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Opening address
Amanda Kwodi

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Women
worker writers
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Women
and literacy
Uswe, ELP and Speak
In November 1988 the Transvaal region
of the Congress of South African Writers
held a conference on women and
writing.

Marking the region's first Annual
General Meeting, it featured a range of
speakers and other participants active
in literature and related areas of work.
The conference provided valuable
insight into the obstacles that restrict
women's participation in literature and
What's inside?

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delivered at the
conference
Thomi Sibisi, Pule Seolonyone, Gladys
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Images of
women in literature
Vehi Soobroyoh, Nadine Gordimer, Miriam
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our cultural and political life generally.
More importantly, it pointed to what
needs to be done to overcome these.
This publication of papers,
discussion and poems from the
conference aims to stimulate further
discussion. Hopefully it will contribute to
the process of moving from ideas to
action that is needed to ensure the
progressive cultural transformation of our
country.

Thanks to ELP, Afropix, Kobie and Susan for photographs and to all who have assisted with
this publication.

POLITICAL SITUATION

Apartheid is still intact despite reports to the contrary and the different government tactics to reform it, for example, the tricameral system, the regional councils, management councils and the local authorities. And the resistance from the masses is also there to counter and thwart whatever strategies are being used by the government.

URBAN AREAS

In the urban areas rents haven't been paid and this is causing problems for the government and councillors. At the moment several townships, including Soweto, owe an amount of R620 million in rent. The township has sewerage, electricity and water problems.

Housing is still a problem, with people staying in shacks and others resisting the Group Areas Act by staying in town. Unemployment is still very high. And people continue to reject dummy bodies like the local authorities. This was evident in the low polls in the October municipal elections.

RURAL AREAS

The homeland system is still rejected by people. Poverty and unemployment is still rampant. Medical, educational and transport facilities are limited or nonexistent and roads are bad. Forced removals continue but in some cases the masses have successfully resisted them.

THE CITIES

Transport, social, educational and health amenities are still segregated. The Group Areas Act is in force. Black people are constantly threatened with eviction, but more than 50 000 black people have shown their determination to violate the Act by staying out in town.

Conflict with the police and security forces is still common. Repression, including detentions, bannings and imprisonment of political offenders, continues.

Internationally, America and Britain are strategising for a Lancaster-type settlement in South Africa.

Women and literature in South Africa

by Amanda Kwadi, from the Federation of Transvaal Women (Fedtraw)

Ruling forces in Britain have called for the expulsion of the ANC from Britain and at the same time for the unconditional release of Nelson Mandela.

The American government has refused sanctions and disinvestment and opts for the education of a few people, encourages the conditional release of Nelson Mandela while at the same time supporting the apart-

heid government and Unita in Angola.

Politically and morally we the oppressed say that we support the release of Nelson Mandela as he is the leader of the ANC and also because we don't want to be seen to be denying him freedom by putting forth other demands. But we have always stated that the release of Mandela doesn't mean freedom and the end of apartheid, but one of the steps towards that.

Other steps essential to the dismantling of apartheid structures are:

(1) the unbanning of the ANC,
(2) the release of political prisoners,
(3) the unconditional return of exiles,
and

(4) the unconditional handing over of power to the people.

WRITERS' OBLIGATIONS

Nobody in South Africa is neutral. Either you are part of the oppressor or part of the oppressed. This applies to writers too.

Writers differ in terms of their historical background and class interests. They also differ in terms of the political ideologies they adopt and their political consciousness.

All this is reflected in the way people's aspirations are being reflected and recorded.

In South Africa writers should not only write books, plays and so on about human relations or love alone, but about the people's sufferings through detentions - miscarriages experienced in detention like E. Mathebula; giving birth in detention like Daisy Matlou; about rent boycotts, school boycotts: about sufferings of women in rural and urban areas, feelings of families whose relatives are in exile and the anxiety they've had to go through when they hear that somebody has been shot in a shoot-out.

Some examples of this are books written by people such as Ngugi, Callinicos and lots of men and women in exile which all reflect issues such as poverty, education and people's resistance against apartheid.

Research on various subjects is also not neutral. It can be used for personal reasons, reflecting a certain ideology and can be used to

Fedttaw leader Amanda Kwadi delivers the opening address at the conference. further certain political persuasions. For example, the book by Barbara Cole, then a 'Rhodesian', contained research on detention and torture and led to the arrest of saboteurs. This clearly shows that research goes in accordance with the Ideological and political persuasions of the researcher/writer.

POSITION OF WOMEN

There are few women writers in SA. This is for a number of reasons. Apartheid policies have deprived people of educational opportunities. Also, the society In which we live makes certain assumptions about what the role of women should be, for example, always expecting to see women with broomsticks and vacuum cleaners rather than with pens and books.

The division of labour within the family burdens women with the triple role - the role of child bearing and childcare, the role at work and the role within the struggle. These are real constraints on women writing and also on reading others people's works.

This may explain why most women writers are single, dlvorcees and widows, with the exception of a few. Even these women writers are constrained by the apartheid system, male domination and class relationships. They are also frustrated by the publishing industry which often rejects their work as political. They are affected by detentions and imprisonment and generally by the unhealthy situation we are living in, which is not conducive to creative writing.

There are only a few works that reflect the aspirations of the masses and the oppression of women. For example, Buchl Emmecheta, in the book The joy of motherhood, does not clearly bring out the exploitation of women. but does expose the situation and the pain of women who have no children - 'Nnueko' - and how traditional systems oppress women.

Domatila in Let me Speak and poetry by Cosatu members In Natal all express these aspirations. and the language used also expresses their class views.

Such works are not alienating to the masses because their visions and images clearly reflect the aspirations of the workers, the underprivileged.

Women as writers or as ordinary women are often portrayed by men writers in the same way as society sees their role. But when men writers become politically conscious, their perception of the status of women

and their role in literature also changes.

Both men and women are important in changing this status and fighting for women's rights and women's emancipation in literature. And by doing this, they will be contributing to the liberation of mankind.

But women writers are the ones who should start the ball rolling, as they are the ones who feel the most pain from exploitation in literature.

As far as broad national liberation is concerned, i will say that the oppressed are the ones who have to liberate themselves and need to be given the forum in literature to pursue the struggle for national liberation.

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Breaking the
silence

The triple oppression of black women in South Africa has meant that few become writers and poets. ,
The panelists for the session on Women Worker Writers, I Boitumelo Motokeng, Nise Malange and Roseline Naapo, are three women who have become writers and poets despite the odds.

in their papers they share their experiences as writers and activists. They look at the obstacles women face and what needs to be done - by women themselves and by democratic organisations generally - to overcome these obstacles and to break the silence.

Boitumelo

Mofokeng

Fume as she is known, is a Federation of Transvaal Women (r'Fedtraw) member. She used to work for Seriti sa Sechaba.

Thanks for this opportunity to present something as women writers. i think i have a whole document of excuses about why we don't have so many women writers, especially black women writers.

Hopefully at the end of the day we will come up with ways and means of encouraging our women to treat life seriously and assume their responsibility in cultural circles.

There is a need for an explanation from active women writers. This need is to create a picture of what i

a woman is to her society, where does she fit in in the cultural circles?

To be more precise: what does she do or say when she sees her children disappearing into jail, exile or being slaughtered mercilessly, or her daughters disappearing into the ditches of immorality, or maybe her community losing direction, What does she do?

There are two things she can do. One is to have courage to stand up and speak, Or she can chose the second option, which is to fold her arms and wait for men to dictate terms to her. The latter is a destructive attitude to adopt.

Before i dwell on the question of why we have so few women writers. and where are they, I would like to pay my tribute to the young generation of 1976, the year of the black student. the period of self-discovery and the beginning or intensification of political consciousness.

That year inspired many of our young boys and girls, and a generation of protest poetry writers was born. Girls stepped into the shoes of their mothers and wrote about the plight of every mother who lost a child during that year, or suffered any kind of loss due to the confrontation with the police force.

They were an angry lot, and their voices were heard during commemoration services and cultural

events. A few succeeded in having their works published. This is the missing link of that period and today. Since I belonged to this generation, I shall attempt to address issues that affected us then, and what brought about the differences between yesterday and today.

In 1976 it was easy to respond to the call of that year and its events. There was some sort of raising of consciousness and spontaneous reaction to the events as they unfolded. It was history that needed to be recorded from all angles. Maybe it was also necessary to conduct oral poetry to mobilise and inspire the masses. But what happened after such events?

In 1977, after the banning of the political organisations, including a writers group, it was as if the cultural development of our people had come to an end.

Some were detained or banned and others had to skip the country. It

Students perform at Cosatu cultural day in Johannesburg took a long time for new groups to be established and take the platform.

What happened, in particular, to the women writers of that time? The Miriam Tlali's survived because they were the old horses in the field.

My contemporaries became inactive. There was no network of communication. Each one followed her own instincts as to what to do next. Others chose to continue their studies or to join industry. The cultural life in them was tampered with. We shall not forget how our marriages contribute to our lack of participation in matters like this.

But after all being said and done, I would like to raise an issue that seems to prevail in many areas of cultural activity - consulting with past women writers when compiling publications.

With due respect to Staffrider and Ravan Press publishers, I would like to use the example of their most recent achievement - a compilation of works they have published in the past decade or so.

Do you want to tell me the works of women writers who started with Staffrider ten years ago were not good enough for reproduction in a collection? I would like to hear from the house what you thought of it.

When I went through it, I discovered works by Miriam Tlali, two black women, Nadine Gordimer and a few others. But compared to the effort of the women, especially the black women, who published with Staffrider in that ten year period, there were very few. Many were left out.

I would also like to know why is it that mainly white women's, excuse that racial remark, works were included. I count two black women's works in that book. Does it mean that a black woman is not good enough?

I would also like to raise another issue, which is just a coincidence. Today I am married to a photographer whose works appeared in that collection. It was work that was achieved over two years, and it was Staffrider's photographic collection. But Tume's work, which actually started with the very first volumes, could not even be noticed in the magazine.

Well, maybe we still need to consult with the editor, or the collective that was compiling or choosing the work to be reproduced.

I am raising this point, not because I wanted to be highlighted as an individual, but only for the sake of show-

ing some recognition of the efforts
made by black women writers then.
I have very little experience with
organisational or trade union publi-
cations. but often I came across
poetry by men. And knowing that
these publications are handled by
men themselves, I wouldn't expect
to see much of women's stuff in
them.
The same goes for celebrations,
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commemorations or cultural events.
Women, as always, are good at
catering whilst men are on stage,
preaching the gospel of mass mo-
bilisation, unity and the need to
stand up together to win our strug-
gle. I have no qualms about this. I
too believe In It. But I am going to do
my best to revive my own writing
and work with other women writers or
budding writers.

One of the ma-
jor, and serious
criticisms raised
after the Fedtraw
women's cultural
day was that
there were very
few women cultu-
ral participants not
accompanied by
men. Please get
that very clear, I
am not saying
there were no
women partici-
pants. They were
there, but accom-
panied by men.

It Is also sad to discover that
women-only groups or organisations
do not seem to be addressing the
need for cultural desks within their
groups.

Something needs to be done by
the women themselves to answer
this need for a strong cultural move-
ment.

Having addressed the Issue of
women writers of the 1976 period, I
would like us to think seriously at the
role of the women in our culture.

Historically, we know how our
people lived happily on their tribal
lands, with livestock and fertile fields
as their means of survival. The fami-
lies were always together, worked
together to supply their material
needs, and were self-sufficient. The
woman of those times occupied her
rightful place In the society.
Since urbanisation, resettlement,
Industrlallsation and migration from
homes to big cities, family life
changed for the worse. Family units
were dismantled and women were
left behind to fend for themselves
and their children.

As poverty, homelessness and in-
security surrounded them, women
too had to pack and go out to join
the workforce ln factories, shops,
kitchens and farms, and those with
education Joined other professions.
Let us not forget the Industrial devel-
opment In the past decade, where
women were recruited for men's
Jobs like garbage collection and
street sweeping.

i don't want to believe it was to
create the equality we talk about,

but it was for the government's cheap labour practices. All these practices meant the woman was to-
"Let us remove the barriers! Let us break the silence. Let us stand up and speak our minds before the men do it for us. Let us fight the social and political obstacles that prevent us from occupying our rightful place in the society...

"Let us find more ways to explain our stand and why we want to be part of the whole society. Let us not wait, to be a disgrace to our children and grandchildren. We owe it to them. The future is theirs. "

tally cut off from her family. And her role as the first teacher in the home, the mentor and custodian of our culture, was not just forgotten but completely destroyed.

There are no more fireside stories, no more people's folklore. Studying the social position of the woman of today, serious factors need to be considered before any criticism is passed as to why women don't write.

It is a fact that we all know, she is a victim of triple oppression, being a black woman, a statutory minor, and provider or breadwinner. She is a victim of the same socio-economic and political oppression as her fellow man. As it this is not enough, she is a victim of sexual abuse, sexual harassment at the workplace, a battered wife, a single parent, a widow - not of natural causes - but because her husband is locked away In Jail or was forced to leave the country.

A literature from these women, or about their experiences, would provide an important social documentation of their lives and provide further study materials for addressing women's Issues and their role in the whole struggle.

More so, it will shed some light in grace to our children and grandchildren about the effect of education on dress the bantu education issue, but good and the bad of being education, over the past ten years, we have found more women seeing women entering the field of journalism as well.

developed their works and not only understanding her better. And something can be done to uplift her. As long as these problems are not identified, recognised as barriers and most importantly, fought, we shall be asking for a miracle to see women standing up with courage and playing their role effectively. This Is a direct challenge to the women themselves. Let us remove these barriers! Sometimes they Just block our heads because of a lot of other personal problems we go

through In life. Let
us break the sl-
lence. Let us stand
up and speak our
minds before the
men do it for us.
Let us tight the so-
cial and political
obstacles that
prevent us from
occupying our
rightful place in the
society.

A member of
the protest poetry generation, and
now a full-time worker for NUM,
once defined women's liberation as
follows: 'Womenls liberation is be-
yond the relationship of men and
women, it is beyond being freed
from men's oppression. But it is the
first phase of our struggle to reaffirm
our role in the struggle for total libera-
tion.'

Let us find more ways to explain
our stand and why we want to be
part of the whole society we live in
today. Let us not wait, to be a dis-
dren. We owe it to them, the future is
theirs.

Let us pause for a while and think
our culture. I am not going to ad-
how education has been used to
create class distinctions within our
community. I shall not talk about the
cated. As part of the process of de-
breaking into maIe-dominated
fields. the arts included. We began
Those who were creative writers

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concentrated on one type of writing
but started on short stories and nov-
els. Today we also have women
playwrights.
achievements.

But can we sincerely say that
some, if not most of the work, is within
the grasp of the ordinary woman in
the street? How do we measure the
success of her writing? Is it by the to-
tal sales, or by readership that gen-
erates discussion or causes people
to take action?

How many of us take the trouble
to write in African languages for the
sake of effective communication?
Think of many cultural events where
writers read their works in English. I am
one of them, like I am doing now.

How does it help the situation, unless
we do not want to communicate
with our people but with those who
oppress us. How
do we gain our
people's support
if they leave the
meeting or read-
ings without under-
standing anything
about our work.

As I see it, Eng-
lish as a language
is a bridge be-
tween different ra-
ces. We applaud such
professionalism.

Given the fact that we are part of
our history, and that we too have a
role to play, let us recognise those
who came before us. Let us honour
them and make use of their skills and
experiences to create our own.

As women, we can never write
outside our community. And we
need that strong presence in com-
munity services or participation in rel-
evant grassroots structures. We are
women, mothers of the nation. Be-
sides all other responsible positions
we hold, we still have this social re-
sponsibility we have to carry until the
end of time.

In the next page or two I wish to
attempt to address the basic and
some sensitive issues which we can
start correcting now in order to have
a place for the women and the
"Can we sincerely say that some, if not most of
the work is' within the grasp of the ordinary
woman in the street? How do we measure the
success of our writing?

Is it by total sales or by readership that
. generates discussion or causes people to take
action? How many of us take the trouble to write
in African languages for the sake of effective
executives or personnel. Let us stop
appointing women as tokens, not lis-
tening to their contributions, or putting
forward destructive criticism. By so
doing we shall be destroying our
role models and we should not ex-

pect more women to dare take a chance to occupy that vacant chair, unless they enjoy being humiliated by their fellow brothers. Let us learn to listen and respect the opinions of our sisters, In particular black sisters. We are likely to pick up good ideas. I don't believe we are working in the corporate world where high sales are a priority. I see our struggle as two-fold. On the one hand it is to bring freedom for our people, and on the other it is to develop one another to be able to assume responsibility in the post-apartheid society.

By recognising the talent of our women well be able to protect them from being used by certain unfavourable elements outside the corridors of our struggle. We shall not find ourselves in conflict with teachings of our Egggroups. H faCll- communication? liberation move-communication How do we gain our people's support if they ment regarding and contact. If we leave the meetings or readings without feminism. weie to \$de the understanding a thing about our work?" Let us mi .ex' subject that Inter- pect to find ests us most we are likely to bow our heads in shame when we realise that those we were writing tor, and about, and reading to, did not get the message.

For example, so much is written about the domestic worker. Her plight is being communicated, but she is not aware of that. She only enjoys the physical support that she counts on. but may not be aware that we are exposing the malpractices in domestic work.

Let us therefore think about how effective our works are in communicating. Let us bridge the gap between the educated and the uneducated. Let us, in the process, practice sincerity at all levels of our writing. Let us be loyal messengers and disciples and serve our communities with utmost dedication and youth in our cultural circles.

These points are from a rough study of the situation of women writers and they are in no way the best and final answers as to what needs to be done. They are not a blue print. i will just quickly go through the points on where we can start to really get our women writers going.

Since the ground is fertile within organisations we could establish not a separate forum, but a special one, to give women a chance to be themselves, to work on their ideas.

take initiatives, and produce their own work.

Let us not generalise issues affecting members or workers as this can override women's issues. Let us strive for a balance in numbers and participation or recruitment of our ready-made

women, or mas-

ters of the craft, unless we are prepared to work hard and produce

our own. There is a big cry over lack of political education. Women are the worst victims and always have to find their own ways of understanding our political struggle and related issues. The same applies to our youth.

Let us find suitable publications that we identify with and use them as a vehicle to carry our message

across. Let us promote women's works collectively. For example, combine their writings with photography, artwork and illustrations by other women. Let us create forums to discuss such issues or brainstorm the ideas.

We can also think of promoting women in the arts by creating incen-

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tlves like awards In different categories.

Lastly, let us try to close the gap between the old and new writers by approaching our culture as dedicated and strongly committed workers. The Issue should not be how many books the writer has published. but how many people did he or she share his or her experience with and help to shape their future.

in conclusion, I would like to pay tribute to all the people behind Cosaw, cultural desks of many organisations, and Individuals like Nadine Gordimer and Miriam Tlali, for their outstanding contribution in our literature. A special thank you to Miriam Tlali who opened her doors to many of us, to use her house for women writers' workshops and to use her resource library. To her I say, we were too young and naive to understand her concern. Thank you.

Roseline Naapo

Rosellne was a domestic worker before becoming an organiser for the South African Domestic Workers' Union (SADWU) , a COSAFA affiliate. She is one of our foremost domestic worker poets.

i am going to speak about how I was inspired to be a writer. I was not born with the knowledge of writing. i was brought up by a stepmother who never showed me love. She bought me beautiful clothes, toys, as a camouflage to society that she loves me. But the house was cold.

When i started going to school i learnt to have a little notebook to write about whatever problems i had on a particular day. These writings made me compile them into small poems, or plays.

During my school days the problems became more and more, because i had the gift of being clever, of coming number one in school each year. And my step mother's children couldn't get the first position. That was another problem for me.

I started again. writing a play and letting the school children play that play and i would pretend to be my stepmother. I was trying to show the people how I was living in that beautiful house, with beautiful clothes, with everything which the people saw was beautiful and a happy life, but with no love.

it went on until, through other sufferings, through the punishment I got from the government after resigning from the police force, I was forced to work as a domestic worker.

In the field of domestic work, it's not happy, it's not nice. You live in a beautiful room which they call a

home. But you live alone. You are not allowed to have visitors, you are not able to live with your husband. You are separated from your family for many months. And your employer expects you to smile each morning when you come into her house. When the employer leaves you with her kids, she expects you to be a good mother to her kids, a good nurse to her kids. You must be one hundred percent to her kids. Meanwhile you are feeling a clot in your heart that you can not even kiss your child in the morning when you wake up.

Here with me I have some of the works of domestic workers. We are encouraging domestic workers to write short stories and seeing whether there are some hidden talents within the domestic workers because we have seen that to be a writer does not mean you had to go to school.

You can say whatever you can say without knowing how to write, The next person will write it for you. and it can be compiled into a book. The first poem I am going to read is about a domestic worker who was very cross because she was dismissed without any salary, without any notice pay, and her things were thrown in the street. it is called Lekgoa Gopola.

Lekgoa ge o fihia
obe ole Bothateng
obe o hioka modulo
Serutha-metsing sebe se
pshatiegile
O filwe modulo
O filwe dljo
Ware go ttwaela
Wa thoma mathaitai
Bogudu ebile a mathomo
Bogoshi ba go utsuwa
O furile magoshl arena
O ba turile ka tjhelete
Wa neela magoshl a rena bjala
Wa ba lebatsha tsa go hlahla
setjhaba
Wa kgona go ba bitsa dithaela
O arotse naga ya rena
Re bitsana ka Bapedi, Mazulu,
Mavenda.
O hweditse re sa th-tsene kereke
O re tile Bebele na tsea - naga
O agile mengwako ya kgoiego
O swere baetapele ba rena
O ba hiahletse ntloana - tshwana
Ge ba kgopela kwano.

And another poem was also written by a domestic worker. It says:

A domestic worker
I've seen her trudging alone
in this lonely lane of poverty
caring touching diligence.
From sunrise to sunset
she drains her years
with masters cooking washing

that pays her
a bowl of disappointment
And she knows
she has to accept these crumbs
For she has no right to strike
or appeal to the deep laws of the
land.
The world spins in her mind
when she remembers
that soon her strength shall be
waned
and there will be no
unemployment
or person for her thereafter.
An idea of forming a mouthpiece
for their grievances
flashed her mind
while she was figuring out the way
to get out from this
torturing isolation
The last poem, i wrote while lwas
a domestic worker.
Alone i sit in my cell
thinking of my poor children
and husband.
No-one to talk to
nor listen to.

A play about "madams and maids" highlights Sadwu's living wage campaign

My poor feet are aching
my shoulders are drooping
from tiredness.
I'm given names
Some call me Maid
Some call me Mary.
Is It so hard to be called Lekhutso?
I am a nurse, doctor, cook,
you name it, I do.

My reward comes when they
want
Land of my forefathers
How can you forget one
who sacrificed her children
to be with yours
Oh rulers of our country
how can you forget me in your
house
how can you forget the lonely
worker.

Nise Malange
Nisa, a poet and writer, was a
member of the National Union of
Metal Workers of SA (Numsa)
and was In the Congress of
South African Trade Unions (Co-
satu) cuIIturaI committee In Natal.
She Is now working In Ihe Culture
and Working Life Project In Natal.
The title of my paper is: iWomen
workers and the struggle for cultural
transformation'.

My presence in this conference
today Is to speak and address two
issues. Firstly, my experiences as a
poet and the problems of support
that I have received as a woman.
And the second Issue Is to give
some outline of the kind of work that
Cosatu ls doing to encourage work-
er writing and to look at whether Co-
satu ls specifically encouraging
women workers to write and If so,
how.

I won't be speaking specifically
on these two issues, but I would like
to share my experiences with you.
I started writing when I was still at
primary school. But sure, everyone
has received that experience of
composition writing, let alone Imag-
ination and recitation.

I used to get frustrated when I was
restricted on what to write and read.
I won't go into details of the rotten
education that is bontu education. I
only took my late mother's advice,
my late mother. She used to tell me,
look, you are just getting confused
day by day, because you read a
lot and you don't concentrate on
your studies, so please ignore the
other things and just try to concen-
trate on the right Issues.

At the same time, It has helped
me. But my mother couldn't see
what I have achieved now, like the
publication that we had and some
other writings, because she died in
1985, before we published 'Black

Mamba Rising'.

I did not have the opportunity of getting alternative education because at that time the one was no better than the other, compared to education facilities that are available today.

My involvement was more in stage plays, dance, singing, sport and writing. I did not give priority to any of these because each of them had its own time at school. It was only in 1977 that I concentrated more on stage plays and writing poetry, without any encouragement. And all that work has disappeared now.

When I started with the trade unions in 1982, I was frustrated, lonely and miserable. I had to learn to be independent and to learn another Nguni language. And for that year I was immersed.

The following year, that is 1983, I became involved in what is today the Cosatu cultural unit. We were making and performing plays, writing poetry and songs. All our work is today portrayed in the book called 'Organise and Act' and the first collection of poems, that is 'Black

Mamba Rlsing' was published In
1985. Hopefully In mId-1989 we will
come up with another collection that
addresses women's hardships.
Generally I have received sup-
port from comrades Inside and out-
side. Working for the Culture and
Working Life Project, I did not give
my writing priority because of the
time. I was a union organiser and this
meant working seven days a week.
Through my experience of sexist
management, and sometimes
through workers, I've gained conti-
dence. You struggle until you can
prove you can do your work.
We are all aware that this society
Is male dominat-
ed, with mainly
male chauvinists.
We are always at-
tacked as wom-
work that we do,
and we need to
be brave In order
to succeed.
In Natal, after
the women's fo-
rum conference,
there were smear
pamphlets attack-
Ing women. I'm
have this pamph-
let now. But these
pamphlets said
they were from workers from the
factory floor. Generally It was ad-
dressing the Issue of women organ-
ising themselves. It said that women
are demanding six months maternity
leave while they are not even sure
that those babies born at that time
will be theirs, that they will be the fa-
thers of those babies. Because
seemingly there Is nothing that you
can do as women alone. You need
to have men Involved In anything
that you are doing. We have come
together regularly to build up our
strength and confidence because
of these attacks.
Today I would say let's rather dis-
cuss practical ways of bringing
women together on a more com-
mon and open ground. Sharing of
skills rather than frustration is maybe
the solution. I don't say let's ignore
the problems that we've got now,
but it we sIt and cry and feel defeat-
ed we won't make a new society.
We need to plan for our future, the
future of women, In the new South
Africa.
Writing about our experiences,
culture and history Is one of the lm-
portant ways of sharing with other
women and passing the message
to other people.
Cosatu women's forum was one
of the important events In our history
as working women. There are many

campaigns that we need to carry forward to make working women aware of all the developments, be it culture, writing, the Ilving wage campaign or parental rights. The success of all those campaigns needs our full participation. It "There is a long history of women's resistance against apartheid and capitalist exploitation. en, in any kind of Increasingly working class women are becoming part of the organised labour force and are effecting changes within their communities. The struggle to change patriarchal attitudes, share the double shift and achieve higher wages and better working conditions, is being forced onto the agendas of organisations. As long as culture is not part of the same agenda, women miss one of the most powerful sorry that I don't tools for bringing about cultural transformation." Is very difficult for me to say there are developments in the area of women. having a hundred plus one problems.

Rather, I would like to share with you the development of the worker theatre movement In Natal. I will be very brief and more of this information can be obtained from 'Organise and Act'.

Over the last five years workers in the trade union movement In Natal consolidated themselves into a strong cultural local. The members have made and performed plays, wrote and read their poetry, composed songs and responded creatively to all major campaigns and events. But the majority of people who have contributed to this process have been male workers. The presence of women has been sporadic, rather than regular and strong Few women have participated In the creative workshops and performances, or In writing poetry. This Is not surprising and It reflects the general lack of women's active involvement In organisations such as Cosatu.

As Cosatu had stated: 'The oppression of women is an Immediate organisational Issue for the democratic movement.' Generally, the broad issues raised with the rise of the women's liberation movement Internationally have not taken root among the rank and file of progressive organisations. Women's issues were Identified as: lack of women in leadership positions, lack of organisational skills to promote women's involvement in the trade unions, patriarchal attitudes, the special problems of women workers. and the constraints placed on

working class
women which
prevent them
from being in-
voNed.

At the Fosatu
women's con-
gress, in 1983 In Jo-
hannesburg, four

women shop ste-
wards described
their own lives as examples of the
daily hardships they experience as
workers, as mothers, as worker lead-
ers, and as mothers in the communi-
ty.

They gave accounts of the strug-
gles in the home and how their deci-
sion to assume leadership roles
clashes with the traditional patriar-
chal family. After some debate, a
male shop steward responded with
an enlightened appeal to his broth-
ers. He asked them to work hand in
hand with women, both at the indus-
trial site and at home.

'Women are now doing a double
job, we say we are the oppressed
nation, but women are more op-
pressed. They go to work and then
start again at home. We should put
aside the whiskey and make the fire
if the wife Is not yet home, and also
carry the child. After all, it is the manis
child also,' he said.

His plea generated cheers from
women and jeering from men. Since

A union member performs at a Cosatu meeting in Cape Town then not much progress has been made: women still suffer the triple oppression. at the workplace, In organisations and in the domestic sphere. They still have to confront the bosses at work and men who play bosses. The bosses have this whole attitude: If he is giving you an instruction you have to take it, like it or not,' you have to take that instruction. And then men become frustrated because they are also bosses. Then they take that frustration back home.

And It is such a problem, especially for women who are housewives, who are not exposed to such things, who cannot argue. And as single women, men always tell us that we won't get married, we won't get husbands, because we argue a lot.

This paper looks at one aspect of women's oppression that is often neglected - performance culture. Performance culture means the representation in public of plays, music, dance and poetry. Participation in performances, both acting and writing, is a powerful experience. And the medium of plays and poetry, it's much more effective than pamphlets, speeches, posters or stickers. The absence of women is therefore particularly distressing, because in performance culture they have a platform for expressing their anger, their perspective and they conscientise their audience.

Furthermore, it is important for women to realise their creative potential and extend their self-confidence as participants in the struggle for cultural transformation. There is a long history of women's resistance against apartheid and capitalist exploitation. Increasingly, working class women are becoming part of the organised labour force and are effecting changes within their communities.

The struggle to change patriarchal attitudes, share the double shift and achieve higher wages and better working conditions, is being forced onto the agendas of trade unions and popular organisations. As long as culture or writing is not part of the same agenda, women miss one of the most powerful tools, for bringing about cultural transformation.

One of the main reasons for women's lack of participation in cultural activities is that there is little information available to women on the shop floor and in the communities. Women have often complained that they are not getting the same amount of information as men, both

on the shop floor and in the community. Very often women do not even know about the existence of groupings. They have little knowledge of union campaigns and strategies. Some believe that it is the role of males to get involved in labour issues, while they must participate in struggles in the townships.

We need information on the role of performance culture and writing. This is one of the great things that we really need. Culture must be taken out of the framework of leisure time activities and put back into the working lives of the people who make and participate in it.

The Durban cultural local and other cultural locals realise this. They embarked on a systematic campaign of producing plays, poems and songs on the lives of working class people. All these tell the story of ordinary people's struggles. It can be in writing or by stage play, but the message is one.

And importantly, they show that each person has a story to tell, that you do not need to be well-educated or specially gifted to be able to tell the story or to write - the same thing that my sister has said.

And we are still encouraging workers to write. There is this argument that there is this hostility between the academics and the working class. I don't regard that as hostility. Workers need to write of their own frustrations. We don't call that hostility.

Because of the double shift for many women workers there seems to be no space or time to add another shift to the already full day.

Many women drop out of workshops because they are too exhausted to cope any longer.

Lack of childcare facilities is an-
i_____._____ %_i

Other problem. One of The women participantS in The Clover play decided That The play was Too important To let childcare responsibilities interfere. So she brought her grandson with her To rehearsals and carried him on her back while she performed. This was possible because other women in The group helped her.

I'm sure i'm The only woman here with a child. To be involved in any struggle, if you've got a baby, if you've got a child, you need To carry That baby along with you, because our boyfriends or husbands don'T regard That as Their role. They don'T regard my participation in The cultural Transformation as part of my work.

if I go To work and earn money To bring up The Child, That is all That They need. Involvement in The struggle means That I will be dominating him, So That's why I had To carry my boy around.

There are other problems like Jealousy and possessiveness from men, and patriarchal relations which regard women as minors. As a result, most women who participate in cultural projects are young or single women who are free To move without accounting for each step outside The home.

This carries other problems with it. Young women often do not have The same historical insights and life experiences as older women.

There is also The socialised lack of self-confidence. Young women from traditional homes have been brought up in conditions where girls must be noticed only through The products of Their labour. They would be considered immodest and rude if They tried To make people aware of Their presence in any other way. Women on The stage feel That They must not be noticed. On The other hand, They are clearly visible. This ambiguity of self-confidence is extraordinary. When one looks at women in what is traditionally regarded as women's areas of activity, There is also a lack of trust in creative ability. Sometimes women do not come forward because They think That people will laugh at Them if They ad on stage. They have come To doubt Their own ability To tell stories in exciting ways, and They lack The self-confidence To appear in public.

There is a general need To realise The importance of performance culture and writing in The struggle for liberation as a whole. No amount of discussions, resolutions and points on agendas of meetings will solve The problem. The support should be

practical. This should involve breaking up The Traditional roles and division of labour.

AT The women's forum conference There was no item on culture. BUT at The education conference There was a culture commission with a few women on it. if The women's forum is not Taking up culture as part of The struggle, putting H on Their agendas and giving H a place in Their lives, no-one will push for This. I'm saying This from a union point of view. The campaigns on women's issues That have succeeded were pushed by women Themselves. Let's give ourselves Time To develop our skills. Women must be Taken seriously. Cultural activity is one way of working Through The problems and Teaching each other about different perspectives.

My Time is devoted To all The disciplines because i know That There is nothing That is impossible if one gives everything a Try. I know That There are women writers who are not confident enough To come forward with Their work. Let's break The silence. Let's write about our frustration, communicate with other women at home and outside.

The ANC has included women in a Their constitutional guidelines. IT reads as follows: "Women shall have equal rights in all spheres of public and private life and The state shall Take affirmative action To eliminate inequalities and discrimination between The sexes"

There is a general need To realise The importance of culture in The struggle for liberation as a whole. Discussions, resolutions Taken and points on agendas of meetings can be of great assistance in building Up women and culture.

Progressive organisations must encourage participation in The cultural movement at every level. If it is To be successful, This encouragement can not just Take The form of Talk.

Women officials who have The political consciousness, The information and The awareness of The power of writing or performance culture must come forward and set an example.

if women workers see Their leaders participate, They will feel encouraged To join. Male comrades must make sure That They allow women enough Time To be creative and not burden Them with 'more important work'.

Cosatu and its affiliates should actively support culture and encourage The women in Their households To participate and write. Cosaw must organise workshops and seminars for women writers To develop and share The skills. That's my recommendation and The last part of my paper.

DISCUSSION

Summarising The papers, The chairperson of The session, Amanda Kwadi, said There was a need for cultural organisation To be put on The agenda's of Trade unions, women's organisations and other democratic organisations.

There was also a need for women writers To be recognised and for men and women To share women's burdens in order To allow women more Time To write.

'Women are cultural reflectors from cradle To grave,' she said.

'They are The mothers and They give education, in a formal or informal way, To The children.'

LANGUAGE

Responding To a question, lee Maingane said cultural activists In Natal were giving serious attention To The issue of language in order To encourage workers. For example, They had produced The first issue of a journal in Zulu, called Injula.

'This is The plan for The workers To have discussion in Their own African language,' she said.

'We are encouraging workers To write. We are encouraging workers To debate all The issues That are being debated by academics or intellectuals.'

She opposed The use of The word 'venacular'. 'It's like being called a banTu, or a kaffir,' she said. 'Rather use Nguni or African language, or use Zulu or Xhosa or whatever. Rather Than using The word venacular.'

LOBOLA

A speaker from The floor felt That women's oppression could be traced back To 'our forefathers' custom' of lobola. Some men think That when They pay lobola for a woman, They are buying her To come and care for The house.

How about if we start by crushing

such customs before we can talk about equality,' he said. Women's problem is that they have compromised and allowed themselves to be dominated by men, said one participant. Women have to do something about this, he said, and referred to women like Cory Aquino in the Philippines and Maggie Thatcher in Britain who had become leaders of their countries. A speaker pointed out that even in these countries which had women leaders, women were still oppressed. These countries had no lobola, but women were still oppressed and exploited. 'So we have to go deeper than that,' she said.

Another speaker said he disagreed that lobola was the root cause of inequality between the sexes.

He said the issue of lobola needed to be understood from a class perspective and an understanding of how societies developed.

'We are not here because of an accident of nature,' he said. 'We have developed from feudalism and other stages that society has gone through. And we ourselves are the product of those developments.'

POLICY AND PRACTICE

'Presently we have organisations that claim to be progressive and democratic. They have principles and policies that are anti-sexist,' said the speaker.

'But you find that the leadership of those organisations is itself sexist.'

'For instance, somebody comes to visit me in my flat. My girlfriend is sleeping on the bed and I am cleaning the flat. Immediately they think something is wrong.'

'But I am cleaning the flat because it needs to be cleaned and it is shared by both of us. She is sleeping because she is tired.'

'It is our duty, it is also my duty, to be proud, to clean the flat. And if she cannot clean it because she is tired, I have to clean it.'

'What is happening is that we make eloquent statements, very convincing statements which appeal to people, but at the end of the day we do not practice what we are preaching.'

'The problem is a lot of women agree to be dominated by their men - even comrades in our union structures and in our political structures.'

'The same happens with men who chauvinistically dominate their women at home, but when it comes to public places like this, they always appear to be the nicest crea-

Tures naTure has ever had.

'The problem is ThaT we are pre-Tending. WhaTeVer we are saying, we are noT saying iT from deep down in our hearTs. We do noT mean whaT we are saying. We are saying iT because H is convenient To say iT or because we read about iT in some book.

"Unless we ourselves are pre-pared To change, we won'T solve These problems.

'We only use The planorms To show people how eloquenle we can speak or how progressive we sound. Then iT does noT Take us anywhere, because aT The end of The day, we doan change our practice.

'After a year, we have anoTher conference and we say The same Things. Because people have been saying These Things for years in different sTructures, buT There is no change.

'Very few men are prepared To change, and very few women are prepared To accept men as equals - They always regard Them as Two or five percent above Themselves.

'The problem. comrades, more Than anyThing else, is The aTTiTude Thai people have - The aTTiTude ThaT says, al'rthough i accept The principles of The Freedom CharTer, of progressiveness, ThaT I need To be equal with The oTher person. I cannot

be equal with my woman or with my man.

'People have lots of excuses to prove why they cannot immediately succumb to these principles of equality.

'I think the main snag, comrades, is that we pretend. We talk too much on such platforms, but we do not mean what we are saying, in real practice.'

A member of the audience said he didn't see any oppressive relationship between men and women. But, he said, men being paid higher wages than women was a sensitive issue.

He said there was a need for what he called 'domestic mutualism' in the home. Instead of the man coming home to read the paper and drink his beer, he should give the woman a hand in cleaning the house and other tasks. This would also be a lesson to the children in the family.

He supported Lobold, saying it was 'our tradition, something we grew up with', and 'if you want to destroy the principles of my tradition, I will fight you until I die. I respect Lobold. Because my forefathers practised it in order to ensure the security of the woman'.

Women should gain more confidence, he said. They should organise and campaign against any dominance.

'If any man wants to dominate a woman that man should realise that he is nothing without that woman,' he said. 'Behind every successful man, there is a woman.'

'A woman is a symbol of our own pride. You were carried and connected to that woman through the umbilical cord. The sweet sound, the first sound you heard, was because of the immediate relationship between you and that woman. Because you can now carry a heavy thing, more than her, you underestimate the power which is there. Let's respect our women, let's give them courage and let's push them, let's work with them, and forward we go' Pointing to the high percentage of men in the audience, the speaker asked 'Where are you women, the wives, the girlfriends and sisters? She agreed with the previous speaker that people hadn't started practising what they preach and appealed to people to bring their women to such occasions in future.

OPPRESSING THEMSELVES

Another speaker said women oppress themselves and other women, at work and even in organisations. Women writers also contributed to this by portraying women's only role

as a mother who cooks, washes
and looks after the children.

'Unless we change attitudes and
we educate both women and men,
then we won't go anywhere,' she
said.

If men oppress women, then one
day they would be overthrown, sold
another participant. He also felt that
women oppress themselves and
complained that women in his class
at school lacked confidence and
were too shy.

'When we have debates, no girls
want to take part. When we have
sport, no girls want to take part. This is
not to say we oppress them, they
do not want to take part. They op-
press themselves. So I don't think
most men do oppress women

"It's up to them to decide what
they want. If you want something,
you must show some initiative, so
that we can book you up. I cannot
book my woman if I can see she
doesn't show some confidence in
what she is saying. She can embar-
rass me in front of the people if I say
I'm booking her up. So I think the
women themselves must take a
stand.'

'They just want to walk around in
town. They want to be the wife of
somebody who is rich, and they im-
agine themselves being in the most
luxurious houses. But none want to
work towards that. She's aiming for
somebody to take her one day.
Now if I take you from the dork then I
must oppress you. Because I have
that power.'

NEED FOR SUPPORT

A woman writer said writing could
be very lonely.

iWhen you discover you are a
writer you sit alone and find yourself
with your writing. You don't know how
good it is. You look at books and
magazines in bookstores and won-
der, will I ever be in that bookshelf?

She said she was very thankful for
Cosow's support for writers, but ap-
pealed for something to be done to
ensure more contact between peo-
ple.

iWe won't grow unless we get to
know each other and support each
other,' she said, urging more experi-
enced writers to participate in work-
shops to help others.

Many women at the conference,
some of whom may be writers, had
been quiet, she added.

'Maybe they just don't know how
to put their feelings. You know, it's not
easy, and we're using this bloated
English that we use all the time. Not
everybody is comfortable with this
English. We must be aware of that.

'I hope something that will be
achieved today is to make contact

and support each other. These speeches are so wonderful. But let's think of supporting each other.

'Then, next time we meet, we'll come up with a bigger group of people who have experience.

What they are doing with domestic workers getting together is extremely beautiful. And people using the block languages is something to be proud of

"There are idioms and sayings in block languages that we can't translate into English. I hope we are not making people feel they must master the English language before they are able to participate.

'I hope more people will learn to participate in these conferences or seminars or gatherings like this. Because it is only then that we know who is facing what and where.'

WOMEN WRITERS

On the issue of why there are so few women writers, one woman writer in the audience told her story:

'I've been writing for quite some time. I think I started writing at the age of twelve.

'My father was in Russia. I used to write letters to him all the time. and then they turned into songs. My mother used to say you are going to be arrested and killed that.

'I wrote more and more, but I was not scored. I had no confidence. I used to show my writings to some people. And they used to say to me these are just not right. But when I saw

their shows, I saw so much of my work there and I realised I was getting ripped off.

'I'm sure there are many of us here, who started writing as little girls, but have now shelved it like I did. But other people used to tell me, come on, come on.

'Sometimes the parents put their children off writing. You find the mother says, what is this nonsense, you should be cleaning instead of doing this. And then you find that you are so scared you can't do anything. As children, we need encouragement.

'But I said to myself, let me stand up and write. Since then I've been writing and I'm very happy about it.'

Another women writer spoke of a similar experience, saying she used to show her comrades her work, 'but they used to discourage me', she said, 'especially the men'.

'When we looked around, there were no women writers and poets. Then I found that other people were using my works, and I said to myself, but this means I am good. It means this is right. They wouldn't use it if it wasn't. So I sat down and wrote more."

"I write from a very emotional point of view. I saw something that made me very, very angry. I could not eat, I could not sleep, I could not do anything. So I sat down and wrote a poem.

Another speaker told how she used to deliver her poetry at various forums such as funerals and meetings.

'But every time I would tear them up afterwards, or they would just hang around at home and in the end they are gone. Because there was nowhere we could give them in for printing. I'm sure lots of people have poems," she said.

HOME FOR WRITERS

An established woman writer said now that since Cosaw was formed, writers had found a home where they could learn, establish contact and get direction.

'For a long time, you would make an effort on your own to get your works published. Sometimes it lands in the wrong hands, in the hands of the people who are not interested in developing you as a writer. They want to publish your work but afterwards you don't know what happened to the royalties. You don't know what is actually happening around you, as a writer.

'You never get a list of other writers or writers organisations. You don't benefit at all.

'Now here we are as members of Cosaw. I'm sure we are now going

to get our wheels rolling, to see our works performed and published with the right people, at the right places, at the right time, and we will be growing as a whole nation of writers. "And we will be growing within our organisations. and within the very communities we live. The speaker earlier said she has been writing but not knowing what to do with her works. I think from now onwards you can feel safe that you can deal with the people.

The chairperson said writers and poets and those who wanted to write should join Cosaw as soon as possible and deliver their poems and work on your scripts and that Cosaw would help them.

COSAW PUBLICATIONS

In response to a question about Cosaw's publications, a Cosaw official said the Transvaal region would produce a journal once every three months, similar to the one distributed at the conference.

This would be a forum to publish works of both budding writers and established writers. it would include short stories. poems and comment. He said a lot of people were talking about what culture is. Some said culture is traditions. while others said this was not the case. The publication would also cover such debates. He pointed out that writers could send their works to the Cosaw address.

Another Cosaw member urged writers from Soweto who wanted encouragement and contact with other cultural workers in Soweto to attend the Soweto cultural forum which met fortnightly.

COLLECTIVE WRITING

A question was asked about what could be done in the case of writers who wanted to express the views and aspirations of the oppressed but unwittingly expressed ruling class or government views. Asked to give an example, Gibson Kenteis Sekunjalo was quoted.

A member of the audience said this problem could be overcome through the principle of collectivism. Mistakes were made, he said, not because people intended to articulate ruling Class views, but because they sat alone with their pens and notebooks, in isolation from the people.

He said workshops needed to be run in the communities where writers and poets could workshop their works collectively with other comrades.

'It is only when a work has been workshopped, and other people have had a hand in shaping it, that it can represent the actual aspirations of the people in our land.

'If people write things alone. there is a 99,9 % chance of falling into the trap of articulating a position different to what was intended. i think we need to learn to share our work with people.

He said Cosaw had been established in various regions and had branches in many areas. He suggested the organisation consider establishing study groups to discuss various works so that people could learn of the writings of other comrades inside and outside the country.

'It is only when we are in structures of organisations that we will be in a position to do things collectively. And it is only then that our aspirations can be properly articulated,' he said.

WRITING WELL

Another speaker agreed, but added: 'We have a problem of thinking that just because we are black and we are talking about the aspirations of the oppressed or writing collectively, we don't have to write well. We also have to Improve our writing. The fact that we put Amand/a's in our writing is not good enough. We have to work towards making our writing good, so we can be proud of that writing.

'ls our approach in writing not becoming narrower and narrower,'

asked another speaker.

'Suppose I want to get Into the mind of an 18 year old who has forced by the system to come Into the townshIp and serve SADF and I want to portray him In writing. Am I not going to be rejected, like Gibson Kente, for Instance.

'Should I Just condemn him without looking Into his background, into what caused him to be there In the township, to find himself within SADF. What makes some people within the SADF, within its highest ranks, change after some time? Suddenly they discover something and they align themselves with the masses.

'Are we not narrowing our approach? Are we not narrowing our range of literature?'

He also urged that the papers delivered at the conference be compiled and distributed so that people could refer to them.

Responding to the point about the SADF soldier, a speaker said: 'If a person writes, he can write about what Is happening. But in every writing there is a theme. That is the important thing,' he said. 'Is it reflecting the aspirations of the people or of the enemy?'

'The problems that we have in our society need to be highlighted so that people should learn from those things. But the theme, after highlighting those problems, should give us direction as to where do we go from there'

Emphasising the importance of organising women, a worker told the audience about how women had brought food to their husbands occupying a factory during a sit-in strike.

It the women had done more than just supply food, like protesting of putting more pressure on management, the workers could have won their strike. he said adding that this showed that women needed to be organised so that they could back up their men in the factories and in day to day struggles.

Some of the comrades have been saying that women oppress themselves, there are very few girls, they are too shy and they don't want to do anything about that,' said a speaker, rounding off the session.

'I Just want to add that its actually very difficult even to come up and speak In a forum like this, because everything agitates against women. break out of that and come forward Isn't very easy.

saying, his woman this, and his woman that. Maybe It's time we realise that women are their own women and that they stand next to the men.

'With regard to writing. It has been said it is also very difficult for women because of a tradition in writing which involves mainly males. When a woman presents her work and asks, what do you think about this writing, they say, well it's nice, and that's about all, because maybe it doesn't have enough political content or theory or some such thing. 'I think we in Cosaw can organise workshops where only women come and read their work and discuss it. This is not in order to exclude men, but rather so that women can come together and be more supportive of one another, and to build up their confidence there. Then they will maybe have more confidence to go out and deliver their poetry and stand up for what they've written.

POETRY FROM THE
SPEAKERS

Roseline Naopo

Madam,

remember when I was young

and happy

Remember when I used to

perform

your choruses in time

Remember while I used to run

your errands fast

Today I'm old

I'm no good

Today I'm walking on three legs

I'm no good

Madam

where did my sweat go

Madam

did you ever consider

that today I need you

as you needed me

in the sixteen years

I worked for you

Newspapers, television, radio are all

seen to be on the side of men. To

'The comrades have also been

Nise Malange

How I wish I was born

In a society

where colour only applies in art

where I will be free

from oppression

where I will be free

from apartheid

Buitemelo Mofokeng

Liberate my soul

so that I can understand

Why I must belong

Liberate my soul

From the shackles

Of bondage

Liberate my soul

From the shackles

Of sexual oppression

Liberate my mind

Liberate my heart

Liberate my soul

Liberate me so that

I can speak your language

Liberate me
So that I can speak
your language
the language of
Work for an
Education for all
Work for all
Liberate me
So that I don't fear
To give birth to this baby -
Nkululeko
Liberate my soul
Liberate my mind
Liberate the whole me
So that I can speak
your language
there is no more time
Move!

Closing the session, Amanda
Kwadi recited a short poem dedi-
cated to Federation of South Afri-
can Women leader, Lilian Ngoyi, in- i
spired by her words as she lay on
her death bed.

I MaNgoyi sidestepped
the forces of injustice
mark my step my children,
mark my step.

Liberating
learning

Apartheid has led to millions of South Africans being unable to read or write. Groups such as the English Literacy Project (ELP), Use, Speak and Write English (Uswe) and the women's magazine, Speak, are tackling this problem.

They argue that literacy goes beyond just learning to read and write, and see it as crucial to the liberation struggle in South Africa.

USWE

Shelley Tracey

Shelley works for Uswe. She writes materials, particularly numeracy materials, which help people to cope with everyday money and finances. Another big concern of hers is healthcare and people's rights around health.

She has done a lot of work in second language learning. She feels that the denial of education in this country is criminal, and that literacy is an absolute necessity. Before joining Uswe, she taught Zulu at the Johannesburg College of Education for four years.

I'll start this paper off with some general statements and then I'll develop them in more detail.

The title of this session of the conference is Women and Literacy. It could also have been Women and Power. Literacy in its true sense means power. Liberation without literacy is impossible.

Let me make it clear from the beginning that at Uswe and ELP, we see literacy as more than reading and writing. It's also more than a kind of compensatory education that makes up for what adults lost out on by not going to school. It's part of the adult education movement, and at its best, it's people's education. I'm going to develop this view of literacy as a tool for empowerment. I'll look at who our learners are and how they see literacy, and the reading needs of these learners.

WHO ARE OUR LEARNERS?

Broadly speaking, we can say that they are black adults between the ages of 17 and 70, who either had no schooling, or failed to complete their schooling.

Some of them can read and write in their mother tongue. Others can't.

Some of them go to vernacular literacy classes and some come to English classes.

Roughly half of these learners are women. At Uswe we have a greater percentage of women workers because we deal mostly with domestic workers.

WHAT DO THESE LEARNERS
HAVE IN COMMON?

Many illiterate people are shy

and embarrassed by what they see as their stupidity. Women learners, in particular, lack self-confidence and tend to condemn themselves. They think they might even be too stupid to learn anything. They blame themselves for their lack of education. 50 literacy has to do with two things: skills and confidence. Monica will develop the aspect of confidence in her paper. But I want to stress that collective action and liberation are impossible without confidence. Until learners understand why they are illiterate, they will continue to blame themselves, and won't look for solutions to their problems. Uswe and ELP are progressive literacy organisations that together reach about 700 people. There are also state-sponsored literacy schemes which cater for many more people. But they can't cope with the problem as a whole. These state-sponsored schemes don't look at the question of confidence, because a little of this kind of

learning might be dangerous.

It is estimated that there are about 9 million illiterate adults in SA. The reasons for this huge number are too complex to go into now. But it has to do with the question of power.

Illiterate people suffer from a lack of political and economic power. Apartheid and unequal expenditure on education have caused illiteracy. They have also caused a need for literacy.

Conditions in the homelands force people to come to the towns. And when they come to town they feel overwhelmed because they are illiterate and they can't cope without literacy skills.

They go into demeaning jobs, like domestic work, because their lack of literacy keeps them from going into anything more challenging.

What this means for those who want to write for literacy learners is that there is a huge public to cater for.

There is also a need to provide the information that is being kept from illiterate people. The range of ages of learners means that they have a variety of tastes. But generally, there is a desire among learners for information about the law, trade unions, politics, health, history and geography.

It is difficult to say whether all learners have a strong desire to read fiction. This realm hasn't been explored yet. Some learners reject fiction as being untrue, and therefore not essential to their lives. But this may be because they don't really have a concept of fiction. They also don't realise that reading can be for pleasure.

There is a need, too, for writing on women's issues. Here's an example of what can be done.

This is a women's kit, written by the International Council for Adult Education. It consists of booklets in simple English about these areas: women's days, child care, health, house work, finding paid work, working conditions, violence in the home and women working together.

In SA we need to make women's kits like this that are appropriate for our situation, in simple English that our learners can understand.

It must be pointed out that, in general, state-run literacy programmes ignore adults' need for informative reading material. They use materials for children in order to teach adults. The materials they write for adults are patronising and reinforce stereotypes.

I'm adding a bit of parody to this, but there is quite a lot of this kind of material:

'See Sam and Betty. Sam is a

man. Betty is a woman. Sam is happy. He is happy because Betty is a good wife."

'Betty is cooking. Sam is watching. Betty is a good cook. Sam is pleased to see Betty cooking.'

In literacy organisations such as Uswe and ELPI we feel that any literacy course needs to incorporate useful and Informative reading material, through which learners can gain information and learn to read, write and cope with living in town.

WHAT MAKES PEOPLE COME TO LITERACY CLASSES?

Some learners come to class because their lack of literacy skills makes them feel at a disadvantage in their Jobs, or they need literacy to cope with their daily lives.

As one learner in the Cape said:

'A train is standing in front of you, but you do not know where it is going, because you cannot read. You have to ask people. and they say, can't you see, it's written up there."

A lack of literacy skills creates dependency in people and makes them lack self-confidence.

People also come to literacy classes to learn number skills, for example because they get cheated when they go shopping. Women, in particular, need literacy skills for coping with their children's education, for taking them to clinics and hospitals.

50 all of our learners have a purpose in coming to class which goes beyond the abstract need to learn to read and write. And once they have been learning for a while. they find other jobs for literacy to do.

i have a tape here of a learner who wrote a letter to the Weekly Mail last year, complaining about her working conditions.

Her name is Patricia Taupudi and she has been an Uswe learner for about a year and half. She originally came to class because she felt she needed help with her English. She wrote this letter to the Weekly Mail after she and her fellow workers got fired for Joining the Transport and General Workers' Union. The case was followed up and she received support from the union and from the SACC and so on.

'The only work i could do was that of a cleaner. i am 36 years old, divorced, with two teenage children. I support my children and my mother. I tried desperately to get a better paying job, but was unsuccessful. i realised that my biggest problem was not being able to read, write and speak English.

'I arranged that my colleagues and i should attend an English class.

We started an English class and asked a voluntary person to teach us. When we started, I made a promise to learn the subject to the best of my ability and to write to newspapers to tell you about our working conditions.

'We are ten women working at a residential which lets out furnished rooms. Our ages range from 40 to 53, and some of us have been working there for 15 years.

'We all get R110 per month, although we have families to support. We have to scrub and polish the dining room, kitchen, rooms and toilets, on our hands and knees.

'Our hours are from 6am to 8pm, Monday to Sunday, with two hours off for lunch. Our living quarters are tiny rooms which we share, with cement floors, no windows and out at the back. The toilets have been broken for three years, and there is no electricity.

'We do not have overalls. We do not get pay slips. We do the washing by hand. There is no medical aid, pension scheme, maternity benefits, or bonus.

'We do get three weeks leave. We always have to work on public holidays and during stayaways. There are no staff meetings for us. The whites' attitude towards is bad. No matter how hard one would try, they just refuse to listen to us. iWeil, in the meantime we joined the SA Domestic Workers Association. SADWU is in the process of investigating this matter. I found your newspaper very interesting. I must admit that your English is quite difficult for me. I learned hard and studied to
Em

Nise Malange makes a point during the discussion session. Panelists, from left to right:

Dawn Norton,

Shelley Tracey, Carola Steinberg, Monica Mnguni, Mpoetsi Goba and Shamim Meer.

be able to write this letter.

'i want your readers to know our problems. Without English I would never have been able to write this letter to show our problems. This letter has taken me a long time to write.'

if we look at the needs of learners like Patricia. It is clear that we need to expand the traditional definition of literacy as reading and writing.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE

LITERATE?

There is an official definition of literacy: you are literate once you have completed four years of schooling.

But this isn't a very reliable definition because so many people who have been to school for longer than this are what we call functionally illiterate.

This means you can't use your reading and writing skills to help you function in everyday life. For example, if you are functionally illiterate, you can't do things like filling in forms, following directions, writing messages. counting your change, and interpreting the information that we get in the media.

One of the biggest problems in SA is that so much information is withheld from us. it's hard to control your life if the things you need to know in order to do so are kept from you.

if we see literacy as the ability to control the written and spoken word, then very few people are literate.

Literacy is more than reading and writing. it means self-confidence, the ability to think critically, to question the system and the desire to work with others for change.

Literacy is for power. So we need to provide learners with literacy for power, literacy and the kind of literature that has information in it, that can draw on the lives and experiences of people, and that increases their confidence.

WHERE CAN WE GET THIS

KIND OF READING

MATERIAL?

Literacy organisations are trying,

In some way, to answer this need.

But they can't do this on their own.

They are small and pressurised.

We found that one of the best ways of providing reading material for learners is to get learners to write it themselves.

At Uswe we run writing workshops from time to time to provide our learners with reading. We bring about two or three learning groups together, and we stimulate discussion on a number of topics. Then we help lear-

ners to write about the topics that they've chosen.

Learners who can write on their own, either in their own language or in English, do so. And those who can't write dictate their stories in English or in the vernacular. Learners can write as individuals or in groups.

After the workshops the stories are edited, but never rewritten. The style of the original is kept as much as possible. Then the writers read their stories to check if the editor interpreted them correctly. Finally, the stories are put into a booklet and made available to all learners.

Experienced writers can also help provide reading material for literacy learners. They could introduce fiction to learners. They could also be very useful in the field of rewriting. They could rewrite health pamphlets, news stories, legal information, love stories and so on.

We found that rewriting and simplifying materials is not easy. It involves simplifying the content and the style so that the line of argument is still clear. The style must still be adult and the tone mustn't be patronising. This is

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actually quite difficult to do.

Here are a few observations

we've made about the style of writing for literacy learners:

G2) Sentences should be kept quite short, perhaps Just one clause. And they can begin with connecting words like but and 50.

b The vocabulary should be kept quite simple. The overall structure of the text should be very clear. using questions and sub-headings.

CC) Many literacy learners are also not aware of the purpose of things like headings, punctuation, contents pages and even page numbers.

50 these should be included, but kept as clear and functional as possible. There is also a need for artists to draw authentic pictures to go with literacy texts. Good pictures can make a text easier to read, because they can help learners to guess at the meaning of words they don't understand.

a Another effective way of writing for literacy learners seems to be by means of using the case study.

Learn and Teach magazine uses case studies for some of its stories. it focuses on one person or a small group of people, talks about their_ particular situation, then It broadens out to link that to the situation as a whole.

These case studies seem to be effective because learners can Identify with the person or group of people and can then relate to the situation. The book, 'Tula Baba', was written for literacy learners, and it actually consists of four case studies of domestic workers who have problems because of their children.

So we need to encourage learners to write their own case studies and their own personal histories. This can show them that their experience has validity. it also helps them to record Important Information that might otherwise be lost.

WHAT OTHER KINDS OF WRITING ARE SUITABLE FOR LEARNERS?

There is a great need for stories that don't reinforce stereotypes. People tend to read the things that are available and seem easy enough, like photostories and magazines like 'Bona' and 'ihandi'. This kind of literature entrenches the acceptance of women as superficial, powerless and materialistic, or the objects of temptation and corruption.

In summary, what makes a text readable for learners?

it could be a story that Interests people, that relates to their lives. And something that is not too serious.

With all this Information. this input, it's

important to have some humour, to reduce the chances of boredom. Learners need writing that asks them questions and makes them think. The layout must be quite clear. The print should be fairly large, especially for those older learners who have problems with their eyesight. And the text must be clearly set out, with not too many lines on the same page.

The biggest problem that faces us as writers for literacy learners is to get learners to read for pleasure and to read on their own.

What Cosaw could do is to help translate, provide information and write easy-to-read pamphlets on health, labour laws and so on. Perhaps they could even write an easy-to-read history of writing in SA. Materials could be simplified and re-written as case studies.

What we need, for our learners, is less of this: 'Betty was happy, because Sam was a good husband. Sam is clever. Betty can trust Sam', and more of this: 'Betty is strong now because she is learning. Now she can take control of her own life. She can trust herself.'

Monica Mnguni

Monica provides support for learners at Uswe, helping them with any learning problems. If they have other social or personal problems that Uswe can't deal with, she refers them to other organisations, particularly Sadwu, which Uswe works with closely.

Before joining Uswe, Monica worked for the SA Council of Churches and (or) Sached. She has also done work with the Detainees Support Committee on the East Rand.

This paper is based on observations made at Uswe literacy classes. It is based on true experiences of the learners, as a result of which I was motivated to come and share this information with all the people at this conference.

The aim of the paper is to highlight why vernacular literacy is seen as one of the most important forms of literacy in our country.

There are a few things that really interest me and that I see as very important

These are:

1) confidence,

2) trust,

3) the question of mother tongue literacy, and

4) meaningful materials (tuition) for mother tongue literacy students.

Once these things are available, meaningful learning can take place.

Learners can be confident to start

straight away with learning a second language.

CONFIDENCE

Confidence is the most important factor in a literacy class. Without it, no learning can take place. The confidence that I am specifically referring to here, is the confidence of a black person in South Africa, and in particular, the confidence of women.

Because of the conditions in this country and the tradition in our sick society that women should not receive education, the majority of black people are not educated.

And how can people have confidence without education?

The belief that black women have no place in the working world has also contributed to women lacking in confidence. Women were only seen as people that should grow up, get married and have as many children as their husbands wished, with no opposition to that. Even decisions that affected their lives were made by their dear husbands. They had no confidence to challenge their husbands and just accepted what they said as given.

In one case, learner X told her Class how her mother died of cervical cancer because her father would not let her have a hysterectomy -

Dancers at International Literacy Day meeting last year.

because of the belief that a woman without a womb is not a woman.

The government introduced literacy classes all over the country. But still learners find these classes not building their confidence. After attending these classes they still feel inadequate and unable to face life alone. and they therefore lose confidence in education.

in some of these classes they were made to give wrong answers in front of men and that completely destroyed their confidence. They were even expected to give answers in English, a language they could not speak.

HOW CAN THEIR
CONFIDENCE BE
RESTORED?

My answer to this question is:

(9 Addressing issues that affect them as women, instead of giving lessons like "Mama, Baba, nana".

(9 Making the learning environment as natural as possible. This can happen if people understand the language of instruction.

TRUST BUILDING

We still have very traditional people in our classes who are still a bit suspicious about educated people. They still have the belief that educated people despise their way of doing things.

It is the duty of the literacy teacher to wipe out this kind of mentality. Because no meaningful learning can ever take place once people think this way.

Trust should first be built before anything can actually start. Topics like history are important to discuss. Point out to them that by trying to abolish apartheid, we are trying to establish a new place where both black and white can live together. English is as important as learning vernacular. But when a teacher is teaching English, just saying one word in vernacular or showing willingness to learn the learner's language will really erase the feeling of suspicion.

It is difficult to teach English literacy to a learner who has never learnt to read her mother tongue. In most institutions. language teaching does not happen in a natural way and usage is limited to formal situations which often do not reflect the practical language-using situation. Such situations do not encourage trust-building.

Sometimes we need to have discussions or writing workshops in our classes. This can only be fruitful if discussions are conducted in vernacular. People cannot argue, persuade, motivate, or even speak or write confidently in a second lan-

guage. The presence of a teacher can even make matters worse. Allowing them to have discussions or write in the mother tongue and then translate will make them have trust in you. And because they will also be interested in the teacher hearing what is happening, they will force themselves to say something in a second language. The kind of talk that occurs in many literacy classes is merely a response to the teacher's questions.

ELP learner of Literacy Day celebrations
And This will never build Trust, 0 very
necessary Tool for meaningful learn-
ing To Take place.

MOTHER TONGUE AS
MEDIUM OF

INSTRUCTION

IT is easier for 0 learner To under-
stand cerTain conceSt when Taught
in mother Tongue, which is The hoTurdl
process of Thinking and expressing
oneself.

An adult, unlike 0 child, already
has fully developed Ideas and con-
ceSt in his mother Tongue and

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1

merely needs The means of com-
municatihg Them or recognising
Them when They are writTeh. To
Teach foreign conceSt To 0 leorher
who has never leorht anything in her
mother Tongue would add 0 further
complicatiOh To The learning pro-
cess.

Once she has leorht To read and
write in her own language, she can
go on To learn dhoTher, since learn-
ing To read in The mother Tongue can
make The possibility of learning on-
oTher language much easier.

MATERIALS

Our country looks The relevant ver-
nocular literacy materials To provide
for our literacy learners. This results in
The use of English materials for The
dissemination of important informa-
tion.

Translation for This kind of work be-
comes necessary, but This Takes 0 lot
of Time. Our learners cannot absorb
wordy newspapers. As 0 result. The
literacy Teacher spends Time select-
ing information That They see as ne-
cessary for Their learners. Again This
consumes a lot of Time. Our Teachers
also range from domestic workers
To doctors, people who do not
have The some potential in handling
materials.

Insufficient resources make literacy,
more especially in The mother
Tongue, 0 difficult Task To implement
As long as we have This, literacy will
be a difficult problem To address in
our country.

ELP

Introduction by
chairperson,
from ELP.

The session '5

Carola Steinberg,

ELP is set up as a service To unions.

All The learning groups That we run
are organised Through FAWU and
TGWU. The classes are run at The
factory or at The workplaces, and
depending on The factory, There are
some groups of men only while oth-
er groups are mixed, men and
women.

We sTorted off ELP five years ago,
very much with 0 focus on Teaching
English, Over The years we've
moved owoy from Tth, mm 0 focus
on Teaching information and conTenT
and basic odult educOTion. English is
used for ThoT, buT The focus is no
longer ThoT much on Teaching English
and IiTerdcy.

Over The years we've ofTen said if
would be nice To Talk abouT wom-
en's issues in our cldsses. BuT in focT iT
hos never happened. Becouse iT
was more imporTonT for us To sorT ouT
The oonTehT, whoT were The poliTicol
and social issues ThoT needed To be
discussed in The classes, and how
could we marry English Teaching and
informOTion.

So we spent the last year talking a lot about Labour Bills and retrenchments and also, what is capitalism, what is socialism - those kinds of questions.

80 when the request from Cosaw came up to do something for this conference, we thought, here is finally an opportunity to start discussing women's Issues, to start discussing Women and Learning In our classes. it was like an outside stimulus that would move us Into action.

And we Invited the women from our learning groups to come and participate In a workshop to talk about their own learning, to talk about their position as women and what their learning means to them. Our Idea was to produce a play with our learners.

As you see there are no learners here. So what Dawn will do now, is to talk about the process of workshops that we did run, what women said, and how things ended. And then Mpoetsl will talk about the lessons we learnt from that.

The paper was workshopped by Farm Fare Learners, Tsela Makue, Karen Deetlefs, Mpoetsl Goba, Carolina Steinberg, Liesa Jossel, Busi Mavuso and Dawn Norton.

Dawn Norton

Dawn Is a materials writer for ELP, focussing mainly on numeracy.

She works In literacy because, she says, literacy has a lot of potential for empowerment. ELP works with trade unions which she feels are one of the strongest forces (or liberation In this country. She worked In the women's movement of Nusas before she joined ELP.

Today, ELP planned for our women learners to present to this conference a play about their experiences as women learning to become literate.

We thought that a first hand account of women's experience in learning to read and write would make a valuable contribution to the conference.

ELP held workshops with a group of about 15 women from Farm Fare Chicken factory in Wynberg. At these workshops, we discussed power relations in society. And we explored gender, race and class issues and how these factors affected women and literacy, women and learning.

Attendance at the workshops fluctuated, generally decreasing. But we were still optimistic that we could pull off a play. That was not to be. At our final 'workshop', when the learners were to transform talking Into performance, the ELP staff out-

numbered the learners. It's a total disaster, we thought.

But none the less, we decided to present a paper on what we have learnt from these women learners and share this with you.

The overall theme of the talk concerns the factors which inhibit and encourage women in the literacy learning situation.

Within this framework we have included:

- 0 the process ELP staff and learners went through to explore the theme of women and literacy;

- 0 an analysis of the content of the workshops: and

- 0 some suggestions for writers who want to write for a semi-literate audience.

The first part of the first workshop dealt with women's attitudes to themselves and to men. As an ice-breaker we discussed whether, if we had a choice, we would choose to be men or women?

Two thirds of the women chose to be women. They saw themselves as strong and competent and responsible, particularly in the role of mother and home maker.

A third of the women said no, actually, they'd rather be men. They said that men care only for themselves, keep their pay packet to themselves and drink at the shebeen.

Although women saw their domestic competence as positive, they later saw it as a negative factor inhibiting their learning. Later the learners agreed that although women work more than men and shoulder more responsibility, generally in this society, men had more power.

The next step in the workshop was to look, firstly, at the general factors, positive and negative, which affect literacy learning, and secondly, coming out of this discussion, to isolate the factors which affect women specifically.

We categorised these factors into three main groups:

- 0 Political and Economic factors

- I Organisational and Personal factors and

- 0 Gender factors

POLITICAL AND
ECONOMIC FACTORS

Some of the statements that the women made were:

- 0 The government and management are not interested in education for adults like us;

- 0 The government does not build enough schools for black school children:

- 0 The government oppresses blacks because they need us to do the dirty jobs:

O l worry in class because we have no money.

So the learners put blame (and rightly so) on the government's deliberate strategy of underprovision of education for black adults and children.

ORGANISATIONAL AND PERSONAL FACTORS

Those mentioned were:

O a problem of getting time off from work to attend classes:

O transport problems in getting home after class;

O irregular classes and irregular attendance;

O mockery by other workers for attending literacy classes;

O disrespect from their school-going children because they were illiterate.

The women learners agreed that all these factors affected both men and women. However, they argued that attending classes was more difficult for a woman than a man.

GENDER FACTORS

The women spoke about three main points:

O having too much work to do at home _ too much cooking, cleaning and looking after children. which did not allow them time to attend classes:

Lh_____ %__

(C) husbands who complained when supper was late, or Jealous husbands who didn't want their wives to attend illterocy classes if they themselves were ililterote or who thought that their wives were seeing other men Instead of attending class;
(CD Folling pregnant and looking otter small children.

We looked at these problems specifically affecting women. and discussed ways of dealing with them. It wasn't sufficient for us just to highlight these problems. We had to mo 0 way of coping with them and deoling with them too.

And it was these very problems and possible solutions that we wont-ed to develop into dromo. Because the focus of this Cosow session was, otter oil, on women and literacy. Most of the. solutions presented by the women involved them taking more responsibility and working harder. They spoke about doing more housework on the weekends and cooking the day before. Not once did any leorner suggest that their husbands help around the house, or cook or look after sick children.

Despite these problems, the women leorners' motivation to learn was very strong.

The women all agreed with one leorner who sold: "in the post a women got married and she had few worries because her husband looked after her and her children. But today, things are different. Today women have to look after their children and otter their husbands. And in order to do that, women need 0 good job to make money, and therefore, women need 0 good education."

As we've already said, we never did get to the final port of our workshop schedule of developing 0 play around women and literacy. We're going to outline some of the reasons for the drop In numbers In these workshops.

We feel that these reasons, which we present rather tentatively, are worth noting by writers who may wish to work with semieliterote groups of people in the future.

At this point I would like to hand over to my colleague Mpoetsi Gobo, who is going to go into those reasons and onolyse them.

Mpoetsi Gobo

Mpoetsi works for ELP and is a founder member of the project. Today she is the rock of the organisation. She works there because she feels literacy is very important, and is also concerned to do consciousness raising work around political and

social Issues. She is part of the women's group in her church, and has a dream of forming a women's group with ELP learners. As Down has already pointed out, I'm going to start off from our experiences.

Firstly, the topic did not really interest the women learners. The sorts of things women talked about in relation to their learning had more to do with living in South Africa, than about being women per se.

Yes, they did speak about domestic burdens and difficult husbands, but most of their attention was on the lack of schools and problems at the work place. Both of these factors apply to both men and women learning to become literate.

The obvious point here is that the subject must interest the participants/audience. One cannot presume interest, this needs to be assessed.

Perhaps a better entry point into gender issues would have been to look at more tangible, immediate issues such as contraception, child care, skin lightening creams and violence against women.

Our starting point was too general

in order to address the specificity of Women and Literacy, we had to take the learners through a long process; we had to try to develop a sensitivity around gender.

Learners were far more conscientised around issues of race and class than around gender. That is not to say that women did not recognise the fact that they worked harder and were rewarded less than men, but this was not given.

The problem of men's lack of participation in housekeeping and child care went unchallenged. The point to note here is to start where people are at.

Another problem was that ELP expected too much time and commitment from these women learners. In our enthusiasm, we underestimated how many other

er commitments the women had.

Learners also did not want to appear negative about the workshops and would promise to come and then not arrive.

Finally, ELP realised that women's Issues are tangential to literacy classes. People come to literacy classes for functional, coping skills and general and political information. Certainly, women's issues may come into that but it won't ever be a focus.

Perhaps a more appropriate place to discuss women's issues are in women's organisation, where women can make public and political their 'personal' oppression.

HOW CAN COSAW HELP

DEVELOP A GENDER

CONSCIOUSNESS AND

PROMOTE LITERACY?

Firstly, we need easy English material and very importantly, vernacular material on Issues which directly affect women, for example: contraception, child care and violence against women. Issues like these are useful building blocks to develop a consciousness around gender.

Secondly, we need material which shows men playing a positive role in the home. Thirdly, we need lots more readers around political events in South Africa. Learners want more information on the struggle.

In summarising, ELP would like to

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' gr. mu"Jnlw-i.'i4i.1;r;l_urs:v _ .. Wimp mutants

recommend that writers Interested In writing for a semi-literate audience meet in a regular forum with literacy workers and learners to develop readers and materials.

This would be of benefit to literacy learners and writers. Writers could assess people's interests and level of understanding of different issues. Importantly, they could develop writing skills which demand close attention to the use of appropriate language. Learners could share experiences and learn new knowledge.

SPEAK

Shamim Meer

Shamim is a founder member of the women's magazine, Speak, where she is a full-time staff member. Speak is aimed at women workers, women living in South Africa's black townships, women working in the factories, shops, offices and homes.

It was started as a forum for women to share their experiences, inspire each other, and explore ways of dealing with women's Issues and organising women. Before she worked at Speak, Shamim was a social

worker a! Phoenix, and organ"
lised women there around com-
munity and rent Issues.
She was also a member of
women's organisations In Dur-
ban. She Is now based In Johan-
nesburg, and Is active In a Fords-
burg women's group which is
allillaled to Fedtraw.

WHY A MAGAZINE FOR WOMEN?

I want to begin by looking at why we
decided to start a magazine for
women. Speak was started by a
group of women who were working
in communities around Durban in
1982.

Those of us who started Speak
were at the time active in working
with women and the community in
general around Issues like rents. We
believed that it was important that
women were active in the struggles
of their communities. But we be-
lieved also that women need to
take up their specifc problems as
women.

We believed, as we still do, that
women in SA are oppressed in three
ways:

b women are oppressed and ex-
ploited as a class, that is, as workers.

a women are explolted and op-
pressed as a race, in this country, as
part of black people.

o women are oppressed and ex-
ploited for being women, as a sex
or gender.

We also believed that women
need to be organised and to hght
these three forms of oppression,
and that we can't have liberation in
this country if we do not address
women's oppression as women,
specifically.

We believed that women need
to become involved in the broader
struggle. At the same time, it is not just
women in greater numbers that must
be Involved In struggle, but rather
women taking up their particular op-
pression and exploitation.

it was this belief that made us feel
that we needed to have a publica-
tion through which women could
raise these forms of oppression,
could raise their experiences, could
talk about ways In which they could
deal with them, and could hopefully
organise to eradicate these forms
of oppression and exploitation.

We hoped a magazine for wom-

w

Traditional dancing at Literacy Day celebrations
en could be a forum in which to raise
some of the issues that affect wom-
en and in which women could share
their experiences of life and organl-
sation with other women.

Our publication was to be differ-
ent from magazines like Fair Lady
and Thandi. Speak would be locat-
ed within the broader struggle in this
country, and would raise issues of
concern to women in the context of
this broader struggle.

We believed that publications
were an important medium.

We believed that reading and
writing are important ways of trans-
mitting information and knowledge.

Reading enables us to learn about
events and experiences in other
countries and on other continents.

The printed word, we all know, is
very important, For us who can read
and write, it has opened up new ar-
eas of life. Weive been able to
communicate with people interna-
tionally, across continents, across
countries. If we are able to read, we
are able to know what Is going on in
our own country, In different parts of
our country.

People on the left, in organisations
that were taking up struggles, began
to come out with publications in the
late seventies. A number of publica-
tions came out that all attempted to
address community struggles and
struggles nationally. They were at-
tempting to link up what was going
on in different parts of the country, as
well as to raise debate and discus-
sion around community organisa-
tion, around organising in factories,
and around broader political organ-
isationi

There seemed to be a gap in
terms of women's struggles. All these
publications, from time to time,
would mention women. But some-
times a whole year went by where
women were hardly mentioned.

in Durban, where Speak was
founded, there was a community
newspaper called Ukusai Their an-
swer was to have a womenis page

The feeling among some of us was
that this was not enough.

We needed to have a publica-
tion that could consistently raise
women's issues, allowing women to
talk out to other women about their
experiences, about their lives, and
about ways of tackling these things
and changing them.

We felt that not only were these
publications not raising women's
concerns sufficiently, but also that
not many women were reading
these publications. Now we didn't
have facts and figures and con-
crete information about this. But we :

felt, from our own experience and knowledge, from talking to people in the communities where we were working, that women were not reading these publications. There were many reasons for this. Women, it seems, don't have a culture of reading. We are hampered by housework, by childcare and by our jobs outside the home. We have very little time to read. Women don't even read the daily papers. Can you imagine the image of a woman sitting with her feet up reading the evening paper? This is just not something that one can imagine. It might be something that might appear in a cartoon, to make a point. But in reality, it is always the image of the man who does this,

while the woman is always busy around the house.

What we wanted to do was to try and break this. We wanted to encourage women to read. And we felt that a publication aimed specifically at women might be able to do this.

We also wanted this to be a particular kind of publication, not like Fair Lady or the other publications from the conventional media that are aimed at women.

We wanted this publication to relate to the national democratic struggle, to the workers' struggle in factories, and to be formally located within the political struggles that are being taken up in this country.

As I said, we were aiming at working class women. And we wanted to stimulate a culture of reading among women. But we also wanted to stimulate a culture of writing. Because we believed that if women were able to write about their own experiences, to share them with other women, this would be a start in making more visible the everyday pain that women go through.

It would also hopefully be a start in women being able to discuss these things with each other and then to move on to act around these things.

We also knew, and this has come up in the other speakers' talks here, that women lacked the skills and the confidence to do this. We wanted to explode the myths about writing and reading. We wanted to make people see, and women in particular, that they could do it.

We saw the need for women to organise themselves to free themselves from all their oppression. We saw that a publication could help in some way towards doing this. Although, I might add that a publication can never take the part of active organising, it is just a means or a vehicle of putting across ideas.

And we were conscious of the fact that we had to address the situation that existed - that most women probably could not read and write or had very basic literacy skills.

We attempted to take these factors into account - that a lot of women would be barely literate, so would have very basic reading and writing skills. And secondly, the fact that I have already mentioned, that women don't have time to sit and read.

And we've attempted to incorporate these things in the way we put out our publications. For example, when we write in English, we attempt to make our language level as simple as possible, so that people with basic literacy skills will be able to un-

derstand what we are trying to put across.

We also felt that, being a Natal-based publication, we needed to come out in the vernacular. This meant coming out in Zulu. So each time we come out with one publication in English and one publication in Zulu.

We also try, in the way we lay out our pages, and in the length of the articles, to take the factors of women's lived experience into account. For example, we have short articles. We don't have articles that are longer than four or five pages. Because we believe we would not be able to get women to sit down for that length of time to read a particular article.

Also, in terms of the issues we report about and the way in which we write them, we attempt as far as possible to keep women's own words. We do this through interviewing women, through getting women to write about their experiences or to tell us about their experiences. Another challenge we are confronting is how to raise new ideas about women's lives, without on the one hand, going too far ahead for people to relate to what we are saying, but on the other hand, not lagging too far behind of where women are.

We find that women are angry about their experiences of all three forms of oppression, as a class, as a race and as a sex. Women have confronted many many problems.

For example, we need to raise and talk about the issue of women being beaten by their husbands, something very real that happens.

But we find that we have to raise these ideas about the new woman, the new South Africa, the way in which women should be treated and seen, and the way in which women should experience themselves in such a way that we can actually reach the women we are talking about. We don't want to be seen to be moving too far ahead, but nor do we want to be lagging behind.

The whole business of women's struggles has been something that organisations have taken up in this country. There have been many meetings and discussions about the way in which women's issues should be taken up.

And we feel that it is important for us, as a publication, to keep in touch with these discussions and so on, and to be part of these, so that we are writing up women's issues in a way that is linked to women's real experience.

HAVE WE MANAGED TO DO

THESE THINGS?

Now I'd like to go into what our experiences have been. How successful have we been in attempting to take up these issues in the printed media? How successful have we been in reaching women as a target audience?

It has not been easy, for the reasons already mentioned. It has not been easy to reach women; The fact that women are oppressed as women in the home is a factor that militates against reaching women as readers, as writers, and even as buyers of publications.

Speak has existed since 1982. We started off by producing 200 Speaks in English and 200 in Zulu. in 1988 we put out 6000 in English and 1000 in Zulu. At the present time we have offices in Durban and Johannesburg. Our distribution is mainly In the Transvaal and Natal.

We sell mainly through organisations, union offices, organised factories and sales at meetings and rallies. Speak is popular. Many people want to read it. This means we could have more offices and sell even more publications than we do now.

But we find that It is not easy to get women to buy Speak. At meetings and rallies it is men who buy Speak. There are usually few women at these meetings anyway. But even those who are there very rarely buy publications. Perhaps this is because men tend to have some money spare for themselves and women don't.

It is not only lack of money, but the fact that women perform a double

L_____. _____%____,

shift - at the workplace where they earn a wage, and at home - which keeps them from having time to read.

This is a problem we have to confront and deal with.

We don't have a problem in selling our publication to men. In fact, what has happened over the years is that we've been able to incorporate men's views. And we see this as useful, we see this as healthy. Because we want there to be discussion between men and women about the problems in women's lives. It's not women's problem alone.

Men contribute to the problem in some way, and men can also assist in the liberation of women in some way. So we feel that having men as readers and men as contributors to our publication is something we do not have a problem with.

But we would like to reach more women. And we would like to try and deal with these problems that militate against women as buyers, on the one hand, and women as writers on the other. And in this area we've had a problem as well.

It has not been easy to get women to write for Speak. We have always appealed to women to write in with stories, experiences of life or of organising, but have had little response. 80 Instead we interview individual women or women's groups and through interviews we get women's experiences in their own words, and these we write up as articles, for example, a group of women's experiences in a strike.

We attempt to write up the articles in Speak using the very words that the women have spoken. Because the women whose experiences we are relating do not feel that they themselves can sit down and write about them, we have to act, in a sense, as the intermediary between the women and the article coming out in Speak.

The problems of triple oppression and the double shift, the fact that women have to do the job that they have out there in the factory or whatever as well as the job in the home, clearly affect women's ability to read and to write.

This prevents or stifles women from being out there in the world, in organisations, at meetings and in a literacy learner celebrates Literacy Day taking up the issues that are affecting their very life. We feel that these issues need to be talked about.

People in organisations like this one also need to find ways of discussing, of dealing with, and doing something about these problems.

It's not enough that we just come together once a year, talk about these issues, raise them as problems, then leave them and do nothing about them. It is something that we need to take into our lives and make a part of our struggle. We believe that these issues need to be addressed by women and by all progressive organisations so that women's lives may change. Another factor that clearly affects women's ability to participate as readers and writers of *Speak* is the very high level of illiteracy. Even when women want to learn to read and write, it is not so that they can read a publication. Women who cannot read and write and who feel motivated to learn are motivated by basic needs like finding a form, to understand what's happening at the clinic when they take their child there, or being able to read a sign on a bus or train. What we are trying to do is something far beyond this. We are wanting people to read so they can share their experiences, so that they can learn about what's happening in other parts of the country, in other parts of the world. And this is something that's not even on the agenda of learners at this point in time. But it is something which we feel should be and must be stimulated. It seems we need as many organisations as possible to work in this area, so that more and more people in this country can become literate. This is a very serious problem that we need to address. The other problem that we have had to contend with has been harassment from the state. As a publication operating in these times we are obviously affected by the state's attempts to clamp down on media and progressive organisations in general. And like all other publications, this has been something we have had to confront and deal with in as creative a way as possible. Being specifically Natal-based, we've also had to confront the difficulties of getting our publication into Natal's townships, because of problems with Inkatha. People who come to meetings are not too happy to take publications like this one back into the township because of the problems that they will confront once they get home. But we've been attempting

Cosatu's Frank Meintjies: "Progressive organisations should do more to encourage literacy work. We cannot wait until after liberation." to find ways of dealing with these. Finally, we have the problem of raising the new, of attempting to raise new ideas about women's role, about women's place, and about how women can relate in a liberated way, as people, as equals, and not as chattels, as interlors and subordinates as we are now.

Women must begin to throw off the shackles that keep us down. We must speak out against oppression and exploitation in every sphere of our lives. There must be education and discussion about vital issues concerning women. We need to understand our situation and to act to change it so that women and all people in our country may be free from the exploitation and oppression we experience in SA today.

DISCUSSION

MILLIONS ILLITERATE

Responding to a question, an ELP speaker said that according to the 1980 government census, about 8 million people in SA are illiterate. Half of these are women, and the racial break down is as follows:

- 0 White - 3%,
- 0 Indian - 13%,
- 0 Coloured - 20%, and
- 0 Black - over 50%.

RELATIONSHIP WITH

WOMEN'S

ORGANISATIONS

There should be a relationship between political women's organisations and literacy groups because the subordination of women is linked to national oppression and class exploitation, said a member of the audience.

Speakers from the literacy groups agreed.

'But organisationally this has not happened yet) said an ELP representative. 'It would be very good if there started to be formal and structural co-operation between women's organisations and literacy organisations.'

Responding to a question on literacy work in the rural areas, an ELP speaker said her organisation had worked mainly in the urban areas, but that groups had been set up in Winterveld and in the northern Transvaal.

LITERACY AND FICTION

Very little fiction is used in literacy programmes, said a speaker, because learners were 'at the level where they are struggling and wanting to know real things, authentic things'.

'To start with fiction is a bit too

challengingf she said, but conceded that consideration should be given to using more fiction.

Another literacy worker agreed:

"People are tired of ieaming about how to fill out forms and want more material that relates to their everyday life", she said.

A member of the audience said fiction should not be seen In classical European terms. 'Rather take fact and surround It with the problems of everyday life.' He urged literacy organisations to consider commissioning writers to do work for them.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Speakers were asked to clarify the issue of illiterate women being discouraged from attending literacy classes because of mockery from their colleagues and disrespect from their children.

'It's not that children dlsrespect their parents,' said one speaker.

'but your children start seeing themselves as knowing more than you, their mother, especially because they learn things at school which you as a parent have never learnt.'

The problem also lies with adults mocking, laughing and discourag-

ing each other, said another speaker.

'I respect a mother who also learns from her child, and the child can also learn something from the mother'. she said.

Commenting on the parent-child relationship, a trade unionist in the audience said youth and students had tried to encourage their parents to participate in Parent-Teacher-Student Associations (PTSA). These and other forums where parents, teachers and students exchanged views were never restricted to parents who were literate, he added.

'My mother has hardly passed standard four. She is a domestic worker. I am very proud of her and I respect her,' he said. "because there are a lot of things I learnt from her which I could not get in the Bantu education classroom.'

THE FREE STATE

A member of the audience from the Free State said there was a need for literacy programmes and other resources in the region. it was also necessary to organise white women 'to be progressive' and to begin to lay the foundations for white and black women to have more contact and to work together. A speaker from Uswelwazi said literacy organisations had limited resources. but would train people from the area to teach literacy there. Shomim from Speak said the magazine had limited distribution in the Free State and would like to improve this.

CONSCIENTISING ROLE

Speaking about the conscientising role of literacy work, O Cosatu official said trade unions and other democratic organisations had not paid sufficient attention to this. "One of the first things liberated countries like Cuba and Mozambique did after liberation was to launch massive literacy campaigns. Hundreds and hundreds of people went out into the rural areas, and trained others - ordinary people like ourselves - to start literacy groups", he said.

'For us in the unions, not knowing how to read or write interferes with organisation.'

literacy is important for workers in many ways, for example for workers to be able to read pamphlets and for shopstewards to take notes at meetings and report back to workers. Unions had encouraged this, he said.

'I think we as progressive organisations should do for more within our ranks to encourage literacy work. We cannot wait until after liberation.'

A speaker from ELP felt the litera-

cy movement in SA would 'only really gain momentum other liberation'. She pointed to the dismal picture of illiteracy in the country today. Only one percent of illiterate people are involved in literacy programmes. Of those, 70 percent are in government projects and only 30 percent in progressive literacy projects such as ELP, Uswa and Learn and Teach.

A member of the audience said it was well known that the apartheid government was to blame for the high level of illiteracy. He said it was time for the cultural desks of mass democratic organisations to help those who were doing literacy work.

TEACHING LITERACY

Asked about literacy projects being run in factories, ELP said these had been run with Cosatu unions, After union branch executives had recommended the appropriate factories, classes had been set up in these factories together with shop stewards.

The issue of whether factory-based or community-based literacy groups were the most visible was an ongoing debate

'We decided union groups, because literacy work is very slow work, not fast and spectacular. We also felt it was important that the confidence and the skills people gain through literacy be used in organisation.

'So we felt it was important to build up unions, because unions are one place in this country where there is strong democratic organisation,' said an ELP speaker.

Factory-based groups were also useful because learners didn't have to arrange extra transport and could attend classes before or after their shifts.

Another advantage was that often the workers in a factory-based group had common problems. These could become a 'discussion and organising focus that feeds into union work'.

'In community groups people are often dispersed and it takes a while to get into common problem thinking,' said the speaker.

A disadvantage of literacy work in factories is the availability of teachers. Shop stewards had been approached, but were often too busy with union work.

BLACK AND WHITE

Asked about the racial composition of teachers in the literacy projects, the speaker said all the groups had both black and white teachers.

A member of the audience then asked whether problems experienced were not due to inadequate

understanding and communication
between white teachers and black
teachers.

"From my experience in market
research, when it comes to commu-
nication, blacks communicate
better with fellow blacks and whites
communicate better with other
whites because of their cultural un-
derstanding." she said.

"We know what you are talking
about and understand it very well,"
said a literacy worker. "We've been
trying very hard to get black teach-
ers but at the moment very few
people will do voluntary work for
nothing", said a literacy worker.
While racial divisions exist and
'most people understand better
those of their own race group', said
one speaker, 'there is something
happening in this country within the
democratic movement.'

"Here people do understand
each other in a sense that extends
beyond racial differences. It would
be very sad if we are saying and
accepting that this is not happening
in any way and that it's only after lib-
eration that we will be able to under-
stand each other as South Africans in
this country."

White people should learn on African
communication, said an ELP speak-
er. 'It is not sufficient that black peo-
ple are developing their English

NUM's Buyisile Jonas: "IT is The educator's duTy To reach The audience."

language skills. H is The responsibiTy of whiTes To learn on African Ion-guogef

A member of The audience soId liTerocy classes are different from BonTu educoTion ond ThoT pupils should conscientise ond Teach The Teacher. 'This is why TT is imporTonT ThoT liTerocy classes are linked To organisoTion,' he said.

A Trode union educoTion officer poinTed ouT ThoT H was ImporTonT for educoTors To make Themselves understood.

"In our seminars you find mm more Then four Africon languages are spoken.

'As on educoTor, H is my obligaTion To reach Those workers. iT is more The duTy of The educoTor Than The one who is being eduooTed To reach The audience.

'Iim one of Those few uneducoTed educoTionolists. And I Think ITm successful in educoTing oThers because I reloTe To Them in The ion-guoge ThoT They understond best."

POLITICS OF COLOUR

Commenting on The use of racial Terminology, a poet and Cosow member said: 'We are a people in The process of o noTion being born. We are noT going back, we are marching forward.

'In These sessions colour poliTics Took root and people were labelled 05 blocks and so on. I wonT To soy ThoT I've outgrown colour poliTics."

He said some quesTions had creoted The negoTive impression ThoT speakers were being accused. He urged porTiciponTs To have discussions with The speakers on possible meThods ThoT could be inTro-duced To ensure effective work and reiOTionships with progressive sTruceTures.

The existIng i iTerocy groups could noT be expected To cover The whole of SouTh Africa, he said, 'We have our progressive organisoTions with Their educoTion ond medic: commiTTees. IT's high Time ThoT we added To olreody existIng i iTerocy groups'

A speaker soId i iTerocy organisoTions could offer support To Those who wonTed To seT up Their own i iTerocy projeCTs, including Training, i iTerocy moTeriols and ideas.

"iT would be good if we sTorTed working TogetHer more,' she said.

Closing The session, AchmoT Don-gor said The problem of a lock of re-sources occured noT only in i iTerocy groups, buT in oil The iniTioiives To help The process of fundomenToi Change in SouTh Africa.

ELP, Uswe and Learn and Teach

had done 0 IoT To Try To sTimuloTe This process, he sold. The challenge To democroTic orgonisoTions was 'To go beyond The rheToric of demand-ing services and occounTobiliTy To being able To give direcTion'.

'IT is Time ThoT we, as Cosow, os port of The democroTic movement, reoch ouT To service orgonisoTions and say To Them: we undersTond whoT you are doing, we undersTond The problems you hove, This is our feeling, This is The way we believe you can inTerocT wiTh us.

"As a wriTers orgonisoTion we are inTeresTed in spreading iiTeroCy, be-cause we also wonT To spread iiTero-Ture. And wiThouT iiTeroCy There is no wriTTen iiTeroiure.'

Poems delivered
 CT The
 conference ,
 Sobeloni Niyobizwo
 Dedicaiied to the conference
 Siphiwe Ngwenya
 Buong Bosodi,
 Khulumoni Mokhosikozi,
 Women Speak,
 Sobeloni Niyobizwo
 Nonsi indido yomzilo,
 Eyobonwo ngumfo kofhlofshwoyo,
 Nongo umfo koMbuLi ememeza ethi;
 "Ngizwo ingomo, ngizwo isikhalo
 Mokhosikozi, Sobeloni Niyobizwo
 Bophi ooMaNgoyi?
 Bophi ooMoMxenge?
 Bemuke nomfulo wegozi!
 Bemuke nomfulo wobondlululo!
 Niyobizwo eMzonsi Africa
 Buong Bosodi
 Khulumoni Mokhosikozi
 Women Speak
 Sobeloni Niyobizwo
 Bopht
 OoMoNcube, OoMoJoseph, OoMoSisulu,
 OoMoMondelc, OoMoMeer, ooMoMoThopeng,
 OoMoMkhize, OoMaTlali, OoMoKhuzwoyo
 Ngingeboqede
 Scbeloni Niyobizwo
 Amondlo enu ophelophi, no?
 Lopho nonifhi: "Strydom, you have tampered with
 the women - you have struck a rock - Wofhinfo
 obofozi, wothinfo umbokodo
 Mokhosikozi, Sobeloni Niyobizwo.
 Stanza Bopope
 Pule Sealanyane
 Kc mofopho ohle ho senyehile
 Bofho bo botsana mopcflelong b0 hloletswe
 Bafho b0 shwo loubo k0 Ioto
 Moleko o ke sefjhobeng
 Bcno b0 nyomelong motsohong o moloo
 Bono b0 nyomelo, bong b0 hlohe b0 se b0
 shwele
 Ho efsaholong no? ke pofso.
 Kc hopolo moro Bopope ko hlollwo
 Kc hopolo moro Nokedi le Mofokeng k0 Tsofo
 No more Bopope o nkilwe ke eng?
 0 nkiwe ke nfjc e se Iesopo
 Ee! E sehloho enc fulo, e senong bokguTio
 E sehloho eno, e senong nnefe Tobe
 Bono b0 nyamela ho se mohlolo
 Ho efsaholong no,ke pofso'?
 Kc Ie leng lefsotsi e Ho hlahela nnefe
 Motho o Tlo mofho so Kaine bibeleng
 Mofho o bofswa o kae stanza
 Leshono Ie TIC be le bobo
 Nne're e Ie momepe Ie monofshi
 Boboloi be He bc: seno'rswe
 Kgotso le nnete di Ho be di sebefso
 Meloo yo bofofu e hloko'rswe
 Mofho o botswa potso yo hore:
 "O entseng nabophelo b0 hoo"
 ' Robolo kc khofso moro Bopope
 Modi a hoo re Ho dulo re a Ilelo.
 Ukubuyo KwoBoholi
 Benkululeko ezweni Iokubo
 Thami Sibisi
 Eliko Vuyisile Mini, ihubo
 Umhlobo ungowabosebenzi nokugcwolc kwowo
 izwe nobokhileyo kulo.

Ngokubo bone bowusekelo phezu kwomodwo-
Iodwolo,
bowomiso nomobhuloho phezu kwemifulakozi.
Ngubani oyokufinyelelo kwi South Afrika
ekhululekileyo;
Nguboni oyokuphilo ezweni lokufhulo
nenfokozo no?
Yilowo ozondlo zokhe ziphefhe
iChoner yeNkululeko ngokulesi,
neChorfer yoboSebenzi ngokwesinye,
onenhliziyo yedelokufo
ongophenduleli umphefumulo wokhe emongeni
nosemolini, nongofungi ngenkohliso.
Uyowukwomukelo isibusiso seSifwolcmdwe,
nokulungo kuboholi benkululeko yokhe.
Yilesi esiyisizukulwone somoqabone;

%_

wono osinga inkululeko emozweni;
ongobonfwonc bokoBhombbotho,
uyongizwo yini Mqoshi? Sela!
Phokomisani bosebengi, phokomisoni izondlo
zenu
ninc: zinsiko zomcebo wokuleli, phokomoni,
ukuze oboholi benkululeko bobuye,
bophume emojele.
Bongobobani Iobaholi benkululeko no?
Bophefhuxolo oluLindiwe kwesikoMobuzo Nom-
zomo
wokukhululo isizwe.
Amoqhowe nomoqhowekazi okulwo.
Ungilalele wemqoshi no? Sela!
Bohlonyo nfjo Boksburg
Pule Sealanyane
Tsohong molofo bono bo-Afriko
Bane b0 Modibo-c-mofsho
Bcno b0 fotshe Io kgotso moilongwathelo
Kgobong mofshwofo le lebelle ha 9 kgiba
E kgibo k0 Io pele Ieo'ro mobewono
Kojeno ho qodile o motjho mofereferere
Boksburg buru le a homo Iere "Glad nie"
" Bonfoe by sy plek, boos by syne"
Ho qodile monyompeflo o apartheid
No buru le Ho hlapohelwo neng no?
NO buru Ie TIC Theo kgofso neng
Tebong bo pelo yo Iona ho Tlefse Tshabo
Le yo Thofhomelo Ie Tshwerwe ke molo
Le se le nohono kc: menwona yo mooto
Ke eng eko bofohwo bo bongo'ro
Kopo ke bono bohlonyo-nfjo b0 bolelwong
Kajeno meTse e senngwo ke Andrisi
Kere Andrisi kopo Yugini a bolelwong
Mokgo wa bono wo bono wc dinokwone o senyo
noha
Pm no 0 o Tshobo ho kgolemelo re Tsebe.
Tsebo hore lqu so hoo se a Thello
Se flofsi'rswe kc mofuro a nokedi moleko
0 re Tellefse ho lekone fefolo moikuflo
Hosone 0 se llele mefsosfso
W0 quello o iTse:
" Hojo kc momelo, k0 sebediso moikuflo"
Noko e fedile yo bohlonyo-nfjo Ie bokooko
Ke noko yo poelono yo sebele
E seng mofereferere one we pele Ie moroo
Soyco ke e0 9 Ho e tonne mohlo
Tloho Tseleng bo'rjho b0 ripitlo
Ho Efsoholong?
Pule Sealanyane
Ke eng hoo ke ho uflwong hoo?
Ho ekong ke bono boko bo bolowong
Bo boloelwang bosowono le monofe.
Ke Theoletso bcno b0 Afriko bohle
bohle b0 mophelo a bone 0 Ho nkuwo
A nkelwo bosowono ke bofloflopil le di-keno-
morung
Bo suflileng meyo yo rono k0 noko telele
Bo hone ho honefswa Ie ho elefswa.
Kojeno botswodi Ie mefswolle b0 hlonome.
Bo hopofse bong k0 bono
Bo hopofse bolwonedil b0 Tokoloho
fotsheng Ieno Io bo-nkgono
Ra no r0 buo kc kgo'rso yo polo
Ra buo k0 foko yo nyofswa
onle re Iokelo ho eTso jwong?
onng k0 moleko o kokofong monyoko?
Kojeno mmuso o lekonfswa, wo kolwo.
Ho setseng ke hore nnefe e hlohele.
Ke theolefse monyone - Tefo Molobeng

Ke hopole IsroeIe wo Mokhoso
Ke ropedise Nkedi wo Mono
Ke re le bohole b0 Tumohole
Oo moleko ha 0 no etsoholo
Boo ke bohlonyo Ie bokokalope
Re Tlo Iwono wo hlooho molomu.
Re pholose a lone mcphelo
Le bong boo le nong Ioe bono.
Ho le dikelo Ie hlomolo pelo
Ke pino yo bono bo Afriko
Bono b0 nkgopo'rso mothofo
Ho b0 bone letsatsi Ie dikelo
Bo hopolo momma a bone
Ho Ie dikelo le hlomolo pelo
Ho b0 bino bc jele IeTing
Bo Iebefse Tso motshehore
Tsa hore heelo bono
Mp0 ho eno sekoloTo
Ho Ie dikelo Ie hlomolo pelo
onle ke noko yo moroko
Ho re qholano ie mefsowlle
E mong le e mong o e yo hobo
Nno ke seno lehoeso
No ke Ho robolo ho mung?
Ha le dikelo Ie hlomolo pelo.

Ho hoko yo boroko e fihlo
MoTho peio e o kokobelo
O nohone moTshwnyeho ohle
O nohone moTskehore o feTiieng
O feTilehg ko boThoTo
NTote c duTse ie bono b0 hoe
A so ikeTse monho moAfrika
MesebeTsi e se e hlokwa
Ere o iThoupiie k0 noko e hngwe
A iio boTio mosebeTsi
A Tecne Ie mengoio heheng
Aukho Umsebehzi! Ho hono mosebeTsi! No work!
Ere bosiu a robeTse
A nohono hono Ie hwahe
A hopolo hore hososo ke ieTsoTsi
Are bonno hore hoko duio e ie bosiu feeio
, My son
When Amondlo was woiTing
Lingering wiTh The goTe
An ice-creom bicycle
went by across The sTreeT
Some Children of his age
And some of Their elders
Buying ice-creom Tubes
For Their self and The younger broThers
Coming The very some way
W05 Amondlo's foTher
NoTicing his Child on The gaTe
WiTh no ice cream in his possession
H was like being hiT
WiTh 0 rock on The head
i BUT forTunoTely
- There was one rand in his pockeT

ReflecTions of on old worker
or
The Bollode of The power
over my body
Gladys Thomas, Cape Town
When l was 0 young man
powerful and sTrong
I had dreams:
I wonTed soft pillows for my head
and To hear my children sing.
Those dreams never come True:
Today I'm buT on emPTy shell.
You reoped The horvest of my lobour
you become The power over my body.
I've worked This eorTh
yeT iT offered me noThing.
My life portner
passed on Through sickness and hunger
my children all osTroy.
Why did I dig so deep?
lfound noThing,
The hard work, The sweoT.
You reoped The horvest of my lobour
you become The power over my body.
Mon is born To work and Toil,
buT I've corrid your load
I've Tilled The soil.
My block face is o concreTe mosk,
your buildings reach The sky
your dreams fulfilled.
. you smile vicToriously.
ls H for This I behT my book?
A day's work done
I reTurn To my shock.
You reoped The horvest of my Iobour,
you become The power over my body
Long ogo in my youTh,
lwos heolThy ond sTrong
The dreams were There
buT now They're gone.
The hard work, The poin
you sTripped me of my sTrenGTh.
buT noT in vain:
The power remained in my head.
You reoped The horvest of my lobour
you become The power of my body.
My children will reTurn.
more powerful and sTronger.
They will lobour buT demand Their reword,
Their dreams wi/lcome True
Their bodies fulfilled
They will become new.
You reaped The horvest of my Iobour,
' you were The power over my body.
Mondelo's birTholoy
Thoughts
Gladys Thomas
The cold light of o wihTer down
i creeps inTo The cell.
Opening my eyes
my birThdoy comes To mind:
TwenTy-six of sevenTy yeors spent in jail;
Rivonio was buT yesTerdoy!
Soon The sun's rays
will warm my isolotion
buT I will noT weep
my book will hoT bend
unTil all my people walk free.
The cold light of o winTer down
sends shivers down my spine
buT I will noT feel cold

I am sTrong
not old!
I will not submit To loneliness;
in my heart I hold you
you fill my arms
Africa, my people, my children.
Africa, I won't, I'll own
your sTrong black body.
' Soon it will be filled
with freedom's seed.
For my beliefs I'm in hell before death,
but I may not die,
I will not die
when you, Africa is waiting for me!
I must not miss our meeting.
we will hold each other volitionally,
I will lead you
away from our oppressors,
The long stormy road
To liberation.
We shall walk Together
you and I,
To our long awaited marriage
and freedom!

Choose not to be me
Ndaleni Radebe
Choose not to be me
A cat in the sack
Not to see the happenings
Choose not to be me
A greatest slave of apartheid
Drunk with poison of capitalism
Tied with chains of slavery
Choose not to be me
The doors are closed
Whites only - Net blankes
In the toilets all over
Choose not to be me
I'm promised fortune and glories
But not in practice
I'm promised heaven and earth
But not given
I asked I don't get
If I take I'm wrong
Jail is my home
Choose not to be me.
My life was at dawn
I never knew happiness
Tears were falling in my face
I wished I could die
Day and night was the same
My body the place of pain
I felt hopeless and useless
My heart aches day and night
Someone came like a dream
Waken me from my sleep
His words were medicine
His touch was a remedy
One thing I knew
I hated a man
Man was my enemy
Man my victim
I thought I will never fall in love
But things went otherwise
I found myself loving
Uttering words of love
It was as if I'm dreaming
I found someone loving
RH
Wiped my tears with love
Wiping away the past
Bringing me new season.
Human heart
Ndaleni Radebe
Human heart, you are troublesome
You troubled our kings as they ruled on their
thrones
You troubled our fathers as they hunted on their
lands
You troubled our mothers when they corned their
fields
Oh human heart
You troubled us,
You are never satlfied
You cry all day
You only know evil
You don't know good
on human heart
You troubled us
You know no justice
You know no truth
You want evrything
You want it all
Teach yourself wisdom
Teach yourself humanity

Oh human heart
We seek our father land
Gonneng Kgosi
Why Lord
Hobaneng Morena
Ngoba Nkosi
Setlhake Gonyane, OFS
Lehatsheng jeno re dirine makgoba
Lehatsheng jeno re tshela ka thata
Lehatsheng jeno re atlholwa ka mmaIa ke ditlaela
Gonneng kgosi- why lord
Lord, you've created us to be black
We have accepted that without looking back
For we know know we are not less powerful
than white brother
The yoke of our shoulder is a great brother
Why Lord - Hobaneng morena

Modimo wo rono - Modimo wo rono
 O re lohleTseng no
 Wo bo hole le Thuso yo rono
 Re biTso bosiu le moTshehore ko Thopelo ho re
 Thole korobo
 Hoboneng Moreno - Why Lord
 Lord, you have designed block and white To be
 equal
 BuT in This counTry
 we are regarded as slaves
 Who hos To suffer under The mercy of my white pol
 Oh Lord whoT l coll home is o dingy cove.
 Why Lord
 Lord,ln This counTry we con'T express pain
 When we sTorT To genuinely exploin
 They lobel us TerrorisTs
 And ThoT meons life senTences ond deoTh
 Why Lord
 Lord. in our beloved counTry we know no peace
 Becouse isizwe seThu sisezondleni sezi rholorhume
 lncukuThu eziconco omogozi, ngobo? ngobo!
 Nkosi!
 Why should we suffer like This, Lord?
 Why Lord?
 Lord, you've brought The wonderful Holy Bible in
 This world
 To resist Tyronny, prejudice, rocism, killings
 and To sow justice love TronquiliTy and freedom
 BuT The professional sinners oppress ond exploit us
 by iT
 Why Lord - How long must we feel Their poin?
 Why Lord
 Sizo fiko nini in The miliTonT ochon
 Yo mhlobo wo giThi
 Sizo fiko nini enkululekweni
 Ye nTsindiso yo Io mhlobo
 Si buzo weno mdoli we 2qu
 No mhlobo fuThi si yo Ielo bobo
 We connoT do onyThing wiThouT your presence
 bobo
 OurTrust and hope is in you
 As our RevoluTionory God
 Send your holy spiriT To save and iiberote us
 Send our sociolist, your rodicol son Jesus ChrIsT
 EmoncipoTe us from This land of bondage
 Oh Lord bless us all.
 TroIn of iiberotIon
 John Bodibe (14 years)
 The Train of liberotIon is coming
 From where? I don'T know
 BuT lT's sneaking iTs way To SouTh Africo.
 lT off-Ioded people like
 Jomo KenyoTTo in Kenyo
 Julius Nyerere in Tonzonio
 KenneTh Koundo in Zombio
 Roberl Mugabe in Zimbabwe
 SereTse Khomo in BoTswono
 Somoro Mochel in Mozambique.
 IT corries people like
 Som Nujomo To Nomibio
 Nelson Mondelo To SouTh Africa
 The suffering people of SouTh Africa
 Are impoTienle wolTing for This Troin
 BuT The clique of oppressors
 And Their puppeTs
 Are proving day in day ouT for iTs deloy
 BuT for Them iT's Too loTe
 The Train is obouT To reach
 lT's destInoTion, SouTh Africa.
 Top of Africo
 John Bodibe

I see The Top of Africo
Africo of Kilimohjoro
I see The Tiger moving on Top of The mountain
Oh, Solomon Mhlongu, Oh, Vincent Tshobololo
Let Botho show difference To Molon, Strydom and
Verwoerd
Let Botho dismantle apartheid
Let Botho release all political prisoners
Let Botho unbond The ANC
Banning Cosas, shooting us
Will never stop The struggle
Will never solve our problems
We'll continue To boycott rents and schools
Until our demands are met
Until we get freedom
I Struggle, Struggle, oh Struggle
How many people died in The struggle
How many children died in The struggle
How many students died in The struggle

Rambo, Rambo. Rambo, Rombo was a coward
He killed members of our struggle
Instead of killing the dogs of Apartheid
Those who are known as
The South African Defeated Fools
And Sdton After People
When I come back from Lusoko,
from Namibia, from Tanzania
I'll talk the new language
Which the puppets would not understand
Which is rototdt ok47
June 16 dnd blood in Africo
John Bodibe
Who are the real owners of Africa
There's no other way
Anyone who knows Europe
Soweto news in America
Sympathy from Russia and Tanzania
Respect and honour to you June 16
Education in white schools
Poison in block schools
Brove student with their stones
Vorster with his machine gun
Respect and honour to you June 16
Fire in Soweto, smoke in Cape Town,
dead bodies in Shorpeviie
but mourners in Tembiso
Thomi Mnyeale in Botswana
Brion Mozibuko in Robben Island
Tombo in Lusoko
Soweto students in Moscow
They fought and they were killed
Their bodies were defeated
But not their spirit
Violence, liberty at last
Respect and honour to you June 16
You are killing me
Mafiepa Mgaga
You are killing me
You who is working
In health centre
I have no money
To pay you when
I'm sick.
Why don't you build
A free centre
For the poor
Why don't you care
About me
For I'm going to help you
When I'm heoithy
Paying you now
Won't bring my life
Back to health
Devise you whors
Turning away from me
For your time
Is running out
Don't be oblivious
Because I'm watching
Your dction
Itm young, unemployed
And homeless
So help because
Tomorrow it can be you
I'm poor today
I'm rich tomorrow
I'm unhealthy today
You help me today.
I help you tomorrow
Help me

thi shdll we do
Mfiepa Mgaga
At home my mother
Is pop and tea
At school my young brother
Is eating bread with water
At work I eat
Fresh milk and bread
In the township my unemployed
Friends are eating
Spy-kos and smoke BB
What shall we do
God created us to live equoi
Talk, and they will
Put you in prison
Fight, and they will soy
you are d terrorist
What shall we do
When I come from work
We all eot pop and mootwono dikgogo
ME;

i sleep under my brother's bed
For we got no extra rooms like them
I talk to administration board
They say ke yo politiko
Who shall we do
In the morning i am late to work
i won't wash
My brother is still washing
We've got one dish to wash
We cannot afford to buy many dishes
I earn R65 0 week
Who shall we do
I won't increase
They say i am ANC
i won't work comfortably
They call the police and say i politic
Who shall we do.
For Gilly Nyothele
(Aged Twelve)
Written in response to an article in The
Weekend Argus of 25 August, 1986.
Mavis Smallberg
First the face, and then
The caption caught my eye:
Small Boy Seen As
Threat to State Security
The face is oval
The cheekbones high
The mouth of generous curve
and then,
Those eyes!
The eyes are almond-shaped
with wrinkles underneath;
The eyes show large white;
The expression in those
serious sullen eyes
is a danger to the state!
A small boy should not have such eyes
eyes which glower, two black coals
smouldering on the page;
eyes which cannot seem to smile
eyes unfathomable
filled with hate, or tinged
with fear?
eyes which look as if they've
never known a tear
a small boy should not have
such eyes
A small boy should not be
detained
A small boy should not be
in jail
Not once,
not thrice,
not four times in a row!
A small boy should not be shut
into a cell
so that he can break
. A small boy should not be
a danger to the state!
And yet
The small boy knows the slogans
knows he has to fight
a system which pays his mother
R6000 per month
The small boy fights against grown men who
pose as 'vigilantes'
The small boy
frowns when comrades drink
getting drunk inside shebeens
The small boy

with o hundred oThers who coll
Themselves The fourTeens'
'run The ploce' - Tumohole,
a Township in The Free SToTe
This small boy
just released from
Heilbron prison in Porys
BuT right now
The small boy only wonTs
'To eoT ond eoT ond eoT'
he fidgeTs in his choir and says:
'white children siT in choirs
like These'.
The small boy Tolks about
democracy
and says his brushes with The sToTe
have only mode him 'sTubborn'
This small boy
This Gilly Nyotheie
who with his broThers Three
live on soIT ond porridge
and who, TogetHer with his sister,
often hungry goes To sleep.
o This small boy knows his foTe
ond wonTs his counTry
, free
Ah, woe beTide our foTe
ThoT such
O small boy
is a danger To The sToTe!

Mavis Smollberg delivers her poetry
For our moThers
Everywhere, especially in Valhalla Pork, Gugulefu,
Athlone, Bongweni, New Brighton, Mitchell's Plain.
Mavis Smallberg
Block old ladies have The most beouTiful smiles
Their faces glow
gleam
like deep purple
Purple; royal, mourning
Block old ladies compare
They mourn The iost loves
The iost lives
of sons and doughiers maimed
killed
and Three-year-old grandchildren
shot
OT point blank range
YeT block old ladies sTili smile
, They dream of 0 long block Tunnel
ever widening
enveloping The whiT
squeezing iT
obiiTeroTing iT
Block old iodies make magic
in block Tunnels
They make whiT pig faces shrivel
moke odd-shoped grey and blue overalls
which bellow ouT mm The sTronge shape
of even sTronger men
spin endlessly
Tiii Their shapes disappear
mm a puipy soggy blur
Block old ladies are magic
in whiT-seeking block Tunnels
They discolour grey and blue overalls
uniforms
TwisT Them
and hang Them ouT To dry
Royal
purpIe-clod
Block old ladies mourn
BUT hexT Time
Blue overalls
you see a Block old lady
sTop
and onch her smiie.

Wdtchout, there's o
policeman
Mavis Smallberg
Watch out/there's o policemon/
he can kiii/you know/
you have to/of course/
do something/thdt's wrong/
and there's Iots/thdt 0 baby/
can do/thdt is/wrong
she can iie/in her bed/
to be shot/in the hedd/
when a suspected rioter/runs into his home/
he can breathe in/tedrgos/ as it lands with 0
crash/
when thrown by/ a policeman/ right into his
home/
he can gdsp in his fright/ he can choke in the
night/
as he dies/ in the fight/ for his life/
watch out/ there's a policeman/
he can kill you/ you know/
you have to/ of course/
do something/ that's wrong/
and there's iots/ that o toddler/
can do/ that is/ wrong/
she can stdnd/ ot the gdte/
in herwoit/ for her mother/ her fdther/
to wend their/ way home/
0 stray bullet/ may come/ from o policemdn's
gun/
and stop/ that child's bredth/ oimed straight for
her Iung/
you con wotch/ the blood spread/
as it spioashes/ dnd oozes/ ond drips from the
mouth/ of her/ dead
watch out/ there's d policemdn/
he can kill you/ you know/
t you have to/ of course/
do something/ that's wrong/
and there's lots/ that o youngster/
can do thot/ is wrong/
he can woik/ home oione/
he can pick up/ 0 stone/
0 policemen may see him/ and chop down/ that
drm/
and stomp on/ that body/ and crush that child's
eyes/
and take thdt/ limp body/ to stuff it owoy/
and parents can look for/ 0nd pieod for/ and
oche
for that child/ but all they will get/
are bureoucrots' lies/
watch out/ there's a poicemon/
he can kill you/ you know
you have to/ of course/
do something/ that's wrong/
and there's iots/ that a teenager/
can do thot/ is wrong/
she can stay home from school/
she can break 0 school rule/
0 poicemon/ con hunt her/ and beat her/ and
thump her/
and take her/ and throw her in jdil/
for nine doys/ for ten doys/ a hundred and one
doys/
she can rot there/ they'll not core/
as she fodes/ owoy/ with each doys/
watch out/ theres a policeman/
he can kill you/ you know/
you have to/ of course/
do something/ that's wrong/

and there's lots/ that block children/
can do/ that is wrong/
for he/ is the god/
who decides/ in 0 second/
exoctiy/
exoctiy/
what's right/ and what's/ wrong/
Funny thing about words
or
Sorry, I'm not allowed to
i soy thdt
Mavis Smallberg
Words, in themselves, are not folse;
People are.
They tredt words too lightly,
bondy them too easily.
Their words become meaningless,
carry no weight;
ore particles of dust, destined always, to settle
' for just the briefest of whiles,
before they dissipate.
One cannot bidme words.
What else do we have but words?
g

They shode our every meoning
 can be clinicol, cold, exact.
 They twirl, whirl with our happy feeling
 stoop with our stumbling,
 run away with Our longing,
 can be down-toeorth
 or motter-of-foct.
 Whot wonderful, mogicol words ore:
 peace justice love friendship
 democracy.
 On the other hand, you have
 corruption evil detention -
 socialism?
 Now there's o mogicol word for you!
 Some people block out word like that.
 Wont them wiped out, covered up,
 not even whispered -
 c'o-m-m-u-n-i-s-m?
 In places you can get killed for saying a word like
 that.
 Be careful with words.
 People with big mouths and usually big sticks
 don't like hearing certain words.
 They'll stick pins through your tongue
 so they don't have to listen
 to any such words.
 Not even a magnificent word like
 shonng.
 You can go to prison for saying
 some words.
 Like... sorry, lim not allowed to say that.
 They bon reams of words in newspapers, on ro-
 clio,
 television, in books, magazines, plays,
 poetry.
 You are only allowed to gesticulote wildly,
 or preferably, just nod.
 The big sticks would love o
 perfectly silent world.
 Just a nod-nod here,
 and o nod-nod there.
 Then they could own oil the words,
 or utter only those that they choose.
 But that's the funny thing about words.
 They cannot be owned.
 Like weed, they insist on coming out,
 even if only scribbled upon wolls.
 And the noddors,
 those who have grown comfortable
 in their gesticuloting world of silence.
 sometimes surprise even themselves
 when suddenly they whisper:
 Amondlo!
 Von jou sol ek 'n lied sing
 Benjamin Thabo Ya Ha MoIefi
 Von sonskyn tot middog
 Sol ek lied sing
 Dit kon 'n boer lied wees
 Moor 'n lied sol ek sing
 'n Lied von sonlig en liefde en moedeloos.
 Toe ek verstoon het
 Het ek koue rillings oor my liggoom gekry
 En my oe het 5005 'n gordyn toe gesloon.
 Die pyn wot jy in my hort gelos het
 ls 'n pyn soos iemond my noel brond.
 En dit styk 5003 'n pyl in my hort
 O! Die pyn in my hort
 Ek wonder of jou lewe skuldig was
 Of my lewe skuldig is
 Asjou lewe nie skuldig was nie
 DAn sol ek soet op jou spoor trop.

A Voice
B. T. Ya Ha Molefi
A distance from where I was a slave
Concentrating on what I was instructed to do
And I heard 0 voice,
I imagined
I imagined the toffee coloured roots
The conditions on which we're leaving
I imagined the children playing
Playing happily in the dusty streets
But still I could hear that voice
I kept on doing my slovery work
Trying to forget how we're forgotten
But that voice kept on knocking on my mind
I imagined 0 little block dusty boy
Only with a dirty khokhi shirt
With tears on his small block and white eyes
Looking for his mother Ntswoki
I never wanted to ignore that cry
I imagined what could the mother be doing
Either be cooking pop and morogo for the family

Or doing nothing
BUT the voice kept on worrying me
The voice went on and on
And reminds
me of Miriam Mckeba
Vukoni Mofhong'omohle
Siphiwe Ngwenya
Lelo yizwi lesizukulwone senu,
Sona esingofundiswongo kulindo,
Sona esingofundiswongo kulilo,
Sisho singcqoli,
Vukoni Mofhong'omohle...
Vukoni zithufho zezwe,
Vukoni modloz'eAfriko,
Ningovuki ngempi.
Ningovuki ngobudlovo,
Vukoni Mothong'omohle...
Kode sidikodikono nolenkingo,
Kode sidikodikono nolempicobodolo,
Nan'r'izwe lidlolwo ngobofokozono,
Nonf'izwe Iidlolwo ngobaqoshi,
Siphiwe Ngwenya delivering his poetry at the conference
Vukoni Mofhong'omohle...
Vulon'izingqondo zeThu,
Vulon'isinhliziyiyo zefhu,
Nisikhumbuze ukukholo kwezinyoni,
Lihlobelela zenonel'ukwefhwoso kwehlobo,
Vukoni Mofhong'omohle...
Hlongonisoni izizwe zonkono,
Hlongonisoni izinhlangono zonkono,
Nonfo ufhingo lwenkosozone ngiyaziso,
Nomo ibhubesi Iibhongo ngiyoziso,
Vukoni Mofhong'omohle.
Inkululeko lsemnyongo
Siphiwe Ngwenya
Iyongqongqozo emnyongo.
Inkululeko eMzansi Afriko.
Ezweni lokukholo,
Nokugelezo kwegozi,
Inkululeko lsemnyongo!
Vukoni eMzansi Afriko!
Selikholile iqhude Iokuso,
Sekuyiso isikha'rhi sokuvuka.
Isikhothi senjobulo,

Vukani! Vulani!
 Nazi izimpi zikhankasile, bo!
 Phakathi kwabansundu nabamhlophe...
 Phakathi kwabansundu nabansundu...
 Phakathi kwabamhlophe nabamhlophe...
 Ngenxa yokukhulula izwe!
 Mayee..., Ngelani leligazi, na?
 Yelekelel abantwana baseMzansi Afrika,
 Bayagwazana
 Bayashisana
 Bayadubulana
 Bayabulalana
 Ngoba, inkululeko isemnyango...
 Sheshan'ilanga lingakashoni,
 Inkululeko isemnyango!
 Yebo, isemnyango.
 Triple B
 (Bayangena, Bayaphuma,
 Bayaphithizela)
 Siphawe Ngwenya
 Bayangena.
 Bayaphuma,
 Bayaphithizela,
 Ngenai
 Phumal
 Ngivumeleni Ngikhulumen.
 Ngivumeleni Ngikhulume...
 Ngivumeleni Ngikhulume...
 "If the newspapers of this country
 are full of good news,
 then the jails of this country
 are full of good people..."
 Bayangena. Bayaphuma. Bayaphithi-
 zeia.
 Gone are the days when our mothers,
 with children on their backs,
 Their hearts full of courage and anger!
 Marched to the union building...
 What about our present and future mothers
 who rest on their laurels?
 Bayangena. Bayaphuma. Bayaphithi-
 zeia.
 From the Sharpeville massacre,
 Soweto was another "X-ville".
 Away with bantu education!
 students shouted,
 The answer was my brother's death!
 The answer was my sister's gagging!
 The answer was my comrade's exile...
 and detention!
 Bayangena. Bayaphuma. Bayaphithi-
 zeia.
 For democracy...
 Tricamerally you "appeased"
 Samora Machel's death is no victory.
 Oppressor that you are!
 For a leader had emerged!
 From the bush to Maputo!
 Viva Chissano!
 Bayangena. Bayaphuma. Bayaphithi-
 zela.
 Bayaphithizela...
 While exiles are longing for their lost land.
 singing, "Kukude Tambo, emakhaya..."
 For the African soil
 watered with the blood
 of innocent souls...
 While Umakoti, Umkhonto we Sizwe...
 Is roaring in the borders,
 "Buuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu..."
 Bayangena. Bayaphuma. Bayaphithi-

zeia.
Yebo, Bayaphithizela.
Courage after sentenced
to death
Douglas Fongoqa, flom his play Zimbi Mawefhu
Lumka don't invite
a hot nyakanyaka mzala
There comes a small snake
crawling, hungry and angry
don't underestimate it
It's dangerous to do so
its bite is fatal
Like the gallows you
are sending me to.
Watch out. bhasobha bhasobha.
iyakhula ingan' emnyama.
That way i salute you MaAfrika.
I am going back to earth;
back to dust where l originate.
Six feet to join my dead brothers.
l am going to fertilise the soil,
from the fertile soil,
There shall grow the bushes;
The bushes where you will run
and hide yourself
when reactionary forces
are after your heels
In darkness of the bush
where you will come together
and say in one voice: masivukeni
Zimbi Mawethu!

Images of
Women
in literature

The way women are portrayed in literature and the media reflects and influences the way women are seen in society.

In a paper on 'Images of women in the media', Veni Soobroyon, from the Natal Organisation of Women (NOW), looks at how advertising in conventional women's magazines perpetuates the dominant ideology of patriarchy, apartheid and capitalism.

Three prominent South African writers, Nadine Gordimer, Miriam Tlali and Achmat Dangor look at the images of women in their own writings and in literature from other countries.

IMAGES OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIA

Veni Soobroyon

I am here as a representative of the Natal Organisation of Women. The paper that I am going to present was drawn up with the assistance of a number of people from NOW. In researching this paper, we examined closely a number of popular magazines and magazines directed at both white women and at the black population. We also referred to a variety of other research articles related to the topic. In short, this is not an academic paper. Instead we hope it will serve as a starting point for further thought and discussion.

Because the parameters of this topic are very broad and far-reaching, we decided that it would be more useful if we focused on a particular aspect of the media. With this in mind, we chose to look specifically at advertisements, because we found that these took up a large percentage of any magazine and a significant portion of newspapers and television. Adverts also create and reflect the changes in the images of women as seen historically.

POLITICAL CONTEXT

Before I proceed with the analysis of these adverts, I want to briefly and broadly define the political context in which this paper is located. Firstly, we are examining the images of SA women in the SA media. Implicit in this is the realisation of the unique nature of SA society:

- 0 the fundamental nature of our society is defined by apartheid,
- 0 the economic base is a capitalist one,
- 0 SA society is a product of colonialism.

It is these three factors, in the main, which dialectically influence the dominant ideology. They cannot be seen as three separate determinants, but rather as a combination of forces that influence the dominant ideology. They do not always complement each other (for example, capitalism and apartheid are often

in contradiction with each other) and

they do not rule out the existence of other forces which may influence the dominant ideology.

Secondly, the gender oppression of women. probably the oldest form of oppression, is compounded in SA society by the class and race oppression that women experience. Women are therefore under the burden of a triple oppression. While this paper does not consistently and explicitly address this fact, this triple oppression forms the basis for the understanding of women's oppression.

IMAGES OF WOMEN

We have identified three main categories or images of women that the media propagates. That is:

- 0 the woman as housekeeper, mother and wife,
- 0 the woman as a sex symbol, and
- 0 the woman as a career woman.

It must be noted however, that these categories often blend and overlap with each other. There is therefore really no single image of the ideal woman.

The woman as housekeeper, mother and wife

The housekeeper, mother and wife, has virtually no identity of her own.

And i want to show you some advertisements. just to prove what I am saying.

In this advert (i) for Ocean fridges, the woman has no identity. in fact, her only identity is that she is Vusi's wife. She isn't even given the dignity of her own name in fact, the advert suggests that Vusi deserves some applause for having got himself such a 'cooi' wife.

The wife and fridge seem to share a similar status - they are both commodities. Vusi acquired a wife and the wife acquired a fridge. To compound this crime, Vusi, whose omnipresent presence in this advertisement is undeniable, probably hardly ever uses this fridge. The kitchen is clearly her domain.

In the next advertisement (2), you will see that women are also the people whose task it is to look after babies. In such pictures she is usually smiling and very content. Not only does she have to be mother to her Vusi's wife IS really cool... children, but to her husband as well. She has to remember to bring him Medinite when he gets ill and give him Floro to keep him healthy, especially after all the strains and stresses at the office. There is absolutely no Mum, are you giving your baby the best protection against nappy rash? question of her being strained at all. The next one shows what i mean: mom is the one that everyone turns

to when iii. Perhaps this image of
woman - consistently hardworking,
pleasing her family, a complete al-

Mom, when your family needs pain relief, who can you turn to? I-iili'rliiu wmmmmumu . She is smart, ambitious, brimful of motivation and enthusiasm and knows exactly where she's going. That is why she comes to Durban Business College where she'll get all the help she needs to get there. With 86 years of teaching tradition behind us, we are qualified to show her the pathway to success as a PRO, Executive Secretary or KLM Consultant.

Truist, is effectively summed up in The Link Pharmacy advert (3) which asks The question/ 'when your family needs pain relief, who can you turn to'. These adverts imply that she herself does not need the tender loving care that she is obviously expected to dish out.

This advert (4) that asks The question, "Is your husband getting it often enough?" has clear sexual undertones. He is on advert for red meat. What it says is that even as far as her sexuality is concerned, the woman is there simply to make the husband happy and to produce children. She does not even have the sexual side to her nature.

In analysing this particular role assigned to women, the following points need to be made:

0 It is in the interests of the dominant ideology to propagate the ideal of the woman's place being at home. Her contentment in the home is the means through which patriarchy maintains its dominance. She will happily supply the labour market and she is the one who will be chiefly responsible for passing on the ideals of the dominant ideology to her children.

0 At the same time, however, she is not able to do all this of her own accord. Capital therefore provides her with all the products she needs to make his life easier and more pleasant. Ironically, the very fact that she

8 ,wn..,w,l.m.wl4lmum;
Are you so busy running
between your career and home
that inflation is outpacing you?
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(uII (ART! :uid Hun llnmC mlh
llic szunc dvgvvc III Cl1TL icncy
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U:- Suulhrnl LIh Awuaun-ul unucd vry nolIMIEINh/Ir.

needs these products implies that
her duty is not really so pleasant af-
teraII.

O In the context of apartheid South
Africa, It Is In the Interests of the ruling
cIass to propagate the idea of a
stable, nuclear family unit, with the
contented woman looking after the
family. In so doing, it attempts to
neutralise the revolutionary potential
of the African masses.

Hence the woman is always en-
couraging her husband to buy their
council house, to take pride in it and
to see that her children are educat-
ed. This creation of a thriving black
middle class is crucial to the state
strategy of co-option. And the
woman's role in this is fundamental.

O The motherly/housewife role also
suggests economic dependence.

The housewife herself does not pro-
duce commodities of direct value in
the economy. But, by serving others,
she "enables them to engage in
productive economic activity'.

In addition, she does not have to
be paid. In effect she is neither em-
ployed nor unemployed. At this
point it is interesting to note that one
of the resolutions taken at the Nairo-
bi Conference was the call for
housework to be paid work.

O Lastly, subtle differences can be
found in the magazines directed at
African women, at white English-
speaking women and at white Afri-
kanerwomen.

The white English-speaking wom-
an is not discouraged from these
tasks of being mother. housewife,
nurturer and so on. But she is also of-
fered a limited liberation. She Is en-
couraged to engage in sport,
spend time spoiling herself and so
on. She is also the professional shop-
per.

The Afrikaner housewife is often
the one who is responsible for main-
taining the traditions and culture of
the past - baking home-styled
Ouma rusks, or giving her family
Weet-bix , which Is so typical of the
platteland.

The black housewife Is primarily
responsible for keeping the family
together and striving to achieve the
typical lifester of western culture.

The woman as sex symbol

Here women are portrayed as
sensuous, glamorous, seductive and
mysterious - very daring kind of

THE IDLE OFFICE GOSSIPS

HOPE FOR THE WORST

"JANE. PLEASE

SEE ME IN MY

OFFICE."

BUT EARLY THAT

MORNING JANE

USED DRY IDEA

TNOW IF I GET

NERVOUS, NOeONE

WILL KNOW'

"A GOOD WORKER, AND

CONFIDENT. SHE HAS

' A FUTURE HERE."

OFFICE.

"REALLY? A SALARY

INCREASE!"

LOTS OF THINGS MAY

MAKE YOU NERVOUS,

AND THEN YOU CAN

SWEAT. ESPECIALLY

UNDER YOUR ARMS.

SO USE DRY IDEA

ROLL-ON, IT'S AN ANTI-

PERSPIRANT AND

DEODORANT IN ONE.

DRY IDEA MEANS

YOU CAN BE CONFIDENT,

ANYWHERE,

EVEN IN THE 8088'

"NOW WE'LL SEE.

HER SWEAT?

. - ' - :r

"SURE, YOU'VE WORKED

L HARD FOR IT?

.u ' -

HELPS HIDE WHEN YOU'RE NERVOUS INSIDE.

women. This is To some extent a product of The Type of liberal feminism That serves The needs of The dominant ideology - The kind of feminism That women are actually encouraged To adopt.

The modern woman is a go-getter, Totally sensuous, daring and adventurous. Her uniqueness and individuality are her focal points.

I won't To look at a few advertisements That depict This:

0 This advertisement (5) for Tab, says: 'That's my style'. That's The kind of individuality That I'm Talking about.

0 This one (6) says, "what kind of girl goes To Durban Business College', and The answer is, 'she is smart, ornate, brimful of motivation and enthusiasm'. Again, That's The kind of glamorous image That is conveyed.

These kinds of ads are ones That we are fairly familiar with.

0 This ad (7) shows a very sensuous, mysterious woman. She is advertising a perfume. But not only can sensuality advertise perfume, but basically anything, as you will see now.

0 In this one (8), There is a wine glass and a woman's face in the background.

She's obviously in some kind of ecstasy. And The advert is for Peaches and Cream, Cointreau's

Liquor. So sensuality and seductive-

ness is for alcohol as well.

0 This is one ThoT i Think reolly cop-
Tures lT all. IT is on odverTlsement for
High Rise. There's a man sTonding ln
from of a Ferrari and a woman is
changing his Tyre on The car. She is
wearing a very seductive oquIT. BuT
whoT iT is saying is ThoT This Type of
woman is noT afraid of onyThing.
She's noT ofroid To be doring, she's
noT ofroid To be odventurousi She is
The one who is prepored To moke
The first move. And as for as men are
concerned, she con hove onybody
she wonTs, And she's noT ofroid To
approach any man she wonTs. Al-
Though iT's on odverTisement for High
Rise, The woman ocTuolly says 0 loT.
Crit/co/ ArTs volume T, number T!
says This of The conTemporory sex
symbol: 'lf sociol orrongements
deny you 0 career, if you wont To
ovoid household drudgery ond
don'T wont To go To poTTery classes,
you con now legiTimoTely become
0 sex object insTeod.'

The woman is noT only G legiTimoTe object of lust, she also sug-
gests ThoT her image is one ThoT oTher
women sTrive for. FurThermore, she
willingly becomes 0 commodity
sought by men.

In onolysing This glamorous image
of women, we need To remember
ThoT The media is noT only influenced
by copiTol and The ruling ideology. IT
has also hlsToricolly been conTrolled
by men.

Although women hold key posi-
Tions in 0 number of mogozines, like
Fair Lady, Drum and so on, The mog-
ozine is essenTiolly reflectiv of The
dominant ideology.

The women in These magazines
are portroyed To be sexuolly oTTroC-
Tive To men. Yet iT is largely women
ThoT reod These magazines.

Therefore women are ToughT To
divorce Themselves from Their sub-
jective selves and To look CT The pic-
ture Through The eyes of 0 man. This
some picture defines whoT she
should be.

Her idenTiTy is again defined by
men's world. In oddition, The picture
also suggests ThoT we are incom-
plete, ugly and inefficient if we do
noT use The products odverTised.

And if we ore leTT To our own devic-
es, we ore essenTiolly worThless.

WhoT These magazines are really
Telling us is look oT This picture, here is
on oTTroCTive woman. She is oTTroCT-
ed To 0 man. And when we look oT iT
as women, we ore ocTuolly seeing

the picture through the eyes of a man. So we identify ourselves, our own images, our own beauty, our own personality, as a man would see it.

Ironically, these advertisements are constantly reminding women of their inadequacies - they are not slim enough or not smooth enough - and are therefore compelling the woman to constantly strive to be 'better' and more attractive. It is in the interests of capital to advocate this type of liberal liberation. Because a woman must be liberated to enjoy and desire new products. The desire for liberation from oppression has therefore been effectively subverted. In effect, our liberation is given to us. It is a liberation that, in the final analysis, benefits the needs of capital and the dominant ideology.

In the African magazines like *Pace*, *True Love* and so on, all the so-called beauty advertisements are for hair straighteners, for hair perms and skin lighteners. And this, I think, is a direct result of a colonised society.

But women in African magazines are rarely blatantly sexual. Perhaps this is the state's method of doing its bit to stem the tide of the African population. What is clear, however, is that sexuality is, at this point in time, very much the domain of white women.

0 There was also an advertisement for Pears Soap that appeared some time in the late 1800's. It was in a magazine called *Harper's Weekly*,

It says: 'The white man's burden is through teaching the virtues of cleanliness. And Pears soap is a potent factor for brightening the dark corners of the earth.'

The African magazines do not portray African women as being blatantly sensuous. But what they have perhaps done now, is taught us 'how to be clean'. And now they are trying to teach us how to be a 'little less African', by providing us with the hair straighteners and skin lighteners and so on.

The woman as career woman
As far as the career woman is concerned, the main thrust here is not to negate the woman's role as intelligent people choose
Snow White

SNOW WHITE acts as a moisturiser and at the same time protects your skin against the harmful effects at our harsh climate. It keeps it looking fresh and healthy all day long.
Use SNOW WHITE and too!

good about looking better.

nuuvnvmn-wnnhmoguuu-n- - '

mother and wife. It suggests that she combines all of these.

This advertisement (9) for Southern Unit Trusts, asks: 'are you so busy running between your career and home that inflation is outpacing you?'. it clearly implies an acceptance and encouragement of the double shift. No solution is offered to the problem of her running between her career and home. it is not even seen as a problem.

Again, a distinction must be drawn between the white career woman and the black career woman. White women are often rising young executives who work in plush offices and Men and women who know what I:

good for their skin use Snow White treckle cream. Snow White contains only safe, tested ingredients that help keep you! skin smooth, clear and healthy.

831C931!

\$931033 W

Yourskin'sbestfriend. s . _ . m"

command some power. In fact, if she is good enough, she can make it in a man's world. However, very definite ceilings on the career prospects of African women can be identified.

And, to show this, I want to look at two advertisements.

This one (10), for Dry Idea deodorant, tells a little story about Jane, who is a secretary, totally conscientious and willing to please her boss as opposed to the other two gossiping girls in the background. She is, of course, duly rewarded for her dedication with an increase. This advertisement defines the type of work

___i

she can do and the type of worker she should be - dedicated and loyal to the boss.

The next one (i 1) says: "Intelligent people choose Snow White".

These advertisements are saying two things. They say the type of work you can be eligible for is fairly limited. You can be secretaries and clerks, and if you are really a go-getter and have on exceptional intelligence, then you can be a teacher.

But if you look at the white community, or even perhaps the other communities, being a teacher is really something that you do. If you can't get something else to do. But in African society it is seen as something one aspires to.

The other point is that these advertisements also tell you what type of worker you ought to be. You ought to be loyal to your boss, you ought to be very conscientious, you ought not to join with office workers, you shouldn't gossip, you shouldn't talk and so on. So it is defining the kind of work you can do and the type of worker you ought to be.

Finally, I want to reiterate that the relationship between capital and the images of women portrayed through the media is not a crudely deterministic one. The relationship is always dialectical and is also influenced by other factors.

Nadine

Gordimer

Images of women in literature. One wonders what that means? It can mean many things. And I'm sure each of us will find a different avenue to explore.

I'd like to talk a little about something that has struck me over the years: the difference between different societies, different countries, different people in the type of image of a woman who appears in their literature.

Nadine Gordimer

THE MOTHER FIGURE IN EUROPEAN AND AFRICAN LITERATURE

The most striking image is the image of the mother. In Europe, in modern literature certainly, the mother often appears as a rather evil figure, especially in relation to sons, but also in relation to daughters. Somebody who is an octopus, strangling her children when they grow up. Her affection has turned sour, she doesn't want them to leave the nest, doesn't want to lose her influence over them, The dominating mother.

Some of you may be familiar with D.H. Lawrence's famous novel Sons and Lovers, quite often studied in

schools, where Poul Morel, through his tremendous attachment to the mother, grows up as a man who cannot form any kind of relationship with any other woman.

He cannot really love a woman.

His sexual relationships with women are 0 failure.

Another very famous example is that of the French writer, Marcel Proust's long novel *The Remembrance of Things Past*. It begins with 0 paragraph where he describes how he couldn't sleep until his mother come to kiss him at night. As the book goes on, there are many instances of the mother-domlnoted

hero or heroine. You see the development of the man, or of the woman, stunted by the grasping mother who doesn't want to let go.

i recently read a novel where the title was The Sacred Monster. This sums up the problem. The book was about a young man who is living, without much confidence in himself, with a widowed mother. Very often it is the widowed mother, the manless woman, who makes her son her huse band, so to speak, and her lover. She uses him as somebody she is attached to in a way that is not appropriate to the mother-son relationship. In the novel, the young man, (he is about 20 years old), is at last going to apply for a job that he wants. She has kept him at home, she keeps him on an allowance. And when he applies for the job, she goes through every ruse possible to prevent him from being in a psychological state. when he goes to the interview, to present himself properly. She wants him not to get the Job. It's a fierce novel, it's a very comical novel. It's very funny, but it's also horrifying. because there you have the title: his mother is a sacred monster.

If you look at the image of the mother in African literature it's a very different picture indeed. Almost without exception, you find that the mother figure is idealised.

i've heard a lot of talk, In the last couple of days, from my black sisters, saying how they are doubly oppressed, under apartheid and by their own men. And of course. the latter goes for most women, no matter what colour they are, no matter what society they are in,

But strangely enough, even the male writers in Africa, writing about their mothers, do so in an absolutely worshipful way, ldealising them. If one were to believe this, these women are absolutely perfect.

There Is never any generation conflict between the mother and her son.

Some years ago, I wrote a little book called The Black Interpreters in which I examined various themes In literature. I was looking through it again, In terms of this mother-fixated image you get in European literature, and contrasting it with the African one. I remembered a book by John Munonye, a Nigerian, who wrote a book called The Only Son. And there we have the same situation as those I described. The mother Is a widow. She has a lovely phrase for her summing up of her feelings towards her son. She calls him her 'many in one', because she sees him as the reincarnation of her own father, of her dead husband, as well

as her son. In other words, he's everything to her
 But her attitude toward him, bringing him up, is totally different from that of the mother in The Sacred Monster. She doesn't try to keep him to herself. She expends all her energies, when he's a small child and when he's an adolescent, to prepare him for life as a man. and in particular to make him capable of truly loving a woman - a completely different attitude.

I also found a little poem, or part of a poem, written by one of our own writers, now, alas, in exile, Mandla Langa. It goes like this:
 I lead her in
 A sepia figure a hundred years old
 Blue ice chips gaze
 And a red slash gapes
 What does she want
 I translate
 Peneon
 Useless kaffir crone
 Lazy as the black devil
 She'll get fuck-all
 I translate
 My man toiled
 And rendered himself impotent
 Vint hard labour
 He paid tax like you
 I'm old enough to get pension
 I was born
 Before the great wars
 And I saw my father
 Slit your like's throats
 I don't translate
 But she loses her pension anyhow.
 I think it's a marvellous expression. In an oblique way, of the feeling for the mother. It's not an idealisation in the way that Munonye's was. But it is also a very warm picture.
 Let's pass on to some other aspects.

There's a Nigerian writer whose work you might have come across, called Flora Nwapa. She wrote a book with a woman's name as the title. It's called Efuru. But Efuru is very different from the mother figure. In fact, she's the absolute opposite, because she is childless. She has been twice married and she's had children, and her children always died. And now she is barren. She is what we would call a career woman. She's a very successful trader. But she is extremely unhappy because she's childless and because, in the village where she lives, a childless woman is always regarded with pity. She's not fulfilling the defined role for her. as a wife and mother.

So she goes to the river to consult the river goddess. And the river goddess makes her a disciple Instead of making her fruitful and able to conceive a child, the river god-

dess takes her into her cult, so to speak. And then she has a special purpose in the community, where a certain mystical and religious rites belong to her, as a childless woman chosen by the river goddess.

I think there are some very interesting things here. Because, first of all, as I said, she's a career woman. She's a trader, and a successful one. She's competing in the male world. There is a suggestion that she has been punished by nature for this, because she hasn't any children. But then, in order not to leave her as an outcast. in order to draw her in and integrate her through this belief in the river goddess there is a place made for her in society. So there we get, shall we say, a more modern image, a more liberated image of the woman. At least there is some kind of inquiry into her place in the society other than the conventional one.

WOMEN AS DEPICTED BY
MEN WRITERS AND BY
WOMEN WRITERS

I think there is a deliberate misunderstanding about the ability of men to portray women characters. I think that there is a feeling, certainly among feminist writers, that this is the preserve of women, that only women know how women feel, only women know how women really act, and only women can understand their motives and can express them in writing.

But this has been disproved, I'm afraid, again and again, and we women have to accept this.

Some of the most marvelous images of women in literature have come from men. The most famous one, the most extraordinary one, is perhaps James Joyce's Molly Bloom in his novel, *Ulysses*, where there is a long section in the form of a monologue. And it is a monologue describing, creating this woman's feelings in the most intimate manner, including her feelings about physical processes. She feels that a period is coming on. How does a man know what a woman feels when a period is coming on? But Joyce does this through his knowledge of women, through the ability I think is the first essential of a writer, and that is to project.

And I don't think it is a conscious thing. I think it is an attribute a writer has, the same as people who can sing in tune - they just do it.

What I am saying is that there is a certain gift or ability in writers, a certain gift that comes from observation, cultivated, that comes from hypersensitivity to other people's feelings, from an ability to read people's faces, to hear beyond and behind their words, what they really are saying. And I think that is how the genius of James Joyce managed, in the first person, to write this extraordinary chapter, from the inside, of a woman's feelings.

Many of the best writers have given a very attractive and noble picture of women. I don't mean attractive only in the sexual sense, in the superficial sense. Though admittedly, the women of great character usually have the attribute of beauty as well, when a man is writing about them.

There is Natasha in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* - a marvellous, lively, wonderful young girl. The whole spirit of a young girl is there. The book is written by a man.

Shakespeare's women are often very brilliant, very sharp. Indeed, men very often get the worst of it when in conversation and in dialogue with them.

In Africa, the same theme: I don't know whether any of you have read Achebe's *Man of the People*, that old novel of his, written during the war in Nigeria.

At the end of this long and dismal tale of political corruption that makes up the man of the people, a

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man is shot in a political dispute, and the author remarks: 'A man has lived a good life. If when he dies in this terrible fashion, there is a woman who loves him enough to kill his assassin.' So here you have a woman who is presented as somebody extremely

brave. She is acting out of personal feeling and also out of political belief. This is all one, it is all fused in this particular novel.

In Ngugi wa Thiong'o's, *The River Between*, there is the story of a young woman. The book is set just before the war of independence, popularly known as the Mau Mau War. So there is a feeling that people are gathering their forces in order to reassert their whole identity from under the cement of colonialism, and that they need to return to roots in many ways. to reinforce their own personality.

This young girl is the daughter of a pastor, and he is a brainwashed Christian, totally submissive to the white priest. He wants his daughter to be married in a Christian wedding ceremony.

The girl has not been circumcised, because female circumcision was outlawed through the pressure of the Christian missions, it was outlawed by the British. But this girl decides that she wants to go through this horrible rite of female circumcision. because, she says, otherwise she will not feel she is a woman of the tribe. Her feelings are conveyed - the conflict between her political awakening for the struggle that's coming. She's mixing with groups who are talking about it. And in her difficulty in finding a way to fit herself for it, she goes back to this rather strange rite. She also feels it's a way to throw off the missionary influence, the colonialist influence under which she has been brought up. It's a very subtle picture of a young woman in a state of conflict between two worlds, so to speak. And it's written, as I say, by a man.

And there's Achebe's latest book, published only last year, *Anthills of the Savannah*. It is a book divided into different tenses and also different voices. Part of it is related by one of the women in the book, in the most person. So there you have Achebe assuming the identity of a woman, and doing it brilliantly. What am I really saying? I think I'm making a case for the powers of writers to write not only within their own bodies, not only within the confines of their own sex. I think that women write very well about men. One gets the feeling often, talking to feminist writers, that the women feel that it's their destiny to write simply from the body of a woman. from the mind of a woman.

But I think this is denying what a writer is, and what a writer can do. Because a writer can be many things in the imagination, in the creation of a character.

On the opening night, one of the speakers spoke about Journalists and writers as if they were one. This Is not so. And this is no reflection at all upon Journalists - a very honourable and fine profession.

But Journalists write about people, and imaginative and creative writers create people, and they create them from the society in which they live. They dredge them up from that society.

From the time that they are small children, all sorts of Impressions, understandings, everything that goes on around them, Is part of their material when they write. And I dont think that sex, whichever sex you belong to, really determines the kind of writing you're going to do.

This of course, has got nothing to do with the fact that women have been regarded as people who don't need education, who dont need any sort of stimulation and opening of their minds, other than what will fit them, indeed, to be in the kitchen and open the fridge and put some ointment on the baby's bottom.

This Is the way women have been looked at. And I think this has been common in many societies, in Europe! as well as widely in Africa. In a family Is large, and money is short, it will be the boys who get the education. You don't have to be highly educated to write, but you do have to have sufficient education to be properly literate. Because you cannot write if you don't read.

And I think that women have been greatly disadvantaged there, since men have been favoured when It comes to educational opportunities. And women usually have to struggle to get those educational opportunities.

Miriam TlCl1i

I'm sorry that I did not have enough time to prepare a comprehensive paper on this subject, which I would much have liked to have done. I will not be speaking about the images of women in all literature. but about Images of women in my own writing.

If we speak of women in SA, we have to remember that there are different classes of women In the SA context. We can never forget that women are divided Into racial groups. You have to Identify white women, who are right at the top of the social pyramid, who form part of the elite part of the white society. And that alone says a lot for how women should be reflected in our writing, or what actuaiiy takes place in our writing.

The first speaker did touch on the stereotypes that are usually at tached to women. And from most of the ones that we saw here, it was mainly bLack women who are kept at that domesticated kind of level. That you should also not lose sight of.

I'm glad to speak mainly about what makes it so difficult - women, especially black women, have been disadvantaged as far as their attempts to write.

It Is mainly because of the kind of system under which we live And at the top of it, as far as Itm concerned, is the Bantu Education system. You cannot speak about women as one group. Because there are black women, white women, coloured women and Indian women. You have to Identify these, you have to speak about these seperately, and reerct them in your writing.

I have delivered lectures on why there are so few black women writ-ers in SA. And ishali read to you part of some of my lectures which I usual-ly give to audiences abroad.

It Is very significant to note that we have very few exceptions. For in-stance, if we judge according to our audience here, we find that there are women of all races. And if you go deeper, you find out why there are so few white women. You find that It is because of the very system, the very apartheid structures which Miriam Tlaili

make it almost impossible for wom-en to think outside those stereo-typed ways, of keeping the image of black women as subordinates all the time.

These women, the white women we have here, and the ones one usually speaks to, are really convert-ed ones, peopIe who do not think along those lines. But we cannot lose

sight of the fact that an overwhelming majority of white women do not want black women removed from those stereotypes of the domesticated part of their kitchens. Once when I was travelling from Europe by plane, a white woman cuddling her infant son came to sit ; next to me, And when we reached x Nairobi, in her conversation with another white woman on the other side, she revealed, rather proudly, that she was a South African by birth. And that she had finally decided to leave Portugal and her husband behind, for keeps. Because he would not leave his country, and because women have to do all the house-

work, women, white women, in Portugal. She said you have to cook, you have to look after the kids, you have to wash, to Iron, to scrub the floors. You have to do everything. 'I am a South African,' she said. 'I am not used to that.' And this woman, as you can see, was fleeing from Portugal, leaving her husband and the hard work behind and going back to sunny old SA, where she knew the status quo would always assure her of an abundant supply of cheap black labour and an African woman who would relieve her of her womanly tasks.

That is why I say you always have to identify between the different groups of women.

There is a book which is about to be published by Skotaville, the title of which is: When the caged bird sings. This book is an anthology of short stories by black women inside and outside the country. In my introduction to this book, I said, amongst other things, that the numerous hazards that face the black woman in SA are aggravated by the fact that she cannot wage her struggle against discrimination with the aid of her privileged white sister.

The white woman is, as a rule, part of the very oppressive machinery. She remains mute and insensitive while the black woman wallows in the squalor on the fringes of the white suburbs. This does not refer to all of them, but it certainly does to the majority of them.

This was also the predicament of a certain Journalist, a certain Jennifer Williams, who was interviewing a number of women about waging their struggle together with black women in Crossroads.

She alludes in strong terms to the apathy of the white women, who while they form a substantial section of the electorate, stand by, tight-lipped towards the plight of the black women.

She cites the Nyanga occurrences of 1981 as an example. She writes: 'But for me, Nyanga had a profound effect, that nothing I had attempted had made one iota of difference. I did not want to be counted among the lotus eaters - the people who mouth platitudes and do nothing.'

Jennifer Williams was saddened by the failure of white women to

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demonstrate their solidarity by signing a petition to the government. Some gave reasons for their refusal to sign, for instance, that their husbands would not like them to sign the petition. While others even claimed that the whole matter of forced re-

movals was not really as bad as It was made out to be.

Now these are some of the problems that black women face. How do I, for Instance. depict women. In my first novel, Muriel at Metropolitan, as they call It, I could not move out of myself. I had to present the black woman, with all her experiences at work, especially. We find that even there, her situation was made very difficult by the white women, mainly, who would not accept her as an equal.

This Is the kind of predicament that Is faced by all black women In this country. In Amand/a. for Instance, I brought up the character of Gramsie, as a very strong woman, like all other mothers are. A woman who went on In spite of her problems, which were very numerous, who went on to save enough money to lay a tombstone for her husband. And who was very much involved with the problems that face the young people. Also, we have the main character there, a woman, the heroine in the story, who took part in most of the activities during the riots of 1976, who in fact, was standing behind Poliso, supporting him throughout, like we find is the case with our young people who are dedicated to the cause of the fight against oppression.

Again there is a book which is about to be published very soon by Pandora Press, in which I have written 0 number of stories, which are mostly confined to women speaking about themselves, and the problems that black women face in SA. And in this book, we see clearly from the stories that are presented, that the black woman does not only have to fight against the husband, against the problems, her marital problems, against the society, against apartheid, but she also has to tight against another woman, only thatshe is white.

How do we overcome these problems that we have? How do we come to work together? That Is the greatest challenge, as far as I am concerned, for us to tind ways and means by which we can overcome these classifications, these stratifications which are there, which we can never Ignore.

We can never Ignore the fact that, at the end of the day, I will be going to Soweto, somebody will be going to a white area, another one will be going to an Indian area, another one to a coloured area.

We have these problems, and they are there, and they have to be reflected In our writing.

Achmat Dangor

When pondering on how to start my topic. which is 'Men writing about women', I wondered whether the one implication of that topic was true. And that implication is that men write about women in the same way that whites used to write about black people. And in the heyday of black consciousness, the way blacks used to write about whites.

That kind of writing was characterised by type casting, based on superficial knowledge and superficial contact. Whites mostly had contact with blacks through employer-employee relationships, and hence black people were seen as servile and dull. While the principal contact that blacks had with whites was in pass offices and at police stations, so blacks saw whites as blank and insensitive officials.

Things have changed dramatically since then. I think the literary revolution of the eighties has changed not only those perceptions, but also the way we portray them. And I think the question of colour has changed more to a question of class.

Those things were reflected in our literature, but is it true of the way in which men write about women today?

I think the relationship between men and women is a far more ancient one than the relationship between different races. It cannot be said to be superficial at all, especially when you consider that women give birth to men. It is true that men writers sometimes unconsciously

type-cast the women characters in their writing.

I discovered that recently in one of my own stories. I wrote a story called Jobman which is now being made into a film.

The story is about a dumb man in the Karoo who revolts against the farmer on whose farm he and his family had lived like serfs for generations. It portrays the dumb man as heroic. He takes up arms and he starts killing the farmer and his family for being brutal to him. Now, Jobman, the dumb character, speaks to his wife, in the story, in sign language, which I then translated, in the course of writing the story, into a spoken narrative. The script writer asked how he could translate that into film language. I suggested all kinds of devices, sub-titles, narrative voice, and he responded by saying, yes, that's OK for Jobman, but what about his wife?

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Achmat Dangor

I rewrote the story and realised that Anna, that is Jobman's wife, did not speak at all in the story. Her vision of the world was conveyed through Jobman's sign language. In the story, the dumb man who cannot speak is articulate and heroic. The woman who can speak, may as well be dumb. Her husband's dumbness had silenced her too.

Men writers silence their women characters. And when I was writing this little piece, I found that the way to describe a person who is robbed of their powers of articulation, is 'emasculate'. How do you 'emasculate' a woman? But do you know, I can't find another word in the dictionary to describe how you deprive a woman of her powers, in the way you say you emasculate a man. So, for the want of a better word, I will say, men writers sometimes 'emasculate' women.

I want to use this as a sketch for the background of the past and the revolution that has taken place. And that kind of perception has changed people. The feminist revolution, the whole feminist ideal, and the way militant feminists fought their cause, has changed men themselves. I fear it has changed some men too much.

What has happened is perhaps like the old concept of the white liberal. When writing about black people, he or she committed, in his or her conversion, an act of contrition. And in that act of expiating his or her guilt, tried to go out and create characters who were pure, unblemished, without fault whatsoever. And I think that is one of the most common

faults that modern men writers oommit today.

But I discovered, to my horror that this is not a new phenomenon. Flaubert, a French writer. wrote a book called Madam Bouvier, about 150 years ago. There is a scene that I wonder has escaped the notice of "feminist vigiliantes". I believe there are some of them around.

He describes a scene where a male character who is in pursuit of a very beautiful Madam Bouvierl or-ranges to meet her in a church. We", he arrives in the church, waits and waits, and she wants to pray, genuinely, for her sins, before she goes out to commit some more. She actually goes to confession as well. He is impatient, and in the end, coerces her Into leaving the church.

He hails a cab. one of those horse-drawn hansoms, with a hood that hid the passengers completely. He gets into the cab, and when the driver asks where to, he says. '90. go anywhere". The cab rides about Paris, 0" through the night, with the manis instructions to 'go, go anywhere', becoming hoarser and more frantic. At last, at six In the morning, he orders the cab to stop, and this is how Flaubert describes the scene: 'And the woman got out walked with her veil down, without tuming her head.'

What went on in the back of that cab? A seduction, a frantic bout of love-making? Flaubert does not actually say, he shrouds it in mystery. At the end of it aII, the woman gets out of the cab, her veil down, her mystery intact.

He pursues what to me is the "IU-

slon of the feminine mystique. First of all, this woman. In that situation, had no right to say, no, to the dominant man. And then, after he had coerced her out of the church and into the cab, had no right to enjoy the love-making. No right to anything, except silence. He is the one who directs it all, to go anywhere. Women of today, I suppose, may have said, 'my car or your car, my township or your township?' I don't know.

The point of the whole scene is, here was a man describing what may have been a beautiful love scene, I don't know. But all you have is silence, with him directing the carriage, taking them all over Paris, by saying, '90, go anywhere'. I wonder if many writers today would have had the courage to reverse that whole scene.

Much more recently. Ayi Kwei Armah in *The Beautyful Ones* are not yet born, takes a woman character to near mystical proportions. I want to read very briefly a passage of his description of Manan, the heroin of the story: 'I looked at Manan, the light was not very strong. But I could see clearly that she was smiling. And the way she looked made me understand that all the time, I had never really looked at the woman, Manan.' Understand that, he had never really looked at the woman, Manan. What did he see her as before?

"Oh, I had looked at her with my eyes and seen images, and thought nothing. And that is a dead way of seeing things. I have known since the first evening on shore, we all knew that Manan was one of the most beautiful women, but the way it came to me again that night was different from any other time." He then goes on to describe her beauty, likening it to the sea, likening it to the mountains, likening it to his own aspirations in the situation he was in. But the closing of that paragraph, to me, is absolutely astonishing.

This is what he says: 'I would have said something to Manan if the things to say had not been so heavy. But even then I was sure she understood. And she had understood long before I had ever seen enough to ask her forgiveness, and that she had forgiven me, as much as it was possible for the suffering to forgive those who only remain to suffer for them to see their distress.'

It is an act of such absolute and pure contrition that I wonder Ayi Kwei Armah never became a saint. Of other writers, some of them I admire and some not. Milan Kundera, a writer from Eastern Europe, who,

apart from his politics, which sometimes tends to be paranoic, also writes very beautifully. However, in his book, 7779 Unbearable Lightness of Being. (I saw the movie, The Unbearable Lightness of Being. I wouldn't call it pornography, but I would say the Image of women is turned into what I would call sensuality taken beyond the point where you wonder if It Is sensuality or pornography.)

But this is what he says, it is after the woman, Theresa, has made love to a man she just met for the first time, and this is how he describes it:

'During her next visit to the sauna she stood before the mirror again. And looking at herself, reviewed the scene of physical love that had taken place in the engineers' flat. It was not her lover she remembered, in fact she would have been hard-put to describe him at all. She may not even have noticed what he looked like naked. What she did remember, and what she now observed, aroused in the mirror, was her own body The man was merely an extraneous and physical necessity, like a mechanical aid? He may as well not have been there.

Garcia Marquez, in his last novel; Love in the time of Cholera, which is a very funny book, and I think pokes fun at all the holy images in literature, goes so far as to declare men redundant, and even says that wornen are only happy when they become widows

I want to read the passage to you. This is what he says about widows: "In the restorative idleness of solitude on the other hand! the widow has discovered that the honourable way to live was at the bodyts bidding, eating only when one was hungry, loving without lies, sleeping without having to feign sleep in order to escape the indecency of official love, possessed, at last, of the right to an entire bed to themselves. where no-one taught them for half of the sheet, half of the air they breathe, half of the night, until their bodies were satisfied with dreaming their own dreams and they woke alone.'

There Is a world without men, it Is beautiful, It is free. They don't even have to fight for the sheets.

What does this say about the way men write about women or the way they should and should not write. In the end I think I would agree with Nadine, men must overcome their undoubted ignorance about women and the way they try to portray them sometimes.

Yes, It Is full of stereotyping. Not only this, it paints them as negative.

But there are also the ones that paint them as so positive that they become unbelievable.

We should attempt to infuse our characterisations of women with the integrity that is demanded of all characterisations. If I write of a policeman, a policeman is not purely an animated being in a white skin and wearing a cap. He also has other attributes, however negative or positive they may be. He has some human attributes and I think it is right of me to explore them. So do women.

We also have to beware of not being stampeded, (I don't know if it is militant feminism that has done that, or merely our own contrition) into worshipful and totally untrue visions of pure and unblemished women.

I want to pose the final question, which I haven't written down in case some one wants to use it against me some day. Let me ask you the question of what would happen if a writer, a hypothetical writer, wrote a novel about the wife of one of the leaders of the liberation movement abroad. She is a woman who shares the absolute vision of the revolution - that you eat, breathe, live the revolution from morning to night. And she falls in love with a very young cadre who is sent to guard her, not only out of lust, but because she genuinely fell in love with this man. Her husband is I never there, has never even thought of asking her, 'well what do you think of about my role in the revolution', or even bothering to find out if she has a role.

First of all I'm sure that the revolution would condemn her absolutely. But what would the revolution do to that poor writer?

Nadine Gordimer responds to a question after papers presented on "Images of women in literature".

Others, from left to right , are Cherry Clayton (chairing the session), Miriam Ho" and Veni Soobrayan.

DISCUSSION

BEAUTY COMPETITIONS

Asked her opinion of women parading to win beauty contests, Soobrayan said she was totally against this and wouldn't support the Idea of men doing it either.

IDEALISING MOTHERS

Questioned about the issue of mothers being idealised, Gordimer said she was aware of what she called the extended mother system. She said she had been stating a fact that in many African books the mother is Idealised, whereas In many books written In Europe and America, the mother is vilified.

'I can't explain why this is,' she said. 'It must, of course be something In the society. There is always something In the structure of society that forms the pattern of human relationships.

"Perhaps the Idealisation of the mother In African society has something to do with the total human order of African society.'

On writing about women, a member of the audience said, 'It writers want to write about our women, our sisters in the struggle, they should not patronise them, they should not try to make goddesses of something that is not a goddess. I'm just saying that we must be sober when we write about our women.

'It there is a woman in Inkatha and she Is doing harm, siash this woman. If there is a woman in the progressive movement who is doing well, look at her for her actions and character.'

FEMINIST VIGILANTES

A speaker from the audience said that women organising women In Natai were attacked by their male colleagues and called "radical feminists or feminist radicals'. She said women felt very threatened by this and wanted to know more about feminism in SA.

She asked Dangor to explain what he had meant by the term 'femlnist vigilantes', 'so that when I go back to Natai, where we as women are trying to solve our problems, to fight this inferiority complex amongst the women, trying to make women more confident in what they are doing and saying, i wiII be able to tackle this term'.

Dangor said he had not been referring to 'lnkatha's kind of vigilantism', but to Western feminism, "whose primary concern was not, for example, the liberation of women within the national liberation of all

people, but the liberation of women in a very narrow sense'.

'It is almost the kind of vigilance that demands that women travel around, read books, look for things in literature that they perceive to be offensive to women and try to have it excised.'

He said this shouldn't be confused with women's struggle in SA.

iWomen in this country are struggling for their own freedom within the patriarchal society in which they live, and they are also fighting for national liberation together with their male brothers.'

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Replying to a question from a Fedtraw member about what could be done to make women aware of the oppressive nature of newspapers, Soobrayan said women need to decide on and define their own images.

'The kind of image that the media projects is one that is very easily Ki

adopted by people. It's very attractive, the answers are all there. it tells you how to be smart, dynamic and confident. Therefore it's very easily internalised and adopted by women. But to remove this is a very difficult task."

As an example of what could be done, she said NOW's media group was producing pamphlets, booklets and information booklets. Women write the articles and also consider the images and pictures used, and how these portray women. She suggested that Fedtraw could specifically address how they took up the issue.

ORGANISING

WOMEN IN TOWN

Asking Tlali's advice on the issue of organising black and white women, a speaker said many black women were staying in Johannesburg and in other areas in the cities. These women faced many problems, including crowded rooms and high rentals and needed to be organised. There was already a non-racial women's group in town and it intended to organise further, she said.

'I was asked about the so-called grey areas where you find blacks and whites living together side by side and being affected by the exploitation of the landlords in a similar manner' said Tlali. "What do you do about this?"

'Even here, if you examine the underlying facts behind the exploitation, the people who are stung much more are the blacks. Because as a black, as a worker, you still earn lower wages than your white neighbour.'

'Whites form the elite, the class of people who make laws for others. They have the vote so they are partly responsible for the status quo. Therefore they have to do something to conscientise their own people, their own whites, not to vote into power structures like apartheid which is going to exploit other human beings.'

RACIAL LANGUAGE

A member of the audience made an impassioned plea against the use of racial language. 'I detest being called a coloured. I detest it with all the heat in my body. And I don't accept there is a coloured race here... In our pursuit to clean up apartheid we must also clean up the language we use,' he said.

Responding to the point, Tlali said, 'We are faced with the problem of classification according to race. But we cannot run away from the fact that the laws are racial and that we

have to fight racial laws in this country.'

HEALTHY RELATIONS

A member of the audience asked how normal and healthy relations between men and women could be developed.

"it's very simple to say, but not so simple to do," said Gordimer, 'and that is to regard each other all as human beings.

"Men have to start regarding women as full human beings like themselves. But this process doesn't end there. Indeed, it's only a very small part of it. We have to regard all of us as people, fighting oppression together.

'We have to consider that the laws separate us and we have to get rid of these laws before we can be fully human.

'But psychologically i dont think we should accept (racial laws) any more than women should accept that they are less human In the eyes of men.'

Gordimer added that many white women were an obstacle to change.

'They are, I think, what they are, chiefly because of capitalism. They are privileged, in a very special way, through capitalism. And they are so beguiled by their privileges that it is very difficult to get them to understand what they are doing. They are also protected by their men from understanding this. They do not understand the dangers of this protection," she said.

RAISING CHILDREN

Tlali said meetings of the African Writers Association consisted mainly of young men. 'I usually ask them, where are your slsters, your mothers and your aunts? And they usually say, they are busy cooking, they want to stay at home to cook and so on.

'The thing Is that we the mothers raise our children, the boys and the girls, differently. We are not without guilt as far as this is concerned.

"Young people should learn to raise their children the same - if the girls do the dishes, the boys should also do the dishes, sweep the floor and so on. These tasks should be taken by all of us, irrespective of our sex. If we start that, perhaps our psychological make up will come right, and we shall be able to regard people as real people and not Just as sex objects.'

SEXUAL DIFFERENCES AND GENDER OPPRESSION

Soobrayan said there was a need to distinguish between sexual differences and gender oppression.

'Sexual differences are biological differences and we are not saying we need to do anything about that. We are addressing gender oppression, and this is the oppression of women as men oppress them, and as women oppress themselves.

'We must also be aware of the fact that men also oppress themselves, and so too, women oppress men. Gender oppression works both ways.

'One simple example: men do not allow themselves to cry, irrespective of whether they want to or not. It's seen as a sign of weakness. And women too make comments if a man cries. 80 women too are responsible for this kind of oppression.

'It each one of us is aware of these things in practice. then we are moving towards a more human relationship

A speaker from the floor emphasised the need for people to fight to overcome the problems. 'When I see black guys or black people in general, claiming that they are oppressed and drinking themselves to death, I have big problems, I get very allergic. And when women allow themselves to be used in the way that we saw in those adverts, then they are also to be blamed.

'We can't just point fingers at the men. We have to tight as well. When we leave this place we should make sure that we do something about it.'

CLOSURE

Rounding off the discussion, Tlali said the conference had made her much more enthusiastic and determined to keep to her pen, and said this should be the aim of all present.

'I would like to see more and more books from young people,' she said. 'I am very happy to see so many of us who are prepared to leave the jollity of the weekend behind to come and discuss creative writing.'

'I hope this kind of spirit will persist, and that because of it we shall grow in our minds and in our perception. Let us write. Let us create.'

Dangor thanked the panelists for their excellent contributions, saying Cosaw hadn't realised how vast the subject of the conference was and how rewarding it would be.

'From the Cosaw point of view we need to stress again, and rededicate ourselves to our declaration which is based on one cardinal and central principle, and that is the principle of a non-racial, united and democratic South Africa.'

'We do not see ourselves apart from our communities. We see ourselves as cultural workers in the service of those communities.'

Referring to earlier discussions, he said that racial terms should increasingly be purged from people's thinking, 'psychologically at least, so that we can go forward to a new South Africa.'

'This new South Africa will be based upon the comradeship of a common humanity. There will still be all kinds of obstacles and differences, but primarily the only other obstacle to fight and eradicate will be exploitation and poverty.'

Before delivering his final poem to the conference, Mzwakhe Mbuli congratulated the conference organisers, 'in particular for honouring our mothers and women in general, in line with the UN decade of the women.'

'I want to believe that gradually, step by step, our people, those who People's poet Mzwakhe Mbuli delivers his poetry are sexists, who think women belong in the kitchen or in another place, will actually begin to respect them as human beings.'

He quoted from the last speech, in Cradock, made by the late Victoria Mxenge, who was gunned down in Durban: 'Women's place is no longer in the kitchen, because in the kitchen there is no longer food to

cook. 80 therefore she has to go out
and tight alongside her menfolks'
EDUCATION HIJACK
by Mzwakhe Mbuli
in 1963 Dr Verwoerd
ln.i%3 Dr Esselen
introduced Bantu education
and this was the brainchild
of the regime in power
disguised through these
philosophers
in terms of toxicology
the science of poison
this system was poisonous
Like 'F' diet for Africans in prison
this system was for Africans only
Countless people have passed
away
Young and old alike, incarcerated
Tormented and machine-gunned
all against this system
In favour of a democratic system
New labels and new names,
do not remove the poison
Like an airplane hijack
drama took place
minds of millions held captive
in a well orchestrated mission
minds kept in subjugation
like hostages on guard
The hijackers demanded separate
education
Barbed wire education for Africans
And superior education for whites
Hewers of wood and drawers of
water
is what the bantu should become
declared Verwoerd,
the chief commander of the hijack
The mission hijack codenamed
The Doors of Education and Culture
Operation hijack
Headed by both Esselen and Ver-
woerd
both as commanders-in-chief
introduced a special injection
called psychological academic
pobon
Talk to me no more
You makers of this system
talk to me no more
You architects of this philosophy
apartheid the philosophy of fear
talk to me no more
you designers of this academic hol-
ocaust
talk to me no more
Yes, talk to me
about the Education Charter
Campaign
Yes, talk to me
about the people's education
for all.

