

BOLT

no. 12
july 1975



75c



Bateleur Press

founders : patrick cullinan
lionel abrahams

POETRY :

**THE CHARLIE MANSON FALSE BAY
TALKING ROCK BLUES**—poems by
David Farrell R1,45

PHOTOGRAPHS OF BUSHMEN
Peter Strauss R1,45

STORIES :

JOBURG, SIS!
Barney Simon R5,85 (hard cover)

*Available from bookshops or direct
from C. Struik,
P.O.Box 1144,
Cape Town.*

sylvia plath:

(Paper 1,95)

THE BELLJAR

*The author's only novel. As bitter
and remorseless as her last poems.
A fine novel.*



Logan's

229 Francois Rd
DURBAN
Telephone 352591

Nedbank Plaza
Scottsville, PMB.
Telephone 41588

BOLT

JULY, 1975
No. 12

EDITORS : MIKE KIRKWOOD
TONY MORPHET

Dear Reader,
Your sub. expires
with this one hoping to hear from
you — Eds.

COVER	Nils Burwitz	
FIVE POEMS	Christopher Hope	2
from <i>LOCAL COLOUR</i> , a novel	Stephen Gray	7
TWO POEMS	Geoffrey Haresnape	12
TWO POEMS	Mike Nicol	14
WINSTON	Christopher Wildman	16
WHITHER NOW and other pieces	Mothobi Mutloatse	17
WINTER, THE WOMEN AND THE MAN	Jeremy Gordin	34
kaiser's bus	Shabbir Banoobhai	35
SIGAMEKO (an extract, in literal translation, from the Author's Zulu story <i>MAMAZANE</i>)	R.H. Mthembu	36
THE BILLIARD ROOM	Patrick Cullinan	41
BLACK, a story	Peter Wilhelm	43

SUBSCRIPTIONS : R3,00 per 4 issues (+ 15c on cheques drawn outside Durban). Cheques payable to Bolt. Contributions, enquiries and correspondence to the Editor, Bolt, c/o Dept. of English, University of Natal, King George V Avenue, Durban, 4001.

FIVE POEMS

MAYDAY

the rose lies in my fingers
red and warm
it is dead

a twenty cent rose for Mayday
picked from my buttonhole
lies in my fingers
it is everything but stiff
such absolute langour
relies on leg irons

dark red petals
deepening into blue-black
sheen of jawlines

the green stem has been wired
a piece of steel neat
and narrow as a bullet
fired along the leg
the head hangs on the wire

the head comes off in my fingers
petals unfeathering
loosening darkness
from the heart
beginning to fill my hand
dark red bird
beating in my fingers

I let it go and it falls
to the street
fluttering

THE CARDBOARD BOX COLLECTOR

(Durban, 1973)

This mild winter's evening, thin black woman
Who collects cardboard boxes for a living,
From stuffed shops bought empty by us,
To flatten and stack beneath your child, there,
Plump rock against the sudden wind that whips
Us all to ruin, you've tropic balm, at least,

This silver in your palm, this at least.
When greatcoat nightwatch settles down
By plush-boxed brilliants dying on jewellers'
Bloody fields, richer leavings here
Than lifetimes of your evening ply,
This at least, sea breath warm beside your cheek.

For this we set out guards before the doors,
Spotlights to watch in the half-built bank
The escalator mounting to darkening heaven:
The pavements are softly founded; drunks snore
Beside all they have given up, their pink and white
Ringing a stained centre. Mark this

For yours; after the laying out make these pickings
Yours, this silver in your palm, this at least.
Come now, thin black woman, your child smiles and tears
The cardboard, not knowing how it becomes money.
She will not thank you for this. Stoop now and loft
The streets upon your head: roof, roof the pavings!

DIRTY LAUNDRY

She doesn't seem to mind
that I've lost my ticket
but it worries her friend,
perspiring and shaking.
Her friend would have me
sign the book - 'Protection,
there's crooks around.
Not you, but others, yes.'
Agreeing, I look grave, smile,
shifting from foot to foot.
'I told you not to take
those students on,'
she tells her friend.
'They waste the money give 'em
by their moms and dads
to eat - so they go for my milk.
I caught one: Listen, I said,
you be careful what
you do. I'm a child of God,
I said, and any bad you do
to me, you get back ten times
later. I'm a poor woman.
I work hard. But if you want,
just ask. God's found
for me. I'll feed you.'
Her friend perspires, shaking:
'The students I took in stole
from me the kaffir dolls
my daughter brought from England.
And they took the fridge light out,
the one that screws in and works
when you open the door.
What's that worth, hey -
forty, fifty cents?
My fridge's fifteen years
old. Can't get another now.
When I open it at night
the things fall out.'
Her eyes water and she wipes
her brow. Both of them
are staring now. I can
gauge the distance to the door
behind me, exactly.
There is a strong smell of silence.
I pay for my laundry,
and go, turning my back,
trying not to walk too quickly.

WHERE'S THE PARTIES?

*How's it ou china, ou bebops, ou maat -
Ek se, major, can you battle us some
start?*

- Traditional ducktail greeting.

Wop bop ba loo bop!

- Little Richard.

To parties in my mate's old lady's car,
a Renault 4L, so high-tailed
it was always going downhill;
to parties airless, short of booze,
sweating around my tied in the doorway.
The cold can slipping to the rim,
I'd sip my beer peering hard
at the faces of the girls across the room,
stamp my heels and hum in my nose -
the music blowing past my ears.
Times like that I used my eyes:
half the night spent looking.
Finding someone - to begin with bad enough -
got worse when I did, being one of the boys.
Talking to the boys about girls was never
any good, I always remembered, later:
on Sunday, the others all agreed,
nodding wearily on somebody's front lawn.
Saturday night was a mountain
I aimed for the top of and always
came downhill, late and fast, back seat empty,
still wide-eyed, wishing I could drive,
imagining how pale I looked, wondering
how my new suedes got that scuffed.

PIANIST

From the train,
at a rickety piano
in the corner of a field,
he seemed a fat child
playing near his house,
ramshackle wigwam
of corrugated iron
and bits of wood.
Despite blue dungarees,
bright shirt, black cap,
banging his fists
on the keyboard
It was no child
who, glancing sideways,
saw my train by.

from **LOCAL COLOUR** a new novel,
to be published shortly by RAVAN PRESS

Once upon an untimely commission of mine skipper, rather than hurling myself upon the inhospitality of an adder-ridden nature, between our location and the Cape of Good Hope, I considered the happening of yet another digression on my homebound course to be not within the circumference of my control, and somewhat resignedly witnessed the planning, foundation and execution of the fort-building in the new Saldarha bay which is of such noteworthy use to us. Mine skipper confirmed that, in short, I was stuck, but not without some tolerably-cured bacon, a modicum of tipping fluid and a considerable acreage of the fructifying sun, absent in the northern hemisphere at that season. I must be lapped in contentment.

Thus I inadvertently observed at that goodly bay, during the erection of that stalwart and most strategic fort, yet another curious chink in the metal of Jan Maat to enable me to understand to completion his forlorn and dissolute character. Jan Maat was there seen to undergo a final snapping of the moral fibre, which the Good Lord had doubtless designed to be of little holding-power amongst the Dutch Elect; we Englanders rather inclining to obstinacy and hoops of natal innocence, I feel, which even the moderate application of liquor and subtropical solarity cannot tarnish, being the better man.

The cause of Jan Maat's lamentable demoralization was twofold; one, the copiously befeathered islet within the glistening reaches of that tranquil and, at first sight, most uninimical bay; and two, the encroachment of what we appeared to be in the company's service to avoid, that is, fortifying a vegetable patch and postage-relief against the ever-menacing savage, the Hottentot. I should in passing note that the walls of our tediously-vaulting Posberg garrison faced inland, and not in the direction of our 8 fathome sandy roadstead. A complete circlet of chastity, both to seaward and shoreward, would have been of greater insurance.

This particular Jan Maat was a deceptively jovial scum, not yet beaten sufficiently at the rope's end for his pristine golden locks to have drooped. Diurnal exercise upon the yard-arm and shroud, you might say, had not yet limited the certain puppyfat of the Friesland lowlander, within which that enfeebled tendon. A butter-box if ever I saw one, this lowly Jan had never

experienced the rigours of keel-hauling, I was informed, due to his comradeship and a certain preventative skill at snickersnee. The band of zielverkooper crimps that impressed him from one house of penury into those Dutch naval casques of labour and reward (unemployment and gnawing vitals being some substitute for English coercion and salary) had chosen well, so they thought, for no mechanical bonecrusher had yet depressed the good human folly of this unsullied, natural fiend. I marvelled, for example, at how he appeared to abandon the flying lash over the dismal backs of the Malabar, in the name of all the citations of the West, and anticipate their continuing efforts at burning sea-shell into mortar without suitable persuasion.

While the other Jan Maats, shades of former Walloon bumpkin, despite recurrent jail-fever causing them to flounder like Adamites about the camp, so that tacky bowel bestrew our noble enclosure, luring rat and lizard alike, maintained conformity of the highest order, yet this product of homespun buttermilk hardly could contemplate their applications of the lash in his stead without howling in like agony.

I confess the bloody flux having achieved a halfway passage through mine own lungs by that time, so that I sat upon my sea-chest but inadequately, and mine skipper having taken to his dazed meanders through the ever-rising dunes once more in search of, I must assume, Parnassus, that same Jan did divert us towards our hammockery with a certain mitigating charm, but the devil too has much goffered lace about his neck, and charm in abundance.

I shall not dissect our Jan Maat in a Rembrandtish gloom of exactitude, but leap lightly to the crucial memorabilia of our visitation upon the bay, by which that Texelated dike-builder achieved a measure of the awareness that admits one into the adulthood of the species, those venerable fingers in the crevice by which the storm is held out. Even the fowl spotted him to be an impossibly soft worthy before that; and I solemnly fancied that from their crouched, attentive promontory they assumed Jan Maat to be the gentle soul to cultivate peas, beans, buttered turnips, boiled cabbage, groat and rye-bread for their delectations too. In short, Jan Maat was to learn the hard way, that though there may be ramparts against the wilderness, there are none like those within the soul that learns a landmass does not turn about and love him.

Jan Maat might have worn a staunch taffeta doublet, but it was shredded, and Jan Maat might have had the company's monogram tattooed upon his admirable left bicep, but it was stippled there by some Batavian light-finger; and neither held in his sentimental heart. Be it understood, it was neither philanthropy nor even goodwill that

drove us up and down the verges of a new continent; it was company business, I said; we were concerned to heap guilders. The laying of castellation and gun-port at the foot of the mighty Posberg before 1660 was through would lay up Jan Maat 100 of them. But no company could have accounted for the bequest he made in return in iniquity.

Now the Posberg, on the reaches of that undefiled lagoon, warded off from high seas, was naturally a favoured retreat, a depot where our documentation was not unduly consumed by white ant and the postal stones were truly dolmenous. That bedazzling inlet could, one did admit, conduce a certain laxity, which was rightly channelled into the penning of missives, not excluding the love briefs my skipper executed on behalf of his crew, once a Lord's day, at the rate of 1 guilder cursive, 1½ florid, metamorphosing houseboat grauw-talk into limp, anti-theoretical pleading.

But this weeshuis-kind, this recalcitrant product of the barracoon, denied his desires for fervency in literate and correctly censored form, causing much uproar in his guilder-saving, subversive stratagems, by announcing in the profanest terms that he would have no ill-famed oratorical nymphs to address, but had found a cheaper object of less abstract, more local devotion; and, like some occasional weirdery upon the face of the earth, such an exuberant claim actually proved in the end to be as solidly founded, if less fortunate, as our progressing entrenchments.

It was of remark that our Jan Maat had indeed a consort--but in the form of a penguin--, being one of ten million stripy tailpiece compatriots of the hinterland we had come to disarm in other fashion. His beloved, who swam her dorsals around our idle Liefde in constant amorous circuitry in his behalf, had been observed to propose such an unimaginable liaison by depositing first a stone, second a branch of bitterbessie, third an early carrot-top, at the amazed feet of our heretic. Such fowlish proposals were said to be of permanence, and it was indeed true that the improvident piebald that selected our Jan Maat experienced no rejection.

It is my solemn duty to report, however unwillingly, that this illicit couple did not resemble the fine matchability with which one more usually associates the estate of dowried matrimony, a stone, a bush and a green plume hardly measuring up to a long-standing trousseau of canvas and ponderable plate, yet--oh I confess!--an exotic kind of grace did at first appear briefly to hallow the billowing lea of sandpit that served as coverlet under which they held their courtly common ministrations under the light of a virginal moon; an opinion I smartly reversed upon inspection of his most quivering and sodden, nightmarish cod.

My skipper was for ducking the knecht from the yard-arm through two whole degrees, and for slubbing the opportunistic, presumptuous sea-denizen into one of very many try-barrels, out of which poured some 3,000 oil-sacks to date. But in the greater interests of science I called upon his suspension of sentence. In expressly leaving Jan Maat to pursue his fishy, blue-eyed dreams, we allowed him to prove that one transgression of the buttressing laws of empire followed upon the heels of another, and that speedily: Jan Maat ran right into submission next to the pudendal exposure of none other than a foul and fatty member of our express enemies, a grossly-inflated Hottentot.

However one wished to avoid such distasteful, outrageous spectacle (my distaste is the sole reason I record, the functioning of such anatomical anomalies, indecent though all too efficient, being deal of my commission), the slimy congress of one upstanding sailor of the mightiest empire, beside the British, that ever launched barge or Contra-Remonstrant, with none other than a scab-ridden shepherdess of the bogs, and that one of the countless unconverted, and that within the periphery of the palisade, namely, on the ship's council's dinner table, surpasses all example of treachery and vileness hitherto exposed to the gentle reader. This act of seditious violation, this lapse of commercial decorum, having been at last completed--a vast, clicking clutch--, and letters to that effect having been billeted under every nearest lodestone; the ship's council having been doused out of varying degrees of shock, proceeded forthwith to try our Jan Maat, to the racking and tearing of his succulent sixpenny-worth of blubber upon the wheel, the axle, the rack, prior to her final immersion in much the same spoil-catcher as of the aforementioned fowl and fish, as deadly as a Dutchman's lust.

Those small-beer mates and senior merchants of the garrison gave but a thin judgment in this case, however. Similar overreaching into the caves and caverns of the peninsula having been in all likelihood within their fine intentions as well, their puny exactment of 10 guilders for soiling the governor's table caused mirth to every being of them, except one of my persuasion.

Yet, at my express coercion, it was mine skipper, once more the wieldiest clubman on the West of Africa, once more of ration-thief girth if ever there was girth, recovered, who designed a matching object lesson in morality that would right a temporary abandonment of guilder-telling in favour of renewed double zeal. His afterthought of a most finical justice did much to re-constitute entirely our wilted, spiritless morale, once the sheltered colony of edibles, stabled beside a bevy of bartered cow, in the trust of several un-scurvied, teat-sucking boors, or clowns, was to be bade farewell and a luscious but most cursed history, when

upon that now-flourishing foothold, Jan Maat the restored, no longer his own man, was obliged to carve the gullet of his penguin paramour, an apt snicker-snee, that christened our outpost with redemptive blood, though pitifully little of it, and much flying drek upon the face of God's land, and carry her punctured frame on board, as yet one more provision of the bay (much gifted with our delft and dead-eye), whence we sailed up latitude once more, refreshed, to the nostalgic lay of our Malay quartet, periwigged upon the strand, very masterful of the flute and viol, an elongated flag unfolded nobly above their obedient heads.

TWO POEMS

THE PANEL BEATER'S PRIVATE SWIMMING POOL

"It's filtered blue, man,
instead of garden weeds:
they contracts from start to finish
lays onna coons to dig the hole:
gunnites
marble-ites
fits your mosaic.

Week-ends I'se gonna be lekker lazy
onna crazy paving -
my ball-and-chain in her bikini
pellies gunning their bakkies over
beer and braai vleis
unna the coloured bulbs -
happy yappy
like a millionare.

At three five
it's a package deal:
Council regulations are making me fit
a overspill
and safety fences on all four sides:
I'se welding my own supports.
The non-U's can jis watch what it's like to *live*, man,
from the other side of the fence.

It's like my sleek swish ducoed dreamboat
all over again -
finance charges, the whole works.
I get my ulcer from instalments
but I owes it to the skin
I'se wrapped in."

NUN

Prune face
skirt pleats neat in coffin folds
old virgin
assiduous at the altar -
she goes unnoticed by the children
who crowd her table after mass.

Rabbits nibble
in the kindergarten hutch!
the ghost of Freud
flies screaming
"Failure! Failure! Failure!"
down the hedge.

Not a leaf moves
before his frenzy
this waiting autumn.

She knows that she must be stripped sooner or later
of home hopes prayers:
come for at last by her long lover,
mind black-out
her modest entire quietness
staked on the gamble of this
grand affair.

By contrast
a Doctor's diagnoses of hang-ups
don't matter much.

TWO POEMS

POPLARS

(In the middle-ages poplars were planted
around graveyards to absorb poisonous
chemicals from decomposing corpses.)

Poplars are not ordinary trees,
they have a certain solemnity
that goes well with death.
Once people understood
the poplars' nature,
but now
tradition supplies their want.

Always conspiring,
I have heard them whisper
in the cemetery on the hill
when, on Sunday afternoons
with nothing better to do,
I've gone up there
to read the gravestones:

to imagine, from an anonymous name,
the life, that say, one
Ester Pieterse dashed out
between two dates.
But whatever sort of life
it signifies,
she's been looked after since.

Some municipal gardener
has tended well the tree
at her last resting place.
Had she, for just an hour,
come to life down there,
she'd have known
the lick and tickle of new roots.

MR CARTER

Mr Carter from Birmingham
is one in whom
the flame of conscience burns
at the mention of Africa.

Had the good Queen been living
she'd have sent him out
to show that people there
care about what's happening here.

A sort of post-imperialist
in way-out dress
he took a post at the university
in the hopes of patching up for Rhodes.

Before long
he was seen about campus
with some black theatre types
in tribal dress,

explaining new trends
in European drama and how best
they could use it
to suit themselves.

WINSTON

He has grown used to the abuse
along with the desolate weather
and on the blunt whetstone of his speech
his knowing sharpens.

His white friends shift in awe or awkwardness
around his self-assurance
his temper is a knifeblade which he never shows
but they know he would use it.

In his head there's room for a headmaster,
a policeman at the door: the jerks and whores
he sees his father with; there is no point in asking
why there are judges, idiots and high-fliers.

He learned too much, too early, and too fast
that's why he's in a backward class at school;
knowing the street's protection is enough:
he won't be helpless if he knows he's tough.

WHITHER NOW? and other pieces

Some of the passengers were Xhosas, Pedis and Zulus
in the heart of the Tswanas
but there was no difference or conflict
because they were all kinds
of black people - workers, thieves, lay-abouts
and eager schoolchildren.
A shabby young-old man was absentmindedly
strumming a battered guitar, while a carelessly-bearded
nstate of about 40 going on for 60 and pretending to be 30
shook the commuters with a hail
of laughter...

"Hey children, why are you paying the busdriver? Isn't
your fare paid by the government? Oh hell, I forgot our
government does not have a treasury. Such a pity, such
a pity with going-it alone. And this is what our
leaders call paradise."

And at one busstop, a young girl of 12, donning an over-
worn double-breasted over-sized jacket, came running as
the bus revved up, about to drive off. She had
hurriedly washed, re-checked her "Dipalo" homework, and
gulped cold milk like a wine veteran; because she had
been busy earlier that wintry morning, milking the cows.

"Matha! Virginia, matha! Bese ya tsamaya!" her mates
inside the bus had shouted at her. They were always to-
gether - like a school of chickens; and they could not
bear leaving Virginia behind - so close.
Instinctively everyone in the bus, young and old alike,
sang "Woo driver! Woa!"

Virginia made it and received what one could describe
as a heroine's welcome! She became a kissing target.
Shy and facile Virginia was overwhelmed.

And there were happy faces in that crowd. Virginia
seemed to have temporarily erased heartaches and worry
from their faces, if the murmurs later, animatedly, were
anything to go by.

Virginia, quite by accident, sat next to another girl,
maybe of the same age, but not in school uniform,
clutching a tiny chick to her small chest. And they
smiled at each other. For them both, this was their
first trip to their new school, 40km away, since they
trekked from fertile soil to muddy soil, at the

insistence of Boreaitse of Pretoria.
The people had refused to move from the arable land first occupied by their ancestors since the fourteenth century.

It was only after stenguns had been pointed in their eyes that the nameless, homeless, landless people moved. Only their dead remained behind - of course, where the dead always are - in the soil.

"If a donkey dies", the Joker said in a loud voice seeking attention and appreciation, "I naturally slaughter it and then braai it for my children; my ever-starving children - bambinos they call them in Gouteng! Don't look shocked, this is civilisation, they have to economise. You see, I have great faith in the animal kingdom, especially the ass.

"It would be beastly of me to let it rot whereas my children were hungry to death. Imagine a donkey being devoured by small creatures like ants. M-o-sadi (singing) wa Mosamaria o timile Jesu deep-kiss! A heha, a-lala!"

The people laughing and cursing simultaneously while the bus stopped and the schoolchildren jumped off and frolicked towards their half-done cardboard-school, a few paces away; amid filth.

Then the bus moved on farther through thorns, muddy and rocky roads with its heavy load of job-hunters and pleasure-seekers - illegally of course.

"What's slowing down the bus", the Joker wanted to know as the bus reduced speed, and, finally came to a standstill. "Julle mense hier, julle's momparas. Julle's toe. Julle's so!" (Demonstrating by covering his eyes with his right palm).
All he got were well-aimed sneers and jeers.

"I mean it. Some of you women love being under the man the rest of your lives; being paid a queenly some of R1 per week for sweating and refraining from sex, promiscuous and legal...My bag (touching his extra-heavy tummy) is tougher than black patience and despair. Ke-tlaa- (singing) ke le fela-fela", as the bus drove off, headed towards Rustenburg.

As the Joker was standing near the door - like a conductor, he immediately confronted the new arrival, a frail-looking old-timer with a stupid face. "Hey you!" the Joker charged, "You live for nothing, eh! You rouse yourself early only to guzzle bojalwa heh! Letagwa ke wena. You didn't even have the decency of washing your face before taking a sip. Ebile o na le dithoko! Hakakakakakaka.. Laugh at him, people, laugh", at

which they did, reluctantly.

"You see this man here, when he attempts to kiss you girls, consult first the dentist and later the skin surgeon. His few teeth need dry-cleaning and his un-vaselined shockingly double-size lips, need re-upholstering, and pretty, pretty fast. I am glad none of my bambinos are girls".

A young woman sneered: "Ha! wena, having children? - I mean real ones, and not bastards!" Supported by laughter.

"If I was your husband, I'd change my sex to accommodate you", replied the Joker as he struck another saucy-meaning humn: "A le mpotsang tshepo ya ka, ke tlaa re ke Jesu..."
Some of the passengers were beginning to enjoy the hymns. Spiritually.

"And where are your bambinos at present", a short man hesitatingly fired a question at the happy-go-lucky Joker.

"Yes, Shorty", he retorted haughtily with a wry grin. "I'm a manosha. I do as I please. I sleep with any woman who's worth the fast-move. My wife collects her payment when my tank's full - sometimes it runs dry and needs overhauling - in bed with a young shapely mechanic. My children, nice little brats, are with their future mother because I just cannot stand their nagging: 'Papa give us a cent'. 'Papa ke kopa se, Papa ke kopa sele.' Where do I get all that money from? Am I the Royal Mint?"

Again the bus stopped, this time at another new village, called Kwa-Phiri, which, after the heavy downpour the previous night, should have been called Kwa-Seretseng - where the mud is.

The houses - I mean, the little shacks, unfit even for horses or cows - approximately six foot squared! wherein two was a crowd and a small family a multitude.

The ordinary bed was too large to go through the door and the kitchen scheme had to stand outside in the rain and hot sun as it was too a member to qualify for accommodation.

A tent pitched outside served as dining-room-cum kitchen. When it was cold, it was colder inside the prefabricated pondokkies; and when it was hot it was much hotter inside the hell-shacks and even candles didn't last long - they melted away as
soon
as they had been bought. In fact, nothing lasted.
Health too.

Then think about decency; and privacy
Think about incest and respect.

After second thoughts, the Joker alighted with a shebeen queen known popularly as Ma-Bighouse - big breasts, big hips and bigmouth.

Another huge woman boarded the bus, and as she sat down, the bus rocked to one side. Ma-Mpotseng had arrived. She liked talking out loud.

"I do not care a kak about being moved
every ten years.
They may send me anywhere
but employment I'll find. Nobody can survive
with money, however low.
I am going to make the best
of this desert, although
daily trips to work are a tedious game
of snakes and ladders."

Some of the folks, in a bid to be early for work,
usually slept in the trees, a few kilos from town
so as to be in time for work, and returned to their
homes at the weekends. To avoid spending half of their
wages
on transport alone.

Eighty-two kilos later, we reached civilisation. Blaring
horns and pass-raids.
Whither now?

BUNDU BULLDOZERS

They come in only one colour
but all sizes and shapes and masepa
preparing for big, big, big day
independence and confusion
our honourable - capitalise that you!
Our Honourable Bundu -
Brothers-in-Arms (SABS-tested)
to engage in mouth-combat
with the common -
the common enemy intoxicated by the mlungu
and his wisdom - our poor Black
subversives.

They pleaded for sugar
and got flour
They begged for tea
and got mealie
meal in coal sacks
They appealed for more land
and received much sand
They tried federation
which turned out to be a conglomeration

They ridiculed the Makhulubaas
in public
and lauded him vigorously
in private
bundu-gifts and all
saying the public could easily
be fooled by using the press - especially
the English Press.

They asked for banning powers - but got killing powers
instead - not forgetting luxury ones; overseas travels
& dances, cheek-to-cheek with Madams, in R200-day hotels
- silencing klaar-klaar opponents for being too
democratic
rather than tribalistic!

They say they want independence
and yet suitable personnel is a tamaai
obstacle and according to Chief Mazambane
they too have decided to have an army
to prepare themselves
against an invasion of the bundus
like that of Africa South
by the mlungus
of the North.

Because:

first he was out of focus
then he was an apparition?
Finally, the conqueror
over our meek warriors.

Chief 'Bietjie-Bietjie' Mahlalela was more
outspoken than the others:
The enemy is coming;
he's preparing himself -
he has done so already!
Gentlemen, we must do something now-now!
We must defend ourselves.
Our principles later.
Our wives much later.
I propose - no, not a toast -
but that we all take lessons -
in kung fu.

In all eight bundu
dialects!

Mamoselanja, a country bumpkin-come-suburbs
was vanished from this earth. Her fault?
She was caught singing.
Singing a very naughty song.
Not a song of freedom.
It was, in earnest, a bundu-praise-song.
She had been in love
with that mhlobo-mdala
culo about 'Meadowlands', and so, tried
to update. And my, how she did!

It went something like:
Otla utlwa makgoa a 'reng
a re'eng
ko bundustan
bundustan
bundustan
bundustan
ko bundustan.

She never lived
to complete this delightful song.
That was her tragedy. She failed
to play
Dishonest Nanny.

That was not all.
They took her boyfriend-husband,
drove him in the deep of night
while still in his underpants,
and dumped him in some secluded bundu,
far from the maddening mlungus.

And expected him to live.

Yes of course, he did.
He made pula.
He made it, oh-yes, yes; he made it.
He had been dumped on rich soil.
Rejected and undermined.
But Tsie Kieo was a mastermind
when it came to living
under trying conditions. He just loved it madly.

Like all dreams, Tsie's luck ran out.
Ran out? Why?
Slip of the tongue - his luck was thrown out
by his earlier executioners with a little help
from the bundu MPs who, though craving and shouting
and crying for independence, are
in their deepest divided hearts, shudder
at the mere thought
of being independent
like Madams do about their marvellous maids
one day
being their equals!

Mci!

Once upon a bundu-era
there was mlungu-discrimination
and as a direct result of separate-masemba
which has been immensely successful
in diving the blackskin
there is now bundu-discrimination.
Who's benefiting - that exquisite Skin!

And Chief Tsweinyane and his mate
in-stupidity-Chief Iphi-Ndlela
have openly admitted operating under the -
not liquor - not yet - operating under spell
of the Makhulubaas.
They love him more
than they love themselves.

They like the Makhulubaas' axiom
that, "I live here
and you'll stay - dáár ver"!

The least said about Chief Skhova
the best for bundustanism. His mannerisms
leave much to be desired. Everybody's dead sure.

Chief Skhova's English is so cracked
it would need three cowhides to patch it.
His clothes never fit him. They were meant
for somebody
less stupid.

Chief Lishonile is so outdated he still speaks of
planning to meet Oom Paul Kruger
in person,
come-what-may!

Remember Tsie? Of course you do.
Where is he to-day?
Playing Robin Hood in the cities - robbing the rich
to feed the poor.
His name is always there
on the list of donors for Black charity
organisations.
As usual, his is a one-man crusade.
Cool and calculated. No crookedness
about it.

He lives not
for himself
but for his people,
his foolish, violent and thankless people.

He knows there is no life
in the bundus where sobriety
is regarded as a miracle - from babies
to MPs.

And what hardened him so much?
It was what had happened
to his late girlfriend-wife's father.

They had banned him, stripped him
of his Africanness
and Blackness
for failing to take off
his hat to Chief Eperi Dyambo inside his own hut.

When the banishment's desired effects
failed, they took away his muntuness
and when this too fell flatly,
they failed to assassinate him plus.

As a last straw, all eight bundu bulldozers
attacked him as one body
one wintry night
smashed down Umfana Omnyama's air-conditioned hut
- and finally, his soul too.

His heart gave in
and God took him away.
Graveless.

ENEMIES OF THE STATE

There was this foreboding 'mbizo at the bugged hovel of
MaHambani Kahle - Umzimkulu - sensitively packed with
furniture and searching brains. And she prayed that
Nkulunkulu bless those who were brave enough to attend.

"Please, O Mighty and Fair One, let us the-umh forever-
taunted mouthpieces of the underdogs gather sufficient
courage and lead our morafe shamelessly away from self-
imposed vultures hiding in women's bosoms; hiding in
beer bottles. Rid us of laziness. Rid us of corruption!
Rid us, O Lord, of hate for those who are in love with
hatred. Akubenjala Nkosiyam!"

Then, to the vultures' dismay, ensued an hour of comical
exchanges Dickens would've marvelled in; with One-Eyed
Baba Zizwe switching on the ignition key with his
tongue-in-cheek philosophy.

"Le re'ng, banna le basadi, if a lepeega-la-ngwana aged 14, declares publicly, 'If you haven't had sex at 10 your tank might explode from the pressure of the unused petrol'."

Some were straight forward about it, others crooked and some beating about the townships: "Let the lekgotla take care of him", "But he's the son of one of the executives", "Ke sejwale-jwale", "He's only exercising his fitness", were some of the comments audible.

Then the opo-eyed Little Man stood up - but who ever took notice of him? Shouted above the din, "The s-y-s-t-e-m!"

Bull-faced Ntate Kunou Kgomo from Kipgat complained: "Bana ba s'modern with their standard six gedagtes ba bua ka ga 'Uncle Modimo' le'Bra Jesu'. They claim to know Sekgoa yet they bloody know nothing of the Makgoa themselves". MaDihelele interrupted: "oopile kgomo lonaka - I mean, figuratively. It is appalling and outrageous that during school vacation our daughters should be found kicking football with their brothers - to while away time in the conspicuous absence of recreation - adequate recreation."

Nobody dared interrupt her. She was boiling. "You see, bana ba rona return periodically to the classroom knowing no other pastime than the appetising exciting mischief game. Delinquency is bred this way, by legislation.

"You see, as prophesied by our rulers - minus their rubbers - idle hands become the devil's favourite tools. What are we saying? Shouting ungrammatical slogans. And what are we doing? Drinking as if the Judgment Day was tomorrow. The crux of the matter is our sechaba can strut like ten devils and yet struggle to whimper even under semi-electrocution - lest it be rebuked for having bad breath!"

MaDlamini came out in support: "The fault is with our leaders, who, like their bundu brothers, have totally got their priorities upside down - and very proud of it too. I've heard them being referred to as stooges but I think they are merely expert puppeteers. Therefore, they are not to blame. Poor chaps. "They are carbon copies of our abefundisi who shrink and honestly shun the truth, 'no we are only being meek', they retaliate - at first sight of Whites; even those regarded as veritabily uncouth."

Some religious voice howled that the previous speaker was a non-churchgoer, therefore she spake blasphemy and something else akin to kraal manure. But his five-cents' worth statement struck nobody as everybody was

absorbed in uncontrollable "hoo-hoo-haa-haa-kaa-kaa-
hee-hee-ho-hos" which even the most serene reverend
would have gladly joined in.

"The system ... the system", echoed an unsure, unseen,
unnoticeable voice.

"Our multi-talented businessmen", challenged the
giraffe-like Ndoda Skandamayeza, "they are so unfair
in their daily dealings that they adulterate their own
coffees in the process too. But I say people who live
in glass houses should not make heavy fussies of people
languishing in hellhouses. Because, it is has been
well-legislated that as a policy of differentiation,
natives will no longer be permitted to own their
houses, their shops and lives too because - they might
mess themselves up. It is like giving a child R100
with which to buy chewing gum! Ha-ha".

Baba Sizani followed up with the cliff-hanger: "If
you don't speak now about your household tribulations,
we may as well call you 'an information officer' for
the police force. Since no-one wanted such a corny
title, there were mutterings of: "South African
espionage is amateurish", "White money is dangerous",
"Spying is first-class ubuthakathi", "I'm clean as
the homelands", "I'm a seller - not a sell-out!"

Ma-Dihelele expounding: "Sechaba sa Rara, let us not
worry ourselves with SB's, because, haven't they been
our neighbours? And since they are, we must practise
what the Bible says ... 'love thy enemy'. Although,
I must say, we are guilty of inhospitality for we have
never thought of inviting our SB friends to dinner,
being the unfortunate sinners we are. And yet they
abide a hand grenade's throw from us. Let us meet hate
with passionate love. Let us meet tragedy with humor
and shed no tears - or blood."

The Little Man whispered: "The system ... the system ..."
Ex-mfundisi Vukani Sihambe dreamily said: "To fear
Ramasedi is man's duty, but to fear and obey umlungu -
even when he's smiling - is not our obligation, in spite
of what our critics claim to be illegal striking for
better conditions. And, also, showing gross and un-
called for insubordination as hidden in the statute book."

Not a sound was made. The people, the police and spies
were as silent as parliament in recess or on Christmas
Day.

Big-headed Vukani Sihambe felt confident. His
listeners were so attentive she could almost hear his
heartbeats.

And he said to them in a tone reminiscent of a frenzied
Zionist minister's: "The man who loudly dares to pacify

an active volcano, with paperweight promises at that! needs two things. First; immediate psychiatric treatment. Two; he needs a well-taken mule-kick!

The man who does not spare a moment's sleep criticising the status quo may be construed as an enemy of the state because we are quite aware of such a poor public stunt.

"Then there is that sweet man who keeps mum even if his mum is street-dragged to jail for striking - unintentionally being sick! or fixing the children various legal papers. This kind of man needs to be castrated!"

"Ijoo! Ijoo!" exclaimed the sexy-looking Mrs My-House. a shebeen queen who carried on with her business from night vigil right through the funeral service itself too.

Vukani corrected himself: "I mean, such a man needs to be ostracised."

Ma-Dlamini, with her big eyes growing even bigger, told Vukani to sit down because she was about to spit fire.

"What's happening on our northern borders is just a case of violence inviting/attracting violence. Niks meer! But I think a revolutionary attitude somehow exposes a person's inability to think clearly, skillfully, positively and above all, unemotionally - for a change. It somewhat lays bare our narrow-mindedness in the rough game of politics where, if an opponent has fallen you literally kick him into the ground because, scientists have proved that a dead man is the best enemy as he cannot avenge."

The people hoo-hoo-ha-ha'd a lot. The police scribbled down mouthfuls while the spies hand-clapped quite unnecessarily!

Back came the semi-retired Vukani Sihambe: "Then, there is the type of man who entices the people with wonderful war-words - and yet he's scared to his pants to press anything that might emit something. Frightened of water-pistols too. Such a person's blackness is suspect and his integrity, questionable. My father, for example. Well, he's dead now."

To avoid monotony, the Little Man, in a sonorous tone said: "Our sys-tem! The sys-tem! Their sys-tem!" But who the hell ever took notice. He's drunk that one, whispered one man out of sympathy.

"Too much personal wealth", Vukani Sihambe, "is gonna kill our white brother. It has made him a bore; heartless, insensitive, inconsiderate and impersonal. So much so he wishes his own shadow was white too. Our white brother is in such a prosperous predicament he

makes love to his spouse - in dreams only while she lay sweetly beside him - enjoying an undisturbed beauty sleep."

More "hoo-hoo-ha-ha-hee-hee-kaa-kaas".

"Uqinisile 'mfana wam", said Ma-Dlamini to Vukani. "Uqinisile because my boss usually looks at me with bedroom eyes."

Further "kaa-kaa-hee-hee-ha-ha-hoo-hoos".

Again, the Little Man's staccato "the system system" warnings.

But by this time, Baba Mangaliso had been so worked up he challenged bold and squarely. "Hey, shortie, has your voice run short of batteries? Are you for home ownership or homeland independence nonsense? Be a man not a seka-monna and complete a sensible sentence at least.

The poor Little Man, caught dumbfounded. "I m-mean", he stammered, "the system! the system! that the system around here is about to collapse!"

Again, more hysterical laughter.

Mark those words because before Ma-Dlamini could announce "here's tea and home-baked bread, sechaba", the observant vultures couldn't bear it any longer and swooped on their preys.

'MADODA, IJUBA...'

Here was I, on my way to Shaka's land now Pretoria's to see my fiancée, excited, unfrustrated and sober when in my compartment, in came three lovely characters who convinced me that freedom was more dangerous than discrimination as it created madness - correction, happiness.

I previously had been of the foolish idea happiness was banned in the townships as a result of those direct missiles from that monumental hide-out in the Cape.

Speaking about the Cape reminds me of Robben Island and Miami Beach. How come, don't ask me, ask our protector of lawlessness and disorder. And my three guests were arguing, and loudly too, about the latest craze in South Africa; detente-or-war. I was shaking, trembling with curiosity. Here were men risking their necks - everything is bugged this side of the Atlantic. Dr. Ramsey - Anglican - could testify too.

The first man, he looked so much like Credo Mutwa, spectacles and all, was saying "Gentlemen, how can I qualify to be a member of the Select Few at Robben Island? I believe the people there are better off than Blacks elsewhere. Well, my source of information is dead. He died on the island - from over-enjoyment. The way he described conditions there made me salivate a thousand times over. Should I apply personally or should I arrange for detente with our protector?"

"Arrange for war", was chubby Madlakadlaka's terse reply. "Like the Transkei is doing. Expecting war, not peace."

The third man was a comic. He was Disorder. His shoes did not fit him, nor did his clothes. "Madoda", he slurred, "Robben Island is going to be closed down - very soon. The papers are saying so, and so is our protector, but in a foreign language. There's an acute shortage of water there. And it is too expensive to run. The inmates are living in too much luxury, for Blacks, as Mandla here, rightly pointed out. Robben Island must go - to the people."

"And what do you mean by that", asked Disorder, in a worried tone. As far as the men were concerned, I did not exist. One, I cannot remember who, even trod on my toe, as if it were part of the floorboard.

"What I mean", Madlakadlaka said, while poking his nose with his right thumb, "is that, Robben Island is not only a white elephant, it is a white whale."

I could not suppress any more and guffawed so much, in the end I was embarrassed at finding myself the centre of attraction. Their eyes swept over me in eagle-like fashion, examining, probing me to ensure that they did not have an 'enemy' on their hands. After a trying silence, they smiled at me and resumed their conversation, still standing as the train pulled out of Johannesburg Station, at 8pm, bound for Durban.

But they were going to get off at Heidelberg, I heard Mandla saying.

Somewhat, my laughter had changed the topic. Didn't I blush!

Madlakadlaka took out a piece of paper from his briefcase. It was sort of a questionnaire. His. "Hey, gentlemen, I've compiled questions on what I call, the IQ of a Sensible Blackman. Would you care to supply the answers?" The other two men nodded, arms folded.

First to be questioned, was Disorder. Asked who he was, he said: "I am a Black creature of South Africa, in the form of a man." Of course, he was dead serious. But we all laughed. At his irony.

The second query produced more laughter from Madlak's - as Disorder called him. It was about the "so-called" homelands. Disorder said: "The mlungu wants to drive us into the sea. The sea of disorder - this has nothing to do with me - and famine to curtail Black majority rule like in Zimbabwe and Blaxplotion as in Nigeria. That's why family planning is a device meant to confuse our people. Large families are the happiest families in a rich world. Get me right, in a rich world, and ours is damn rich. It is respected regardless of discrimination. In fact, in the economic world, human rights play second fiddle and will continue to do so, unless, as the big mlungu warned, the alternative is too ghastly to contemplate."

"That was a mouthful, heh, Dis", Mandla said to him. "Your logic's orderly."

Disorder was elated. "Yes, man, those are the cold bare facts. And they are ugly. Change can be brought about by an economic revolution, and that means we must all become businessmen. We must not allow ourselves to be duped into buying anything at the drop of a hat. We must stop being impulsive buyers. We must start planning our future. In fact, we must budget it. Not in the homelands. No, no, no. In the urban areas. That's where the action is. No khaya about it."

"And how can we do it", I asked, quite unsure of myself. I was half-expecting a lecture, but Disorder could smell the milk in me. He was gentle and understanding.

"Nothing more than standing up and be counted. And fight, if anybody refused to count us. I do not mean fighting with guns and knives. No, we fight with our brains. Not our hearts or hands. The problem with Black people is that they are a people that are not sure of themselves. They cannot believe that they too could become a business people owning large chain-stores, newspapers, banks and hotels. Education, at times retards progress, or inhibits. Look at the Black Muslims, made rich by an illiterate, the late Elijah Muhammad. Determination, enthusiasm and sacrifice are the keywords. Colour has nothing to do with success. The

status quo should not upset any determined body." I further questioned him about the Black Bank, and at this, his face widened. It was as if I had asked him how much he worshipped it and its organisers.

"Those men deserve Nobel Prizes", he said and we all laughed. "The problem with our youth is that they are angry in a hurry, and ultimately, they are frustrated and violent and irrational. They are generally, impatient even where it's unnecessary. With their own people. And this is mainly their downfall. They might end up the same way as the Black Power Movement in America - without a following. You cannot claim to be speaking on behalf of the masses when you have not as yet, spoken to them - better, talked with them, patiently and not condescendingly. We must not play White-man on our own people. Sia lingana. Uneducated or not. We're all Black. No Blacker-than-thou attitudes about it." And to demonstrate what he meant, Disorderly took some sandwiches from his carrier bag and we all shared them. Sharing. Of ideas and food. And sorrows too. That's what Africa is all about, he said.

Before we had realised it, we reached Heidelberg, and we had to part, oh-so sadly.

The next morning, at 9, the train pulled into a dirty and archaic station. A fellow passenger told me it was Durban. I was amazed. I thought it was a big district station. Unfortunately for me, there was no-one to meet at the station - probably my telegram never reached its destination. (It arrived four days later. This is South Africa!)

Since Hammarsdale was about 32 miles west of Durban, it meant catching another train, but since I was a 'moegie' in a strange land, I got what was coming. An innocent-looking man in blue overalls looked me over for sometime and decided I was going to be his 'catch' for the day. And what, he succeeded!

He told me he knew where I could get a train direct to Hammarsdale. He offered to carry my suitcase. We went out of the station onto Commercial street, and what! - I had a rickshaw on my hands. I looked like an American tourist on that cart. Boy! Since it was a Saturday morning, the streets were streaming with shoppers, and at Berea station, just off the Big Market, I thought there was a racial fight.

That five-minute trip, approximately, cost me R5. I wanted to grumble but thought otherwise as my 'host' could clobber me, and if anybody inquired he would simply say I had refused to pay.

I bought my single-trip ticket to Hammarsdale, still shaken by the previous happening. And while inside the

train, I silently laughed at myself at the mere thought what my friends back in Johannesburg would say on hearing that I had been conned by a rickshaw.

Alongside the rails, Ijuba upon Ijuba.
The train itself? A mobile black market.
Olenjis for five cents; apoli for four cents and Ijuba carton - of white-brewed concoction - 15 cents.

"Let that Ijuba rotate!" a female voice filled the air. I looked behind me, and saw a hussy seated, feet astride, and probably causing physical riots in the trousers of the men in front of her because her thighs were all meat. First grade. She was typically Sotho, boisterous and bawdy. I turned around further because I could just see her panties. And they had such large holes!

"Mannyeu, let us drink. I'm thirsty", she said as she snatched the carton from her companion who was opposite her and had suddenly stopped drinking, distracted by the saucy panties.

Next to me, two young girls, presumably high school students on holiday, were discussing the textile strikes. It was such a relief to hear girls not talking about soccer, for a change! But it was to be short-lived. Like most coups.

For a moment I was under the impression here were some sensible young people, who had a great future. You wait. Two minutes later, I got rude awakening when they bought two ijubas from the roving shebeen queen and her prince, a boy of 12 or so. Talk about employing oneself. Jeepers. Little wonder everybody was reiterating: "Madoda, nants, Ijuba".

I was so disgusted with the two girls that I got up, and went to sit three seats away. The lassies were drinking without shame or fear, of a rapping from their elderlies.

Ya! This is s'modern
Or was it mass frustration? Is a crisis a crisis only
when it affects the Haves?
Had people given up the will to live?
Had people thrown in the towel as a people?
Did the strike leave an indelible mark on its targets?
Did the workers get their promises more than sackings
or lay-offs?
Was frustration not arming the people with violence?
Was deprivation not preparing the nation with guns?
Qha?
That is how
the standard of inebriety is
in Shaka's land (and beyond maybe?)
so high only a neurotic could immortalise

the gaiety of the masses there -
the only ones with the reddest eyes in all Africa
on a Black face.

A-wee ma!

I had arrived in Hammarsdale. And there was she, my
future wife, with her big brown eyes. Young and
beautiful.

Winter, the Women, and the Man

Tonight cold stampeded
over the last *hamsin* before winter
and now herds of cloud
huddle by the moon.

The women
stepping from the lit theatre
sense it at once: as I suck in

pipe-smoke and shiver
near the entrance I see them close
tight, as the ground will
in nearby sparse gardens. In summer

they all wouldn't have looked away
from that short man. Now, I suppose,
they foresee the leaves
littering this midnight street

and are warned against
being easy to pick up,
easy to crush underfoot. And so
it should be. For who knows

what that short condom-carrier,
public-toilet-loiterer and rude fingerer
might inflict? Or that, as the women
clamp their tidy heads forward to walk
together away, he empties his pipe
hard against a hard, garden wall?

Jerusalem: xi/74

kaiser's bus

kaisers bus
crawls into view
like a snail into sun after rain

for two girls on the roadside
school
is no longer a daydream away

one roughly brushes curly hair
her mirror
the look on her friends face

kaisers bus grunts to a stop
the girls board
with muddy feet

kaisers bus too old to care moves on
the girls wait
for the red roof of school

today
the difficulty
of the afrikaans opstel

tomorrow
teacher tells the story of
umabatha

SIGAMEKO

Mamazane gave birth firstly to a son. Sikwili gave him the name Sigameko, "great event". He was commemorating the momentous events which befell him and led to his marriage with Mamazane, and he was commemorating his departure from the kraal of his family in order to build his kraal at Ekuphumuleni.

This child was reared very carefully, being nourished with milk because the cattle overflowed the cattle-kraal at home. Mamazane was a tidy person, and the child was always clean, washed and scrubbed, and smelling sweetly. The child grew up strongly and became a muscularly powerful person.

When Sigameko was still a boy herding calves, he learnt many things. He was accustomed to going out to herd with the small boys who were his age-mates, herding calves. Their great game was fencing with sticks, and throwing darts at a large bulb, and swimming in the deep pool. In all this they were taught by a small boy, Nhlanguwini, who was already well developed among them. The calves always eventually went astray in the forest when they had started these games of theirs. Sigameko was very fond of setting the calves to fight in the herding, and he would shout their praises until he raised the dust from the ground as he watched them fighting.

In the herding of the calves Sigameko learnt to fight with sticks, he learnt to throw accurately, and he learnt also to swim in the deep pool. He was greatly devoted to fighting, and he soon defeated all the small boys who were his age-mates.

Sigameko grew up very quickly, and he soon left the calves and began to go out with the cattle to herd. Sigameko was not treated well in the herding when he met the boys he was not accustomed to; they treated him disrespectfully because he was a newcomer.

There was a left-handed boy who had already mastered the boys with his stick. He had a trick with his stick which he had studied, and he would suddenly hit a boy on the throat and the boy would cough until he fell down. As soon as he got up he would run away, running wildly and not looking behind. The left-handed

boy would run along with him, hitting him. There was no boy who had the courage to face up to that left-handed boy on account of that trick with his stick, and he was now the champion.

This left-handed boy was Mkhishwa of the Msomi clan. He took after his father in stick-fighting; he had defeated all the small boys in the herding, and they discussed him everywhere. This made Mkhishwa conceited and contemptuous, and he derided the other boys very much.

Sigameko was not all content with Mkhishwa's conduct, being disgusted by his contemptuous behaviour and by his persecution of the other boys. But he was unable to do anything because Mkhishwa was older than he, and also he was their leader. But yet even Mkhishwa saw that Sigameko's face was full of contempt. One day Mkhishwa chose Sigameko and sent him to go and turn back the cattle. When Sigameko tried to hesitate, he jabbed him with his stick on the head and pushed him from behind so that he should run and turn back the cattle as he had sent him to do.

Sigameko went pouting with his mouth stuck out, but he was now extremely angry. When he arrived at the cattle, he selected the cattle of his family and went with them straight towards his home. When he was still on the hill he called out, "Hey, Mkhishwa, is this your mother whom you are treating like this? Do not forget your sticks tomorrow and carry three of them, so say I, the son of Sikhwili of the iron-wood tree." He brandished his stick and impudently went off with his cattle.

Mkhishwa burned with anger when he heard Sigameko's words. He was unable to speak, and he walked the whole way home with his body trembling, having been insulted by the boy in a manner he had never known.

When Sigameko was sitting at his home, many thoughts came to him. He was pervaded by the fear of how on earth he would accomplish such a task, and then he encouraged himself by saying that his adversary was also a person of flesh and blood, and "he cannot ward off all my blows."

After the cattle had returned, the boys of Sigameko's homeplace went to him to ask what he was going to do since he had now quarrelled with Mkhishwa. The boys found Sigameko preparing his defensive stick, being angry almost to death. Whereas they had been uncertain and wondering whether Sigameko had perhaps simply lost his temper, they now immediately realized that after all Sigameko indeed intended to fight Mkhishwa the next day, and they gave him courage.

The news that on the morrow Mkhishwa and Sigameko would fight each other was discussed in all the kraals. The matter was eventually joined in even by the young men, because Mkhishwa was known to be the leader of the boys and he was also well able to hit out against any boy.

Sigameko went to sleep trembling with fear and with anger. He was frightened because he knew that he was going to fight the champion, and he was also angry because he thought after all how long would it be that they were treated contemptuously by Mkhishwa because he thought he was the champion.

The boys all invited one another to come and watch the stick-fight, the battle of the eagles. Some boys simply said that Sigameko was going to hang himself because he was a child, and furthermore they had not yet seen him fighting with a boy who was already well developed.

MKHISHWA AND SIGAMEKO FIGHT IT OUT

At the rising of the red ball of the sun on the morrow, Sigameko was already up, and he went straight to the river to bathe his body. When he had finished, he attacked a scrubby bush and left it in tatters, fencing with his sticks. He threatens to strike it, and then defends himself and then hits it. As he does all this he talks to himself and says, "Accept defeat, Mkhishwa, you have had enough", and he was now dripping with perspiration.

As he went home he walked along talking to himself and said, "Mkhishwa would be a good defender if he could ward off all these blows of mine." He did not speak to anyone when he arrived home. He opened the cross-bars of the gateway of the cattle-kraal and took out the cattle, and the people at home were suddenly surprised that the cattle were no longer in the cattle-kraal. Sigameko went out with the cattle and grazed them below the homestead. At midmorning he brought them back to milk. When he had finished milking, he stirred up his little clay pot of sour milk and finished it all. He left home feeling fit, carrying his sticks which he trusted as well as his shield which he honoured, the black one with white strips interlaced downwards through the slits.

Sigameko's cattle went out and slowly climbed the mountain. When they were about to reach the top, he saw the boys aiming at the warblers and quails below in the fallow land. When the boys saw Sigameko, they left the birds alone and gathered together by the drift. The noise was overpowering as the boys called Sigameko,

and some praised him saying, "Come Sigameko, son of Sikhwili of the iron-wood tree."

Sigameko was struck by fear as he approached the drift, seeing that the boys were so many, but the young men of his place as well as the young men of Mkhishwa's place had come to see the fight. Sigameko gained great courage when he saw the young men of his home-place, and he went down straight to them. He saw Mkhishwa too, sitting on the ground chewing his cheeks in anxiety, for he also was suffering from fear and thinking, "I wonder what the outcome will be", because he had been expecting that Sigameko would be afraid and not come to the herding.

Everyone stirred when Sigameko arrived, and the people of his home-place gave him courage and said that he should go to him and that a coward had never been born amongst the Ntulis. Sigameko went out angry now, he went out into the open and said, "Remember my words of yesterday, Mkhishwa; today is today, come out with your sticks." Even Mkhishwa saw that indeed there was something in which this boy had confidence. There was heard the noise of the boys whistling and shouting out, "And so you come out, Sigameko; and so you come out, son of Sikhwili of the iron-wood tree."

When Mkhishwa stood up, all the young men jostled for positions, wanting to see clearly because a great argument had been going on, some saying that Sigameko could not stand against Mkhishwa because he was not of his age-group, and others saying that you would see a wonder today, Mkhishwa beaten by Sigameko. When they raised their sticks against each other, the young men commented and said, "Watch, men, you are going to see wonders, the stick-fighting prowess of the son of Msomi."

You saw by the buttocks hardening into round rocks on the son of Sikhwili that the struggle was starting. The left-handed boy of the Msomis struck in quick succession while Sigameko only defended himself. Mkhishwa forced him back until he threw him against a palm tree, but Sigameko jumped round to the other side of it and even got an opportunity to compose his mind properly. When Sigameko came out from the other side of the tree, he met again with Mkhishwa. He lunged at him with his shield and Mkhishwa immediately defended himself, and Sigameko gave him two blows in succession on his fighting arm. These were hard blows and they rendered Mkhishwa powerless. Seeing that his blows had incapacitated Mkhishwa, Sigameko no longer gave him a chance. He hit him without stopping, until his fighting stick fell down. Then they were separated so that Mkhishwa should pick up his stick. However, Mkhishwa no longer had the courage because his arm was now powerless. When they met again, Mkhishwa's head

resounded with a blow and he fell down briefly then got up and ran off at great speed. Sigameko chased him as far as the deep pool.

A great commotion arose and there was almost a fight amongst all the people who had been having arguments saying, "Sigameko can never face up to Mkhishwa". This disturbance grew great until it was settled by the men who happened to have been drinking in the upper part of Jali's kraal.

Sigameko returned walking with a swagger and slashing with a stick, having defeated the champion. The young men of his place then took him up and accompanied him as they went home with him. The cattle came back with the boys on that day, but Sigameko was not among them.

For a long time the matter of Mkhishwa's defeat was discussed.

THE BILLIARD ROOM

The play of his power,
the living, you can smell
it in this room: the cues glitter like weapons,
the green nap of the table
was a battleground for him, where conflicts broke
in the strategy of a game.

And I can remember hearing,
at night above my head,
the sound of a glass breaking, and a burst
of rich laughter; then silence,
except for the powerful tread, the pacing
from angle to angle,
and the crack of a cannon
as the white slammed into the red. It's

all snuffed out now of course, like a long
Havana cigar, a Hoyo de Monterrey perhaps,
smoked down for an inch or two, and never
much more. The act has gone, his gesture
casual on an evening thirty years ago
is obsolete; now
only a sense of ritual pervades the room and feeds
familiar on the tokens of his power:

a German ceremonial sword
he captured in South West stands rigid
in a shell case, against one wall an old
propeller rots (and somewhere stuck in a drawer
there's an album showing photographs of the crash)
so that objects of steel and brass, records
of dead encounter have made this room
a potent place, the temple of my caste

where I must pay homage, the sour pietas
of son to father, the unforgiving
love that looks for only one thing in the past:
conflict as barren as dust. I have no god
but a giant who paces above my head,
who blusters nightly that in his turn
my son shall have his saga of Fee, Fie, Fum,
to grind my bones to make his bread.

Though I stand by a half opened window
and breathe in the air
the dust still stirs about me,
raised by a step on the floor,
and the smell that comes up is the smell of old power
unbreaking love, unfinished war.

BLACK

Seeking a metaphor, the Minister of Culture thought:

The Gardens are full of boiling nests of storm.

Late winter, early spring. One or the other. And the wind raged between trees, dashing bitter rain into eyes, pulling hair fretfully. It had come up off the sea and stank coldly of iron and dead fish, a smell like luminous medicine. It hunted, this distillate of bad medicine.

The Minister of Culture thought of Shakespeare, and of storms meshing into the turmoil of driven heroes: the pathetic fallacy orchestrated to purge through terror, delirium. Was he Lear? The Fool? Both? Absurdly, he felt flattened into an interminable steam of words on a page, as if someone was writing him. Almost frightened he opened his mouth, O, to suck in air, to validate through the precise sensation of freezing air on aching teeth his identity. He was the Minister of Culture, yet.

He had been in the museum, studied the iron stone that was the head of Uys Krige: it was dark and lustrous, kingly. It had often been said of him that he resembled the poet. Thinking that, warmth spread in solid reassuring waves... The head, now, in the growing storm, could be imaged as a rock in the sea. The Minister of Culture curved his mind smoothly around the rock: it held him firm in the beating chaos.

"Shocking weather, Minister."

On a path near a cage of silent huddling birds he had met a figure often seen in grey corridors. It was a greyish man, an Under-Secretary, named like all Under-Secretaries Botha, or Venter, or Vosloo, or De Klerk.

"Yes, Mulder," he replied but Bezuidenhout, or Visser, or Naude, or Nel had passed on into the conglomerate darkness, the dark side of his being, into the storm.

The meeting dissipated all fleeting sensations of security: there had been a moment, frozen, precipitous, when the Under-Secretary had been on the point of not

recognising him. It had been as close as all the failed rugby goals memory could dredge for talk in smoky bars; the Minister of Culture knew it, and it focussed the reality of the shocking change that was enveloping him.

He sat down on a dripping green bench in the rain, marked clearly "Whites Only". Huddled in a long, thick raincoat, his stony skull draped with the seaweed of his hair, his striped Ministerial suit shining with wet, he studied his hands in the limited light of this late winter, early spring evening, with people all about scrambling for shelter, newspapers and umbrella thrust into ragged, furious, hunting water.

And shivered.

There was no doubt: the negrosis had worsened. Soon it would become as apparent to his colleagues as it was to himself, and to his wife and the frightened children.

The deserts of the breakfast table; the aborted talk; the averted eyes at bedtime; the eeriness of love-making. Everything was preface to what was coming; the only certainty was that matters would worsen, and never right themselves.

Shame had too many roots. His wife, slipping into sleep, had cried out a single damnable word.

Of course, though publically unfashionable, it was a word with fine historical antecedents -- first used (he understood) by Arab slavers down the eastern coast of Africa. There was nothing intrinsically wrong with it; it did not necessarily imply denigration. Indeed the Cabinet (when matters got informal, though no less gritty) used it freely. It helped to place matters in exact perspective, here, further down the coast.

But the cried damnable word had come with an extraordinary effect of liberation, a flail against his flesh. It had been hours before he slept, trembling frequently, disturbed by flashing images of crumbling artifacts and towers which tugged him up again and again from the deep reaches of sleep.

The following day he had unnecessarily abused a Black man who impeded his progress down some grey corridor.

The doctor, Remember.

"Your condition will continue to deteriorate. There is no hope. In my long career this is the worst case of progressive negrosis I have ever encountered."

"Is it... hereditary?"

Taint. Shame. Pick up the stone: assess the horrors...

"No. Along with the common cold, though far less common, progressive negrosis baffles the combined forces that the best of modern medical research can bring to bear against the problem. In certain areas of the American Deep South it has reached epidemic proportions, leading to mass suicide, reported visions of St. Elmo's fire, and premature baldness. You must understand, however, that progressive negrosis is a benign malignancy affecting only the white blood corpuscles. There is no danger of secondary or tertiary carcinomic accretions. There is merely an alteration of pigmentation: the white corpuscles turn black."

The Minister of Culture had come shaken from that inspection; had heard the analysis repeated again twice over before acceptance sifted gently as life-long pessimism into his consciousness.

No hope!

"The final transformation will be abrupt, perhaps at a moment of great emotional stress. The stress will be a seed crystal in your condition: dropped into your metabolism it will initiate burrs and webworks of black corpuscles throughout your bloodstream."

Abruptly he was brought back to awareness of the storm. It was horrible; it shrieked. On a green bench the Minister of Culture sobbed ineffectually within a greater wetness. A single lightning flash illuminated the side of the mountain and he saw in detail raviness and sheer faces which apparently rushed at him before disappearing in the blackness.

Black. The colour of Africa. The colour of great kings.

"I am Black and proud," he said in mockery.

In Parliament a Member of the Opposition had once asked him if it was his Government's policy to move away from racial discrimination in cultural matters; would there be a sharing of cultural facilities?

"It is the policy of my Government," he had enunciated in that cool, rational, immovable tone for which he was famous, "that the different national groups in our country participate in and share their own separate cultural heritages. Just as I would feel out of place at an initiation ceremony in the Congo, and would inevitably fail to appreciate the nuances of the drumming and ululating which might form part of the ritual, it would be improbable if any member of a grouping not defined as White could appreciate the

Western flavour and import of such White artists as Beethoven and Shakespeare. It would be unfair to enforce such an imposition on anyone not trained for it from birth onwards; and it is well known that our Government is a scrupulously fair and just one in this regard.

"Nonetheless, I can categorically state that any member of a non-White group is free to learn a White language and participate without fear of discrimination in the reading of books in that language. It is not Government policy to limit the sales of books written by Whites to Whites only."

That had been clear enough, surely?

The Minister of Culture rose to his feet, angrily, and walked furiously into the storm to escape an emotion he would not admit as guilt.

It had all been a lie, really. He had never believed that preposterous farrago of sub-truth and piety. Had he? It had been policy; he was a politician.

He walked down to the foreshore through the bitter night, past blazing shopfronts showing wigs, skin lighteners, books written by White people. And there, amidst milling, shouting, gesticulating people, he was astonished to see that a small freighter had been forced inland and had gone aground on black rocks; a rescue operation was being attempted and newsmen flashed bulbs to illuminate ropes being flung and men being hauled drenched from foaming, horribly sucking surf.

Without becoming aware of it the Minister of Culture became part of the rescue operation. The rain and wind was forgotten as men (and a few women) laboured together to save lives. It was -- he would have to use the word later, in awed description -- thrilling.

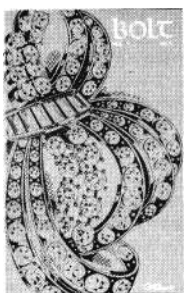
The freighter was a foreign one, from a nation of essentially non-White peoples; but the sheer human need of the sailors called out across the gulf, etc. There were descriptions of this fact in the news media the following day, including a caption to a photograph showing the Minister of Culture doing his share tugging a rope between two White men: "Race was no bar in the dramatic rescue. This Bantu man, who would only give his name as John, assisted in bringing the distressed seamen to shore."

Yes, in the Black storm, beside the Black sea, and the Black rocks on which the Black freighter had gone aground, the Minister of Culture assisted in the rescue of Black life.

And afterwards he wrote a poem:

You have come in the Black night
like a lover whose kiss is darkness:
Black on Black, myself, you have come
like an old friend, unrecognised
but bearing the simplest truth,
that I am myself,
I have always been myself,
my lover, my friend.
Now take me into the Black dawn
which has begun in Dar es Salaam,
and Accra,
and Lusaka,
and here too where I bellow my visions of Blackness.

It was a terrible poem; but that was no obstacle to its
being printed in a Black literary journal called BLACK,
which was later banned.



In this issue:
A new story by Alan Paton.



A limited number of full sets
(Bolt 1-12) is available
at R15 per set.

SIGNA
VIRI ET FEMINE
MORVAI PATRI
NON-MORVAI

THE
MORVAI
PATRI
NON-MORVAI