Staffrider

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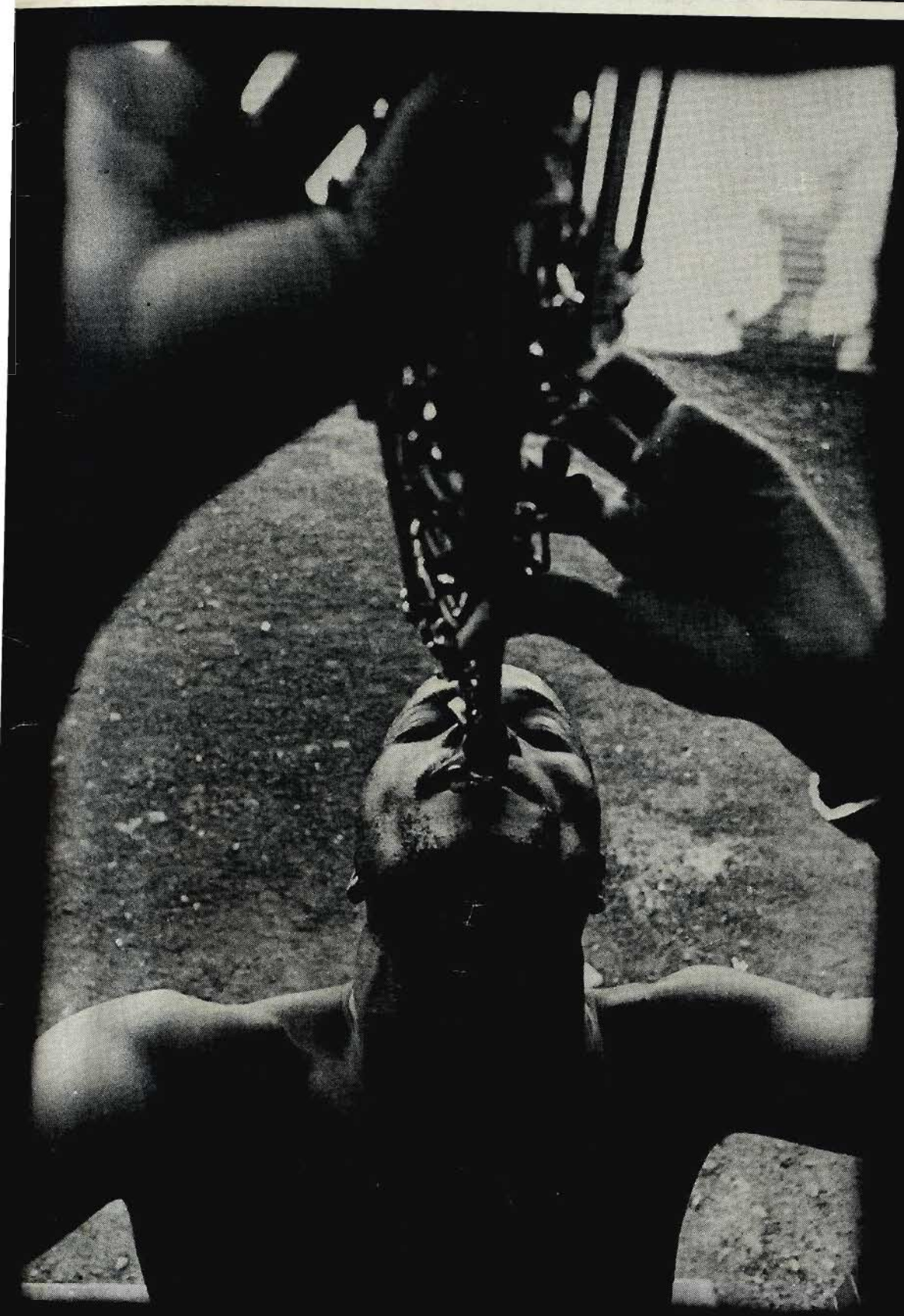

Stories

Mtutuzeli Matshoba
Ahmed Essop
Nape 'a Motana
Modikwe Dikobe
Jayapraga Reddy
E.M. Macphail
Mothobi Mutloatse

Graphics

Mzwakhe
William Kentridge
Richard Jack
and others

Photos

Alf Kumalo
Paul Weinberg
Ralph Ndawo
Judas Ngwenya
and others

Poetry

Maishe Maponya
Nokugcina Sigwili
Julius Chingono
Israel Motlhabane
Jaki Seroke
Ben Langa
and many others

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VOICES FROM THE GHETTO:

Kwa Mashu Speaking

Speaking: Mrs M. of Kwa Mashu, born in 1926 in the District of Umbumbulu, Natal South Coast, interviewed in July 1979 by A. Manson and D. Collins of the Killie Campbell Africana Library Oral History Programme.

FROM CATO MANOR TO KWA MASHU

In 1950 I married and went to stay in Cato Manor . . .

In 1959 they started sending us to places like Kwa Mashu and Umlazi. Most people started to run away at that time, some to Inanda, others to a place somewhere at Isipingo which was called, translated into English, "when you see a policeman, you have to run, and then when the policeman is gone you come back and do what you like and build your home."

LIFE AT CATO MANOR

In Cato Manor the laws were very flexible. My husband and I were running a shack shop. Though we were working in town, we would come home to do the shop. We were forever being arrested, but I can see now that we were more united there than we have ever been here (Kwa Mashu.)

I stayed in Cato Manor for many years, and I can assure you — we always discuss these things — that if today they were to say yes, we would go back, even though it was a slum.

It must be remembered that, before, it was a slum with no site and service. You know that. Well, the life was very free, people were very co-operative with one another. You couldn't come and kill somebody for nothing. We used to see that there was something happening that side. We'd all rush to go and help that somebody. We'd be beating the . . . It was just like that, honestly. I used to hear people who had never been to Cato Manor say, "Hau. Were you at Cato Manor?" Because today, believe me, I don't go about here at Kwa Mashu in the evening, because my life would be gone. You see. So myself, I don't see anything good here in these townships. There — I'm talking as if — because Cato Manor was just a homely place, you know. In those slums, squatters' camps as you call them now, we had that spirit of humour from one another. Here, I discover that people in these four-roomeds — I don't know whether they are polluted by them — they don't know their neighbours. Honestly, I don't know my neighbours but I'm here, you can just imagine, from 1959! Nobody cares for anyone here, and even if a person is crying — my dogs are doing a lot of work sometimes. When somebody cries (imitation of a scream) — *tsotsis*, you know, pickpocketing, slaughtering someone, I have to release my dogs. Otherwise the life here . . . myself, I say that in Cato Manor we were much better, because of unity which I think is very important. Here, honestly, nobody cares for any other person.

For me, I don't like it, that is not the spirit of we Africans. I don't know whether it is because I was born on the farm where that spirit is existing, you know, to care about the person on the other side, is he happy and if not, what happened there. We used even to hear the bell ringing. There are some signs that people use on the farm. If that bell rings and then stops, and then rings and then stops, oh, we know that there was somebody who had passed away. Definitely: if I was ploughing or whatever I was doing, we'd leave that straight away. And then we'd have to go and ask "Who is dead? Somebody has passed away. Did you hear that bell ringing from the church?" It was a sign telling the people that somebody had passed away. Here, it is most appalling to me, seeing a coffin passing. They don't care what it is. So I don't think life here in the townships is as good, ja.

What kind of social activities did you have at Cato Manor?

In Cato Manor people used to, we used to . . . There was politics, in the first place. There was too much of ANC in those days, but those people were very much united, honestly. We used to hear a sound which told us that there was something wrong. We'd have to touch one another, that, now, something's happening, what's happening now? And then, there, we used to gather. That was politics, of course.

Then, in the line of the welfare: people, as I say, were brewing gavine, shimiyana, everything. They were very rich, compared to the people here in the township. We used to organize ourselves to help those children who came from very poor people, to serve them with some milk, you know, just to end this kwashiokor in the township. And we used to participate — there were schools there. We used to gather as women to discuss our problems. That was when the Durban Corporation started to give us site and service. Because before, as you know, there was nothing like latrines or water or anything. You used to go there to the Umkumbane — washing, drinking, all those things. Our children were getting diarrhorea a lot. Through those meetings of ours, I think, the Durban City Councillors got the idea of this site and service, and gave us some plans. It was L, U, you know, then you build your own. But they were nicely built because there was this plan which we were given, free of charge, by the Durban City Councillors. This is why I always ask why don't they do it to these people that are on next-door Richmond Farm and Inanda, in those squatters' camps, you know, because people *will* build in a better way if they are given that privilege, and given site and service. They may not build beautiful houses, but a simple, nice good pattern with a site and service, you know. These are important things because the population explosion is *here*.

THE SHACK SHOPS

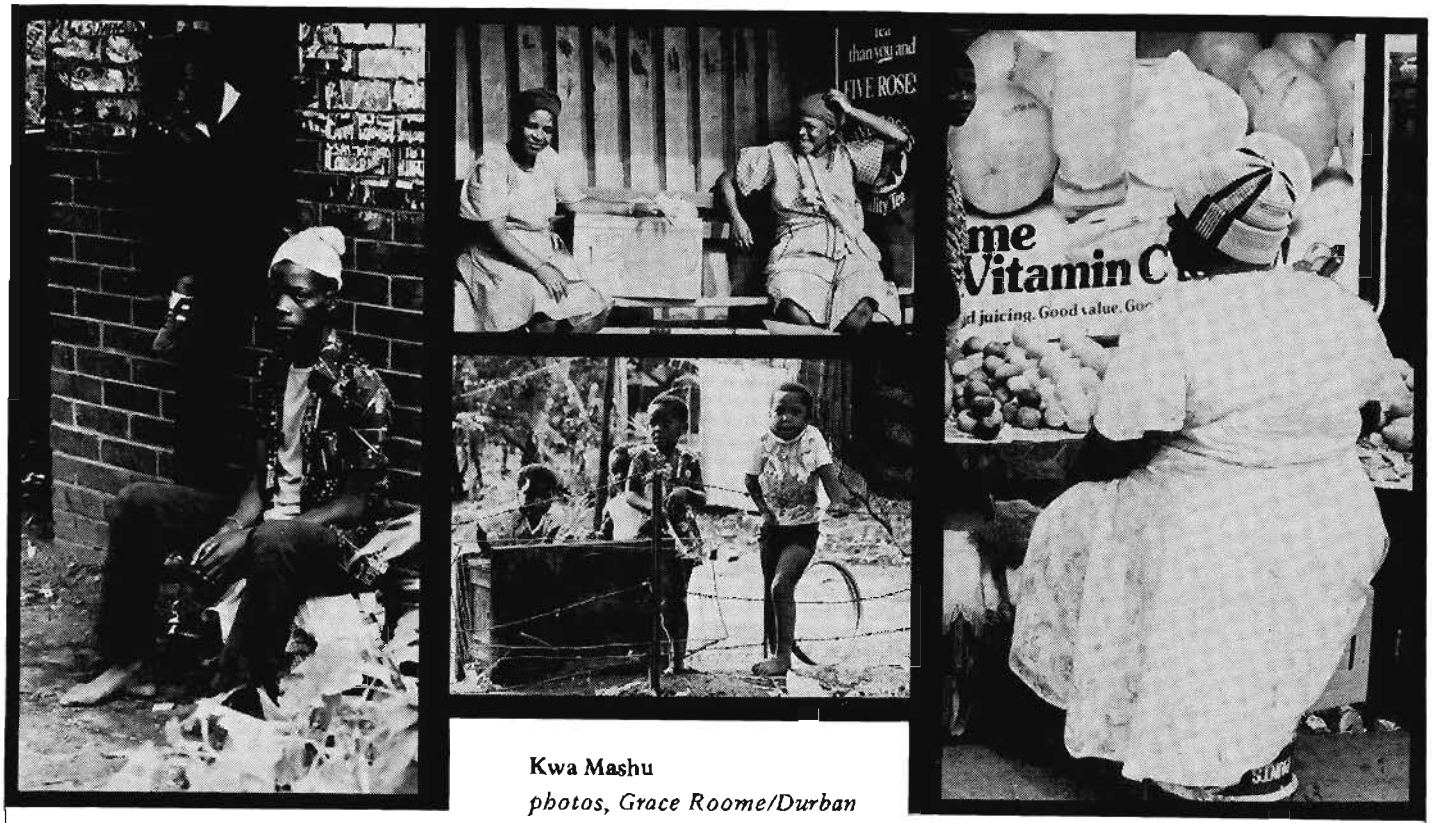
Which area did you live in? Did you live in any specific area in Cato Manor like Shumville?

We started in a place called Mangaroo. Then from Mangaroo I went up to Newlook. Newlook. That was the name of the shack shop I was running at Umkumbane. It was less than this (indicating the room). It was just an open four-walls with no ceiling.

You must remember Cato Manor was owned by Indians before. I think that an Indian merchant had been trying to build a shop. Then there were those riots and the people killed those — they were killing everybody, burning everything. So those four walls were just left unfinished, with no roof inside. That was in Newlook. So my husband had to move there. Nobody had to tell us, we just moved, you know.

And then Bourquin* was too clever. There were some big Indian shops there. He said, 'Oh, no, you people, if you want to enter these shops now, come and negotiate with me. But for myself, it was just an open four-wall room at Newlook.'

But life there at Cato Manor, honestly, it was a very sweet



Kwa Mashu
photos, Grace Roome/Durban

life, I must be honest.

RESISTANCE

So you didn't want to move?

No. Actually a lot of people resisted the removing. And you know — you must know — that we were removed by Saracens. I still have that in my mind and in my dreams. Some of the people were at work, and then here come the policemen, here come the soldiers with those Saracens, and then they just take all your things in that manner, you know, and shove it on those big government lorries, those for war, and then they just bulldoze your house, just like that. When these men came I remember one night a man knocked and we were so much afraid, yes. And then he says, "I'm looking for my number." This man had been to Cato Manor. He had discovered that now his house was just flattened. You see. This was the very thing which touched me. In Cato Manor. The way we were removed. Because we were resisting, we were saying, "We are happy here."

A NEW LIFE

When you arrived in Kwa Mashu, it must have been very different?

Ja, it's changed our lives. We had to live now another life. I don't know how I can put it. Whether it is Western civilization or culture I don't know, because to me, I may be civilized but I don't want to become cut off from my customs and my culture. Some are very good and I admire them. I still relate to my children, you know, what life was like on the farm. I want them to know all these things. And here, I'm not very happy, actually, because people seem to have forgotten their customs and culture, such things. But well, things are changing, maybe I'm outdated, I don't know. We have to live with such things. But there are some people who are just like me, who are interested in seeing to it that we don't run away from our culture — though we can inherit your Western civilization. There are some parts of your culture that are good, but I still say that there are some parts of our culture and customs which are very good.

When you moved here, did the people from Cato Manor all come to one area?

Actually, many people came here to Kwa Mashu but many of them were not very quick to adjust themselves to this life. Others, they stayed here for a few months or six months, then they jumped off to go build those 'squatters' at Inanda. They were real Cato Manor people, Umkumbane people. Because there were so many laws to deal with now, in a somebody's four-roomed. Then, in Cato Manor, we were not even paying for this water. And you see the life changed totally, became too expensive a life, you know. And then they couldn't tolerate it, they said; "Oh no, I better go and start another Umkumbane further out here," you know, rather than pay this water. If I don't pay the rent I'm being told that, "Well, we've got to kick you out." There were some policemen harassing us in the township. People couldn't do what they were doing in Cato Manor and couldn't brew all those things which I've mentioned. So life changed completely for some people. They said, "Ugh, life here! Because there is somebody who is on our shoulders. It shows that this is not your land, this is not your house, you never paid a thing over it, you just pay rent." And so they jumped off.

Was there any friction between the people who came to Kwa Mashu from the different areas? Was there squabbling between the people from the different places?

Here at Kwa Mashu? No, no. There wasn't at all, because those who knew one another from Cato Manor, we used to make friends with them, you know. There was no squabbling. But there was too much of poverty, I should call it now because they were not doing what they knew how to do and felt like doing. There was a lot of house-breaking and theft. It happened to those who wake up very early in the morning to go to town and work. They used to have their homes burgled. That was the thing that was happening here.

Did a lot of people who had previously not worked have to go out and work now?

No, I think it was just people taking a chance, now that here we were in a new township. Everything was new. Ja, it was just one of those things.

**A well-known 'Native', then 'Bantu' Administrator in Natal.*

To Kill a Man's Pride...

An excerpt from a new story by Mtutuzeli Matshoba

illustrated by Mzwakhe

Registration for work is such an interesting example of a way of killing a man's pride that I cannot pass it by without mention. It was on Monday, after two weeks of unrewarded labour and perseverence, that Pieters gave me a letter which said I had been employed as a general labourer at his firm and which I was to take to the notorious 80 Albert Street. Monday is usually the busiest day there because everybody wakes up on this day determined to find a job. They end up dejected, crowding the labour office for 'piece' jobs.

That Monday I woke up elated, whistling all the way as I cleaned the coal stove, made fire to warm the house for those who were still asleep, and took my toothbrush and washing rags to the tap outside the toilet. The cold water was revivifying as I splashed it over my upper body. I greeted 'Star', also washing at the tap diagonally opposite my home. Then I took the washing basin, half-filled it with water and went into the lavatory to wash the rest of me. When I had finished washing and dressing I bade them goodbye at home and set out, swept into the torrent of workers rushing to the station. Somdalc had reached the station first and we waited for our trains with the hundreds already on the platform. The guys from the location prefer to wait for trains on the station bridge. Many of them looked like children who did not want to go to school. I did not sympathize with them. The little time my brothers have to themselves, Saturday and Sunday, some of them spend worshipping Bacchus.

The train schedule was geared to the morning rush hour. From four in the morning the trains had rumbled in with precarious frequency. If you stay near the road to the hostel you are woken up by the shuffle of a myriad footfalls long before the first train. I have seen these people on my way home when the nocturnal bug has bitten me. All I can say is that an endless flow of resolute men hastening in the inky, misty morning down Mohale Street to the station is an awesome apparition.

I had arrived ten minutes early at the station. The 'ninety-

The full text of "To Kill A Man's Pride", as well as twenty-four other stories and prose pieces by contemporary black South African writers are to appear in a collection entitled **FORCED LANDING Africa South: Contemporary Writings**, edited by Mothobi Mutloatse, and published by Ravan Press, next month. The stories are accompanied by drawings by Nkoana Moyaga and Fikile.
FORCED LANDING will be number three in the **Staffrider Series,** (following **AFRICA MY BEGINNING** and **CALL ME NOT A MAN**) and will be available from bookshops and Staffriders in your area soon.

five' to George Goch passed Mzimhlope while I was there. This train brought the free morning stuntman show. The daredevils ran along the roof of the train, a few centimetres from the naked cable carrying thousands of electric volts, and ducked under every pylon. One mistimed step, a slip — and reflex action would send his hand clasping for support. No comment from any of us at the station. The train shows have been going on since time immemorial and have lost their magic.

My train to Faraday arrived, bursting along the seams with its load. The spaces between the adjacent coaches were filled with people. So the only way I could get on the train was by wedging myself among those hanging on perilously by hooking their fingers into the narrow tunnels along the tops of the coaches, their feet on the door ledges. A slight wandering of the mind, a sudden swaying of the train as it switched lines, bringing the weight of the others on top of us, a lost grip and another labour unit would be abruptly terminated. We hung on for dear life until Faraday.

In Pieters' office. Four automatic telephones, two scarlet and two orange coloured, two fancy ashtrays, a gilded ball-pen stand complete with gilded pen and chain, two flat plastic ashtrays and baskets, the one on the left marked IN and the other one OUT, all displayed on the poor bland face of a large highly polished desk. Under my feet a thick carpet that made me feel like a piece of dirt. On the soft opal green wall on my left a big framed 'Desiderata' and above me a ceiling of heavenly splendour. Behind the desk, wearing a short cream-white safari suit, leaning back in a regal flexible armchair, his hairy legs (the pale skin of which curiously made me think of a frog's ventral side) balanced on the edge of the desk in the manner of a sheriff in an old-fashioned western, my blue-eyed, slightly bald, jackal-faced overlord.

'You've got your pass?'

'Yes, mister Pieters.' That one did not want to be called *baas*.

'Let me see it. I hope it's the right one. You got a permit to work in Johannesburg?'

'I was born here, mister Pieters.' My hands were respectfully behind me.

'It doesn't follow.' He removed his legs from the edge of the table and opened a drawer. Out of it he took a small bundle of typed papers. He signed one of them and handed it to me. 'Go to the pass office. Don't spend two days there. Otherwise you come back and I've taken somebody else in your place.'

He squinted his eyes at me and wagged his tongue, trying to amuse me the way he would try to make a baby smile. That really amused me, his trying to amuse me the way he would a baby. I thought he had a baby's mind.

'Esibayeni'. Two storey red-brick building occupying a whole block. Address: 80 Albert street, or simply 'Pass Office'. Across the street, half the block (the remaining half a parking space and 'home' of the homeless methylated spirit drinkers of the city) taken up by another red-brick structure. Not offices this time, but *'Esibayeni'* (at the kraal) itself. No question why it has been called that. The whole black population of Johannesburg above pass age knows that place.

Like I said, it was full on a Monday, full of wretched men with defeated eyes, sitting along the gutters on both sides of Albert street, the whole pass office block, others grouped where the sun's rays leaked through the sky-scrapers and the rest milling about. When a car driven by a white man went up the street pandemonium broke loose as men, I mean dirty slovenly *men*, trotted behind it and fought to give their passes first. If the white person had not come for that purpose they cursed him until he went out of sight. Occasionally a truck or van would come to pick up labourers for a piece job. The clerk would shout out the number of men that were wanted for such and such a job, say forty, and double the number would be all over the truck before you could say 'stop'. None of them would want to miss the cut, which caused quite some problems for the employer. A shrewd businessman would take all and simply divide the money he had laid out among the whole group, as it was left to him to decide how much to pay for a piece job. Everybody was satisfied in the end — the temporary employer having his work done in half the time he had bargained for, and each of the labourers with enough for a ticket back to the pass-office the following day, and maybe ten cents worth of dishwater and bread from the oily restaurants in the neighbourhood, for three days. Those who were smart and familiar with the ways of the pass-office handed their passes in with twenty and/or fifty-cent pieces between the pages. This gave them first preference of the better jobs.

The queue to *'Esibayeni'* was moving slowly. It snaked about thirty metres around the corner of Polly street. It had taken me more than an hour to reach the door. Inside the ten-feet high wall was an asphalt rectangle, longitudinal benches along the opposite wall in the shade of narrow tin ledges, filled with bored looking men, toilets on the lower side of the rectangle, facing wide bustling doors. It would take me another three hours to reach the clerks. If I finished there just before lunch-time, it meant that I would not be through with my registration by four in the afternoon when the pass office closed. Fortunately I had twenty cents and I knew that the blackjacks who worked there were nothing but starving leeches. One took me up the queue to four people who stood before a snarling white boy. Those whose places ahead of me in the queue had been usurped wasted their breath grumbling.

The man in front of me could not understand what was being bawled at him in Afrikaans. The clerk gave up explaining, not prepared to use any other language than his own. I felt that at his age, about twenty, he should be at RAU learning to speak other languages. That way he wouldn't burst a vein trying to explain everything in one tongue just because it was his. He was either bone-headed or downright lazy or else impatient to 'rule the Bantus'.

He took a rubber stamp and banged it furiously on one of the pages of the man's pass, and threw the book into the man's face. 'Go to the other building, stupid!'

The man said, 'Thanks,' and elbowed his way to the door.

'Next! *Wat soek jy?'* he asked in a bellicose voice when my turn to be snarled at came. He had freckles all over his face, and a weak jaw.

I gave him the letter of employment and explained in Afrikaans that I wanted E and F cards. My talking in his tongue eased some of the tension out of him. He asked for my pass in a slightly calmer manner. I gave it to him and he paged through. 'Good, you have permission to work in Johannesburg right enough.' He took two cards from a pile in front of him and labouriously wrote my pass numbers on them. Again I thought that he should still be at school, learning to write properly. He stamped the cards and told me to go to room six in the other block. There were about twelve other clerks growling at people from behind a continuous U-shaped desk, and the space in front of the desk was overcrowded with people who made it difficult to get to the door.

Another blackjack barred the entrance to the building across the street. 'Where do you think you're going?'

'Awu! What's wrong with you? I'm going to room six to be registered. You're wasting my time,' I answered in an equally unfriendly way. His eyes were bloodshot, as big as a cow's and as stupid, his breath was fouled with *'mai-mai'*, and his attitude was a long way from helpful.

He spat into his right hand, rubbed his palms together and grabbed a stick that was leaning against the wall near him. 'Go in,' he challenged, indica-

ting with a tilt of his head, and dilating his gaping nostrils.

His behaviour perplexed me, more than angering or dismaying me. It might be that he was drunk; or was I supposed to produce something first, and was he so uncouth as not to tell me why he would not allow me to go in? Whatever the reason, I regretted that I could not kick some of the *'mai-mai'* out of the sagging belly, and proceeded on my way. I turned to see if there was anyone else witnessing the unnecessary aggression.

'No, *mfo*. You've got to wait for others who are also going to room six,' explained a man with half his teeth missing, wearing a tattered overcoat and nothing to cover his large, parched feet. And, before I could say thanks: 'Say, *mnumzane*, have you got a cigarette on you? Y'know, I haven't had a single smoke since yesterday.'

I gave him the one shrivelled Lexington I had in my shirt-pocket. He indicated that he had no matches either. I searched myself and gave the box to him. His hands shook violently when he lit and shielded the flame. *'Ei! Babalaz* has me.'

'Ya, neh,' I said, for the sake of saying something. The man turned and walked away as if his feet were sore. I leaned against the wall and waited. When there were a good many of us waiting the gatekeeper grunted that we should follow him inside to another bustling 'kraal'. That was where the black clerks shouted out the jobs at fifty cents apiece or more, depending on whether they were permanent or temporary. The men in there were fighting like mad to reach the row of windows where they could hand in their passes. We followed the blackjack up a sloping cement way rising to a green double door.

There was nowhere it wasn't full at the pass-office. Here too it was full of the same miserable figures that were buzzing all over the place, but this time they stood in a series of queues at a long counter like the one across the street, only this one was L-shaped and the white clerks behind the brass grille wore ties. I decided that they were of a better class than the others, although there was no doubt that they also had the same rotten manners and arrogance. The blackjack left us with another one who told us which queues to join. Our cards were taken and handed to a lady filing clerk who went to look for our records.

I was right! The clerks were, at bottom, all the same. When I reached the counter I pushed my pass under the grille. The man who took it had close-cropped hair and a thin sharp face. He went through my pass checking it against a photostat record with my name scrawled on top in a handwriting that I did not know.

'Where have you been from January until now, September?' he said in a cold voice, looking at me from behind the grille like a god about to admonish a sinner.

I have heard some funny tales, from many tellers, when it come to answering that question. See if you can recognise this one:

CLERK: *Heer, man. Waar was jy al die tyd, jong?* (Lord, man. Where have you been all the time, *jong?*)

MAN: I . . . I was mad, *baas.*

CLERK: Mad!? You think I'm your uncle, *kaffer?*

KAFFER: No *baas*, I was mad.

CLERK: *Jy . . . jy dink . . .* (and the white man's mouth drops open with no words coming out.)

KAFFER: (Coming to the rescue of the baas with an explanation) At home they tell me that I was mad all along, *baas.* 'Strue.

CLERK: Where are the doctor's papers? You must have been to hospital if you were mad! (With annoyance.)

KAFFER: I was treated by a witch-doctor, baas. Now I am better and have found a job.

Such answers serve them right. If it is their aim to harass the poor people with impossible questions, then they should expect equivalent answers. I did not, however, say something out of the way. I told the truth, 'looking for work.'

'Looking for work, who?'

'Baas.'

'That's right. And what have you been living on all along?' he asked, like a god.

'Scrounging, and looking for work.' Perhaps he did not know that among us blacks a man is never thrown to the dogs.

'Stealing, huh? You should have been caught before you found this job. Do you know that you have contravened section two, nine, for nine months? Do you know that you would have gone to jail for two years if you had been caught, *tsotsi*? These policemen are not doing their job anymore,' he said, turning his attention to the stamps and papers in front of him.

I had wanted to tell him that if I had had a chance to steal, I would not have hesitated to do so, but I stopped myself. It was the wise thing to act timid in the circumstances. He gave me the pass after stamping it. The blackjack told me which corridor to follow. I found men sitting on benches alongside one wall and stood at the end of the queue. The man in front of me shifted and I sat on the edge. This time the queue was reasonably fast. We moved forward on the seats of our pants. If you wanted to prevent them shining you had to stand up and sit, stand up and sit. You could not follow the line standing. The patrolling blackjack made you sit in an embarrassing way. Halfway to the door we were approaching, the man next to me removed his upper clothes. All the others nearer to the door had their clothes bundled under their armpits. I did the same.

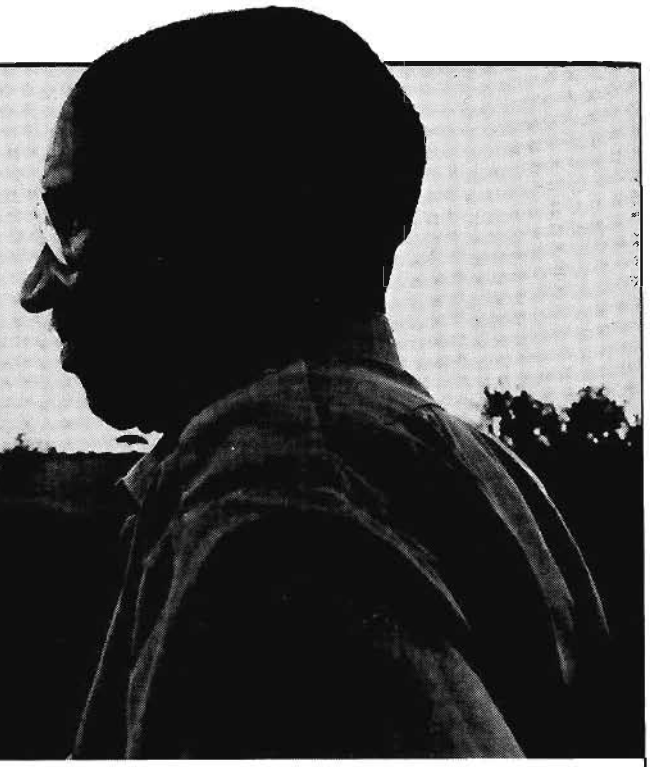
We were all vaccinated in the first room and moved on to the next one where we were X-rayed by some impatient black technicians. The snaking line of black bodies reminded me of prisoners being searched. That was what 80 Albert Street was all about.

The last part of the medical examination was the most disgraceful. I don't know whether it was designed to save expense or on some other ground of expediency, but on me it had the effect of dishonour. After being X-rayed we could put on our shirts and cross the corridor to the doctor's cubicle. Outside were people of both sexes waiting to settle their own affairs. You passed them before entering the cubicle, inside which sat a fat white man in a white dust-coat with a face like an owl, behind a simple desk. The man who had gone in ahead of me was zipping up his fly. I unzipped mine and stood facing the owl behind the desk, holding my trousers with both hands. He tilted his fat face to the right and left twice or thrice. 'Ja. Your pass.'

I hitched my trousers up while he harried me to give him the pass before I could zip my trousers. I straightened myself at leisure, in spite of his *'Gou, gou, gou!'* My pride had been hurt enough by exposing myself to him, with the man behind me preparing to do so and the one in front of me having done the same; a row of men of different ages parading themselves before a bored owl. When I finished dressing I gave him the pass. He put a little maroon stamp somewhere in amongst the last pages. It must have meant that I was fit to work.

The medical examination was over and the women on the benches outside pretended they did not know. The young white ladies clicking their heels up and down the passages showed you they knew. You held yourself together as best as you could until you vanished from their sight, and you never told anybody else about it.

Profile / Modikwe Dikobe



Modikwe Dikobe was born in 1913 at Seabe, in the Moretele district. He attended St. Cyprian school and then Albert St. School between 1924 and 1932, selling newspapers part-time. He was secretary of the 1942 Alexandra bus dispute and worked with Alexandra squatters in 1946. In 1948 he contested the advisory board election in Orlando, and in that year was secretary of ASINAMALI. In 1959 he was involved in organising African shop workers, and through the trade union, he published and wrote in a monthly journal, 'Shopworker'. His book, *The Marabi Dance* was published in 1963, and he is now retired.

At present he is working on a history of Doornfontein which will cover the history of blacks in Johannesburg based mainly on his own experiences and memories. The work reflects three processes: the movement of people off the land into the towns; a discussion of early black life in Johannesburg including the beginnings of segregation; and the shifting of people out of towns onto the land again. The piece we publish here reflects the pre-apartheid period: the days when blacks could still own restaurants etc., and is a fictional discussion of the kind that took place in a cafe that was frequented by ANC sympathisers.

Modikwe Dikobe at his home at Seabe, *photos, Paul Weinberg*

Star Café

The name *Star* sounds grand to me. It is because its owner Mr Moretsele, affectinately called Retsi, was a man of the people. He was like that when he arrived in Pretoria, and later in the golden city, some sixty years ago.

He was born in Sekhukhuneland in the late eighties. Being a country boy without education, he worked as a domestic servant where he learned to read and write. He was a follower of Matseke and Makgatho, Transvaal leaders of Transvaal National Congress. He later joined a national organisation.

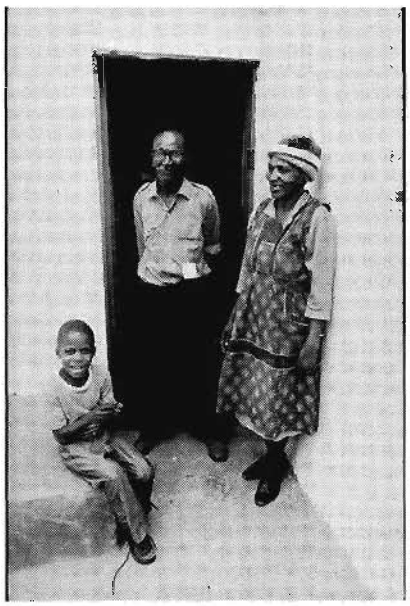
At the marital age, he lived in the slums of the city. And by hard efforts he found a house in Western Native Township. Nkadimeng of Municipal Workers Union helped him to find a house in Newclare (Western Native Township as it's better known.)

Low wages and unsuitability of jobs taught him to *undo* himself, in a way familiar to others who find out to do for themselves. He ran an unlicensed Koffie-Kar. 'I did not sleep,' he would say, I baked fat cakes on returning from work.' He was then working in commercial distributive trade.

'I sold fat cakes, to Market Street, wholesale. The workers there called me Retse. Selling fat cakes earned me better than I was receiving from my employer. I ventured into the Koffie-Kar business. A hard task, moving from place to place.

Then I applied for a licence for a cafe. I got this cafe . . . ' He stopped. An inspector was passing, then vanished into an alley of Indian fruit sellers. 'Bastard, subsidises his earnings by bribery. I am sorry for these poor creatures. They are poorly paid, but will not budge from claiming baasskap.'

Then someone arrived and took a quick table. He was reading a newspaper. 'Well Afred, how is your union working?' 'Tough job,' he replied. Municipal workers will not tolerate delay in increasing wages. They want rationing done away with.'



At home with his family

'What about negotiation?'

'Well, Retsi'. He sighed. 'You are a businessman. A union of workers can be of use to you. Recognition is to your advantage, if only you have a yellow union.'

'I don't understand.'

'What I mean, Mr Moretsele, is that the City Council is contemplating recognition, on condition it has its own chosen officials. It is in fact negotiating on those conditions.'

'Are you selling the workers?'

'I intend walking out if my secretary succumbs to the council's demands.'

The sellout took place, however, before Mr Moretsile realised it. Nkadimeng was selling down the river the refuse-removers' rights. Mr Nkadimeng was, without much ado, placed in a municipal house. And, effortlessly, he found Mr Moretsele a house.

Mr Moretsele was a staunch supporter of the left wing. He and Dr Dadoo were personal friends. His other ardent India friend was Nana Sitha, who lived in Pretoria. 'You go pass Marabastad, Retsi, me give you message. Pass to Pietersburg,' Nana Sitha would say.

'You India, no good. Friend here. Your house, me not come in front door.'

You're a friend, me no chase away, you sit by table with me.'

Moretsele was a modest man, man of the people. Job seekers took rest in Star Cafe.

Then, when Moretsele was buried, a square in Western Native Township witnessed for the first time black and white bemoaning the death of Retsi.

OBITUARY

Dead. I've left Moretsele
Stains undone
Dispossession, land-hunger
And the right to live
That you too shall carry on
From where he shall leave.

Zamani Arts

CAPE TO CAIRO

These ebony skin-deep people
With their marred but sacred soil
Shall not crumble asunder
They are what they are
They are Africa

Listen to them talk
Listen to them laugh
Listen to their volcanic stampede
They tread on their restless ancestors
They are what they are
They are Africa

Drag them to the Transkei
Tie them down to Bophutatswana
Drown them within Vendaland
But never in the British Isles
Let alone the American shores
They remain what they are
They are Africa

They overflow in prisons
They die in multitudes
They are not cremated
But buried to enrich the soil
They are what they are
They are Africa

These monstrous skyscrapers
Those hefty white torsos
Bear the black palm prints
That raised and fed them
Through ages ungrudgingly
They are what they are
They are anchored in Africa
They are Africa

Themba Mabele/Zamani Arts, Dobsonville

GRAVITY IN THE HOLE

Holes and faded letters
in my Bible
and floods of tears
on my handkerchief
Grave mud on my pick
and shining shovel
Weed and reptiles
in my backyard
Smoke in my chimney
and black pots
full of flies
and starving cockroaches
as lean as my children.
Stinging wires on my bed
and bugs fat
like factory boss.

Nhlanhla Maake/
Zamani Arts Association, Dobsonville

OCTOBER 19TH

Thunder rumbled and threatened to destroy
our painful joy.
We froze as if our bones
were carved of stones.
Our hearts beat protest against our chest
but our lips knew silence to be best.
We looked up to see our banners of peace
at half mast, torn to many a piece.
Tongues without accent whispered in despair
as thunder echoed in the air.
Our hopes in gagged tone did cry
but never to fade and die.
A war born of mind and word
shall never cease by the sword.
May such a trial be our last
and forever past,
So that those who preach our goals
may not populate gaols,
To have their human thoughts subdued
in a slough of solitude.

Nhlanhla Maake/
Zamani Arts Association, Dobsonville

JUSTICE

When things are like this
what do they say
they took him from me
they kept him in custody
they said justice would be done

After some days
they took me too
into custody
and left our child alone
our son kept on asking
where are my parents
they told him
the justice people took them away

How long will they keep
my parents
until justice is done
I wanted to know
what my papa did
they said he was a 'terrorist'
I wanted to know
what my mama did
they said
she's the wife of a 'terrorist'
then let justice be done
but
where is justice?

Dipuo Moerane/Jabavu, Soweto

Allahpoets

Two Poems by Maishe Maponya

THE GHETTO

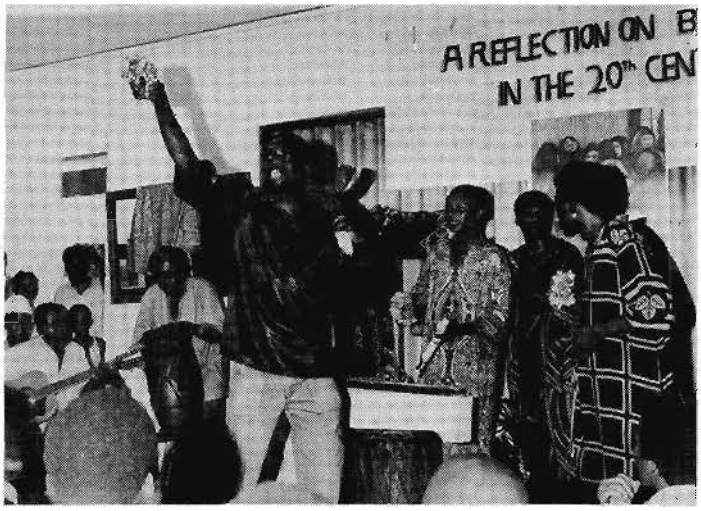
Look deep into the ghetto
And see modernised graves
Where only the living dead exist
Manacled with chains
So as not to resist.

Look deep into the ghetto
And see the streets dividing the graves
Streets watered with tears
Streets with pavements
Dyed with blood
Blood of the innocent
Streets used by the chained
To manufacture more chains daily
Look deep into the ghetto
You will see yourself
Silenced by a 99-year lease
Thus creating a class struggle
Within a struggle for survival.

Look the ghetto over
You will see smog hover
And dust choking
The lifeless-living-dead
Look the ghetto over
You will see pain and hunger
Torture and oppression

Can you hear beasts of evil
And creatures of death
Brawling and crying
To devour you
And suck the last drop
Of blood from your emaciated corpse.

Maishe Maponya



Maishe Maponya and the Allahpoets at a Dube poetry reading, *photo, Judas Ngwenya*

NO ALTERNATIVE

You either stop
Or be stopped
You either serve
Or be served
You have no alternative

Either you say no
Or you say yes
Either you move
Or be moved
You have no alternative

Either you negotiate
Or you don't
Either you fight for it
Or you don't
You have no alternative

You either oppress
Or be oppressed
You have no alternative
We will all die later!

Maishe Maponya

CYA

GAME RESERVE

I cater for all I mother the wild On my breast
They rest and rust Some see the days passing
I am packed: Lions, tigers, tigers, wolves.

I bellow like a crazy cow In a slaughter-house
Bellowing for my extinction. Elephants, ants
Big, big elephants Trampling my little body.
Soweto: Human Game Reserve.

M. Ledwaba/CYA, Diepkloof

TONGUE

If I could speak
In the tongues of angels and prophets
Perhaps my words
Would be taken
To be evidence of injustice
In you Mother Azania!

Mabuse A. Letlhage/CYA, Diepkloof

FORESEEN YET UNPREVENTED ACCIDENT

historical anno domini year
time eleventh hour
it pulled out of the tranquil station
four passenger province-carriages
fragmented into racial mini carriage-states
to fulfil goals of separatist ideology
over twenty-million passengers
number of train: twentieth century arrogance

innocent souls
unsuspecting and relaxed
babies sucking their tasteless dummies
laboriously
small girls adorning
their new dolls with tears
small boys cherishing the moment
of travelling on ever-parallel mini-state rail lines
mamas and papas chatting away
about their household chores
first, second, third . . . fifth station
always outwards and inwards
bodies carrying spiritual souls

out of twentieth arrogance station,
then it happened
it was incredible
recklessly and sadly shocking
the deafening sounds
of clattering steel and plank
the ghastly sight of babies
was far from that sight
(that sight of sucked dummies)
as they were flung
flung in the skies
like the lassies' dollies
the awry scene
not a shadow
of the lads' thinking of neat parallel lines
a concoction of legs
heads arms and torsos
strewn all over the country

topsy turvy land was never meant to look the same

Makgale J. Mahopo/Soweto

PRESSED

The urine burns and stings my small bladder
I can feel it fall out in warm small drops.
The Whites-Only toilets are nearby, so are the cops
Who are ready to swoop down upon me as if I were an adder..

My underpants are already wet,
My bladder seems to swell and about to burst
My forehead glitters with sweat, and I thirst
For an icy drink. Still the urine drips; I stand and fret.

I can smell the strong disinfectant wafting from the Whites-Only toilets,
It seems to be inviting me to come in and ease nature,
Dear Lord, how can I? I'd rather torture myself
on the pavement; still fall the large droplets.

Suddenly I cannot suppress myself anymore
The urine jets out. I feel its warmth on my skin
As it trickles down into my shoe; passers-by sneer and grin
My dignity as a man lowered like never before.

The sign stinks worse than a human stool
The warm urine irritates my dry skin.
I wonder which is worse, to commit a social sin
Or publicly piss myself like a fool.

James Twala/Meadowlands, Soweto

TO A FRIEND (PIERO)

those moments when
we bled on our knees
weighing old john's
unprepared journey
we looked deeper
into each other's eyes

we stood together
helplessly watching
our friends dragging
their talents into
mincing passages
claiming nothing in the
world of art
we were sad beyond pity

people saw us then until
a bullet cut through
the flesh and messed up minds
throwing our hopes and dreams
away
we ran, seeking refuge
in nothingness

the other day
you asked me why people
ask you why
again we bled in silence
and i asked you why

i realised the cross
in our time

Themba kaMiya/Klipspruit, Soweto

"HISTORY WILL ABSOLVE ME" FIDEL CASTRO

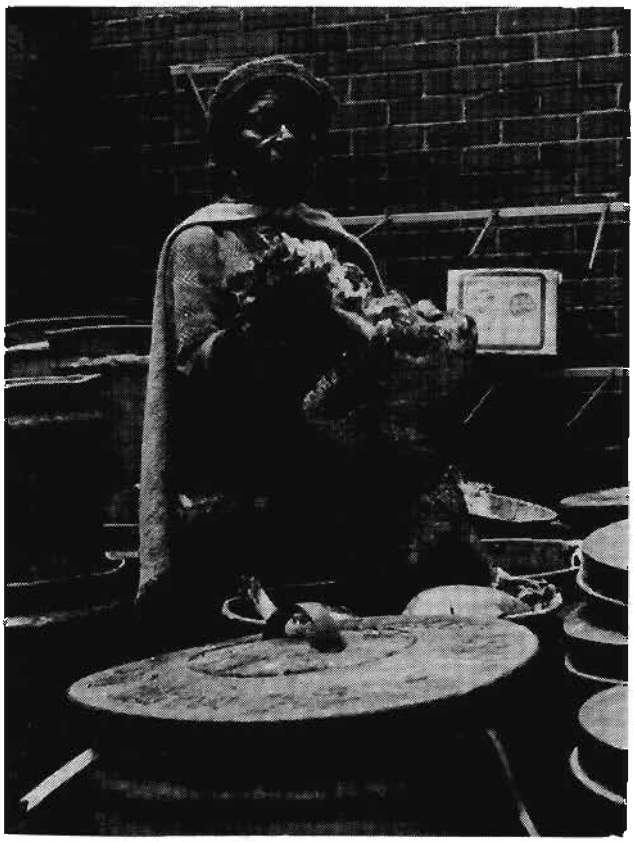
(An unfinished poem.)

Fidel,
History absolves no-one,
History takes drugs, has hallucinations,
stumbles among the corpses looking for a fix,
wakes up in the morning with a dead head
& vomits into the future.

Africa,
shaped like a skull
unknown.

Men in khaki & incongruous helmets
who stood in poses beneath the sun.
No marble columns/ to frame the action.
No clear record/ of the number dead.
Despatches in the press.
Africa – the outhouse,
unspeakable
acts.
Where any civil servant, rough trader, road
maker,
could take his pants off
feel the shit slide
softly down his legs.

But they stayed, Fidel, they stayed.
Not in the Cape, where dreams could rest
– out beyond the ring of the mountains,
annuli of distance, sunsets red as crucifix
blood.



Yeoville, *photo, Biddy Crewe*

"To preserve our doctrines in purity"
The clean holes of bullet wounds.
Men with dark beards
& the dust on their clothes
the land deep
in a dream of itself.
Beauty is annihilating, Fidel,
the beasts remained
animal eyes in the darkness
the dark rows
of sweating, serried bodies
&
"the rest of the world
was nowhere
as far as our ears
& eyes were concerned"*

Blood River,
Kitchener's camps,
Biko
beaten on the head
to die of brain damage
a blind brute of pain
bellowing
bullet wounds
wide as flowers
a child's
teargassed eyes
bleed for simple mercies
truncheon hand
at the top of its trajectory
statistics
no-one believes
politician's
dull jaws
malice
their unmoving eyes
Fidel,
Calvin's dead God
gloats in the kwashiorkor gloom
an animal
with thick flanks
waits by the river
"die aapmens
hy wat nie kan dink nie"**

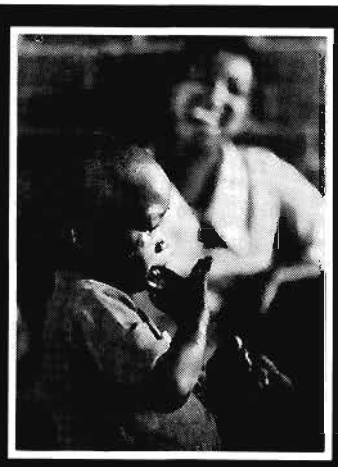
Martin Taylor/Johannesburg

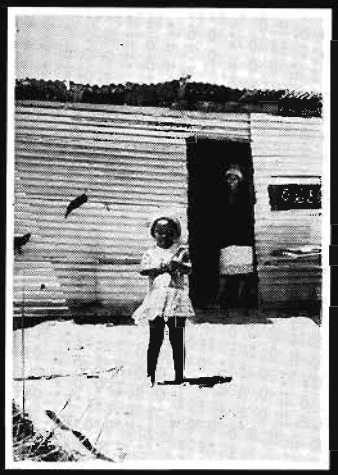
**Anna Steenkamp – Journals*
*** N.P. van Wyk Louw – Raka*

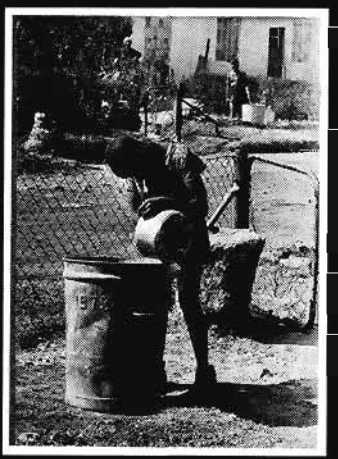
HILLBROW

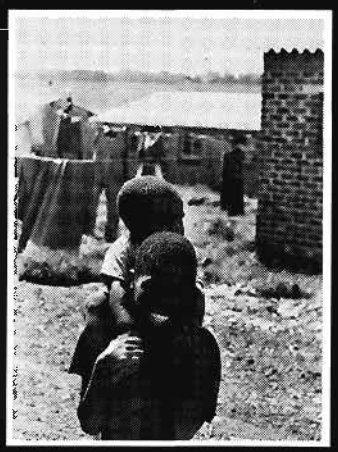
I waited in the city
and all its eyes turned down on me,
surprised.
Only old women in old slacks
do that
and walk from single room
down smelly cabbage stairs
to supermarket shopping
as old as city chapel flowerbeds
between the sunless flats.
Who would live in Building Block Land?

Patrick Taylor/Johannesburg









NGWANA WA AZANIA

A film concept by Mothobi Mutloatse/eSkom Arts ,Soweto

This film has to be shot on location as much as possible, and the musical score shall be regarded as an integral rather than minor part of this herculean task portraying the lot, or is it heap, of the Black child Azania, on celluloid. It will definitely not be an intellectual nor fancy exercise: in fact, some or most of the participants will have to volunteer to go through hell first before agreeing to make their contributions, because basically, making a film documentary even on a small aspect of the black man, is sheer agony. One cannot feign pain, it has to be felt again to put that stamp of authenticity on any documentary, seeing we have no archives to refer to. Again, much of the documentary's success will depend on imagination, improvisation and the artistry of all those involved in this project. The director – at least the bum who decides to take up this seemingly impractical proposition – will have to be a strong, patient, open-minded, non-commercial, un-technical artist. He will be expected to do casting himself from the camera-man up to the last 'extra'. He will have to read the synopsis, which in many ways is also the shooting script, to everybody at a discussion meeting where, naturally, he will have to be grilled by everybody. Suggestions, deletions, additions or even alterations to the synopsis, will have to be made. Concerning the musical score, all the musicians will be required to give their own interpretations of how they view the project, and thereafter agree on the score.

• The future of the black child, the recalcitrant Azanian child in South Africa, is as bright as night and this child, forever uprooted, shall grow into a big sitting duck for the uniformed gunslinger.

• From ages two to four he shall ponder over whiteness and its intrigue. From ages five to eight he shall prise open his jacket-like ears and eyes to the stark realisation of his proud skin of ebony. From ages nine to fifteen he shall harden into an aggressive victim of brainbashing and yet prevail. From ages sixteen to twenty-one he shall eventually graduate from a wavering township candle into a flickering life-prisoner of hate and revenge and hate in endless fury. This motherchild shall be crippled mentally and physically for experimental purposes by concerned quack statesmen parading as philanthropists.

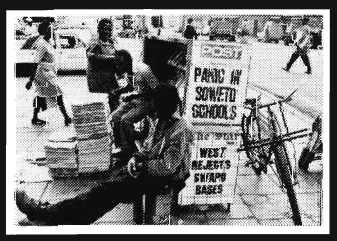
• This motherchild shall be protected and educated free of state subsidy in an enterprising private business asylum by Mr. Nobody. This motherchild shall mother the fatherless thousands and father boldly the motherless million pariahs. This nkgonochild shall recall seasons of greed and injustice to her war-triumphant and liberated Azachilds. This mkhuluchild shall pipesmoke in the peace and tranquility of liberation, and this landchild of the earth shall never be carved up ravenously again and the free and the wild and the proud shall but live together in their original own unrestricted domain without fear of one another, and this waterchild shall gaily bear its load without a fuss like any other happy mother after many suns and moons of fruitlessness in diabolical inhumanity.

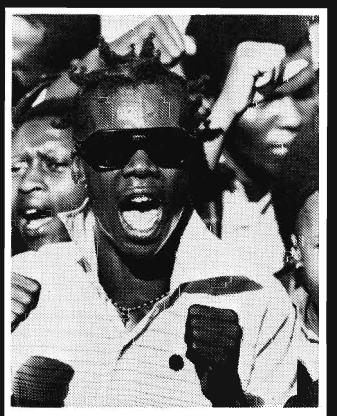
• This gamble-child of zwêpe shall spin coins with his own delicate life to win the spoils of struggle that is life itself. This child of despair shall shit in the kitchen; shit in the lounge; shit in the bedroom-cum-lounge-cum-kitchen; he shall shit himself dead; and shall shit everybody as well in solidarity and in his old-age shall dump his shit legacy for the benefit of his granny-childs: this very ngwana of redemptive suffering; this umtwana shall but revel in revealing off-beat, creative, original graffiti sugar-coated with sweet nothings like:

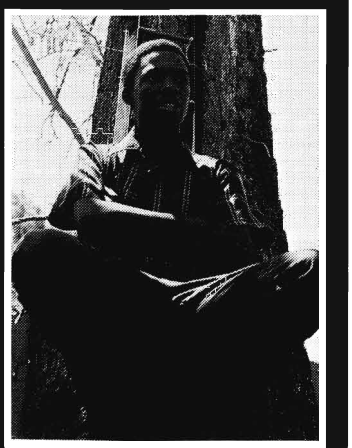
re tlaa ba etsa power/re-lease Mandela/azikhwelwa at all costs/we shall not kneel down to white power/release Sisulu/ jo' ma se moer/black power will be back tonight/release or charge all detainees/msunuwakho/down with booze/ Mashinini is going to be back with a bang/to bloody hell with bantu education/ don't shoot – we are not fighting/Azania eyethu/masende akho/majority is coming soon/freedom does not walk it sprints/inkululeko ngoku!

• This child born in a never-ending war situation shall play marbles seasonably with TNTs and knife nearly everyone in sight in the neighbourhood for touch and feel with reality, this child of an insane and degenerated society shall know love of hatred and the eager teeth of specially-trained biting dogs and he will speak animatedly of love and rage under the influence of glue and resistance.

• This marathon child shall trudge barefooted, thousands of kilometres through icy and windy and stormy and rainy days and nights to and from rickety church-cum-stable-cum-classrooms with bloated tummy to strengthen him for urban work and toil in the goldmines, the diamond mines, the coal mines, the platinum







mines, the uranium mines so that he should survive countless weekly rockfalls, pipe bursts, and traditional faction fights over a meal of maiza that has been recommended for family planning.

• This child of raw indecision and experimentation shall sell newspapers from street corners and between fast moving cars for a dear living breadwinning instead of learning about life in free and compulsory school, and shall provide the capitalistic country with the cheapest form of slavery the labourglobe has ever known and the governor of the reserve bank shall reward him with a thanks-for-nothing-thanks-for-enriching-the-rich kick in the arse for having flattened inflation alone hands-down.

• This child of the tunnels shall occasionally sleep malunde for an on-the-spot research into the effects of legalised separation of families and he shall find his migrant long-lost father during a knife-duel in a men's hostel and his domestic mother shall he ultimately embrace passionately in a cul de sac in the kitchen in a gang-bang.

• This child of concrete shall record and computerise how the boss shouts and swears publicly at his heroically shy father-boy and how the madam arrogantly sends his mother-girl from pillar to bust. He shall photograph how the superior doctor addresses his unkempt mother in untailored talk as if mother-stupid had conceived a baboon-child.

• This observant child shall taste its first balanced meal in an i.c.u., and in the very intensive care unit shall he be revived to further life and misery and malnutrition in this immensely-wealthy land to loosen up the bones down to their perforated marrow.

• This child of the donga shall watch in jubilation and ecstasy and ire as its godforsaken, godgiven home called squatter camp is razed through its permission down to the ground by demolishing bulldozers lately referred to as front-enders.

• This child of nowhere shall of his own free will join the bandwagon and ravaza its own Botshabelo to lighten the merciless soil conservationists' burden for a place in the sun of uncertainty, he shall show absolute respect for his elders with a hard kierie blow across the grey head and shall be unanimously nominated for a nobel peace prize for his untold, numerous contributions to human science at a local mortuary.

• This child born into a callous and too individualistically-selfish society shall be considered sane until further notice by psychopaths masquerading as men of law. He shall be an unmatched hero with an undecided following, having paralysed parents and preachers alike with his frankness and willingness not only to whisper nor speak about wanting to be free but to bloody well move mountains to be free!

• This child of evictions shall sleep in toilets while its off-spring cross the borders for possible m.t.

• This child of rags to rags and more rags to riches school uniform tatters shall quench his thirst with dishwater in the suburbs and also with methylated spirits in the deadendstreet camps to communicate with the gods.

• This child shall breastfeed her first baby before her seventeenth birthday and be highly pleased with motherhood lacking essential fatherhood. This child of uneasiness shall trust nobody, believe in no one, even himself, except perhaps when he's sober. This ghettochild shall excel in the pipi-olympics with gold and bronze medals in raping grannies with every wayward erection and eviction from home resulting from ntate's chronic unemployment and inability to pay the hovel rent.

• This growing child of the kindergarten shall psychologically avoid a school uniform admired telegraphically by uniformed gunfighters of maintenance of chaos and supremacy. He shall smother moderation good bye and throttle reason in one hell of a fell swoop, and the whole scheming world shall cheer him up to the winning post with its courage in the mud and its heart in its pink arse. This child of dissipation shall loiter in the shebeen in earnest search for its parents and shall be battered and abused to hell and gone by its roving parents when reunited in frustration in an alleyway.

• This child of bastardised society and bastard people-in-high-office and colour-obsession and paranoid of communism and humanism, shall break through and snap the chain of repression with its bare hands, and this child, with its rotten background and slightly bleak future shall however liberate this nuclear crazy world with Nkulunkulu's greatest gift to man: ubuntu.

• This lambschild shall remind the nation of the oft-remembered but never used ISINTU:

Mangwana o tshwara thipa ka fa bogaleng.

a story

by Nape 'a Motana

illustrated

by Richard Jack

the poet in love

Lesetja, a lad of Mamelodi, is a poet. He loves parties, wine and women. Apart from a cluster of girls who are casual or free-lance lovers, he has a steady partner. She is Mathilda or Tilly. She is conspicuously pretty. Some cynics openly say he is showing her off like a piece of jewelry.

Lesetja is popular among other Mamelodi poets. He reads his stuff at all kinds of parties and shebeens. The secret of his instant popularity is simple: he has as material what people will have an opinion on, like or dislike; what is on the people's lips. He often argues: 'Why should I bother about birds, bees and trees while my people are trapped in the ghetto!'

Poetry earns him fame, more company and, sometimes, free liquor. Recently one of the trendy shebeens, *The Yellow House*, heard him reading to ecstatic patrons:

wet sunday
leaves blue monday
in the lurch;
babalaaz chews my brain
like bubble-gum;
how can I bubble
when fermented bottles
hobble me?
I am boss of the moment —
Baas can go to hell!

Some of his friends skin him alive for 'grooving through poetry'. He tells them that an artist does not live in a vacuum; that an artist reflects his society. His punches are sometimes wild: 'Those who see flowers when corpses abound are eunuchs!'

But his hectic life is not to last. It reaches a climax when, to the dismay of many socialites, he leaves Tilly to settle for a plain woman like Mokgadi. To be frank, Mokgadi is somewhere near ugliness. Lesetja has been stupidly in love with Tilly. He admits he has been stupid, unable to see beyond his arms as they embraced Tilly.

His friend, Madumetja remarks once:

'You are a true poet.'

'Why?'

'Because you see a bush for a bear, a beauty for an ugly duckling.'

'Do you say Mokgadi is ugly?'

'This confirms how true a poet you are. Tell me, why did you "boot" Tilly, such a beauty of a model?'

'Look here Madumetja, I am responsible for everything that I do. Are you playing my godfather?'

Lesetja is ruffled. Madumetja is amused. The argument ends in a cul-de-sac. Neither will throw in the towel.

The naked truth is: Madumetja is right. Lesetja is a poet. He is romantic about Mokgadi. He imagines he is in love with Miss Afrika. His poetic eyes scoop nothing but beauty from this lass who does not deserve a second look.

Mokgadi, whom Lesetja dubs 'black diamond', is a university student. She is coal black while he is lighter in complexion. He often brushes her smooth cheek with the back of his palm and romanticises: 'Pure black womanhood from the heart of Afrika!' She giggles, displaying a set of snow-white teeth which contrast beautifully with her ebony face.

One day as he marvels at her somewhat rare complexion, she confesses to him. She tells him her biological father is a Zairean whom the government repatriated with scores of 'foreign Bantus' in the early 1960s.

Mokgadi has a broad, nearly flat nose, typically Zairean. Her mouth is small, presumably like her mother's. Pitch-black-and-white eyes seem to bulge. Her waist is thicker as if she wears indigenous beads. Her shoulders are wide and nearly round, and do not go well with her small breasts.

But Lesetja loves her passionately. His sensitive eyes see nothing but a 'black diamond'. That the secret of art lies in orchestrating the commonplace and unrelated things into one solid coherent piece of beauty, here applies to Lesetja, one hundred percent.

Lesetja meets Mokgadi in the 1970s when black students, thinkers, politicians, writers, artists and theologians are exposed to the upsurge of Black Consciousness. Drama, poetry and art are vibrant. Lesetja is now wiser. He sees beyond his love-making arms. He sees beyond parties and shebeens.

He mixes with knowledgeable people. He reads books until he comes across and loves Frantz Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks*. The spiritual metamorphosis spurs him to be a committed poet. He spits fire and venom. He dislikes artists who, while they eat hunger, blood and sweat, vomit fruit salads.

Lesetja changes. He is no more a poet of parties. He baffles Tilly but she thinks he will come back. He is no longer that bohemian poet who has been lionised by fun lovers. Patrons at *The Yellow House* cannot understand why he is scarce, keeping to himself. Shebeen queens miss his incisive humorous verse. What has gone wrong with the poet laureate of Mamelodi? Nobody can furnish the answers.

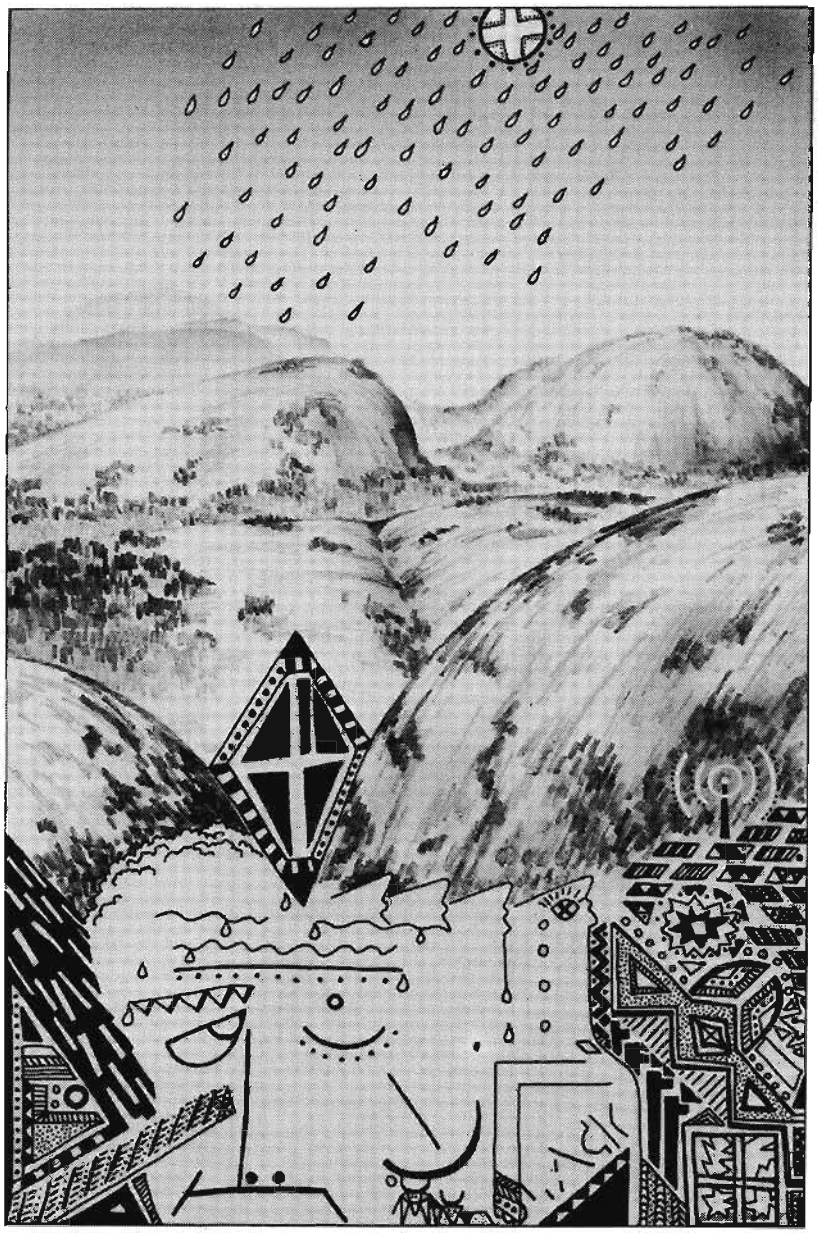
'One must not play with words while Afrika is ablaze,' he harangues those who confront him over his 'new life'. He discovers that indulgence in pleasure has been a multiple land-mine on the road towards ideal creativity or political freedom. He hates over-indulgence. He sheds a handful of lovers. He finds them to be either superficial or immature. 'Parasites and staffriders!' he thinks aloud. He even feels a

'One must not play with words while Africa is ablaze'

Spiritual metamorphosis spurs him to be a committed poet. He spits fire and venom. He dislikes artists who, while they eat hunger, blood and sweat, vomit fruit salads.

strong compulsion to live like a hermit, but he still loves the city hubbub which affords him some raw material.

He looks at Tilly through a different pair of eyes. She is only a beauty, a cabbage-headed non-white model who battles against nature. Sympathy replaces love. 'No! it was not love but lust!' he corrects himself. Tilly has been fit only for a mere 'release of manly venom', he reflects, with bitterness and built. He recalls what he read from *Black Skins, White Masks*, that women of Tilly's ilk are a disgrace because they want to bleach the black race. They clamour to imprison black souls in white skins. Sis!



He used to visit Tilly thrice a week. Now he cuts the ration drastically to nil. She first disguises her worry and anger through the hackneyed 'Long time no see.'

'Inspiration, darling.'

'Inspiration for what?'

'That's when I am writing poems. I must not be disturbed.'

'Have I become a disturbance? That's news.'

Lesetja manages to defuse an otherwise explosive situation. He shuts his mouth and talks about something else.

She later suspects out of feminine instinct that he keeps another woman closer to his heart. Jealousy drives her beserk. Worked up like a hen whose chicken has been snatched by a hawk, she marches to Lesetja's room. She knocks and barks like a black-jack. The door is not locked. She storms in at the speed of a Boeing when it takes off. She is ready for a fight, sweating and shivering.

Her bloodshot eyes scrutinise the bed hurriedly. There is Lesetja lying! No woman next to him! Maybe the devil of a woman has hidden under the bed or in the wardrobe when THEY heard her advancing footsteps. He is alone, surrounded by pencils, drafts of poems, scribblers, books and literary magazines. A Concise Oxford Dictionary lies on his chest as he gazes at Tilly, as if saying: 'And now?' Anger at her intrusion is tempered by her pitiful state. His unexpected coolness frustrates her pent-up emotions. She is benumbed and she just sobs and sobs while he feigns pity. For thirty minutes they never say a word to each other. He fumbles with the writing material, packing books and unpacking them. She holds him at ransom with her rivulets of tears. She stands up abruptly and leaves dejectedly. Their roads part.

Lesetja feels light, as if somebody has taken a coal bag off his back. He reads voraciously and spends a lot of time doing some soul-searching. His writingcraft mellows with intensive practice. Madumetja has been visiting him, perhaps more out of curiosity than friendship. He pokes fun at him: 'It seems you make it your business to caress books while WE fondle dames and drink the happy waters.' He asks Madumetja to shut his big mouth or make use of his long legs.

He knows and sees what he wants. He moves between blinkers. He attends art exhibitions, poetry readings and more funerals.

One evening he is thunderously applauded when he reads to a small audience at the local church:

Black beauty
The soot that you wear
is Afrika's proud
epidermis
My tongue and cranium
exhume
from your rich bosom,
a black diamond,

The thrilled poetry lovers congratulate Lesetja and three other poets after the reading. Mokgadi a student of African Literature, is stunned and stirred, especially by Lesetja's poem. This epitome of an African woman has a chitchat with Lesetja, not knowing that she is talking herself into the poet's heart.

MESSAGE TO JOBURG NORTH

You –
with your cream-white complexion
about to invent
a wonderful machine
to lift you from bed
and stand you in your shoes
Look under your feet:
For you're standing on a people
who'll soon shatter your complacency
and turn off
your electric carving-knife.

Richie Levin/Swaziland

PART III NO. 1

The dark angel took seven stars
And flung them to the crimson hell-flares

This quickened the anger of the crowd,
Who surged, helpless humanity, against the
gaudy podium

And virile cowboys start whipping
The air is whipped till it stinks
This happened some years ago

And, surely not, blood in thick disastrous gouts
From you yourself
Quick over your sweating body.

There will be lines of men with machine-guns,
bombed villages,
A crate in the shopping centre
Into which waste is flung.

Behold, if there is no God, I am He.
Give me my whip.

Peter Stewart/Lesotho

PART III No. 2.

I loved you like the diamonds
That glistened through wet mosses

Cointreau, the liqueur of oranges, sweet and high,
On a tube train

And the cities grind on
The cities grind on

And on my bed I toss, like a carcass of meat
turned on the spit

And in the mine compounds
And in the hearts and in the corner
In the centre five thin uncles play dice for money,
with abandon

Joshua Mfolo was murdered with an axe on
the 26 of February

And after the oldest tourist train in the world,
Fleas on the seats, six minutes,

This is the ocean
I loved you in the ocean, for my love for you
vanished, evaporated, I didn't love you any
more
And I drowned

And divided into many human beings
Each with social class, in some part of the
world, with incomes, status, virtue, and the
lack of these

Who are you now?
I will love you because
I do not love you yet
Because of the good news that came when
hunger had helped to reduce the remaining
family to painfully subdued frustrations and
permanent tension.

You are my neighbour.

Peter Stewart/Lesotho

THE SMALL TRADER

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

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

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

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

Kelwyn Sole/Namibia

BIRTH OF A PEOPLE

Tell them
These are the joys
Of war
The ecstacy of parturition

Joys
Of our new life
Springing
From marching in the heat
Drinking
Cool fountain water
Destroying life
Bent on destroying us
Then dying in the sun
To free those who must live

Bathing our battered souls
In the sweet stenches
Of sex
Purification
In our gory glory
Quenching our thirst
With the warm blood
Of man
Putrefaction
Of the warm bodies
Of man

Our guns
Ejaculate death
Our guns spew love
Of a new people
Birth in death
Love in death
A people born of death
A people MUST be born
In death

Zanemvula Mda/Lesotho

WHEN THEY COME BACK

When they come back
From call-up
Our sons look strange
Empty mouths without words
Deep eyes, gashes
Deepened by bayonets of fear
Puffing nostrils puffing out
Impacts of close shaves
And when they smile
They smile the smile
Of the army
When it is not armed

These children look strange
Trailed by an odour
An odour of the army

Julius Chingono/Salisbury, Zimbabwe

Lino-cut, P.C.P. Malumise/Rorkes Drift

DEATH IS NOT ONLY DEATH FOR THE DEAD BUT IT IS DEATH FOR THE LIVING

Clad in Black
She knelt beside a coffin:
Inside, plastered in wood, lay her husband.
She mourned for a man gone
She wailed for an African son gone
She cried for a future escaped.

She counted sons and daughters in schools
She counted daughters and sons in the cradle
She spelled the name of the child at the breast
And wondered what next to do.

The Priest's voice: 'Madam, God save your
wounded soul.'
No hope of God could bandage the wound
securely.
The hazards of bleak winds in winter ravaged
And the hunger of numberless children infected
The prospect of years ahead, her breadwinner
gone.

S.M. Tlali/Lesotho

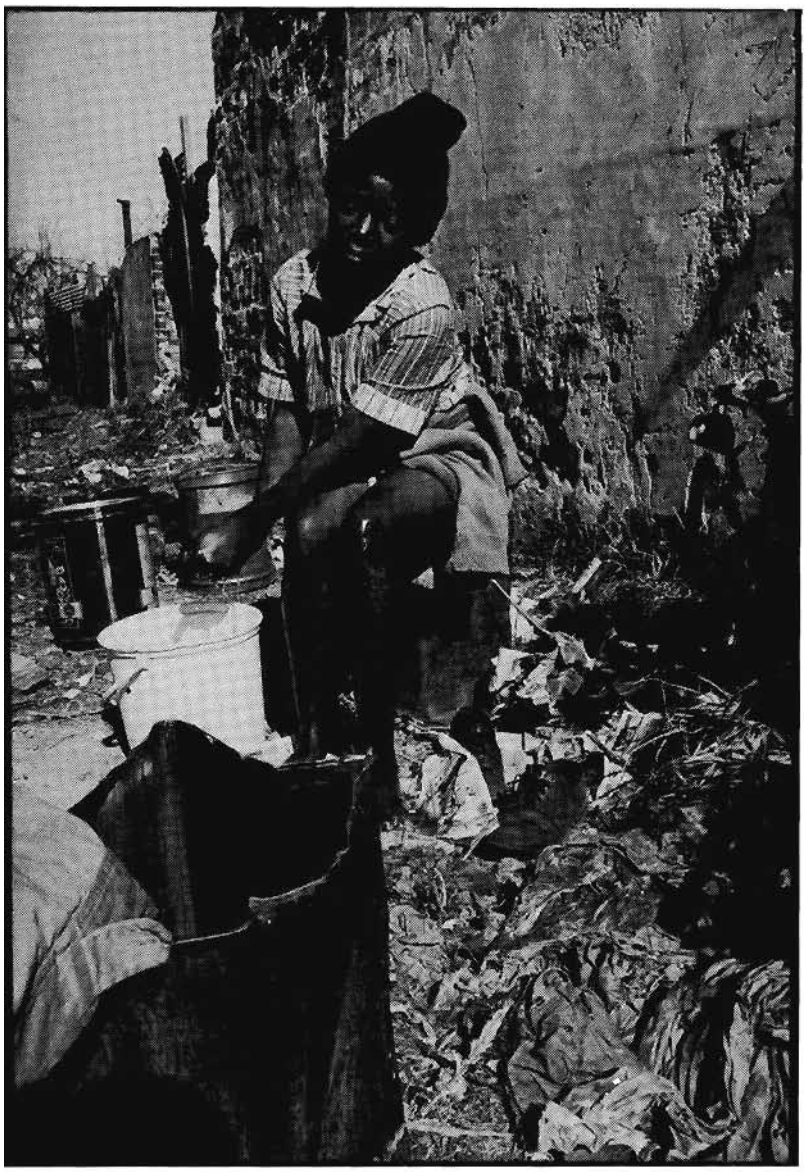
SOUNDS ARE NO MORE

Sounds are no more
Explosions of seed pods
In regeneration
But explosions of bombs
In degeneration
In our khaki bushes.

Julius Chingono/Salisbury, Zimbabwe

Behind the Lens: JUDAS NGWENYA

The first in a series of interviews with *Staffrider* photographers and graphic artists about themselves and their work, and how they see it in relation to cultural struggle as a whole.



Kliptown backyard

I started taking pictures in 1968 while I was still at school. Someone lent me a polaroid and when he took it back I was very sad. I bought an instamatic and started using it for black and white pictures. I photographed children, parties, school-groups. I was still learning, so I didn't charge professional prices, I just said, "If you've got 25c it's O.K."

In 1970 I bought a good camera. I started using colour, and taking photographs of adults: parties, weddings, funerals, competitions. I charged 75c a print. At this time I was working at Checkers as a packer, so all the photography was done in my spare time.

I didn't think that commercial photography would take my aims as a photographer further, but I used the money to buy photography books so I could study.

In 1973 I resigned from Checkers and started free-lance work. By now I was well-known as a wedding/party photographer. But I was tired of weddings. I wanted to learn printing and more advanced techniques, so that I would be competent enough to take more relevant pictures, and I started a correspondence course in photography.

One day, a few years later, I was taking my granny to Baragwanath hospital. I had my camera with me. It was about 10 a.m. I saw a lot of children shouting 'Power'. I didn't know what was happening . . . I wanted to take photographs but I was scared and confused. There were a lot of police but something kept telling me, if I'm a photographer I *must* take these pictures. I heard taxis hooting, and then I saw dead children on stretchers being carried out of the taxis. I was helping to carry the stretchers to the hospital but at the same time I was seeing colours, colours everywhere . . . Men in white coats, nurses in blue-striped uniforms, some in green and red stripes, men in white and blue overalls. And I kept thinking, 'I've got a colour film in my camera'. But I also felt I must help in the situation, and when the hippos came I just ran to the car. I was very scared. By this time I had lost my grandmother: I only found her the following day at Dube police station. This was my experience of June 16th 1976. It was a Wednesday . . .

I wanted pictures so that I could look back at events and see clearly what had been happening. But I also knew that when I took the film to be processed I probably wouldn't get it back. I now know that it's not easy to take photographs in those situations. But Magubane, Moffat Zungu, Ralph Ndawo . . . they did it. And I've learned about how important photographs are in documenting people's lives. They remind us of our history: what's happened before and what's going to happen in the future.

In 1978 I got a diploma in photography from a correspondence course I'd been doing. The diploma's important to me because it has proved to me that I understand some of the theory of my work.

Then I joined the photography workshop at the Open School. That was where I finally learned how to develop and print my own work. I won a pocket camera in a competition: this encouraged me a lot. If you're taking pictures, you need people to see your work and react to it, otherwise you don't make progress. To take pictures is to learn, and to see what the lives of the people are like: most are suffering, though some aren't. People have very different existences, and photographs

'I wanted pictures so that I could look back at events and see clearly what had been happening.'

'Where must we live? We have no place to sleep . . . can't get job . . . /Doornfontein

Returning migrants

show that.

Even now I need advice and criticism from other photographers. I need to talk with old-timers like Magubane, Robert Tshabalala, Ndawo. Although I want to avoid taking similar pictures to, say, Magubane. That's why I buy books of other photographers' work: to see how they operate. Because I want to create things that are my own, not copies of someone else's work.

So it's a learn and teach process: now I'm working on a youth project with YWCA, teaching kids (10 – 15 year olds) to take pictures with instamatics. Which is where I started long ago.

The Slumbering Spirit

A short story by Jayapraga Reddy
illustrated by Mike van Niekerk

Terry set off for the shops as usual. It was only seven in the morning but already the day was hot, the relentless heat building up slowly. By noon it would make work impossible and lie upon them all like something heavy and tangible. He kicked a stone on the pathway. From the kitchen, his mother saw him and she thrust her head out of the window. 'Terry' she warned, 'those shoes must last for a year, remember! And hurry up! Or you'll be late for school!'

She disappeared and resumed her early morning tasks of preparing breakfast and packing eight school lunches.

Terry quickened his steps but outside the gate he slowed down. He hated Mondays. After the carefree freedom and fun of the weekends, Mondays seemed a bad mistake. He and his friends played games of high adventure in the huge storm water pipes. Or they would go exploring the whole of Durban. Sometimes on a Sunday they would go to the other side of town to the old Indian temple. There would usually be a wedding on and they would sit down to a mouth-watering meal of rice and pungent vegetable curries served on banana leaves. Ah yes, weekends meant living the way you wanted to. Running with the wind, dreaming in the grass and smelling the sun hot and sweet on one's skin. He sighed regretfully. But it was a Monday and there was school. He would have to hurry.

At the corner, he paused. Someone had called, 'Hey boy!'

It was old Miss Anderson, the white woman, who lived at the end of the street.

In those days the Group Areas Act was slowly trying to sort out the different races in the interest of separate development. But in the meantime, whites, 'coloureds', Indians and even a few Chinese, lived cheek by jowl in the city. In their neighbourhood there were a handful of whites. And Miss Anderson was one of them. She lived all alone with a nondescript mongrel and two old cats. Her sole relative was a sister, much younger than herself, who lived somewhere in Canada. Thrice a week an African maid came in to do the cleaning. Nobody in the street knew much about Miss Anderson. She lived quietly and kept very much to herself. It was rumoured that she was very rich but no one could be sure of that.

Now Terry glanced enquiringly towards the stoep where the old woman stood. She motioned to him to wait. She hobbled towards the gate on her stick. The dog followed tiredly.

'Young man, could you get me a few things from the shop?' she asked in a thin, quavering voice.

He nodded. She held out the money. 'Buy yourself some sweets from the change,' she said. 'Just get me some bread, cheese and half a dozen eggs.'

He took the money with murmured thanks. She was so very old and frail, he thought. Her hair was snowy white and this gave her an added air of fragility.

When he returned, she was sitting on the stoep in a rocking-chair. He took the things to her which she accepted with a quivering smile. 'Thank you, my boy. You're very kind.'

He went home but did not mention the errand he had done.

The following afternoon on his way to the shop, he paused to glance at the house. She sat there, waiting for him, rocking gently. She beckoned to him. The dog lay languidly at her feet, and wagged his tail half-heartedly. Terry went up the few steps and stood beside her. The red stoep was clean and shining. It had been polished that day; he knew, for he could still smell the polish. Roses grew in wild profusion over the white lattice which partly screened the verandah. He noticed the unusual quiet It was alien to him. Their house, with ten children, resounded with laughter and noise. He wondered what it was like inside.

'I looked for you this morning,' she said.

He explained that he went to the shop in the mornings only on Mondays. She nodded.

'I see. Well, would you mind stopping by on your way, just to get me a few things?'

'Alright. I don't mind,' he agreed casually.

'You are so kind, you are so different from the other "coloured" boys from these parts,' she remarked.

He shifted a little uncomfortably, for he was unused to praise. Different? In what way was he different? He watched her fumbling in her purse with hands that were knotted with arthritis.

'There, keep the change,' she said.

When he returned she was there, waiting. 'Sit down boy,' she said, motioning him to a chair.

He shook his head, saying he preferred to stand. He glanced anxiously at the street, hoping none of his friends would see him. He dreaded the curious prying and merciless teasing which was bound to follow. He stood there awkwardly as she tried to draw him out.

'What's your name, boy?' she asked.

He told her.

'How old are you and how many are there in the family?'

He told her that he was eleven years old and that there were ten children in the family.

'Ten!' she exclaimed, incredulous. 'Now that's a big family! Are they all in school?'

No, he explained haltingly. There was the baby and his eldest sister, Pam, who worked. Pam would leave them soon, he went on. She was going to get

married.

'Ah! That's interesting,' she remarked with a gleam of interest in her eyes. 'Ten, that's a lot of children. There were just two of us in our family. Just my sister and me. She went away, years ago, to live in Canada. She writes to me. Do you collect stamps? You could have all the stamps.'

Stamps? What would he do with stamps? he wondered, puzzled. She rambled on, telling him all about her sister. He listened politely, but his glance strayed towards the street again. The African vendor trundled up and down idly with his ice-cream cart, tinkling his bell mechanically. He had gone up and down the street three times already. He was bored and tired. Just a few more hours and he could pack it up for the day. Now he paused meaningfully outside the old woman's gate. But the old woman took no notice of him. She went on chatting animatedly. Terry listened with half an ear. It really did not matter. She spoke of times and events beyond his experience. Instead he allowed his thoughts to drift. The vendor moved on. In his mind's eye he could picture the scene at home. The vendor would deliberately pause outside their gate and ring his bell persistently. His mother would try grimly to ignore him and the clamouring demands of the children. Finally, exasperated and annoyed, she would give in. Marching to the gate, she would pluck her purse from her bosom and rail at the poor vendor.

'Man, why can't you move on, eh? Do you think money grows on trees? If you come back here tomorrow, you'll be sorry! Understand? Just remember that! You hear me!'

But undaunted, he always returned, for he was sure of business.

There was no stopping the old woman. She just went on and on.

'I must be going now,' Terry began hesitantly.

'It's been so nice talking to you,' she gushed.

At home he shared the sweets he had bought.

'Where did you get the money from?' his mother demanded sharply.

He hung his head bashfully. 'Miss Anderson gave me,' he mumbled.

They stared at him in astonishment. His mother stood arrested in the middle of kneading the dough. Pam turned from the sink, her hands dripping suds.

'Miss Anderson!' his mother exclaimed.

Terry fidgeted, embarrassed. 'Yes. She asked me to get her some things from the shop,' he explained. 'She said I must keep the change.'

'So Miss Anderson is your friend,' Pam teased.

The others sniggered. 'Be quiet!' his mother rapped out sharply.

She turned to Terry and waggled a finger. 'Now just you be careful, Terry. I don't want you getting mixed up with the whites. I know them too well. So don't you go accepting any money, see?'

He shook his head, perplexed. 'But Ma,' he began.

'There are no buts!' she said in a firm and unmistakeable tone.

'But Ma, he's only doing her a favour,' protested Pam. 'What harm is there?'

Her mother turned upon her sharply. 'You know nothing about this! Get back to your work!'

So it was a closed subject at home. But running errands for Miss Anderson became routine. One afternoon she invited him in for tea. There was a home-made jam tart and a delicious lemon cake.

'I hope you like it, I baked it myself,' she said.

But he couldn't do more than nibble. He felt too ill at ease. She seemed unaware of his discomfort and rambled on. He swallowed and gulped his tea. It was hot in the room with everything closed and airless. When he had drunk his tea, it was a relief to escape. In the street he took in deep breaths of the hot, dusty air.

But tea with Miss Anderson also became routine. With time, he lost his initial awkwardness and taciturnity. He found he could talk to her; indeed, that he enjoyed telling her things. At home, his mother was too tired and work-worn to spare them encouragement and praise, But Miss Anderson had time. He told her of the family, of life at school and of the games he played with his friends. She would listen, often advising him sagely, sometimes gently discourag-

ing him from doing anything dangerous or foolish. She, in turn, was rewarded by his patient attention while she reminisced about the old days, and the happy times of her youth. Sometimes though, the adult in her irked him, for it reminded him too acutely that he was still a child. Like when she gushed patronisingly, 'You are such a good boy!'

There was the time when he happened to mention that Pam was looking for a place of her own. She considered him thoughtfully for a moment and then said, 'How many rooms does she need? I could let her have two.'

And that was how Pam and her husband came to live with the old woman, much against his mother's wishes.

So the next few years rolled on. He no longer did any errands for Miss Anderson as Pam took over. The woman grew frailer and less mobile. Her body, stiffened by arthritis, made it difficult for her to move, even onto the stoep. The dog too grew old and enfeebled. He would lie on the floor near the old woman's bed where she could reach out and touch him. Often Terry would watch her as she painfully penned her letters to her sister.

Pam did a lot to help the old woman. She cooked her meals and tended to her when she was ill. Soon the old woman grew too ill to leave her bed. Terry knew it would not be long, and taking Pam's advice, he stayed away.

When at last it was all over, Pam informed the old woman's lawyer, as she had been instructed to do. A telegram was sent to the sister in Canada. At the funeral only the lawyer, Terry and his family were present. His mother justified her presence by saying that no person should be buried unmourned and no funeral should go unwitnessed.

A few days later, the sister arrived. She was healthy and energetic and got down to the business of sorting things out. She was calm and displayed no grief.

'I must thank you and your brother for being good to her,' she said to Pam. 'She used to write to me about how good your brother was to her.'

She stayed for two weeks, during which time she packed everything and put the house up for sale. The lawyer was to handle the sale. She allowed Pam to stay on till she found a place.

And then on her last day, she said to Terry, 'I would like you to have the dog. Every boy loves a dog. I'm sure you'll take good care of him.'

Terry stared at her, speechless. Every boy loves a dog. But an old dog who was too tired to even wag his tail and who moved so stiffly?

That night everyone sat around the kitchen table, strangely silent. His mother was doing the ironing and Pam was washing up. Terry was doing his homework with the dog lying mutely at his feet. Pam turned from the sink.

'To think she did not even leave us a pot plant!' she observed indignantly.

She resumed her washing up with renewed vigour, unable to conceal her disgust.

'I told you, didn't I? Never trust a white. They worry about their own skins, not the next man. Let this be a lesson to you,' she warned.

'But Ma', Pam began.

'Weren't expecting anything, were you?' her mother demanded sharply.

Pam didn't answer. She was too angry, too disillusioned to answer. Besides, she didn't think she could answer that question honestly.

Terry reached under the table and patted the dog. He moved his tail limply and raised his head to lick his hand. Somehow, he found it oddly comforting. Terry wished they wouldn't talk about it. It was his first experience of pain. He got up and left the kitchen. The dog followed. Already he was a shadow, inevitably tagging behind him.

Outside, the night was quiet and cool. In his heart, he knew they were wrong. He could have told them that, had he been articulate enough. Miss Anderson had given him something, something more precious than anything material. Years later, he was to recognise it for what it really was. But standing there, in the cool night air, with a lift of the heart, he remembered a gentle old woman on a sun-warmed stoep. She had given him time and friendship, and something else which his fourteen-year-old mind was too young to analyse. It was an awakening, an awakening of the slumbering spirit to mutual sharing and communication and sympathetic understanding. And that was something he would carry with him for a lifetime.

Yes, he would take good care of the dog. A dog knew about trust and friendship. Even if he was just an ordinary and nondescript mongrel.

Poetry/ Cape Town

A SONG OF AFRICANIZATION

I'd like to trace my progress from my
background: liberal, classic;
I used to read Houghton, now I read
Legassick.

My journey from the truths we've learnt
by rote;
I used to be a Prog, now I don't vote.

I've broadened my concerns beyond the
shrinking rand;
I used to dig the Stones, now I'm into Brand.

I've adopted a new theory, a new set of beliefs:
I used to root for Chelsea, now I back the Chiefs.

I'm now of this continent, a native, an insider;
I used to write for Contrast, now its for
Staffrider.

My theories have brought understanding of
our paralysis;
I used to look at race, now I'm sold on class
analysis.

But all I've learnt is that I really cannot fit;
I used to think I'd stay, now I'm about to split.

Paul Benjamin/Cape Town

1976

I cannot say I marched that day
When lives were lost to win a pride
They never stole from me.

I have not mourned the fallen close
But counted in the quiet of twilight suburbs.

Paul Benjamin/Cape Town

Port Elizabeth Young Artists Association

TRIBUTE TO THE MARTYRS

When you stood up,
Castrating the chain that binds you
To your oppression and enslavement;
When you stood up,
Rejecting the education
That enfeebles your mind;
Like in Sharpeville you fell
In hundreds and thousands
At the hands of the rulers
Of this my beloved country
Suckers of this my sweat and blood
Rapers of this my rich soil of Africa.

We raised our clenched fists
As big as our hearts
We showed solidarity to your families
Unzima lomthwalo, ufuna simanyane
We sang in the graveyard
When we laid down your bodies
To join our ancestors in their ancestral war.

When we turned our backs to your graves
We felt your spirits
Cutting our hearts
Searching for our sincerity to the cause
The pain of this experience
Brought tears to my eyes
Tears that would turn to blood
And water the tree,
The tree you watered
With your blood so selflessly.

You showed your love
Unlimited for us children of Africa
You laid your lives down
We will never rest
Until the day
When what belongs to me
Is returned to me
And justice prevails once more
In this beautiful country of our forefathers.

And on that day I will say again:
Rest in peace my brothers and sisters
Your sacrifices have not been in vain.

Fezile Sikhumbuzo Tshume/Peyarta,
Port Elizabeth

THE FREEDOM WAGON

Brother,
It has approached its destination
It's the freedom wagon up there
It's come to free me and you
From the bondage that hinders
Your growth and mine.

Brother,
I'm creating
Under the yoke that suppresses my creativity
Because it needs me I'm its passenger
The freedom wagon
Creativity is art
Art is culture
Be one of the passengers
Let's create.

Charles Xola Mbikwana/Peyarta,
Port Elizabeth

BANNED

He is strong handsome and black
Never smiles unless he sees me
Always hating till he loves me
Almost as quiet as death can be
Till my voice tells him I'm back.

You think he is bitter don't you?
But would you feel any better banned
from the world
And confined within the walls
Of a township house that you abhor?

Mandi Williams/Peyarta,
Port Elizabeth

WISHES

I wanted to be a pastor in my youth
A pastor who would quench the thirst
and hunger of our youth

I wanted to be a mentor in my youth
to soothe the pain of the enraged kin
to protect the squatter baby of the
demolished tin

Yes, illusions
are beautiful

I wanted to be a true orator in my youth
to tell the true stories
that will ring in our ears

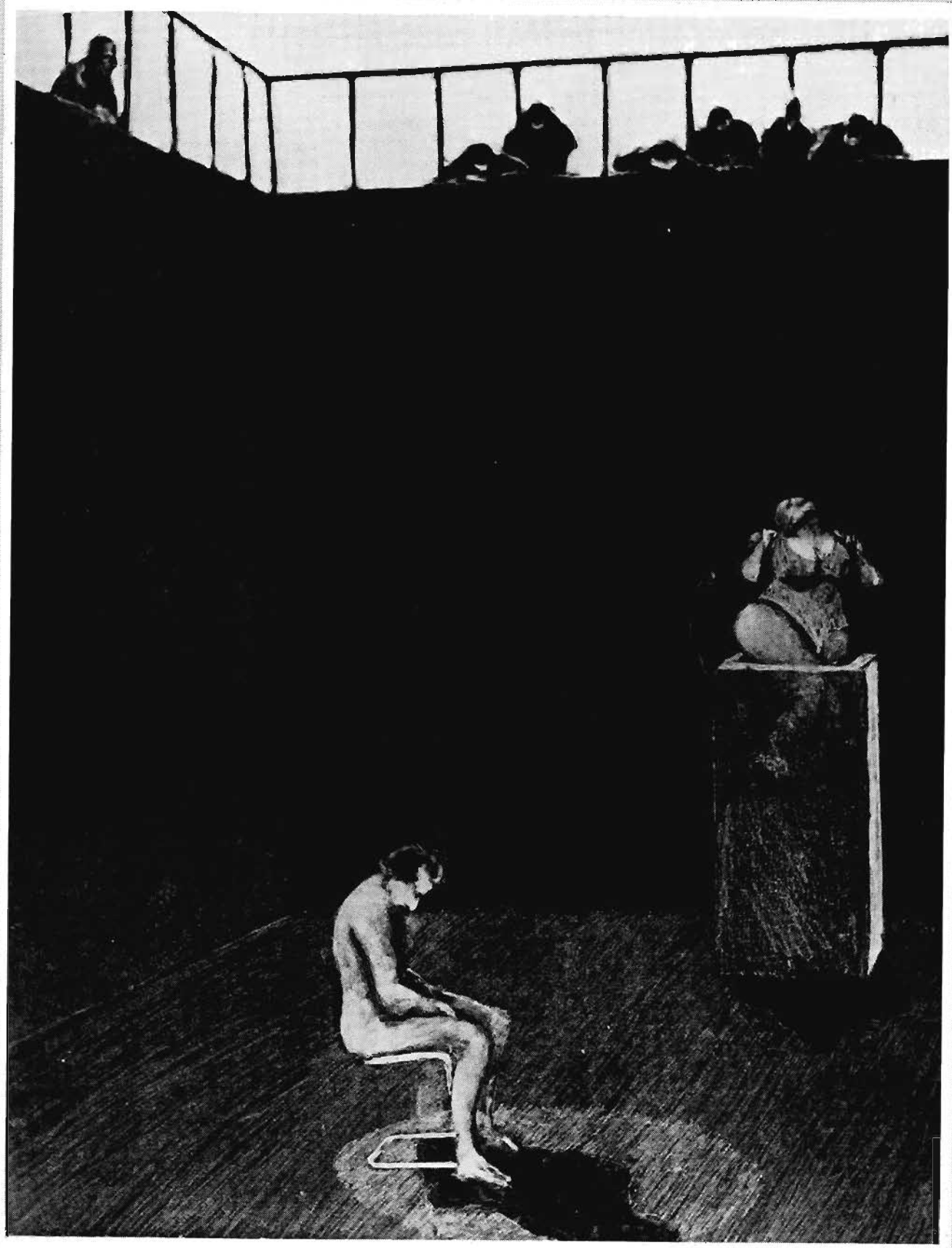
I wanted to be an architect in my youth
to build high monuments
that will shelter us in our time

Yes, dreams
are beautiful

But these our wishes
are whitewashed by witches.

Nkos'omzi Ngcukana/Guguletu

William Kentridge

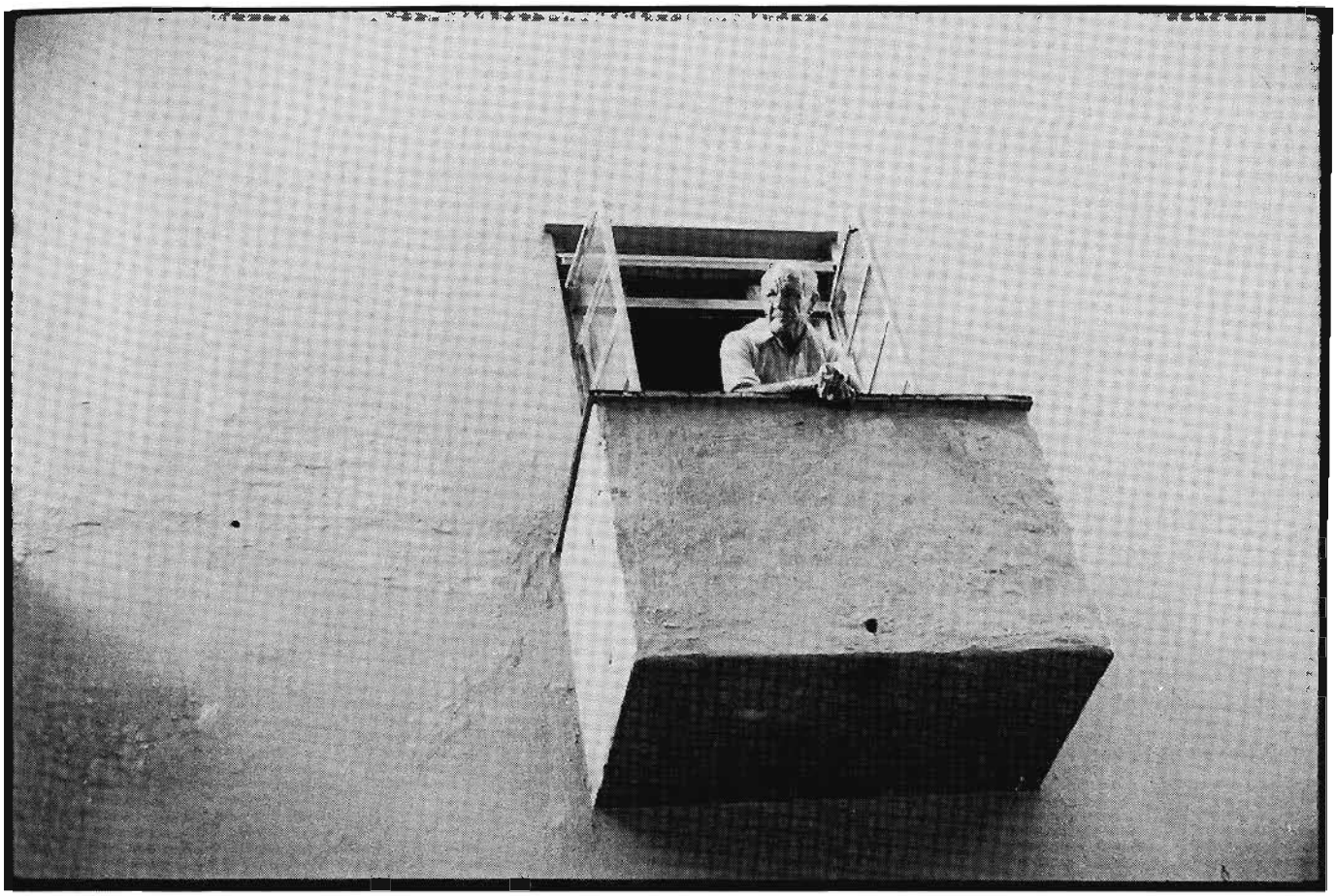


William Kentridge's exhibition of etchings and monoprints, held at the Market Gallery recently, show him to be an emerging force in South African visual arts. Conceptually and technically his works are striking, especially his series of twenty monoprints which work on a metaphorical level as images of white isolation in South Africa. His satirical neo-Renaissance figures, caught in a variety of contorted postures, symbolise the alienation of enclosed white society in South Africa.

The brooding figures peering into the cell-like space give a powerful sense of the excluded masses, and the relationship set up between these dark figures and the inhabitants of the closed interior is a powerful metaphor for South African social relations.

Andy Mason

Paul Weinberg



Hillbrow

Kliptown

GUYO BOOK CLUB

DOGS CONTINUE TO BARK

they flock in
faces like walls
with peeling paint
faces looking like
haunted graves
at phiphidi-waterfalls

at ṭhoho-ya-ndou hotel
boys and girls complain
about 'the look in your eyes'
while pigs and people drink together
some bubbling politics
an agent next to them
sipping beer and lighting a cigar
for his drinking comrade

waiting for the hotel to close
old-timers snore in cars outside
dreaming about a school-girl in botsotso
who never worries about a bed
coin and fuel papa had

but down in papa's village
dogs continue to bark
while a baby continues to cry
mama sobbing and weeping inside
for a habit is like a stubborn germ

Nthambeleni Phalanndwa/Guyo, Sibasa

AN ASS-BEE

Have you heard of it?

It is an ass that works all day
For a stomachful of green leaves
Its ass-like ears are ideal for eavesdropping.
As bees do,
It flies from one flower to the other
Collecting nectar to feed the Boss.

My brother, beware:
For this bee like all bees stings
Its sting may mean 90 days or more in hospital
Or permanent hospitalisation.
Remember, next time you go into the garden or park
Take 'DOOM' along with you.

Sisters, don't wear perfume on out-door errands:
You may be mistaken for a flower.
The ass-bee, don't forget, is as wise as an ass
With a sting like a bee.

Tshilidzi Shonisani Ramovha/Guyo, Sibasa

TRAGEDY

on second floor citadel/on existence
earned by partitions on the gravity
of repression/we are given to bog
among stainless steel rape pork smell
section two nine mushrooms possession of

koffiehuis whatnot/our fate tolls in the
fabric of time/on second floor
citadel/benoni – then kempton park/
thousands of men waxed in single tragedy

Modderbee Prison
July 1979

Jaki Seroke/Thembisa

SUPERMARKET BARGAINS

we sell the ecstasy of lekkerkrap
in times of disturbances and
crucial challenges

we offer special prices for
paralytics who seek adventure

we also have aspirins to kill
the pain of 1976

you can buy peace/we have
it silver-wrapped

sale now on 'till
your limbo

Jaki Seroke/Thembisa

---

singing of development

singing of development
at ilmorog
drinking thengeta
along the trans-africa highway

singing of development
at sibasa
drinking gumbu
at ṭhoho-ya-ndou hotel
with women
who know their cars

Maano Dzeani Ṭuwani/Guyo, Sibasa

SOWETO IS BURNING

I was here
Down here in Rorke's Drift
My eyes fixed in the direction
Of the smouldering mountain
I stood, facing Soweto.

Newspapers and magazines
I read
They said
Soweto is burning
Mother and grandmother
Child and father
They ran up the slope
This slope
Up that precipice
The word is spread
Soweto is Burning
My child, my son
My people and my brother
Poor souls
They are in danger!
Extinguish the fire!

Is it Soweto I see
Is that the smoke
That smoulders my Soweto
On top of that peak
Is that a cloud of peace
That the fire is out
That the gun's barrel
Is no longer facing
My young ones
That the dogs
Are no longer biting
My young ones
That the pick-up
Is no longer
Picking up my piccaninny
But picking them out
Of Modder-bee

Fire Fire
Slow your anger
On people hungry
My poor people
Soweto is my Soweto
Soweto is my Afrika
Soweto die it won't
Rise Soweto rise
From the ashes rise
Rise my Soweto

Matime Papane/Sharpeville

DIVISION

Keep dividing the lemons from the oranges

By nature and appearance they are the same
One day they will rot simultaneously
And you will experience their stinking smell
As they will have Unity.

Mohale J. Mateta/Ga-Kgapane, Duiwelskloof

THE EMPTY POTS

I was asked to carry these thoughts
from my infancy
Though my conscience sometimes
fought a losing battle
Against eyes that bulged
and silently in dismay,
Rolled and stared
emptily into the sky!

Where are witchdoctors that
know of evil spirits
And tell of a heal on a leopard skin?
But when wealth shines in their pockets
You don't know where you are with them!

In the morn I thought of water
trickling slowly in the valley
Where my cattle may drink
and give enough milk
To share with those
whose pots lie empty.

Motlase Mogotsi/Rustenburg

MADI GROUP

POWER

Power! To the man
who made a way for them
there in the bush
where snakes and thorns
rule the silent jungle

Power! To the man
as tough as the sea
sending his child to learn
whilst he had no work
no money
no food to eat

Power! To the woman
looking after other children
whilst hers die of kwashiokor and malnutrition
back home picking coal from dumps
victim of meagre salary

Power! To the child
going to school, wearing borrowed trousers
seeking naked truth in old books
told that slaves were treated well in the Cape

Power! To the black patriots
fighters of HITLER
who did no good, nor bad to them
but purchased their life for a bicycle
their life for a bottle of wine
for God's sake more Power to the people

Maupa-Kadiaka/Madi

MaloPoets

For My Brothers

(Mandla and Bheki) In Exile

You have seen part of the world
Met some very nice people
Experienced the hardships of fresh air
Longed for the warm home-fires
Around which we sat on winter nights
Listening to pa tell us stories
Or reading passages from the Bible.
Those were the days, my brother Mandla,
Some days they were, my brother Bheki.
Do you remember those days?
When we were young and happy together
Playing cops and robbers, hide and seek,
Pinching bottoms whilst in hiding –
Young and happy together?
One day it would rain
And before the night was out
We'd be carrying brooms, sacks and buckets,
Urging the water out of our house.
You do remember those days?

Maybe I do not know where you are.
You left in the stealth of the night
Maybe hiked miles in fear but determined
To finally reach new worlds unknown.
Some days I happen to clean house
Exploring every nook and cranny.
I find here and there memories of our youth
Written on scraps of black and white photos.
I shake my head in pain of loss,
Say to myself, 'Gone are those days.'

The old woman is still around, brothers,
Heavy creases run down her mahogany face;
They are dry rivulets opened by heavy rains of pain.
At night, alone in the vaults of darkness,
She prays. In her prayer she talks about you.
Mama cries at night – by day she laughs,
Tending sisters' small children.
I know she longs to catch but one glimpse
Of her flesh and blood. Of her own womb.
Sometimes she talks about it,
Swallowing lumps, hiding tears behind eyes.
Mama is strong. Very tough. She was carved in teak.
In the evenings when we're together, she sometimes
Sings the songs we used to sing together.
Then she goes to sleep. I wonder if she'll sleep.
On Xmas Day mama makes custard and jelly,
Reminds us of how we all looked forward to Xmas
Because that was about the only day
We ever tasted custard and jelly.

Lino-cut, Mzwakhe/Rorkes Drift, 1977

Big bowls of jelly would be made
Then taken to the kindly butcher
(Remember, we didn't have a fridge).
Some time before our big meal
She'd send one of us to collect the bowls.
I remember we would handle those bowls gingerly
As though our whole life depended on them.

I do not know, maybe, what you're doing out there.
I know you're alive, yet longing for the home country.
You loved this country deeply,
So much that you could leave only to come back
When it has gained more sense.
Our neighbours (the ones you knew so well) are still there.
We meet at the tap (it's still outside) and chat.
They ask about you. They care about you.
Those days you do remember.

In all our pain and agony we rejoice,
For the tensile steel strength of our souls
Transcends borders and boundaries.
However far apart our bodies may be
Our souls are locked together in a perpetual embrace.

Ben J. Langa/Malopoets, Durban

ABANGANI OPEN SCHOOL

NGIZWELE MNGANI

Mngani ngizwele
Usuhlezi kahle kweyetsheboya
Kahle kunye nezinsana zakho
Nezibusana zesizwe sikantu
Uze ungakhohlwa ubuzwe bakho,
Ungisize ungaphazami

Ngisho usuliqed' izwe ngosuku
Ngemihl' efudumel' imishini
Uyishuntsha namhla nayizolo
Kuze kuhlabek' ulova
Mngani wami uz' ungalokothi.

Sewotha Mngani
Izinhlobonhlobo zemishini yamazinga,
Uwashintsh' amazing' okwelanga
Lon' elishisa, liphole, libande
Konke lokhu kungokwesithukuthuku
UnguM'Afrika ungakhohlwa

Ngiyakuncenga Mngani
Yenza kodwa ubuyele neno
Okokuba uyalaz' elikhona
Phakathi kwakho naye
Oshintsh onsundu ivamenz' esakho isikhali
M'Afrika ngiyakuncenga
Ungakhohlwa ubundabu oyibo
Abanomule baph' omaguqa?
Ziphi izibayakazi zawokhokho
Leyonhloniph' engingeze ngayichaza?

OkoM'Afrika ukudla akumgakla
Yonk' iminyaka akushintshanga
Kodwa kugijimis' igazi ngiyakuthanda
Kwa M'Afrika kuyayidl' inyama
Keph' okwana mtila kudid'umenzi.

Izembath' zoM'Afrika
Ngiyazincoma
Ngoba zingezo'kudabuka kimi
Lalela ngikudonse ngendlebe
Omlandelayo kawashiyanga awakhe
Nakokwakho kangenanga
Kukhona ukungqubuzana
Kokwenza lapho
Okunamhla kuyangixaka.

Qaphela-ke Mngani
Loku okulandelayo kabubunya
Ezakh'izigaba ngingezibale
Konje ukuphike wena okulandelayo?
Lokho wen' unguM'Afrika
Usukhohliwe nawubuzwe bakho na?
Mngani masingakhohlwa.

S.Z. Kunene/Abangani, Durban

AND THE BEGGARS LOOKED UP AT ME . . .

And the beggars looked up at me
and made me feel like a culprit

I'd seen them
Day in
And day out
Sitting, begging, waiting
(And I wondered
what would happen
if none from the free-running
cared to pause
and drop a few pennies)
God knows, really
How these people travel
From their homes to their begging corners

One was black as a chimney-sweep
The other grey as an ash-swimmer
The free-running ran on either side
Without pausing to please
And the sun was simmering slowly
And I came running
Cursing life, cursing God
Not knowing where my next
Meal may come from

And the beggars looked up at me
And their pleading stare
Made me feel like a culprit

Senzo Malinga/Abangani, Durban

HATE

The word itself is loathsome,
And filled with emotional strain
It wears one down and keeps one there
Hating itself is tiresome,
Right through it's filled with pain
But love and only love will always care.

V.J. Mchunu/Kwa-Dlangezwe

MISUNDERSTANDING

A mistake and a bad one too,
To say you said that
Which you never said.
This is what you wished to say,
Or what you wanted to say.
For this I am very sorry.

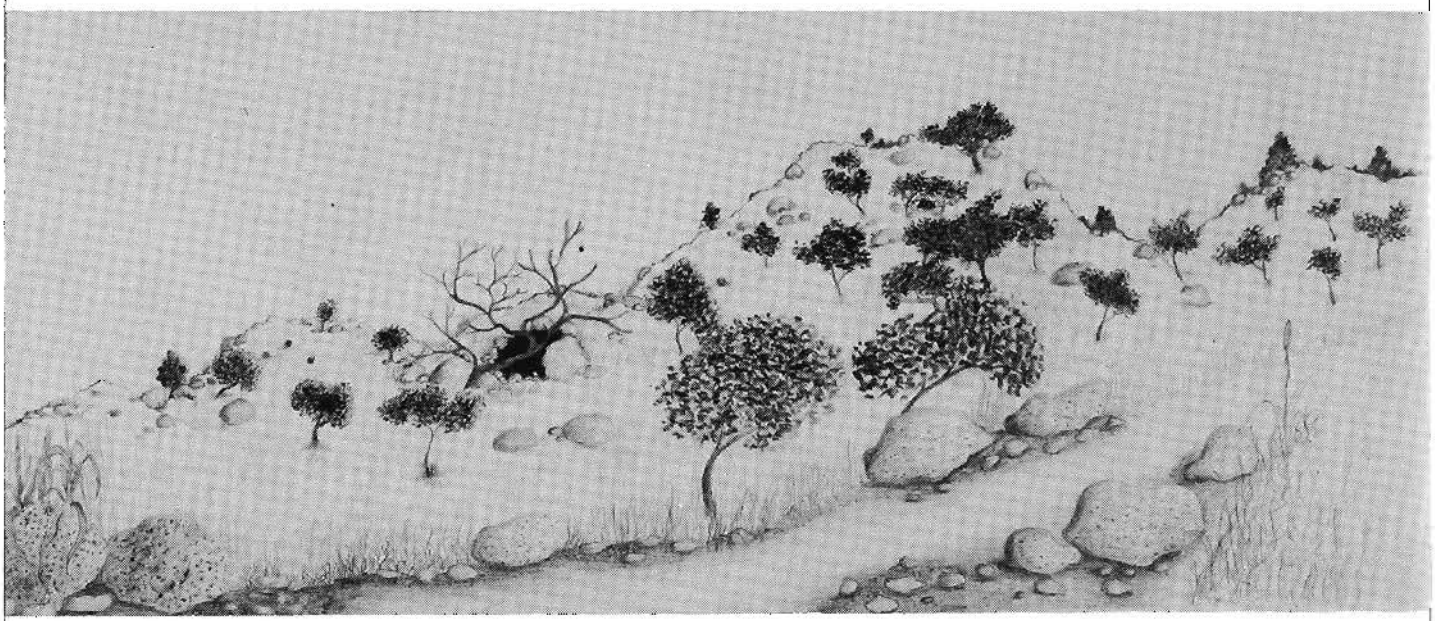
V.J. Mchunu/Kwa-Dlangezwe

Chief Memwe IV Part One

By Albert G.T.K. Malikongwa

Illustrated by Mpikayipheli

CHIEF MEMWE IV
SUB-CHIEFS:
NDZONGA
TAZWALA
THINI
CHANGATE
MOKGOSI
JOMO: Chief Memwe's Son and Heir-apparent
IMI: Jomo's Senior Wife
TOSE: Jomo's Second Wife
MAMANJI: Jomo's Mother and Chief Memwe's Wife
NGAKA NJISI
NGAKA SABATA
NGAKA MOSIKARI
TEFO: Chief's Messenger
MAKENOSI: The Leading Witch
WITCHES:
FIRST WOMAN
SECOND WOMAN
THIRD WOMAN
and Ten Others
FIRST TRIBESMAN
SECOND TRIBESMAN
THIRD TRIBESMAN
FOURTH TRIBESMAN
KONO: Ruler of Kazungula



The place is Chief Memwe's kraal. Seated by the fire place are Chief Memwe and two of his Senior Chiefs.

NDZONGA: My Lord, I greet you,
Son of Memwe,
The great ruler of this country.

MEMWE: Please sit down.

NDZONGA: Greetings to you too,
My beloved cousin. *(To Thini).*

THINI: I greet you too,
I wear a smile.
Yet our hearts shake inside the ribs. It does not help to complain. Men's tears die in their hearts. Men *never* wear tears on their faces. Never.

MEMWE: Yes, this is true. Tears are women's stuff. They always punctuate their eyes at the pinch of anything sour.

NDZONGA: What pains your hearts that you speak so mournfully yet your faces look so clear? I see no sorrow walking on your faces. Please be brief and to the point.

THINI: When the cocks crow no one cares, except an early riser, but when the lion groans all the beasts and creatures in the land lift up their eyes and ears. They know that the King of the wilderness is in trouble. They either run away in fear as cowards always do, or they come to the King's aid.

NDZONGA: I hope nothing is so serious with My Lordship.

THINI: The pain that is in the fingertip affects every part of the body. The sore that is on the eye affects the brain and disturbs the mind, the whole body indeed.

NDZONGA: Please talk straight.

THINI: The chief's son is seriously ill, I mean Jomo. *(In silence Chief Memwe shakes his head and mumbles something to himself, fixing his gaze straight on the fire, and begins to speak).*

MEMWE: The anguish of a father,
The sadness in his heart
Are like a disease in the blood
For they flow and flow
And keep on flowing.

I fear that my son may die
Before he has tasted
The glory of chieftainship.
The irrationality of death
Which threatens my son's soul
Seeks to deprive him of the pride of youth.
All these my Countrymen
Are but to me a book
Full of horrors wherein
I see death trying to eat my son's life.
Oh you Gods, prevent it, prevent it,
For death never compromises.

NDZONGA: My Lord, you worry too much. Your son will be all right.

THINI: This is true, my cousin.
Even the finest reeds
That enjoy the sweetest cares by the riverside,
No matter how perfectly they grow,
Must be shaken by the wind.
You know, it is not usually the fruit
That hangs first that falls first.
Cracking doors live long.
Jomo is a brave young man,
Lively, witty and with the Gods on his side.
They will spare his life.

MEMWE: Friends, I thank you,
Your words are like medicine from the herbs of this land
Taken in the midst of great pain,
For besides being a chief
I am also a parent and a father.

THINI: But My Lord remember, you are not just a father to Jomo, you are a father to this tribe, owner of this land.

MEMWE: *(To Ndzonga.)* Call me a messenger.
(Ndzonga walks away and in a few minutes he returns with the messenger).

NDZONGA: My Lord, the messenger has come.

MEMWE: What is your name by the way?

TEFO: My name is Tefo, Your Lordship.

MEMWE: Go and call me Mamanji.
(Messenger bows down and leaves, and in comes Mamanji).

MAMANJI: *(Kneeling down).* My Lord, I understand you have called me.

MEMWE: Come nearer that I may whisper to you, so that neither the leaves nor the grass can hear me.
(Exit Ndzonga and Thini).

MAMANJI: What is it, My Lord?

MEMWE: I have not slept this night. The cock crowed and I was still awake. My eyelids never closed. Jomo is ill and I have decided to call you so that you may advise me as to what can be done.

MAMANJI: My Lord, call Ngaka Njisi. He is a very able and practical man.
(Exit Chief Memwe and Mamanji).

(Part of the village in one room, in Jomo's ward).
(Enter Imi followed by a group of women).

IMI: The tedium of a lonely life
And of a woman without a child
Is like the sky on a hot day without a single cloud.
I am ageing and wrinkled without a child.
I agreed to the marriage of Tose
But now I realise I have sold my soul.
My position as senior wife to Jomo is gone.
I am no more than a kitchen girl.
I have lost favour with Jomo,
Instead Tose is now his little gold.
A few more words hurt me.
This woman must go, go, I say.
I will sting like a serpent that lies in the green grass
Whose fatal fangs stream in the blood.
I will undo her womanhood
And she will never taste the kiss
Of a baby born of her womb
Nor bear fruit from Jomo's seed
For this is the cause of trouble
Between my husband and me.
Not all the love-potions in the world
That I have administered to Jomo will change his mind.

FIRST W.: Yes, be as harmless as a chameleon in the green grass
That wears the camouflage of nature,
Yet be as sharp as the quills of a porcupine in grief.
I am a doctor, trained
According to the arts of our tradition.
I have doctored women
And sterilized their wombs.

SECOND W.: A dog bears a pup, and if a pup fights and it begins to put the bone in its mouth down, surely, another dog or pup will pick it up and run away.

IMI: Please, dear mothers, tell me what I must do.

ALL: Destroy, kill, poison, bewitch.

IMI: Teach me how I should do this. Oh, here comes Ngaka Sebata.

SEBATA: Good morning, or is it good morning?

ALL: Same to you.

SEBATA: You seem to be in a meeting.
Is there anything wrong?

FIRST W.: Yes.

SEBATA: Tell me everything.
I know most of these women.
They belong to the witchdoctor's night club.
(Exit all women except Imi and the First and Second Woman).

IMI: Ngaka Sebata, I need your help now that you have come. My husband Jomo has married a second woman, and since I cannot bear children for him, he does not love me anymore, because of that wicked woman Tose. I have vowed that either Tose or Jomo or both must go. The thrust of the sting of your charms must bite and cut deeply. Yes, this sacred cow of his must go.

SEBATA: I am Doctor Sebata, the lion that roars once a year. The lion of Maitengwe. I shall give you the formula. I shall need only two black goats, and she shall bleed to death.

IMI: Tomorrow before sunset my messenger shall bring you the fattest goats from my kraal. Please go ahead, my heart burns to hear.

SEBATA: Rise early in the morning;
This is the formula:
'Remove the soil whereon she urinated,
Mix it with these herbs
In a broken earthen pot, full of this lion's fat.
These five stones you shall use.

As soon as you leave her room,
Face not where you come from
Till you have entered your room.
Go out through the back door
And as soon as you cross
The Maitengwe River
Throw each stone in five different
Directions, calling her name.
Her right leg and hand
Shall shrivel like the dried lungs of a beast.
She shall start bleeding and no one shall stop it.'

IMI: I shall do as I am told.
(Exit Imi; First and Second Woman).

SEBATA: *(Alone).* I shall blow this horn and awaken those of my trade to a meeting by the Hill of Red Tops to brief them on what is happening. First Selo shall I tell, then his brother, Kgomo, then their mother, Mamedupi. This is necessary to fortify myself against any reprisals. *(Then he blows the horn which echos as follows:)*

'Tomorrow I shall be with Ntolido
The great one from the river
Who grinds biltong for dinner
And keeps a piece for the morrow.

Tomorrow I shall be with Ntolido
The great one from the river
Who boils eggs for supper
And keeps two for the morrow.'

(Exit Ngaka Sebata).
(A hut in Imi's home. Enter Imi and the two women).

IMI: *(Crying and sobbing).* I understand Ngaka Sebata is gone to far lands, across the river of many streams. I need him or else if I am discovered, the Chief will destroy me.

FIRST W.: What is the matter?

IMI: I cannot tell you.

FIRST W.: Why not, are we no longer friends?

IMI: No, not that.

FIRST W.: But why?

IMI: I am tongue-tied and frightened by what has happened to me.

SECOND W.: Look, Imi, though we are women, our secrets are more fortified than the walls of Chief Memwe's village. Do you understand? People of our trade prefer to die rather than say anything about their nocturnal activities.

IMI: Let me speak then, if you want to force my hand.

FIRST W.: No coercion about it.

IMI: Ngaka Sebata gave me his concoctions with a formula for killing Tose, but things have gone wrong. *(She covers her eyes and begins to cry).*

FIRST W.: The eyes of women are like rain clouds, always ready to supply rain, but without a formula for stopping it.

IMI: Three of the five stones are missing
And I tripped against a stone
And the mixture in the earthen pot was shaken and the contents spilt over.

FIRST W.: Tose has been well doctored and is well protected against witchcraft. Do you doubt it?

IMI: Do you mean she is so strong that even men like Sebata cannot do anything to her?

FIRST W.: Yes, I do. She has caused three of his charmed stones to get lost, and in addition, caused you to trip and break the earthen pots containing herbs and traditional medicine and all sorts of mixtures. Imi, this woman is strong, I tell you. She is the daughter of a man. No charms can do anything to her. She is fire-proof, death-proof.

IMI: Do you mean that I should give in and leave Tose to do what she likes with my husband?

SECOND W.: No, Imi, no. That is not the point. Please be cool.

IMI: And then do what? *(Angrily).*

FIRST W.: Imi, when the fire burns, it is better to smell where the wind comes from.

SECOND W.: No. You should remember that you come from a great family, with a great family tree. Your grandfather Makoni would never spit on the ground and then pick up his saliva or sputum. Oh yes, you would see him on horse-back, galloping across deep dongas, jumping over trees with his horse. He would never follow a cow's path. You do not belong to the riff raff. Therefore take your time and plan afresh.

IMI: Tell me, am I a blundering lioness? Please speak.

FIRST W.: Oh no, no.

IMI: I will do it, even if this is wicked, wicked, I say. I shall close the gates of my heart towards persuasion to mercy and retreat. I shall burn like fire in the hearth, whose embers are hidden below the hot ashes. My charm shall eat her like an earthworm. The Gods, the Gods of Thunder give me power that I may crack her like thunder. The Gods of Rain send forth gentle rain that must wash and clean my conscience after she is dead. The Serpent God, oh you, come, give her hell, that I may twist her like tree leaves. Come all of you at once.

SECOND W.: This is excellent. Don't easily give up at the first sign of failure. Be as tough as a rhinoceros.

IMI: Please speak softly, I hear steps. Someone is coming.

SECOND W.: *(Standing up to see who is coming).* It is a man. I cannot recognise his face.

FIRST W.: I wish Ngaka Mosikari were here. He would unriddle all this confusion and Tose would regret that she ever married Jomo.

IMI: Who is Mosikari?

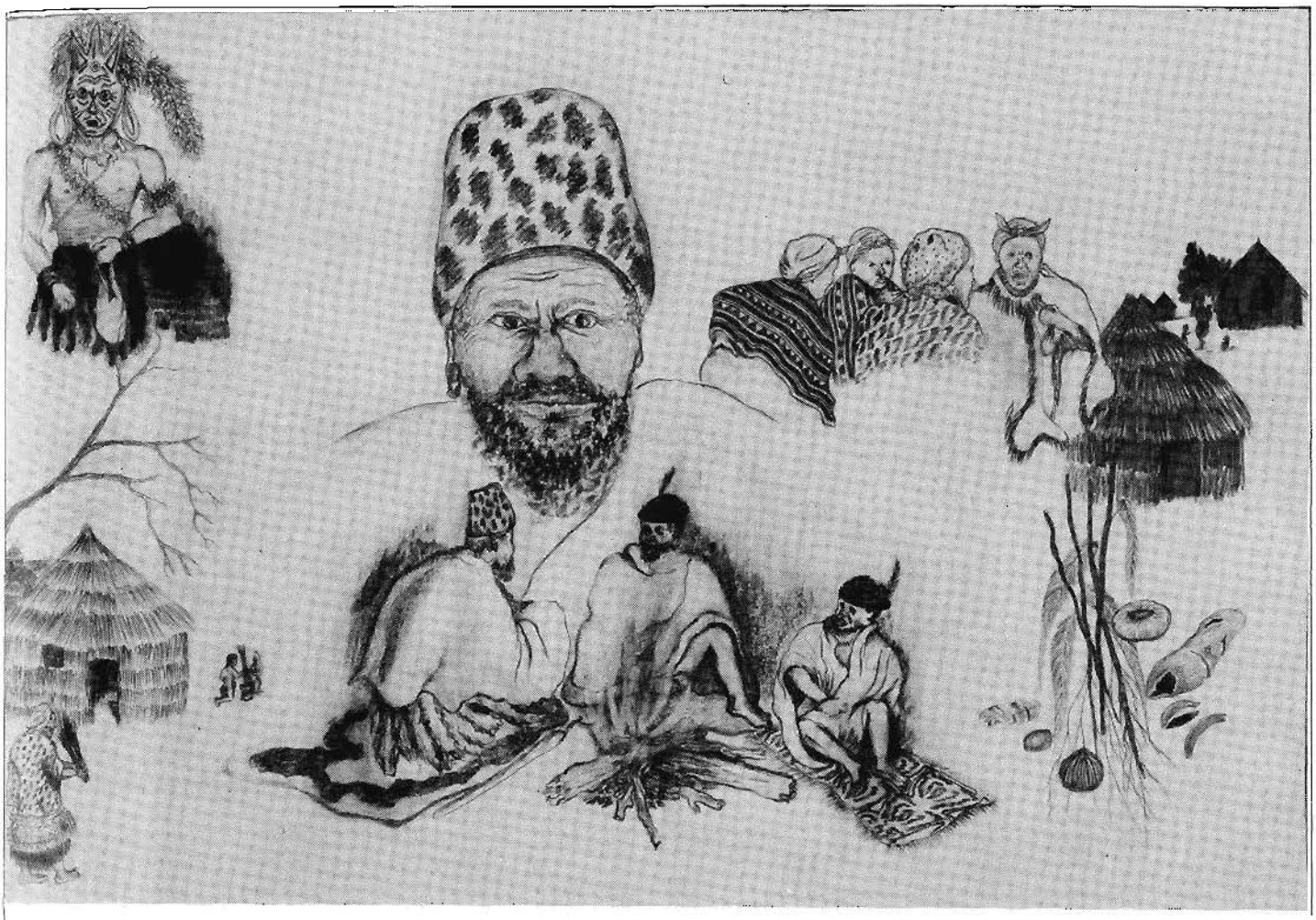
SECOND W.: Shii.

FIRST W.: It's him! It's Mosikari!
(All stand up).

MOSIKARI: It's me. And how is everybody?

FIRST W.: Please sit down and you will not blink till you have heard strange tales told in simple and straightforward language.
(Exit All).

(Memwe's Village, a room behind three others. Enter Chief Memwe, followed by Sub-Chiefs Ndzonga, Thini, Mokgosi, Tazwala and Changate, Ngaka Njisi. Outside, Mamanji is sweeping the courtyard, while a group of girls with bare breats are stamping corn and singing).



MEMWE: Your highnesses, this world is a great deceiver. When I was young, I was far happier; when one grows older, this world seems to hold one hostage.

NDZONGA: Your Lordship, do you think that the world would be complete without troubles? Look at at the great and beautiful things which our God Mwali made.

THINI: I was just going to say that.
Anyway, speak on, your highness.

NDZONGA: If Your Lordship would care to look around, I would show him those places. *(Pointing).*
(They all stand up).
The beautiful Mount Wedu, with those trees that adorn the surroundings. They too have hollow caves and stones jutting out only to spoil their beauty. The river Nkange below is perennial, guarded by immense walls of river sand, yet you can be sure to tumble down the steep rocks, and perhaps lose a toe.

THINI: Yes, even the beauty of a woman is often infected, sour, brutal, seesaw, and gilded.

NOKGOSI: Indeed, beauty is a funny thing. It never stays alone.

TAZWALA: Even troubles too. They breed and breed.

NDZONGA: To the extent of following a man, like a shadow.

THINI: Chief Memwe, your highnesses speak in parables and paradoxes, yet your messages convey the same meaning.

CHANGATE: I have been listening very carefully to what each one of you had to say. Your Lordship has lived on this land for a long time to tell many tales, good or bad, tales of brave men and women.

NDZONGA: Yes, he was with me during that terrible year, the year of rinderpest. Oh, that was a terrible year, cattle-hooves remaining in the mud. The year of foot and mouth disease too.

THINI: I have heard of that. I was at the mines then.

TAZWALA: The year of Red-Locusts was no better. I am told that even the sun at one stage stopped moving. There was a great cloud around it. These things show how the world is made.

MEMWE: Your highnesses, the agonies of this transient world
Never mellow with the seasons and years
But live and lie in slumber,
Like a poisonous snake in the wintry season
Only to dash back
Like an arrow at the first opportunity,
And with impunity
Mingle with man's dreams and happiness,
Disturbing and bullying him as they wish.
I have seen many summers and winters pass,
I have seen many suns and moons passing and following one another, like husband and wife
Across those skies over there.
Man lives with adversity
Which chains his life and his dreams
Like trees tied down by great roots
Underneath the ground.
I speak not in derision of what you have said.
Much do I thank all of you.
The tree that is without roots
Falls with the slightest push of wind
And I must say to you all
That if ever I die before any one of you,
I shall commend your good services
And loyalty to me and to my people
To your fathers and fathers' fathers.

I believe my Jomo shall live.
And if the Gods wish
For me to exchange my life for his,
This do I leave at their disposal.

CHANGATE: Long live Your Lordship.

ALL SUB-CHIEFS: Long live Your Lordship.
Long live Chief Memwe.
Long live his Royal Highness Jomo. *(Chief Memwe stands up and calls for Mamanji).*

MEMWE: *(To Mamanji).* These people are hungry. Is there anything you have arranged for them to eat?

MAMANJI: My Lord, food is ready.
I was about to send in a messenger to you to find out if their highnesses would prefer to have food first and then drinks afterwards.

MEMWE: Give them food first.

MAMANJI: I will do so, My Lord.
(Exit Mamanji).

Scene II

The same place.

MEMWE: Thini, please give me snuff.
My nostrils are dry.
I have not smoked anything since yesterday.

NDZONGA: Me neither, My Lord.

MEMWE: Nonsense, you like things.

NDZONGA: *(Laughing).* No, My Lord, I just want a bit.

MEMWE: But your nostrils are too big:
you will empty the whole horn in there.

NDZONGA: I have a very handsome nose, My Lord, and women say so too.

MEMWE: *(Passes a small curved horn containing traditional tobacco, finely ground, to Ndzonga).*

NDZONGA: Yes, this is good stuff.

MEMWE: By the way, Mokgosi, who is that man whose beard is so bushy?

MOKGOSI: Ngaka Njisi, My Lord.

MEMWE: And what does he do?

MOKGOSI: He is a great healer.
He knows very bush and herb that is in this land.
He is also a great bone thrower.
His bones speak with great precision.
He also sends pestilence to those who kill others.
Last year a child got lost, abducted by a certain headman for medicine.
He told exactly where the child was to be found.

CHANGATE: Was the child found?

MOKGOSI: Yes.

MEMWE: Alive?

MOKGOSI: Yes, My Lord, in the bush among the rocks.
He was just about to be killed, to strengthen the headman's kgotla.

MEMWE: Where does he come from?

MOKGOSI: He comes from Nata.

MEMWE: Call him in.
He may just be a pretender, a simpleton.
(Mokgosi goes out and in a few moments comes back with Ngaka Njisi).

MOKGOSI: I have brought this man.
Your Lordship may wish to speak with him.

NJISI: My Lord, and your highnesses,
I greet you. *(He kneels down).*

MEMWE: Greetings to you, my son.

SUB-CHIEFS: Greetings to you too, young man.

MEMWE: What is your name and where do you come from?

NJISI: My name is Losika Njisi. I come from Nata.

MEMWE: I understand you are a doctor.

NJISI: Yes, Your Lordship.

NDZONGA: Can you tell us more about yourself?

NJISI: What exactly is it that Your Lordship wants me to tell him about myself?

NDZONGA: Your work as such.

NJISI: People usually despise men who speak loudly about themselves and eulogize their works, you know.

MEMWE: Speak on, brother, and forget what people always say. We are old and can easily see if you are telling us lies.
We have no reason to doubt your sincerity and credibility.

MOKGOSI: You tax our anxiety. Please speak up.

NJISI: Your Lordship, I deal in herbs
And charms.
I was trained by a traditional
Medicine man who was also the secret
Doctor of Chief Lewanika.

MEMWE: Those people are great.
No wizard or witch dares play with them.
They see any mischief before it is hatched.

NJISI: My Lord, while I do not object to your request that I should tell you something about myself, I would instead ask you to give me any task to prove whether I am a real doctor or just a cheat.
I am prepared to do that for no reward.

NDZONGA: I think this is a mighty good idea.

MEMWE: And you, Mokgosi, you are the youngest.
Speak first.

MOKGOSI: Your Lordship, I agree.

MEMWE: I can see you are a very clever young man.
We shall allow you to do as you have requested.
We shall be here Monday next.
Arrive here before the sun is very high above the trees.
(Exit All).

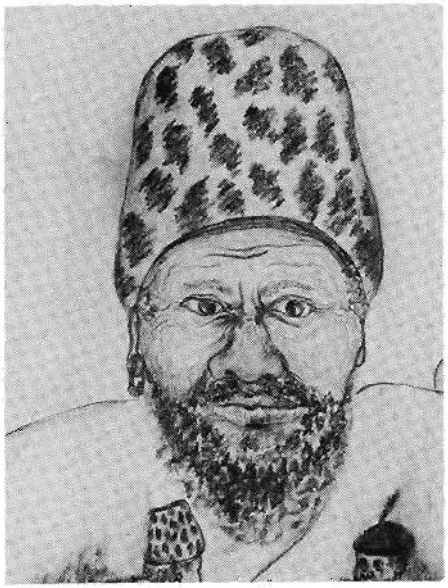
NJISI: *(Njisi speaking alone as he walks to his home, pulling heavy sandals made from an ox head-skin).*
To me, witchcraft is like
The bow and arrow to a bushman.
These men know not that I am more than I appear to be.
In the darkness of ignorance,
No man appears wiser.
I shall strike hard, if I am required to strike.
(Exit Njisi).

Scene III

A hut in Imi's sweet-potato garden. It is dark. Enter Imi, First and Second Women plus Ten others, and Mosikari.

IMI: Mosikari, I wish to bring home facts as they are
Mine is a question of life and death.
Tose, the second wife to Jomi, must be destroyed; she must be eliminated.
She has taken everything from me.
Jomo cares no more for me.

MOSIKARI: Do you know who I am?



FIRST W.: Yes.

IMI: The great buffalo
Who attacks and leaves
Enemies fleeing in horror and terror,
The black buffalo from the north,
Welcomer of danger,
Whose fury is stronger than fire,
The tall, the pitiless.

MOSIKARI: What do you want me to do for you then?

IMI: Kill Tose. Eliminate her from Maitengwe.

SECOND W.: Send her to rot in the graveyard over there.

FIRST W.: Cowardly men will flee their homes then they hear you are in the village,
For your name never escapes the lips of any one of us.

IMI: Speak, I beg you. Will you help me?

SECOND W.: Scorch her like the scorching sun that scorches the grass till it is dry and colourless.

FIRST W.: Turn her into a moving skeleton, so that she may eat her own excreta.

SECOND W.: That is not cruel enough.

FIRST W.: Let her scratch the ground like an angry bulldog. Let her roll in the ash-dumps like a donkey.

OTHER W.: *(Laughs aloud).*

IMI: Oh, Mosikari, let your charms destroy her.
Let your herbs work on her. Be as stealthy
As a thief. Shame her, shame her.

MOSIKARI: But you say I must kill her. Which is which now?

IMI: Yes, kill her or give me something so that I may bewitch her.

MOSIKARI: The nation will blame me for having destroyed the wife of the heir-apparent, Jomo's wife.
She has a newly born baby who is looked upon to be the next chief when Jomo goes.

IMI: Oh, you coward. A buffalo turns into a duck.

MOSIKARI: I grieve for your plight but, Madam, I cannot help it. Chief Memwe is a great man. I have heard that he has been visited by Ngaka Njisi.
I fear this man.

IMI: You mean Njisi?

MOSIKARI: Yes. Oh yes.

IMI: But why? Is he greater than you?

MOSIKARI: I tremble before his feet.
His rumblings are the warnings of thunder.
When he strikes he leaves orphans all over.
Villages he closes in a week.
Husbands become wifeless.
Women weep till their eyelids can close no more.
Worms inside the graves eat
Until they can eat no more.
He is a great sorcerer, a great enigma
As illusive as the rainbow.
He reads the hidden mind.
He speaks with the ancestral spirits.
He is a savage when it comes to killing.
I know much that I may not reveal.
Regard me as your true friend,
But if you remain unmoved when you should be moved,
When you hear and may not perceive,
When you see the signs
And cannot read,
When, like a leopard in the forest
Waiting for prey to destroy,
A timely bird warns of the lion behind,
And you see the prey and not the danger,
You doubt where doubt should not be,
Then blame me not for your future discomfort.
I am a doctor, full of knowledge
Of our traditional expertise
In witchcraft and the art of healing
And can prove the power of my craft
And can plant fear and despair
And destroy mercilessly if I should so wish,
Yet even the elders of my Village
Cannot condone it if I tread
Where Kings fear to tread.
With these words,
I leave this to you.
This is a tragic decision for you.
The sun is clearing the sky in the East.
And the morning is still as beautiful as ever.
I shall seal my lips,
And like a dog, shut my mouth
Never to speak out any secrets, as dogs never do.
(Exit Mosikari).

IMI: *(Holding her cheeks).* Oh this man, this man.

FIRST W.: He speaks like a church-bishop in the pulpit.

SECOND W.: Did you hear how he put melody to his voice?

FIRST W.: He has the temerity to tell you to abandon this venture.

SECOND.: He is like a dog that barks loud and then runs away at the first sound or echo of anything. *(They all laugh).* Even a branch.

FIRST W.: You know baboons are extremely cowardly.

IMI: Yes, if they see blood on any one of their colleagues, they run for their lives. *(Laughter).*

FIRST W.: Have courage.

SECOND W.: And determination.

FIRST W.: And steadfastness.

THIRD W.: So you think you can trust that man?
There are more traitors in the world than traitresses.

FIRST W.: You may be right.

SECOND W.: Never mind. He is stupid.

IMI: Doctors don't betray. They use bones to smell witches. Some see them through water contained in small, round, charmed calabashes.

FIRST W.: And so!

IMI: Those who smell witches and wizards have to use traditional methods and the witchdoctor's expertise.

FIRST W.: This job needs a woman, well trained, and I have thought of a certain woman. She lives far away.

IMI: No place is far away for our purpose. The animals we ride at night are very fast, you know.

(Chief Memwe's Cattle Kraal. It is midnight. Enter Makenosi, the leading witch, Imi, First Woman, Second Woman and Ten Others).

MAKENOSI: Shii. Stay here. First, we shall leave our articles outside the cattle kraal. The first two women and I shall go in first. The rest will remain behind. But what is this?

FIRST W.: It is Memwe's bull. It seems to hear us.

SECOND W.: My feet are heavy and cold. I am gripped by fear.

IMI: Are you a cousin to Mosikari, that coward?

SECOND W.: Oh no. But this place is well charmed. This bull seems to have been well doctored, fortified and strengthened to the extent of smelling wizards and witches.

IMI: I will open the gate for you.

FIRST W.: The bull is restless.

SECOND W.: It is bellowing angrily and scratching the ground with its front legs.

MAKENOSI: *(Makenosi touches the gate and her arms stick to the poles and she cannot move).*
Oh please, help, help! I am caught, stuck to these poles.
Oh what shall I say to my husband?
I shall be hanged alive. I cannot move.
The bull is coming to destroy me. Why did I do it? I cannot move, help, help.
(She cries).

FIRST W.: Imi, what must we do?
(Before she can reply, Chief Memwe, who has been awakened by his bull, comes to see what is happening at the kraal).

SECOND W.: Someone is coming; let us hide ourselves.
(They run away and hide a short distance away, extremely frightened).
(Enter Chief Memwe).

MEMWE: Who are you?

MAKENOSI: *(No reply).*

MEMWE: I say, who are you and what do you want here? Speak before I destroy you.

MAKENOSI: My name is Ma-ke-no-si.

MEMWE: And what do you want at this time of the night? You are almost naked with a piece of skin around your loins. Speak or else . . .
(He lifts his sjambok and strikes her three times).

MAKENOSI: *(Crying and pleading).* I am stuck to these poles. I cannot move. My lord, I missed my direction and found myself here.

MEMWE: You lie.

MAKENOSI: Forgive me, my lord, forgive me. I shall never do it again.

MEMWE: If you don't tell me the truth I shall leave you stuck here until sunrise and I will call everybody to come and see you.

MAKENOSI: My lord, forgive me. I am not alone.

MEMWE: You say you are not alone?

MAKENOSI: Yes, my lord.

MEMWE: Who are the others?

MAKENOSI: I cannot tell. I am not supposed to tell. It is against our practice and tradition.

MEMWE: Don't waste my time. I will kill you.

MAKENOSI: My lord, please forgive me.

MEMWE: I will not, till you tell it all.

MAKENOSI: The bull, the bull is coming.

MEMWE: *(Calls it by name. It recognizes him and moves away, but it is still very wild).* I will hit you with this sjambok till you speak the truth, or else you will remain here till sunrise.

MAKENOSI: My Lord, I am with Jomo's . . .

MEMWE: You are with Jomo's what?

MAKENOSI: Jomo's wife.

MEMWE: *(Angrily).* Which Jomo's wife? Speak quickly.

MAKENOSI: Imi.

MEMWE: Imi and who else?

MAKENOSI: And more than ten other women. I don't know their names. Please, my lord.

MEMWE: Have it, you rogue.
(He strikes her once).
You will regret that you were ever born.
I will cut your ears and leave you to bleed.

MAKENOSI: Oh my lord, spare me and I will tell you all.

MEMWE: Speak then, before I lose my temper and cut off your nose and ears.

MAKENOSI: We came to bewitch Jomo's second wife, Tose. Madam Imi does not like her. She says she bears children; Imi does not. Jomo loves her more than he does Imi.

MEMWE: Where are the others now?

MAKENOSI: They ran away and hid themselves when they saw you coming.
(Chief Memwe goes away and in a short time returns with a short stick smeared with a creamy liquid at the tip. He strikes her gently on each hand and she is released. She runs away looking back in fear.)

MEMWE: *(Moves slowly back to his hut).*
Chiefs cannot grow fat when they see such things. For years I have seen many of these people, but now things take place inside my house. I am baffled.
(Exit Chief Memwe).

(In the morning. Enter Mamanji into the Chief's hut).

MAMANJI: Good morning, my lord. I bring you sad news. My child has just come in to say that Makenosi is not well. She says strange things. She speaks of wizards and witches and has begun to tear off her clothes. They say she is mad and has been bewitched.

MEMWE: Where is she now?

MAMANJI: She has been taken in an ox-wagon to a certain witchdoctor across the Nkange River. I forget his name.

MEMWE: I hope she will recover.

MAMANJI: My lord, what could have happened to such a kind and seemingly innocent person like her?

MEMWE: Rare is a perfect personality,
Seductive and beautiful things
Are in the end superficial.

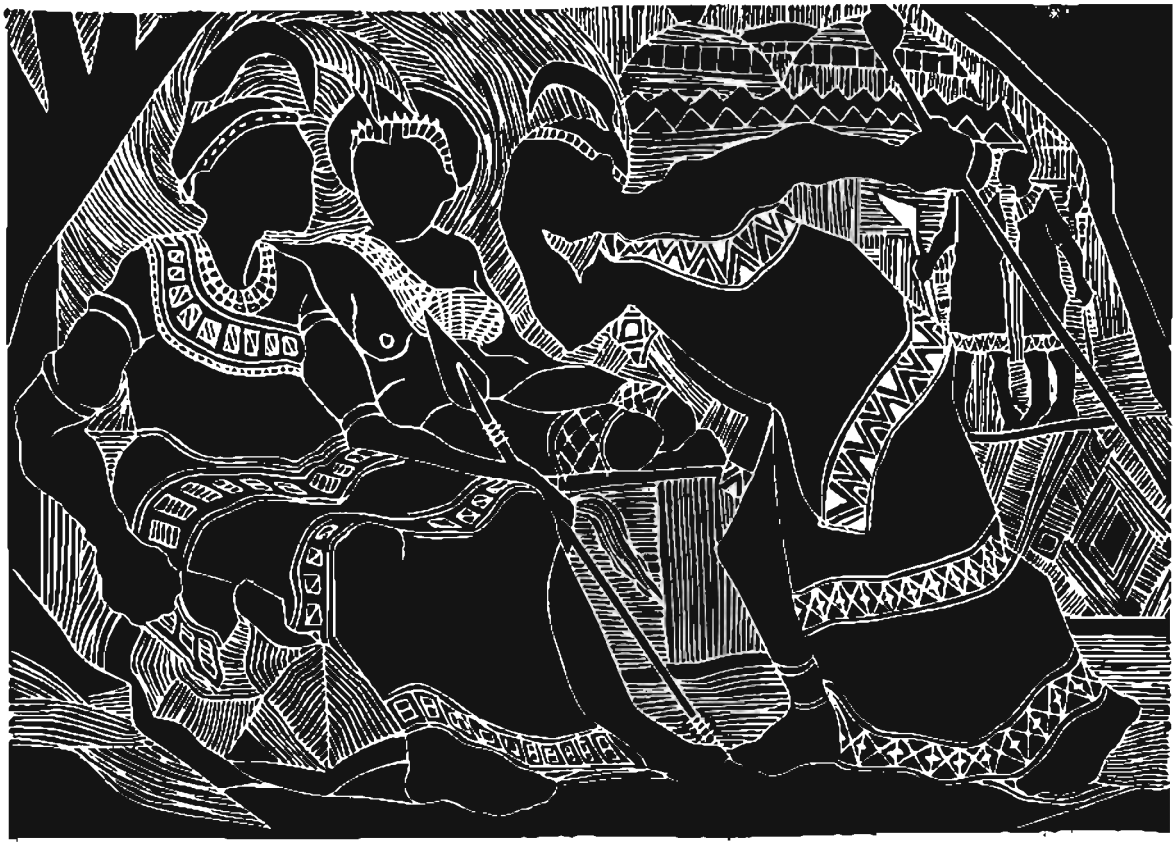
MAMANJI: My lord, this is strange. I don't think she will live.

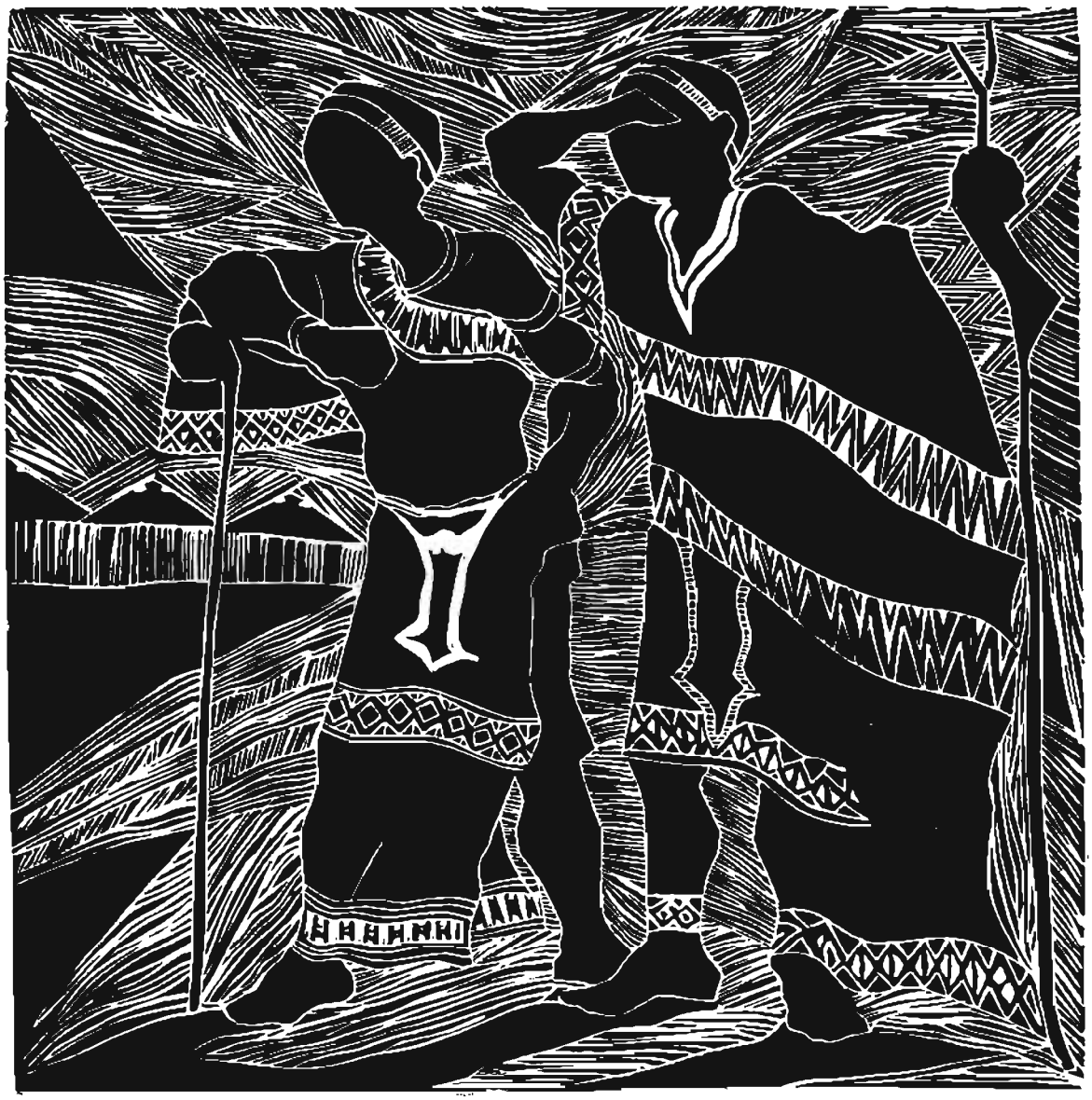
MEMWE: But why, and so soon?

MAMANJI: I am told she is sick, sick in the head

MEMWE: All of us in this world
Must submit ourselves to some decree
For death dictates its own terms.
Men must live with this in mind.

Continued on page 38.





Lino-cuts, Mzwakhe/Rorkes Drift, 1977

I am not heartless at all.

MAMANJI: But your words, my lord, seem to be rather harsh and hard.

MEMWE: Is that so? Please excuse me.

MAMANJI: *(Sneezing with her two fingers).* My lord, my thoughts are disturbed by what might happen to this woman. Perhaps I am over-reaching to this situation. I don't know.

MEMWE: Such things usually happen either when someone is a witch or is in league with witches and wizards. I don't believe she is bewitched.

MAMANJI: Your lordship may be right. This may be a punishment for what she has done. It may also be a prelude to something more serious.

MEMWE: Please call me the messenger.

MAMANJI I will, my lord. *(She goes out, and in a short time Tefo comes in.)* The messenger, my lord.

TEFO: *(Kneeling down).* Good morning, my lord.

MEMWE: Good morning, Tefo. Go and call me Sub-Chief Ndzonga. Tell him I wish to see him if possible today.

TEFO: I will, my lord.
(Exit Chief Memwe and Tefo).

Scene IV

At a point where the Maitengwe River meets its biggest tributary. It is night. Enter Imi, First and Second Women, plus ten others).

FIRST W.: I was scared to hell. Hey woman, I nearly urinated on myself.

IMI: But why? You have chosen this as your way of life.

SECOND W.: Where is Makenosi?

FIRST W.: I went to see her before she was taken off by ox-wagon to Ngaka Mosikari.

IMI: To Mosikari, oh no. They should not have sent her to that bastard. Anyway, it is not our business.

SECOND W.: How is she?

FIRST W.: She could not recognise me. She says strange things. She talks of people she has killed, women, children, men, and of how they were disposed of.

SECOND W.: How does she say she disposed of them?

FIRST W.: She speaks of how she used to point at the grave of a newly buried corpse with the thigh bone of a human being and the corpse would come out.

IMI: And then do what?

FIRST W.: They would chop it to pieces and cook the flesh for consumption.

IMI: Enough, enough, please.

SECOND W.: Please wait. Did she say these things before many people?

FIRST W.: Yes.

SECOND W.: Did she say anything about us?

FIRST W.: No, nothing.

IMI: You are curious, neh!

SECOND W.: It is necessary to know what is happening before we can plan ahead.

IMI: I agree. What else can you tell us?

FIRST W.: She bites her fingernails. She lifts up her head and eyes as if she were praying and then inaudibly mumbles strange words. She finishes by saying 'Amen,' several times. Then she calls, without repeating herself, the names of those she claims to have bewitched and killed.

SECOND W.: And are they names of people who have actually died?

FIRST W.: Yes, I knew some of the names.

IMI: Is she mad? Are they hallucinations or mere figments of the mind?

FIRST W.: I don't know, really.

IMI: We shall wait and see. In the meantime, you know Tose has caused us to fail.

FIRST W.: She is strong.

IMI: I believe so.

SECOND W.: Oh, that night. The bull, oh, that bull. It put hell in me.

FIRST W.: Shut up, I don't want to hear anything about that.

IMI: Tose seems to be as illusive as the rainbow. I have decided to shelve her for the time being.

SECOND W.: And do what?

IMI: My husband is the cause of all these things. I have tried to administer all the love-potions I know, but nothing happened. Anyway, I did something.

FIRST W.: You mean to Jomo?

IMI: Yes, I managed to put poison into the beer that was kept by his second wife, Tose, for him.

SECOND W.: How did you do that?

IMI: I saw Tose carrying an earthen pot on her head. She told me she was going to fetch water from the river. So I joined her and told her I was going to fetch wood. As soon as we parted near the Bush of Bafi, I ran back home and slipped in the poison. I then went back and waited for her by the roadside. We returned together. It was a hurried business.

FIRST W.: *(Excited).* Alleluya, Amen.

ALL W.: Alleluya, Amen. You have done it.

IMI: Please don't whisper this to anyone.

FIRST W.: I shall be as silent as the moon.

SECOND W.: I shall seal my lips like a rock.

OTHER W.: We swear, we swear, by thunder and lightning, We shall not say a word.

FIRST W.: And how is Jomo?

IMI: He is in hell. The Chief and everybody is up. People think Tose has bewitched him.
(Exit All).

The Drama of Chief Memwe will be concluded in the next edition of *Staffrider*.

Black Sabbath
White Christmas

. . . And so the children of Azania
Gathered in multitudes
To bury their slain
To comfort their widows
Like a swarm of locusts in search of new fields
They filled the grave-yards to lay the heroes to rest
Unlike locusts they were not in search of food —
But of solutions to escape the hunter's snare.

'Amandla' became a military salutation
Medal and honour
To those who had paid the ultimate price
Laid side by side on a monumental structure
Their names could have stretched from the Limpopo
Right down to the tip of the Cape.

This was the Black Sabbath.
Written in the calendars by the blood of the Martyrs
Ground into history books
By those who sought no personal glory
But a place under the sun for the black man.

Christmas carols filled the air
The smell of fillet and steak permeated white kitchens
Wine and beer overflowed from caskets
Like a river after torrential rain.
Symphony orchestras rendered heavenly music
Beautiful sounds that could have brought smiles to all
And man nearer to God
But this did not bring Azania's dead from the graves
NOR SAINTS TO COME MARCHING IN!

It was a White Christmas alright
With its traditional abundance of veneer holiness
Excessive merry-making, socialising and visitation.
A Christmas not to celebrate the birth of Christ
But the annihilation of the oppressed.

Whilst laughter — like sonatas shattered the night
And fire-crackers blazed multi-coloured sparks
Marking the birth of a prosperous new year
The ghettoes licked their wounds and counted their dead
They had no reason to be happy, or for that matter
To be sorry for themselves.
This was the price uhuru demanded!

They could not miss the festivities
Nor the shebeens their profits.
Neither could they sing Christmas Carols
Nor welcome the new year —
What was there to be happy about?
What was there to be celebrated?

So in silent dignity
Azania mourned the heroes
And echoed a young girl's prayer from the ghetto.
The deer was not forgotten . . .

But there were those who did not mourn
There were those who had a White Christmas in Azania
They had no reason to cry.

Israel Motlhabane/Witsieshoek

TWO-DIMENSIONAL

A story by Ahmed Essop, illustrated by Renee Engelbrecht

Anil, a former pupil, came to live in my street in Lenasia. I would see him some mornings from my lounge window, going to the bus stop. He was still a good-looking youth, though his face had lost its schoolboyish softness. His complexion was a burnt bronze; his hair carbon black. His lean body seemed to have remained a physical constant. At school, in Newtown, Anil had been a quiet and reserved boy, performing his academic work dutifully rather than with any relish. He sat at the back of the class-room, withdrawing himself into the limbo of virtual non-identity. As a consequence, he had never received the attention that other pupils, more alert and extrovertly vocal, had received. Yet in the fluid glitter of his dark eyes one saw a sensitive youth, an impression amplified when he responded to oral questions by the mellifluous cadence of his voice. Once he played a strange trick that earned him a brief period of notoriety. He left a note on his desk which said that by the time it was read he would be 'dead among the reeds in the Zoo Lake'. Everyone searched frantically for him for two days – his family distraught with anxiety and worry – but he was nowhere to be found. He reappeared on the third morning and refused to answer any questions. However, the relief felt at his reappearance quickly erased the memory of the incident. At the end of the year he matriculated with a second class pass and left school.

One day I met Anil in the street. I asked him what work he was doing. He told me that he was a clerk for a stockbroker and that much of his time was spent at the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

'The work must be interesting.'

'Like hell!' he snarled.

'Why?'

'I feel I am a robot, a nobody.'

'Sure . . . '

'You don't understand. I am just a machine doing all the dirty work for the white capitalists.'

I was astonished, hardly prepared for the sharp indictment from someone who had been so reticent.

'Well, I am sure you are learning something.'

'Learning? If you can call working with bandits learning.'

'I suppose you have a living to make.'

'You know, after I left school I went to Wits University to do a B.A. I left half way.'

'You left?'

'How I hated the place! You should see those white liberal morons. They rig a few protest placards and go on to parade like zombies. Afterwards they crawl back into their pleasure domes.'

Later, after we had parted, I thought about what Anil had said. I felt unconvinced that he had left the university for the reason he had given. There was restlessness within him, confusion, morbid hate for others as well as for himself. I recalled the suicide incident at school and realized that though at that time it had been dismissed as some sort of schoolboy prank, it had been a desperate egotistical act to focus attention on himself. But more seriously it

suggested a tendency to irrational behaviour rooted in psychological imbalance. Now, I wondered whether the break in his studies was not the result of his insecure psyche, or whether it had been the result of some traumatic experience.

Anil was seated in the university library when he first saw her. She was about three tables away, head bowed over her book, her blond hair falling on either side. He looked at her for a few minutes, taking delight in his surreptitious survey. His eyes shifted from her head to her breasts gently thrusting against a white blouse, then focused below the table where her hands lay clasped in her lap. Suddenly his entire consciousness was sensually ignited: her clasped hands symbolic of the erotic paradise she could offer him. She looked up at him as though she had caught him in some act of guilt. He rose quickly from his chair, turned towards a shelf without looking at the title. When he sat down and glanced at her table she had vanished. Impulsively he hurried out of the library in search of her.

He stopped in the colonnaded porch outside. She was standing beside a column, looking for something in her handbag, the sunlight playing on her beauty that exceeded Anil's first impression. From the waist down, her lithe body asserted itself through a close-fitting marine-blue skirt. His veins yeasty, surcharged, he could not move. She looked up at him.

'Tired of studying?' she asked.

'Yes,' he answered, feebly.

'You are doing Arts, aren't you?'

'Yes,' he said, staring like a visionary.

'Goodbye. See you again.'

Her words failed to strike his aural sense immediately as he gazed at her going down the steps, walk away hurriedly over the shrub-fringed tarmac and climb a quartet of stone steps that led to the street, but came to him like an echo afterwards.

He sat down on the steps for a while to still the ebullition within him. Suddenly, in the claustrophobic atmosphere of the library, his being's pith seemed to have undergone a mutation: he had become strongly conscious of himself as a sensual being. There were so many girls at the university — they flowered so profusely in its environment — yet never before had he found himself overwhelmed by the impulse and appetite of youthful passion.

From then on he kept a searching eye for her. Between lectures he sought her in corridors, in foyers, in porticos, on campus and in the library. He met her, but the encounters were invariably brief, disjointed spells of academic chitchat about lectures and courses. On one of these occasions he saw a note-book in her hand. On the cover was her name: Caroline Seymour.

One day she met him as he was rushing to a Milton lecture.

'I was looking for you,' she said. 'We are having a protest demonstration tomorrow . . .'

She stood close to him as she elaborated. He felt himself drawn into privileged intimacy.

Elated, he hurried to the lecture room. He would meet her the next day and stand alongside her in the protest demonstration. His imagination glowed with the promise of amorous possibilities in the future. The lecture was a failure: Lucifer's agony in hell failed to touch the happy centre of his being.

The next day, punctually, he was at the appointed place. He saw her amidst a crowd of students and went up to her.

'I am so glad you came,' she said, handing him a placard attached to a broomstick. The placard screamed in vermilion: 'We hate dictators!'

The students paraded on campus and then moved in procession to a busy street on the university's boundary. Anil looked for Caroline, but she had moved ahead of him. The students lined the pavement and displayed their placards to pedestrians and motorists: some looked indifferently at them, others smiled, some glared and a few made obscene gestures. One spat and shouted: 'Red!' The police arrived with alsatian dogs and stood on the opposite pavement.

Anil saw Caroline on his right, holding a placard. For two happy hours he stood there, conscious of her and of his identification with her in the protest. Then the demonstration broke up. He looked for her to give her the placard, but she had disappeared. He was left alone, the placard in his hand.

One evening Anil came to visit me. After some amiable talk, I said to him, 'I have been thinking about what you said when we last met. Don't you think it's unreasonable to condemn all the students at Wits university?'

Unreasonable? What do you mean?'

'Surely, some students are sincere in their political commitment.'

'Sincere? To you, yes, because you have been brainwashed.'

'Brainwashed?'

'Yes, by white thought and white culture.'

Shocked by the allegation I did not reply.

'What did you and the others teach us at school,' he went on, 'but everything about whites — their language, their history, their science. The whites are your gods. But not for long, I am warning you. We are going to destroy them.'

I intended to protest that I did not prescribe the curriculum, but asked instead:

'Who is "we"?'

'We the oppressed. We shall destroy the white morons.'

Anil was sitting in an arm-chair, his face changed into a scowling mask.

'Why are you working at the white Stock Exchange?' I asked.

'Because *you* are not working there does not mean you are with us,' he answered evasively.

He placed his elbows on his knees and looked broodingly at the patterned carpet, his mind captive to something implacably calcified in his memory.

'Anil, I think you should go on with your studies privately,' I said.

'I don't want a worthless Arts degree . . . In any case I am going away.'

'Going away? To Europe?'

'Europe! Whites!'

'Where then?'

He did not answer, but looked at me in bitter contempt and resentment.

'The whites at the Stock Exchange will miss you,' I said in reflex.

His body quivered, his arms tensed vengefully. But he only looked at me, then rose from the chair and left the house.

Anil was sitting on a bench beside a camelia tree, several terraces separating him from the swimming pool that spread a fluorescent blue haze on everything around. Behind him was the university's small Fine Arts Library and Gallery. He saw a figure in a black swimming costume appear from the ladies' change room and he recognized Caroline at once. He watched her walking up the steps to the diving platform — her bodily grace and definition of form strongly presented in the sunlight — stand poised on the edge for a moment with uplifted arms as though supplicating some swimming pool deity, then plunge. He seemed to plunge with her into the pool and experienced, within the cyclone heart of erotic passion, a self-annihilating orgasmic deluge.

When her head emerged above water, he rose from the bench, afraid that she would see him gazing at her. He hurried towards the Fine Arts Library, hoping to find within its walls something to still the tumult within.

Caroline's body dominated his consciousness as the days passed. Her beauty seemed to enrich his aesthetic vision. The world of trees, shrubs and flowers that edged the campus lawns became a newly discovered reality. He

allowed his spirit to be drenched by the colours of flowers as though their beauty flashed out of her body. And he turned with avid greed to the nudes displayed in the art books in the Fine Arts Library: fat palaeolithic goddesses, serene Aphrodites, mellow Venuses.

One morning Anil was standing beside a fountain, looking at the yellow heart of a water-lily, when Caroline came up to him.

Anil looked at her. Suddenly he was seized by an amalgam of weakness, coyness and trepidation. She had come upon him when his attention had been profoundly captured by the miracle of an aquatic bloom emerging from its fluid matrix. Confronted by her presence in a way that was different from the previous meetings, he did not know what to say to her. He knew so little of her, of her interests beyond the university.

'No lectures today,' she asked.

'One only, and its over,' he said.

'That's why you're idling here,' she said, with laughter glittering in her superb blue eyes. She sat down on the encircling wall of the fountain.

Beginning to feel at ease, joy pulsated through Anil.

'I was on my way home when I stopped for a moment,' he said.

'Where do you live?' she asked.

'In Fordsburg.'

'Do you know Mr Mia? My father had business dealings with him.'

'He is a well-known merchant,' Anil said, visually caressing her body tautly expressed through dark green slacks. 'Would you like to come to Fordsburg?'

'If I get an invitation.'

'Come tomorrow for lunch,' he said, taking pen and paper from his bag and writing his address. 'I must go now,' he said, giving her the paper.

With a wave of his hand he was off, his whole being caught in a lyrical turmoil in which flower, fountain and Caroline's body seemed to melt and fuse.

The next day was Saturday and Caroline went in her small car to Fordsburg. Anil was waiting anxiously for her. He lived with an elder brother and his family.

After lunch Anil took Caroline for a walk through the suburb's streets. Caroline, coming from an affluent suburb of mansions and gardens, was fascinated by the narrow streets, quaint old homes embracing each other, little shops crammed with goods, and the motley crowds. Anil on two occasions, as he escorted her, slipped his hand around her waist, and later when they entered an arcade-like street where fruit, vegetable and flower stalls blazed with colour, daringly attempted to entwine his fingers with Caroline's. Although she gently disentwined hers, he did not feel repulsed. His elation remained high. She had come to visit him and would come again. In fact his belief was soon proved correct when they returned and Caroline accepted an invitation from Anil's brother that she join them on a family outing and picnic on the following Sunday.

On Sunday Caroline arrived and they went by car into the country. They stopped beneath some trees along a river bank. They had lunch. Afterwards, the children, with Caroline joining them, played with a ball in a shallow pool of water hemmed by rocks. She was dressed in denim jeans and a loose lilac blouse. Anil watched her every movement. Later, when she came to sit near him he proposed that he would like to show her an artificial waterfall which was a short distance away. Caroline went with him.

The river bank was thickly wooded, with an undergrowth of ferns and shrubs. They walked along a path, and wherever there was a slope or a jutting stone or a fallen branch in the way, Anil placed his arm protectively around her waist. When they reached the waterfall they watched the water as it glided over a brick wall like fluid glass and shattered on the rocks below. Anil's entire sensual consciousness was now concentrated in a centrifugal tension-seeking release. His hand flew out and drew Caroline towards him. But Caroline, by turning swiftly eluded his grasp, and laughingly saying, 'Come, let's run a race,' ran back along the path they had come.

He stood there in a trance, his ears thundering with the crash of water, his vision darkened by the verdigris of looming trees. Then the reality of what had happened rushed upon him. The cumulative disaster of rejection, defeat, humiliation sunk into him like some bitter sediment. A cry escaped from his lips and he felt himself swept down the waterfall . . . When he awoke he found himself lying in the grass.

He returned and found everyone playing footfall on a level stretch of lawn.

For the next three days Anil did not attend university. He stayed in his room, nursing his slashed ego; walked about the streets; visited museums — those huge mausoleums of heavy silence — and looked vacantly at artefacts and relics. When he returned to university, he attended lectures listlessly, racked by the continual presence of Caroline in his consciousness and his desperate wish never to see her again. What would he say to her if he met her? And how would she react to him?

He did not see her for two weeks. Then one day he went to the student cafeteria, bought a glass of milk and was walking towards a table, when he saw Caroline sitting alone in a corner. She waved at him to come over. An agonizing struggle of decision, lasting a matchflare, gripped him. Should he go to her? Or should he pretend not to have noticed her, drink his milk quickly and leave? He went towards her.

'I am glad to see you,' she said as he sat down opposite her. 'We are having another demonstration on Friday . . . '

A rowdy group of students entered the cafeteria and came over to them.

'Hi Caroline! Hi Caroline!' they shouted, bringing chairs to sit near them. Anil recognized several of them they had been part of the demonstration. One of them sat next to Caroline and put his arm around her shoulders.

'I have just told Anil about the demonstration on Friday,' Caroline said.

'You must be there,' one of the students said.

'Last Friday Caroline and I eloped to Durban in my new sports car,' the student sitting next to Caroline said, drawing her closer. 'The weather was perfect. We stayed at the Blue Waters Hotel and dined at an Indian restaurant. What was it called . . . ?'

Some of the students looked at Anil.

'Khyber,' Caroline answered, almost touching her partner's ear with her lips.

'The food was super,' the student went on. 'And guess who we met there . . . '

Anil felt himself pushed out, negated. He looked at Caroline to rescue him, to say a word, to smile, giving him the assurance that he was still part of her. But she seemed to be receding from him, drawn away by a clasping arm. In an instant he saw her as part of the white liberal caste that indulged in ritual protest because it was expected of them, only to leave the university later to take their place in a privileged society for which they had been prepared.

'I have a lecture to attend,' he stammered, more to himself than to the group and left hurriedly.

Outside he ran along a pathway towards the street and home. A cry, 'She is a white! She is a white!' flew out of his mouth, stabbing his own ears. The cry, weighted by bitter accusation and the authority of a final revelation, seemed to crack some inner stronghold.

He ran on, his thoughts and feelings

webbed, humid and hot. She had betrayed him when he most needed her, when the students had looked upon him as some sort of exotic culinary specimen. She was like the rest of them, nothing authentic about her. She had used him in that pitiful protest masquerade and wanted to use him again. Running under the shadow of a plane tree he saw her naked body in a mirage, against a background of crushed urban dwellings, rising and receding into the sky, drawn away by an encircling arm. His imagination exploded with water as her body – sunlit, ravishingly Circean – plunged into the swimming pool and vanished. He could never reach her. To reach her he had to break a system, shatter a world.

'Caroline! Caroline!' he cried, as a swell of desire rose and surged within him. He stumbled against a jutting pavement slab and fell. He did not get hurt. The physical jolt seemed to shake him out of a nightmare. He walked homewards.

One evening I was having a party at my place when I was told that someone wanted to see me. I went to the door and saw Anil.

'Can I come in?' he asked in an apologetic voice.

'Of course,' I said, hoping the party atmosphere would do him good.

Dancing was going on and Anil sat and watched. After dancing we had refreshments, followed by party talk: local gossip, art, politics and whatever else took our fancy. We came to discussing the ordeal of some twenty men and women who had been arrested and held incommunicado for one year.

'And what have you done about that?' Anil asked loudly.

Everyone looked at him. There was something so embarrassingly intrusive and discordant about the remark that no one dared to ask him what he himself had done.

'The whites have not only conditioned your way of life but your resistance reflexes as well.'

'We are powerless,' said Zinat. She was sitting cross-legged on the carpet, with a plait of hair falling over her left shoulder into her lap.

'And what merit is there in resistance by the strong? In any case, you have been dancing here as though there is nothing rotten in this country. White culture has sapped your will to resist.'

'That's nonsense,' she said.

'Revolt is too much for you – for all of you – because the whites have twisted your minds. Get out, get out into the streets and fight . . . ! Kill them all . . . ! Fight . . . ! Anil was screaming hysterically. He rushed to the door and ran out.

Anil lost interest in his studies at the university. He spent most of his time in the small African Studies library which was used by few students.

One day he entered the room and saw Caroline as he turned into an aisle between two rows of book shelves. She was standing at the end which was almost a secluded niche. A student stood beside her. He was looking over her shoulder at an open book in her hand. Then the student placed his arm around her waist. A sliver of pain shot through Anil. He stood rigid, tumult rising within him. He let out a strident scream, took a book from the shelf and flung it at the two lovers who fragmented in his vision into surrealist unreality at the impact. He rushed towards the door and ran out of the building.

I didn't see Anil again for some time. Then one evening he came.

'I have come to say goodbye,' he said. 'I am leaving the country soon.'

I asked him to come in, for several times since the party I had thought of him. It troubled me that a boy I had once taught was deeply unhappy. Calcification had set in within him – due to failure in his studies? a bitter experience? personality disorder? who could say – that neither reason nor compassion could dissolve.

He sat down in a chair and said, 'I suppose you will be glad.'

'Why should I? He looked at me in a sardonic glancing way, then stared at the carpet with his elbows on his knees.

'Where are you going?' I asked.

'That's not important. I want to be free of the whites.'

'Will that bring you happiness?'

He looked at me in bewilderment and with muted rage, as though he had expected me to say something else.

'That's all,' he said, rising from the chair and going towards the door. I went to the door and watched him walk away, a solitary silhouette as he passed under a street lamp.

Several months later I received a letter from Dar-es-Salaam. I was puzzled as I knew no one in that city. On opening the letter I saw a series of words boldly and crudely printed in black ink and for some inscrutable reason in mirror script. The letter was a ferociously denunciatory, obscenely abusive attack against 'Herrenvolk dogs and their syphilitic women'.

Review/ Mafika Gwala

With the publication of *Just a Little Stretch of Road* by Ravan Press, one can boldly assert – adding the appearance of Makwedini Mtsaka, Fats Dike and Ingoapele Madingoane – that the vacuum created by the bannings and exile of black writers in the early sixties has definitely been filled.

The novella *Just a Little Stretch of Road* by Neil Williams (born 1955), and the collection of poems titled *The Rainmaker* by Fhazel Johennesse (born 1956) clearly confirm my assertion: Proof sealed.

In the work of Neil one goes through the crimpling realities of ghetto life and the human-challenge conflicts which have been characterised by benzine/glue inhaling and fah-fee as escapist measures, (let alone dagga, alcohol and horse betting); degrading paperbacks that pass as literature; B-movies; the tragic 'distant' witnessing of thalidomide ('Distaval') which exposed the negative power of drug companies, (many of our blacks have died from laxative tablets, and others have burned their faces with complexion lotions); the stark violence of ghetto living; the body/rotation perceptions; and the question and answer contradictions.

One is lucky to have escaped child bashing in Neil's uninhibited exposure to the seamier-side of daily life amongst ghetto blacks. Neil has not only mastered the language he uses. He expresses virtuosity itself. Without getting prolix.

Some of the language virtuosity: 'The unspoken had been uttered in the meeting of eyes'; 'A keen wail lifted itself, disturbing the dew settling to the ground'; 'The questions hit her like shrapnel fragmenting into her skin as she struggled to answer'.

Neil's is a very touching (not touchy!) story that deserves to be read for the common experience that we all share in our society – knowing we are a part of that part to which Neil Alwin Williams has added a new tone.

The poems of Fhazel Johennesse, of which the title poem 'The Rainmaker' is the longest, are part of this sudden phenomenal upsurge of poetry by blacks. The hard-hitting lines of Fhazel – lines that don't easily lyricize – prove that one cannot deny the fact that blacks are doing much to save the English language in Southern Africa.

The two co-authors have made yet another landmark in the local literary scene.

'Men are always women's children'

NOKUGCINA SIGWILI WRITES:

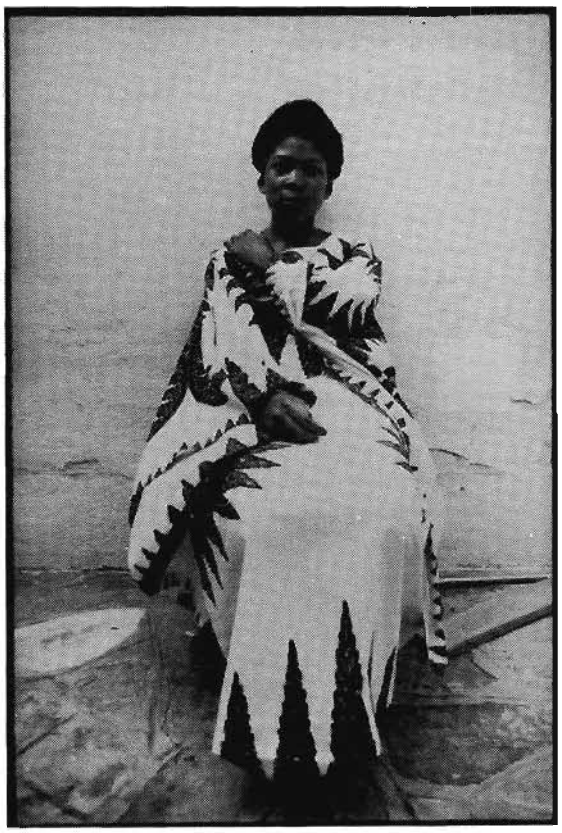
In response to what Boitumelo said in the last issue of *Staffrider*, I feel I must say something too.

It's very important for women to write what they feel. Really, we need more writing from women. I think women understand each other better when they are alone together than when there's a man around because then there is always the possibility of pretending, and that's not communication. I'm a very talkative somebody so I find it easy to make friends. That gives me the privilege of talking to other people and getting to know more about their feelings so I can compare them with mine. I find that when I'm with another girl I'm very free and relaxed. But when I'm with a man, I have to be very careful about what I'm doing or saying and I learn that other women feel the same. So we should come together as women and try to do some creative writing – I mean writing that will help or encourage other people who might become our fellow-writers in the future.

We are very important to men (maybe they know this – although I'm not sure.) The point is that we need each other, for we depend on each other's strength. Men can be physically strong, but our strength as women is our motherhood: men are always women's children. And their manhood doesn't show if women aren't there.

PERSECUTION

You are so sure of yourself
If you were not an evil-doer
I'd marvel at your determination
Even the hardest diamond
Is not harder than you are
You are the stickiest glue
that I know of
You stick to me like a second skin
Actually I think you are wicked
How can you be so rude
Can't you see I want
to use my talents
You're pulling me down
I can't even move
You are the devil's angel
You must be ashamed of yourself
You'll pay for this, I mean it
Now you are persecuting me
But your turn will come
Sooner than you'd expected
I'm telling you,
You'll regret having done this to me
Inferiority complex
You merciless stooge!
How I hate you!



'Gcina, *photo, Biddy Crewe*

THE BUILDING FELL

It stood very firm.
As if rooted with iron,
This darkest brown building.

The rains and strong winds came
But they never shook its strength,
This darkest brown building.

Stones were hurled time and again
Earthquakes came and went,
But this darkest brown building stood
firm.

Its tiny windows provided enough light,
The basement storage kept enough food
For this darkest brown building.

Even during drought periods
It was never too dry to crumble,
This darkest brown building.

Its four sides stood boldly
Each side was differently beautified,
This darkest brown building looked
lovely.

The front was decorated with mibhaco
The right side with indlamu,
One could have loved this building.

The left side was adorned with dikobo
The back with meropa,
This building looked really lovely.

Where there is gold there is happiness
The hives in this building had gold
honey,
Imagine how proudly firm it stood.

Even Qamata marvelled at it,
And promised never to forsake
This very precious building.

Then one day, somebody dripping with
water
came, looking for something
inside this darkest brown building.

His children were Settler, Burger and
Huguenot,
They came with paint, to renew
This darkest brown building.

The mighty building struggled
against the white paint
until it became black with sweat

The battle was so exhausting
that a red something oozed somewhere
And so the building fell.

Its falling had no screams
but moans,
It did not die
down but heaped like
a mountain
So it did fall but did not die.

Saturday afternoon

at the Diepkloof Dutch Reformed Church Hall, Zone 4, with poets, Peter Elstob, Drums, The Special Branch, babies, paintings, Blue Ocean Music, Free Art Festac, sculpture.

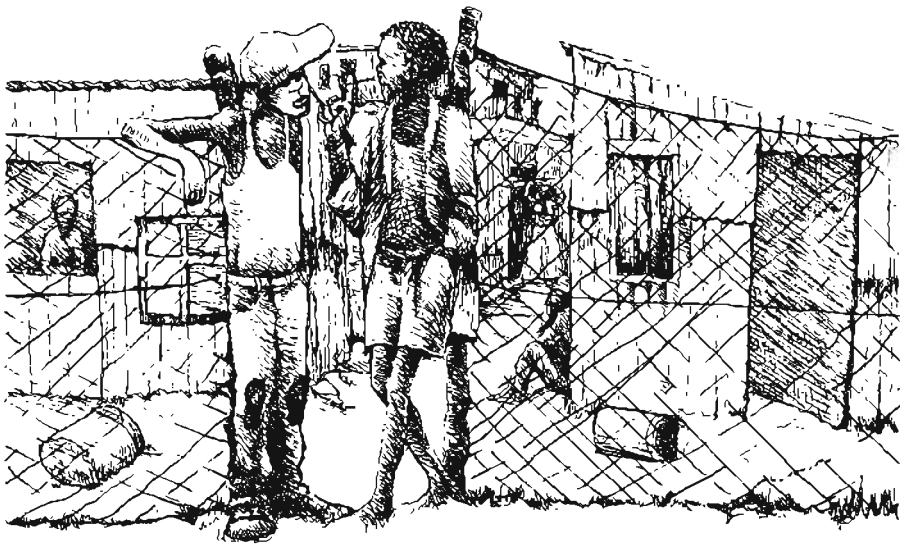
E. M. Macphail/Johannesburg

We arrive as they are hauling in the amplifying equipment, a small boy clutches a microphone. It looks like a flower on a tall stem and his companions run beside him stretching out hands eager to help or be allowed a turn to carry it. Out of the hatch of a station wagon jump young men in cowboy tight denims, here and there an ethnic blouse and the youngsters crowd around begging to be allowed to carry their drums. The hall squats in the middle of rank kikuyu grass. Inside there is standing room only. The chairs in the forward part are taken and the children sit on the floor in front of the stage their heads bent back as they watch a small group of drummers. There are pictures on the walls. I look at the pictures. If I look at the pictures I won't look like a white madam waiting for someone to give me a chair in the front. I wonder why this young woman sticks to me. I would rather be on my own. I can see an empty chair. If I hurry perhaps I'll get there first. But she's close behind and there are two chairs. Together. A young man wearing glasses hurries on to the stage and makes an announcement. A small group at the back of the stage are beating drums with busy fingers and a tall boy runs up the steps to the stage. He has a big black foolscap book and he will read his poems. I shall have to concentrate because the drums are louder now. I think the middle drummer is the best. His hands flutter above the drum like birds, his eyes stare out at the crowd. It's difficult to tell whether he is a boy or a girl. The black grape skin, close hair and the cloth tied on one shoulder. I have a table cloth like that. Another young man locks a chain around the poet's neck and the first poem is called 'Chains'. We used to have a chain like that. For the . . . I'm glad I didn't wear my gold chain bracelet. The children in front hiss for silence. The young man reads in a low voice, the drums chatter and when he is finished there is a crash of applause, the middle drummer taps out a long roll and the baby next to me bounces on her father's knee. The next poem is in the vernacular. I can see a young chap I recognise. I remember his hair. It's pulled into little points all over his head . . . like . . . the sun symbol and he doesn't look so cross here. He taps a tattoo on the head of the boy who is sitting between his knees and bends down to tell him something. They laugh. The acclamation is even louder

this time and I hear the beginning of a single ululation. The poet runs off the stage and his friends gather round him. The groupss pack up and hurry off and a tall thin man comes on to play the penny whistle. Is it a penny whistle? I mean I wonder if one is supposed to call it a penny whistle. Well then it's a flute. Long ago when we were children and lived in the country . . . not beautiful but rather sad . . . like bagpipes in the distance . . . Glencoe, the Campbells . . . Scottish history excited Uncle Norman. When I tried to hum the tune it always turned into 'Teddy Bears' Picnic'. I wonder why dark red velvet has always been used for stage curtains. These are pulled half way back and there's a rent in one and I can see an eye looking through it. It's exciting to peep at an audience through a hole in a stage curtain. The man who plays the flute sways, his eyes closed, the drummer waits with his hands poised. When I smile at the baby next to me she lowers her shy face, her eyelashes are like wire springs on her round cheek. I shall pretend I don't know she is staring at me so that she can have a really good look. Look at this strange skin and light hair close to for the first time. I wonder if she isn't feeling tired, standing on her father's knee for so long. She's wearing a striped shirt. The smallest rugby shirt in the world. I would like to squeeze her smooth chocolate plump arm. But she might cry and I would have to explain I hadn't meant to frighten her. Another poem being read together with the flute music. This one is about the police. There are big windows which open at the top so there must be some air but I suppose with so many people . . . I know how to stop hiccoughs but not yawns. There are two fair haired young men walking amongst the people standing at the back and sides of the hall. Perhaps they feel sleepy too. The dress of this woman in front of me suits her but I would be nervous of those colours and in such a large pattern. Now there's going to be a play. Oh shame, the next one to read his poems has been told there isn't time. How disappointing for him. Well perhaps he'll get a chance later on. A group of young fellows of about his age laugh at him. Perhaps it's because he looks as though he has jumped too far into his pants which makes him seem shorter than he is and his shiny brown brogues so enormous. One of the actors is trying to thread a needle. He uses big gestures. Squints. Now he is sewing. He is sewing not like a woman but like a man trying to sew like a woman. He is so funny. Oh, oh. Everyone is laughing. Including the baby. A crocodile of school children is led towards the front. They sit down on the floor and crane their necks backward to stare at the actor who is threading the needle but they haven't realised how funny he is yet. Then the two actors put chains around each other's necks and the drums start softly. Now there is a tense moment in the play and everyone hisses for quiet as the one actor calls to the other to emasculate his chain. I think he said emasculate. And he does so with a heavy stone. I'm glad I didn't wear my gold chain bracelet. If only I could stand up and walk about, but the hall is packed and more groups keep arriving with their drums. Twice now my head has snapped up and woken me. If I could have forty winks I'd be all right. It's not only the lack of air. It's because so much is happening. All that energy. I'm exhausted. Perhaps the next poetry reading I attend someone will have written a poem about a rich white patronising bitch. Alliteration and rhyme. Transpose rich and white. Better on the ear? I don't know. The announcer asks the artists whose pictures hang on the walls to come forward as soon as the play is over so that he can present them to the audience. Somebody comes to tell me the others are ready to leave. It takes me some time to thread my way through the crowd at the back and as I say cheerio Mr M. says 'We have our friends the S.B. with us' and he laughs. As I go I see a new group on the stage. They are all chained together and are singing a poem about persecution. I'm glad I didn't . . .

Children of Crossroads

An excerpt from a series of interviews held with children of the Crossroads squatter camp during 1979.



Illustration, *Goodman Mabote*

PATRIC: In 1974 we lived at different bushes. But the inspectors used to visit us in these bushes and gave us some papers to go to Crossroads because they said Crossroads was for black people. When we arrived there were 'coloured' people living there. Immediately we arrived they were moved from there.

CLAUDE: The reason why people came to live at Crossroads is because they did not have the right to live in Cape Town. Because they were struggling, year in and year out, they wanted to make themselves a place to live. People were trying to live independently and of course they were hiding from the amaBhulu.

COLLINA: When we came it was all bushes, our fathers chopped down the bushes. It was not long before the amaBhulu came, they were so cruel everything was upside down. There was such a big noise: babies were crying and parents were running; there was confusion. People were chased, others were caught, houses were pulled down, material was taken. These were terrible times. During the night you would hear the dogs barking and see the police torchlights flashing. We stopped sleeping at our homes, we slept in the bushes. When somebody saw the police coming they would say 'kubomvu', that's a sign telling there is danger coming.

PATRIC: In 1975 the inspectors came to catch people here at Crossroads. They pulled our houses down. They did not have pity or feeling for the harm they were doing to people. We ran from 4 a.m. in the morning to 5 p.m. in the evening. There was no peaceful moment. We did not have rest. The police did not even wait for a person to dress; they beat him.

Even people who had little babies were caught, even my own mother had a little baby. She used to get up at 4 a.m. Just imagine, for a little baby to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning and come back at 5 p.m. What is the child eating? We did not have water here at Crossroads, we bought water from the 'coloured' people for 10c a bucket. Where did we get the money to buy water from everyday? We even bought water for washing our clothes. Our parents did not get jobs but we bought food and water every day.

PONI: Oh! It's terrible to be a child because the Boers don't feel a thing about us but we are all children like their children. Our parents here at Crossroads are being chased by the amaBhulu. They sleep without food, they sleep in the bushes. We children go to bed without our parents and with empty stomachs because our mothers don't have time to cook for us, because they are being chased around.

The amaBhulu went to a *liila* shop and took whatever they liked — things like drinks and cigarettes — and then they collected our parents and put them in cells without food.

JOYCE: During the daytime people went to hide in the bushes because they were afraid. Together with our parents we would run to the bushes in the morning and come back home in the evening to eat something. The shacks we live in leak when it is raining and are very hot when it is hot. Even if those are the conditions we are forced to live in them.

ETHEL: One night in September 1978 we were fast asleep when we heard a noise outside. Just then we heard a big knock at the door. Father went to open the door; it was another lady who lives at the school. Just when my father was asking where she was coming from, we saw a white inspector enter the house. We were all puzzled.

My father did not wait to hear what they wanted. We ran to the bedroom and got out through the window. To his surprise there were lots of police surrounding the house and they had torches. They caught him and asked him for his pass. Because he did not have one they caught him. My father had a car. They asked where he got the car and they said he had stolen it. They took him to the van. We all saw how badly they handled our father. We were also afraid. We were surprised to see how they talked and handled our father because we had never known that there was anyone who could handle him like that. We respected our father.

They took our father away because they believed he had stolen the car. We could not sleep that night because we feared that they would come and fetch us. During the scene my mother was hiding in the wardrobe.

PONI: Yes, it was terrible to be a child in Crossroads. But at the present moment our parents go to sleep without any fears. They have been given permits for the time being. We are all happy now at Crossroads. We don't know about the future. We thank the Lord for looking after Crossroads.

BONGIWE: We experienced hardships here but the Crossroads people stood up and fought for Crossroads, that is why Crossroads is standing now. Today they are giving Crossroads people rights to live in Cape Town. Our parents, brothers and sisters have passes now. We are going to live in brick houses.

THENJIWE: Now, in 1979, people are given passes so that they can work. People from the age of 16 upwards were given passes.

We are happy this year that nothing is disturbing us here.

SIMPHIWE: Today I am able to say that we shall rule this country, South Africa, if God permits, even if the amaBhulu don't like that. God is going to give the black nation power here in South Africa. I want the black nation to be happy like other people in this country.

XOLANI: In 1979 we are happy and we can laugh.

We Salute Lebenya

Lebenya Mokheseng is twenty, a poet well known to those who have seen, heard and shared in the work of Mihloti on so many occasions.

We remember that on 4 April 1979 a heavy blow struck Mihloti, and all writers and artists. The police detained Lebenya, and over the next eight months PEN and other groups did what they could to express their solidarity with this founder-member of the Johannesburg PEN Centre.

Did it help? What Mokheseng went through in that period of solitary confinement, and what he underwent under the methods of police interrogation now customary in South Africa, he had to face alone.

Now he is back among the writers. Acting through PEN the writers are determined not to let the matter rest. A full account of the legal action PEN is to take will be published in the next *Staffrider*. Meanwhile, we salute Lebenya Mokheseng.

And not Lebenya alone, but through him all the writers who have been and are being subjected to the harassment and detention procedures which give the lie to the State's 'new deal'.

Only recently we heard of the case of a young writer from the Mbakasima Group in Sebokeng, whom we now believe to have been in detention since February 1979.

All cases of harassment and detention should be reported immediately to the Chairman, telephone: 391178.

The month of February 1980 is dedicated to the banned Soweto poet, VUYISILE MDLELENI, a founder member of the banned MEDUPE Writers' Association. Vuyisile, also an official of the banned Black Community Project, was silenced last year after being detained for more than a year.

Miriam to edit new magazine

MIRIAM TLALI has been appointed Associate Editor: Southern Africa, for *Straight Ahead International*, a new literary magazine for women to be published in New Jersey, U.S.A. early this year.

She is one of nine Associate Editors, the others being from Western Europe, the Socialist countries, the Middle East, the Sub-Continent, Asia, Oceana, South America and the Caribbean.

Straight Ahead International will be a quarterly magazine. Each Associate Editor will be responsible for securing a writer for each issue.

Miriam would welcome short stories, poems, profiles, book reviews, information on early childhood education or other articles from women writers in South Africa. The publishers are particularly interested in our region and would welcome any contributions. Please send in your writing to Miriam soon.

Publications Directorate Reviews...

PUBLICATIONS ACT, 1974: PUBLICATION: "CALL ME NOT A MAN"

In reply to your letter of 14 November 1979, I have to inform you that the committee's reasons for declaring that the above-mentioned publication is undesirable within the meaning of section 47 (2) (e) of the above-mentioned Act, were as follows:

"The committee is not unaware of the not inconsiderable merit in much of the writing in this collection of short stories by the African writer Mtutuzeli Matshoba. With regard both to the quality of the writing and to the author's insight in the human situations which he interprets, the stories are generally of a high quality.

The exception, however, is the story 'A Glimpse of Slavery'. The style of writing in this story is on the whole, on the flat side, with the exception of one or two cameo's of creative presentation this writing comes near to the reporting type and the appeal lies not in the literary creation and composition, but rather in the objectionable nature of the events which are presented.

Now even if all these situations had occurred, which is improbable, and had occurred in this accumulated context in which they are set in the story, the presentation of these scenes in a popular medium would be undesirable. The presentation is calculated to exacerbate race feelings between the black and white races reciprocally; it is calculated to promote a sense of grievance without sufficient particular grounds to justify the grievance feelings in the minds of African readers; and it offers material for emotional propagandistic action of a violent kind (a type of material used only too often in anti-state underground documents).

The committee could not but place this document under section 47 (2) (e)."

"MURIEL AT METROPOLITAN", printed by Ravan: Undesirable within the meaning of section 47 (2) (c) and (d):

"This book is published by Ravan Press and is a revised version of the book with the same title published by Longman. The latter book was found to be objectionable in terms of the Act.

While this publication does not contain all the parts that were found to be objectionable in the Longman version it is considered to be undesirable within the meaning of section 47 (2) (c) and (d) of the Publications Act in that the author refers to Mrs Stein who is Afrikaans speaking as a 'lousy Boer' (page 12, bottom); also on pages 14 and 29 derogatory remarks about Afrikaners are made."

In the last issue of *Staffrider* we invited writers to advise us on the kind of workshops they would like. So far we've had no response. A PEN Sub-Committee will soon be discussing this question and its members would welcome suggestions from members. Please write in soon.

IMAGES

George Haller's *Images* and James Matthews' text are combined in a publication that is simple, powerful and unpretentious. The poems are never captions, nor are the pictures illustrations, but the two media form a dialogue: sometimes contradicting, sometimes complementing each other. The pictures cover a wide range of black experience, mostly located in the Cape. *Images* is a striking and unsentimental journey. Buy it.

IMAGES: R6-00

Now available from Ravan Press, P.O. Box 31134, Braamfontein, 2017 Johannesburg, or from BLAC Publishing House, P.O. Box 17, Athlone, Cape.

Work In Progress

is a journal which explores and presents ideas and material about contemporary South African society. WIP appears five times per year.

REGULAR FEATURES

include summaries of political trials, and items on resistance by the working class.

SOME ARTICLES

in previous editions have dealt with the Glenmore resettlement issue, Winterveld, the Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions,African women and labour, the Solomon Mahlangu case, the Eveready strike, literature and its relationship to society, bus boycotts and the Pietermaritzburg Treason Trial.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

are available to organisations, individuals, and groups who wish to distribute WIP.

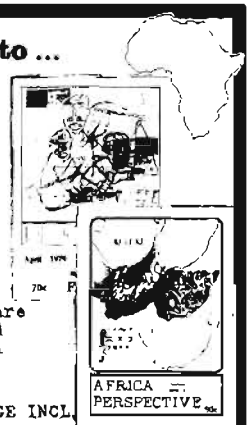
Rates in Southern Africa:
Individuals: R5-00 per annum.
Organisations: R10-00 per annum.
Group distributions: 80c per copy. Reduced rates and/or a certain number of complimentary copies can be arranged on request.

Rates elsewhere:
Western Europe and the United Kingdom: Individuals: R12-50 per annum. Organisations: R18-00 per annum.
North America and Canada: Individuals: R15-00 per annum. Organisations: R25-00 per annum. (Rates include second class airmail postage).

For further details and subscriptions contact:
The Editors, P.O. Box 93174, Yeoville 2143, South Africa.

AFRICA subscribe to ...

AFRICA PERSPECTIVE, a quarterly journal, started in 1974, attempts to raise the level of discussion on African, particularly Southern African events, through articles that are both theoretical and factual, both historical and current. Some of these have been about resettlement,women,state and labour,underdevelopment,industrial conflict, the role of the reserves in S.A.,local political bodies,and the growth of capitalist agriculture.
African countries which have been looked at are Mozambique,Uganda,Tanzania,Angola,Namibia,and Zaire.Issues planned will focus on the social consequences of the use of machinery in S.A. industry,and on the Southern African states.



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PERSPECTIVE

WRITE TO:PO BOX 32267, BRAAMFONTEIN, JOHANNESBURG, 2017.

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A journal for media studies

This new journal will be characterized by a radical perspective on the arts (e.g. film, radio, television, theatre, music, art, press etc.). It will be concerned with media and communication in a Third World context and will be polemical in nature. Its immediate aim will be to generate discussion and dialogue between academics and the world at large, and to challenge the existing social structures and social relations which govern the status quo orientation of South Africa's media institutions.

The Editors are now in a position to receive articles which may be considered for publication. Further information may be obtained from the Editors, c/o School of Dramatic Art, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

PRAXIS

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A Journal of Radical Perspectives on the Arts

Robert Sayre, 'Goldmann and Modern Realism: Introduction to the *Balcony* Article'

Lucien Goldmann, 'Genet's *The Balcony*: A Realist Play'

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Stefan Heym, 'The Indifferent Man' (short story)

Ariel Dorfman, 'The Invisible Chile: Three Years of Cultural Resistance'

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Andrew Turner, '*Ballads Moribundus*' (28 drawings)

William Hartley, '*Lumbras*: A Vision of Hell in the Third World'

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Heinz Brüggemann, 'Bertolt Brecht and Karl Korsch: Questions of Living and Dead Elements Within Marxism'

Richard Albrecht and Matthias Mitzschke, 'Bert Brecht: "Bolshevik Without a Party Book" or *Petit-Bourgeois* Intellectual?'

Thomas McGrath, 'Some Notes on Walter Lowenfels'

'The Spanish Civil War: A Portrait in Verse, with Photographs by Hans Namuth and Georg Reisner'

David Craven, 'Towards a Newer Virgil. Mondrian De-mythologized'

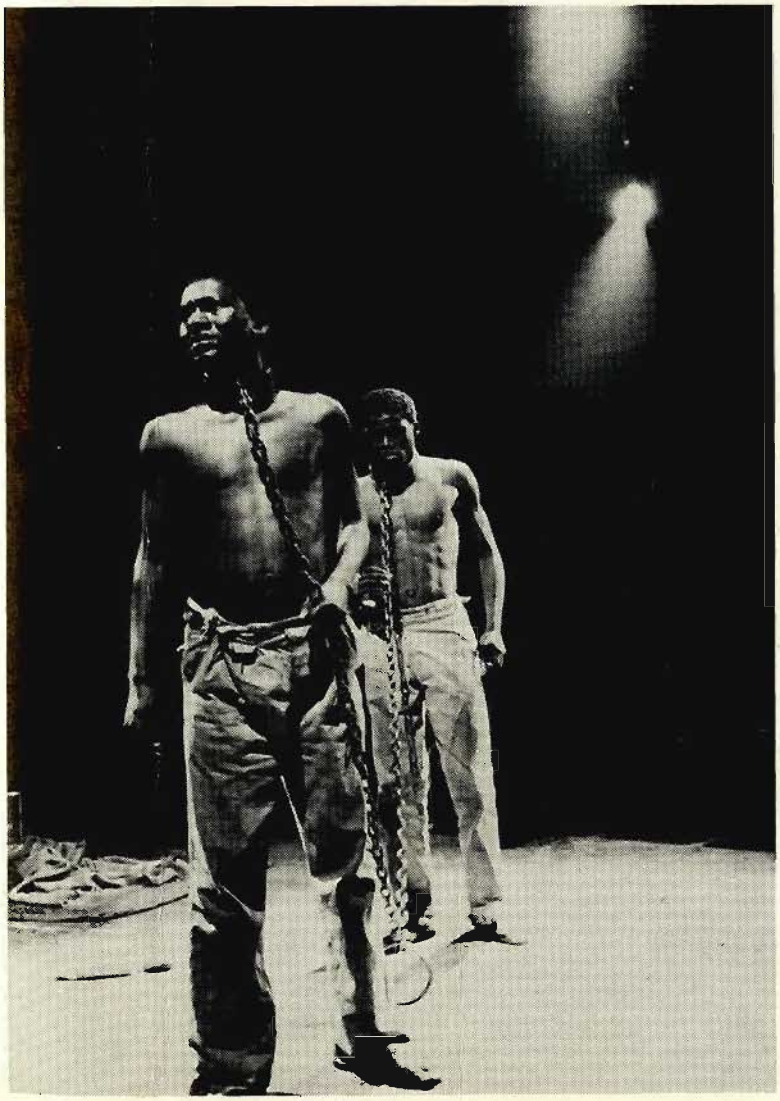
Plus notes and discussion *by Leonard Henny, Marc Zimmerman, Edward Baker and Bram Dijkstra*; short reviews by *Lee Baxandall, Jonah Raskin, Frank Galassi and David Peck*; poetry by *Yannis Ritsos, Ernesto Cardenal, Denise Levertov, Thomas McGrath, Tanure Ojaide, Peter Klappert, Ricardo Alonso, Margaret Randall, Teresa de Jesús, Vicente Gomez Kemp, Don Gordon, Walter Lowenfels, Harryette Mullen, James Scully, Ricardo Morales, Mary Lou Reker, E. Ethelbert Miller and Susan Anderson*; drawings by *René Castro*.

Single copies: $3.75. Individual subscriptions (*including* outside the United States): $7.00 for two issues. Sustaining subscriptions: $25.00. For checks in Canadian dollars please add 10%

Scenes from the play

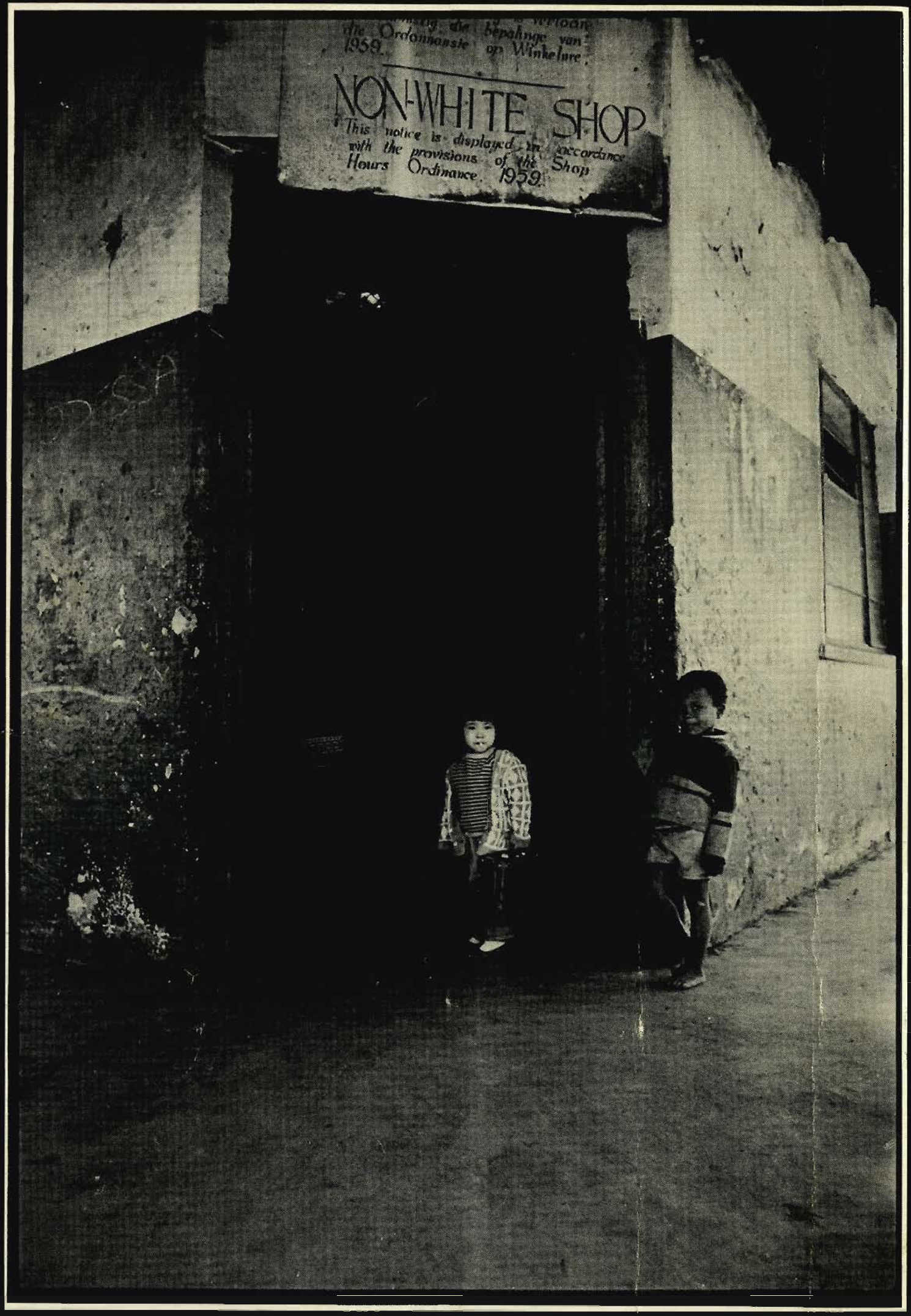
EGOLI

city of gold



Through our eyes we have seen the sufferings of our people. We have seen them being moved from fertile lands to barren areas, we have seen them starve in squatter camps. Through our eyes we have seen the life of our people assume various shapes of humiliation and suffering. Thus the continual struggle to create 'Egoli' was for us unavoidable. Together with Soyikwa Black Theatre, the drama wing of Creative Youth Association, we felt commited to focus our creative thoughts on the plight of the workers, more especially the mine migrants. Soyikwa Black Theatre was named after the well-known playwright, Wole Soyinka. The group believes in positive art, theatre of purpose, communal theatre, theatre of survival and liberation, original and relevant indigenous African theatre and, of course, creative theatre. We hope our theatre will not be mistaken for mere public entertainment.

Matsemela Manaka



ALSO RIDING: Abangani, Allahpoets, CYA, eSkom Arts, Guyo, Madi, Malopoets, Peyarta, Zamani Arts