they frighten us no more;
they have ridden their tandem of terror into ignominy,
they have become a scarecrow
on which birds build their nests.

Effigies are in flight!

Who set up that scaffold in 1652?
Its noose has wrung so many necks,
but, lo, the victims have become scarce;
it stands there loose, limpid and forlorn.

Even the executioner has fallen into a drunken stupor;
his nerves are torn into ribbons,
his black gown is gilded with faeces,
his gloves are more gory
than a vulture's beak,
his guillotine lies there broken and blunt.

What effigies am I talking about?

Ask the man in the madhouse;
I heard him laughing aloud,
I heard him telling the sun,
'Don't show your pretty face to-morrow,
it will be spattered with blood
when I cut the throats
of those who have driven me mad.'

The sun agreed with a smile,
the lunatic regained his sanity,
and the whirlwind from the North
swept across the plains,
to restore freedom in our land.

drawing by Lionel Davis

MEDITATION **by Reverend Wolfgang Schäfer**

on
"An Old Man in Church" (poem by Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali)

Religion is a very dangerous thing
I say a 'thing' provisionally
because it's many things:
it is a substitute for man's degenerated instincts
it's a substitute for a world lost
it's a substitute for freedom and scope
taken away, left frustrated and marginalized
it's a substitute for community,
for love, for sexuality, for dignity
it can be deprivation of a man's and a woman's
right to eat, to be housed, to enjoy
the fruits of their labour
it withdraws the child's right
to have faith and make mistakes
the young's right to sin and learn.
religion is a very dangerous thing.
it can be alienation from reality
falsification of history and beauty
it can be misused to recharge the batteries
for endless exploitation.

I quote:
4 They make up heavy packs
and pile them on men's shoulders,
but will not raise a finger
to lift the load themselves.

13 You shut the door of the kingdom
in men's faces
you do not enter yourselves
and when others are entering
you stop them.

23 You pay tithes of mint and dill and cummin,
but you have overlooked the weightier
demands of the Law,
justice, mercy and good faith,
you strain off a midge,
yet gulp down a camel.

37 You, city, that murders the prophets
and stones the messengers sent to you!
How often have I longed to gather your children,
as gathers a hen
her brood under her wings
but you would not let me.

Poem by Jesus, year 35, Jerusalem (Mt 23)

Religion is a very dangerous thing indeed -
Religion can also be a life-securing force
it can liberate and take man and woman
for beyond the constraint of instinct and compulsion
it can challenge to create a world
out of the world,
it can make flesh seeing and hearing
speaking and making a choice
yes and no, perhaps and sure.
It can build a bridge between you and me
it can make work and be
it can give the right to go and stay
it can create a community.

Quote:
He has sent me to announce good news to the poor
to proclaim release for prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind
to let the broken victims go free
to proclaim the year of favour.

Jesus, Luke 4

Mbuyiseni Mtshali's poem has got three stanzas: the middle more extended part shows the old man in his honest devotion which allows the man to hit his God's heart with screams as hard as stones. The first and third describe the physical and spiritual exploitation by the two self-appointed false Gods, the capitalist and the priest. The last phrase and quote: "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the truth" is meant by the poet to denounce the priest and to indicate the "may be" and the "must be" of a last victory of the old man.

Religion is a very dangerous thing indeed. And religion can be a liberating humanising force, its faculties are analysis, legitimation and the self-sacrifice.

The New Testament story shows a pattern of a life which excludes the fraud of the priest and the misuse of the message for exploitation. Nobody has greater love ... For two thousand years politicians, capitalists and priests have tried to use it for legitimation of their exploitation and accumulation. But - this pattern of life proves to disrupt these ventures again and again.

The poet is a prophet. He disrupts the fraud and accuses the actors. He also promises and pledges by implication and indication that he will give his energy and ultimately his life - to make true what the old man in the church believes. Therefore the poet means it when he says: Blessed are the meek - all these old good people made believe in a fraud - because they shall inherit the earth - I have made it my business.

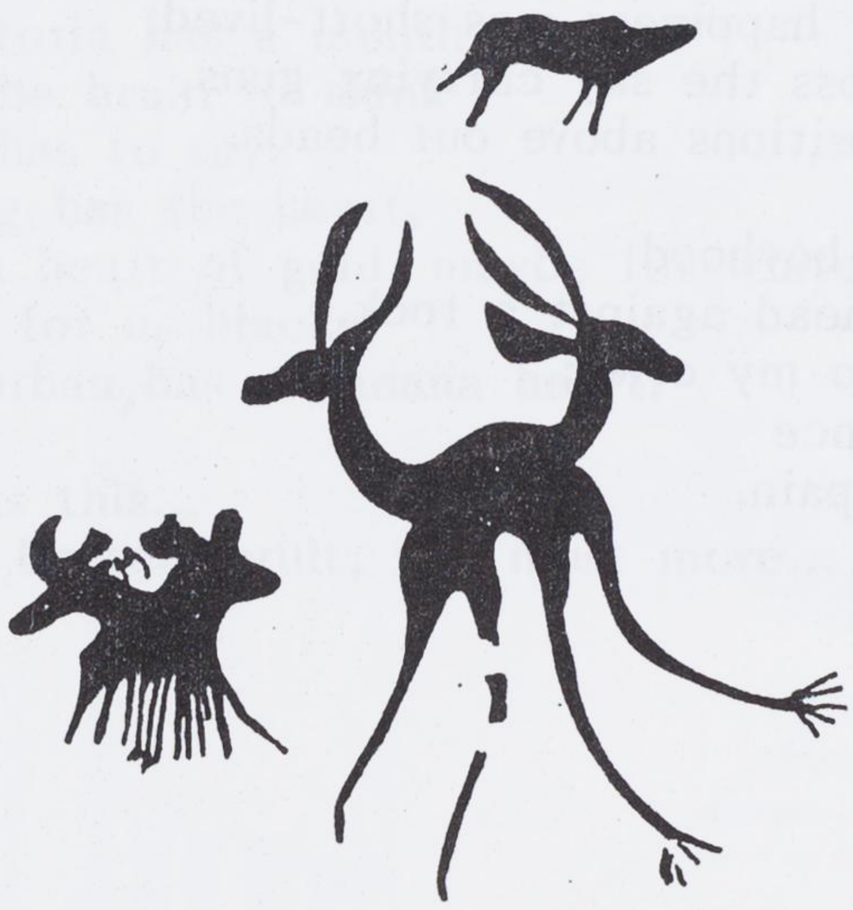
Structurally identical with religion, writing and poetry is a very dangerous thing indeed - and it can be the very liberating and humanising force.

AN OLD MAN IN CHURCH

I know an old man
who during the week is a machine working at full throttle:
productivity would stall,
spoil the master's high profit estimate,
if on Sunday he did not go to church
to recharge his spiritual batteries.

He never says his prayer in a velvet-cushioned pew -
it would only be a whisper on God's ear.
He falls on raw knees
that smudge the bare floor with his piety.
He hits God's heart with screams as hard as stones
flung from the slingshot of his soul.
He takes the gilded communion plate with gnarled hands,
he lowers his eyes into the deep pond of serenity,
his brow rippling with devotion,
his ears enraptured by rustling silk vestments of the priest.
He drinks the Lord's blood from a golden chalice
with cracked lips thirsty for peace.

The acolyte comes around with a brass-coated collection plate
the old man sneaks in a cent piece
that raises a scowl on the collector's face
whose puckered nose sneezes at such poor generosity
instead of inhaling the aromatic incense smoke.
Then the preacher stands up in the pulpit,
his voice fiery with holy fervour:
'Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.'



The removal of our village - Kwa-Bhanya by Oswald M. Mtshali

Oh, I remember you,
my tiny little village of Kwa-Bhanya
where my umbilical cord was cut with a reed knife;
where I yelled a scream of horror at being brought into this world,
where I inhaled the herbs burnt to banish the evil spirits,
that choked every infant born to the black mothers,
where my forefathers and my parents were masters of their lives,
and owners of their plots,
where they lived without paying any rent to mlungu,
where we tilled the ground,
harvested a bountiful crop,
fresh mielie corn, large pumpkins
which we squashed into pulp
to make pumpkin broth and melon porridge;
and ate juicy calabashes, luscious peaches, plums and pears.

Mlungu came from the town of Vryheid (Freedom)
to deprive us of our liberty by his endless decrees
and pompous proclamations,
'All Bantu people of this slum and black spot must move.'

We went on milking our cows,
Heleyisi and Batata.
I drank milk straight from the cow's udder
by squeezing the teats into my mouth;
we ladled rich cream in our claypots
and mixed the sour milk
together with fresh corn bread;
we stuffed ourselves full like piglets.

It was a blissful life.

It was an existence we savoured more than
Christians hanker for their Jesu and Heaven in the clouds;
we had our feet in the soil of our ancestors,
and we salted the soil with our tears during the drought,
and watered the crops with our sweat.

Alas, the sunshine of our happiness was short-lived;
dark clouds marched across the sky carrying guns,
and took up menacing positions above our heads.

And when I think of my boyhood
I feel I am bashing my head against a rock.
The rock is stone deaf to my cries;
I wish I could pinch it once
and make it wince with pain.

I see myself in short pants and khaki shirt,
running a race with my shadow,
trying to catch the tail of Gugu, our fluffy cat;
and then collide with my many friends -
Sikobho, Fabiyana, Thami, Jimisoni;
they are all dead now.
I will follow them
when crabs and frogs have grown horns.

I feel a million arrows pass through my heart,
my eyes turn into a stream of salty water,
I page through the flimsy salinity,
I see the broken graves of my grandfather and grandmother.

I hear their voices calling,
'Buya, light the lantern,
the stars are hidden in the sea cave,
the rain has gone to fetch them,
the sea is sorry it lashed the earth with thunderclaps.'

I grope in the dark in the feeble light of my lantern,
the grave is ablaze,
the tombstones are smiling ghosts,
they are singing to me a valedictory hymn!
'Hhayi usizi lomunti omnyama e-Afrika...
O, the black man's sorrow in Africa.'

I know the time is near,
Mlungu is coming to our village,
Kwa-Bhanya will soon be dead;
the voices from the ghostly graves are warning me
to tell the villagers;
I dare not.

Then it was morning again,
as all mornings come in the morning
never at noon nor in the evening nor at night.

The morning brings the word from Pretoria,
as words come from Pretoria,
because only Pretoria has a mouth;
Cape Town has the brain to think
what the mouth has to say.
Only Johannesburg has the heart;
they say it has a heart of gold, maybe for whites,
and a clay heart for us blacks,
and of course Durban has a banana heart.

And the word was this...
'Bantu people of Bestersspruit, you must move... Julle moet trek.'

Villagers gathered in clusters,
they called meeting after meeting,
and decided in unison to defy the word from Pretoria;
'Mlungu is mad, his head is full of shit, asihambi.'

Then it was Monday morning,
as Monday mornings are ominous everywhere,
when army trucks trundled to a stop,
raising an acrid dust and petrol fumes
that filled our eyes with tears
and our mouths with unvomited puke.

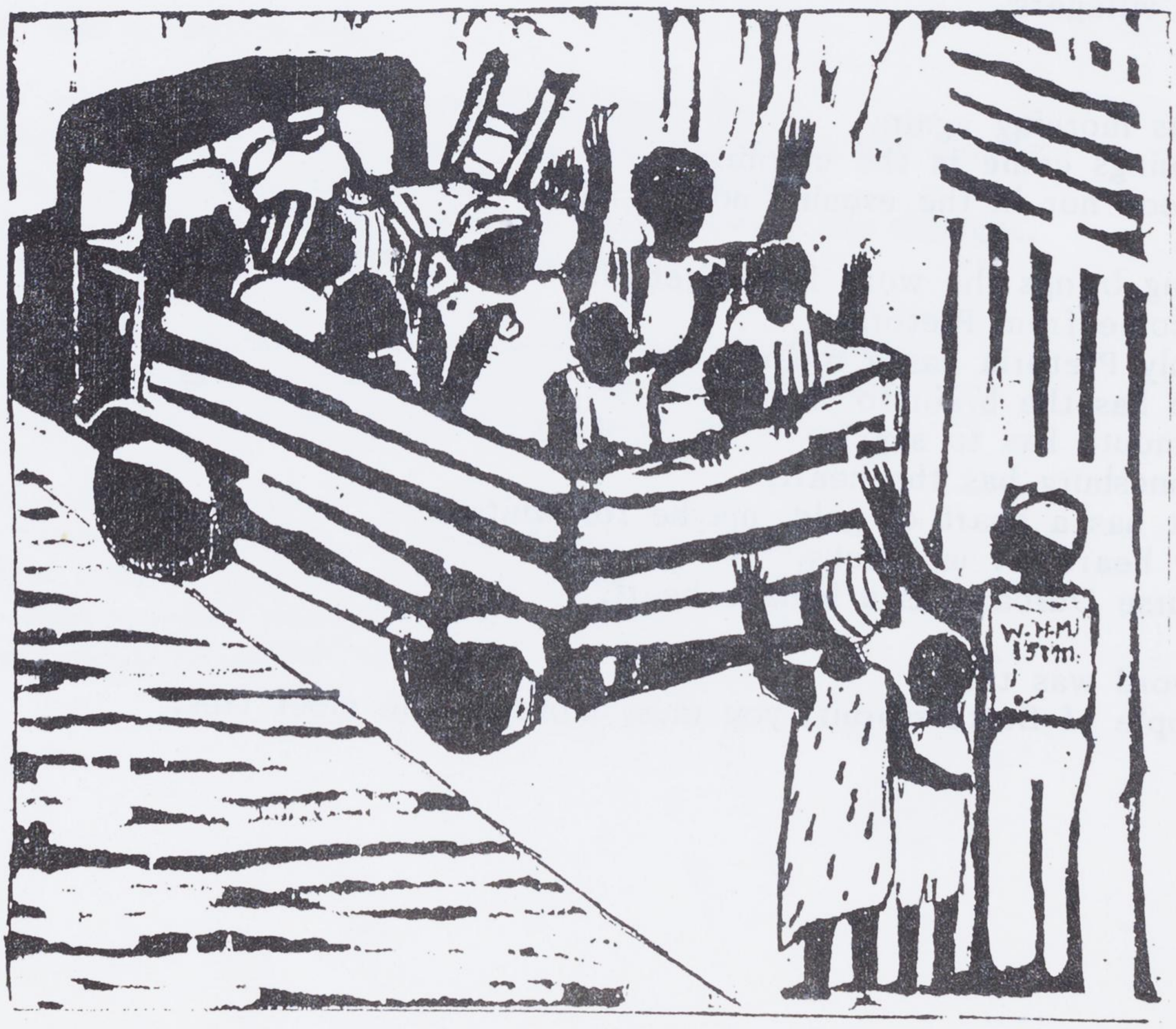
Police in battle dress jumped out from the trucks,
they were armed to the teeth,
and as grim-faced as the white man
who hangs people in Pretoria.

'We told you to move... so trek nou.'

We pleaded for an extension of time.

We wanted to harvest our crop,
we wanted to transfer our children to other schools,
we waited for the return of our husbands
and sons from the mines in Johannesburg.

We were taken by force
and put in row upon row of tents,
like prisoners of war in a camp,
while bulldozers razed our houses to the ground.



MEDITATION by Robert Kriger
"...and the lion shall eat straw like the ox"

Good morning, friends. We would like to start with our meditation, although I know it's an ungodly hour to begin the day at nine o'clock, especially if you have had a very very early morning.

I have entitled the meditation for this morning: "And the lion shall eat straw like the ox." Some of you may know this saying or perhaps the more commonly known one: "And the wolf shall lie down with the lamb." I wish to read a section from the book of Isaiah 65, verses 17 to 25. And for those of you who have certainly forgotten these words I shall just like to refresh your memories:

> For now I create new heavens and a new earth, and the past will not be remembered, and will come no more to men's minds. Be glad and rejoice for ever and ever for what I am creating, because I now create Jerusalem "Joy" and her people "Gladness". I shall rejoice over Jerusalem and exult in my people. No more will the sound of weeping or the sound of cries be heard in her; in her, no more will be found the infant living a few days only, or the old man not living to the end of his days. To die at the age of a hundred will be dying young; not to live to be a hundred will be the sign of a curse. They will build houses and inhabit them, plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They will not build for others to live in, or plant so that others can eat. For my people shall live as long as trees, and my chosen ones wear out what their hands have made. They will not toil in vain or beget children to their own ruin, for they will be a race blessed by Yahweh, and their children with them. Long before they call I shall answer; before they stop speaking I shall have heard. The wolf and the young lamb will feed together, the lion eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent's food. They will do no hurt, no harm on all my holy mountain, says Yahweh.

These words spoken by the prophet Isaiah are reiterated by various other prophets, both in the Old and New Testaments. There is, for instance, Daniel, or Ezra, or Solomon, or, probably known to most of you, John of Patmos who wrote the Revelations, or Apocalypse. Very often, when listening to these words of vision or of wisdom, we tend to reject it. I remember that as a youngster, brought up in a more or less Lutheran tradition, we were always consoled with the words of the Openbaringe, of the Revelation, of something beyond this world which we would receive. I am sure that many of us today still foster these misconceptions that Isaiah or John of Patmos attempted to pacify those listening to these words.

But then, theologians and literary scholars have something in common: both practise the trade of tearing apart words, of exegesis, of interpretation. Whereas the theologian refers to hermeneutics and exegesis,

the literary scholar speaks of text analysis, criticism and interpretation. The use of these "tools" has taught us something about these writings of vision, these writings of apocalypse. Using these tools, we have discovered that the words speak within a very concrete situation. If we look at the Book of Revelations, or, more particularly here, at the words of Isaiah, one discovers that this is not a vision beyond this earth, but it is a vision rooted in the realities of this world in which we live. As highly symbolic or "unwordly" the language may seem, it was certainly pregnant with political meaning to the audiences of either Isaiah or John of Patmos. When John of Patmos, for instance, addresses his audience and mentions the serpent's and the dragon's teeth or the fire and flames, he is not referring to some imaginary animal which may appear should one commit sin. When John of Patmos reprimands, he reprimands not his audience, but encourages them to overcome the sin of the serpent, the beast. And that is, in most cases: tyranny, the tyrant, the despot.

The dictator was well known, both in the Old and in the New Testament. The dictator was the unjust king. The tyrant was the one who extorted enormous taxes, who enslaved people for his own wealth. The despot was the man who sat in far off Rome and decreed laws affecting millions of people and causing untold suffering. Central to the words of Isaiah, and central to the words of John of Patmos, is the invocation that out of the suffering and beyond the tyranny there lies a particular hope, a palpable hope for the people. Now we could go into greater detail, but I'll spare you that, for instance about the war between good and evil, or between God and satan. For, John believes, as does Isaiah, that if satan, and that can be anybody immersed in evil, in injustice, in "Unfrieden", as the German say; anybody who creates disharmony amongst men and women, is the embodiment of satan and has to be fought.

Throughout these visionary writings, these writings of Revelation, of Apocalypse, we discover something which can not be termed soothing, but something which we can claim to be a vision of that which is possible. But before we get to that, the prophets as well as John of Patmos remind us that before we can realize this vision, we have to be acquainted with the present. For only out of the present and the knowledge of the present can we realize our vision, can we utter our vision.

Last year, the evangelicals in South Africa published a critique of their theology and ecclesiastical practice. It's called the "Evangelical Witness in South Africa". For those of us who don't know what an evangelical is: The evangelicals constitute people within the Christian Churches who are charismatic, who believe in personal salvation, that only through rebaptism can one be saved and taken up into the Kingdom of God. These charismatics, these evangelicals very often are domesticated by the powers - i.e. the state. As in South Africa, so too in many countries of Latin America. In South Africa, we have

a number of Evangelical Churches which have, or rather some of them have recognized that their theology and their practices were conducive to oppression in South Africa, that it lent itself to oppression, that the theology preached, opened the hearts of the believers to accept Apartheid, so to speak. And now they looked at themselves, in the light of the emergency in South Africa, in the light of the crisis in the society, in the light of the deaths on the streets. They said: "We must sit down and look at our situation." And they have put down in words a few things which I think we should listen to, because it's most unusual coming from their quarters. They write, for instance, in the first chapter on the crisis:

> "We wish to confess that the people who regard themselves as evangelicals across all the Churches in South Africa condemn and campaign against all efforts to change the racist apartheid system in South Africa. They condemn and campaign against organisations (ecclesiastical and secular) which engage either in relief (aid) ministries to victims of apartheid or direct programmes to remove the apartheid regime.
>
> Besides the crisis in the country, Black Christians (especially those who are evangelicals) in the townships are facing a crisis of faith. This crisis of faith is caused by the contradictions they have to live with on a daily basis as they try to live their faith in this crisis situation. This crisis of faith is caused by the dilemma of being oppressed and exploited by people who claim to be christians, especially those who claim to be 'born-again'. It is a dilemma of being detained by these people, tortured and even killed by them in the name of 'Law and Order' or in the name of combatting 'communism'.
>
> This crisis is worsened by the support of the apartheid regime by most of the evangelical churches and groups which oppose any resistance against the apartheid regime reverting all the time to Romans 13, or the concepts of reconciliation, love, humility, peace, non-violence and heavenly concerns rather than earthly concerns. The dilemma of the young people we have to minister to in the townships is further worsened by the fact that the whole christian family, the so-called Christian West, support these positions." (Evang. Witness, 1986, pp. 4-5)

They then proceed in making an analysis of the situation in South Africa, the situation of crisis which you know of. They have recognized that their dilemma is all-embracing. It goes to the roots of their beliefs. But, as the audiences which listened to John of Patmos or to Isaiah, they cling to something which is part of their existence, namely their belief in a God of justice and a God of peace. And so, they embark on the road of search, as John of Patmos embarked on this road, as Isaiah embarked on this road, to be revealed or to receive the revelation, the vision, the Apocalypse, of that which may

sound unearthly, but is very real indeed, namely: hope within the crisis, the vision of hope within this crisis.

As I said, they had to analyze the situation, they had to come to terms with the realities, the brutalities in the streets, and within their homes, or, within their personal lives. The present General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, Frank Chikane, himself a member of the evangelical movement, was in this hall about nine months ago. He told a story, an experience, of how, during his last detention, he was tortured by one of the (white) elders of his Church, someone who also claimed to be born again - a member of God's chosen few. And yet, without any scruples, there he was, driving out Frank's devils in his evil ways. It is a crisis for both black and white Christians in South Africa; but there is a divide. And yet, Frank and others like him have not given up a belief, a strong belief in a vision that justice shall reign and that peace shall live amongst the people of South Africa. And that is which is their driving force. For, behind all this there is a revaluation of theology, as mentioned above. This contextual theology derides the "pie-in-the-sky" delusions of Western theology and places the Kingdom of God in our midst. In a paper on "Incarnation in the lives of the people in Southern Africa" (ICT News, 3,1/1985), Chikane has the following to say in this regard:

> "Incarnation has to do with identifying with humanity. It means identifying with humanity's weakness, suffering and pain. It means identifying with the struggles of the people. That God was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, God amongst the people, God with the people, this defies and denies everything in this world's value system.

The problem today is that Jesus is spoken about in terms and values that are totally alien to him. As Nolan has said, Jesus is associated with Kings and Lords, with the Powerful and 'important' people in society. This must be Jesus the collaborator. This is an image of Jesus created by the powerful of society as a religious justification for their evil and unjust systems.

If we understand incarnation in terms of the life and attitudes of the historical Jesus then it must be clear that incarnation means making a preferential option for the victims of society and against the victimizer. Did not the historical Jesus choose to identify and live with the poor, the blind, the sick and the hungry, thus deliberately associating with a particular class of people in that society? Did not the historical Jesus refuse to be made a king? Did he not rebuke the Pharisees, the chief Priests and the Scribes? Did he not say to the rich, 'it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God (Mark 10, 25)'. Did he not

die the death of a criminal after being sentenced for high treason in the hands of the Church leadership and political rulers?

There is therefore no question of neutrality in the face of evil and injustices. In the light of the new understanding of the incarnate life of our Lord we are called to abandon the old ideas of neutrality, unity and reconciliation. We must understand that neutrality in the face of gross injustices, in the face of the oppression, domination and exploitation of millions of people, in the face of the violation of human life and integrity, is tantamount to collaboration with the forces of evil.

We must begin to understand that there is no possibility of unity or reconciliation between the oppressed and the oppressor, the exploiter and the exploited, between good and evil, God and the Devil. To have unity and reconciliation there must be repentance and commitment to the truth. In the incarnation, we are called to abandon the old theology of reconciliation. Bonino says that 'the ideological appropriation of the Christian doctrine of reconciliation by the liberal capitalist system in order to conceal the brutal fact of class and imperialist exploitation and conflict is one - if not the - major heresy of our time' (Bonino 1975, p. 65). We must realize that there can be no peace without removing injustice. One cannot have peace in South Africa whilst apartheid is alive and well.

> It must be made clear that in a world where there is a struggle between evil and good, between righteousness and unrighteousness, between justice and injustice there is no possibility of a neutral theology. The Western theology that was presented to us as a neutral and universal theology has since been exposed to be actually a theology of the liberal capitalist ideology. It is a theology of oppression, exploitation and domination."

His words are reiterated in the Evangelical Witness document, albeit somewhat more concretely, in continuing their analysis. They speak of the motives which some people use or claim to have while preaching the gospel:

> "Although we are committed to preaching the gospel to extend the Kingdom of God, we are concerned about the motives of many groups for undertaking evangelistic missions. Many evangelical churches and evangelistic groups, especially those organized by whites (here or in the USA) preach the gospel to blacks to make them submissive to the oppressive apartheid system of South Africa. Some preach to blacks to make sure they do not steal from their bosses whilst they are responsible for underpaying them. In some cases, bosses preach the gospel or invite evangelists to preach the gospel to their black workers

> (employees) to make sure that they do not demand their rights as workers particularly as regards just pay. They preach to make workers feel that it is sin to complain about unequal pay for equal work between whites and blacks." (E.W., pp. 30-1)

The recognition is there: the analysis of tyranny, be it in Palestine 95 A.D., or be it in Judah 740 B.C., or be it in South Africa, in Chile, or in Guatemala today. The analyses of tyranny is part of the vision, for only in recognizing the devil and the beast are we able to go beyond and reassure ourselves that we have to and can stake our claim. The evangelicals said that in terms of realizing this vision, we need a radical change. They said, for instance:

> "It is a maxim that to be an evangelical means to believe in repentance on one's sin(s) and conversion. It means to believe in Salvation by faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ.
>
> It is also equally true that in our proclamation of the Gospel we condemn sin in all its forms: personal, collective and structural. We then, also, call people to repentance, with the hope of forgiveness of sin, and the restoration of relationship with God and with people.
>
> Whereas the word repentance (metanoia), means a change of mind, attitude or course, its emphasis seems to be the view to hope. In other words, one ought to repent of one's sin(s), with a view to entering into new life or relationship." (E.W., pp. 36-7)

And that is what evangelicals are trying to realize in their struggle. But it is extremely difficult, as they have realized in South Africa, it is extremely difficult for Christians, for people in a situation of struggle, to maintain this hope. And yet, they cling to their faith that in time of crisis, justice can be realized and peace will be amongst us. These Christians, these evangelicals, or the people who composed the Kairos document, share something with poets and writers: for they, too, have a vision. We have heard it last night, we've heard it these past few days: That firmly imbedded in the description of tyranny, in the description of crisis, in the description of destruction, there is the vision of a New Jerusalem, of a new heaven - of a new earth. Not something in the clouds, not something beyond the beyond, but something firmly rooted in our reality, a reality of justice and peace.

In an untitled poem which Mavis Smallberg wrote a month ago, she is particularly concerned about the eyes, the faces of the mothers of children:

> "Have you noticed our women,
> have you checked their courage?
> Have you seen how they walk
> to headquarters at Loop Street
> where doors are shut in their faces
> and they hear how the oppressor can swear.

They get parcels of clothes
given back unopened,
and point-blank refusals to accept
essentials for loved ones detained,
merely because the official is not
inclined to do so today?
Have you watched them go back
Monday after Monday"

Smallberg goes on to describe the inhuman dimensions of this tyranny:

"Have you seen their eyes,
have you watched their expression
as they give the command to kill:
children, babies
mothers, sisters
grandmothers, even.
Have you seen how they do it,
in between coffee and prayers
church service and braais.
Have you watched them justify,
have you heard their lies?"

But, out of this description of tyranny, evolving from the recognition of the beast and its making, there are already the signs of hope, the groping towards something new, although we have to tread the path of death to regain life:

"Have you observed our people,
shocked, still shocked
by every atrocity
in every city:
They had hung the boy up by his wrists,
for four hours or more;
They burned the comrade's pubic hair
and slammed her breasts in a drawer;
They drove over his father's hut with a Casspir
they knew that he was inside.

Yes, we are shocked.
But we too are shocked
when we hear the young lïons roar:
Thula, qabane!
Here they come!
ssh, ssh-ssh
Organise and mobilize
ssh, ssh-ssh
Get out your AK
Kill a man -

Oh my people in this my country
my beautiful country
my wonderful people
strugglin, just,
foolish, wise
We must take the lesson
they brought us
We must learn to be hard
Destroy the oppressor inhuman
so we can remain
human."

Mavis Smallberg, 12 November, 1987.

As I have mentioned above, as with Isaiah, as with John of Patmos, as with the Evangelicals, Frank Chikane, Mavis Smallberg and many others, there is a firm belief, no, a conviction that a New Jerusalem, a new heaven will be established. This means:

- the fall of evil,
  i.e. the eradication of apartheid, of racism and fascism in South Africa;

- the uprooting of the perpetrators of evil,
  i.e. the Bothas and their Black hand-puppets, the Mangopes, Buthelezis, Rajbansis, Hendrickses and Matanzimas;

- and, encompassing the hope of true reconciliation ("wolf and lamb");
  i.e. offering no cheap friendship, but instead a recognition of our deep divisions and working to break down these "scheidsmuren", these barriers.

Yes, the beast shall die, the dragon perish and peace with justice reign.

In conclusion: We are certain of victory. We are positive about the regaining of our humanity, our humaneness, for we are as earnest as the prophet Isaiah in entering a New Jerusalem, where there'll be no "cry of distress" and where -

> "...the lion shall eat straw like the ox."

CALL ME SOWETO

by Vusi D. Mchunu

Call me Soweto
and toast me long life
'cause I'm a celebrity... you see

Afrikaans
like township smog corrodes the white of my eye
bootkicks
burst kidney-dams drowning my lung in bile
bird shots
flush me down colons of putrid catacombs
sjamboks
sweep my back and leave lone ribs howling
police trucks
sag to standstills under my earthy-heavy corpse
a half-brick shatters the air banked inside Barclays
stray bullets
break crusts of wounds of yestercentury's wars

mountain winds
lash the spinal ridge knitting uKhahlamba's bondage valley
a picanninny revolt
erupts the vomit, the flames that awaken a volcano
the white master
plagued by a running stomach stares at his toilet clock
yesterday's warriors
laugh the maddening laughter of black rededication
cracked lips
emit dirges, rivers carrying white masters away

Call me Soweto
and toast me long life
'cause I've come of age... you see

HIT OF THE SEASON

by Vusi D. Mchunu

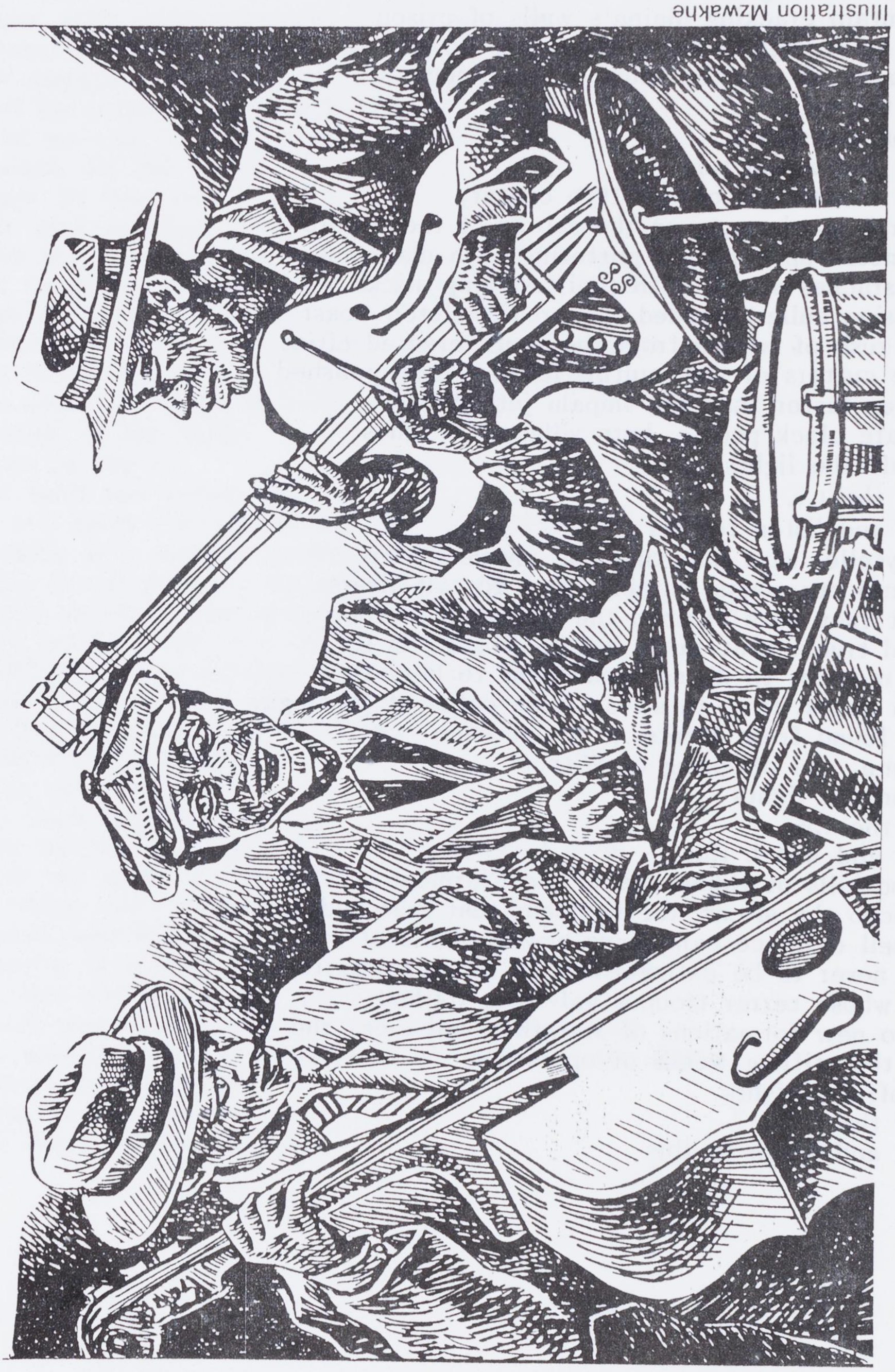
(Winner of 7 Kwame Nkrumah Youth Awards, nominated for the coveted Toussiant L'overture Trophy, critically acclaimed for the Frederick Douglass Struggle Prize)

switch on the lights
turn on the t.v.
sit back and watch this
an Ethiopian fly buzzing the final rites
over the dead eyes of a child in the shade
of flaccid breasts, the fountain that once
upon 3000 years quenched the needs of a
sovereign African people, the pond
of Abyssinia where we all drank our fill
till his imperial greed licked the well dry
and we took refuge in the tents of death
switch off the lights
turn off the t.v.
sit back and hear this
the storyteller saw a woman descend the hills
of Gondarto deliver a baby in the tents of death
her screams tearing the night to shreds
shocking the white volunteers and those inmates
as in the red dawn a bouncy baby girl arrived
to erase the reign of hunger over Africa
switch on the lights
turn on the t.v.
sit back and watch this
a red earth hill rolls across the Cameroons
hissing as a serpent, puffing fatal fumes
that litters Africa's eroded valleys with
child corpses, child carcases that caught
the satellite eye of a vulture dressed in
lufthansa, el al feathers whose rough landing
caused yet another spew of poison gas
fading out stars in a Cameroonian dusk
switch off the lights
turn off the t.v.
sit back and listen to this
the storyteller witnessed in one moonlight night
how the spirit of Mnyobe-Ruben possessed, shook
a young man, commanding him to run at breakneck
speed with strides of stampeding buffalo herds
roaring in a deep voice, calling maidens of Africa
to rise and run to the cornfields to parry away
birds that profess humanitarian aid yet intending
to anchor a vulture kingdom on the lands of the Bantu
switch on the lights
turn on the t.v.
sit back and watch this

the Rift Valley echoes the thudding feet of the last
Mau Mau warrior descending with measured steps and
searching for the bones of Kimaathi, China strewn
all about the Kenyan lands fertilising roots of revolt
aimed at those leaders who hold our heads to the
pincers that tear off the locks of sovereignty
from the Kenyan scalp
switch off the lights
turn off the t.v.
sit back and listen to this
the storyteller says the last Mau Mau is
possessor of the great voice thundering down
the mountain cracking Maina's walls of prison
pointing to foreign bases, foreign aids now
camouflaged as aid, the voice of Mwakenya
turn on the t.v.
switch on the lights
sit back and watch this
Prussian moustaches of the 19th century
went for a spaziergang on the shores of the Namib
and stumbled upon people glittering with diamonds
the moustaches struck with their walking sticks
the Prussian bullet branded the area Skeleton Coast
and the rush of whites from the south erected cities
to house cutters of the multinationals whose polished
theft flies faster than the impala jetfighters
that strafe black people, burn villages to ashes
switch off the lights
turn off the t.v.
sit back and listen to this
the storyteller says now that the invaders have
pissed onto our rivers, turning them to salt rivers
now that they have chained the Qhoi-San to their
armoured trucks that raise dust in Angola, is it
not the moment to divine sandstorms to bury their
mines in dunes, time to swear fresh oaths of Morenga,
time to found fresh fronts, is it not time
answer me, you offspring of Witbooi
switch on the lights
turn on the t.v.
sit back and watch this
the round hills of Ndunduma in the Clermont of the
fifties echo the sirens, the saracens that marched
in to quell defiance campaigns blazing trails of
decades never to be extinguished by the zero-starter
inkatha whose terror troupes galvanise vigilant
blacks to new formations of war that will clear the
hills of the stifling weeds of oppression
switch off the lights
turn off the t.v.
sit back and listen to this

praise is due to the children of eThekwini as they
overthrow that load kaHulumeni whose straps were
loosened by Mkhuthuzi Mdluli, the knots undone by
the Biko medical students' unit, the rope of
bondage flung afar by Msizi Dube. Now boatwomen,
now boatmen lets row into the Indian Ocean and
in one mighty swing throw overboard monster apartheid
and return to the shores, eGagasini, free, smiling
nina besizwe
mayihlome!

Illustration Mzwakhe



Group One: On Popular Culture
with Mavis Smallberg and Alfred Themba Qabula, Ethel Kriger, coordinator

Mavis Smallberg opened the discussion by giving a resumée of the lecture which she had held on the first evening of the conference (see pp.). Her main concern was to present a working definition of what constitutes "popular culture". She also raised the question of why popular culture was regarded as a danger to the status quo in South Africa.

Smallberg postulated that popular culture had become a form of resistance, and as such, was part and parcel of the political struggle for democracy and freedom in South Africa. A variety of cultural forms has emerged, so that popular culture does not comprise only the "classical" cultural artefacts, but has also incorporated mass-media into its ambit. T-shirts and buttons convey political messages. An upsurge of political graffitti as a means of communication has followed in the wake of the banning of pamphleteering. Even the wearing of jewelry in the colours of the outlawed African National Congress (ANC) has to be seen as part of a broader commitment to challenge the dominant culture. Indeed there is widespread consensus that traditional forms of the dominant culture should be rejected, and that cultural involvement should be a search for peoples' own cultural expression. A process of cultural decolonisation should take place. The determinants of popular culture are therefore explicitly political.

Alfred Qabula's introduction was autobiographical, which gave an interesting insight into how society, a particular political economy and an ensuing worker consciousness work together to determine the growth of what is known as popular culture.

As a young man Qabula would come together with other young people in order to write poetry or create plays. Especially during the Christmas festivities, the players would entertain the rural communities they come from. Later, as a worker, he joined a trade union. In the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU) he pooled his resources with like-minded fellow workers to create the Dunlop Cultural Workers' Play. The play was well received by workers on various shop floors, the cultural workers being invited to perform at factories whose union members were affiliated to the then still functioning Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). In 1984 the bosses put an end to the performances at the factories. In the meantime Qabula was successfully encouraging workers to create cultural artefacts which would pass on the message of liberation, and would wake up the sluggish to their political reality with poetry, drama and songs of resistance. But also "to let out the hurt or hate". This challenge was directed not only at workers, but at the community as a whole.

In 1985 the cultural workers around Qabula produced the play "Black Mamba Rising", which was vigorously attacked by a literary critic in the South African newspaper, "Weekly Mail". The players responded with a terse: "Sorry, Baas, but we're not speaking to you..."

At present the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has taken the question of a popular culture into its union activity. A national cultural desk has been formed. At local level cultural units attempt to embrace all groups of society e.g. women, the youth. COSATU grants subsidies to encourage the unemployed to do the cultural work at local level. This activity has come to the notice of the Security Police and has led to arrests and harassment. However, many people have signed up with COSATU since it has embarked on cultural work, because the message that it conveys, is being understood. (See Appendix.)

The issues that worker plays take up are usually a combination of topical international events and the situation in South Africa.

After the introductions of Smallberg and Qabula, questions were asked. The first question was: How do cultural workers operate in the face of such comprehensive state harassment and intimidation? Qabula said that people no longer allow themselves to be intimidated by either the state or its agents. They try to find means of continuing their work by finding loopholes in banning or restriction orders. A point in case was a people's festival that had been banned. Because the district of the venue had been included in the banning order, the cultural workers simply went to a different district, and went ahead with parts of the festival. However, in Natal both cultural workers and political activists face brutal attacks by puppets of the South African government viz. the Inkatha movement. This has led to the assassination of members of MAWU by Inkatha followers at Bopomeni. These attacks by Inkatha or other "vigilante" groups have failed to reduce the cultural workers to a state of inactivity.

The next question raised was to what extent a people's culture had developed especially in the rural areas. Both Smallberg and Quabula felt that the rural areas were not lagging behind as much as often supposed. An interaction between urban and rural areas was taking place constantly as migrant labourers carry ideas from the urban areas into the rural communities, or return to urban areas with ideas and experiences made in the rural areas. One example of a very successful rural cultural movement was the "Saamstaan" (stand together) movement in the south-western Cape, although this group has been particularly hard hit by state repression. (In February 1988 three members of the organisation were served with banning orders, ed.)

Answering the question of how a cultural boycott was being handled inside South Africa, Smallberg said in the area where she works,

the Western Cape, there was no campaign around this issue as such. However people involved in entertainment, for example, have begun feeling the political pressure of people's expectations for relevant entertainment. But there was no evidence as yet that certain popular entertainers would enjoy more popularity if they produced politically relevant entertainment. The feeling in the Western Cape is that artists have to be won over. Cultural mobilisation in this area is a slow process.

The next point to be discussed was that of the sex divide: who raises these questions; are these issues raised at all? Women's issues are being raised, and by women themselves. The South African Domestic Workers' Union (SADWU) has created a play centring not only around the working conditions of these women, but also around the conditions in their own households. Essentially the debate around the participation of women in the struggle still grapples with the question of whether the stance of women should be feminist or nationalist. Presently this debate does not enjoy much priority. This leads to the kinds of contradictions which Qabula pointed out, that during the strike at O.K. Bazaars men tried forcing the striking women back to work, although they (the men) were for strike action.

The next question raised was whether popular culture could be regarded as a platform for a vision of a future South Africa, or whether it was merely descriptive of the present political set-up. Both cultural workers felt that popular culture was certainly not only descriptive. An important component was always that popular culture is legitimate because it gives direction for political activity. Important for a future South Africa is that progressive popular culture aims at promoting non-racialism.

The discussion then dealt with the question of whether popular culture could reflect the ideology of resistance. Is cultural activity the only sphere of resistance left? The declaration of a state of emergency has curtailed the leeway for cultural activity to a small extent. But especially in the rural areas plays and poetry have contributed greatly to a heightening of political awareness. Smallberg and Qabula pointed out that day-to-day political issues are being supported by cultural activity. So, for example, the activities around the welcoming back of Govan Mbeki, but also the kind of support given to those carrying out the rent boycott.

One of the last points to be discussed showed that a lot of hard work had yet to be done to breach the gap between the "home" and the "exile" cultures. Communication does not work as well as it should. Rigid censorship deters the possession and reading of works of exiled writers by people inside the country. An appeal was made for "exile" literature to be made available to people through COSATU. The Congress of South African Writers (COSAW)

was trying to breach this gap by setting up an Alex La Guma Prize in honour of one of South Africa's best writers, who died in exile in Cuba, where he represented the ANC.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to Alfred Qabula and Mavis Smallberg for their interesting contributions.

Minutes compiled by Ethel Kriger

For our brothers and sisters
in the factories
and the struggle to develop
a new world for our children.

CULTURAL DAY

COSATU cultural day was one of the biggest cultural events in South Africa ever. About 300 workers presented 69 cultural items as well as plenty of art exhibitions, slides and videos. More than 5000 people crammed the five venues for the one-day culture festival. The various items came from every part of the country with more than 80 % of our COSATU locals participating.

The Cultural Day was organised quietly and with little publicity. COSATU cultural organiser Mi Hlatswayo travelled from city to city looking for worker and townships groups to take part - he found hundreds eager and ready to perform.

The result: a feast of 20 plays, 27 poets, 16 choirs and 6 dance groups.

In every theatre, the mainly worker audience cheered and gasped and laughed and roared and intervened. The message was often hard and rough - direct from the townships and factories. "We are strong. We are fighting. We can feel our power in this place! Voetsek Botha, Watch out Relly"

The programme continued non-stop throughout the day. The hard part was choosing what to see and what to miss. There was Mzwakhe and the Clover Workers' Play in Theatre 2; the GM Workers and three Natal poets in Theatre 1... You could only see one out of every five of the many items on the programme.

COSATU Cultural Day has proved several things. First, there is a vast amount of progressive cultural activity happening at grass-roots level around the country. Second, that organised workers are taking the lead in forging working class culture and "people's culture".

The event was a big inspiration for COSATU cultural workers. It was a sign that COSATU was late in recognising the powerful role of progressive worker and township groups. We must now go on to build a strong cultural wing in every region, with cultural units in every local, that can promote cultural work and encourage a dynamic role for progressive culture.

The good news is that the Cultural Day is not over yet! A video is being put together of many of the acts that were presented at the festival; a tape is being made of the poetry, music and slogans that made this such a powerful day; and a book of pictures covering the Cultural Day is coming out soon.

Cultural workers wherever you might be - contact your local union or COSATU office and find out what cultural work is happening in your area.

WORKING CLASS CULTURE

We recognise that:

1. Culture is a terrain that we as workers can no longer leave in the hands of our enemies to control.

2. There lies a vast amount of cultural creativity among our members in COSATU in the form of songs, plays, poetry, sculpture etc.

3. The enemy or the ruling class has used culture effectively against the working class and we need to defend ourselves and our interests from domination by other classes.

4. Culture, used effectively by COSATU, can help to cement our relationship with our democratic allies in the liberation struggle against oppression and exploitation.

5. Culture in COSATU must be a vehicle to sustain and popularise working class politics so that it becomes the politics of the majority.

6. Cultural activities and structures can only be useful to us as the working class if they are accessible to us and compatible with existing democratic structures in COSATU.

To attain this we resolve:

1. To endorse and support the work of the COSATU National Cultural Unit in promoting, co-ordinating and giving prominence to working class culture within and outside our federation.

2. That affiliates, locals and regions should help the Cultural Unit in setting up cultural units or groups in every COSATU local.

3. That affiliates and the federation's structures should give the fullest co-operation to COSATU National Cultural Unit and encourage worker participation in cultural events and debates within affiliates and COSATU.

4. To back the Cultural Unit in campaigns aimed at challenging and exposing exploitative cultural events and practices of State and local government and big business.

5. To support all forms of international pressure - including the cultural boycott - aimed at isolating the present regime and ending apartheid - except where such visits advance the liberation struggle and are at the invitation or agreement of mass organisations here.

6. To support and encourage COSATU Cultural Unit in building lasting relationships with other progressive culture groups outside our ranks.

(taken from: Report of 2nd COSATU Conference 1987)

CONGRESS OF SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS

PRAISE POEM TO FOSATU

by Alfred Qabula

You moving forest of Africa.
When I arrived the children were all crying,
These were the workers,
industrial workers,
Discussing the problems
that affect them in the
industries they work for
in Africa.
I saw one of them consoling
others,
Wiping their tears from
their eyes,
I saw wonders, 'cause even
in his eyes the tears did
flow.
Worker, about what is that
cry Maye?
You are crying, but who
is hassling you?
Escape into that forest,
the black forest that the
employers saw and ran
for safety.
The workers saw it too
'It belongs to us', they
said,
'Let us take refuge in it
to be safe from our hunters.'
Deep into the forest they
hid themselves and when
they came out they were
free from fear.
You are the hen with wide
wings
That protects its chickens.
Protect us too with those
sacred wings of yours
That knoweth no discrimination.
Protect us too so that we
gain wisdom.
Militant are your sons and
daughters.
One wonders what kind of
muti you sprinkle them
with.
Sprinkle us too that we take
after them and act likewise.
FOSATU has given birth
His sons are spread all over
Africa
Even overseas you find his
sons.

FOSATU you are the lion
that roared at Pretoria
North,
With union offices everywhere
whilst walking, thinking
about the workers' problems, I saw a fist flying
across Dunlop's cheek.
Whilst Dunlop was still
shivering,
Perhaps Bakers was asking
'What did my neighbour do
that he is being hurt like
that?'
I saw a combination of fists
bombarding Bakers on his
ribs,
until Dunlop was concerned,
He called the shop stewards
and asked:
'Is MAWU now going to
cause trouble at Bakers?'
'No, Banumzane.'
'Who is organising at Bakers?
Of course Sweet Food and
Allied Workers' Union.'
'But where does it come
from?'
'From FOSATU.'
'This MAWU, where does it
spring from?'
'Also from FOSATU.'
'Same constitution?'
'Yebo.
Same policy, same constitution, don't worry Jim, it's
still another MAWU.'
Chakijana? Wake up and
wear your clothes of power
and wisdom.
Keep your gates closed
FOSATU.
Because the workers' enemies are ambushing you.
They are looking for a hole
to enter through in order to
disband you.
Oh! We poor workers, dead
we shall be if they succeed
in so doing.
Close! Please close!
You are the mole that was
seen by the bosses' impimpis coming slowly but
surely towards the factories.
Fast ran the impimpis and
reported to their bosses and
said:
'Baas, Baas, thina bukile lomvukuzane buya losayidi
kalofekthri kathina.'
'Yah, yah;
What is the mvukuzane
my boy, tell me,

what is it?
Is it one of FOSATU's unions?
You are a good muntu
Mina azi akhela wena 6
room house lapha lohomeland kawena.
Thatha lo-machine gun, vala
logates.
Skhathi wena buka lo-union
bulala lo-union
Skhathi lo-union yena ngena
lapha fekthri kathina,
amashares phelile.
Lo-union thatha yonke.'
Whilst still wondering what
to do,
There came a messenger and
said:
Better leave everything as it
is,
'Cause the union is already
holding a meeting with the
workers in the canteen.
Not only here — there at
Sasol as well.
FOSATU, we have chosen
you to lead us.
Time and time again we
have been electing leaders,
Electing people whom we
trusted,
Fellow people with whom
we were born and grew up
together.
People who knew all our
sufferings,
Together with whom we
were enslaved.
We had elected them because
we believed they were
a lamp to brighten our way
to freedom.
But to our dismay,
After we had appointed
them, we placed them
on the top of the mountain,
and they turned against us.
They brought impimpis into
our midst to inflict
suffering upon us.
Some of us, those who were
clever, were shot down to
the dust with bullets.
Others were shut behind
the walls of darkness.
Others decided to flee the
land of their birth.
Is FOSATU also going to
hug you with those warm
hands?
His hands that know no
racism?
Prayed we did to our
Mvelinqangi,
kneeled we did, and prayed

to our ancestors and said:
We pray to you for a leader,
We pray to you for a leader.
Mvelinqangi and the
ancestors have answered us,
and sent to us FOSATU!
Don't disappoint us
FOSATU,
Don't sacrifice us to our
adversaries,
To date your policy and
your sons are commendable
We don't know what's to
happen tomorrow.
Listen I am a Sangoma,
You have come to me so
that I tell all about you.
I have thrown my bones
and called on my abalozi.
My bones and my amadlozi
are telling me this:
Yebo, you have good and
handsome sons.
Also they are intelligent and
quite healthy.

Good Mnumzane, I am
writing you a letter to ask
permission to use this
ground.
We will be discussing and
reporting to our members
about all that we have
achieved.
Here is the agenda so that
you may know about what
we are going to discuss.
There you are big man,
your refusal is a challenge.
Get hold of him and pull
him by the jacket.
Put him into the judgement
box.
Come Senior Judge.
Pass judgement on him for refu-
sing us permission to use this
ground.
Why do you refuse us
permission to use this play-
ground?
The old man said this and
that and he was left
disappointed because the
Judge granted permission.
Don't play with fire, my
boy, because you'll get
burnt.
You are the metal loco-
motive that moves on top
of other metals.
The metal that doesn't bend
that was sent to the
engineers but they
couldn't bend it.

Teach us FOSATU about
the past organisations be-
fore we came.
Tell us about their mistakes
so that we may not fall foul
of such mistakes.
Our hopes lie with you,
the Sambane that digs holes
and sleeps in them, whereas
others dig holes and leave
them.
I say this because you teach
a worker to know what his
duties are in his organisation,
And what he is in the
community

Lead us FOSATU to where
we are eager to go.
Even in parliament you
shall be our representative.
Go and represent us because
you are our Moses —
through your leadership we
shall reach our Canaan.
They call you the disrupt-
ionist because you dis-
rupted the employers at
their own meeting.
Because you man of old,
asked a question:
'Did you consider the
workers?
Have you really planned
about FOSATU, the workers'
representative?
No!
Well then we can't continue
because FOSATU doesn't
laugh when they see some-
thing that makes workers
look laughable.
The meeting was disrupted.
All that remained behind
was beers, whiskies and
disappointment.
The cakes and the cool-
drinks were also dis-
appointed.
Hero deal with them and
throw them into the Red Sea.
Strangle them and don't let
loose,
until they tell the truth as
to why they suck the
workers' blood.
I am coming slowly and I
am watching all that you
are doing.
You're great FOSATU.
Bayethe!
Amandla kubasebenzi!

MOTHER

Even though I cannot see you by the natural eyes
I can see you through my imagination.
The Lord gave you a very short life
You left for the land of high winds
long before I was satisfied to be with you.
You left me with endless loneliness

Mother, I have made great effort
to find someone who will do like you did.
Yes, she has tried by all means to console,
advise and build me up.
Now she has built me a home
Has given me beautiful, respectful,
sincere and honest children

Yes, my mother, all this leaves me with a question
What is a home without a mother?
A pride to the old and the young, a mother.
I am away, out on the road
Hungry, thirsty and full of tears.
I think about you Mother, my home
I regain my strength.
Hunger, thirst and exhaustion are all gone.
Problems and sorrow of being away on the road
disappear when I reach home, you my mother.

Who will be like a mother?
You were never a trained nurse, doctor
But in my infancy, before I could talk
she could live, feel and understand
the pain and suffering in my life.
She unselfishly gave me her breasts to feed
And today I have grown up, I am a man.
She taught me all the dangers in life
as well as those things good for my life.
I feel safe, still today your advice,
plans and wishes are planted and growing in me.
Even if I am in pain
my conscience reminds me of you.
And suddenly I hear that soft, echoing voice
guiding my way forward.

Hu....uu, happiness is all over my face!
Pardon me, Mother, let this not disturb you
where you are; stay there and be free.
The mission you came for in this world is fulfilled.
You were a sincere and honest parent
Today I am what I am because of you.

Whenever I see you in dreams
I know that all my difficulties in this world
Will be removed, and my freedom is earned.
You are a fresh scent in my life.
The day I forget your teachings and advice
my Mother, I believe that would be the
end of me in this world you left me in
and taught me about.

Your word is the light in this world of darkness.
In times of war, your teachings are my weapon
I conquer with.
Even when I am alone, I don't feel lonely
because of your teachings.
Though you left me rather early
before I was satisfied to be with you
I say I don't regret.
The time had come for you to
pass on to the land of the high winds.
There too, your good work was needed, my Mother.
Mother, be free, your nation is free.

by Alfred Temba Quabula

Written in response to a record review of 'District Six, The Musical', by David Kramer and Taliep Petersen. The review was written by Frank Heydenrych and appeared in the Cape Times Supplement, Funfinder of 5 December, 1986.

A quote from the article:

"... It is surprising that it took two decades for a fullscale musical to appear from the rubble that still litters the slopes below Roeland Street. But Kramer and Petersen have succeeded in extracting the flavour and essence of a culture, and putting it to music. Clearly they understand the coloureds and appreciate them for what they are: an independent race group which has borrowed from many cultures, but has retained a unique character."

Hey, Frankie-boy!
the 'coloured' are people, man
people who eat, sleep, work
sing and love a lot.
real people, man
sure they're independant
unrepentant, dependant
rocked and knocked about,
but there's no special 'race' about them, man

ever heard of the
Khoi-san, Frankie-boy?
or perhaps to you
the Hottentot
or better still,
the Hotnot?

now THEY were independant, man
they roamed this land
as free as birds
and camped and lived
just where they liked
you see, they OWNED this land

and then your skelm fathers came
to screw them up
to screw them down
to screw them right into
the blêrrie groun'
an' all this screwing, Frankie-boy
led to us, a lekka' mix
who were, like you said,
bulldozed out of District Six

so do you see
ou Frankie-boy
pathetic boy
patronizing silly boy
this 'race' that you describe so gran'
you understand is a little bit of you an' me!

and we're just normal people, man
no need to try to 'understand'
the people, man!
poor, rich, educated
ignorant, hungry, humble people;
some of us who shout:
"rênd-a-bêg! rênd-a-bêg!"
or: don' be nervous whila
bananas are et your service!

some of us are intellectual and highbrow
we'd grace your table and
you wouldn't even know that
we're the ones who could
or should belong to your so-called 'Coloured
independant group', Frankie-whitie-boy!

so next time just be careful
what you say when you
print in white and black
as if it were historical fact.
your government dubbed us
'coloured'
but we, in fact, are people
African people
who recognize themselves as black!

Mavis Smallberg
5 December 1987

A Curse Reversed

abracadabra
saliem ca la diem
we won't pull him out
we will push him in
abracadabra
saliem ca la diem

The words of a chant?
The words of the devil?
Does one whip out
one's Bible to ward
off and cower
the forces of evil?

abracadabra
saliem ca la diem
we won't pull him out
we will push him in
abracadabra
saliem ca la diem

A spell has been cast
that no witches have made.
But children
are chanting
and shouting
and choking
with anger and fury
frustration, emotion
at a man who
stands against sin

abracadabra
saliem ca la diem

A crude Bible is scrawled
to punctuate words
both childish and silly
How sad that the Bible,
an inspirational source,
is hurled at a man
who prays as a matter of course
but yet has to learn
that love and not violence
is the magical word
which conjures respect
in the hearts of all children
wiping out spite
and mean provocation

abracadabra
saliem ca la diem
we won't pull him out
we will push him in
abracadabra
saliem ca la diem

There is love in the Bible
no silly chants there.
There is hope and charity
and peace to be found.
Yet, here's one who stands
with a Bible in hand
and a whip in the other
to beat up rash children
who ramble and fumble
when voicing their anger

abracadabra
saliem ca la diem
we won't pull him out
we will push him in
abracadabra
saliem ca la diem

A spell has been cast
that no witches have made.
The children have made it
But children are magic
with mystical powers
The smiles of the children
can creep in one's soul
The cruelty of children
can take away pride
And old magic words,
from young children's dreams
can be balm
like the Bible
that soothes and then heals

abracadabra
saliem ca la diem

Mavis Smallberg

Children's Song

Sing a song of sixpence
A pocketful of love
A pocketful of care
For us
To share?

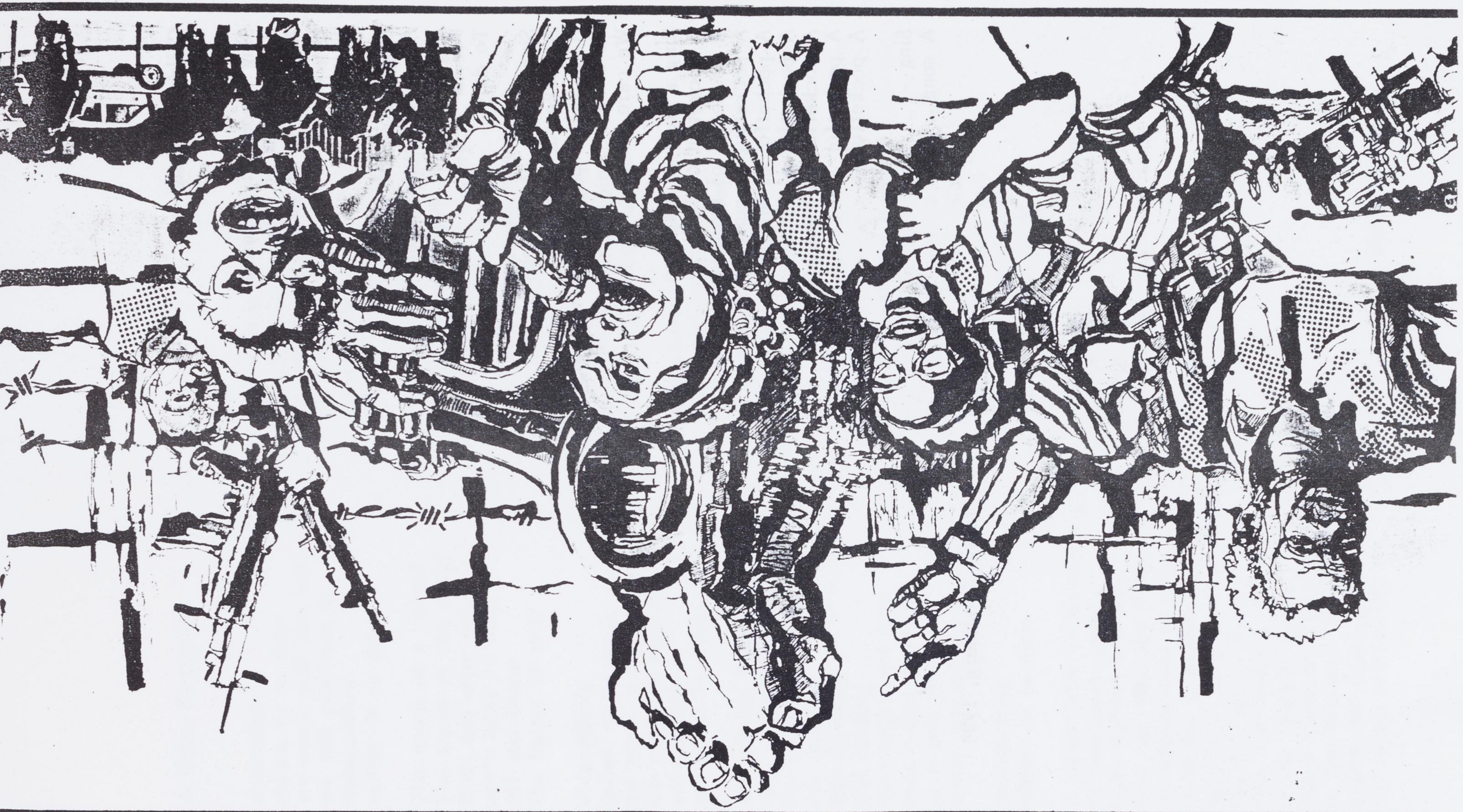
Sing a song of sixpence
A pocketful of dreams
A pocketful of schemes
For us
To dare

Sing a song of sixpence
A pocketful of stones
A pocketful of violence
To show
We care

Sing a song of sixpence
A pocketful of hate
A pocketful of innocence
A pocketful of guilt
A pocketful of misery
A pocketful of luck
A pocketful of hand-grenades
A pocketful
A pocketful

Sing -
A song... ?

Mavis Smallberg, 1984



Group Two: Poetry of Resistance
with Oswald M. Mtshali,
Geoffrey V. Davis, coordinator

The participants of the session having introduced themselves, Mtshali proceeded to deliver the second half of the paper he had begun on the preceding Friday evening (see 'Conclusion' of Mtshali's paper, pp. 30-35).

His thesis was that there has been resistance to white rule in South Africa since the beginning. Early missionaries brainwashed the black population through indoctrination which was at times blatant, at times subtle. The Bible was used as a tool to enforce a new, alien code of conduct on the indigenous population, whose customs and traditions were regarded as barbaric. Their songs and dances were replaced by church music, their culture was eroded through religious practices in church and school. The 'ideal' of white civilization was upheld.

At the present we are witnessing the re-establishment of the old indigenous culture everywhere in South Africa - even in prison in the art forms developed by the detainees. This shows how oppression has failed to silence the voice of freedom. In such a situation writing is not a luxury, but a necessity, even though it is almost impossible to write in the circumstances of the struggle.

Mtshali then read his poem 'I am a burning chimney' from Fire-flames:

I'm a burning chimney
(a militant's cry)

I stand on the debris of my life,
the Black man's life,
the life of every black soul.

I look out at the four corners of the earth,
like a weathervane on a church steeple,
like a lighthouse staring at the serene sea
turning into turbulence.

For too long, I have weathered the elements,
three centuries of perpetual poundings;
I have withstood the sun,
I have defied the frost,
I have ignored thousands of thunderclaps on my cheeks
and brushed aside the torrents of rain.

I grow blacker and blacker by the day
as my heart crackles with fires of fury,
stoked by the daily degradations for my blackness.

I eat the woeful wood
that is fed into me
by those who burn my buttocks
to seek the warmth and comfort
from the hearth of their cosy homes.

Let them sit down there
and watch the logs of time
perish into the ashes of their inevitable perdition.

I will belch out suffocating smoke,
clear the sooty phlegm from my throat
which suppresses my strident voice of dissent,
I will let out a roar louder than a million lions.

I will melt the stars from the firmament,
inflame the frozen night,
parch the clouds into powdered milk.

My heart has become as hard as an anvil
on which I will forge a weapon
sharper than a Turkish dagger.

The moon will play truant from
its observation tower,
and go to sleep on the seabed.

I will descend quickly from my vantage point,
slash the curtains of darkness
from a bat's wings.

I will wear a phantom's slippers,
the informant owl will be blindfolded
as I strike as fast as a viper,
then disappear into the embrace of dawn.

I will tell the rooster to crow,
call the sun from its hiding place,
show my handiwork to the world.

My ebony face will reflect the sunrays
more iridescent to behold than polished brass;
I will puff the frankincent smoke of victory
whose wisps will fill my fellow chimneys with elation.

We will ascend to take up our rightful places,
we will sing a song in unison,
'At last victory is ours;
the whole household now belongs to us.'

The writer in South Africa today is faced with many challenges. He is not writing in a vacuum - but very few writers actually make dedicated activists. The Congress of South African Writers (COSAW), recently launched at a meeting at the University of the Witwatersrand and affiliated to the United Democratic Front (UDF), has set itself the goal of mass mobilisation of the people. Any writer who subscribes to the Freedom Charter is free to join.

Mtshali then read his poem 'The raging generation':

The raging generation

Babies of yesterday,
children of today,
adults of tomorrow
ripening overnight like grapes in an untended vineyard -
I salute you with langourous words devoid of pretence;
I drink the bitterness in the calabashes of your hearts.
The pouches of your cheeks are full of boiling tears,
there is broiling blood in the goatskin purses
in your unpummelled souls.

Menchildren in the promised land of your forefathers,
returning swallows who presage the coming of our summers,
the bane of the receding winters of our oppression,
unbroken steeds, whose hooves raised the dust
of Soweto streets,
where your maimed bodies were cut down by doom-primed fireshells
from depraved barrels,
little girls, budding flowers of our youth,
your tight inviolate virginal veil torn asunder
by the wanton penis of the monster.

Mothers and fathers of the days that lie ahead
like a carpet of choice velvet,
your eyes are the beams
that see the glorious future
that lies ahead
beyond the swirling streams of scarlet waves.

I salute your fearlessness;
I stand in awe of your bravery,
and I bend my knee at the shrine of your steadfastness.
I hear your heart-touching songs at the memorial services
where you celebrate the passing of your comrades.

Amandla! Amandla! Amandla! Ngawethu!

Power! Power! Power! To the people!

This was followed by 'Flames of Fury':

Flames of fury

Wait for them, brother,
wait for them, sister,
be ready;
flames of fury are coming
like a wild veld fire
fanned by a whirlwind of fleeing dwarfs;
be ready, brother,
be ready, sister;
listen to the sound of the war trumpet,
telling you to cry and gnash your teeth,
announcing the pains of death
and the blood that will flow wider
than the Tugela River in flood,
when it bursts its banks
to drown the laggard locust.

O yes, my brother,
and you my beloved sister,
there will appear in the horizon
flying machines sweeping like swallows
that snatch the newly-hatched maggots in the sky,
and spit flames of fury,
and squirt swords of poisonous death
which will leave man and beast roasted,
peeling off like over-ripe bananas.

You will, brother
and you my loving sister, hear the uncontrollable
voices of mourning orphans and bereaved parents,
as they whimper and wince in the agony
of scalding, hot, molten lead,
which will scorch the grass yellow
like an ass's urine,
and leave the mountains bare and blackened
like a rock-rabbit's teeth.

Beware brother,
beware sister,
falling tongues of fire
from a belligerent's bow and arrow in a life and death combat
hiss like hurricane,
when flying machines loaded with barrel-shaped bombs
turn into sharp spears of fiery might
tougher than syringa thorns.

Birds will inhale the fumes
and flee like mad dogs
that have eaten a vulture's liver;
they will shrink to the size of tiny bat's droppings,
their wings singed and puffed up with pus,
and the eagle's throne will be set on fire;
it will burn into a handful of ashes
which will be blown away by the broken, armed wind.

Where will you be, my brother,
and you my darling sister?
Need I ask you?
Needless to say, in the thick of it,
in the front line of the struggle,
from where you will witness - for you were the cause -
those luxury houses crashing to the ground,
demolishing the edifices of our degradation,
watch their priceless paintings and treasure-troves
razed and reduced to the ground.

Be ready, brother,
be prepared, sister,
for the flames of fury to burn
these symbols of our bondage,
these shackles of our oppression and exploitation,
be ready, be firm, be strong!

Indeed, brother, and you my sister,
you heard the prattle and cackle
of the so-called Super Powers,
and I beg you, for the cause of our liberation,
ignore the two cackling hens of senility -
Mr Tear-him-apart from the West,
Mr Look-at-the-chin from the East -
sitting at the conference table in the House of Monkeys,
dishing to the Third World a porridge of lies called detente,
cooked in a broken pot of empty promises.

We saw them offer each other snuff,
with golden snuff spoons, from golden snuff boxes,
like crones tying buffalo knots
with the shreds of our tattered hearts;
whilst secretly they arm our enemies
and tell them to tighten the manacles of our misery
and the handcuffs of our humiliation.

Listen, brother, resist it all;
for the sake of our freedom, sister,
reject the pernicious pack of lies,
this insidious state of our lives;
refuse to be intimidated and frightened with

the dead skin of a moulten snake
that is brandished as a big stick
to beat the timid hearts of a subjugated people.

Yes, brother
and you my sister,
gird your loincloth
and bellow like a bull bristling with massive power,
blow your nostrils to blur the sun,
shake the earth to its rotten roots,
lick the gunpowder from the rusty cannons,
clash the shield against the spear,
let the bullet explode into a weeping droplet of sterile semen,
let the assegai sing the sweet song of our victory,
let death despair and perish into the enslaver's dungeon of defeat.

Let him produce the plundered stores of three centuries of our conquest.

Go brother,
go sister, back to drink
from the fountain of our forefathers,
for your salvation and your liberation;
quaff copious draughts of your Blackness.

Remember, brother,
remember, sister, to remain poised,
ready to strike like the dangerous, provoked Black Mamba,
for therein lies your strength
in your black biceps forged from the black soil
of the fertile valleys of Central Africa.

(Translated from the Zulu, 1975)

The poet, Mtshali asserted, must write with honesty and sensitivity. His work is being performed in a political situation characterised, if one may judge by the situation in Pietermaritzburg, by a low-intensity civil war between Inkatha and the UDF. In such a situation the writer cannot afford to feel powerless; rather he should inspire, educate and entertain.

The upheaval in poetic development was ushered in by the rise of the Black Consciousness Movement - although people now see that it is no longer colour itself which poses the problem. Mtshali resists categorisation in terms of 'Soweto Poetry' in the manner of Michael Chapman (who wrote a book of that title). For him black poetry goes back much further than the 60s and is a much wider phenomenon than the term 'Soweto Poetry' would suggest. Mtshali therefore ended by emphasising the universal nature of the poetry produced by black writers in South Africa.

There followed a discussion of the points raised in both parts of Mtshali's contribution.

Responding to a general question as to his motivation in writing poetry at all, Mtshali pointed to the urgency and immediacy of poetry's message. He sees poetry as a 'vehicle for singing about the future', as a means of expressing the certainty of victory. As an example he quoted the Nigerian experience where poets were able to bring about conciliation after the civil war. In a memorable phrase he suggested that 'the cultural worker treads where politicians fear to speak...'.

The much discussed topic of language prompted Mtshali to recount how he was first taught English by a German nun, who insisted that he master English grammar and composition. Both his parents were teachers and they spoke English with visitors at home. Although he was also brought up to speak Zulu, he was forbidden to speak in the vernacular between the hours of 8.30 and 4.30, when he attended boarding school in Northern Natal. While at school he wrote a competition poem for the school magazine in English. He was fortunate in that having been born during the war in 1940, he was taught English from the very beginning. With the advent of Bantu Education in 1953, blacks were taught in the mother-tongue and thus had to learn arithmetic, for example, in Zulu. In his day, Zulu was not the language of instruction.

One of the poet's roles is to help to find solutions towards a non-racial South Africa. At the moment poets in South Africa cannot write as loyal patriots: when apartheid is overthrown, however, they will write poems of celebration.

Asked to comment on the term 'protest poetry' and to consider whether the appeal to whites in the pre-BCM phase had not been somewhat naive and whether his volume Fireflames did not represent a stronger call to resistance than had his earlier Sounds of a Cowhide Drum, Mtshali distinguished a transition in poets' attitudes to whites. Whereas they had indeed appealed to whites in earlier work, at the height of BCM in 1973 there had been a change towards ignoring white audiences altogether. After 1976 this developed into a direct challenge to the existing power structures. June 1976 gave the impetus in mobilising the people. It was of course also the time when many young people went into exile. Mtshali appealed for all those who hate apartheid to come together in unity.

In the context of Sounds of a Cowhide Drum it was suggested that people were able to identify with the strength and power which the poems in that collection expressed. In a poem such as 'Boy on a Swing', the poet was felt to be speaking on behalf of the people. In contrast, it was suggested, literature in Europe tends to

be more sophisticated. Could not European readers and writers therefore learn from the anger and the urgency of South African poetry?

Boy on a swing

Slowly he moves
to and fro, to and fro,
then faster and faster
he swishes up and down.

His blue shirt
billows in the breeze
like a tattered kite.

The world whirls by:
east becomes west,
north turns to south;
the four cardinal points
meet in his head.

Mother!
Where did I come from?
When will I wear long trousers?
Why was my father jailed?

In his reply Mtshali pointed to the differences between white and black in South Africa. Whites see themselves in individual terms, whereas blacks share their experience, feel that everybody is in the same boat. The white community is characterised by greed and selfishness, lack of concern for one's fellow men. Oppression has brought blacks together, all are trapped in the same situation. That is why the conflict between Inkatha and the UDF is senseless. The majority are clinging together to resist the agents of oppression, e.g. those who operate as vigilantes.

At last year's conference it was felt that there had been a tremendous feeling of power coming from South Africa, so much so that people were quite taken aback by it. The question is, where do we go from here? How do we establish meaningful links between the struggle in your society and that in our own? Mtshali emphasised that in South Africa one is brought face to face with people who have not been destroyed: 'It gives me great hope, that no matter how much repression is inflicted, it has not succeeded in breaking us down.' In the presence of all of us at Bad Boll, he saw a manifestation of concern, of a readiness to give moral support, simply to help. Apartheid is an insult to humanity and has to be destroyed. The South African government remains extremely sensitive to outside pressure. If we in Europe continue to act in support of him, his coming to Bad Boll will not have been in vain. He repeated his

concern for the problem of vigilantes: 'We are trying to make our people who have become vigilantes change. We are trying to show them that it's futile.' We should all increase and intensify our efforts to publicise as much as possible the evil that is going on.

Minutes compiled by Geoffrey V. Davis

Weep not for a warrior by Oswald M. Mtshali

A warrior drinks the goat's blood for bravery
as a willow in a swamp sucks water
to grow stalwart and stay evergreen.

A warrior never perishes;
he is sustained by the glorious deeds of the departed;
he eats the raw meat of fearlessness
and awaits his canonisation in the realm of heroes,
where all the freedom fighters dwell;
their numerous names are inscribed for posterity
in the massive girth of the baobab tree.

Fear has no roots
strong enough to pierce
the armoured heart of a man in bondage,
whose unbridled anger tears the tiger from its lair,
grabs the lion by its tail,
spears the elephant on its trunk.

Tears were not made
to fall like rain on the grave of the warrior,
to drown the indomitable spirit,
and wash away his halo of martyrdom.

As the clouds of war gather,
and the southern sky frowns with rage,
and the mountains quiver like broth,
and the lightning swords the firmament,
and the clouds melt into cascades of water,
and the gushing torrents collect the corpses
and flush them like logs into a raging sea,
the death knell will echo to every corner.

The warrior will lie there, solemn
in his impregnable casket.
His proud widow and children will say,
"Weep not for him,
He was a brave warrior;
Let him rest on the buffalo-hide bed,
where his forefathers repose."

Springtime in District Six
(Zonnebloem)

The dust has settled
and unfailingly
the grass has pushed its way through,
covering the ugly
red scars
left by the bulldozers...

In fact
it looks quite pretty,
this empty patch
beneath the mountain,
in the heart
of the city
with empty churches
dotted here and there

The mosque stands
silhouette against the sky
as do the regimented chimney-pots
atop the black roofs
of the white
newly-painted white houses.

The area is pretty deserted, now
except a few brave white souls
who occupy
the white houses with their black roofs.

They slink about
with downcast eyes -
unsure, unsafe
They bar their windows
ears and eyes
against the voice of the Imam
who vainly calls the faithful
now long since shunted out...
They note the grasses
growing green
and hope that spring will never end
They double bolt
their doors at night
but strangely, at odd hours,
the voice of the Imam
still comes floating down their chimney-pots
calling
calling...

Mavis Smallberg
October 1983

Too Many Times We Die

by Farouk Asvat

- for Aggrey Klaaste -

There are too many handwashing ceremonies
Too many graves to clean
Too many heads to shave
Black bands to wear

Too many times we go down
On our knees
In jubilation
Or in supplication
We go down
Too many times

For the keepers of the flame
Think too often
Too close
To the keepers of the kingdom of hunger:

We are caught
In the past;
In gestures
That in the end
Mean nothing

As we die
Every day
In spite of the stale bread
Put into our mouths
And the hardness of our lives
The bullets still pass through

While wildfire love
Burns to ashes
And the hearth of love
Feeds patiently on our bodies
Flaming into a new warmth each day

As city fears sprout
And the rural nostalgia returns
Like the innocence of stolen fruit
Hymns smelling of smoke and too many bodies
The memory of growing like mielies in the yard

Or first love returning:
Like a good song
Hitting you in the chest

But love is a pain
We began to learn too early
As we grew older
As those that loved me
And laughed at my misery
Returned to miss me again
As I drifted away
Like a cloud within reach
A familiar smell in a strange place
Or the lives that pass us
In the night

But we will not cover our heads in ash

Too many times we have thrown loam
Over the fresh bodies of friends and strangers

Too many times we have laughed with fear
Too many times swallowed our hearts back
To where they belong

But through it all
A Black Christmas of rejoicing
The dusty storms of August
Through the cold mist of a working morning
Or the smoked smog that greets us home
We have learnt another bearing
Defiance in the midst of slavery
Pride in the heritage of ourselves
As the great drum,
Beaten leather of blood,
Talks to the night

Group Three: On Black Writers: Novels and Short Stories
with Lewis Nkosi and Farouk Asvat,
Holger Ehling, coordinator

Main points of discussion:

- Periodization of Black South African literature
- The demands on Black writers
- The specific influences of a heterogeneous readership on the production of literature
- The Black population's access to literature

1. Periodization of Black South African Literature

The group session started with a discussion about the complex situation of South African literature which turns the design of a literary history into an extremely demanding task. Such a literary history would have to cope with many problems, such as the incorporation of exile literature and the existence of various languages including their respective literary traditions. Even today South African literature is considered to be written only in Afrikaans and English.

Lewis Nkosi pointed out that classification and periodization should be based upon a close examination of the text and not of the intent. He added that this periodization is dangerous unless the correlation between historical movements (which are still to be defined) and literary development is considered. He detects a difference between fiction written by White writers who experiment with literary techniques and Black writers who are stuck (as he put it) in a crisis for the "lack of adventurous presentation" in short stories and novels. The move away from realism to abstract models (as presented in Coetzee's Waiting for the Barbarians) can't be detected in Black writing. There certainly is, however, a movement to be seen from La Guma's socialist realism or from explanatory writing (as propaganda) to a writer like Lauretta Ngcobo who sees no need for a propagandistic approach in her works. She provides a historical perspective which is based upon the assumption that everyone has already joined the political struggle.

This crisis in Black fiction is mainly due to the expectations of the various readerships (see 3.) and to the situation of the writers. They simply haven't got the time to indulge in literary finesse since many of them are active members in oppositional political movements.

The situation is essentially different with poetry which has changed under the influence of the BCM (Black Consciousness Movement). It has become very dynamic and self-assertive as the writings of

M.W. Serote show, whereas the poets of the 1950s, like D. Brutus and A. Nortje, still followed the tradition of English poetry. Poetry today expresses a new mood which is difficult to grasp and to define. This "emancipation" is mainly due to the fact that poetry can be disseminated quite easily, it is continuously present on political platforms and it can be performed (so the reception of literature doesn't require the ability to read). (Cf. report of Group I)

Nkosi made clear that there is a relationship between the struggle and the form. He defined the novel as a bourgeois and counter-revolutionary genre because even while dealing with revolutionary subjects it has to embark upon counter-revolutionary aspects and ideas. This dialogical (Bakhtin) constituent is not present in poetry. In an ideal marxist society the genre novel would be rendered superfluous; it would become obsolete.

2. The Demands on Black Writers

Farouk Asvat indicated that Black writers should go beyond the mere assertion that they are part of the struggle. As Nkosi put it: A theorization into the aesthetic production is needed; formalistically the genres must be enriched. Asvat pointed out that a journalistic or documentary approach in fiction is inappropriate because in a political sense, journalistic and documentary texts (like Nelson Mandela's or Steve Biko's writings) are far more efficient. So the Black authors should begin to work on their craft: They shouldn't confine themselves to writing explanatory and exhortative fiction.

3. The Specific Influences of a Heterogenous Readership on the Production of Literature in South Africa

English (a lingua franca in South Africa) as a medium in Black fiction certainly allows a large readership both within and outside South Africa to have access to the texts. But this implies that the author is constantly forced to explain facts contained in the novel which every South African reader would understand readily. In addition to that the Western readership expects Black writers to incorporate African languages in their works which would then have to be explained and translated. So the writer has to simplify his work to a certain degree. Prof. Kunene was quoted as saying that a Black writer has to adopt English to meet the White man's inability to speak an African language. He goes on to say that using English also raises problems of identity for those Black writers who at the same time try to be proletarian authors.

The choice of an African language certainly gives the writer the chance of reaching certain groups within the Black population in South Africa more easily. But this implies the danger of limitation to an ideological identification with the struggle which certainly must have a great influence on the shape of literary works.

So the writer constantly has to make up his mind about his readership which determines the choice of language and even the concept of the text. For him it's almost impossible to write fiction that can meet the demands both of a Western and a Black South African reader.

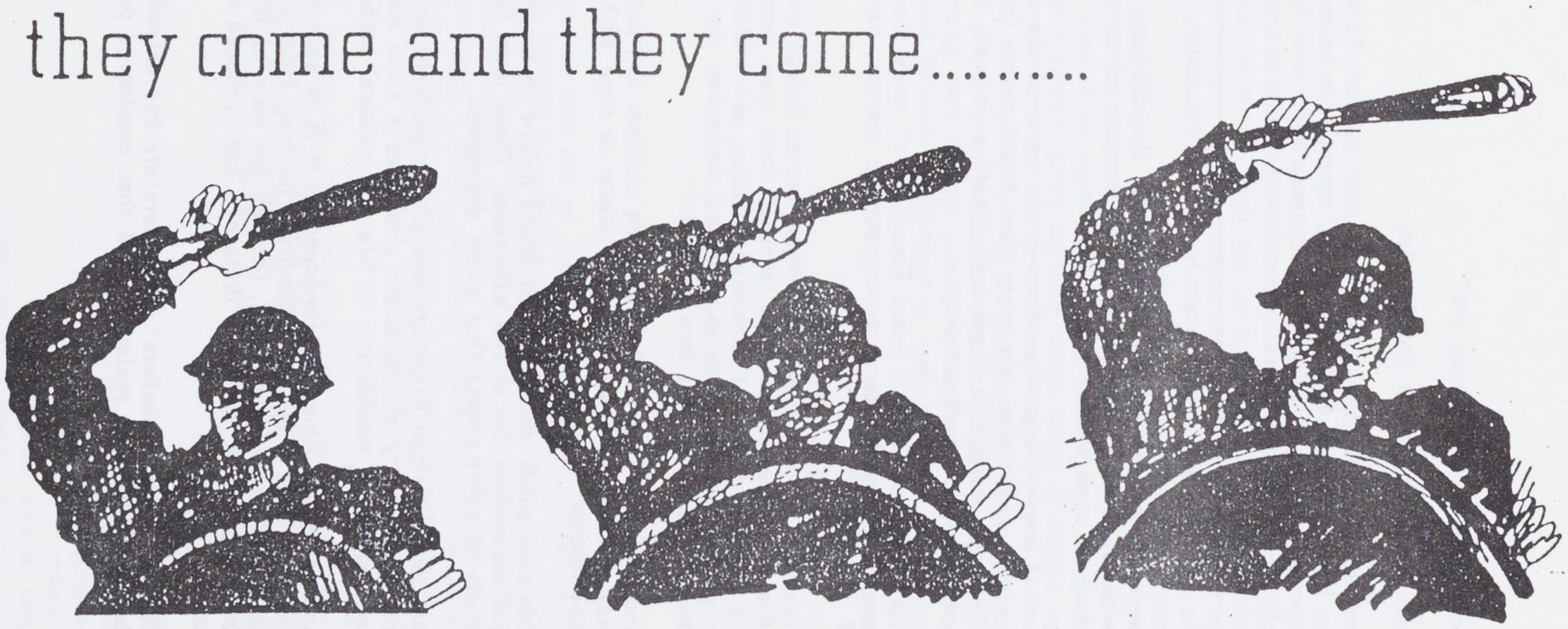
In spite of all its political implications, the choice of language shouldn't correlate to political ends only. Such limitations would exclude access to South African literary traditions which are deeply rooted in the various languages. The implication of these literary traditions would certainly enrich the South African literature. This also means that the language and the genre discussion can't be separated.

4. Access to Literature for the Black Population in South Africa

The lack of literacy restricts the number of readers among the Black population (especially in rural areas); but literacy is a more complex phenomenon than the simple ability to read and write: it also implies the ability to understand the intent and the message of fiction. So readings (poetry/fiction) and performances (drama) serve as effective means to disseminate literature in these areas. These modes of presentation also correspond to the Black tradition of story-telling which finds itself in opposition to the practice of reading.

In addition to that, it is quite expensive for Blacks to get hold of books if the low level of their average income is taken into consideration. Furthermore, most bookshops are also quite off the beaten track. They are mainly to be found in "White" areas.

Minutes compiled by Christopher Lepping



The Indicator, 22-31 May 1987

Black SA literature in the Eighties

When this article (the first in a series) by poet Farouk Asvat was first published in South Africa recently, it caused a stir in literary and political circles. It is controversial - and thought-provoking. It is meant to stimulate further debate. Readers are welcome to send their views.

The last two and a half years have been traumatic, to say the least.

People in the townships, and especially the children, underwent a tremendous amount of tragic experiences, quite often without the vocabulary to cope with it.

Even if many things were done in the name of the revolution, the concomitant suppression saw more than 3 000 people (mainly children) killed; and words like "canaries", "mellow-yellow", "hippos" and "necklaces", assumed new meanings.

Bizarre stickers like "I heart (haat) Alex" made their incongruous appearances, and became as common as teargas, toyi-toyi, and chants of "hayi! hayi!".

Thousands of people saw and smelt human beings actually being burnt alive in grotesque dances in front of their eyes, saw people being shot for throwing stones at armoured vehicles, saw children being hauled off to prison, and thousands experienced themselves the traumas of being abused, beaten up and incarcerated.

And even less than in the '70s, the children had nothing beyond the easy rhetoric handed out by politicians to cope with these shattering experiences.

And even small victories must sound hollow to these youngsters who find themselves out in the wilderness. There must be an amazing magnitude of sheer events that await expression.

But South African literature has always suffered under the illusion that the severity of oppression precludes it from vibrancy; that we are doomed to mediocrity: in life and political leadership, as in fiction.

And yet South America, enveloped as it is in endemic violence and isolation, with a mournful history stretching from pre-Columbian cultures to Spanish colonialism, through the wars of liberation to the terrible peace of countless dictators, has produced a fascinating literature.

Dubbed "magical realism", the literature has extended the power of the imagination to realms beyond that considered possible previously.

That is not to say that the tragic South African situation has not produced a nascent literature that in some cases has just begun to reflect the horrors and intricacies of the situation with a specifically Azanian perspective; that some of our writers are not beginning to move from the merely autobiographical and reflective to the creative; or that our writers have not continued writing in spite of the havocs of death, censorship, imprisonent, bannings and exile.

We need writing that comes out of the furnaces of our indigenous consciousness, away from the narrow constraints of most English writing and thinking that emanates from both sides of the Atlantic; away from the imposed traditions of modern African and much "third world" literature, where the oppressed are heroes, and the colonisers villains. Period.

Most South African literature suffers, even when good, from a very Western bias, reaching perhaps the nadir in an unpublished collection of the early Sixties where Marxist thoughts were voiced in Shakespearean iambic pentameter; from narrow nationalistic rhetoric; or lately from a romanticised Marxist-Leninism perspective.

But on the other hand, it would be ridiculous to say in the age of satellite communication - though many of our people still have to walk kilometres to crank a telephone in a white or indian shop - that Pablo Picasso's mural protest against the fascist bombing of a Basque town, the sheer horror of genius gone mad in "Apocalypse Now", the plaintive violin of Yehudi Menuhin, the brush strokes of Sequiros, the zest of Miriam Makeba, the sensitive portrayals in Satyajit Ray's "Devi", the musical genius of Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand), the joyous calypsos of Harry Belafonte, the plaintive musical streams of Mikis Theodorakis, or the intenseness of Wole Soyinka's prose, the involvement of Ngugi wa Thiong'o in the anti-neocolonialist war, the anguished ragas of Ravi Shankar, or the writings of Stratis Haviaris, Dumbudzo Marechera, Desmond Hogan and Wongar, did not influence us.

It would be even more tragic if we didn't let it. But they are just part of our broader vision, providing influences, support, and a worldview to our own, provincial experiences.

Whereas the early Seventies saw, with the advent of Black Consciousness, a resurgence of creativity and exploration, the early Eighties seem to be caught in the inertia of dogma, by the constraints of petty ideological warfare: narrow-minded nationalists pitted against strait-jacketed Stalinists.

It is perhaps a reflection of a nation finally brutalised by the strains of oppression, as our people indulge in wanton violence reminiscent of the undisciplined killings of the Khmer Rouge; or collapse into senseless actions symptomatic of much of South America: if you would only ask the mothers of the missing:

There are on the earth 50 000 dead
whom no one mourned
no one...
the mothers of Angola
died together with their sons

Costa Andrade.

But as much as literature should emanate from our experiences, we are faced, at present, with a retrogressive trend, where emergent and established writers expose themselves only to South African black writing, and at most to Africa south of the Sahara (as the desert creeps up on us).

They deny themselves the satire against Indira Gandhi's state of emergency in Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children", the anger against the violence of Ireland in Desmond Hogan's "Diamonds at the Bottom of the Sea" and "Children of Lir"; the desparate poetic love affair of Mahmoud Darwish with his Palestine in "The Music of Human Flesh"; and I think most of all to the wonder and sadness of South American literature, for it reflects so much of our own anguish and quest.

The Indicator (June 1987?)

Artist's Function is to master his Craft

This is the second article in a thought-provoking series on black South African literature by award-winning poet **Farouk Asvat.** The articles have sparked strong controversy in political and literary circles. Readers are invited to give their views.

The excuse is often made, both by black writers and white writers for black writers, that blacks are unable to produce anything substantial beside the odd poem in the heat of the night decrying their own chains, for the sheer degree of suppression, and for the more mundane needs of our daily lives.

But as Aggrey Klaaste said recently in his column in The Sowetan: "People have written some of the most wonderful stuff under worse conditions than we will ever dream of. Artists have stinged themselves of bread and shelter to get these things out of their system, and either collapsed into obscurity, or into posthumous prominence."

Or as Njabulo Ndebele says in his review "Turkish Tales and Some Thoughts on SA Fiction" in Staffrider: "If we want to struggle to a genuinely democratic future, then we must be prepared to subject everything to rigorous intellectual scrunity followed by open and fearless discussion... The future is too demanding on us to feel sorry for ourselves."

Before Gabriel Garcia Marquez wrote "The Autumn of the Patriarch", he spent more than 12 years reading about dictators, travelling the Caribbean islands.

Carlos Fuentes wrote "Where the Air is Clear" "in four years while finishing law school, working at the University of Mexico, getting drunk every night, and dancing the mambo". Pablo Neruda spent 12 years writing his epic poem "The Height of Macchu Picchu".

And yet, our writers are wont to publish the day after they have written a story.

The other common misnomer is that oppression prevents good writing: a fallacy born of justification, no doubt. Good literature appeals to all our senses of emotion, logic, truth, aesthetics, beauty, emerging from our everyday lives and struggles, even if manifest in very ugly situations.

Since unfortunately we are faced with oppression and its white manifestation, it is just as well that writers and artists exploit the situation to our advantage (as we proceed with the more mundane mechanics of liberation), so our writing could even under the severest conditions attain in beauty and killing power an inverse proportion to the degree of tyranny.

Another common fault with SA black writers, which obviously upsets them a lot, is their lack of dedication to their craft, as they are the first to point out that art is for life's sake.

They seem by and large quite satisfied to read peripherally, provincially and politically; they seem to give the briefest thought to a poem or short story, churn it out, send it for publication, and the worst part is that it does get published without merit quite often, just because it comes out of a township.

And this is destroying the art, or at best leaving it stagnant. Marquez says: "I don't think you can write a book that's worth anything without extraordinary discipline."

Having chosen to write, an artist's function is to master his craft. Ravi Shankar said he had to practise every day on the sitar for 15 years to just begin to learn to play; painters endeavour to daily learn the myriad subtle differences in colour, stroke, shade, to feel, seize, penetrate, to abandon; so why are our writers excluded?

Both carpentry and writing "are very hard work... with both you are working with reality... both are full of tricks and techniques. Basically very little magic and a lot of hard work are involved."

Or as jazz trumpeter Winston Marsalis says: "I studied classical music because so many black musicians were scared of this big monster on the other side of the mountain called classical music. I wanted to know what it was that scared everyone. I went into it and found out it wasn't anything but some more music."

It is essential that our creative writers understand that to be genuinely committed to the development of our people in a political sense means an equally genuine commitment to the demands of their art.

That they realise, like Neruda did, that poetry is a full-time occupation; that "it has been the privilege of our time - with its wars, revolutions and tremendous social upheavals - to cultivate more ground for poetry than anyone had ever imagined".

The Indicator, 28-31 July 1987

Looking at "Third World" and European literary Perspectives

This is the third in a four-part series on Black SA Writing in the Eighties by **Farouk Asvat.**

Before dealing with South African writing of the past five years, some European and "Third World" perspectives in world literature, pertaining to our paradigm, have to be dealt with.

The broad groupings of English literature as it affects the oppressed nations will fall perhaps into six main groupings:

- One that is essentially racist or at best condescending, with obviously no understanding of our world, and we shall go no further with the ilks of Wilbur Smith and Robert Ruark.

- Built perhaps on the old exotic racism of Shakespeare's "Othello" (a provincial reaction to something strange), comes a literature with modern perspectives, obviously empathic, but one that remains the outsider's view: where the natives remain peripheral, obedient servants mostly, props for the white man's stories - as Joseph Conrad displays in "A Heart of Darkness", "Victory" and "Nostromo"; or as Graham Greene's heroes struggle not only for their lives but their souls in "The Heart of the Matter", and "The Power and the Glory".

These are all rather "objective" portrayals, without the anguish of Mishima committing harakiri or Marechera trying to exorcise his ghosts.

Faulkner is perhaps the only Western novelist in the 20th century who has the same sense of defeat and loss that we have.

- The other is an "insider's" view, written in the third world, with a third world setting, with an attempt to be sympathetic to its pains, but with a somewhat tubular vision (limited by exposure), with an essentially European literary perspective: by white writers like Nadine Gordimer ("Occasion for Loving", "A Guest of Honour"), or Eurasians like Ruth Praver Jhabvalla ("Heat and Dust").

- But does our literature exclude European writers, with no hold in the third world, writing about their own country, with an oppressed perspective: as Desmond Hogan's sparse, evocative intensity of vision displays in "Children of Lir", or Stratis Haviaris in "The Tree Sings", and perhaps Milan Kundera's difficult pursuit of happiness in a totalitarian state.

- In contrast with the above is the writer from the colonized or neo-colonized world, who frowns upon his own heritage. V.S. Naipaul flourishes in a denial of his own culture and background in "Guerrilla", "A Bend in the River", and "In a Free State", a perspective already evident in his early short stories; or writes with an essentially Eurocentric vision like R.K. Narayan; or writes about his world with a view to the exotic for a western audience, as Salman Rushdie does in "Midnight's Children" and "Shame".

- But then we come to writers from our world, who write about their lives, usually with excruciating pain and torment, with a perspective ingrained from their own cultures: B. Wongar's deep savage irony, combined with the ancient incantatory songs of the Aborigenes plangently mourning the genocide of their people in "The Track to Bralgu"; the shatteringly beautiful and valedictory sadness of Yukio Mishima's "The Sea of Fertility"; Dumbudzo Marechera's verbal acidity and vulnerability in his sardonic tales of madness, violence and despair in "The House of Hunger"; George Lammings's claustrophic intensity of life in "Natives of my Person"; Wole Soyinka's searing prose emanating from solitary confinement in "The Man Died"; Ngugi wa Thiong'o's blending of the modern and the liberation struggle with the personal and the traditional in "Petals of Blood"; the poems of Mao Andrade; or the stories of Yusuf Idris in "The Cheapest Nights": writers who are or were actively involved in the political and day-to-day struggles of their people.

(The Indicator, August 1987?)

The problems with South African fiction

by Farouk Asvat

The last in a series on black South African literature in the eighties.

Black South African fiction is faced with several constraints: the most damaging has been the state of censorship that has existed over the past few decades, but which has gone largely unchallenged in terms of fiction itself, except for the regular mouthings of liberal protest sentiments.

Writers and artists have also had to deal with the prescriptions of both the politicians and the publishers. Politicians on the left have tended to prescribe what "relevant" literature should be about, and writers themselves have not faced up to the challenge of opposing this, or explaining the contributory role that literature can play.

Publishers on the other hand have been bogged down by their Western perceptions of "subtlety" and "objectivity"; their need to service universities; or by pure mercenary objectives; and have refrained from taking on anything off the beaten track, anything innovative, or anything controversial.

So that reviewing black South African literature of the 80s has been largely a journey through nostalgia, as a host of publishers got old books off the banning list and played it safe; writers that were published previously had their new books undertaken; and emergent writers remained unpublished or had to publish their own stuff. So that our published fiction remains largely autobiographical, journalistic fact-fiction, based poorly on the socialist-realism school.

Because so often our people fall into the sad trap of cultural colonialism where it is impossible to convince South Africans themselves that their literature is good until the outside world tells us that it is good. And unfortunately, many of our writers are more concerned with fame and political "acceptability" than with the development of their own work.

But we are faced with another challenge: to find out what emanates from our suffering, what creative thinking processes (not necessarily fiction) are blossoming in our ghettoes and our rural impoverishments. For there exists in our midst a tangle of broken traditions - cultures destroying themselves, or being destroyed by the white man - and a mist of new ideas, befogged by staid ideologues. But it is out of this very tangle of events and this morning mist that an African and Azanian consciousness must begin to form itself.

Because fiction remains the artifice of transforming old realities into new ones, writers and artists must create a new reality, not merely mirror it.

We have been exposed to many cultures, both the indigenous and the external: both the Western, and that brought by the slaves and identured labourers. We have to learn these cultures, and we have to appropriate writers of other traditions in order to fill the void.

All of Asia, Latin America and Africa have been fooled by the illusion of progress; even though Western culture has been essentially destructive and rapacious. And like most of the "third" world we live in a continent where the novel is a recent development, where many things have been left unsaid.

So we have to look back on our tradition which is rich in religious and cultural imagery, at our sad and proud history of struggle; and we have to look at this hope in our hearts, for often that is all we have. For our political life is fragmented and our history shot through with failure. But our cultural tradition is rich, if only we will seek it. The time is at hand when we will have to look at our own faces, our own past: look into the mirror, and look at these masks we have created.

For we do have an oral culture to fall back on, even though we have no historians of note; few records of traditional songs; no scholars delving into the mystery of the past; a written literature that is nascent, going back less than a century. And yet, when we sit down to write, we must feel the whole of our tradition in our bones: a tradition that extends from Homer to Themba; Imbongi to Shakespeare; from Mishima to Marquez; Khoi-Khoi paintings to Picasso; from warriors to guerillas.

The challenges that confront us are many. And that is the challenge we face today: to create our own myths based entireiy on the truth, for myths are a tradition, myths breathe, myths nourish the epics.

We have to decipher the environment, to separate the essential elements of a poetic synthesis from an environment we know all too well. And we have to learn the craft of writing: the techniques, the carpentry. "To find probabilities out of real facts is the work of the journalist and the novelist, and it is also the work of the prophet."

I think writers are pretty powerful, because people eventually come to believe their writers more than their politicians; because the function of the true artists has always been the keeper of the truth, like The-Keeper-of-the-History in our traditional society: a most harrowing task, with a great sense of responsibility, but one that is also most challenging and imperative. But unfortunately in they want, but about what they think they should want, bringing forth a certain type of calculated literature that doesn't have anything to do with experience, intuition, or honesty.

As Marquez said, in a statement very pertinent to all the favourite arguments bandied about here: "I have a great many reservations about

what came in Latin America to be called 'committed literature'... the novel of social protest ... This is mainly because I think its limited view of the world and life does not help achieve anything in political terms."

Far from accelerating any process of raising consciousness, it actually slows it down. Latin Americans expect more from a novel than an exposé of the oppression and injustice they know all too well. Many of my militant friends who so often feel the need to dictate to writers what they should or should not write are, unconsciously perhaps, taking a reactionary stance inasmuch as they are imposing restrictions on creative freedom.

"I believe a novel about love is as valid as any other. When it comes down to it, the writer's duty - his revolutionary duty if you like - is to write well."

But there is an extraordinary potential for vitality in the process of liberation by the oppressed, arising perhaps partly from the fact that oppressive regimes bring forth extraordinary heroes, and extraordinary circumstances that lend themselves to new visions for the future of mankind.

Radinycka Mosaka, 'Dancing Starvation Away', Drawing

A Celebration of Flames

by Farouk Asvat

Do not disturb
The sancity of my home
When you throw a molotov
Through the shattered pain:

All over the land

Children, put your mothers out
Raze their homes
In a celebration of flames
And acrid tyres smelling of life
Build a bonfire of ashes
Ululating with delight,
And then
Without name or face
Bury yourselves,
If you still possess the skin of shame

And you,
Flaunting the tribal feathers of liberation
And you, assuming the crown,
In purple robes of piety
Or golden robes of rhetoric,
Make glib statements
Counting score
Of dead and maimed
Amongst our own
On rosaries that flame with burning flesh

What are we
Reduced to?
What insanity
Now drives my people
From the fires
Of liberation
To the corpses of doom
Writhing
In the dance
Of a final
Farewell.

All around me I see ruin.
The ruin of land
The ruin of people

Convoys of dusty hippos
Patrol the blood-laden streets
Of another jungle
Shooting innocent blood:

Children contorted in happy games
Mothers shot in the moment of birth
Virgins driven to a lonely veld
Echoing with the madness of their lives

And you, my brother,
Do not stir in your rotten grave
Lie awake and wonder
How they deny your naked ghost
Tied to a chain
For Azania is up in flames again
And even your friends do not remember
The anguish of its dreams

And you, son of the soil,
Do not ponder too long
Let the gods keep you there
In your heaven of so many sorrows
For so few
Carry burning memories
Of a feverish uprising
That history books have forgotten

And you, my comrade,
Do not pace too many times
For they do many things in your name
Carry you on bright banners
So you can roam your cage in agitation
And watch a country burn
To cinders of despair
In the anthem of the revolution

After All These Years

by Farouk Asvat

- a letter to a friend wherever she may be -

Anger swells
Like an explosion
In the chest

But it is too late
To change lives now.
Love is a strange feeling
I left behind
In the disturbances of youth;
The tiger will not let me off
And the hyena cannot stop laughing
As the hippo rides the streets

Besides, we are too learned now
To go back to the source

After all these years
The emerald dazzle has softened,
Your eyes have black sediments,
And I have aged in my youth:

Oh how the years wasted our lives
How our tongues could not speak
The language of our hearts
How we barricaded
Behind the myths of our upbringings.

Hearing the Children Cry

Hearing the children cry
Is music
To the silence of blank faces
Hearing the child in solitary
Is better than not knowing
That the child's nightmare
Is better than the cold
Silence of death

by Farouk Asvat

Group Four: Case Studies on Language:
Sipho Sepamla, B.W. Vilakazi, Alex La Guma
with Vernon February,
Vusi D. Mchunu, coordinator

Our central aim was to illustrate the plurality and the vast possibilities within the linguistic and cultural situation inside South Africa. The first poem to be analysed was "Come duze baby" by poet and novelist Sipho Sepamla. It has been recently read during the "1820 Settlers Festival in Grahamstown", where the author stated, "If there are people who don't understand this poem, then they'll seriously have to reflect on their South Africanness."

The poem is in Flaaitaal, formerly derisively referred to as "Tsotsitaal", but now fast becoming in the towns a vibrant means of communication between peoples of various language groups inside South Africa. To illustrate the brilliant and manifold possibilities open to the black writer linguistically, we identified a number of features from the poem: 114 expressions in Afrikaans, 40 expressions in English, 13 expressions in vernacular (10 in Zulu, 2 in Southern Sotho, 1 in Tsonga). It became evident that these town dialects are becoming the language of cultural resistance, for example the usage of vivid metaphors:

Come duze baby	-	Zulu; come closer to me, be part of me; this renders the poem a love poem
zwakala daarso	-	Zulu; listen, the usual term is yizwa la
notch	-	English; notice (slang)
met my 'm'	-	Afrikaans; moeder Southern Sotho; Mme
weetie	-	English; witty, clever
ntanjana	-	Zulu; string, trendy tie
washout	-	English; washed out
my hart maak shandies	-	Afrikaans; my heart is playing havoc with me
wala wala	-	Zulu slang; talk too much

Flaaitaal is an important social tool for creative expression. Its reliance on Afrikaans as a medium for progressive literature is a blow to Afrikaners (the Boers) who regard the purity of their

language as something which defines their cultural identity. The linguistic flexibility and vitality of this poem come through when contrasted with the Langenhoven (Afrikaner poet) poem which was adopted by the Boers as their national anthem:

"Uit die blou van onse hemel
uit die diepte van ons see"

The rigidity in form here alludes to the national ethnicitiy of this group. They have isolated themselves from the rest of the world and try to impose a "pure" language on the majority black population. However, the free flow of Zulu, Sotho, Afrikaans and English in the poem "Come duze baby" indicates that the majority population is searching for new linguistic forms.

Our group then turned its attention to the poem "Impophoma yeVictoria" by the Zulu poet and teacher of languages, B.W. Vilakazi. We identified and isolated a number of features common to Bantu languages:

1. tone
2. concordial relationship
3. alliteration of style
4. ideophones

This is a poem to be heard from the mouth of an oral poet, an imbongi. The Zulu language lends itself to meaningful alliteration and reproduction of associative sound. For this reason the sound "Impophoma yeVictoria" is in strong contrast to "Victoria Falls". The development of phonetic imagery in performed pieces of Zulu literature is boosted by ideophones.

It is some of these features which shape the emerging Flaaitaal. And all this is taking place outside the consciousness of whites in the country, since they are by and large not part of the ideological aspirations of the black masses. The question to be posed here is how will a national literature flourish when in South Africa linguistic barriers entrenched in the racist philosophy are still a reality?

Last but not least, we worked out a brief synopsis of the novella, "A walk in the night" by the late novelist and editor, Alex La Guma. He wrote in the language of urban ghetto dwellers in the now destroyed District Six in Cape Town. Since this language has elements of Xhosa, Khoisan, Afrikaans and English, one is tempted to ask whether La Guma writes in English or in Anglikaans? La Guma's language is a socio-lect in which Afrikaans and English are inseparable. The language of force is enshrined in the commands of Constable Raalt in the novella, who derides ghetto inhabitants by calling them: meid (Afrikaans; woman), donder (Afrikaans; wretch).

In this novella is reflected the linguistic development of a community exposed to a number of languages and dialects. South African literature

arises out of this socio-linguistic context. To rewrite this novella in standard English would be to remove it from its social origins. As a social-realist, La Guma is sensitive to his linguistic environment.

A suggestion came that our group should consider the emergence of a regular language in South Africa, incorporating Nguni, Sotho-Tswana, Tsonga-Venda and Afrikaans as a future national language. English would remain the second official language. However, the discussion got no further since we ran short of time.

Minutes compiled by Vusi D. Mchunu

South African Dialogue

Morning Baas,
Baas,
Baas Kleinbaas says,
I must come and tell
Baas that,
Baas Ben's Baasboy says,
Baas Ben want to see
Baas Kleinbaas if
Baas don't use
Baas Kleinbaas,
Baas.

Tell
Baas Kleinbaas that,
Baas says,
Baas Kleinbaas must tell
Baas Ben's Baasboy that,
Baas Ben's Baasboy must tell
Baas Ben that,
Baas says,
If Baas Ben want to see
Baas Kleinbaas,
Baas Ben must come and see
Baas Kleinbaas here.

Thank you
Baas.
I'll tell
Baas Kleinbaas that,
Baas says,
Baas Kleinbaas must tell
Baas Ben's Baasboy that,
Baas Ben's Baasboy must tell
Baas Ben that,
Baas says,
If Baas Ben want to see
Baas Kleinbaas,
Baas Ben must come and see
Baas Kleinbaas here,
Baas.
Goodbye Baas.

Baas Kleinbaas,
Baas says,
I must come and tell
Baas Kleinbaas that,
Baas Kleinbaas must tell
Baas Ben's Baasboy that,
Baas Ben's Baasboy must tell
Baas Ben that,
Baas says,
If Baas Ben want to see
Baas Kleinbaas,
Baas Ben must come and see
Baas Kleinbaas here,
Baas Kleinbaas.

Baasboy,
Tell Baas Ben that,
Baas Kleinbaas says,
Baas says,
If Baas Ben want to see me
(Kleinbaas)
Baas Ben must come and
See me (Kleinbaas) here.

Thank you
Baas Kleinbaas,
I'll tell
Baas Ben that,
Baas Kleinbaas says,
Baas says,
If Baas Ben want to see
Baas Kleinbaas,
Baas Ben must come and see
Baas Kleinbaas here,
Baas Kleinbaas.
Goodbye
Baas Kleinbaas.

Baas Ben,
Baas Kleinbaas says,
I must come and tell
Baas Ben that,
Baas says,
If Baas Ben want to see
Baas Kleinbaas,
Baas Ben must come and see
Baas Kleinbaas there,
Baas Ben.
Baas Ben,
Baas Be-ne . . .
Baas Ben
Goodbye
Baas Ben.

MOTSHILE WA NTHODI

WE SHALL SING FOR THE FATHERLAND
DARK VOICES RING
DEAD END

Zakes Mda's work is acutely concerned with South Africa at the crossroads. Elements of history, contemporary experience and the future are combined in these plays to present a powerful dramatic statement.

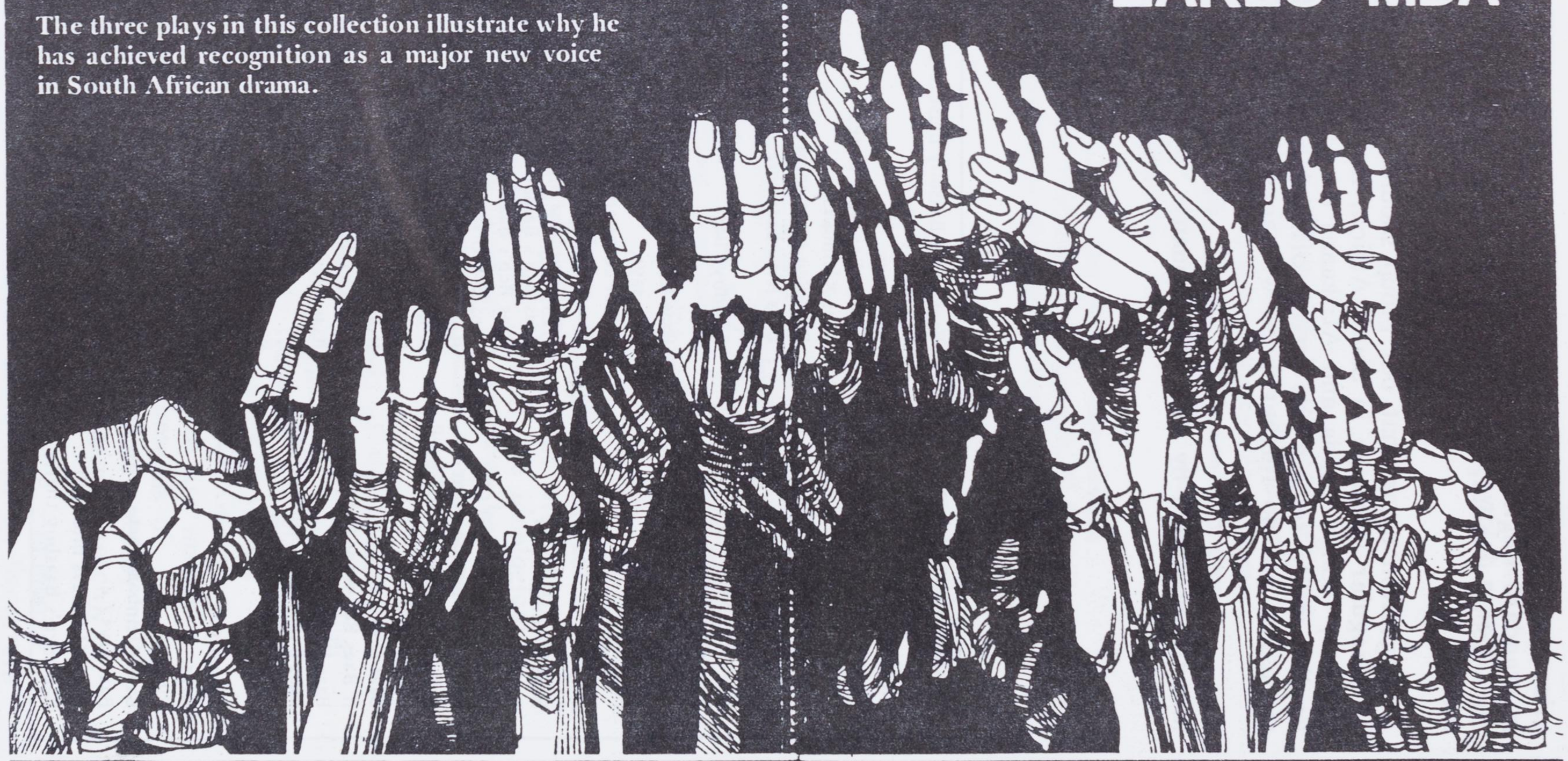
Zakes Mda has won awards for both *We Shall Sing for the Fatherland* and his recent play about migrant workers in Lesotho, *The Hill*.

The three plays in this collection illustrate why he has achieved recognition as a major new voice in South African drama.

Ravan Playscripts
ISBN 0 86975 197 2
Ravan Press/Johannesburg

WE SHALL SING FOR THE FATHERLAND
AND OTHER PLAYS

ZAKES MDA



RAVAN PLAYSCRIPTS 6

Group Six: Theatre and Politics in South Africa
with Prof. Jacques Alvarez-Péreyre,
Robert Kriger, coordinator

In his introduction, Robert Kriger gave a brief history of Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre's work and publications (main work: "Poetry of Committment in South Africa") and expressed his thanks that Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre was able to attend the conference.

The ensuing paper by Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre, which incidentally is to be expanded and revised and will be published at a later date in a collection of essays by French, British and South African scholars and playwrights, turned out to be a wide-ranging introduction to the topic of the relationship between Black Theatre and politics, and raised a number of points which could unfortunately not be discussed in more detail due to lack of time at the end of the paper.

His interest in Black Theatre, and an awareness of its importance, first started during work on his doctoral dissertation "Apartheid and Committed Poetry in South Africa" in the 1970's. Black Theatre at that time was mainly a collage or montage of poetry, songs and dance. Whilst researching committed works from the 1890's to 1976 he became aware that theatre as a genre had grown tremendously over the years. These considerations were later formulated in a paper given in 1984 at a conference of English lecturers in France (see Annexure 1).(An updated version will appear in the above-mentioned book of essays.) Since then he has concentrated on Black Committed Theatre in South Africa, although he is aware of the existence of collaborationist theatre and commercial theatre.

During his studies of South African theatre he came across a puzzling sentence in an article by Owen Williams "Theatre in South Africa", published in Contrast No. 13 (Dec. '65). In this, Williams says:

> "The first thing to note about the South African Theatre is that as an indigenous, revitalizing force it simply does not exist."

This sounded strange to him since he was already aware of works, which were mentioned later, and he knew that committed Black poetry preceeded the present period by far, and that the same applied with Black Drama. The article then goes on:

> "On the other hand, a feeling for drama, a need for the stage is part of an ancient, primordial impulse. It is a hardy plant which seeks ground to grow in. It is irresistible, it cannot be resisted even here in time. One can only wait.";

and concludes:

> "The picture then of South African Theatre is a bleak and grey one, shot through with as few flashes of light and colour."

Looking back, this is prophetic, and may redeem the inadequacies of the first statement, although Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre still questions its non-existence as an indigenous, revitalizing force. 22 years later he received an article on "White Playwrights in South Africa Today" by Stephen Gray. At the end of this the author widens the scope to cover the theatre as a whole, and says:

"Slowly in the last 10 years, as constrictions on the Arts have tightened, audiences have become faced with this irony. Theatre is now the dominant literary form, while less immediate media like the novel have dwindled in news-bearing importance, and the minority art form like poetry has become virtually irrelevant. Perhaps in embattled conditions theatre is the hardiest form. (cf. Williams) When voices need to be heard in the Arts and there's no place for more individualistic literary activities, theatre's great strength, magnified many times by the sparsity of discussion elsewhere, remains its solidarity with its living audience. Although outsiders might never fully know what is being said in this new language of spectacle, ritual and protest, no South African is unable to read between the lines, understand the pauses." *

There is only one thing to question here, whether a "... minority art form like poetry is virtually irrelevant."? There is ample evidence of a renewal of poetry, not so much published poetry as before, but oral deliveries are accelerating daily.

In connection with Williams' first sentence Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre quoted an article by H.I.E. Dhlomo, "Drama and the African" (see Annexure 2), published almost 30 years previously in October 1936 in "South African Outlook" (a Christian progressive review).

> "The development of African Drama can't purely be from African roots. It must be grafted in Western drama. It must borrow form, be inspired by, shoot from European dramatic art forms and be tainted by exotic influences. The African dramatist should not fear being mocked as an imitator of European art. Only he should write and produce his plays as he feels. His work should be marked by his own soul and individuality, for in drama, as in life, it is not so much what is done, as how it is done."

He then goes on to consider the question of an African national dramatic movement. Should Africans develop their own exclusive, national dramatic and theatrical movement, distancing from, competing with and opposed to the European dramatic movement? The

*This article was commissionned by EUROPE magazine for its April 1988 special issue on South African Literatures co-edited by Prof. Ampie Coetzee and Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre.

article finishes with a statement, which in the opinion of Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre is most important for African playwrights.

> "The African dramatist has an important part to play. In the story of African travail, birth and progress lies an inexhaustible source of African literary and dramatic creation. We want African playwrights who will dramatize and expound the philosophy of our history. We want dramatic representations of African oppression, emancipation and evolution."

Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre then formulated his main statement on the topic, namely that theatre and poetry are the spearhead of creative production in a pre-revolutionary society, but also in a situation of minor, localised civil war. (The term minor is questionable, as Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre pointed out.)

He then moved on to a consideration of some of Peter Horn's poetry. He had questioned Horn on the type of audiences, public and language he experienced in South Africa. In his reply Horn mentioned

> "... a strange kind of rapport between you and the audience, and any weakness in the poet shows up immediately. Canto 1, by example, has gone through endless revisions as it is one of the poems most in demand. Every reading has prompted changes!"

A part of his "Civil War Cantos" was read by Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre, and he emphasized the strength that such a poem would make when read to an audience of perhaps 6000.

Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre then moved directly into the field of theatre today with a discussion of Maisha Maponya's play "Gangsters". The play was first produced two years ago and since then a part of the play has been rewritten, or rather reorganized. It is a mixture of poetry and strict drama, though both are closely linked.

In the first version of the play the scenes alternate between the cell and the interrogation room. In this version it is the major and Rasechaba who recite pieces of poetry to show how inflammatory these are.

In the second version of the play the poems are placed at the beginning, and are not read, but actually performed to give an idea of the rapport between the audience and the performer, and to vividly show just how inflammatory the poems are. According to the stage directions the first 3 poems are to be recited in the auditorium, suggesting a public performance. The main character is now female, "Mother Africa", "Masechaba". "The readings should not be rigid, but rather the poet should move about

depending on the mood of the poem." The second interesting point here is that the poet's language is now a mixture of various African languages, as well as English.

The concern and objectives with the present situation leads to another playwright, artist, poet, Zakes Mda (perhaps one of the most original playwrights of the day). The play itself, "BITS of DEBRIS", looks like poetry and is actually interspersed with dances. Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre saw a close relationship between Mda's "WE SHALL SING FOR THE FATHERLAND" and some of Ngugi's dramatical works in Kenya. On the other hand, Mda's play "DARK VOICES RING", takes place in and deals with the rural community (like Matshoba's "SEEDS OF WAR"), a new development since previously short-stories, novels and poetry had come out and were addressed to an audience living in urban or peri-urban (township) areas.

Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre then moved on to a discussion of Agitprop theatre. He cited the example of the Maratholi Travelling Theatre, an extension of the National University of Lesotho. In the introduction to the booklet edited by Zakes Mda, one can read the following:

> "Its goal was to initiate and support community developments and self-help programs through the use of drama. The target areas were rural communities in the Roma Valley and the Lesotho Institute of Correction. Between 1982 and 1985 the project produced a number of plays dealing with such themes as reforestation, cooperative societies and the rehabilitation of prisoners. These plays were successfully performed in the target areas and most of them were broadcast over Radio Lesotho for a wider audience."

The theatre group makes use of three methods, one of which is Agitprop. Although the Agitprop productions are prepackaged, the theatre is oriented towards the people:

> "The actors respond to local situations and work along the five-step precedure of information gathering in the target communities, information analysis, story improvisation, rehearsal and finally community performances.
>
> In Agitprop the level of critical awareness on specific themes, e.g. family planning, nutrition, human rights, sanitation, etc., may not be very high since these issues are raised outside the community. Another weakness of this method is that there is no community participation and spectators become consumers of the finished product, though post-performance discussions may lead to individual action on a short-term basis. Maratholi Travelling Theatre will continue to use the Agitprop method when necessary, but the dominant methods will be known as Participatory Theatre and Theatre for Conscientization."

Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre apologised that he had no time to go into the topic of worker plays in Natal, and especially in the Durban area, nor into that of Black Afrikaans Theatre, but recommended a very interesting booklet called "Swart Afrikaanse Skrywers", edited by Julian F. Smith, Hein Willemse and Alwyn van Genesen for the University of the Western Cape. One article especially, by Beverly Jansen was extremely illuminating regarding the use of Afrikaans, coming not 10 years after the Soweto uprising.

> "Later I came to realise that workers on the farms speak Afrikaans. ... I became aware of the fact that if I wanted to identify with the struggle of the working class I had to speak, understand and write the language we all know."

The final point touched upon by Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre was a question which had already been raised by Prof. Lewis Nkosi, i.e. the respective importance of craft and message in a revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situation. Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre hopes that one day South Africans will be in a position to escape from the fatality of having to be under the burden of saying something and at the same time trying to be poetical.

In this connection Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre's final reference was to Dikobe wa Mogale's article entitled "Art is not neutral". This is the sort of situation where the poet wants to convey something but still can't help being poetical. Prof. Alvarez-Péreyre then read a short piece of Mogale's poetry.

The brief discussion at the end of the session concentrated on the influence, if any, of European and other Western drama theories (Brecht's and Grotowski's) which may have filtered through into Southern Africa and are known by playwrights working in these geographical areas.

Minutes compiled by Andrew Holdsworth

Annexure 1:

Black Committed Theatre in South Africa*

A great number of plays have been produced by black South Africans since the late sixties (1). This is hardly surprising in the present context of oppression and struggle which calls for the eradication of apartheid. Yet, very little has found its way into print, and what has, has already been performed successfully at home or abroad. So, just as black committed theatre is only one among the many manifestations of black cultural resistance (2), the plays one can read represent only the tip of the iceberg.

What one misses, from the mere examination of the texts, is the very atmosphere in which the theatre thrives everywhere, but particularly in societies where struggle and conflict prevail: the communal ritual of live performances, with the subtle interplay between its various constituants, and the thinnest of distance between the stage and the world immediately outside or around. By no stretch of the imagination can one fully grasp the innuendoes, the little gestures, winks of the eyes and general facial and bodily expression which can emphasize, or destroy, what has just been said. So many private jokes can be shared with an audience fully conversant in the language that is spoken (3), linked as its members are by the political circumstances which govern their lives. Most of these are lost to the reader.

Yet, enough of the character of this theatre comes through to enable one to see that a cultural weapon is being wielded to foster unity and solidarity. Whatever the name one gives to it, "theatre of the oppressed" or "theatre of the dispossessed", where the emphasis is on the originators and agents of the plays, or else "theatre of survival and liberation", and "theatre of the fist", where one refers particularly to objectives and manner, the key-word underlying all is struggle.

Pressured by circumstances affecting their very existence, even non-professionals are moved to create and enact their predicament in dramatic form. A good example of this "theatre of urgency" (Augusto Boal) is Imfuduso (Made to Move) which came into being at the end of 1978. Women from the Crossroads squatter camp, threatened with eviction for not having the documents enabling them to stay with their husbands, were arrested after a demonstration against BAAB (Bantu Authorities Administration Board) officials, then released, only to be deported in their majority to the Transkei. Most of them came back and refused to move in spite of the repeated destruction of their shacks. About fifteen women belonging to this group enacted what had happened to them, both to "let the world know how we are living here", and to "teach us to show what we are". They contributed to attract international attention, and Crossroads was granted a reprieve pending consultations with Dr Koornhof, the Minister of Plural Relations and Development (4). The play, devised by the women themselves, develops in a linear way: 13 scenes highlight the main events of the forced exodus and voluntary return, while a hymn brings the play to an end. In its first version it lasted for two hours; it was subsequently shortened and after two performances in a Crossroads school hall, was shown at the Space Theatre Cape Town, and the Market Theatre, Johannesburg. In Orlando East, one of the Soweto townships, it was shown during the meeting of the Committee of Ten (5). Thousands of raised fists saluted the entrance of the women who played as they had never done before to an enthusiastic, already politicised audience which burst spontaneously into the African hymn 'Nkosi Sikelel' Afrika' (6).

This is really theatre at the grassroots, fulfilling its role of welding a community together, increasing its fighting spirit as well as serving as a memo of resistance to the younger ones, on the very spot and at the time needed for the occasion. Such performances mostly go unrecorded and belong to the domain of oral tradition (7).

There seems to exist only a few examples of such a form of theatre which is closest to what one might call "proletarian theatre". Tomaselli relates the birth of Ilanga, in which strikers who had to appear in court re-enacted, first for their lawyer and then to the judge, the incidents which had led to the conflict with their employers (8). Another example can be found in a recent labour bulletin which mentions a play put on and performed at the annual meeting of MAWU (Metal and Allied Workers Union) of the Dunlop factory in Durban:

> Most impressive... was that the workers could take their stories, their experiences, and turn them into such a potent cultural product. During the previous ten weeks they met after work, or before night-shift, and workshopped the scenes together with some of the people that made Ilanga on the East Rand.
>
> As one of the workers stated after the play, 'We made people laugh and cry. We showed them something they understand. We made them think. Life and struggle have many sides (9).

* * *

To make people think, and become more aware of their responsibilities in the perpetuation of the system, but also of their possible role in the struggle, i.e., no longer watching with a degree of self-pity the evils inflicted on them by apartheid. To 'disalienate' and decolonise the minds. To lash at the escapists, gradualists and procrastinators of all kinds, let alone the direct collaborators of the regime. To make the blacks proud of their heritage, their history, their traditions. All this can be found in all forms of committed writing, hence in the committed plays, whether they be created, directed and acted by non-professionals or professionals. Among the latter one finds such playwrights as Gibson Kente, Fatima Dike, Adam Small, Matsemela Manaka, Maishe Maponya, Makwedini Mtsaka, Zakes Mofokeng, Ronnie Govender... .

Gibson Kente is at the precise point where commercial and committed theatre meet. He is primarily a showman with a forte for music - he composes his own lyrics - and all his plays are characterized by rhythm and pace.

Kente founded his own company in the mid-sixties. He devised a formula which seemed to work and suit the public: a combination of song, dance, and drama, with scenes and characters taken from the townships, showing their daily lives with a mixture of humour and pathos.

In 1973, under the influence of Black Consciousness, Kente gave his plays a greater political import without altering his style: his trilogy, How Long, I Believe and Too Late, caused him trouble with the police - and the censors (10). Like many other black artists, journalists, writers and Black Consciousness militants, he was detained in 1977 for two and a half months. After his release, his productions, like those of his colleagues, suffered from the whims of the all-powerful (white) township superintendants, and his financial enterprise which had been flourishing until then, began to seriously decline. This led him to revert to his former formula (11). Here is how Sepamla reacted to How Long:

> Well, I was one of some 1000 persons cramming the all-purpose hall at Kwa-Thema for the play. For a marathon two and three quarter hours non-stop there were ripples of joy running through the hall in response to the message. And what is this message? As the title says How Long is the question posed to the whiteman - Kente says for the suffering and misery meted out to the Black man. He asks the question in the final tune of the show. It is an electrifying, choking cry, the drums rock in a pulsating rhythm and the trumpets' bleating in a mournful wail leaves one panting, shaking the head to ask, yeah, how long?... He doesn't only say the white man is a mean dog but he shows up the iniquities of the Black man himself in the whole set-up. He doesn't pretend that there are no Black people who are villains because we have our share of them (12).

Sepamla elaborates on this when he says that "there's always a threat of arrest above our heads... The policeman is the spider which weaves a web in the lives of the township people (13).

Of course, the substance for the web is already in the body of laws which affect the blacks in so many ways and in their every act. They get caught so easily; that is why the 'pass' or 'reference book' which every black African over 16 years of age must carry all the time, figures so prominently and in so many plays. It epitomizes the cruelty and absurdity of the system.

Take Sizwe Bansi Is Dead, for instance. Here, an African who has been endorsed out, is given a new chance thanks to a dead man's pass which, quite literally, becomes his 'book of life' - for such is the official terminology - provided he adopts the deceased's name. It takes Buntu, who is there to help him, a 24-line explanation to tell him the procedure he (Sizwe Bansi) must follow in order to have his papers in order, concluding with the word "Simple" which needs no exclamation mark to carry the point home (14).

In The Island, a play also devised by Athol Fugard, Winston Ntshona and John Kani, the two political prisoners kept in the maximum-security penitentiary of Robben Island have to fill their barrows with sand, only to dump it afterwards along the beach.

South Africa, the country itself, is a gigantic jail: this comes out clearly in Egoli (Raven Press, n.d.) by Matsemela Manaka, where two former prisoners, who have escaped from a chain-gang, become mine-workers and discover that they have just exchanged chains.

Chains, cells, prisons, walls are all part of the same set-up designed to divide people and keep them in their places - forcefully. Indeed, as in the same play bearing the same title, Lines Draw Monsters (15). The worst thing of it all is that many among the oppressed have internalised those divisions - and the prejudices and contempt that go with them.

This was already the main theme of Fugard's The Blood Knot, where the light-skinned and the darker-skinned brothers occasionally lapse into the role of white man and black man, with the feeling of alienation made all the more poignant since they belong to the same family. Not His Pride, by Makwedini Mtsaka, takes it up and develops it: here, the 'coloured' character refers to her black relatives as 'boys'. Again, to quote Aggrey Klaarte:

> ... If it is somewhat involved, with all kinds of allegorical allusions, I think it should be seen as approaching the Absurd. This is the distortion typical of Kafka and Brecht, both realists who created a series of distorting situations in which the experimental object, modern man, is placed (16).

Fatima Dike's The First South African is a true allegory of the Absurd. The hero of the play is a young man who, although born out of wedlock of a black mother and a white father, is physically white, with blond hair and blue eyes. The boy has been brought up as a Xhosa by his black mother and black step-father and he has been classified as a 'Coloured'. When he grows up, he takes advantage of his looking white, rejects his own kin and girl-friend and is, in turn, rejected by them. He eventually becomes totally disoriented and ends up working as a poor white on the railway-line. Fatima Dike says of the play:

> The question was: here was a man who looked like a white man, who had the heart of a black man, and was coloured. Now my question was: what is that man? That man is not white; he's the shadow of a black man. And he's not coloured. What is he? Under the laws of the system. And that was my question (17).

The absurdity of the situation, based on a real story, is made alive by a very complex set of scenes which ring true and bring out forcefully the alienation of that young man who, as a black man, is called Zwellinzima, and Rooi when he is white. In the opening prologue, Zwellinzima declares:

> ... Man is obsessed.
> Fear makes man into a savage who pulls bodies apart,
> And bathes in their blood.
> He'll come out of the bloodbath one day,
> To find his colour has changed ... to ochre.
>
> He'll look at himself in the mirror,
> And see himself for what he is.
> He'll turn round to find his brother looking at him,
> And the reflection in the mirror will be the image in front of him.
> He'll put his hand in his brother's,
> And they'll walk into the kingdom of life.
> Am I not a man then? (18)

The very essence of this spirit of brotherhood, all the more extraordinary in a country which claims to be Christian (19), is given concrete form in Woza Albert!: if Jesus Christ chose South Africa for his Second Coming, he would be arrested and taken to Robben Island (20).

Now, all this could sound as a long litany of evils to be deplored. But such is not the purpose of the committed theatre; quite the opposite:

> ... We tell the people to stop moaning and to wake up and start doing something about their valuable and beautiful lives (21).

The three authors of Woza Albert!, first performed in 1981, could but subscribe to the above statement made in 1973 by a spokesman for the Mihloti theatre group. For they have taken the message to the letter: 'woza' means 'rise up!', and the last scene of the play sees a re-enactment of the ressurrection of the dead in a Soweto cemetery. The people who are called to rise up out of their graves are the great heroes or victims belonging to the recent history of the struggle: Albert Luthuli, Robert Sobukwe, Lilian Ngoyi, Steve Biko, Bram Fischer, Ruth First, Griffith Mxenge, Hector Petersen... (22). In the true tradition of negro-spirituals, the religious hymn which accompanies the scene has undeniable political undertones, and from 'rise up' to 'arise', there is only one tiny step - which the spectators are invited to take.

* * *

The reference to great men and martyrs who fell for the cause is part of a wider movement by the oppressed to re-define themselves on their own terms. Hence, the resort to contemporary or more ancient testimonies of resistence to oppression, hence too, the affirmation of pride in one's traditions and language.

In The Sacrifice of Kreli, also by Fatima Dike, the author has revived an episode in the history of the Gcaleka kingdom of the 1880's. Originally written in Xhosa, then partly translated into English by herself, for she wanted to keep as much of the original rhythm as possible, the play has an appealing, very impressive grandeur about it. The king and the remainder of the army have retreated into the mountains after their defeat at the hands of the British. The debate whether to stay there, or go back to the destroyed villages in the valley where the ancestors' graves are, is resolved in the end. The sacrifice of the diviner has not been in vain; his last words convey the message of the ancestors: "There is a way", hence the injunction from the king to his men to go back, rebuild the fallen walls and plough the burnt fields:

> Sandulela, go and tell our people that our sun is rising...
> Nonqaba, go and tell our people we will work and grow...
> And now, Mevana my son, go and tell our people we will defend the honour of what we are (23).

Bob Leshoai's Wrath of the Ancestors is also set in the Xhosa rural community, but in more recent times: it relates the revolt against, and the destitution of, the government-appointed chief, and the restoration of the traditional heir to the chieftainship. The text is suffused with cultural references, and it reveals the spirit of resistance alive among the not-so-easily fooled population (24).

More contemporary, and for this reason immediately banned, was Give Us This Day, by Rev. Mzwandile Maquina, which relates the life and death of Abraham Tiro, the student leader killed by a parcel bomb in Gaberones.

Credo Mutwa's uNosilimela, although falling into the same category of plays, has a different stature. It is an epic deeply rooted in African life and customs, myths and religion. But it is also very contemporary. The heroine's journey, which defies time and space, is an initiatic one, from pre-colonial times to the present, from countryside to the modern cities and their depravity, and from there at last to a New Africa where uNosilimela will take her companions (25). The difficulty to find one's footing between the old and the new, the jibes at Christianity, but also the supernatural elements are all integrated in episodes which are in no way forced or artificial. The staging itself reveals Mutwa's thorough research into traditional African theatre. Patrick Mshengu Kavanagh, who co-ordinated the play with Credo Mutwa, notes that "although in no way connected with the Black Consciousness Movement, uNosilimela expresses one of its crucial concerns - the re-evaluation of black culture and history" (26). Not the least element in this re-evaluation is the use of the vernacular. The same can be said of Ndancama, a Xhosa tragi-comedy written entirely in Xhosa by Sandile Naonxuba. As for Shimina Solly Mekgoe, he has written the text of Lindiwe in English, but each scene is punctuated by Zulu, Tswana, Tsonga, or Xhosa lyrics. Another interesting thing to note is the appearance of rural characters in plays written predominantly, if not exclusively, by urban playwrights, and of guerilla - or would-be guerilla fighters. In Mtutuzeli Matshoba's Seeds of War, his only play so far, Maqhawe ('the valiant one'), will not wait until his father has been buried to leave for the place where he can prepare to avenge his death (27).

* * *

Another way of 'conscientising' people is to present them with the spectacle of what they do in present-day South Africa, and how they react to the system; not simply as one would do with a mirror, but by enlarging certain shortcomings or little heroic acts, as with a magnifying glass. This, incidently, was Maiakovski's concern in his use of agit-prop.

Two examples of such an approach are Mqayisa's Confused Mhlaba and Ronnie Govender's The Lahnee's Pleasure. Both plays present a whole gammut of attitudes of their own people - the Africans, in the first case, the Indians, in the second - both do so in a far from simplistic way, both use humour, although in different degrees, both actually echo each other, particularly in the critical comments on their communities (28).

In Confused Mhlaba, Hlubi Nkululeko, the main protagonist, a former ANC member, has just been released from jail where he has spent the last 15 years. Some of his former friends have 'made it', others have betrayed the cause by accepting to turn state-witnesses in political trials, others, still, like his friend James, have found refuge in drinking, while Joyce, a nurse, has found solace in religion. She will eventually accept to house Hlubi, for his own wife has remarried and has had two children, one from Hlubi, called Mhlaba, who does not really know where he belongs, hence the title. Although the play is loosely constructed, and some of the riddles are left unanswered - Mhlaba never reappears in the last part of the play - the point is made by Hlubi, the 'positive' character, vis-à-vis whom the others act as foils: the freedom they believe they enjoy is a false one, and will remain so if they sit passively (29). For Hlubi is the only politicised character: more outspoken than the others, it is his task to awaken them to their reality and to point out the main oppressor: the white man who is cast only in negative ways.

This is not so in Govender's play: the Lahnee (the rich man, the white man, the boss) may be paternalistic or contemptuous, he nevertheless helps Mothie, the Indian labourer. For it is through his personal intervention that the Indian and African policemen, who originally made fun of Mothie when the latter had asked them to find his abducted daughter eventually help him in an apologetic way. Yes, the white man pulls the strings, but as far as economic exploitation is concerned, we are told that the 'char ous' (the Indians) are no better, nay, even worse than the 'wit ous' (the whites).

The play itself, which was originally performed in one act, and then extended to two by the addition of a new character, Johnny, moves on at a quick pace and reveals in a humorous way a variety of characters and political attitudes. This is done all the more effectively as Govender has set the whole scene in the 'non-white' section of a pub situated in the Natal sugar-belt. Here, too, some of the characters play it safe: out of tradition and lest they lose their jobs (Sunny, the barman, who has succeeded his own father in the post), others, like Mothie, out of a mixture of fear of the white man and of interest or gratefulness, because he wields the power. Mothie, incidentally, is rebellious out of the white man's presence but obsequious as soon as he appears. There is also Johnny, a young man in his early twenties, who wants to leave the country and continue enjoying life - either by fair means or foul - while 'Stranger', the only character to have lived abroad, in London more precisely, finds it his duty to remain in South Africa. He is the real counterpart of Hlubi, of Confused Mhlaba: the most politicised one, the most articulate and defiant of all. At the end of the play, responding to the highly derogatory 'Sammy' in which the lahnee has addressed him, he exclaims "One day, white man, one day!", while Mothie, true to his character, and in an effort to placate the white man, offers to dance and to sing for him. Which of the two - the utterance or the dancing act - has more effect on the audience, conscientisation-wise, is exactly the

question. It seems, though, that the Stranger's threat must add up to the uneasiness of the audience left with the utterly contemptible spectacle of Mothie's servility. The Lahnee's Pleasure, despite the nuances mentioned before in the portrayal of the white man, may have a more mobilising effect than Confused Mhlaba. It is the latter play, though, which was banned, and not Govender's, perhaps because the latter is less manichean.

This, in turn, raises another question: how can the militancy of the play on the political level be best achieved, let alone measured? Is their being censored, and the eventual banning or arrest of their authors an indication of their effectiveness? And how can militancy be measured in real terms? The answers, or part of the answers, depend on tone and manner, as much as, say, the political circumstances of the day or the authorities' self-confidence and their command of the situation.

The plays or 'montages' and 'collages' of texts, music, slides etc. of the early seventies were extremely direct, strident and aggressive. When a free adaptation of Anouilh's Antigone was presented in 1971 under the title: Antigone in 71, the critic of the Durban Daily News wrote that the play was "such a savage indictment of the present South African political system that (his) instinctive reaction was to reel back in horror". "My second reaction", he added, "was to await the arrival of the political police" (30). The play had been adapted and produced by TECON (Theatre Council of Natal), probably the first cultural weapon of the then budding Black Consciousness Movement since it was founded in 1969. One will remember that members of TECON and PET (People's Experimental Theatre), the latter founded in 1973, stood on trial in 1975, charged as they were under the notorious Terrorism Act for conspiring against the State because of their work. Yet, last December, a white critic watching Umongikazi, a play by Maishe Maponya, noted: "the Oppressor is fair game. Is it naked racism? No, it is merely revenge, and revenge is dressed to kill. Still, for the white suburban theatre-goer, it's a little uncomfortable" (31). As far as we know, the play is still going on - with scanty audiences watching it.

The same stridency, then. Only the times have changed. The political initiative having changed hands (32), it may be better for the State to leave an outlet for the pent-up anger which survives. But here, too, it would be dangerous to generalize. A play like Woza Albert! is, also, a highly volatile one as far as politics are concerned. As we have seen earlier, it deals with the Second Coming of Christ on Earth, except that this time he comes to South Africa. The play elaborates on this theme in 26 more or less short scenes or sketches, where there is a lot of humour but also biting remarks in passing about what practically all blacks object to, from the South African authorities' grip on everyday life to Bantustan policy, from pass offences to Bantu education, from poverty and famine to organised 'suicides'. Robert Attaway, in the interview he conducted in London with the actors and directors - who actually are the co-authors of the play - has this to say:

> The bold shock of the ideabehind Woza Albert! would surely have alerted any censor. Here he has two causes for alarm, for blasphemy and sedition go hand in hand. Yet the play has not been suppressed (33).

And he goes on quoting Barney Simon's remark on the nature of censorship, that "decisions are made from confusion rather than conviction. And it is harder to ban a success than a near-miss" (34), a statement that is far from convincing if one takes no account of the period.

Independently from the reasons given before, the emphasis in the last few years seems to have shifted from the message to the medium, or rather towards a greater balance between the two. For things can be quite as devastating when expressed in a humorous manner.

The following headline appeared in Sketsh in its Winter 75 issue: "Black is beautiful ... but talent helps too!". A concern for the medium has been expressed several times since, to wit this remark by Benjy Francis:

> ... It is perhaps all very well to talk of content and 'Black art as an action for liberation', but we cannot and must not allow ourselves to fall into a situation of poor standards, of not understanding the form and structure of dramatic writing (35).

And the author of Egoli, Matsemela Manaka, declared in a more recent interview that " as far as I am concerned, it's some kind of critirion of what art is: artistic form and revolutionary content. You have to marry the two" (36). This concern was certainly that of Fatima Dike, Ronnie Govender and the authors of Sizwe Bansi is Dead, The Island and Woza Albert!. The latter is not only extremelywell constructed, it is also an extraordinary feat of acting by only two actors impersonating a great number of characters, with no other clothes than track-suit bottoms and running shoes - and no props. Ngema and Mtwa have acknowledged their debt to Grotowski's Towards a Poor Theatre, so has Athol Fugard. This does not negate the popular impact of their plays, the more so as the language that is being used is either the English of the ghettoes or one of the indigenous languages. The will to achieve the proper balance between the message and the medium is perhaps best expressed by Dikobe Martins, who is both an artist and an essay-writer:

> ... We should bring about the necessary conditions for all cultural products to reach the people. This is not to say that the artist has to sacrifice the artistic worth of his creations. It is to say that we have to struggle in all ways so that the artist creates for the people and so that the people in turn raise their cultural level and draw nearer to the artist ... (37).

* * *

> And 'Black Art' will only be a temporary thing. A phase in the identification process leading to national theatre. And what is national theatre? National theatre may be said to be theatre that portrays and identifies the true social and historic characteristic of a people that form a nation (38).

It seems, indeed, that one will have to speak in terms of 'white' and 'black' theatre as long as oppression on the grounds of skin pigmentation continues to exert itself, as long as 'the black experience' differs so much from 'the white experience', as long as the word 'nation' remains the preserve and the privilege of a 'happy few'.

Yet, exactly ten years after he made the above-mentioned statement, Gwala mentions that "the oppressor may be either the fascist engineer (for Afrikanerdom) or the collaborationist black (for homeland rule)", while noting that "what the new black middle-class cannot stomach is the white's role in the economy and subsequent political domination; not their leadership ... ", thus underlining the growth of a class element among the hitherto largely homogeneous black community (39).

The need for a different type of analysis in the early eighties is also expressed by Matsemela Manaka in a discussion of a play devised by Barney Simon with black artists:

> It (Cincinnati) is just a straight apartheid problem - which I think is not the problem in South Africa. We have a much more in-depth problem, which is not only apartheid - we are not fighting a racial struggle - it's also a class struggle. You have to combine the two, and this is what South African theatre lacks (40).

These remarks are substantiated by the development of a black bourgeoisie, a trend which can only increase owing to the present government's efforts to promote upward mobility for all blacks (41). And the collaborationist camp will undoubtedly gain new adherents among the 'Coloureds' and Indians invited to enter the new Parliament (42).

It is not extraordinary, then, to note the appearance of the plays which do not spare the collaborationists - at whatever level they may be acting - and the black bourgeoisie. Dark Voices Ring, by Zakes Mda, is one of such plays. This short, but very dramatic one-acter slowly reveals what it was - and still is - to be a 'baas boy'. It is presented in the form of a psychodrama which involves three characters: the former baas-boy who is reduced to a vegetable, his wife who still behaves as if their little baby girl were alive, whereas she died, sixteen years earlier when their hut was burnt down by rebellious farm-workers, finally the young man who was to be their son-in-law. He is the one who leads them to face the stark reality at long last:

> Man: (Rushes to the woman, holds and violently shakes her)
> We have done away with crying, ma. We are finished with weeping. Black people don't cry, ma. They don't weep. Do you realise, ma, he was on their side? (Pointing at the old man).
> Woman: He was only doing his work, my child.
> Man: They always say that. Every one of them. Black officials of this regime ... civil servants who carry out the repressive laws ... chiefs ... policemen ... in Soweto ... Langa ... New Brighton ... throughout the land. They are doing their duty [...] That is why I am going, ma. Because now I know that our salvation lies only in ourselves ... in our guns (43).

We Shall Sing For the Fatherland, also by Zakes Mda, despite the death of the two heroes, is on the contrary a comedy, but with serious undertones and a corrosive irony, both in the situation and in the language. Mda has created two very original characters, Sergeant-Major and Jambari, his long-time associate, who are former war-veterans, the war that 'freed' the (unspecified) country. (Mda lives in Lesotho but his father is a South African political refugee of the early 1960's).

The two hoboes live in a public park, commenting upon the people that pass by while mapping out their 'operations' - pinching a few things from momentarily empty houses in order to survive. Part of the humour of the play derives from the military jargon used by the two men: "operational areas", "strategy", "plan of action". Survival, for these two men is very much the order of the day. Their fellow blacks have made it, especially the black businessman who averts his eyes when passing by them with his white friend, a banker. The fact that the action is supposed to take place ten years after 'independence' brings out the irony of a situation which sees a black bourgeoisie working hand in hand with the white capitalists. Even the black policeman cum keeper of the park, Ofisiri, keeps nagging at the two men who, on that particularly cold winter night, prefer to die of exposure rather than to accept to leave the park and take temporary shelter in a shed. The last scene shows them watching a gang of prisoners (themselves being watched by Ofisiri) digging their graves while, in the distance, can be heard the bells announcing the funeral of the black businessman who died of an ulcer. The church itself is not spared, to wit Sergeant remarking that "the priests have already decided that he was wealthy enough to go to heaven" (44).

The extraordinary thing with We Shall Sing For the Fatherland is that it should so healthily demystify in advance a situation close to neo-colonialism which Ngugi wa Thiong'o attacked in I Will Marry When I Want (45). Interestingly enough, the substitution of class criticism in lieu of race criticism - a new thing in itself - is not didactic in the least. But the point is made clearly that the Wars of Freedom are still to be fought - and won.

There are still other signs of the growing difficulty of speaking of strictly 'black' theatre. What are The Coat, Sizwe Bansi is Dead and The Island if not the result of a joint authorship between a white man and blacks? And we can say the same about Woza Albert! True enough, what is shown is the 'black experience'. But Pascal Gwala again, ten years ago, accepted Fugard as reflecting that black experience in several of his plays while insisting, in at least two different instances, on his difficulty in identifying Wopko Jensma, who turned out to be white, in terms of colour. And what about James Matthews' ending his latest book of poems, No Time for Dreams (46) with one significantly entitled "Freedom is not the colour of my black skin". This, and the implicit parallel "Power is not the colour of our white skin", is what the numerous black and white followers of the United Democratic Front have been saying aloud for the past year.

Actually, the black committed theatre seems to have run the same course as the poetry of commitment. It grew with and was given impetus by the Black Consciousness Movement. It, too, testifies, accuses, criticises and wants to mobilise. It has likewise expanded the social, literary and linguistic fields existing before its appearance only a decade and a half ago. Finally, it also points to a South Africa belonging to its 30 million inhabitants and rid of the obsession of colour.

True enough, the South African nation is not yet born. After all, the word itself implies, among other things, the will of all the inhabitants to live together. Apartheid is just the opposite, and the most glaring evidence of this, is the total rejection of the black Africans from the new constitutional dispensations.

Is this final? We doubt it very much: the use of the word 'nation' has already often changed over the last forty years. The Afrikaners claimed it for themselves by speaking of the 'Afrikaner nation', until they felt satisfied that a majority of white English-speaking South Africans accepted their policy - hence the present reference to 'the white South African nation'.

What the new terminology will be now that the Indians and 'Coloureds' have been co-opted into it remains to be seen? The rulers and their propagandists have a long experience in stretching the vocabulary to its limits - and beyond! "Here words change sooner than seasons", ... "words that no dictionary can embrace" (Sepamla in The Soweto I Love) (47).

Yet, the will to live together survives among the oppressed majority and the slightly growing white opposition. This shall eventually come through in reality. When, and how, that is still the question. But literature will, once again have proved its ability to at least herald, and to some extent, help to bring about, the changes to come. Then, and then only, will the literary critics be justified in speaking simply about the South African theatre.

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NOTES

(1) According to Gladys Thomas, as reported in an interview with Dr. G. Davies (BAOBAB, Göttingen, 2, 1982), the Post, a Johannesburg paper, received 600 plays for its contest in 1978.

(2) It ranges from comic strips to theology, from journalism to literary and art criticism, from graphic to photographic works...

(3) Language here, refers not only to the English of the black ghettoes and any of the indigenous languages, but also to what is taking place on the stage in the wider sense of all types of expression.

(4) The squatters still remaining in Crossroads still lead a very precarious life and are constantly harrassed by the police.

(5) It came into existence in Soweto in June 1977, and consisted of leading professional people teachers, churchmen and others. Headed by Dr. Motlana, it was severely hit in October 1977 by the widespread repressive measures taken by the authorities.

(6) These details are taken from an eye-witness account provided by Alain Blondel, a young sociologist then doing social work in the Cape area.

(7) Two excerpts of the play can be found in We Will Not Move, a dossier on Crossroads collected and published by NUSAS (National Union of South African Students) in late 1978. The publication was banned and subsequently reprinted abroad by IUEF (International University Exchange Fund), Geneva, later disbanded when it was found that BOSS (Bureau of State Security) had planted one of its agents.

(8) "Theatre, Repression and the Working Class in South Africa", Kunapipi, vol. IV, no. 2. (Aarhus, 1982).

(9) "Union Struggle on Stage", South African Labour Bulletin, vol. VIII, no. 7, (Durban, August 1983).

(10) See Kavanagh P., ed., South African People's Plays, Heinemann AWS, (London, 1981).

(11) See Gus Silber, "Enter the Theatre of the Fist", Frontline, vol. IV, no. 4, (Johannesburg, Dec. 1983/Jan. 1984), for fresh evidence of Gibson Kente's continuing success.

(12) Sketsh, (Johannesburg, Summer 1974-75).

(13) Ibid.

(14) Athol Fugard, John Kani, Winston Shona, Statements, O.U.P. (London, 1973), pp. 25-26.

(15) Pereira C., ed., Contemporary South African Plays, Ravan Press, (Johannesburg, 1977).

(16) Sketsh, (Johannesburg, Summer 1975). Not His Pride is published by Ravan Press (Ravan Playscripts), (Johannesburg, 1978).

(17) See "An Interview with Fatima Dike" by Stephen Gray in Black South African Women Writers in English: A Preliminary Checklist, compiled by Amelia House, 1980 Program on Women, Northwestern University, Evanston, Il., U.S.A.

(18) The First South African, Ravan Playscripts 4, (Johannesburg, 1979), p. 1.

(19) This is the leitmotiv of all committed writing as it was already one of Paton's main themes in Cry the Beloved Country.
The latest Constitution (1983) makes it clear in its preamble:

> In Humble submission to Almighty God, Who controls the destinies of peoples and nations...
> We DECLARE that we
> Are CONSCIOUS of our responsibility towards God and man;
> Are CONVINCED of the necessity of standing united and of pursuing the following national goals:
> To uphold Christian values and civilized norms...[sic].

(20) Mtwa, Ngema and Simon, Woza Albert!, Methuen Modern Plays, (London, 1983).

(21) Gwala P., ed., Black Review 1973, Black Community Programmes, (Durban, 1974), p. 113.

(22) This 'oecumenical' list, since it includes all population groups living in South Africa (except, strangely enough the Indian community which has had its fighters and martyrs), mentions, among other prople two historic leaders (Luthuli of the ANC, and Sobukwe of the PAC). Hector Petersen was the first child to die in the Soweto uprisings. A glossary of names is included in Woza Albert!.

(23) The Sacrifice of Krell is one of five plays printed in Gray S., ed., Theatre One, Donker, (Johannesburg, 1978).

(24) Wrath of the Ancestors, East African Publishing House, (Nairobi, 1972).

(25) Re the conclusion to uNosilimela, Patrick Mershgu Kavanagh remarks that:"Mutwa's rejection of the modern city, its technology and its children in favour of a mystical paradise presided over by a religious hierarchy, stamps him as both a romantic visionary and a conservative." South African People's Plays, p. xx.

(26) Ibid. pp. xvii-xviii. Credo Mutwa, whose ambiguity had always been noted, was so critical of the Soweto Students uprising, equating them to Nazis, that his house was burnt down and he was lucky to escape unscathed.

(27) Seeds of War, Staffrider Series Number Eleven, Ravan Press, (Johannesburg, 1981).

(28) Maqaisa Khayalethu, Confused Mhlaba, Ravan Press, (Johannesburg, 1974).
Ronnie Govender, The Lahnee's Pleasure, Ravan Playscripts 5, (Johannesburg, n.d. [1978?]).
Among the numerous 'echoes', one can note: "The trouble with us is we are too soft" (Confused Mhlaba, p. 23) and "The trouble is we're too scared" (The Lahnee's Pleasure, p. 10); "Now that I'm back (from jail), believe me brothers, I will not scamper from the country. South Africa is the country of my birth" (Confused Mhlaba, p. 6) and "... running away won't solve any problems... I can never leave this country." (The Lahnee's Pleasure, p. 39).

(29) See also my analysis of the play in The Poetry of Commitment in South Africa, Heinemann, (London, 1984).

(30) See "Black Theatre in South Africa", Fact Paper N°2, International Defence and Aid Fund, (London, June 1976).

(31) Frontline, vol. IV, no. 4.

(32) Whereas the 1970's saw South Africa losing its defensive glacis of Angola, Mozambique and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), together with an increase in guerilla warfare in Namibia, and internal unrest (numerous strikes, uprisings and rioting), the military strikes at the neighbouring states and further divisive tactics inside South Africa have tipped the scales since the early 1980's.

(33) "Kingdom Come", The Listener, 20-26 March 1982.

(34) Ibid.

(35) Sketsh, (Johannesburg, Winter 1979), p. 11.

(36) From an interview with Dr. G. Davis, "Black Literature after Soweto", Englisch Amerikanische Studien, (Munster, West Germany, 4/82), p. 522.

(37) "Art is Not Neutral", Staffrider, vol.IV, no. 2, (Johannesburg, July/ August 1981).

(38) Pascal Gwala, "Towards a National Theatre", South African Outlook, vol. 103, no. 1227, (Cape, August 1973).

(39) From a paper, parts of which were published in Le Monde Diplomatique, (Paris, January 1984).

(40) Englisch Amerikanische Studien, 4/82.

(41) For this emergence of this black middle-class, see "Hints of Reform in South Africa Defy Predictions", The Globe and Mail, no. 41910,(Toronto, Canada, April 4, 1984). Pascal Gwala in the afore-mentioned paper, is more sceptical. He asks: "middle? between what?"

(42) For details, see the annual survey published by the South African Institute of Race Relations.

(43) Ravan Playscripts 6, (n.d.), p. 43.

(44) Ibid, p. 25.

(45) Heinemann AWS, (London, 1982).

(46) Ravan Press, (Johannesburg, 1982).

(47) Rex Collings, (London, 1977).

* This essay was originally meant to be on "Black Theatre in South Africa". Due to lack of space, both commercial and collaborationist theatre have been left out. For the latter, see Reality, vol. 15, no. 6, (November 1983).

Annexure 2:

THE SOUTH AFRICAN OUTLOOK. *October 1st, 1936.*

Drama and the African

By H. I. E. Dhlomo

(It will interest our readers to know that the writer of this article—a member of the staff of "The Bantu World"—will shortly issue through the Lovedale Press, a play in English, entitled "Nongqause." —Editor, S.A. Outlook).

ACTION! Rhythm! Emotion! Gesture! Imitation! Desires! That is what drama was before it developed into an institution for propaganda, the propagation of ideas, or for commercialized entertainment. Action, rhythm and the other histrionic qualities are not foreign to the African—neither is drama. Indeed, there is no race in the world which did not have some kind of tribal dramatic representation.

The origin of African drama was a combination of religious or magical ritual, rhythmic dances and the song. These ceremonies were based on what anthropologists call Sympathetic Magic. The people believed that like always and everywhere produced like. Consequently imitation, which is the basis of drama, played a large part in these African tribal dramatic ceremonies. If the people wanted to precipitate rain, to kill and conquer in battle, or cause pain to their foes, they had to "imitate" (make a representation of) these things. Since they believed in the principle of Sympathetic Magic (that like produced like) they were extremely careful exactly to imitate—to dramatize—whatever result they desired to accomplish, and their dramatic representations of battle, pain and other things, were vivid, artistic, realistic performances. This, then, was the origin, the basis of African Drama. If you wanted your enemy to feel pain or to suffer death, you had only exactly to act what you desired to befall him—and he would suffer accordingly. Many of these tribal dramatic representations were results of the desire to have much food, many children and to conquer in battle.

Some tribal dramas were actual, others symbolic and imaginative. That is, some of the dramatic festivals were commemorative of some important event—e.g. a successful hunt or raid. In such ritual representations, the people acted the actual thing or experience that had taken place. These performances are of interest and value to modern writers and students because they are historical,—showing what actually happened in the past. They are tribal historical plays.

There are also what one may call anticipatory dances or ceremonies based on the principle of sympathetic magic. In these ceremonies the people "Acted," not what had happened, but what they wished to happen. In this respect the tribal performers, like the directors of the cinema, were careful about details of every description. The ceremonies were psychological and imaginative: psychological because they show us the thoughts and the desires of the people; imaginative because the people pictured what would or should happen.

To summarize: the beginnings of the art of drama were (*a*) Fun and frolic—things done for the love of "doing" in response to the instincts of play, imitation, gregarious, self-elation. (*b*) Religious and magical rites. (*c*) Self-preservation—propitiations and offerings to ancestral spirits.

DANCING AND SONG.

Tribal drama was accompanied by dancing and by song. The dances were rhythmic and expressive; the songs emotional and devotional. This was drama in its simple, not classical or literary form. The ceremonies did not aim at delineation, education, or propaganda, but were magico-religious representations. On most occasions they were on a large communal scale, and sometimes on a small family or even individual scale. The representations were not entirely wordless. Inspired individuals and tribal bards would often burst out into poetic praises of ancestors, kings, leaders, tribes, places. These poetic praises were the basis of modern monologue. Although the ceremonies had a definite form, method of procedure and unity of general action, emotional individuals were free to add colour and detail by extemporaneous solo-music and by reciting praises. In some cases the solo singer acted as strophe (i.e. leading voice) and the rest of the people as anti-strophe (as echo). This musical tendency reduced to speech would have been the origin of dialogue. Since the poetic praises—*izibongo*—were not recorded it is not possible to-day to analyse this unique tribal poetry. However, the praises were not unlike the modern praises that appear in Bantu newspapers from time to time. Drama and poetry have always been closely associated. It is difficult to tell if there is a future for African poetic drama. That raises the thorny question of the future of African languages in drama and in literature.

SENSE OF TRAGEDY.

African tribal dramatic representations were rather tragical than comical—which disproves the assertion that comedy overflows all African drama. The sense of tragedy is well marked in the African. Tribal life is grim, tragical, haunted. Parenthetically, one may point out that the tragic uncanny dances of the tribal witch-doctors were, in fact, dramatic feats. Witch-doctors were first-class actors—and therein lay their power and influence.

The elements of mystery and of uncertainty play an important part in modern drama. African life has a wealth of mystery ceremonies. The training of an African herbalist, the strange "*abaloyi*" voices, African spiritualism, the activities of African secret societies—these and many other facets of tribal life, are mysteries. There is no reason why African playwrights of to-day should not provide us with excellent mystery and problem plays.

It may reasonably be claimed that African tribal drama had developed beyond ritual into entertainment. Some dramatic representations were not for the practical purposes of religion or magic, but for amusement.

Representations of animals and other dances were undertaken for entertainment, although their origin was in ritual.

The tribal audience participated in the ritual plays. This was the result of tribal communal life. Participation by the audience served to spur on the actors and to register appreciation. The audience ceased to participate or did so half-heartedly if the actors did not come up to standard. This was good for both sides—and would be good for many modern productions. However, the tribal audience should not be thought of in terms of a modern audience. Between the tribal spectators and the tribal performers there was no strict line drawn. In most cases the tribal spectators were in fact actors awaiting their turn. Unlike some modern audiences the tribal spectators came, not passively to be entertained, but to take an active part themselves. The people came because it was a need, a duty, besides being amusement.

In African tribal drama the actor was "author," "producer" and performer at one and the same time. He expressed himself—his soul, mind and feelings—to the spectators, and was not a mere "directed," connecting link between playwright and audience. The duty of the actor was to express himself through and by means of the play staged. The best actors expressed their soul and individuality without violating the spirit or misinterpreting the message of what they acted.

Tribal performers were not mercenary. Nothing was done for commercial profit. Acting was social, religious, magical, obligatory.

THE PLACE OF SCENERY.

Although there was no scenery as we know it to-day, African tribal actors realized the great value of, and the important part played by surroundings or atmosphere or scenery in dramatic representations. The tribal actor took great care, therefore, to choose a suitable place and time for his dramatic representations. For example, if his intention was to create awe, mystery and wonder among the people, he chose surroundings that helped create the intended atmosphere. Awe-inspiring mystery dramatic rituals were staged, not at daytime nor at dead of night (for there is some serenity and peacefulness about the dead of night), but at the "intoxicating," "aromatic" hours of twilight when everything looks weird, shadowy, ghostly; when nature perfumes herself; when there is a clash between retiring day creatures and waking night animals; when there is a terrifying symphony of "ebbing" daylight melodies and rising nocturnal croons. We have said "aromatic" hours, because the tribal actor appreciated the efficacy of fragrant and stimulating herbs which, in fact, were part of the "effects." The herbs were used to arouse certain emotions and moods. There were herbs that made people bold or nervous, hilarious or sad.

The tribal African classed himself with animals which he believed affected his life for good or ill. Animals were regarded as totems, as reincarnations of ancestors, as signs of fortune, as omens of ill-luck. The point is that tribal man felt that he was related to the other forms of creation. In his dramatic festivals and rituals, animals, dead or alive, actual or personified, played an important part. The science of biology—especially Darwinism—shows that tribal man was not wrong in thinking that animals were his distant cousins. Strangely enough, in modern art and drama animals, more and more, play important parts just as they did in tribal life and drama.

African tribal drama was national. It treated of matters that concerned the people as a whole. Its patrons were the tribe. In the few cases where dramatic representations were personal, they were staged privately with no audience. But the public dramatic representations (festivals of harvest, rain, hunting and the bringing back of the dead) were always of tribal significance. Tribal drama was customary and traditional.

BORN ACTORS.

Africans were great actors. Witness how African tribal men can, with little or no effort, change from grave to light mood. For example, in cases of death those inside weep, those outside gossip. In the presence of authority the African is a model of humility, simplicity and obedience; but at his home and among his associates he is the personification of dignity, imperturbability and wisdom. In tribal wedding ceremonies the bride and many members of her party, weep themselves bloated for the sake of—custom! To-day, go to any of the numerous African churches and see how dramatic the whole procedure is. Drama is a social art. Bantu society is social and communistic. Functions such as religious festivals, death rites, hunting and dancing ceremonies were, in a way, the counterparts, the beginnings of the theatre. Here you could find models of dramatic expressions—some people joyful, others sad; now all were expectant and restless, anon all were happy and indifferent, according to the vagaries of Fate or the commands of the chiefs. In these festivals the people freely used their powers of mimicry, emotion, gesticulation, simulation. All this made of the tribal African an accomplished actor. To-day a life of oppression, uncertainty, and varying shades of fortune has made the African a still more accomplished actor. How often one hears people say the African is happy and care-free because he smiles—ignorant of the fact that behind those smiles and calm expression lie a rebellious soul, a restless mind, a bleeding heart, stupendous ambitions, the highest aspirations, grim determination, a clear grasp of facts and the situation, grim resolve, a will to live.

The African has greatly developed powers of speech. In European countries the introduction, long ago, of reading and writing, despite its incomparable blessings and advantages, made for some slight deterioration in European faculties of speech—the art of the spoken word. Writing and reading made it possible and easy to communicate without actual speech. Thus we find that the average White person with no training in elocution has slightly less developed vocal powers than the average Black man. The African has always depended on the living spoken word. With all its grave handicaps this weakness has helped to preserve the Black man's faculties of speech. In Africa it is customary to tell stories around the home fires in the evenings. The very dim light of such fires compels the story teller to depend almost entirely on his powers of speech to convey the meaning and excitement of the hairbreadth adventures of the day, or the varying situations of a folk-lore story. The theatre, broadcasting, gramophone recording, etc., have all put a premium on vocal power.

* * * *

In Johannesburg and other centres an African Dramatic Movement has been launched. What should be the aims and what will be the results of the movement? It will help encourage the African playwright and pave the way towards the development of African dramatic art—play and play production.

Drama will help liberate the African woman from the tyranny of custom and tradition.

To-day life is commercial. As the Africans go higher in the ladder of progress, new avenues of employment and of expression are required. Surely drama is one of them. The evolution of African opinion, sentiment and ideas will give birth to a great industry and a valuable source of careers as drama develops.

We should interest people in African history and tradition. Drama is the reconstruction, recreation and reproduction of the great experiences of a people, and it helps them to live more abundantly. Drama and the cinema gradually are taking a leading part in the formation of character, ideas and ideals. Drama like the school is a great educating agency.

The African dramatist can teach, by drama, lessons that cannot be taught in the pulpit or in the classroom. To "see" a fact, an experience or a phase of life is more important and impressive than to be taught and admonished about it. The dramatist may through a play give vivid and realistic descriptions of life and manners that would not be permissible or wise in a serious work of history, politics or philosophy. The playwright has a wider field and a greater wealth and variety of material than a writer of factual literature. Drama reaches the masses. Even people who are not well educated can appreciate dramatic representation. A wisely controlled dramatic movement can do much to harmonize and humanize race relations in this country.

As we have seen, modern drama is not a mere emotional entertainment. It is a source of ideas, a cultural and educational centre, an agency for propaganda, a social institution, and it is literature. The African can contribute strong fast rhythm (and rhythm is more than physical), expressive of vigorous gesture and action, and a channel of seeing things from a different angle.

• • • •

The development of African drama cannot purely be from African roots. It must be grafted in Western drama. It must borrow from, be inspired by, shoot from European dramatic art forms, and be tainted by exotic influences. The African dramatist should not fear being mocked as an "imitator" of European art. Only, he should write and produce his plays as he feels. His work should be marked by his own soul and individuality, for in drama as in life it is not so much what is done as how it is done.

Art is understanding and expressing the feelings and experiences around you. An artist must come out of himself and enter into the general emotion, thought and opinion of the people. He must express not only himself, but the thought and feeling of the people. The African dramatist cannot delve into the past unless he has grasped the Present. African art cannot grow and thrive by going back and digging up the bones of the past without dressing them with modern knowledge and craftmanship. If it is true that the Past should form the background of African art, equally true it is that African art must deal with the things that are vital and near to the African to-day—the school, the church, the slums, the automobile, commerce, etc.

The African dramatist has an important part to play. In the story of African Travail, Birth and Progress, lies an inexhaustible source of African literary and dramatic creations. We want African playwrights who will dramatize and expound a philosophy of our history. We want dramatic representations of African Oppression, Emancipation and Evolution. To do this the African dramatist must be an artist before being a propagandist; a philosopher before a reformer; a psychologist before a patriot; be true to himself, and not be a mere prey to popular artistic fashions which are like the gardens of Adonis.

Drama is an artist's reaction to, comment on, and view of life. It reflects the mind and beliefs of the people and the age. However, great artists and thinkers confine themselves neither to time, place nor race, but create for all climes and all time. Great art or thought (art is thought-feeling) is more than national: it is universal, reflecting the image—the spirit—of the All-Creative Being who knows neither East nor West, Black nor White, Jew nor Gentile, time nor space. The tragedy of a Job, a Hamlet, a Joan, a Nongqause, is the tragedy of all countries, all times, all races.

Some doubt whether Africans can write tragic masterpieces. How can it truthfully be said that a people whose life is one long series of poignant shattering experiences, have no sense of tragedy, of the deeper meaning of life, of the agony that is existence? However, it is not always necessary that an artist should actually live what he portrays or creates. An artist is one able to reveal and portray objective experience subjectively; one who can be touched and be moved by objective reality and experience as if it were subjective. The human mind is capable not only of remaining oblivious to subjective reality and experience, but of being wholly susceptible to objective experience. An artist must live the life of other men, times, places.

It only remains to consider the question of an African National Dramatic Movement. Should Africans develop their own exclusive National Dramatic and Theatrical Movement distinct from, competing with and opposed to the European Dramatic movement? What does the evolution of African Opinion, Sentiment and Ideas point to in this direction? Does the African want to "develop on his own lines" or to fall in the maelstroom of general progress? What of the Coloureds and the Indians in the country? And what of economic, cultural and artistic as distinct from colour considerations?

These and similar questions must seriously and intelligently be answered by those who love South Africans as South Africans and art as art.

in: "The South African Outlook",
October 1st, 1936, pp. 232-235.

To my brother James by Jacques Alvarez-Péreyre
(after I know fear)

I, too, have known fear
Fear was the studded boots
that clanged along the street, paused near
then marched away

I, too, have known dismay
Dismay at seeing friends
turn heads and look away
thinking my yellow star a mark of infamy

I, too, have known oppression
the sneers of derision, the stings of persecution
all because of my creed
and loyalty to ancestry

I, too, have known pain
agony at seeing relatives whisked away
to die like slaughtered sheep
in some camp far away

There remains for me to know Death
I hope that when he comes he will find me ready
not the helpless, near-compliant victim
but the fighter I dreamt I would become one day

LINOCUT — GARTH ERASMUS

"The Implications and Challenges of the Cultural Boycott" - Panel and Plenary Discussion conducted in the Protestant Academy, Bad Boll on Sunday, December 13, 1987.

Panelists: Oswald M. Mtshali, Lewis Nkosi, Mavis Smallberg, Ntongela Masilela.

Moderator: Robert Kriger

Initially this discussion was to be introduced with a paper by the exiled poet Mongane Wally Serote. As he was unable to attend the conference due to travelling restrictions and as the convenors felt the need to have some formal statement by the African National Congress (ANC) on this controversial subject, the following article - which appeared in the July-August 1987 edition of "Africa Report" - was circulated in conference amongst the participants and used as the basis for our discussion which followed after an (excerpted) reading of the same:

The ANC and the Cultural Boycott **by Barbara Masekela**

Because of the participation of musicians from South Africa, Paul Simon's "Graceland" album and tour aroused controversy among anti-apartheid activists around the world, causing the ANC to modify its policy on the cultural boycott. In this Africa Report exclusive, the movement's secretary for culture explains the ANC's new position on the role of artists inside the country in the accelerating struggle.

The cultural boycott of South Africa cannot be viewed outside the demands of our developing and intensifying struggle for national liberation and the establishment of a united, democratic, and non-racial South African state. The boycott issue must be understood in the context of that aspect of the African National Congress' strategies and tactics that have promoted united action at home and mobilization of the international community for the isolation of the racist regime. The cultural boycott then is an integral part of the call for mandatory and comprehensive sanctions against the apartheid regime. It is a supplement to the struggle waged by workers, youth, students, professionals, churches, community, and civic groups.

It is evident that the might of the racist regime derives to a significant extent from the support it has enjoyed from Western governments and their allies. This support in all aspects, particularly the military and economic sector, has prolonged the tenure of the minority regime and emboldened it to carry out even more aggressive and repressive acts not only against its opponents, and in particular

the majority population, but also against the frontline states with impunity.

The periodic mouthings of "reform" by the regime are designed to buy time. At any rate, the South African people are demonstrating through extreme sacrifice and determination that nothing less than one person, one vote will do.

It is in this light that the ANC has appealed to the international community to take actions that go beyond condemnatory press statements and speeches at international fora to hasten the demise of apartheid and stop the conflict which the minority regime is actively promoting.

We are not naive. We do not think that the cultural boycott will bring about instant liberation to South Africa. We know that ultimately we must and will liberate ourselves from racial and economic oppression. In view of the prolonged suffering of our people, we believe the cultural boycott - in conjunction with other mandatory and comprehensive sanctions - will have a cumulative effect that will force a speedy resolution of the South African crisis. Unarguably, this would mean less bloodshed. For those then who profess support of the South African people in struggle, it is incumbent to show their solidarity in practical terms.

Delivering the 1987 Canon Collins Annual Memorial Lecture on May 28, ANC President Oliver Tambo made a critical policy statement on the issue of the cultural boycott of South Africa. For all of us in the ranks of the ANC, especially cultural workers, it is fitting that our position was made in the context of our "all-around struggle" and not divorced from the pertinent political issues that face all of those in active struggle against the racists of South Africa and their collaborators world-wide.

What cannot be repeated too often is that the ANC is dedicated to the creation of a non-racial, united, and democratic South Africa. In pursuit of this cause, we have accepted that there is "no easy walk to freedom." Thus our people are building today, in the midst of the spine-chilling destruction directed at their efforts by the regime, the infrastructure for the new order.

These political developments have emerged in the form of what is called the "culture of liberation" in the very broad sense of the meaning of culture. The South African culture of liberation is inspired and sustained by the ideals of the Freedom Charter which declares: "The doors of learning and culture shall be opened. The government shall discover, develop, and encourage national talent for the enhancement of cultural life: all cultural treasures of mankind shall be opened to all by free exchange of ideas and contact with other lands; the aim of education shall be to teach the youth

to love their people and their culture, to honor human brotherhood, liberty, and peace... The color bar in cultural life, in sport, and in education shall be abolished."

It is a challenge to our movement to promote these high ideals. We maintain that South Africa "belongs to all who live in it"; thus we eschew any quick answers and sensational pronouncements that will jeopardize the inevitable victory toward which our people are marching inexorably...

For the majority, apartheid culture means familiarity with the instruments of torture: breathing tear gas, suffering the pangs of hunger in a land of plenty, the torment of homelessness in the face of empty "white" housing, lack of classrooms and overcrowding of schools in spite of the fact that white schools are underpopulated, and worse, political repression including the imprisonment of children. That is apartheid culture. But we are convinced that this too shall pass...

For one thing, they (the regimes) would like to enjoy the best that Western culture can provide in entertainment, sport, theatre, etc. We say: Support our cause - deprive them of these amenities which at best have negligible exposure in the majority of the population. In 1985, 54 artists in the United States made their viewpoint very clear. As Artists United Against Apartheid through the "Sun City" project, they said loudly and clearly, "I ain't gonna play Sun City." The people of South Africa and anti-apartheid aupporters the world over said, "More power". We cheer Steven Van Zandt and his fellow artists because they are unequivocally declaring where they stand in the fight against the latter-day Nazis of South Africa. We cheer because they are exposing the obscenity of Sun City built in the midst of apartheid-made hunger, suffering, repression, torture, and death.

Along the same lines, anti-apartheid workers and artists in Sweden, Holland, Denmark, England, France, and many other countries have organized projects to make their voices heard.

Inside South Africa, cultural workers are quickening their pace to catch up with their compatriots in other sectors. The last few years have seen the founding of a number of cultural groups aimed at tackling the apartheid culture monster. It is the South African people who signalled the time for this activity when they boycotted foreign cultural mercenaries who performed in South Africa at the invitation of the regime.

In a bid to stem the growing cultural isolation, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) sponsored the infamous Bureau of Information song. The response of the public was contemptuous. Even liberal circles decried the waste of millions of rands for such a patently propagandist endeavor that was an imitation of the "We Are The World" project. For the artists participating in the charade

came a sad aftermath: They were attacked and mocked from all sides by a broad spectrum of South African society. Worse, some of them had to flee the townships and live under the protection of the regime's guards to escape the activists' wrath.

Subsequently some of them, notably Steve Kekane, one-time top-selling artist in the Republic, have been mending their fences with the people. In a series of interviews, Kekane admitted the error of his involvement in the Bureau of Information project and the need for artists to make themselves relevant to the unfolding situation.

There are, however, many forms of "persuasion" employed by the regime to compel entertainers to toe the line and even to perform for the South African Defence Force (SADF) illegally occupying Namibia. This is not so much in mitigation of these artists, but in praise of those who have ably resisted the "persuasion". The volatility of the situation in South Africa is constantly and deliberately accelerated by the arrogance of the regime and its agents who are desperate at the sheer growth of people's power and determination.

President Tambo says, "We must take into account the changes that have taken place over time... There has emerged a definable alternative democratic culture - the people's culture - permeated with and giving expression to the deepest aspirations of our people in struggle, immersed in democratic and enduring human values."

Thus in the last few years, we have seen a veritable flowering of anti-apartheid work, acclaimed both inside and outside of South Africa - "Woza Albert!", "Asinamali!", "Wenzani", and many others. We have also witnessed the founding of a number of artists' collectives, publishing houses, musicians' associations, and craft cooperatives - all addressing themselves to the issues of their craft as well as economic and racial exploitation.

They are in diametrical contrast to entertainers in productions such as "Ipi Tombi", "Meropa", "Shaka Zulu", and the like. For instance, "Ipi Tombi" has been boycotted widely because it was a creation of the regime. It was meant to show smiling black faces whose culture is preserved in the system of separate development and whose humanity is distorted in their child-like simplicity. "Ipi Tombi" was an affront to the dignity and development of our people.

Concerning popular culture, we have to admit that it is propagated and manipulated to a large degree by the regime's agencies, who ban and censor certain songs from the airwaves. Of those that get through, very little meaning is retained. But from time to time, something beautiful like "Istimela Sam Sase Zola" is born. It is neither partisan, prudish, nor revolutionary. Its extreme popularity

among South Africans, like its predecessor "Sekorokoro", is because it has great social relevance, artistic appeal, and reflects the ability of our people to laugh through their tears. It is a celebration of life in spite of itself. Furthermore, it breaks the divide between the rural and the urban experience in South Africa.

In other words, we would like to stress that we are not dour-faced dogmatists calling for a rigorous code that every song and poem should reverberate with heady revolutionary fervor. Neither do we have a secret formula which advocates percentages or quotas for humor, slogans, names of leaders, history, and so forth. After all, where would we be without the optimism and humor which carries us from one struggle to the next? Our South African languages are replete with humor, satire, and sheer poetry.

It is our people who lead the way, and Oliver Tambo urges us to "deal with the alternative structures that our people have created and are creating through struggle and sacrifice as the genuine representatives of these masses in all fields of human activity. Not only should these not be boycotted, but more they should be supported, encouraged, and treated as the democratic counterparts within South Africa of similar institutions and organizations internationally."

The cultural boycott was never intended to isolate the democratic forces of culture at home. Anti-apartheid culture produced in South Africa must be seen and heard world-wide. Anti-apartheid refers to those who have lent their talent to support the struggle, and who are recognized as the representatives of the genuine South African culture in the making, by their compatriots.

Finally, in addressing the question of mechanisms to complement the cultural boycott, our president's injunction is that there is the need "to act together" between the ANC, the broad democratic movement in its various formations within South Africa, and the international solidarity movement. It goes without saying that we cannot go public on these arrangements given the present sweeping repressive laws. The status of the ANC under the regime's legislation is well-known. Nelson Mandela, together with our other leaders, has been in jail for over two decades and he cannot be quoted in South Africa.

If we should say anything on the "Graceland" album and tour, it is that the Paul Simon issue highlighted the need for a cultural boycott policy which not only answers the demands of the intensifying struggle inside South Africa, but also that of politics. Many of the participating artists who are so widely acclaimed today have in fact been popular for more than a decade. It is the actions and sacrifices of those in active struggle who have made the international public receptive to South African culture. The electronic media which until recently was daily transmitting the ugly experience of struggle at

home - the vivid pictures of beatings, house bombings, shootings, and tear gassing of children - is what has created the curiosity and interest.

Individuals have never been the primary focus of our efforts, but since the controversy was fueled by what was considered the inadequacy of Paul Simon's letter to the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid, we think the whole episode could be closed when he has made a proper formulation - not to the press but to the Special Committee.

In general, we are still firmly opposed to any visits by artists to South Africa. Such visits only serve to legitimize the regime and make nonsense of the objective to isolate Pretoria. Any visits to South Africa should be discussed beforehand with the appropriate anti-apartheid movement or the ANC.

Note:
The discussion which followed the reading of the above article is reproduced here in condensed form. Initials of speakers have only been inserted in the case of the panelists and moderator.

R.K.
Ladies + gentlemen, comrades and friends, we have some time at our disposal now to enter into a debate on the views expressed by Barbara Masekela and those which we shall be hearing from our panelists.

You will allow me, I believe, to make a few preliminary remarks regarding the letter by Paul Simon mentioned by Masekela: In this letter Paul Simon states that he was completely overwhelmed by the music which he heard in the townships and of which he had been completely unaware up till then. That is what he wrote, anyway, and that's what we should believe apparently. He met various artists and members of management in South Africa and, in his attempts to get some of these artists to perform their music for him - which some of them then did -, he encountered resistance from those artists who pointed out the existence of a cultural boycott to him. Apparently he was also unaware of this. Nonetheless, he made his recordings and returned to the United States and produced amongst others, this "Graceland" album in which, I believe, anybody acquainted with South African music would find it very difficult to recognize our strengths. Nonetheless several South African musicians performed with him, both in the production of this album and in later concerts. For instance Hugh Masekela, the South African musician who lives in exile in New York, the South African group Ladysmith Black Mambaso, exiled Miriam Makeba and Stimela, a very popular group in South Africa.

So this is what roused the controversy, this brought it to the fore. Subsequently Paul Simon did several somersaults and catapults to correct the image that he had broken the boycott. If there is somebody here who could explain a bit more about what happened at the United Nations, we would be grateful to hear his or her views.

O.M.

I can talk only from what I heard and read inside the country, and I want to state quite clearly that, what I am saying here, is personal. I have no mandate to speak for any organization. I wrote an article which was published in "Ecunews" - a publication of the South African Council of Churches. I wrote a paper for the WCC/PCR conference - Programme to Combat Racism - which was held on the 29th April up to the 8th May 1987. In that paper, if I recall correctly - the title is "Cultural and Academic Boycott" -, I dealt mainly with the cultural boycott, more than with the academic boycott, because I felt that, 1) I could speak with some authority as a cultural worker and as a writer in South Africa, and also 2) because in 1982 I worked for the "Star" as an art critic. I covered everything that had to do with the arts in South Africa, particularly in the Johannesburg area. I had and I have a lot of contacts with the arts and people who are involved in the arts. Personally, I felt that what had happened in this "Graceland" thing was a disgrace, because Paul Simon, who had been a superstar in his hey-days, had suddenly found himself in obscurity. All of a sudden, from nowhere, he discovered this rich cultural reservoir of talent which had been in existence for such a long time. My premise was that: Do we really need the Paul Simons to discover us? Do we really need people who are going to come from their obscurity to come and put us into the limelight? We have people who have been out of the country as ambassadors of our art and our culture; people like Gerald Sekota; people who have been in exile since the '40s or early '50s. Sekota is a maestro, a man of immense talent. So you can't tell me that we need to be "discovered". And I'm using that word "discover" in its fullest sense of insult. What we need is to get rid of apartheid and let the country be open and the world won't "discover", instead the world will find art that has been in existence since time immemorial. So we don't need some charlatan, dilettante, to come and say, yes, after all they can sing and dance, with diamonds on their toes.

As I mentioned, art has been in existence long before the white man came to South Africa. We have in what is euphemistically called Bophutatswana, excavations, that show not villages, but cities. We have in the Northern Transvaal, in what is called the homeland of Venda, statues carved in gold. The Venda people were carving artefacts in gold long before the white man landed in South Africa. Gold was being mined by the Batswana long before the white man ever set his foot in Southern Africa. Why I say this, is because I just want to point out to you that when you talk of this art and culture, you are

talking of a reality that has been there long before the so-called recorded history of our country. So, for us to be "discovered" by the Paul Simons of this day, is really an insult, because our music dates far back. - You cannot carve and wrought masterpieces in gold if you don't have music in your heart. It is music that rings in the heart and in the mind and in the soul of an artist who can sit down and with his hands produce a masterpiece of art. Unfortunately we do not have recording companies like HMV, CBS or others like Motown in the United States, but our music was already in existence. So, starting from there, I said in that paper:

1. Black Mambaso had been performing, doing their thing since, as far as I know, the early sixties, and Stimela came later. But the music they are playing, is music that was already in existence when I was born, eg. marabi, imbube. In the '50s, we had for instance, in the jazz field, Zuluboy, the Jazz Maniacs. That music was not music that just came from nowhere. It was music that was drawn from the so-called townships, the so-called black ghettoes. It was music of the people. It was music that expressed the hopes and the aspirations of the people.

2. As such I proceeded to say that the cultural boycott is long overdue because 1) we have people who have been coming to South Africa to sing and dance and 2) draw large sums of money. The list is endless. People, like Frank Sinatra, who was given two million rands for performing in the Bantustan of Bophutkaswana at "Sun City". But before that, we had pioneers who went to America to sing there, eg. Miriam Makeba, Letta Mbula. Why were these people not asked when they arrived there, to record and draw and express the background from which they came? Where was Paul Simon then? Harry Belafonte "adopted" Miriam Makeba and exposed her to the American public. Where was Paul Simon at that time? What was he doing? If he was interested in promoting our artists, he should have taken up the initiative at that time to say, 'Hey, there's something cooking here. There is something good here. Let me go to South Africa.' This was in the early '60s, '70s. Now, when the cultural boycott is intensified, we have a person coming from nowhere. He is there to promote these artists just when this cultural boycott has taken a political dimension that stopped artists, singers, dancers from coming to South Africa as a strategy of isolating the racist regime. When looking at the timing of this so-called promotion of our art, then you can see that it was a deliberate, well-calculated move, literally promoted and supported by the regime, while the country is in a state of low-intensity civil war, that we can export these singers and send them out into the world to show that no, our Blacks can still sing and dance. There is no crisis in our country. That is the image that is projected by this so-called "Graceland" thing.

W.S.
I think our time here at this conference is very precious also to strategize. This is one of the few events in the Federal Republic - I'm now speaking to the Germans especially - where we have a cultural happening and where it is our aim to give the floor to the struggling people of South Africa and the cultural workers in that struggle. And therefore, it is very important for us to organize, to see what our involvement is, and what our strategy in this boycott and in the whole struggle can be. What does solidarity mean now with regard to the cultural field? Compared with other forms of boycott of South Africa, we should not imagine that we now have to boycott everything which comes from South Africa. But this boycott also means promotion of something else. There lies our task: What will we do in future to further the other side and to boycott the regime side and to expose this subtle exploitation of you, the cultural workers from South Africa.

Dollar Brand - Abdullah Ibrahim -, once left a festival in Tübingen very angry, because he had discovered that they use "solidarity" for inviting and paying good artists very little money. So you call it a "solidarity festival", then you get the man for a little money. There is a subtle exploitation of this, and this is where we, the Germans, have to unite, to fight for this and to analyze and to see it within ourselves. This should not happen. On the other hand, we have to find out and talk with our comrades, which is the correct way of supporting you? What could we do? What is honest? What serves you? I think we should have a discussion on that.

A speaker from the floor noted the following concerns:

- the need for exiled South African cultural workers to organize themselves;
- to support those "confused, apolitical" persons in groups like Black Mambaso, Stimela, Ipinthombi, Umabatha who have "jumped" to find their feet in exile, instead of their landing in mental asylums;
- promoting the participation of South African cultural workers in cultural events here, instead of ignoring and driving them into still further isolation;
- establishing, for instance, recording studios especially to promote South African musicians who have no or little chance of being recorded at home.

N.M.
My contribution is really a practical question, and, in a way I am directing it to Alfred, to Mavis, and to Oswald. I assume that the question of cultural boycott is a very complicated and a very complex issue. I usually assume that the cultural boycott is specifically of foreign artists from abroad participating or intervening in a cultural process or development in South Africa as such. And to a large extent, of course, South Africa is a highly industrialized country. People like Paul Simon intervene in the situation of South Africa, not so much for the appreciation of South African culture, as much as the economic profit derived from it.

I am a film-maker. I made two documentary films. One of them is on Black American and on African music. Do you think we South Africans in exile should send our stuff to be shown? Of course, as a film-maker I'd like to get some money from that and make some more films. Should we South Africans in exile intervene in the processes in South Africa, or what? Should we take the money from there and make some more films, or are we in the same category as Paul Simon then? I've been having a debate for the last six months within myself, whether I'm doing an honest thing, or is it a justification for perpetuating Paul-Simonism, in a different way. This also regards the publication of books in South Africa, and so on.

M.S.
Firstly, the whole cultural boycott issue at home is also a big thing. People are just as confused as people outside, in a sense. Especially the rigour with which the cultural boycott has been applied outside South Africa after all the media exposure of 1985, when there was talk that even publishers might withdraw books from the South African market. People at home were very worried about this. We need the books, we need to know what is going on, and we felt that that is actually taking the cultural boycott a bit too far. There was the issue of the Malopoets who went to Britain and were barred by the Musicians Union. Malopoets have actually played quite an important role in Cape Town as far as I know, with their lyrics and as to where they performed their music. They weren't paid for the kind of fund-raising concerts they were giving. We also stated that the cultural boycott was mainly instituted by anti-apartheid groups outside the country to prevent people from coming in. We then said: Maybe there should be a selective boycott - and if so, who does the selection? How do you decide which groups will get a platform? What are they going to be representative of? At the moment, we feel that, to answer your question, there should be structures put into operation in South Africa whereby people like yourself can liaise with, and whereby

these questions can be thoroughly discussed. All that I can say is that there is going to be a cultural desk which is in the process of being formed, the UDF Cultural Desk. In the process people are being elected from various parts of the country. At the very moment it is an almost clandestine process. I think once such a Cultural Desk has been formed, and we inside the country can have a say in who goes out and who comes in and make that kind of decision, then that kind of thing will be stopped. At the moment that's all I can say.

T.Q.
Comrades, I think the workers are very interested in what is being discussed by their brothers and sisters in exile. I think that's why we in COSATU formed the Cultural Unit. Each and everybody must come through the Cultural Unit which is controlled by the COSATU local. If, for instance, you invite me in COSATU, I'll take your invitation through the Cultural Unit, and from the Cultural Unit we'll have to take it to the shop-steward and to the COSATU local. They will discuss this. If they say no, because of such or such a reason, then it's no. To put it straight: We, the workers in South Africa are not clear of what's really happening abroad. Are you doing something? What are you doing?

Floor contribution
I want to affirm what both comrades have said there. I think it has to do with the structure you finally work with, and the issue will be whether the structure you process your thing with would be trusted and accepted by the people. For example, let me just say one or two things about Skotaville. Skotaville started out because of an interest on the part of the struggling people in the country, an interest to surface or let their literature emerge to publish their writings, and so on. But at the same time, I think people know that the Skotaville publishers have another interest, and that is to make literature available to them at reasonable prices. So, for example, Skotaville will go out of its way to raise funds to subsidize material. I think that's an example of, let's say, the type of structure that people would trust if one has to process maybe a book from here. If that would be, of course, allowed in the country!

But I want to say something else with respect to the cultural boycott. Right now the system is pouring a lot of money and energy and time into trying to win the "scene" down at home. If you match what is being put into groups that are organizing in terms of the resistance culture, you find that the amount that is poured in there, is far too little in comparison with what has been poured in the propaganda use of culture in our country by the system. So I want to say that somehow, I think, that a crucial factor for the success

of the cultural boycott will depend on how much is put into community groups, cultural groups. How much money is poured in there too, to fight apartheid. I think that the sum of our struggle is, that although we receive a lot of funds to fight apartheid, we still have to fight on very little.

R.K.
Before we continue, allow me to gather that which has been said in the past half hour. It seems as if there is a confusion about whether there is a policy regarding the cultural boycott or not. Barbara Masekela in her article claims the existence of such a policy. As far as I know, at the CASA* conference in Amsterdam during the next week, a possible policy is going to be debated. What we do know is that we don't want any perpetuation of a "Graceland" issue, and, secondly, that artists from South Africa, knowingly or unknowingly used by the system for propaganda purposes, would also fall under the various clauses of a possible cultural boycott policy. What I think we are trying to clear here now is, in acknowledging the above and this nebulous state of affairs notwithstanding, we are trying to find ways of strategizing, i.e. how to keep the umbilical cord between solidarity groups here and cultural workers and groups in South Africa intact. Furthermore, we should investigate what we should do to increase the popular consciousness about the cultural boycott. We need, therefore, to know from such groups and organizations in S.A. what they feel about the cultural boycott, and how we are to implement it. That is, I think, what has left us in the dark up to now.

O.M.
One of the previous speakers mentioned the very serious point that there are people who come from South Africa who are non-political or apolitical. I think everybody in South Africa is political. Whether you are white or black, you are political. Your existence in South Africa is a political statement. For example, take the detention of 4 or 5 year olds. Why does this happen? It is in that context that I want to clarify this point, and say then, in answer to Ntongela, that we inside the country are not stupid. We realize when something is for our benefit and will promote our liberation. And we know that if people from inside the country come out, those people should not come out and sing a peace song for you to believe that everything is rosy-dozy inside the country. They should come out and expose you to the current under-currents of our cultural activities and reflect the feelings of the people inside the country. So if you find "Woza Albert", "Bhopa", "Asinamali" coming out, then it is those artists who are reflecting the current feelings of the people. But you should not be duped to receive "Umabatha", to receive dance and

*CASA: "Culture in Another South Africa" = a conference hosted by the AAM-Netherlands during December 1987 with some 300 South African cultural workers to debate issues pertaining to cultural work in S.A.

song here and think that those performances reflect the current feelings of our people inside the country. I think, you are also not stupid. You are perceptive enough to see what is propaganda.

Floor contribution

I think what the cultural boycott requires is a certain amount of clarity, and the way I see it is, that there are two main issues that have to be faced. And the first issue is: What are the objectives of the cultural boycott? To put it very simplisticly, it would basically be to support those groups that are within the country and people who are outside the country who support the liberation movements, who will be given the go-ahead to continue with their work and then to boycott those groups that come into South Africa or that leave South Africa supporting the regime to call for a boycott of those groups. The area that would become, I think, the more difficult area, would be the groups that are not politically conscientised per se, but would then claim to be political or to be representative. But those will be the issues that will have to be discussed and clarified. The second issue is - in my opinion - a very important issue: Who decides who is to come and who is not to come? And for that we require a very democratic process. And that democratic process would require input and consensus from all the major ideological groupings that are fighting against the regime. I don't think this is a place to go into the mechanics of how we arrive at it, but people both within the country and outside the country in the ANC, PAC, the Black Consciousness Movement, and within the country, from the National Forum, AZAPO, UDF, and other groups like the African Writers Association, the Journalists' Group, MWASA, other Trade Unions like NACTU should all be consulted, and somehow, through some mechanism, arrive at a consensus. I don't think by and large there would be a problem in the different groups arriving at a similar conclusion. So I think these are the two major objectives that we have to focus on. The one is what are we trying to achieve with the boycott, and who will decide who is to be boycotted, and who is to be supported.

Floor contribution

I think we are going to have a problem here. On the question of who is going to decide at home, who is to be boycotted and who is not to be boycotted, because recently there has been a very big discussion as to: Are the people at home to play the role of censors? Censoring people as to: You are allowed to go and play, and you are not. So, the question here is: If we are going to continue like the other comrade is putting it, continue to tell people not to come and continue to tell people you are allowed to go there, aren't we then playing the role of exactly that which is currently happening at home? Being sort of censors? So that is my question now as to: Aren't we going to that danger of being censors?

L.N.
The last speaker is making the point I exactly wanted to make myself. I'm sorry that Oswald Mtshali comes down very hard on the speaker who raised certain problems about the cultural boycott, merely to dismiss some of those points and say anybody who comes from South Africa is political. Of course, it is so, philosophically speaking. It means that if you live under oppression you must be political in some way, or if you are practising oppression, you must be political. But I don't think that this is a very serious point to make. It's a real abstract kind of statement to me. It is true that some people from South Africa come out, and it is, when they come under intense pressure, that they realize the folly of their ways. I'd think also what the speaker was suggesting, and, I think, all of us are suggesting, is that we don't have a policy. We must really express certain things in candour. We don't have a policy on the cultural boycott. My own feeling is that it is easy for the enemy to divide us on this cultural boycott issue. The enemy is able to exploit this, basically because we ourselves have made certain errors in the formulation of the boycott issue. I'm speaking now as someone who worked in London with the playwrights' boycotts with people like Ronnie Segal, Ruth First, myself, and the Harold Pinters of this world, who were very powerful people. Athol Fugard had in fact persuaded some of those people to support the cultural boycott, and later on, turned against the cultural boycott. So the fall-out from that was that we had to pick up the pieces. People like Ruth First and myself had to answer those people when they said: Well, you see, here is Athol Fugard saying, he thinks he was in error in encouraging the cultural boycott, that in fact artists should be doing something to change that situation. Are you saying that artists have no relevance in the political process? Therefore, why are artists of any importance? So, some of these issues are philosophical, and dangerous, because they keep us hostages to people who are prepared to exploit precisely these kind of abstractions. My feeling is that we made the error of pretending that the boycott is a principle instead of a tactic.
It must be clear that there is nothing that requires us to have a blanket boycott. We can select what we want to have boycotted, who we want to support, and so on. I am extremely worried about any idea of setting up a board of censors or whatever we want to call it, that says so and so should not go; and if he/she goes, we are going to arrange solidarity groups to boycott that person abroad. I am for an idea of sponsoring artists that the liberation movement in broad terms accepts as people speaking for our condition, but leave it vague. I can tell you why this is my feeling. There are some of us who can be extremely critical, even on the basis of formalistic problems of the arts. And then some idiot, who is sitting in some committee and decides: "Well, I don't know about his tendencies, I don't think he should go", when in fact that kind of person will be of great value in the democratic process of thinking ourselves into the future. What I want to say is that we don't have a policy

and we should admit this; but this does not give blanket permission for people to go to South Africa and fraternise with the enemy. There are certain areas of the cultural boycott, that we really agree on. For example, I think that musicians from outside going into South Africa can come under very broad scrutiny and we know what they are doing. But we don't have a policy, and therefore we can't really act as if we do.

Floor contribution

The speaker expressed his concern vis-á-vis using the term "boycott" given the recent German history. For issues as clear as products from S.A. and loans to the apartheid state, there is no quarrel. Here the boycott should be intensified and pressure applied on West-German banks to pull out of S.A. Also the academic boycott should receive popular support, eg. no medical students to S.A. The difficulty arises when having to differentiate between the official (repressive) and democratic (liberating) "cultures". How do institutions, groups and individuals react to serialised South African propaganda - in the form of the SABC-TV 10 part series "Chaka Zulu" - being screened on West-German TV? Where were the protests regarding this distorted view of South African history? It is necessary, therefore, for an organised form of coordinating actions regarding a cultural boycott.

L.N.

again raised the issue of structures:

- in order to disseminate information about artistic productions in/ from S.A.;
- how they intend coping with the question of "vetting" that which is produced.

Floor contribution

It's the question of strategy that is important. The rest is a bit muddled. Speaking of strategies, I would like to suggest three concrete ways: a) We should have advance warning of who is coming and why. This would be on two levels, in two fields, because we do need to know who is coming. We, the scholars, researchers, militants and so on. In order to disseminate the information among the people we know, so that we can get in touch with the people from inside, because we are in dire need of what is coming from inside, especially because of the censorship and all that. So, who is coming and why? And why, because, if certain groups are going to tour Europe, there is advanced warning, they know it inside, and we can devise our strategies then and there. That's one thing. b) Secondly, we mustn't be too sure. There will always be infiltrations into the country, and

we must adapt a strategy to that. If they do come into the country, whatever country you live in, there are two ways. If we have that advanced warning, we can at least put up a campaign to counter this and to tell the people: "Don't organize that. Don't think of organizing this, because this is bad", and tell them why it is bad. So, we can do that, but even if we can't stop it, then there's the way of taking advantage of the situation to attract the attention of people on what is really taking place. What we can and must do afterwards, in the schools, in the universities, and in the public, is to say what it is exactly about. We have to illuminate the people about that, so this is also a counter-attack. This is our role as teachers or militants.

In a contribution from the floor, the speaker, a South African, mentioned the "Culture in Another South Africa" conference which was to be hosted in Amsterdam by the AAM - Netherlands - where, amongst others,

- "comrades and cultural workers of all persuasions and political groupings would come together";

- "despite enormous communication problems", these people will be coming together for the first such gathering ever;

- "people who have been legitimised by their various organisations, will be attending".

We would, therefore, be "jumping the gun" should we here (in Bad Boll) wish to formulate a policy statement regarding the cultural boycott. It would, therefore, be expedient to await the outcome of CASA.

A further issue raised was the reiteration of the importance of building up structures for liaising between writers/academics in South Africa and the writers/academics in exile. This has up to now been sadly neglected and mainly left to chance.

Another contributor stressed the necessity of establishing a viable "cultural task-force within the West-German anti-apartheid movement". There, too, liaison between structures in S.A. (eg. UDF and COSATU Cultural Desks) and dependable structures here would be essential.

This suggestion, taken up by a South African writer in exile, was refined somewhat: that it would be essential too, to liaise with the various craft-unions directly, eg. with the musicians' alliance.

R.K.
We have just sent around a list for all those who live and work here in the FRG who wish to be part of this cultural task-force. Please put down your names, address and area of interest, eg. drama or music. Sometime during next year then, we would convene a meeting to set up some workable structure. In this regard it should be mentioned that the DGB (Federation of German Trade Unions) has started something similar, viz. "Beat against Apartheid" and in Hamburg a women's collective has started the "Künstler gegen Apartheid". Here it would be necessary for us to take up contact with them and to coordinate future plans and programmes. That, I think, is all that we have time for now.

It remains for me, as convenor, to express a vote of thanks to all those who have made this second conference possible. There are the "backroom boys and girls", who saw to all our "technical needs". Then the various group convenors and those who have offered to compile the minutes of the group sessions. Also the participants deserve a round of applause for their lively participation in the plenary and group discussions. Finally, I would like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to those South African writers and scholars whose contributions have certainly guaranteed the success of this debate. As you have no doubt noticed, there is a great need for a venture of this nature to be conducted here in the parochiality of Western German academia. We thank you for your openess and your frankness - without which we would probably not have had the intensity and level of debate as experienced in the past two days. Allow me too, to make special mention of Mavis Smallberg, Oswald Mtshali, Themba Qabula and Farouk Asvat who have, as it were, come directly from the front and will be returning there in the near future. We wish you courage and strength. Please convey our sincere greetings and good wishes to your organisations - UDF, COSATU and COSAW. Thank you.

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The Second South African Literature Conference in West Germany.
December 11th-13th, 1987.

To the Ambassador of Malawi, Mainzer Str. 124, 5300 Bonn 2.
To the Minister of Education, Private Bag, Lilongwe, Malawi.
To the Vice-Chancellor, Chancellor College, Zomba, Malawi.

Your Excellency,
Dear Minister,
Dear Vice-Chancellor,

The Second South African Literature Conference in West Germany, hosted by the Protestant Academy of Bad Boll and attended by writers, lecturers, church workers and students from Europe and Africa, strongly protests the detention without trial of one of Africa's most important writers, our colleague

JACK MAPANJE

poet and head of the department of English at the University of Malawi.
In common with other concerned organisations throughout the Commonwealth and the rest of the world, we demand his immediate release, so that he may resume his duties at the University and his positive contribution to the literature of Africa.

Yours faithfully,

- the undersigned participants -

Appendix 2: Biographical Data

Neela Alvarez-Péreyre, writer, critic, part-time lecturer, English language in the University of Grenoble.

Farouk Asvat, poet, medical doctor, Alexandra Health Centre and University Clinic, Johannesburg, presently research student in the Netherlands.

Vernon February, poet, critic, research fellow and lecturer at the Afrika-Studiecentrum, Leiden/Netherlands.

Vusi Mchunu, poet, critic, co-editor "AWA-FINNABA", based in Berlin (West).

Oswald Mbuyiseni Mtshali, poet, gen.-sec., Congress of South African Writers, Director of Communication, South African Council of Churches, Johannesburg.

Lewis Nkosi, novelist, critic, essayist, prof. of English.

Ntongela Masilela, film and literary critic, presently research fellow Free University Berlin (West).

Alfred Qabula, worker-poet, member COSATU Workers' Cultural Local, Durban.

Mavis Smallberg, poetess, dancer, high-school teacher, vice-president (W.C.), Congress of South African Writers, Vakalisa Arts Association, Cape Town.

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VIII