

# Staffrider

Volume Three Number One June 1980

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**Zimbabwe ~ Struggle and Celebration**

## **AMANDLA**

Mariam Tlali's new novel  
an excerpt.

## **June 1976**

Poems of Remembrance

## **Fikile**

The Staffrider Profile

## **Gallery**

Paul Stopforth

## **Reviews**

Jazz Inspiration  
Juluka, Allahpoets  
Roger Lucey  
Malombo at Vanwyksrust

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Wole Soyinka  
Pacific Poets  
Chirwa Chipeya  
Charles Mungoshi  
Farouk Stemmet  
Lebenya Mokheseng  
Molahlehi waMmutle  
Heather Bailey  
Mafika Gwala  
and many others

## **Stories**

John Gambanga  
Paul Hotz  
Chris Chapman  
Xolile Mavuso  
Joel Matlou

## **Still riding**

CYA, MALIMO, PEYARTA,  
DINOTSHI, KHAULEZA,  
MPUMALANGA ARTS,  
GUYO BOOK CLUB,  
MEHLODI

# GRAPHICS'80

AN EXHIBITION OF NEW SOUTH AFRICAN GRAPHICS is to be held at the Market Gallery from the end of September to the end of October, organised by *Staffrider*. Artists wishing to submit works or who intend working towards the exhibition are invited to contact *Staffrider* as soon as possible.

The emphasis is to be on a collective impact rather than individual artists, and artists are requested to limit themselves to a few powerful works.

## Staffrider Series

No. 3. in the *Staffrider Series*, *Forced Landing*, edited by Mothobi Mutloatse, has been banned for distribution by the Publications Directorate.

Forthcoming books in the *Staffrider Series* are *OGUN ABIBIMAN* by Nigerian author Wole Soyinka, and *AMANDLA* by Miriam Tlali. Excerpts from both books are featured in this issue.

## New Titles

Other new titles from Ravan Press:

*MAIDS AND MADAMS - A Study in the Politics of Exploitation* by Jacklyn Cock. The first major study of domestic workers under apartheid.

*SWORDS OR PLOUGHSHARES?* by Vincent Victor Razis. A concise and lucidly presented introduction to the debate on change in South Africa.

*THE STORY OF AN AFRIKANER* by Natie Ferreira.

*TUTTI AND THE MAGIC BIRD* by Julia Boyd-Harvey, illustrated by Marjorie Bereza. Another Ravan Book for the Children of Africa.

## Competition

The English Association of South Africa are holding a short story competition. Prizes are R300, R200 and R100. Closing date for the competition is 31 August 1980. The story must be 2 000 - 3 000 words on the theme of 'Gold'. Each entry must be accompanied by an entry fee of 50 cents. Entrants must write to the Competition Organiser, English Association, P.O. Box 81, Rondebosch, 7700, for your copies of the rules and entry forms.

## on our cover :

Comrade Bernard, a twenty-three year old Junior Commander in the ZANLA forces, and one of the 2 300 guerillas who reported to the assembly points in accordance with the cease-fire of the Lancaster House agreement.

Paul Weinberg spoke to him shortly before the elections when he and three hundred of his comrades were gathered at Delta assembly point, where they had been since early January, waiting for the elections and showing visible signs of boredom:

'There's nothing to do here - nothing to read, no soccer ball, nothing. You just have to hang around here - life was far better in the bush.'

When asked about the future of Zimbabwe, he said:

'All I want to see happen is true liberation, the suffering ended and a country that serves its people. I want to see an end to the system - equality for all - and until that happens I will fight for it.'

# INDEX on Censorship

A journal devoted to freedom of expression worldwide



The Face  
Behind my face  
Twists in agony at  
the thought of our  
people  
Twisted by various  
forms of  
constriction

Pitika Ntuli,

◀ DESPITE by Ntuli

Dissent in African Art and Literature is the topic of the next issue of *INDEX on Censorship* (No.3/80). It includes an interview with the sculptor and writer PITIKA NTULI in which he talks about his imprisonment, his work and the predicament of artists in repressive societies; an article by ANDREW HORN on African theatre; an interview with the Kenyan author NGUGI WA THIONG'O in which he discusses his education and the development of literature; a personal view by A.M.BABU of cultural freedom in Africa; an interview with CAMARA LAYE - probably the last before his death; a profile of the imprisoned Moroccan poet ABDULLAH ZERRIKA; an extract from the Togolese author YVES DOGBE'S novel *The Prisoner* and a poem by ABDELLATIF LAABI.

*INDEX on Censorship* is a bimonthly magazine devoted to freedom of expression worldwide.

"I...find *INDEX* one of the finest journals in circulation"  
André Brink

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### Cover Photographs:

Front: Comrade Bernard, Paul Weinberg  
Back: Bob Marley, Paul Weinberg

## Four poems by Chirwa P. Chipeya

### zimbabwe on the horizon

in the  
rising episode  
of hope  
in the hope  
of deliverance  
uncelebrated though  
the uhuru songs  
the uhuru dances  
(songs might have  
been sweeter and more  
poetic in the bush with  
nature, birds)  
emerging slowly  
in the masses  
of perseverance  
africa on the eve  
of another soul-search  
the times  
the pressures  
treading on  
the calamitous deaths  
that doomed cultures  
the ravages  
the strange  
estrangements  
and while peace glows  
for motherland  
in the wilderness  
it is bitter  
to reminisce  
the battles  
of zimbabwe

Chirwa P. Chipeya

### peace time

where  
limpopo is  
waning  
ebbing  
with the seasonal tides  
cicadas  
must be  
singing  
the summer  
that ended  
the war  
and zambezi  
must be  
flowing  
in peace  
again

Chirwa P. Chipeya

### rue

rue  
in a land feted  
with whirlwinds and  
ill wills  
  
the boredom  
of silent minds  
weighs a heavy cloud  
in the drowning cynicism  
of ruthless terror

even  
the birds fly voiceless  
they've lost the will  
to utter beautiful sounds

rivers flow  
in a mute rush  
there is no cause  
to splash happiness

Chirwa P. Chipeya

### liberté aujourd'hui

aujourd'hui  
la guerre  
a fini  
le peuple  
chante  
la liberté  
est arrivée  
le peuple  
en chantant  
les chansons  
de joie ou  
les chansons  
pour les morts

Chirwa P. Chipeya

*Today  
the war  
has ended  
the people sing  
freedom has arrived  
the people are singing  
songs  
of joy or  
songs for the dead.*



Zimbabwe faces/ photos, Bidy Crewe

# Orphaned before birth...

by John Gambanga/Harare

*When fishes flew and forests walked  
And figs grew upon thorn  
Some moment when the moon was  
blood*

*Then surely I was born*

— *The Donkey* by G.K. Chesterton.

Yes, that was when I was born; when the world was upside down and nothing was in place. I am told I was born when there was war in our country, a political war, between the white oppressive army and the members of the liberation movement who were operating from outside the country. Not an enviable time to be born in; indeed, it was a very unfortunate time. But, surprisingly enough, I have somehow staggered up all the way to where I am now: I am 18. It took my mother all the courage, determination, patience and love she had to raise me thus far on her own. And it is to her, more than to anyone else in this world, that I am most grateful.

My father, the late Jaji Tapera, from what I hear from those who knew him well, was a truck driver with a flourishing company in the small town of Bindura where he lived. He was known for his cheerful disposition, I am told. 'Your father was never a sad man,' said Tinei, one of his workmates. 'It was all smiles always.' It would be all smiles today, if death had not struck at such an untimely moment. But that is always the case with death; it comes unexpectedly. My mother recalls the day very well:



'It was a Friday afternoon,' she began one day after I had talked her into telling me about it, 'and your dad and I had gone into town for a bit of shopping. I had just been to see the doctor as I was expecting. You can imagine, your dad was bubbling over with joy. In fact, that day he was extraordinarily happy, as if he knew what was to happen that afternoon. In the truck we were talking about this and that, and he was exuberant with joy and happiness. I remember it all. '(Here my mother paused and looked up at me). I asked her what was the matter and she resumed the narration: 'At one time we stopped by the roadside while we had our lunch, our last lunch together... I remember Old Mudhara, the butcher, waving to us as he sped past us in his white battered pick-up. Little did he know that he was waving your father his last goodbye.

'Then we drove on, at a steady speed. Your father was never a fast driver, and that particular day he drove more carefully than usual in view of my physical condition and because the road was rather bumpy.

'I remember him asking me, "Don't you think, honey, that we should buy a smaller and better car?" I remember looking up to him as we were negotiating a bend, I leaned deliberately on him as the car came into the clear road again, and we both smiled. I had replied that I'd love a new car, not the old pick-up truck that was becoming a ramshackle box.

"Yes, my dear," he said, "a new car is just what we want with a new baby. I hope it will be a boy. We will drive to all the places of interest, Salisbury, the Lake, National Archives and many more." I remember his voice was confident and comfortingly rich.

'Then it happened, almost within the blink of an eye. We had just driven into a smaller dust road and out of nowhere there came loud gun shots from in front of us. The sound of it terrified me and I screamed. Then we saw two armed men, standing in the middle of the road ahead of us. From what I learnt later, they must have mistaken our car for a white farmer's, for it was mostly the white farmers who were the targets of the members of the liberation movement. I remember a local farmer who drove a white pick-up truck just like ours. They gave your father no chance. They fired blindly at the oncoming car. I dropped to the floor and shuddered to imagine what was to happen to us.

'The car went on, almost wobbling

'... out of nowhere there came loud gunshots... The sound terrified me and I screamed. Then we saw two armed men, standing in the road in front of us...'

now, and I think your father was attempting to avoid the two armed men when he swerved and... from there I don't recall what happened. I must have gone into a deep coma.'

At this point she looked up at me. She looked lost in the dark memories of the past. She managed to come back to the present when I asked her what had happened next.

'The next thing I remember is delivering you early the following morning at the local clinic. I heard sweet voices and opened my eyes.

'There were two beautiful women in white dresses who I guessed were nurses. Both of them were smiling at me. I tried to recall what had happened the day before but I had a splitting headache and could not. I knew I was in the clinic and I even recognised one of the nurses.

'"Easy now, amai, just relax and lie back," one of the nurses soothed me after I tried to pull myself up. They didn't answer me when I asked about my husband, the accident, and how I had come into the clinic. They didn't have to tell me; it was written all over their faces.

'But later, much later, with you breathing the new air and myself a bit relieved, I was told you were an orphan. Your father had died from bullet wounds received in the gunfire. He had died instantly, they told me.

'The following day I left the maternity clinic and went home. One thing loomed miserably ahead of me — my son would be an orphan, fatherless before he was born.'

Even before my mother had finished telling me the tragic story, my tears had already begun rolling down my cheeks. I rose and left the room silently for my mother was also weeping.

# Zimbabwe images:

## Two poems by Charles Mungoshi

### TO THE ANCESTORS

your dawn-fertilised words  
like semen  
fall lightly  
on some inner veld in me  
softly  
i spread out  
gently  
curl up into the sun  
then  
warmdarkly  
fold in in me  
the delicate beginnings  
of something  
that will live  
and move  
with quiet gentleness  
in the harsh  
neon eye of the world.

Charles Mungoshi

### BURNING LOG

i am  
a burning log  
my history being reduced  
to ashes  
what i remember  
of yesterday  
is the ashy taste  
of defeat  
my hope  
for tomorrow  
is the fire.

Charles Mungoshi

---

'SOME KINDS OF WOUNDS',  
a story by Charles Mungoshi  
will be published in the next  
edition of *Staffrider*.

---



Biddy Crewe



Paul Weinberg

# Struggle and Celebration



photos, Bidy Crewe

## JUNE 1976

### Poems of Remembrance

#### JUNE'S BLAZE

Cries of dying children  
in spirited rebellious bands  
stoked the masses' wrath  
and told police stuttering guns,  
Afrikaans boggled their minds.

Carrying howling banners high,  
fists of togetherness raised high  
they marched like crusaders  
and faced the law in barrels of guns  
that gave a killer's answer.

In the crash, bang and thud  
that split heads, bodies and souls,  
stampeding as their blood ran  
they told police coughing guns,  
they were marching to freedom.

They rode militant horses,  
galloped and called for help  
in a crowded ghetto of a million,  
grim with a torso pavilion.

A dread dream it seemed  
when vows of vengeance razed  
bigot's symbols in June's blaze  
and wreaked masses' wrath  
hereditary in match-box houses —  
fertile seedbeds of hate.

Soweto ablaze simply meant  
so-where-to from here?  
and the answer was not minced  
when the country shook with fear.

**Mandla Ndlazi/Soweto**

#### JUNE SIXTEENTH

the sixteenth  
day from the first  
after the midwife  
safely delivered  
the deformed child  
paralysing my  
body  
with cold

the month brought  
the dawn of the day  
that levelled my thinking  
like the Russian and Cuban  
tanks on the plains  
and sands of Ethiopia  
and pierced my heart  
like the French and Belgian  
bullets in the thickets  
of forested Zaire

my bones cracked  
when i beheld  
the salty tears  
flowing down  
the widowed woman's  
cheeks

the sobs of the  
mother left childless  
by the stray soldiers' guns  
tore the skies  
and rose higher  
than the tip  
of kilimanjaro  
when she beheld  
the mau mau  
and never protested

the sixth day  
from the tenth  
in the sixth  
month from one  
rose with peace  
that never was to see  
sunset  
like the titanic  
that left the native shores  
to destination unknown  
beyond the tumultuous  
salty sea

nineteen hundreds  
seven tens  
and six people and many more  
cried louder than the  
echoes of machine guns  
and their tears  
flooded our hopes  
like the falls  
of 'musi-wa-thunya'  
and left us  
the remnants of the kingdom of Zimbabwe  
(\*Victoria falls)

**Nhlanhla Paul Maake/Thokoza**

#### RAGE

The volcanic rage  
In my ghetto's face  
Is a warning phase  
Of freedom's rumbles  
That will not mumble.

The volcano in its crater  
Is fire enough to cremate  
The ghetto's creators  
In their splendour next door.

Stop the rage in my ghetto's face  
And the brilliant ebony numbers  
Will give their homes face  
In security baked bricks of grace  
On plains of freedom squares.

**Mandla Ndlazi/Soweto**





drawing by Richard Jack

# CUSTODIAN OF OUR SPIRIT

A poem by Farouk Stemmet

oh Baobab  
you stand firm  
in the soil  
in which you always stood  
you stand firm  
in the soil  
in which you will always stand

your wrinkled bark testifies  
to a memory  
rich in times and events  
long forgotten by man

you are not the rolling tide  
you are not the changing cloud  
you are neither the weeping willow  
nor the departing ibis  
you are not fallible man

you have never been colonised  
you have always belonged  
to the soil in which you stand

though your branches  
may be chopped and pruned  
you remain yourself  
for your roots are secure  
in the soil  
which gave you birth

though your trunk is wide  
and exposed to much  
you can shield many

though the air about you may change  
you will live forever

*'Oh Africa, seek your Spirit in me'*

An old man waits for death in his mansion in Natal. He believes that the Revolution has finally come, and has barricaded his house against his imagined invaders ...

# NOVEMBER '76

A story by Paul Hotz/Johannesburg

6 November 1976.

They are coming. Last night, at five to seven, the radio went dead. We — my brother, my spinster sister, and I — did not look at each other. The tea in the silver teapot grew cool. A cigarette smouldered, neglected, in the ashtray.

'Perhaps it is the radio,' my brother mumbled. My sister and I ignored him. Such a wishful attempt to deny the situation did not deserve a rebuttal.

It is not as if this is unexpected. There have been portents. How many times, I wonder, have we each, alone, played and replayed the possible scenarios?

A week ago we saw them for the first time. As Mary and I sat on the verandah, I with my whiskey, she with her gin, watching the sun set, a dozen of them slipped along the path at the bottom of the garden, the path that runs between the neat borders of the lawn and the first rows of sugarcane.

We will submit to history with dignity. There is a shotgun and a pistol here, and I have some experience of warfare. As soon as I came of age I volunteered and was posted to France. I will not speak of the trenches.

We will follow our grandfather's example; he was always a perfect gentleman and a dutiful soldier. At Rorke's Drift the British, though outnumbered ten to one, though trapped in a mission station sandbagged only with sacks of flour and empty ammunition boxes, fought off the hordes of the Zulu vanguard and saved the infant colony of Natal. Our situation, though, is hopeless. The country has collapsed about us.

In my grandfather's day they possessed only the few guns they had obtained from unscrupulous traders. Nonetheless Isandlwana was the greatest single disaster of all Britain's colonial battles; eight hundred regulars and as many loyal Zulu fell. There have been rumours that submarines are landing arms on the Zululand coast, of the dis-

covery of arms caches. Soweto simmers. My grandson, back from the border, hints at things he has sworn not to reveal. We scoff at the rumours of course, but we remember them. The newspapers say nothing, but then they never do. It was from the returning troops that we first learned of the Angolan War. It was from a basket of pamphlets the Germans fired over that we first learned of Caporetto. The next day my batman had his head blown off.

I have dismissed the servants. There is no need for them to witness this last defeat. They were reluctant. They would prefer to stand about and gawp. That, at least, will be spared us. Rebecca performed. She sobbed that she had served us faithfully for thirty years. I gave her a reference and promised her a pension. What can it mean now? But the ritual of it seemed to comfort her. I doubt she can conceive of a world without us. She is too old — close on eighty I should think — roughly as old as I. She is one of the good ones — uncorrupted by the city, education, or missionaries. I would like to add loyal — and in her own way no doubt she has been — but it is difficult to apply the word to them for they have no real conception of its meaning. During the Mau-Mau rebellion it was always the trusted houseboy who let in the terrorists.

I wonder what place she will find in the new order? Servant to some black official, fresh from the kraal, who clumsily apes the ways of his erstwhile masters? A Russian adviser?

She sobbed into her apron as she left. Tonight, no doubt, she will explain the layout of the house to them. I locked the door behind her. I want them to be conscious of a violation as they enter. The three beds have all been dragged into the lounge. I have locked all the doors and closed all the curtains. Mary has the revolver, I the shotgun. My brother, I'm afraid, is too incompetent to be trusted.

7 November 1976.

It is 3 a.m. and I, the insomniac, await the moment. I would not want death to claim me unawares.

The house is still now. This afternoon they were on the verandah, presumably trying to peer through the chinks in the curtain. I sat in my armchair, my shotgun across my knees, awaiting the crash of glass and the thrusting barrel of a Kashalnikov. They must suspect a trap.

Termites gnaw at the floorboards, rust growls beneath the paint. I have never felt at home here though I was born here, in this house which has been in the family for three generations. The spirits of this land are inimical to us and our order. The bush swallows all one's efforts to build something of value — this continent has no accretions of history — leaving, perhaps, a pile of stones upon a hill for some future archaeologist to attempt to tease a history from. Ending a sentence with a preposition! What was Churchill's reply again? Forgetting again.

I cough and all is quiet. They must be listening. Then, after a moment's respectful silence, they begin again. Above my desk hangs a parchment copy of our coat of arms. The stain, once a speck in the lower left hand corner, has spread almost to the centre. I cannot help but wonder what strange beast is being sketched in. The bougainvillea has assumed the verandah, spoiling the view. My father often sat out there in the early evening, sundowner in his hand. Now Mary believes it inhabited by a colony of snakes and keeps the lounge door permanently locked. The pond is choked with dead leaves and slime; mosquitoes and toads engender there. The waterlilies and the fat red goldfish which we once cast for with cotton lines and bits of tinsel have vanished. When a garden is abandoned rank weeds flourish there — not the original bush. I like to see that as an allegory.

Ours is an old colonial family; one



Illustration, William Kentridge

that is mentioned often in the chronicles of our early history together with the Acutts, the Shepstones and the Huletts. We are no longer links in a chain of predecessors and successors. We live a memory, stiffly. What was it that died out there under the flare of the Very lights, withering on the tangles of barbed wire like a corpse too exposed to bring back? Our children, with the exception of Mike, the stupid one, were all tempted to the cities. Mike prefers to live in the village, close to his beerswilling cronies. Like the others he visits only on official occasions. I am pleased he will not now inherit.

The others return for the occasional weekend. After a while silences gape in the conversation and they begin to be impatient of what we have hoped for. But they try to disguise their impatience, to be polite. The grandchildren mess everywhere, twist and turn impatiently when I talk to them. Only when they want money for sweets are they attentive.

The incident in the lounge: I slapped her across the face. She howled. Pigtailed, blue eyes, and a muddy frock have an aura of innocence which she has quickly learnt to exploit. The image of my sister Mary when she was a child. Such obscenities from such a mouth. She denied

everything of course. She said I had been hearing things; she should have been beaten for lying. Her parents believed her, but did not dare offend me. Afterwards my son came to me and stumbled on apologetically about modern children. I insist, as I always have, on the necessity for discipline.

Then, worse, are the occasional scraps of conversation overheard: 'He lives so much in the past'. My son's wife said this, after I had forgotten myself and rambled on about the war. But it was she who raised the subject, nudged me toward it. She wants my son to believe I've lapsed into senility. She dreams of the day she can have me committed. Wants to get her hands on the estate 'Don't you think his behaviour tonight was... well... perverted?' she says. My son clears his throat and pauses. He spends five minutes saying nothing and afterwards does as his wife tells him. If he had her drive I'd have no worries — in that respect, at least. We gave him all the opportunities, but he cannot help what he is. Having had it soft he has become soft — the disease of his generation.

It is not pleasant to think of those who will come after us. I imagine their thick black fingers coiling sweatily round the Chinese vase, hurling it

against the wall, laughing as it shatters. They smash down the copy of the coat of arms, kick in the portraits, rip the doors from the liquor cabinet, drink themselves into a stupor. When the shooting begins it will be my duty to take care of Mary; I could not allow her to suffer that.

The morning after the orgy they will awaken amidst broken glass, smashed furniture and the smell of urine and vomit to see us lying stiff and calm as icons.

After the carnival the vacuum will no longer seem to be freedom — it will be recognized for the chaos it is. They will be scared, like children, and will wish us back to shore up their world. No quantity of missionaries, Bibles, or schools could civilize them. Remember the Congo, Biafra, Uganda. Without us the country will revert back to the trees. They have no gift for order. They snatch at their pleasures greedily, like children, with no thought for the morrow. They will live to regret our absence.

8 November 1976.

I tore up the floor of the bedroom and hammered boards across all the windows and doors. It took nearly all afternoon. My hands are chafed and

'They are watching us.

Every morning I hear the thud of their boots  
about the back door, the chinking of metal...'

blistered but at least we should have a few moments warning before they break through.

My brother, I suspect, has had a stroke. His face went blue then white. He lies sprawled out beside his bed, the flies buzzing about the stains on his trousers. I know he is still alive because he is snoring loudly. His mouth is open and his lips are quivering with flies.

I cannot attend to him; I dare not relax my vigilance a moment. Mary is incapable now; but that is understandable. Only an exceptional woman would be able to endure this.

They rap and tap at the windows. They try to peer in through the cracks and they laugh. They will come when they have worked themselves up sufficiently, perhaps after they have looted the liquor store — or, more likely, once they have run through all the stocks. Rebecca will remind them of the liquor hoard here. Their cowardice and indolence would need some such spur.

9 November 1976.

As I expected my brother's nerve broke. He drank a bottle of gin to give himself courage and then informed me that he wanted to go for help. Always the practical one I pointed out that they had the place surrounded. He mumbled that he was prepared to take the risk. I become suspicious when a coward volunteers. He repeated the story of Dick King's ride to Grahamstown. Then I understood. I refused. He tried to duck past me. I hit him on the back of his head with my cane. He fell against a chair, dropping the bottle. It smashed. The chair toppled over. He lies sprawled out beside his bed, the flies buzzing about the stains on his trousers. Even at school he lacked a sense of duty.

Mary says she has seen a vision but she refuses to tell me of what. She says that I am not worthy.

I remember when young White's nerve gave way. We had had no sleep for close on thirty hours. The seventh on our right gave way and we were obliged to retreat about five hundred yards — our third retreat in as many days. Every time a shell howled over us White flung himself to the ground and covered his head with a trenchcoat. I pretended not to notice. 'I can't go on,' White told me that afternoon. 'Report sick,' I offered. Thinking of his family, he refused. After



Illustration, N.D. Mazin

another heavy shelling waves of infantry charged. Lieutenant White took a Lewis gun and stood up on the parapets of the trench, firing till he fell, moments later. He was a brave boy, the bravest of us all.

I digress. The meanderings of encroaching age. Would I have become one of those bent grey men who wander about muttering to themselves? Another of the shadow selves one senses within, but dare not name or define for fear that, having given it shape, it will assume a reality independent of its maker. One intuits this about certain things — as for instance one senses, silent beneath the lyric green of a reed-fringed river, a crocodile. It is as if something, some darkness in the land itself has infected us, as if . . .

10 November 1976.

I wonder why they have not yet entered. They are watching us. Every morning I hear the thud of the boots of their patrols about the back door, the chinking of metal. I cannot guess what they are planning — to starve us out and shoot us as we surrender?

Perhaps there are other possibilities. We have, after all, always been good to them. Will they offer us a mudhut in the backyard? Keep us as tame bogeymen to scare the piccanins with? I cannot spend my last days with a few scraggy chickens and a stinking goat. Under such circumstances it will be my duty to risk one final gesture.

Mary has found our Mother's wedding dress. She stumbles about these rooms in flowing veils of lace and satin. I hacked off the train when it became entangled with the table. She did not try to disentangle herself, but pulled and pulled until she was exhausted. I pushed the big table against the kitchen door, and jammed chairs against the others. It might slow them a little.

11 November 1976.

she says she has seen them they were inside the room everywhere sitting on the table on the coat of arms on my shoulder and she wanted to get out to get away I held on my duty two dry sticks rubbing together at the seacottage the hot sand among the dunes by the pinetree the seawind twisted

when you came from the sea the sun a brazen flower rising behind you and I held you my duty there as the waves withdrew tugging at the sand beneath our feet and we fell into the water and the sun boiled red from the sea and your face shredded and wrinkled and the false teeth skewed trying to scream

and there is blood on your dress where you fell against the table it toppled to the floor and the vase is broken the one from China with all the strange flowers I chipped it when I was six remember and Jonathan hasn't moved all day after the rugby the coma for three days and she has gone and the light comes in the lounge door screaming at me and there is something white lying out on the verandah steps near the bougainvillea with a black mark upon it and clouds of flies above it and the light is screaming at me and I know that I will wait here I will wait here they



Soyikwa Black Theatre, the drama wing of CYA, will be having a conference on 31 May and 1 June entitled **Black Theatre Today**. All groups and individuals are welcome to attend the conference to be held at Moravian Hall, Diepkloof, Zone 1.

## HOPE

The sculptured hope  
For my freedom  
From the clutches  
Of self and themselves  
. . . The artistry  
Of time  
And experience

**Mabuse A. Letlhage**

## UNIBEL

Ask not . . .  
There is only one bell  
That tolls for thee  
Unibel!

**Mabuse A. Letlhage**

## SOWETO VILLAGE

I hear  
Faint little voices  
The folk-songs are subsiding  
The black slumbering giant  
Is going to sleep  
And deathly fear grips my heart

**Mabuse A. Letlhage**

## OBSERVATIONS

Beneath the shadows of mankind  
I foresee not freedom but chaos  
For I cannot see the road to freedom  
or freedom is lost . . .

**Tebogo Darkie Moteane**

*Mohlang re koponang le bona*

Mohlang re koponang le bona  
Re tla be re bina re habile  
Re habetse yona ntwā  
Rona bana ba afrika  
Re tiile re bile re *amme*  
Ha re ba bona re tla qeta ka bona

**Nono Thulo**

## WE HAVE HEARD THE BLUES

In memoriam: Bra Zakes Nkosi

when victor madoda ndlazilwane  
and themba koyane  
disappeared with the ancestral clouds  
we counted you amongst those who would  
keep our throats wet  
with the blues from the clouds of this african  
continent  
our hearts could not stop whimpering for you to  
come and solace  
our stomach from colonial masturbation  
we all cried and said  
come sing the blues with us  
come blow the ghetto blues  
with the children of shaka's blood  
come blow the isandlwana blues  
with the dispossessed  
come sing the liberation blues with us  
we the dispossessed have  
had enough of the halellujah blues  
we have heard the alexandra blues  
we have heard the blues  
of man-lives-no-more when the clock of  
darkness strikes  
and the msomi gangsters become the ruling  
party  
in search of bread  
those were the ghetto blues  
we have heard the blues  
today  
yesterday  
day before yesterday  
and days before some of us were born  
we have heard the kofifi blues  
sobukwe blues  
boogie woogie blues  
marabi blues  
mandela blues  
harlem blues  
and b.c. blues  
we have heard the sharpeville blues  
we have heard the diagonal street blues  
we have heard the hector peterson blues  
we have heard the blues  
sung by soweto students  
overclouded by smoke fumes  
from burnt government offices  
we have heard the park station blues  
kempton park blues  
pelican blues  
jabulani blues  
orlando blues  
moroka blues  
soekmeaar blues  
silverton blues  
we have heard the booyens blues  
through the RPG sound track  
which has zimbabwe liberation on record  
we heard about the bra zakes blues  
when some people were moaning about jesus  
christ blues  
oh what a good friday to sing the bra zakes  
blues

**Matsemela Manaka**

ADMINISTRATION

There are two sides  
To a coin  
It gets tossed  
Settles on heads  
Oppresses  
Destroys  
Gets tossed again  
Lands on the land  
And with its tail  
lashes with revenge  
The oppressors  
Destroyers

Tlhanodi Raletsebele

THE UN

Talks, talks  
All nations  
talking about  
their nations

'Talks were successful'  
'No comment'  
'Step in the right direction'  
'Great break-through'  
'History is made'

The talkers  
talked about a direction  
which needs no comment

They got a break-through  
And they made history  
When they talked  
Talking  
BULLSHIT

Tlhanodi Raletsebele

*There is a song*

There is a song  
in my heart.  
If I can echo it  
I will feel relieved  
free  
and holy  
So teach me harmony  
to back this  
song in my  
heart.  
Give me  
sweet chords, Lord  
to sing  
this sweet song  
of freedom  
a song  
in my heart.  
a song of love  
a song about  
my faith and hope.  
Freedom song in my heart

Oupa Thando Mthimkulu



Lino-cut, Mzwakhe/Soweto

OH! MY ROTTING FAITH

Seal my mouth and feel my heart  
I'm not in conferences as your people are  
But a social outcast as my people are  
Touch my hands and heal the wounds  
I have no franchise hospital as you have  
Only a pair of handcuffs, but not rarely, as you  
have.  
My poor soul is ageing in your cage of rusty  
rubble  
These bars I shall one day break  
And wrestle with them until I'm dead  
The dual of body and soul can't complete a  
man;  
Perhaps an unhappy lot a bright future  
sometimes can.  
Your world is a city full of non-biological  
cells  
You naively claim that yours is complex  
Your problems would beat the best analyst,  
you say  
But I shall neither trust you  
Nor ever place my faith in you, only in the  
LORD.

Ndlela Radebe

THE CRYING HOTEL BLUES

On my way through the country,  
In a hotel of lice I slept  
Food smelling from the courtyard,  
that cockroaches could not digest.  
The rooms suffocating with  
remoteness, all else was barred out.  
I never went near the bath for fear  
that sharks were in the water.

In the morning hunger threw me  
to the breakfast table among residents  
who knew the routine and accepted the filth.  
The waiter who served me had no sunshine  
in his eyes, rondavels of sleep covered his  
eyes while urine marks stained his uniform.  
Divorcees: frozen hairdos, lipstick  
on their noses, carried patent leather  
handbags  
with country and western smiles.  
Yes wanderers and sailors, labourers and  
mavericks, vagabonds and professors all  
ate the same way; I never knew what  
it meant.  
I pulled my jacket closer to my  
body to escape the uneasiness  
on my way through the country.

Ken Gibbs

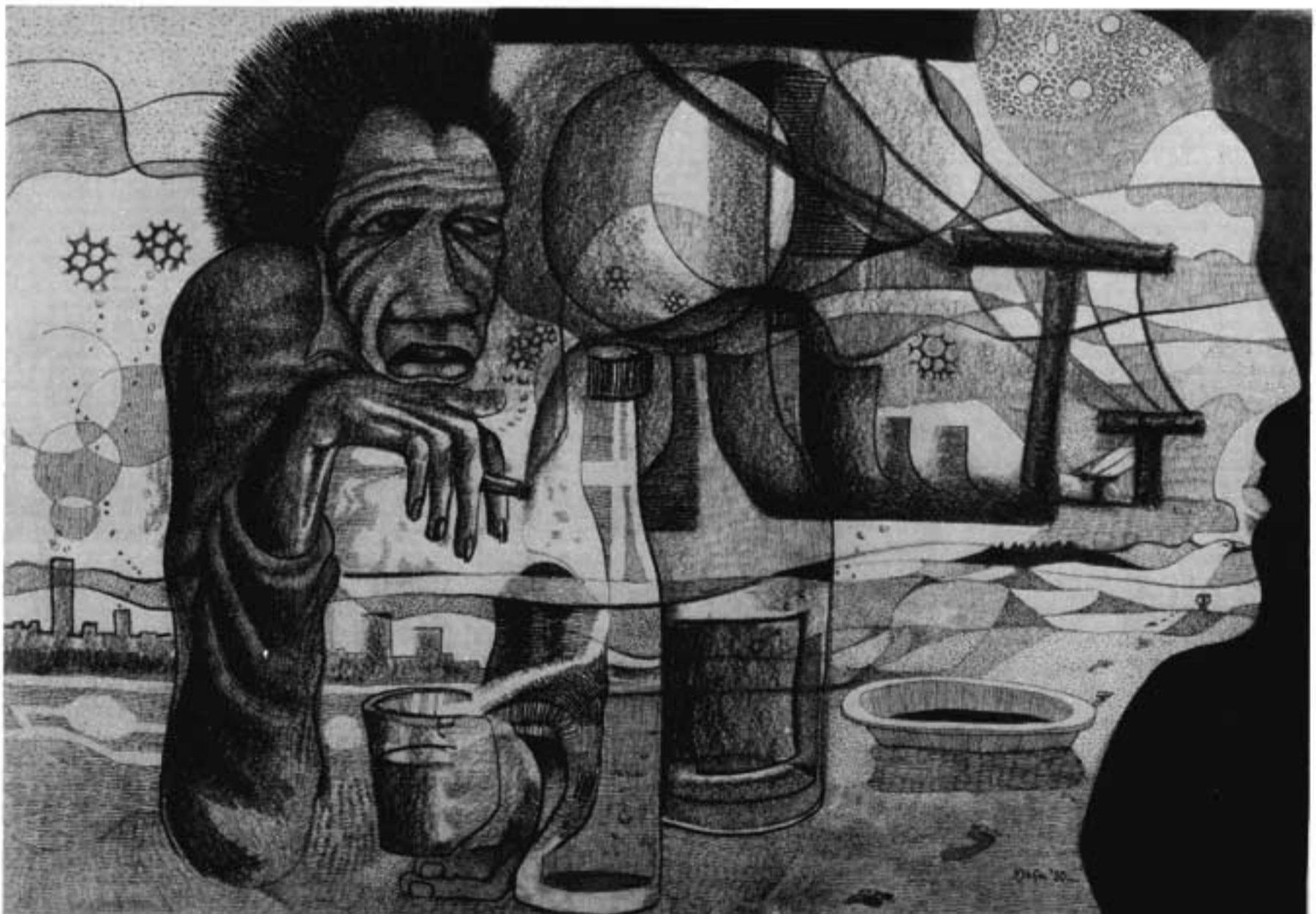
THE SAP

o my mother's child  
drink of the Sap

the Sap is all  
that is left to us;  
Blank  
and Blond  
and Blue as a uniform  
Bloody as a bayonet  
Charred as bullets  
sizzling  
through  
our  
bodies

o child drink  
to our Lives  
for it is our Deaths too

Farouk Asvat



Black Blue and Broke

Drawing, Mafa Ngwenya/Soweto



*Drawing, Goodman Mabote/Soweto*

## MALIMO

### DEDICATION (Diopic Emotions)

Brothers and sisters whose souls they cannot  
chain

You looked beyond the beautiful masks  
Soaked in perfume and aping innocence  
And saw those hideous sores  
Lurking in the deep, ready to eat  
Into the flesh of all the unsuspecting  
And for the love of black humanity  
You raised your voice and alerted all those  
In danger of the disease you saw spreading  
And in the process stuck your neck out  
For the sword of the law to slice  
While all of us who did not give a damn  
Caught the flow of blood in glasses of wine  
And drank it in ignorant merriment  
To the long life of injustice.

When your eyes did open  
Misery stared into them  
You looked left and human suffering smirked  
Right, and despair grinned  
Right back at your woolly hair  
And behind you  
Injustice mocked your blackarse.

You could have blinkered your eyes  
But then you cared, black mother's child  
You had eaten of all embryonic food  
Suckled the breast dry  
Of a mother who has known struggle  
Child of a father who told tales of the whip  
You sat down  
And stripped the mask off the other's face  
Sending piercing knives of fear swishing  
through his heart  
Causing law, through desperation, to be  
Made and remade, thus  
Sending justice flying into the sea.

### Mogorosi Motshumi/Batho Location

#### THALA-BODIBA

Tsietsi ke thala-bodiba mora Mashinini  
Thala-bodiba ya thella hara mapolesa  
A thella mapolesa a modikile a entse leswiti  
Ba dikile mora Mashinini mothemelle lekaka  
A ya a ile mora monna  
Bare ba sa ile lekgongwana hodimo  
Tsietsi a tswa a nyenyellepa  
Tsietsi a ikela ba sa tseane  
boko bo hana ho sebeta  
Mapolesa a batla monna nkgogo Tsietsi

Ha hlajwa mogosi ba phutheha banna  
Ba phuthehela kantorong tse kgola Protea  
Bare rona re bo Mobrikadiri le boKaptone  
Ngwanenwa re tla mopoma maphewana  
Re tla moruta ho phela le batho

Rope tsa kgoho tsa bapala bana  
Tse telele tsona ba dijahela sefubeng  
Tholwana tsa teng dibentshitsuwe  
Eka mohla tsatsi la Rephaboliki la dipontsho  
Eta tsona ba fasitse moya o se kene  
Kepisi ele tse telele tse dinaledi phatleng

Ba e kgwasa thala-bodiba  
Hona hare kwetseng  
Moo ho phelang noha tsa metsi dikganyapa  
Noha tsa metsi noha tse kgolo bo kwena  
Yanna ya eba 'thibang . . . thibang!'  
Ya thella thala-bodiba ba fahlwa

Ba sala ba ahlame  
Mahlo ba tjamiseditse botjhabela  
Ba fana ka dimpho ba 'betjha'  
Bare ranta ke tse makgola a mahlono  
hodima hlooho ya mora motho  
Morwalo wa Judase ona ba inkela

Ya thella namane e maro  
Tawana ya Afrika  
Ya . . . ya ka utlwa e bitswa London  
Ya . . . ya ka utlwa e bitswa Tanzania  
Kare thella thala-bodiba  
Thella ngwana 'maMashinini  
Thella metsing a haeno a matsho  
Ha . . . ha! ya kgaola ya ya!

### Lebenya Mokheseng/Mofolo



# PEYARTA

## FOR STRENGTH

When I'm down in spirits  
Play for me those cowhide drums  
Beat them softly  
And produce African rhythms  
To soothe my dispirited soul  
And enliven my dull body  
With your beat  
Pump strength into my bleeding heart  
And let it carry me  
Above my sorrows

**Fezile Tshume**

## HUNGER SLUMBER

Dirty old man lying in the gutter,  
Fingers of poverty gripping his throat.  
Eyes half-closed,  
He smelled a meaty odour.  
Slowly, weakly, his hand shot forth,  
and grabbed . . .

It was not meat,  
Only the smelly feet  
of a dirty passerby.

**Mpumie Cilibe**

## YOUNG INNOCENCE

So smooth is his face,  
No stubble on his skin.  
His eyes shiny and bright.  
The whites of his eyes white.  
His pitch black hair bushy and clean.  
A faraway look in his eyes,  
Innocent as if still in his father's testicles.  
No lines of experience mar his mahogany  
complexion.

But soon he'll know he's of the black race  
And taste the fruit called oppression.

**Mpumie Cilibe**

*It was a hot summer's day*

It was a hot summer's day  
And the birds were merry.  
Grey-haired old men sat near the kraal  
Anointing spears,  
Recounting tales of their prowess in battles.

A tell-tale breeze blew  
Homeward the laughter of teenagers  
Picking wild berries  
While goats and sheep mated.

Torrential sea waves rolled and roared  
Beating furiously against Dromedaris  
For when that ship landed here  
Love and happiness were assassinated.

**Zakes Mokoena**

## FOR THE FATHERLAND

The wheel of time swiftly turns  
Minutes to days and years  
Shooting young hearts with every turn  
Events fast repeated

Young hearts did not see the vulture  
Scorning plains of the fatherland  
Nestling and hatching borders  
Nor heard the desperate cry  
Saw the glowing eyes of hunger  
When a visiting and invasion came

The plague perched on the kraal  
Young hearts were not there  
To protect stock  
And the shadow of death  
Covered the fatherland  
Old hearts were vanquished  
The victor the eagle reigned  
Killing all pride and honour  
Leaving crippled old hearts

That history may repeat itself  
From old hearts come young hearts  
Amidst needs, pains and strife  
Baptized in streamlets of tears  
But the eagle has flown the route  
And shall not let go

Now young hearts knew the pain  
So they shall find the way  
But the eagle must be tamed  
And pride and honour restored

For the fatherland  
Daybreak shall bring new sun  
To wipe all vestiges of doubt  
No shadows and no pains  
With tentacles of fear severed.

**Busy Qupe**

## MY PEN

My humble weapon is you my pen  
I will spill blood and walk on idle bodies  
My hands, bloodless as they are  
will shake the hearts of soldiers and  
statesmen

You are my potent weapon  
Long tube of transportation  
Quiet as you are, you disclose  
The heart-folded secrets

Between my fingers you are tiny  
Like an ant on an elephant's back  
But the way you tell my miseries and joys  
Is incomparable with gold

Keep that chain between us O Lord  
May it be strengthened and baptized  
Oh my pen! My mouth!  
I am ecstatic!

**Wonga Tabata**

## My Lifestyle



by Joël Matlou  
of Mabopane

Illustration, Sipho Msimang

On your Marks... Get set... Ready... Go!

All happened when I was twelve years old and I was really on my marks and ready to shoot my lifestyle in 1966 to 1974, those nine years as a lifestyle maker. My lifestyle has helped and prevented me from knowing how or what is a jail or a crime. I was really far from crime and jail. My style has saved my life. Nobody pointed a finger at me and told me what to do or not to do. Perhaps if I had listened to what the other youths said, I would have found myself in the cells.

If someone says do this and leave that I will agree but I will not do his or her mind. I do not want to be told; I want to decide for myself. Of course, I was a scholar. For those nine years I have used four steps, as (a) a carry boy; (b) a coal deliverer; (c) a gardener and (d) an iron or steel hunter.

In 1966 I was a scholar doing Sub-B. At home there was no way of getting money for eating at school. But who told me to become a carry boy? No one. It was on Saturday morning, and I was looking for small wires to make a toy car. I was standing near the small rubbish dump full of wires and I was

choosing the better ones when a short man carrying a box of bananas and a big tin of Achaar came towards me. We greeted each other. The short man asked me to help him carry the achaar to his home, and I accepted his offer. At his home he gave me 20 cents. I was very happy to be rich with 20 cents.

Five minutes after earning 20 cents I started to forget about wire cars and turned back to the bus stop for another good carry. I was stupid. At the bus stop I just stood near the pole looking at the people coming from town. One woman with two packets of oranges called me to help her, and I did so. At her home she gave me two cents for thanks. I was happy to be rich with two cents in my pocket. When I went back home I had 22 cents.

On Monday and the following days, I used that money for breakfast. I bought two slices of bread and achaar which is called 'special' by children.

The next Saturday I made another journey to the busstop. When people came from town, I stood near the bus and called: 'Carry! Carry! Mama, carry mama?' That time I did well for myself. I made about 80 cents a day and the school fees were 15 cents for a quarter.

That first old short man who called me to help him brought me luck: I was a carry boy.

Most of the people who came from the market in Marabastad called me a 'carry boy'. When they met me during the weekdays they greeted me by saying, 'Ja, carry boy, o kae,' and I responded by saying, 'Ke teng mama', to a woman and 'Ke teng rara,' to a man.

With the carry money I bought shoes, khaki trousers, a khaki shirt and a white shirt.

My parents were happy to see me become clever among stupid. As a carry boy I learned when the people arrived from the Marabastad market: between 10 and 11.30 a.m.

Crime was far from my mind; I was busy carrying.

At the end of 1968 my job as carry boy helped me onto my feet. The youths of nowadays do not become carry boys: instead, they carry knives in their pockets.

At that time life was great for me and my parents. If I had some cents in my pocket my mother did not say, where does this money come from, because she knew very well I earned it as a carry boy.



Illustration, Tose Martin

But the parents of today, if their children have a lot of rands and coins in their pockets, would not ask them where it came from because they might be killed or shot by their beloved children. Some children today are not respecting. Why? Because things are changing fast. Some are respecting because they want peace and love for a good living with their parents. Nowadays if a young man or woman respects his or her parents or somebody else, she or he would be called a stupid. If you respect you are a stupid. If you don't respect you are a clever. What is this? How can you build your future with your parents?

If your mother or father is 57 years and you are 34 years old and she or he wants to send you to the shop to buy 2,5 kg. of sugar two kilometres away, you must go, don't fight and say, 'I am big enough.' No, your parents are your luck. They know you but you do not want to know them. Why?

The girls of today have their children while they are still young. You find that a girl of 14 years has a little baby but she does not know how to care for her baby. Some young girls' babies are dying after birth because their bones are not strong enough to be a baby. They are having babies at the wrong time and at the wrong age.

Mr Jacob Moeketsi of Bophuthatswana was 21 years old and his wife was 16 years old when she gave birth to a baby girl. When it was about two months old it cried so much one night that Jacob Moeketsi hired a taxi at 1.30 a.m. to take her to the hospital. The taxi man charged him R30,00. The baby was examined by a doctor. 'For shame,' the doctor said, 'This little beautiful baby is not sick, she is hungry; give her a breast feed.' After giving her a feed, the baby started to smile and laugh. Mr Jacob Moeketsi of Bophuthatswana was fined R60,00 for not feeding the baby for ten hours. This, plus the R30,00 for taxi fare is R90,00, for nothing. Please youth, just stop playing too much for your money.

My parents were not poor or rich they were equal like other residents in the townships.

I was a carry boy for three years. As I grew older I realised that carry money was not enough. My books at school cost more and more and I looked for other ways to earn money.

Near the place where I am living is a big slum camp known as Klippan or Winterveldt where no life grows. This camp was full of immigrants with different businesses, like coal selling, wood selling, small shops, etc. There are many people in Klippan or Winterveldt or 'Setakaneng'; there are no yards, few toilets and 60 000 children who are not at school. Crime is a day's living.

Winterveldt has different names like 'Soweto', 'Setakaneng', 'Angola', 'Dark City', etc.

My life was dear to me.

There was an old man known as Mr Marapo Mathambo because he sold bones. As he drove through the Dark City on his small trolley drawn by two stupid donkeys he used to call out: 'amaThambo!' As the years went by Mr Marapo Mathambo opened a coal camp. I was the first labourer at the camp and my work was to deliver coal all over Dark City and district. As I was living in Boekenhoutfontein (old Mabopane) I got to know Mabopane on my deliveries. But before I started to work for Mr Mathambo I worked for Mr Mponya selling coal from a Bedford truck for a week. As a coal man for Marapo I was earning 20 cents a day. After two months I was promoted to be a cook for the four labourers. I was given an increase of five cents a day. After another two months I was promoted to paymaster and paid 30 cents a day.

Mr Mathambo also sold wood. The people of Winterveldt were buying a lot and Mr Mathambo was making R95,00 a day. The coal camp of Mr Mathambo was at the centre of Winterveldt. Near it was a beerhall.

The strongest, tallest woman in Winterveldt was called Nthothoreng. She was very strong and cheeky. She beat all men and women during the battles. She was the 'sterring' of Winterveldt. She was known as Nthothoreng all over Klippan. She was also a master or star of Fahfee 'Mochaena.'

My last promotion was after three months when I was promoted to coal and wood seller. I was handling money and was responsible for everything. My pay increased to 50 cents a day. But I became clever: I used to steal R1,50 a day. I was earning R3,00 a week, plus stealing R9,00 a week. Really, I was rich, healthy and hard-working. I used to buy everything I wanted: books, shoes, clothes and so on.

Where there is suffering, there is progress of course.

Today, Winterveldt is facing a raid. Rumours have spread of a possible

police raid to arrest and fine people who have no permits to be in the area.

Families are pulling down their shanties and packing their belongings to seek asylum outside Bophuthatswana. But things have cooled down because hundreds are applying for forced citizenship certificates. My lifestyle was really on the line. As I became clever, I realised that working for a black man was first class nonsense. So I decided to leave him. My lifestyle changed again; I became a gardener in town.

In the first month of 1971, I made a daring journey to Pretoria to look for a gardening job. On Saturday I boarded a bus to Pretoria from Bophuthatswana. In town I walked around slowly, seeking work. A little white girl came running to me. She greeted me and said her father wanted a garden boy. I was so happy. She called her father while I was standing at the gate. Talks were good and her father took me in his yard and gave me a cup of coffee with two big brown slices of bread. After drinking the coffee I was given a lawn mower and told to cut the lawn. It was a whole day's work. The boss also taught me how to cut old trees and how to grow trees. For myself I was learning for the future. The yard was very clean. Even my boss was happy. I finished work at four o'clock and went to collect my pay. When I arrived there he told me to take an old box from the garage and throw it onto the dumping place. I did this and when I came back he was in the house. I waited for three minutes and knocked at the door. When he came out I spoke to him in Afrikaans, but instead of saying: 'Ek het daardie ou kas weg gegoei,' I said, 'Ek het daardie ou kaak weg gegoei.' The boss laughed loudly and called his wife. They both laughed. Instead of paying me R2,50, they paid me R5,00, for a good laugh.

The following Saturday my name Joël, was scratched and they called me 'Ou Kaak' because of that old box. One long weekend they took me with them to visit Hartebeespoort Dam. My boss, his wife and two children slept in the caravan and I slept in their car.

At the Hartebeespoort Dam my boss showed me his revolver in a Standard Bank bag. It was the first time I saw a revolver. During the night my boss loaded his revolver and during the day he unloaded and cleaned it.

As I was a schoolgoer, I used to ask for books to make a story at school during the final month of the year.

Things were going slowly until I bought pigeons and chickens for my lifestyle.

Some jealous people burned my fowl run to ashes after they stole my pigeons and chickens. I was left with only ashes for my hard earned money.

# OUR IMMORTAL MOTHER

My mother died a servant  
She was buried a meid  
A house meid she was  
Like a dienskneg she lived  
With all humanity removed

On a plank bed she slept  
Supported by four Gokoks  
Wrapped in a shoal of bags  
Covered with rags from her Missies  
Radiance of colour and design faded

She scrubbed the floors  
Washed their underwear  
Like a soulless brute she worked  
She had no soul they said  
Was she not born to suffer

She ate out of a broken plate  
Drank from a cup without handle  
Those were oorskiets and krummels  
From her divine master's table  
Were they not destined to be Masters?

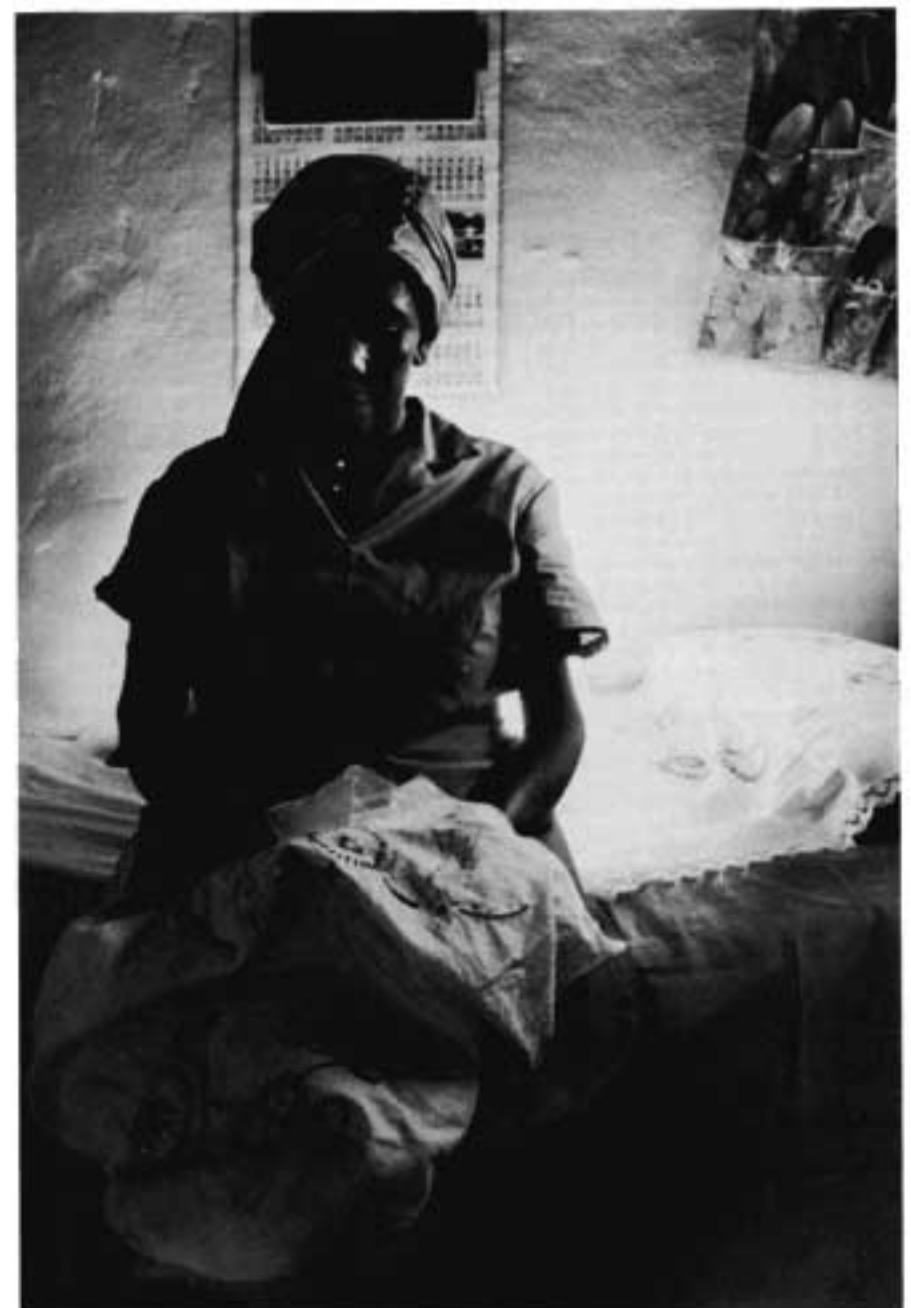
My arm salige Moeder  
Sy was te goed om te lewe  
Te eerlik vir die werêld  
Mag die almagtige haar seën  
Haar trane, haar bloed lewe

Like a servant she was rewarded  
With oud klere and huisraad  
She had a Sunday off  
To pray and thank their God  
For their godheid and genade

They killed her  
She died in solitude  
Broken – broken to the bone  
Without raising an eye to heaven  
For the foreign God betrayed her

She lives on in her shrine  
Her soul they could not destroy  
She went to rest, a goddess,  
Worshipped by those she loved  
Immortalised by her children

Molahlehi wa Mmutle  
Mamelodi/Pretoria



photos, Biddy Crewe

## Poetry/ Ga-Rankuwa

The Ga-Rankuwa Arts Association has resolved to retain their original name, DINOTSHI. Having chosen 1980 as the year of the people's STING, the group has issued a pamphlet (MAMEPE) to coincide with an arts festival on 3 – 4 May in Ga-Rankuwa.

### MLIMO MLIMO

Mlimo Mlimo

said the Oracle  
they eat everything rotten  
this child labour  
neon lights  
intoxicated nights  
then thank for it with blasphemy  
for them creation was the beginning  
like meeting at the corners  
laughing, gossiping whispers,  
then going their different ways,  
a shout came out for help –

Mlimo Mlimo!

like adopted drop-outs  
turning their heels against their lean  
shadows  
before reaching their destination  
they reached a halt  
a human pulse  
hammering in them; they lost  
course in inebriation  
that was Mwari  
calling them:

Mlimo Mlimo!

the wind danced  
lost in themselves  
and turning to their lost tracks  
through this stormy course –  
life began to change its path  
but liberation is not the way  
if the system is in it  
the voice reminds me  
of the strangled sons  
and daughters of this soil  
of roots under this soil  
now withered by incessant watering of salty  
tears

then through blindness, folly,  
men began to shout in torture:

Mlimo Mlimo!

**David Mphusu**

### NATURAL NATURE

Natural nature!  
Man is he who loves  
Man is he who struggles  
He who creates nature within nature.  
Man is he who fears  
The existence of immortals  
He who fears not to expose  
The roots of his culture.

**Teba Modingoane**

### THE PRAYING DRUMS

Shhh!  
Listen!  
I have heard their pattering footsteps  
Down the streets singing  
Beautiful freedom songs.

My ear on every move they take  
I was beating the praying Drums.  
I was watering their moves  
With the lovely sounds  
Of the pattering sounds and tunes  
Of the praying Drums.

Retreat not my Brother  
For victory is at hand  
I will bless the beautiful hands  
Of our Great Freedom Fighters;  
With lovely and strong sounds  
Of African Praying Drums.  
Listen to the Praying Drums  
Let them Pray.

Our Ancestors.  
Dear Great Badimo.  
Give us not your back.  
Show us not your back.  
Give us not your back.

Retreat not Africa my Child.  
Victory is at Hand.

Listen to the Praying Drums –  
Shhhh!

Badimo I say!  
We want back our Pride.  
Our Pride is our Land.  
Our Pride is our Tradition.

The Horn will blow  
Drums of Africa  
Shall transmit the Message  
From Egypt my eye;  
To the Horn of Africa  
The Horn will blow  
And blow.

Egypt will beat  
The thunderous Drums  
With the roaring and rolling  
Sounds of the learned Hands;  
And the womb of Africa  
Will vibrate with the Horn of Africa  
Spurting and Vomitting  
Tunes and Sounds of Africa!  
Dipela shall be tasted  
In the tail of Africa.

Shhh!  
Listen!  
It is the horn calling  
That the war is near  
The truth is near  
Shhh!  
Listen!

**Radinyeka Mosaka**

# Khauleza

## WHO AM I?

I am the son of an African woman  
Whose countenance was chiselled  
By the gods of Africa  
Out of a Black Diamond

I am the son of an African woman  
Whose blood was boiled in the pots of clay  
By the great Ancestors of Africa

They implanted the religion now called  
a superstition  
in my marrow  
And Africanism is flowing in my veins.

## Thami

### HOW DO YOU LIKE IT?

Upon a hot tarred road  
I lay, accurately painting  
the lines of the road  
under the great gaze of the sun,  
that turned my blood solid.

Behind me stood Van der Merwe.  
A straw-hat on his head,  
Sun-glasses for his eyes,  
A short safari trouser,  
Under the great gaze of the sun —  
And I, in a blue overall  
With sweat to protect my body  
Against heat  
that turned my blood solid

When nature solidifies  
Under the watchful eye of Van der Merwe  
Whose false smile  
Turns my heart into rock,  
My heart prays silently:  
'O hot sun, when your  
great gaze brings about  
That awaited hour  
Of turning the tables  
Let my stone-heart  
Grind Van der Merwe to pieces!'

## Thami

### A DYING DAY

A dying day is  
a jolly day for them  
Yet a salty day for us.  
The coming day's  
A terrifying day for them  
Yet an interesting day for us.

Nowadays  
Life's a frightening scene  
Yet nature remains  
A precious diamond.

**Mdungazi Peter Maroleni**



*Drawing, Mpikayipbeli/Tembisa*

## ALEXANDRA (TRUDGED ON)

I remember your flesh, bullet-riddled.  
Reddish soaking clothes  
Dripping like a blanket on a line  
Drops shrinking soil below.  
Msomi's reign.

Your wound deepened when friends  
Divorced you to marry Thembisa and Soweto.

I photographed your writhing face  
With salty water snailing in the  
Furrows of your cheeks  
Popping sweat mid-day sun-wrung

I remember you wading in the  
River of blood.  
Smoke suffocating your doeked face  
Coughing like a hag  
Reddish salty water winking  
From a gash.  
Pulse of life told me  
Your days were dangling like a fruit-tree.

I remember your people  
Winking you to stay.  
Leaders drunk with fatigue  
Dragging you from a whispering death.  
Although hurt you trudged on.

**Israel Moloto/Alexandra**

A quick handclasp, and he was gone, melting into the landscape of his

# HOME TERRITORY

A very short story by Chris Chapman/Pietermaritzburg

An African man, in his early twenties, went to visit his girlfriend in white Pietermaritzburg on a Monday night. She was a house-servant and lived in the khaya at the bottom of her boss's garden. Just after ten, as he was beginning to wonder how he was going to get back to Sobantu village where he lived, he heard the dogs in the garden furiously barking at something. A door banged, shouting was heard and he saw dimly in the darkness two figures leaping the wall into the next property and fleeing.

As the lights in the house snapped on the boss was already on the phone to the police.

Knowing instinctively that he would be the first suspect to be pounced upon, his chest froze in fear. So, only pausing long enough to grab his hat, he leapt over the back fence.

He didn't get far though, because the next-door people had also been roused by the rucus and had seen the fugitives

dashing across their lawn and down the driveway towards the road. Things were getting too hot so he ducked into a shed that was in darkness, and crouched in a corner, his heart pounding.

Some white people were standing outside the shed where he was hiding, talking about the evening's excitement. A man in a dressing gown with slippers on his feet came up to them and said, 'Have you people been having any trouble here? I heard noises, and I've just seen a white man with a gun catch a native in the street.' No response from the group, who had a loaded chillum in their hands and were wanting to smoke it before the police came snooping around. The man in the dressing gown went back to the safety of his house.

Just then one of the whites came to the door of the shed and turned the light on, jumping back and exclaiming in surprise at the man crouching in the corner who was even more terrified than

himself. They all stood around uncomfortably, the man thinking the game was up.

'Wenzani?' said one of the whites in a fanagalo accent. No answer.

They started talking amongst themselves in English, thinking he couldn't understand — which he did perfectly easily.

'D'you think he's one of them?'

'For sure. Why else would he be hiding in the shed?'

'Must have seen his buddy get nailed in the street and came back here.'

'Wenzani?' Again addressed to the silent intruder.

Putting his two hands together in front of him he pleaded: 'Please kosaan, take me away from here. I am afraid.'

He really was afraid. His face was earnest, there was no harm in him, only that lurking blackness.

The whites looked at each other and shrugged, trying to avoid making a decision. The one holding the pipe hid it under a rock and said, 'I'm just going out to see what's happening in the road', and he walked down the driveway. The African followed at a short distance, keeping to the shadows. Again he pleaded, 'Take me in the car kosaan.' The white avoided answering and went out into the road, which was empty. He went back to the man waiting in the shadows who pleaded with him again. 'O.K. Let's go', he said.

They went out to the car, moving quickly but quietly. Once they'd got away from that street, the white relaxed and breathed a sigh of relief, and allowed himself a smile. The man in the passenger seat remained silent, slightly hunched.

'Where to?'

'Sobantu village kosaan.'

They never said another word. Once out of the suburbs they crossed the highway, and on the outskirts of Sobantu the white pulled up on the side of the road. The man got out of the car. A quick handclasp, and he was gone, melting into the landscape of his home territory.



Illustration, Goodman Mabote/Soweto

## Poetry/ Swaziland, Botswana

### THE SLUMS OF GABORONE (Dedicated to all freedom fighters in Africa)

Molested women, sing in the slums  
I can hear a gong, beating:  
I can hear an African Panorama,  
Beating, making some noise,  
The perturbing voices of those women  
stir my bleeding heart,  
They sing bravely, seeking liberation —  
They sing with bursting hearts,  
They lift up their negritude hands,  
Their hearts burst with sadness,  
They survive only with a pill  
to keep their hungry bellies full,  
They chew a bubble gum to drive off hunger,  
They sing in the summer heat, sweating,  
Teardrops falling from their eyes,  
Devouring that sour sweat against their will,  
What a terrific scene  
This vision, of the Gaborone slums  
These ghettos  
These slums,  
These dilapidated ruined dwellings  
Cry so shamefully, like a mother  
who has lost her children . . .  
These slums have lost their gloss  
They are no more, dead like a rotten leaf!

I see a line of demarcation  
I see some corrupt society;  
Their eyes are dry like a bone,  
Their lips are cracking, longing for food;  
Look at those STINKING — stinking ghettos!  
Those men,  
Those children,  
Those old women,  
Those babies, are all unfortunate,  
'Morena, boloka Aferika', they sing,  
Walking in the smothering heat:  
During the dusty night they have no dwelling,  
They have nowhere to sleep,  
Suffering, crying bitterly,  
Like slaves, dressed in pearls of glass  
they are deceived!  
Deceived by fat political tongues,  
There is New England,  
There is New Canada,  
There is Ditakaneng!  
There is Bontleng!  
That divided Gaborone,  
is like a lost widow, disturbed  
like wind in the dusty night:  
This Gaborone, these ghettos prick my  
nerves —  
A luta continua! . . . Let there be light . . .  
One day, the dead will rise . . .

Cedric Thobega/Botswana

### THE BIG LIE

And in the midst  
of heaven's cacophony,  
I rose and passed through bodies  
wallowing in the stench  
of a society whose heart  
lies long buried  
in the dry decaying mud.

'They'll stab you  
in the back.'  
a jab of pain  
shooting  
to the nerve centre  
of my crumpled body,  
tripped up  
by your vision  
in a mirror  
frozen, like an  
hallucination  
of a devil-like face  
on a pitch-black night.

It is right now, and still I wait for the jab  
in the back  
that you promised me  
in your huge  
white lie  
that you weaned me on  
shaping and moulding  
my pliable brain,  
that I turned on  
and cursed  
as now I watch,  
a spectator  
with a grand-stand view:  
You,  
swimming breast-stroke  
through a quagmire  
of sticky excrement,  
which you pathetically  
proclaim:  
The Truth.

Richie Levin/Swaziland

### LIBERALIA

Again we sat  
Face to face  
With our friends  
We talked about  
Films, Literature and Art  
Again we sat  
Face to face  
Rigorously avoiding  
Any comments  
That would drag us to our  
Daily battle  
'Racial Arguments'  
We all sat there  
Face to face  
And smiled at each other  
I tell you it was so  
'Nice'

Bika/Swaziland





... in the white man's civilization

Drawing, David Maseko/Swaziland

**LISTEN!**

How can I forget  
When robbed of my manhood  
When my youth is hoodwinked into  
Nothingness by your 'ethics and civilisation'

How can I forget  
The history of my blood  
That flowed in favour of your profit and  
security

In my own land

How can I forget  
When my women run after  
Your pockets for survival and  
The raising of my children  
— your future slaves

How can I forget  
When inflation caused by  
'Progress and modernisation'  
Eats every tissue of my being

How can I forget  
When the instinct  
Of Shaka, Moshoeshoe, Sobukwe  
Continuously sways my youth  
How can I . . .

Now,  
Listen!

Lister Manahile Manaka/Swaziland

**TO SERVE YOU**

When I, at cockcrow  
Jump up at the break of dawn,  
Swallowing jerkily  
Yesterday's stagnant acquaintances  
To fill my grumbling pit hole  
Hurriedly adorning  
Myself in a tattered robe of rags  
Rushing  
To serve you

When I, at sunset  
Swallow my fears down with dusk  
Dragging my fatigued body  
To my ramshackle hovel  
Fighting a losing battle with the dark  
My life creaking  
Beneath my ordeal  
To serve you

When I, on the day of rest  
Sit surrounded by my attentive breed  
Narrating tales long time born  
Of our great heroes and warriors of old  
Body resting, mind working on  
To the morrow  
A day like all others  
Monotonously meant  
To serve you.

Noxolo F. Nhlapo/Swaziland

Fikile

**When did you start drawing?**

Before I went to school. I was always drawing . . . images of things that I used to see around me — what you might call caricatures. I drew on the inside covers of my father's books.

**How would you describe your work?**

In academic terms you could describe it as surrealism. To me it's not surrealism. It's spiritual . . . I would say it is mysticism.

**Do you think of yourself as a mystic?**

I think every person is a mystic in this world. People tend not to know



photo, Bidy Crewe



OBSERVER

their powers, how or where to use their powers, how to push their lives . . .

**Are you religious? Do you make a distinction between religion and mysticism?**

I am very religious, in my own way . . . For instance I felt that Hinduism was *the* religion — they say it's the first religion; but the point is that it doesn't force you to do this or that. So it's just an open thing and it's up to you what you take and what you leave. Other religions have taken a lot from Hinduism.

**Is there any of this in your work?**

I wouldn't say there's everything. If there's *everything* in my work, then I'm as good as dead.

**Do some of your images come from dreams?**

Sometimes . . . Not lately though. They used to come from dreams, directly and indirectly. Now, reading and music are my main influences.

**As sources of imagery?**

*Ja.* Sometimes I might find that a single line from a book can so much inspire me that I can work a whole series of drawings from it.

**Can you remember any of the lines?**

No, I have done the work.

**Which authors were particularly significant?**

Kalil Gibran, Kafka, Joyce — I liked his tricky way of writing . . . Then I was given a book, a present from a certain lady. 'Labyrinths' by Christopher Okigbo — poetry. It was so beautiful. There was one time we spent two nights working it out with a few friends, with dictionaries and all that. I think that was one of the most beautiful parts of my life . . . Also, 'The Trial of Christopher Okigbo' by Ali Mazrui (*in which Christopher Okigbo is tried in heaven*

'I have always hated this thing of people creating kids with torn trousers and that kind of thing... It's self-pity art, that's what I call it.'

(for sacrificing his art for political activity.) I found that a very powerful book.

Any other main influences in your life?

My father was the main, main, main influence in my life. He used to tell me stories like: 'If you swear at an elderly person, then your head will be shaved and you'll be thrown into the desert.' He was sort of surrealistic in his way of saying things. Immediately after his death I wrote a book about him. It was stolen.

Do you think that everyone is an artist, potentially at least?

What I see around me these days are designers; people who are academically good, who believe in technique and all these things. I don't believe in all that. I just want to sit at the table or drawing board — or if I'm using the wall for these big drawings, I just paste the paper on the wall, and it must stay there for a couple of days, until I get the so-called 'call'.

So you're saying that some people might be technically proficient, but they might not be an artist?

Someone might be involved in the design world, but they might not have the real meaning, the deeper meaning...

To me this is nothing superficial, nothing to do with getting lots of money. I think one feels *satisfied* after working. For instance when I finished my 'Dance of the Second Creation' series (a series of very large drawings), I thought, 'I won't be able to work like this again.'

Do you still feel that?

No.

Do you think you could work on that scale again?

I can work on that size — and if ever there was a paper that started here and stretched to heaven, and there was a ladder starting here and going to heaven, I'd start from heaven and work down. (laughter) It's not yet time to go.



FORGOTTEN SPIRIT

Actually, when you're doing a large drawing, do you start at the top or at the bottom?

I start at the top. Always. You know, when I work on a large scale, it's like every morning when I wake up, I go into that room, where the paper is pasted on the wall, and I study it. I think: This is a challenge. I'm afraid of it. Then I go out, maybe to a friend that I can talk to about serious things.

How do you get your work across to people?

After my last exhibition (at the Linda Goodman Gallery) I felt that I was not going to pull punches anymore. I decided not to use these galleries any more. I started a market in the townships, working with people on an instalment basis: people were paying me because they were satisfied with the work.

These people who pamper black artists with praises don't realise that

they're dragging these guys down. I have always hated this thing of seeing people creating kids with torn trousers and that kind of thing: How can Black Consciousness go home to people who view these pictures? It's self-pity art, that's what I call it.

And the galleries like this kind of work?

Ja. But there's one thing I believe in: if you draw the black man, he must be beautiful, handsome; the woman must be heavenly. Drape them with the most beautiful clothes — to wash away this whole shit of self-pity.

I am the people's artist — otherwise I would not be here if the people were not with me.

I can undress a man — he must stand there naked — or undress a woman, and let her stand naked, but it's all with pride and dignity. Nobody will be curious to look at their private parts, or something like that...

TIME TO COME HOME

MAMA AFRIKA,  
Mama, are you listening  
to the sons of baNguni  
weaving uqunge ancestral songs?  
did you hear the veld grass labour  
under the weight of dew drops  
moonlit diamonds  
scattered by shadows  
moving in the womb of night?  
Mama, did anyone tell your daughter  
living in strange lands  
of the bullet refrain  
on the morning breath of goch street?  
MAMA AFRIKA,  
we hear choruses  
we dig the refrain  
chains clanking unjust justice justly  
the vibe moves limb and mind  
polyrhythmic war drum beat  
MAMA AFRIKA,  
do you hear the spears' conspiracy  
with that cowhide drum speech?  
MAMA,  
oh, MAMA!  
tell Makeba and Masekela  
Inkos'sikelele verse comes down  
like summer rain  
Jol'inkomo,  
'Tis time to come home.

Dikobe Martins

SLAVE'S NIGHTMARE

Slave, who shall free you?  
Free yourself from your chains.  
How you do it lies not with  
Your master, but within your bosom —  
(Your master's attitude will determine the  
modus operandi)  
Can your master show you  
How to render him slaveless?  
Can he surrender comfort and wealth  
cheerfully, willingly?  
God knows! He helps those who help  
themselves  
Ka Mme-mmago! 'O thusa ba ba ithusang.

MASTER'S NIGHTMARE

Why is my slave keeping to himself?  
Why is he clamouring for more when  
I have given him what is enough for him —  
I know what's good for him, he doesn't!  
Gag, banish or eliminate him?  
No, give him money and liquor  
He will do the rest himself  
Hy sal homself morsdood tot by morsgat  
drink!

Wetsho-Otsile Seremane/Mafeking

MPUMALANGA ARTS



A REMINDER

Do you still remember  
Norman, mfo kaDubazane,  
When you shouted:  
'Siyo Diliz'iintaba nabo nyana boMgijima!  
whilst Strin'ing beans on the Isle of Makhanda;  
For us to say thank you:  
Sibongile, ngoKwenzakwakhe  
okaSenzangakhona  
iNhlanhla of the ancestors is on our side,  
making Black Trix  
to keep us on;  
'Cos uZwelesizwe's Black utterances  
did spit out tongue-cleansed aMathe kaDiseko,  
Thus, for us to sing: 'Bhek'isizwe seAfrika';  
And to look at the face of the African iLanga,  
Saying: 'We belong with':  
Nkondo-nkondo icilongo libhobhile!  
Zinjiva lezonsizwa in deep snow winter  
For iNyamekoe isiyeqile  
iBhekwe ngeyesiko lobuntu  
Phakama munt'omnyama!  
Nhlapho kaSekhukhuni, inyansiso seyiWelile,  
Wozani Mabandla onke nizolalela?

Do you still remember  
Norman, mfo kaDubazane?

Bantu, bika kokhokho bethu  
That it does work!

Vivan' mankwedini!

Mafika Gwala

FATHER'S HOUSE

In my father's house  
I have learnt to accept you  
Why then turn me away  
From the pantry of the very house?

Wetsho-Otsile Seremane

## GUYO BOOK CLUB

### INWI NO TONDWAHO (Kha Maano Dzeani Tuvani)

Apu maço a si mafanedza  
Na a nzie o di itela zwinwa  
Sa inwi ni songo sokou bebwa  
A vhengaho zwine na vha zwone  
U lwa na Ene o ni sikaho  
A dzhiyaho zwi re zwanu  
U dzhiela Ene o ni neaho

Fhongo farani la 'Makhulukuku'  
Vhe 'Maçuvha ha fani'  
'Zwa mulovha' zwone 'zwi a fhela'  
Ni si nge 'Mafangambiti'  
We ula nwaha a sia 'Tshianeo'  
E na 'Maele wa vho Mathavha'  
Ni tshi swika 'Mirunzini ya vhuvha'  
'Fhulule dzani' nge na kona  
U vha 'Tsengela-tsiwana' shangoni

Nne nda ni sedza ndi pfa ndo fushea  
Ndi tshi vhona yo tenengedzwa  
Thoho ye na newa nga Ramaanda  
Livhuwani o ni tonda nga yeneyo  
Ni i shumise nga hune na kona

Kuçiçe nde ndi tshi fhira nda senga  
mutsinga  
Mukegulu a tshi tou shingaila  
Muronzhe wo fhelela namani  
Fhala tshikwarani thoho dzi mirini  
Nda lavhelesa nda pfa ndi tshi tama  
Zwiçhannga zwa khofheni hu no nga tshanda  
itshi

Zwi tshi tou sunya zwo takala

U sea hone ndi u sokou ita  
Khanwe na riçe dzi vhona ro vhiçha  
Phambane yone i mihumbuloni  
Inwi no tondwaho ni songo ri shonisa  
Shushani magwitha afho muhuyuni  
Nga a fhufhe a humele hune a bva

### Nthambeleni Phalanndwa

### NDI ZWI DENYA

Ndi tshihevhehevhe  
Vhathu vha ço khauwa nçeve  
Thoho dzi dzula dzi tshi rema  
I a voholana ya makhotho.

Munwe na munwe uri nçe ndi nçe  
Ho hula u zwikulana nga maço  
Zwigomamatanda zwo wana tshinkwa  
Thangu dzi ço balea nga tshankombo.

Nemashango vha tou veta fhasi  
Vha tama na u milisana tshivhindi  
Ndi masea khole mbiluni zwi si ho  
Muthu kwae ndi nny?

### Mushaisano Ratshivhaçela Maiwashe

### PFANO

Dzulani fhasi vhananga  
Khotsi vha ço vhuya  
Tshidulo ni kumedze muthihi  
A takalelwaho nga vhoçe.

Vhofhani lithihi, zwi a shonisa  
Ni ço ri vhidzela vhaloi muçini  
Matshelo na vho ri zwi a çula  
Mashango oçe o ima nga zwiingamo.

Tshi songo pfi ndi tsha u bebwa natsho  
Zwi songo livhanywa na lupfumo  
Sedzani wa vhuluvhi ho çambaho  
Vhoçe wa lupfumo na muthu-phepho.

Ingamelani vhahura vhashu vha Vhukalanga  
Ni vhone u sa fhedza nga mukosi  
Nçe ri na afhio, iwe vhane  
Ni vhone u vhidzana nga miludzi.

Thumbu i ço kwama muçana  
Tenda no fara khoço  
Ni vhone u phumula biko la malofha  
Thivhululani khambana ni dahisane fola.

Ni vhone u lila tshioçdzi-mare  
Ni songo kumedza çuvha loçha  
Zwi a shonisa, lukani lithihi  
Mapfumo fhasi vhananga.

### Mushaisano Ratshivhaçela Maiwashe

### MUTSHINYALO

Ni si vhone maço u tshena  
Ndi u pfa thumbu yo fura  
No mu vhona na Mutshinyalo  
Tenda vho tou mu beba.

U fuwa kholomo ndi u çivha pfulo  
Ni vhone dzi sa siele namana vhusiwana  
U ngafhi Masianuge?  
Mapfura sa do kamba lufo.

Ho bebwa Mutshinyalo fhanu muçini  
Vhathu vha dzula vho futelana  
Nga u pfa ndala thumbuni  
Vhe nzie i fhufha nga muswani.

Vho-Masianuge vhe pfulo ndi nnzhi  
Kholomo dzi vha dzo hobaladza thumbu  
A zwi ambiwi ndi zwa Makahane  
Vhe na fhindula ni na vhuyo.

U songo çitika nga kholomo dza munwe  
Dzima li do pfuka wo donala maço  
Mutambuli o fhepherisa mulomo  
Vheri bebani ri ço ni nwatela vhuswa.

### Mushaisano Ratshivhaçela Maiwashe

# 'The Pest of Love...'

## A story by Xolile Mavuso

SIPHO,' she said. 'I am pregnant.'

As the words hit him he felt his heart do a somersault. He did not know whether he had heard right. He sat rigidly and stared at her, hoping that what he had just heard was part of a dream. He kept staring at her, wanting to answer her but not finding the words. Finally the shock subsided and he no longer felt weak at the knees. 'Are you really pregnant?' he asked. 'Are you not teasing me, Nomsa?' 'I am serious and there's no joke about it. I am now two months pregnant', she said. 'Two months?' he said, aghast. 'Why didn't you let me know before?' 'I wanted to be certain before I jumped to conclusions. Why, surely we do love each other. You've said so many a time, and you promised to marry me.'

I didn't want to tell you whilst I was a month pregnant, knowing you might want me to abort it. After all, there's no problem really.'

'No problem?' he said in anger, 'How can you say there's no problem when we are still at school? And about your being pregnant, I think it's a jinx. That was the first time we ever made love. Never before. So how can it be possible that the first time we make love you fall pregnant? As far as I'm concerned, I am not responsible.'

She couldn't believe what she was hearing. It could not be coming from the boy sitting opposite her. For a person who always whispered sweet words to her — sweet endearing words of love — to say what she'd just heard, was unbelievable. It seemed as if her world — the world she had built for both of them — was coming apart. It was unfolding at the seams. She saw her future hopelessly crumbling before her. Like a giant building suddenly coming down and crushing those beneath it.

Both of them were in post-primary school, doing the same standard. Siphso was five years Nomsa's senior. They were desperately in love. For the three years they had been in love, Nomsa had allowed him no more than a kiss — that is, until recently when she had given herself to him. She had wanted to preserve her virginity but had felt guilty at not giving herself to the man she loved. She had lost count of the number of times he had said to her: 'I love you, Nomsa.' But now, she thought sorrowfully, she had succumbed and given in to the pleasures of the flesh. Because of her trust and loyalty for Siphso, she had done what her parents found loathsome and despicable. Her parents were staunch Catholics who believed that the human body is God's temple and that it should be kept pure and clean. Violating the human body is tantamount to violating God's temple. And now, she thought, she had done just that.

'You say as far as you are concerned you are not to blame for making me pregnant,' she said. Siphso was sitting, deep in troubled thoughts at that.

'And that there is no possibility of my falling pregnant after having sex for the first time,' she continued. 'What do you think your genitals emit when we copulate? Water? No. That thick and slimy liquid it produces is capable of creating a human being. Yes, Siphso, the foetus in me is your responsibility. I am going to let it grow into your — OUR — child. Nothing you say or do will alter that. It is my final word. So, Siphso, make up your mind. Your mind seems befuddled and you are unsure of yourself. Either you accept it or you don't. Either of your decisions is



Lino-cut, Napo Makoena/Katlebong

welcome to me.' Tears trickled down her cheeks.

Sipho listened to everything she was saying and was lost. He couldn't make a decision. The thought of having to abandon school and find a job so as to feed the child kept ringing in his mind. It encroached on his reason till he reached a point of indecision and uncertainty. He despised the thought of having to work for a white man. And a pushy white man at that. To him all white men were pushy. Why is it then, he reasoned, that our parents are always rushing off to arrive on time at work if the white man is not pushy? Why is it then, that our parents always come home complaining of being tired and about umLungu being a nuisance, if umLungu is not pushy? Such trivialities made him shudder and retreat into the protective shell which was his pride. It will be degradation, he thought painfully, and a loss of pride to wake up in the morning, run for the train and come home sweaty. That he wouldn't bow down to. He, like any other man, was proud of himself and of being a man. Only a lowly creature has no pride. So, he would make sure that he stuck to his pride and relished it; he would make sure he didn't lose it.

It was, then, this pride in himself that made him abandon his indecisiveness and say with what he thought was clarity:

'I quite understand our plight, Nomsa, and the problems we are going to face. But do you realize that your pregnancy is an impediment to my hopes and future? It has upset my apple-cart. I want to finish school and go to varsity. So, the only solution is to abort. There's . . .'

'Abort?' she said in astonishment. 'How can I abort the child when I am already two months pregnant? I am not ready yet to take my life, and to procure an abortion might be signing my death warrant. Not when the foetus is two months old. So the idea of abortion is out. It is too precarious.'

'What are you going to do, then?' he said, angry.

'Just let everything be — that's what I am going to do. I told you that whether you accept it or not, is up to you. I am not going to abort. Not now or ever. And that's it,' she said firmly.

'It looks as if you have firmly and finally made your decision. And nothing can or will change it. Not even my pleas. It's such a sad state of affairs. Do your parents know of your pregnancy?'

'I have made a clean breast of everything,' she said solemnly, recalling the encounter. 'Of what use is it to hide everything until the eleventh hour? How am I going to benefit from doing that? I need their help and support. I

now see how much I need it, particularly as you have shown me your standpoint. Telling it to them was quite gruesome — I hated every minute and every word I said. How do you imagine they took it? Their sixteen-year-old daughter falls pregnant. What are the people going to say? Our neighbours, the people in the street? Won't they say: 'Ha! We knew that sooner or later something was going to happen. So much for her good parents.' Is that not what they are going to say when they see me pushing a big, round belly? But I don't care what the next person says, *that doesn't* trouble me. What does, is that my parents had high hopes for me. And now look what I have done — I've dashed their hopes against the rocks. I have let them and myself down, to say the least. But still, they are on my side, encouraging me.'

All this seemed like a dreary lecture to Sipho. He was listening but his mind kept wandering away. It darted here and there like a jumping jack. Not knowing what to say, he stood up.

'I am still going to think about it, Nomsa. I never expected, when I came to see you, to hear such news. It really knocked me off my feet. I thought nothing had resulted from our love-making. Our first love-making, that is,' he said.

She stood up to see him out. She said nothing till they were outside.

'Sipho, there's nothing to decide. But all the same, I do not want to impose a decision upon you. Go and think about it. Or should I say about us and our future?' She stopped at the gate. 'I won't be able to take you as far as the corner. I am feeling tired and listless. I will hear from you then.'

She lifted her head for him to kiss her. He planted a kiss on her lips.

'I will see you tomorrow, darling. That I promise you. And rest assured that I love you,' he said.

'Same with me, Sipho. I really do love you. Goodbye and sweet dreams.'

'Same to you,' he said and departed.

Nomsa went into the house. She was hoping that Sipho would make the right decision because, O Lord, she truly loved him. He was in her blood like a virus.

But Sipho did not come the next day or the day after. Not even the following week, month or year. She never heard from him. Scarcely saw him. Suddenly he had become volatile. When she asked his friends about him, they answered negatively. They did not know where he had gone. She had gone to his parents' home where she was told that they knew nothing about her. And that he had never said anything to them about making a certain girl pregnant. All he had done was to tell them that he

wanted to visit his aunt in Zululand and, at this moment, he might have reached his destination. No, they did not know the address since Sipho's aunt had moved to a new place. They would notify her when Sipho corresponded with them by letter.

Nomsa had known that such a thing might happen, though the impact it had on her was devastating. 'I thought I knew him well enough to give myself to him', she thought woefully. 'It was, nonetheless, quite an experience. But now he has run away, shunning responsibility, like a scared dog with its tail between its legs.'

She was scorned by almost everyone for carrying a fatherless child. But she kept her head erect. She would sometimes come across her friends standing in a little group. After she had greeted them and walked on, they would remain whispering and talking in low tones. Sometimes she caught them at it and she would just go on without feeling disheartened.

Her parents would sometimes ask her about Sipho. They would refer to him as 'the boy who made you pregnant.' When asked about him and the lapse of time since they had seen him, she brushed off their questions, saying that he had gone visiting and that he would be back at any time. She kept on telling them lies until it dawned on her that they no longer believed her.

'Are you sure that this boyfriend of yours hasn't run away?' asked her father concernedly one night, while they were having supper.

'Yes, Pa. I am sure he hasn't run away. He wrote (*a lie*) telling me that he would be back soon and that I shouldn't worry,' she said.

'But he's been away a long time. And as for the letters he wrote to you, where are they?' implored the mother.

'I tore them all up,' she answered, nonchalantly.

'Why?' — her mother, insistently.

'What is the use of keeping them? After all, he wrote the letters to me and to no one else.'

'I hope you are not telling us lies. You know quite well that I hate children who tell lies,' — her father, sternly. And with those words, all was forgotten for a while.

Knowing the truth, Nomsa cringed inside. She nearly gave in to her emotions but took hold of herself. Holding back her tears, she stood up and excused herself, claiming to be unwell, and went into the bedroom where she let the tears roll. She felt like screaming her head off, grabbing anything in sight and smashing it against the wall. She wanted to vent her anger on these inanimate objects because she felt mistreated. She had lied to her parents to save herself

from the torrent of accusations and abuse that would come from her mother. The last time had been too much — when she had told them that she was pregnant. And now having to face that again, or even more, because of a slimy, yellow-bellied shrimp she was scared of facing the music. She felt weak, and breathlessly sat on the bed staring at nothing in particular. She did not see or sense her mother, in the doorway, sorrowfully observing her daughter.

The healthy, jovial, five-year old child was having fun playing with her mother. Nomsa's child, whose name was Zenzile, was trying her mother, but to no avail. She ran and ran in circles until Nomsa, seeing her tiring, snatched her up and took her to where she had been sitting. Nomsa sat on the bench, which was against the wall, and placed Zenzile on her lap. She was tickling her child and Zenzile laughed warmly, showing tiny white teeth.

'And you thought I would never catch you, heh? You pretty little thing!' she said warmly.

She was about to take Zenzile off her lap when she suddenly saw a car stop by the gate. The man sitting behind the wheel was young and she wondered who he might be. The young man looked in her direction, opened the car door and stepped out.

In the heat of that summer day she felt a cold chill run through her body. Zenzile just slipped down her lap. Nomsa felt nausea gripping her. She shivered and gripped the bench hard. Finally everything became clear and she lifted her eyes to find Siphos standing over her — looking at her, seeing the shock his arrival had registered in her. Zenzile had by this time gone into the house. Siphos, looking matured — with a beard — and quite confident of himself, gazed straight into her eyes. He was trying hard, but he found it difficult to gauge the expression and feeling from those eyes. Unable to meet his gaze, she lowered her eyes and toyed with the seams of her skirt, trying to straighten the crease made by Zenzile sitting on her lap. He just stood there trying to find the opening words. Looking at her, he now saw how pretty she was. As somebody had put it — from a book he read at school — 'All pictures but fairest lined, are but black to Rosalind.' Was it a Shakespearian play? He tried to remember. Oh, yes! These were the words, he now recalled, said by Orlando when wooing Rosalind in *As You Like It*. And now, he thought, here am I standing before MY Rosalind.

'Hello, my darling. It's been quite a long time,' he said, gaily offering his hand.

'Sakubona, Siphos,' she said, quietly offering her limp hand. The touch of his hand made her head spin and sent thrills through her body. She wanted to hug him, kiss him passionately. But she took hold of herself, not wanting to be emotional.

As Siphos continued talking, her mind went back into the past and what had happened then. She was thoughtfully journeying through the past when something Siphos said jolted her mind into the present.

'... and as I was coming, I saw you playing with a little girl,' he was saying. 'Is she,' and his Adam's apple moved as he swallowed. 'Is she our child?'

'She is *my* child,' she said, petulantly.

'What do you mean by saying she is *your* child? Didn't I create that child — if she is the one? Or perhaps you did procure an abortion and murdered my child? Where is my child, I demand to know?' he said, his temper rising.

Nomsa stood up and went into the house. She came back with Zenzile. She looked straight into Siphos's enquiring eyes.

'This is the child that for nine months I carried in my belly. The child that I was jeered at for because the people knew she was fatherless. Didn't I tell you before that — and the words I exactly said were: "The foetus in me is your responsibility. I will let it grow into our child." Well, didn't I? This creature standing before you was the foetus you so much wanted me to terminate. I think I made it clear to you that abortion is out, as far as I am concerned. And I stated to you again clearly, that I never intended taking a life — not now or ever. So then, Siphos, this is the child and I'm its mother.'

The venom with which she was speaking to him was excruciatingly painful to Siphos. He had to clarify everything to her.

'Do you remember those days when we were wonderfully in love?' she continued. 'The days when we gave to one another freely? Showing our love like a beacon of happiness? And just when I was counting on you, you deserted me. Do you have an inkling — even an inkling — of what effect your desertion, had on me? When I had to lie to my parents about you writing letters saying you would be back? The stories I had to conjure up for five solid years? I bet you don't. For your information, I tried to get over the shock, but in vain.'

Siphos sat listening as he had done before. When Nomsa had told him of her 'misfortune'.

'I comprehend fully what you have just said. But you are not giving me a chance to explain — to give you my side of the story. Whether you take it or not,

is up to you, because proof of what I have to tell you stands there,' he said, pointing at the car.

'I know you regard me as an indecisive and uncertain person who finds it difficult to make his mind up,' he continued. 'Whatever the case may be — this comes from deep down in my heart: I love you and always will. One thing I won't permit myself to do, I hope you understand, is to beg forgiveness from you. Because, "Love means never having to say you are sorry." Now please give me a chance to explain everything.'

'You need not make any explanations because ...'

'Are you or are you not going to give me the chance I ask of you?' he interjected.

'Okay, go on,' she said.

He went on to explain what had made him decide to 'disappear' after having promised her he would be back the following day. How he had completed his studies — for their sake — and had gone to the university. And that he studied and obtained his degree. He went on, without any interruption from Nomsa, telling her how he acquired a well-paid job and the car that she saw him driving. His actions were neither hypocritical nor perfidious, but those of concern. Concern about their future and security.

'That is, then, my story. I hate giving you alternatives but either you accept it or not. Accepting my story, will be accepting me,' he finally said.

Nomsa stared at him with bright eyes. Bright eyes made by the tears that welled in her eyes and which were now rolling down her cheeks. She believed him and felt happy about it. I now have reason, she thought happily, to betray my pride.

'O, Siphos! You don't know how happy you have made me. I ...' She was lost for words. Her actions took the place of the words as she took him in her arms, embracing and kissing him, in between her tears of joy.

They stood there embracing and passionately kissing each other, oblivious of Zenzile looking at them with awe and surprise. They never realised that Nomsa's mother was standing in the doorway, concerned and at the same time taken aback.

What *they* were concerned with was that they knew their love was unique and genuine. That nothing would come between them. And that in love, one sometimes becomes foolish and does things one regrets soon after. And why not, when all is said and done, 'love is a beautiful song'. As long as the two who are singing it do no change the chords.





# Poetry from the Pacific Regions

*The poems on this page first appeared in The Floating Coconut, published by Lotu Pasifika Productions, Suva, Fiji.*

## THE POT PLANT

A pot plant  
complete with soil  
was planted  
in these islands  
Five decades testified  
to the growth  
of a tree  
firm and sure  
flowered and fruited  
But what of the pot?

The roots are deep  
like a native kauri  
Generations of fruits  
are born,  
decay and die  
dry leaves wither  
old branches fall  
But the tree stands immortal  
Braving the storm of change  
Bearing even better fruits.

From Imla to the tamure  
with vigorous movements  
to the dictates  
of the rumbling torrent  
Branches shake  
violently  
out of control  
Fruits scatter  
Chaos everywhere.

No more is the pot  
no more is the imported soil  
Consumed by the native worm  
dissolved by the tropical sun  
producing a unique cross-breed  
of custom and culture  
of tradition and belief

The cloud darkens  
begins to assemble  
as in a youth camp  
The sky changes colour  
from navy blue  
to reddish brown  
proclaiming the approach  
of unsettled weather.

But in the midst  
of this gloominess  
this dark confusion  
a ray of light  
for a halo  
all pervading  
all sustaining  
Bringing life and vitality  
and a clear vision  
to the tree.

**Sitiveni Ratuveli**

## I REMEMBER

I remember  
along the weeping Avatin stream.  
I remember my brothers  
swimming in the wind,  
and hanging their laughter  
on guava trees,  
And my mother calling us  
in the evening.

This morning I imagined  
their laughter echoing in my mind  
And I cried for a quiet corner  
to relive the past things we did.

**Maki Tongia**

## WHAT IS IT?

Oh, I am feeling cold again,  
What is it which makes me feel so cold?  
Not a single thing can I see here,  
But there's something I can feel;  
Something moving to and fro,  
Which makes me very cold.  
From the West it seems to come,  
And from the East it travels too,  
In fact, it seems to come from everywhere  
And is always on the move.

I'm always cold when it's around,  
And hot when it's not present;  
I try in vain to look for it,  
But never can I see a thing.  
Then suddenly I'm feeling cold again,  
Oh, how strange that feeling is.

I try to hold it in my hands,  
But reach and grasp in vain,  
For nothing do I ever touch,  
Except this emptiness called space.  
Then when my aching arms are warm again,  
I find I'm calling for this unseen thing  
To gently blow across my face and limbs,  
To make me cool again.

**Jacinta Misily**

## ON LEAVING NEW HEBRIDES BY AIR – APRIL 1973

On these small islands  
dark under white clouds  
People  
under alien rule  
not yet free  
unconfident – unsure – unproud  
Wait  
for the Day

**Bruce Deverell**

# Chief Memwe IV Part One continued

By Albert G.T.K. Malikongwa

Illustrated by Mpikayipheli

In our previous issue we read how a battalion of women, including Jomo's first wife, Imi, conspired to eliminate Tose, the second wife of Jomo. Imi loves Jomo but she is cursed because she can't give birth. Frustrated in her attempt to kill Tose, she decides to bewitch Jomo by pouring poison into his beer, prepared by Tose. Now in this instalment read about the fate of this battalion of women, including Imi.



*(Drums calling the people. The Chief's Place. Enter Chief Memwe, Sub-Chiefs Ndzonga, Thini, Mokgosi, Tazwala, Cbangate, also Mamanji, Senior Eldermen of the Village, Ngaka Njisi. Jomo is brought in, walking painfully and is made to sit on a leopard skin between his two wives. Tose is weeping. The crowd is silent.)*

FIRST TRIBESMAN:

My lower eyelid tickles. Something big is going to happen.

SECOND T.: The Chief looks serious and upset.

THIRD T.: Look, who is that walking with his back bent like a bow? He appears to be in great pain.

FOURTH T.: It is the Chief's son, Jomo. Oh, sweet Jomo.

FIRST T.: And his wife is crying.

SECOND T.: Tears are like the morning dew.

They never last long.  
Where tears come out in plenty, sorrow  
Is usually shallow-grounded.

FIRST T.: Shii — the Chief moves.

FOURTH T.: I see a man coming from a distance.

FIRST T.: Move back, you fool, you step on my toe.

FOURTH T.: It is Ngaka Njisi and two others. Shii — Sub-Chief Ndzonga is on his feet.

NDZONGA: Your Lordship, Chief Memwe,  
Senior Headmen of the Tribe,  
My Countrymen and women,  
I greet you all.

The Chief has an important message for you all.

Please sit down and listen carefully.

MEMWE: My people, I greet you.

Mine is a sad chapter,  
Full of duplicity and double-crossing.

Never before have I been sad  
To the point that my manhood revolts.  
But since restraint is a powerful weapon,  
I have decided to be as cool  
As a breeze on a summer's day.  
My son Jomo, the heir-apparent  
Whom you see over there, is ill;  
The child whom the Gods gave to you  
To walk in my footsteps when I am gone.  
I plead with the heavens to spare him.  
Many among you wear a thousand faces,  
Masking that which is real and true  
Behind the iron masks of hypocrisy and  
innocence.

The Gods forbid that I should stand here  
And fold my arms and shut my eyes  
When that which is yours is wounded,  
Wounded by those who wear smiles on their  
faces

Yet try to stifle the seed of this house.  
I am Memwe, ruler of this country.  
I warn you: keep danger and conspiracy away  
from my son.

I will tear mischief into a thousand pieces  
And cut the tongues and ears of every witch I  
catch.

*(Gets angry and begins to perspire).*

FIRST T.: The Lion of Maitengwe,  
Watch, his grey hair moves too.  
Never before have I seen death itself  
Walking on this land among people.  
He wears death on his face.  
Shii *(he waves his hand.)* Please listen.

MEMWE: I will uproot them like headstones and



tombstones in the graveyards.  
I move like thunder, yet I am more powerful  
than thunder.  
And whoever has suckled milk from a witch's  
breasts  
And polluted his breath with that chaff  
Shall wail like a dog.  
They plant themselves like a sugared wedding  
cake in the midst of men,  
Yet they are as sour as the cactus plant.  
I know who they are, and their names,  
Yet let justice take its course.  
Let Ngaka Njisi tell us all,  
Lest I be accused of blaming the innocent.  
FIRST T.: Let the worms prepare their teeth.  
And if ever I come near a witch, she shall  
scream like a wounded hyena.  
SECOND T.: So they want to kill the innocent Jomo. They  
shall regret that they ever lived.  
FIRST T.: Oh great ruler,  
Great Chief of this Land,  
Who greets danger with a smile,  
Whose bald head is as wide as the Milky Way,  
Who sent battalions of Matebele warriors  
Scampering in disarray across the Maitengwe  
River,  
Oh most powerful ruler, we bow down before  
you.  
Son of Memwe, Your son is our next Chief.  
SECOND T.: We are most loyal. Jomo shall live his life, his  
full life.  
NDZONGA: Silence. The Chief has not finished speaking.  
MEMWE: Let not your blood boil too hot,  
Let not your anger peel the skins of your  
hearts,  
Let not the mountains be flattered by lizards.  
My son Jomo is ill  
And I have called you  
To come and be witnesses today.  
Ngaka Njisi is here to unravel the mystery of  
Jomo's illness.  
(He sits down).  
NDZONGA: Ngaka Njisi will be coming soon.  
(There is silence. Far away drums are clearly  
heard. Suddenly a flight of birds, hundreds,  
begins to settle on the trees. They are  
sparkling white. All move behind Jomo).  
MEMWE: You should all kneel down with your backs  
towards the East.  
(The wind blows very strongly and lightning  
begins to flash with a terrifying noise. Enter  
Ngaka Njisi dressed in zebra skins and a  
leopard skin hat. The drums begin to beat  
loudly while Njisi sings a solo, dancing in a  
circle with a small boy dressed also like him-

self and holding a kierre. He sings:)  
NGAKA N.: Fate is harsh and unkind.  
Witchcraft is the treasure of ages,  
The interplay of magic and experience in  
traditional medicine.  
You marvel at its machinations.  
And marvel at its secrets true.  
It is infectious and carries the smell and sting  
of death.  
Oh you Gods over the heavens,  
Give me power. Oh wise and friendly spirits,  
I am only flesh, flesh, I say.  
MEMWE: Oh black hammer, we burn for action.  
One eye cannot see what red spots the other  
has;  
The left eye never sees the right eye in its  
socket.  
The right ear cannot hear  
What the left ear has heard.  
Speak that the nation may hear,  
Or I shall never be silent,  
For you hear the dreams of men asleep  
And hear their plots when you are far away.  
You know their whispers past or present.  
NGAKA N.: Your son, My Lord, is ill.  
FIRST T.: Speak loud that we may hear.  
NDZONGA: Will you please keep quiet so that we may  
clearly hear what is being said by Ngaka Njisi.  
NGAKA N.: My Lord, My Lord.  
(He bows down).  
MEMWE: My son is ill and the people want to know  
what has happened to him.  
NGAKA N.: Your will shall be done. Let Jomo come  
nearer to me and let him sit here in the  
middle.  
(He points at a spot on the ground).  
May your highnesses please sit over there and  
all face West.  
The Chief's wife and Jomo's wives, please sit  
over there and also face the West. The tribe  
should sit behind them and also face West.  
NDZONGA: Do you need any help?  
NGAKA N.: Oh no, your highness.  
(A flute is heard from a distance and all the  
birds on the tree descend except the biggest  
which remains perched on the tip of a forked  
branch. The rest squat flat in the form of a  
horseshoe around Jomo. The people are  
frightened. The drums begin to beat louder  
and then they are silent again. The flute  
echoes as follows:)  
  
The black hammer,  
Rider of buffalo bulls,  
Keeper of great secrets,  
Say them all this day.  
  
The black hammer,  
Rider of elephant bulls,  
Whose pillow is a python's head,  
Say them all this day.  
  
(Silence).  
(Njisi opens his leather coat and around his  
chest a big snake has coiled itself and licks his  
left arm with its forked tongue. Women  
scream and some of the tribesmen tremble in  
great fright).  
NDZONGA: Please, no one must move or leave this place  
without permission.



*(The flute is heard again.)*

*The black hammer,  
The hammer that pounds once and for all,  
Rider of the wind,  
Say them all this day.*

*(Silence).*

NGAKA N.: Your Lordship, we are beginning.  
*(Burns herbs and throws more into the fire. He sprays something that looks like liquid blood over the people using the tip of a finely decorated horse tail. He casts his bones, calling them by name. And then he continues speaking).*

That bird on the tree  
Will, as soon as I kneel on the ground  
And hit this rock three times with my horse  
tail, descend and sit on the head of each  
witch or wizard.

It will turn and face the four cardinal points  
while sitting on the head of each one of  
them.

If you are not a witch, don't fear.

NDZONGA: What should we do in the meantime?

NGAKA N.: Remain kneeling, but you can turn around  
and see what is going on. The witches shall  
sneeze and sneeze and sneeze.

*(He begins to kneel and performs actions as  
shown above).*

FIRST T.: The bird, the bird begins to move — Oh, look.

SECOND T.: *(Excited, but feeling rather uneasy and  
shaking in each limb).*

Look, it moves towards the Chief's wife.

FIRST T.: No, it swept past her.

THIRD T.: Dear me, dear me. Oh! Look, look, it has  
passed again. Oh no, it has sat on the head of  
Jomo's first wife, Imi.

FIRST T.: Oh, that cannot be. No, that cannot be. Can  
Jomo's wife kill her husband? What for, what  
for, tell me?

*(He is about to stand up but is pulled down  
by the crowd).*

SECOND T.: Drag her out of the crowd and kill her.

FIRST T.: Oh, such a beautiful woman?

SECOND T.: What do common people say when wives  
begin to kill their husbands, let alone wives to  
the Chief's successor?

FIRST T.: Shii, the bird has moved again. Look, it is on  
that woman, I don't know her name. Now it is  
on the next one. They are twelve in number.

SECOND T.: We are not safe in this country. They form a  
battalion. Yes, a regiment.

FIRST T.: *(Shouting).*

Hang them on those trees with their heads  
upside down.

THIRD T.: Cut off their ears and noses.

*(He jumps up, pulling out his sword).*

MAMANJI: *(Fainting and crying loudly).*  
My son Jomo, oh my Jomo,  
Why do they want to kill you? Oh Jomo,  
Jomo —  
*(Her voice fades away. She is carried out,  
guarded by two Tribesmen and two women).*

NGAKA N.: My sorrowing people,  
Your shattered hopes  
Which a few minutes ago  
Were as far apart  
As the branches of a tree,  
Shall be welded together  
As if by a blacksmith.  
And all you weeping mothers  
So sorrowful over the  
Illness of his highness Jomo  
Shall not taste the kiss of disappointment.  
I am the black hammer  
Whose echoes thunder beyond the tops of the  
hills.

Thunder has rumbled and sown fear  
And Jomo's star shall not fall or die  
Before it has shone in the Milky Way and in  
the heavens.

Sorrow and anguish are transient  
And, like leaves of green,  
Mellow in the winter's sharp stings.

My Lord, brothers and sisters,  
Wives, husbands, young and old,  
The black hammer is here.

I have as yet not spoken.

See who comes there.

My mission is incomplete without that soul.  
*(Somewhere in the distance a scrawny figure  
is crawling towards the crowd. Enter  
MaKenosi, mumbling, her head full of ashes,  
her body marked by fire. She crawls up to  
Njisi and lies prostrate before him.)*

People of this Village,  
This drowsy, skin-and-bones woman  
Belongs to the same club as those women over  
there.

She is the Commander-in-Chief,  
Gone insane, the price of a witch's mischief.

FIRST T.: Wisely do you speak.

Today the black hammer

Will hammer them

Like a road caterpillar.

*(Ngaka Njisi touches her and all madness and  
insanity flies away. The great bird descends on  
her. Loud screams are heard from women in  
the crowd. The drums beat again. Thunder  
rumbles. The birds scatter and settle on the  
trees again).*

SECOND T.: The people are deeply shocked and hurt by  
these revelations.

THIRD T.: Let the Chief hang them on those trees and  
light fires under their feet.

SECOND T.: Oh no, don't be so cruel-minded.

THIRD T.: I don't care. Witches are witches and wizards  
are wizards. They destroy many good things  
in this world for no good reason. I hate them,  
do you understand?

FIRST T.: Yes, they are heartless fools.

SECOND T.: They will destroy or kill even the poorest  
human being. Even a cripple or a blind person.

THIRD T.: Let the Chief finish with them.

FIRST T.: Shii — the lion, the lion of Maitengwe stands  
up. Be quiet.

MEMWE: My good people, you are all witnesses to what  
has happened.



Lino-cut, Mzwakhe

TRIBESMEN: We are, Your Lordship. Punish them, punish them.

MEMWE: These women have brought so much suffering, hatred and confusion to my family and the country.

TRIBESMEN: Tell us your desire. We shall carry it out immediately.

MEMWE: I shall now ask Chief Ndzonga and others to help me.

NDZONGA: Guards, bring in Imi.  
*(The crowd stands up, anxious to see what is happening, and is ordered to sit down by the guards).*  
Imi, your husband Jomo is ill. Can you tell us what you did to him?  
*(Imi does not reply; she cries).*

MEMWE: You must reply to each question quickly. If you do not open your mouth, I shall open it for you.

NDZONGA: Imi, do you understand? Now, answer my questions. What did you do to Jomo?

IMI: My Lord, I . . . I . . .

NDZONGA: Hurry up, don't waste our time with useless stammerings. Guard, bring a sjambok.

IMI: My Lord, I was not alone.

NDZONGA: No, that is not the question. Tell us what you did to Jomo.

IMI: I poisoned him.

MEMWE: You dared poison my son. You, you louse.  
*(He is held back by other chiefs).*

NDZONGA: You said you were not alone. Who were you with?

IMI: My Lord, please forgive me.

TAZWALA: Give her three lashes so that she understands we are not kidding. Speak, quick!  
*(He stands up angrily).*

IMI: I poisoned him myself. The others helped in the planning.

NDZONGA: What do you mean by 'others'?

IMI: I mean MaKenosi and those other women seated over there.  
*(She points to the women on whose heads the great bird had perched).*

NDZONGA: *(Turning to the women).*  
Do you know this woman?

WOMEN: Yes. She is Imi, Jomo's first wife.

NDZONGA: She says you plotted and actually assisted in the attempt to kill Jomo.

FIRST W.: If we speak the truth will Your Lordship have mercy on us?

MEMWE: Don't answer a question with a question, you fool.  
*(He snatches the sjambok from the guard and before they can hold him, he gives her two lashes).*

MOKGOSI: No, My Lord. Let them speak so that we do not leave anything out.

NDZONGA: Now will you answer my question?

FIRST W.: We helped, My Lord, although MaKenosi was confused and went mad before we finished the job. The others only gave support.

NDZONGA: Why did you decide to kill Jomo?

IMI: My Lord, we wanted to kill Tose, but failed. She is very strong. We only . . .  
*(There is pandemonium among the crowd).*  
. . . decided to kill Jomo afterwards.

NDZONGA: But why?

IMI: Jomo does not love me anymore because I do not bear children. I am bewitched. He loves Tose, so I decided to kill him . . .  
*(She cries).*

NDZONGA: *(Calls the women one by one).*  
Do you all agree with what Imi says?

WOMEN: *(Together)* Yes, My Lord.

NDZONGA: Where is the medicine you used?

IMI: In that horn over there.  
*(She picks up the horn and hands it to Ndzonga).*

MEMWE: Now you have exposed yourselves  
And shown my people how evil you are.

NDZONGA: Your Lordship should not hasten to pronounce judgement. Now, you women, including Imi, cure this man first. Then we shall give judgement. Guards, take these women to that hut. They shall remain there till Jomo is cured. If he dies, we shall chop off your heads. No more questions.  
*(Exit all except Chief Memwe, Sub-Chief Ndzonga, Thini, Changate, Tazwala, Mokgosi, Mamanji, Ngaka Njisi and Senior Headmen).*

MEMWE: Please, give me some water to drink. I am feeling tired. Perhaps those that have gone before me are about to call me.

MAMANJI: No, My Lord, you will live for many years to come.

MEMWE: Not when wives have turned against husbands. Who knows who is next on the list?  
*(Mamanji brings him water).*

MAMANJI: My Lord, here is water.

MEMWE: Your highnesses, we have gone through the ordeal of seeing a group of women attempting to deprive the tribe of that which the good Gods ordained was theirs. I have endured much in this ordeal. In my youth I lived with death and survived its grasp. I trust Jomo will do the same. I have been a bystander for a long time, but events have shaped up well so far. The drama of Jomo's ordeal will soon be over.



This is our last instalment though the play continues and ultimately Jomo recovers from his illness, but decides to kill Imi.



# AMANDLA

AN EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL IN PROGRESS BY MIRIAM TLALI/ROCKVILLE

Nana and Betty alighted from a mourner's coach carrying beautifully-arranged wreaths of fresh flowers and moved towards the graveside at Avalon Cemetery. 'You know, Nana, this is very, very cruel indeed,' Betty remarked. 'What?' 'This thing of refusing us permission to hold a mass funeral for all those who died on the 16th. We should be left alone to bury our dead the way *we* want. Who interferes with them when they bury theirs?'

'You're just saying what T. said when they made the announcement last week on the radio. You know how strongly he feels about these things. He and teachers from all over Soweto were in the middle of preparations and drawing up programmes when we learnt that we would not be allowed a mass funeral because, as they were told, "they had a mandate from the people." He would not even *eat* because of that refusal. He kept asking: "Who gives *them* the mandate, who gives *them* the mandate to sit in their mad parliament and pass all these oppressive laws against us?"'

'Surely we don't have to have a mandate from anyone to know what *we* want. Did they hold a referendum about this issue? How do they know how we feel? Do they ever care? They just decide to stick their noses in.'

'That's just it, sheer provocation and interference!'

'Look at that,' Betty said, pointing, 'look at how far that group of mourners is from here. It's the first time I've seen separate groups of mourners this far apart. Look at that other one on the other side. It never happens usually, does it? Just the opposite, in fact. How many times haven't we complained about being conglomerated together

when we bury our dead, so that people attending one burial are unable to carry out their last rites in their own way without interfering with others adjacent to them?'

'Yes. They normally allot graves side by side so that ministers and congregations attending different funerals — with totally different services — are thrown together into a knot, sometimes three or four adjacent and at the same time. There's always confusion and discord as one group starts its own hymn, while another round the next grave tries to drown it with its own jarring anthem.'

'Yes, you always have one group peeling off in song just as another tries to listen to a speech, and so on.'

'Yes. We normally have "forced" mass funerals! Why did they not do that today?'

Nana and Betty stood aside and waited near the open graves. The procession of students accompanying the hearse stopped at a distance and the pall-bearers took turns carrying the coffin containing the remains of Dumisani. It was a very big funeral. Dumi had been one of the first to give his life on the 16th of June, in the struggle against the

notorious system of Bantu Education. The multitudes moved, singing freedom songs, away from the endless row of waiting buses, lorries, cars, Kombis and taxis.

'What a crowd!' one mourner remarked. 'And others are still alighting from cars and lorries outside the graveyard.'

'But there's not a single PUTCO bus in sight,' observed another.

'How can there be? The children will *burn* them. PUTCO is refunding deposits on bus reservations for services in Soweto all over, in fact. They're afraid. Many, many buses have been burnt. Don't you read the papers? Agnes was telling me that they have to go and get back the deposit they paid for buses to Braamfontein Cemetery next month.'

'Is it for a funeral in Braamfontein?'

'No. It's for Pholoso's grandfather's tombstone-laying.'

'Oh, I remember now. And shame, poor Pholoso will probably not be there either. They have to evade the police all the time. They live like birds, poor children. In old cars, dongas, garages and so on.'

They were now speaking in muffled voices in case there were informers in the procession. They changed the sub-

ject.

'Listen to the children's songs!'

And the mourners joined in the singing, joining the schoolchildren as they marched past the long columns of waiting police vans — anxious, gleaming eyes just visible through the heavily-wired windows.

'Who invited them to attend, anyway?' someone asked.

Pholoso sat quietly on the mount of red soil which was soon to inter the casket containing the body of his greatest friend. To many he was just one of the mourners. He was not even dressed in the usual grey flannels and white shirt of the students. His downcast eyes kept drifting to the coffin resting on the shining chromium beams of the lowering device. He seemed not to notice what was going on around him. His thick bush of hair and short beard looked real, and the dark smoothly curving lines of his eyebrows, which would have made him easily recognisable, were concealed behind the dark sunglasses he wore. The many speeches and messages of condolence only served to exasperate his already depressed spirits. At times of such deep sorrow he sometimes wished people would say as little as possible. But how could they?

It was only when a young lawyer, who was himself a popular student leader at Turfloop University, started to speak, that Pholoso became fully attentive. The man had been a colleague of John Tiro. Pholoso stood up to listen.

'... We Africans respect and revere our dead. They are our saints and mediators. We believe that after death they are more active than when they are alive. We keep them "alive" by naming our children after them so that the living link with them is never severed. We remember them from time to time in many of our family ceremonies . . .

'We live in difficult times where those who have put themselves in power over us and their supporters stand firmly against all the evidence facing them. The well-meaning few try preaching to ears that will not listen. They plead for change. Yet the odds are against them. At every "Whites Only" election, they hand over power to forces which contradict what they profess verbally. Their results announce — NO CHANGE! How many times have we who look on heard that verdict reiterated . . . ?

'Only last week I was listening to a sermon on the radio. Perhaps some of you were also listening. I shall quote a few lines from the sermon: "... We have to change," the preacher was say-

ing. "Yet we do not have the power to move. We are caught up in a nightmare situation; yet the sense of urgent necessity won't go away." He tried to lecture to people in fear; people with guns and revolvers under their pillows and in their pockets. He warned them: "Unless we learn to live together, we shall destroy one another." He read from the Bible, Genesis chapter eleven, pointing out the dangers of pride and self-sufficiency . . .

'America is just now celebrating its bicentenary. Two hundred years since the foundation for a just society was laid. That the right to the freedom of all peoples shall be respected; and government shall be by the people, of the people and for the people . . . Like Abraham Lincoln, we are saying now that "Those who died did not die in vain . . ."

'The echo of Sharpeville on the sixteenth of March 1960 resounded in Soweto on the sixteenth of June 1976. We salute our dead with humility. Dumisani Daluxolo was one of those who laid down their lives for the struggle against the unjust society where truth is blindly ignored. . . . South Africa is a signatory to the Human Rights Charter. Yet it is true that the whites of this land deliberately and consciously deny the blacks that right to freedom . . .

'To the Boers, I would like to say, remember Majuba. Remember what you maintain was *your* struggle for truth. Remember too that truth is indestructible. I would also like to sound a warning to the whites here. It is an undeniable truth that we the blacks are of this continent of Africa. That we belong to every inch of it cannot be disputed. It does not matter how much you like to claim it, or by what sophisticated scholarly excuses. Centuries before your ancestors set down their feet at the Cape, my ancestors were already moving in every inch of this continent from Cape to Cairo. Your claim that my ancestors arrived here only two decades or so before yours is a sham. No wonder the Africans treat it with the contempt it deserves. Archaeological evidence, quoted by such scholars as Professor Monica Wilson, has proved the outrageousness of the myth that the white settlers in South Africa populated an empty land. You would be more easily understood if you told people point-blank that you got yourself entrenched here by the gun, by your lies, cunning and manoeuvres. That you shall strive to keep that position by holding even more firmly to the gun. This nightmare situation you now live in is of your own

making and it will persist until you stew in your own broth. You can take your gun and mow me down now like Tiro; the truth shall remain. Surely there could never be any triumph in the knowledge that you have a great number of casualties to your credit. What is the use of that exaltation and momentary delight as you retire with your gun at the end of the day, as you reflect and pride yourself on the knowledge that you have mowed down what you call "rebels" when you can never destroy their spirit of determination?'

There was silence. The speech was long and yet the huge crowd listened with unflagging attention. They were gripped by the stern eloquence and sincerity of the young lawyer. He went on:

'Like the Boers at Slagtersnek, we give our pledge today that we shall never lay down our arms, we shall never rest, until the truth prevails — until a just, peaceful society for all emerges here in our land . . .

'We had hoped that we would be given a common site where we would bury all our departed martyrs, so that coming generations should build a monument at that site. This request was refused. But even this banning of a mass funeral was something of a blessing. *Amadlozi ase-Afrika*, our ancestors decreed it that way. The ashes of our dead are now not confined to a few rows of gaping ready-to-consume graves. They have been intermingled with our other dead, so that their spirits shall not rest, but will be scattered amongst all the other sons and daughters of the soil — in Doornkop, Nancefield, Avalon and other cemeteries outside Soweto. The ashes were sprinkled so that their spirits shall rise throughout this whole sub-continent in protest and action, and the resonance be even greater. Truth shall not be destroyed. These are our fighters for liberation, and people like these never die . . . Science proves that energy is indestructible; it goes on and on. Surely the power that motivated them into action will not stop here; it will go on working. They threw themselves into the forefront facing guns, and their souls shall respond. I am sure that we can all feel that motivating power even as we are standing here.

'... *Amandla . . . Awethu!*  
*Maatla . . . Ke a Rona!*'

One of the officiating speakers tapped Pholoso lightly on the shoulder. It was his turn to pay his last respects to his dearest companion. Without any formal introduction, the mourners watched as he moved to the fore. Many

**Continued on page 41.**





Barney Rachabane, photo, Biddy Crewe

## JAZZ INSPIRATION at the Market Theatre.

Sitting awaiting the take off of the 'Jazz Inspiration' concert, the eagerness of the smart-casual crowd was reflected in the dim light, making them look like spit-shone fruit patiently waiting to be bought.

The lights softened, and something in me surged as if the jazz we were about to experience had already poured out and was drowning me in its agonising beauty. The band emerged and promptly assailed the silence, erupting it with a highly rhythmic umbhaqanga tune composed by the pianist Bheki Mseleku. I caught a glimpse of several people in the audience restraining themselves after having unconsciously succumbed to the vibrations that fervently sought to transform the theatre into a jumping township joint. 'This is where it's all happening,' Barney and Bheki insisted through their solos. A vibrant aura of township emotion unfurled from the overture — which served also as an encore — and embraced us for the sojourn across a varied landscape of jazz.

### A PICTURE OF HUMAN EMOTIONS.

The mood kept on evolving throughout the evening as the music of these mystics carried us through shades of chronic twelve-bar blues, fragile ballads, and fiery, frenzied up-tempos. That each musician is a technical master, there lingers no doubt — as was show-cased in their solo spots; but their success in painting a variegated picture of human emotions is a tribute to their innovative skills. The basis of good jazz is the spontaneous marriage of these skills to unrestrained feeling to produce animated music that borders on the mystical. And each musician sustained this potential differently on those two nights: Bheki and Allen Kwela yielded openly under the agony (or ecstasy?) of their spirited submission; Enoch Mthalane, Johnnie Fourie, and Zulu Bidi were immersed in a painful serenity that made them equally awesome; and Barney's boyish figure was inflated through his alto horn to the size of a revelation.

Eugene Skeef

## ROGER LUCEY BAND at the Market Theatre

Roger Lucey seems to be in a period of transition in his music, following his trip to Britain and the US, and the image of himself as a musician which he presented at the Market Theatre left many of his fans in a state of confusion.

For this concert Roger put aside his guitar, and also neglected his saxophone and flute, in order to give himself more freedom to prance around the stage while he delivered the often powerful and relevant lines of his songs. However, this stage act tended to separate Roger from his group, and established a relationship on stage which split up the unity of the group into lead singer and backing band. At the same time a discrepancy became evident between his over-theatrical stage performance and the sometimes challenging, sometimes sombre messages he was delivering.

### A DIFFICULT MIX

Roger is attempting the difficult mix of political statement and rock 'n roll — how to entertain and deliver a powerful social message at the same time — and he has to learn to develop a method of combining the two without sacrificing the one for the other.

For an artist in such a situation, the idea of the *necessity* of a modicum of compromise is powerfully seductive. To succeed, a Rock musician needs a wide audience (and one which will *buy* his records) and the temptation to alter his cultural product to increase its accessibility to this wider audience is, in economic terms, perhaps too easy to rationalise.

At this stage in his career Roger seems to be adopting a strategy of changing the form and presentation of his music, in order to legitimise its content. Thus by adopting a pop format and glittering stage show he hopes to bring his music to a wider audience who will be seduced by the form before they have time to build up a resistance to the content. Salesmen know that once the foot is in the door, half the battle is over, and within a certain context this is obviously an intelligent strategy, as a rave review in a women's supplement to one of the daily papers will testify. However it is the context in which this strategy is to be operative which is in question, rather than the strategy itself. For the context is that of the white-controlled media, and the buying public which it directs.

Roger is aiming at the ideal of a kind of music and presentation which will be equally appropriate in a Soweto stadium or the Potchefstroom University hall — without doubt, a high ideal. But the cultural climate in South Africa today is harsh and polarised, embodying the conflicts and tensions which exist in the wider society.

At this moment in our history it is necessary for the artist to take a stand, and, to quote Roger's own lyrics, 'the stand you take/is one side or the other.'



Roger Lucey, photo, Frank Black

## 'The Revolution will not be reviewed in "The Star Tonight!"'

Roger Lucey has built up a reputation in South African music circles for his uncompromising commitment to real social issues, and even if this image might cut him off from a potentially large white record-buying public, this is in fact his strongest weapon if he is to be a significant musician in this country.

### A TRICKY TIGHTROPE

It is a tricky tightrope that the 'committed' artist in South Africa must walk, and there are many of great talent and potential who still experience relative obscurity as a result of refusing to compromise this commitment in order to achieve recognition and a wider appeal in terms of media and media audiences. Furthermore, the situation becomes trickier as the State's 'total national strategy' increasingly serves to obscure and blur the internal political contradictions in South African society. The subtlety of the social confusion sown by this 'strategy' is as evident in cultural life as it is in the economic and social spheres, and demands of the artist an increasing severity of personal commitment and clarity of vision as to the path he is to pursue in his search for a truthful expression.

Andy Mason

### 'THE SUN WILL RISE' THE ALLAHPOETS at the Market Theatre

If the success of the Allahpoets' show at the Market Theatre depended on the artistry of its stage presentation and the ability to emit a magnetism which draws forth response and entertains the audience, then I can only reply, having sat in that audience, by confessing that I was completely spell-bound and my emotions were so worked up that tears uncontrollably rolled down my face.



Allahpoets, photo-collage, Clifford Ranaka

However, I don't think that the power of the Allahpoets lies primarily in stage production and entertainment, but rather in fearlessly embarking on a course of protest, social criticism and the raising of consciousness among the people. In this racist oppressive, exploitative and degenerate situation that is South Africa, through the medium of poetry and music, and indeed all the arts, they are playing a positive role in social change and development.

### CULTURAL MALNUTRITION

While note must be taken of the flaws in the show, such as poor choreography, poor English language pronunciation and unprofessional musical accompaniment and arrangement, this is not the point at issue owing to the fact that our whole urban South African society is suffering from cultural malnutrition. The Allahpoets have had to start almost from scratch, without any ready tools such as music and dance libraries, arts institutions etc.

In fact, anybody wishing to concern him- or herself with the Allahpoets (before they can even write critical comments) should think and 'act' in terms of encouraging them, and raising their professional standard through fostering their self-evaluation and improvement, organising their country-wide tours, and according them their legitimate role and function in the upliftment of their people. It should also be remembered, as the Allahpoets pointed out, that 'the Revolution will not be reviewed in the *Star Tonight!*'

M.K. Malefane

### JULUKA at the Market Theatre

Formed in 1971, the musical partnership of Jonathan Clegg and Sipho Mchunu has produced a number of very popular singles and the recently released album, 'Universal Men.' Although their reception at the SABC has always been 'cool', since the inception of Capital Radio they have shot to number one position with their single 'Africa' from the album.

The wide coverage the pair have received in South African magazines over the last few months has served to put JULUKA firmly on the map as a unique fusion of African and European sounds.

However their recent concerts at the Market Theatre left behind them certain reservations about the *kind* of cultural relationships their show represents, and the fear that success will pull JULUKA away from their commitment to the roots of their music, towards the kind of consumer-oriented product that success too often brings about.

JULUKA is the Zulu word for SWEAT — implying struggle, work, strife, strenuous labour — but this atmosphere, integral to the life of the migrant labourers whose music and experience Jon Clegg has tried to distill into the music of JULUKA, is somehow absent from the stage show of the group.

### AN ACT OF AUDACITY

The removal of this kind of music and dance from its authentic context, where it does not pretend to be anything external to this context, is an act of audacity which can be justified only if it is accompanied by a commitment to the annihilation of the very socio-economic structure which is indeed its antecedent. In its present form, JULUKA serves to perpetuate the syndrome whereby presentation is geared towards the consumer, and the relationships set up on the stage between the 'star' and the rest of his group unfortunately seem to duplicate rather than challenge South African social relations. For instance, John Clegg speaks of 'those four lads over there', without giving names to the full-grown men whom he has already undermined by exhibiting them on stage somewhat like curiosities in a curio shop.

# Staffrider Reviews

Their apparent discomfort and lack of energy on stage tends to reinforce this impression.

At the same time, if the performance is to retain credibility as something more than a consumer-orientated pop show, the music must be *alive* with social comment — much more is needed than the somewhat facetious anthropological tone of Jon Clegg's introductions to the songs. These discourses on the Zulu tradition suggest a cultural heritage entombed in a shatterproof glass cage in some museum. Which is a pity because the songs themselves have subtlety and sensitivity, and show a more than superficial understanding of the articulation between the present conditions of the migrant workers and their cultural traditions.

JULUKA's attempt to bridge the gap between cultures (and demonstrate that whites can respect and participate in black culture) can overcome the problems inherent in such an attempt, in the present South African context, only if the group is committed to challenging rather than perpetuating the patterns of domination and submission existent in our society.

For behind the excitement and involvement of the performance there always lurks the danger of producing a cultural product not unlike the impotent fertility mask bought at the Carlton Centre curio shop to complete the 'African touch' in an upper Houghton lounge.

P. Kulia

## MALOMBO at Vanwyksrust

Malombo at Vanwyksrust! What a contradiction in tones! Vanwyksrust sounds more like one of those names born to further the aims of colonialism. It has the tone of the day when this land was taken away from its own people. And Malombo has overtones of Africa's heritage. It is a sound that shall resist all forces of cultural imperialism. A sound that reminds blacks of their own religion, their own cultural past. It arouses their emotional attachments with the spirits of the dead and it is a sound that shall talk to God through the gods. Those who are an integral part of this religion shall easily tell when the sound is abused or badly produced.

Today we are afraid, we are scared of western cultural traits. The music from the west has done much damage to our musicians. We fear that the last remnants of this music must not be washed away by this disco sound. So far Phillip Tabane has become the legend of this our music. But we often wonder whether he is going to be passionate to his fellow brothers who are struggling to put Malombo chords



Phillip Tabane, photo, Paul Weinberg

together. We often ask ourselves whether it is possible to get help from this malombo genius. Is it possible to play in the same group with this guitar maestro? It takes you more than the courage of facing a hippo to think about asking for help from people like Phillip.

Anyway, we believe that Malombo shall always remain an eternity in the black man's life and like any other human beings all the maestros in this music shall meet their eternal sleep. But before they decide to sleep, let them declare their talent a communal property by sharing with those who are engaged in some funny music studies. It's a pity our music is not institutionalised in this institutional life we live.

Mokone waNtshidikgolo

## AMANDLA

of his schoolmates who immediately recognised the suave student leader's voice were by now aware of the intention to conceal his identity. Their attentive faces revealed little to arouse undesirable official curiosity. Holding his right palm over the interred coffin, the sad young man spoke solemnly and with intense emotion:

'Rest in peace, my dear brother. We vow on this day that we shall never tire; that we shall relentlessly pursue this course for freedom, until those aspirations and ideals for which you gave your life are realised. Son of the soil, your precious blood which was shed by the enemy shall sink into the earth and

there nurture the roots of the tree of liberation . . .'

The words seemed to trip his vocal cords, so that he could not continue with his farewell message. He raised his clenched fist, swallowing the lump which stuck in his throat. The multitude instantly and unanimously roared a deafening 'Amandla!' as Pholoso reached for the white petals of fresh flowers which were held ready for him by a member of the bereaved family. He stood still and watched them as they gently descended in a steady drizzle and came to rest over the polished chest below.

Miriam Tlali's novel, *Amandla*, is to be published later this year as no. 5 in the *Staffrider Series*.

## STACCATO

Staccato . . . staccato  
All scurried and ran  
scrambling and dodging  
for cover  
to evade the  
hail of bullets.

the sky was torn  
raining tornado and destruction  
on the helpless  
heads of the defenceless  
Unless death goes  
we shall not surrender  
for our blackness  
stands firm.

Serekele Ramachela/Namakgale



Bob Marley at Rufaro Stadium, Zimbabwe.

*photos, Paul Weinberg*

# Rastaman in Zimbabwe

An on-the-spot account by Masilo Rabothata

'MBUYA NEHANDA... Mbuya Nehanda!' That's crowds at Muchitanga Lion Lager People's bar. Chants about the war punctuated with 'Iso! Iso! Wa Tonga!' in Fort Victoria. It is the movement of the people. It is the movement of the people from Egypt to Canaan, from Babylon to Israel, from the gutters and stench of Rhodesia to bounteous



peaceful Zimbabwe. Unfortunately also, from newly anointed Zimbabwe to unholy South Africa... It is the wild dancing of the people to the Tongorara praise-remembrance song from the juke box at the Chevron hotel. The lengthy queue of cars towing caravans at Beit Bridge. Waiting to cross over. You could drop dead just looking into some of those faces, worn out by disappointment and hatred. It is Exodus. At Rufaro Stadium did Bob Marley sing about it.

While there may have been a shortage of flowers in Zimbabwe, the nectar was there. The buzzing did not stop. Despite the wounds that gaped at one from everywhere. Despite gun-toting white Rhodesians out to revenge those they lost in the war. Despite the River Boys at the Coq D'Or night club, straining their lungs to reach the high-pitched 'SOS' by 'The Police', caught in some commercial web and confused about who they are. Despite Verukweru's completely unknown 'Never never my darling, never you be alone' at Queen's Hotel with prostitution lurking in the background among the section of Africa that's gone disco-crazy. Despite all this and more, the people were happy because Zimbabwe was born and Bob Marley was there to sing with the people.

This guy Bob Marley came sauntering like a small iron balloon across the border from Rhodesia into Zimbabwe. The very same guy who bubbled out after '76 with 'You got to lively up yourself' and while you balanced on your toes wondering why, he added 'Get up, stand up; stand up for your rights'. Did you? In Zimbabwe they did while you went running after the infamous and unmusical Millie Jackson...

Bob Marley was happy when he said to me 'I'll be playing at the Celebrations tonight at Rufaro stadium.' 'And tomorrow?' 'At the showgrounds.' I could hardly believe I was shaking the hand of a superstar, his humility was remarkable. But then, here he was, in Africa, with the people he has been telling untiringly 'No matter where you come from, as long as you're a black man you're an African.'

Imagine Rufaro Stadium on 18 April. Imagine the traditional Shona dance in its most raw state. Unscathed by the Bertha Egnos of Rhodesia. Imagine the colonial British choir lamenting through the last minutes before the Union Jack goes down, all swallowed up by black, black, black on all sides. Pretty stiff because they were not used to it. May

their Lord (whoever he is) help them get used to it. Imagine a group of Zimbabwean Indians doing a slow motion pose (they thought/said they were dancing) with lighted candles which made the stadium look like the sky. I really thought the sky had fallen for their white clothes made them look like clouds. Imagine all this, and much more...



But hang on, the lights go blue here. Bob is on stage. The time is somewhere around 11.30. He is singing 'Everywhere is war, war in the east, war in the west, war up north, war...' Coughs once, coughs twice, music stops. Why? From our end of the stadium we could see fumes rising lazily into the sky. The next minute we were coughing too and crying. I personally could not be mistaken about why. William in front of me said that he thought something was burning. 'No!' I shouted, 'It's teargas.' I did not add 'You fool!' because it would not have seemed fair.

Anyway, lights go dark at this point on stage and teargas fumes get mixed up with the air and in ten or fifteen minutes the stadium is in peace again. Why the teargas? Yeah, there were thousands of people outside the stadium, jostling to come in. But it was already filled to capacity. Heads of state from many countries were there, and the First Prime Minister of Zimbabwe Robert Gabriel Mugabe has already had three attempts on his life, so security had to be tight.

When Bob sings 'Rastaman vibrations' everyone sings along and you do not need to remind yourself that you are in Africa. You do not need that. In Africa we sing along to the music until our voices go hoarse. We don't sit back and wait to be electrified like we were supposed to wait for Millie Jackson to electrify us. The experienced musicians play the beat and we join in the chorus. We are also our own entertainers. Now Bob's music, reggae music is like that, 'sing along'. So when he sings 'We Africans will fight...' how can one not sing along? The music is with the people because it is about them.

Filled with Chibuku beer from the celebrations and flag-raising ceremonies which took place during the day, the people responded...

As if the sky had suddenly opened up and there was a downpouring of music and happiness. When Bob came and sang 'I shot the sheriff but I did not shoot the deputy' he could not have said better, for how else are the people expected to react to oppression? Shoot it down in self-defense but don't shoot the deputy.

Now the deputy is already advancing his foot into South Africa. We need self defence methods. Rhodesians are right here! In South Africa, that is.

'Imagine the dreams dreamt there by those who mined your gold'



### CROWN MINES COMPOUND DEMOLITION BLUES

They're pulling down the compound in Crown Mines. The roof has gone already (corrugated iron has resale value). You can see inside the outer wall of rough hewn stones, which often we've admired in passing, the concrete bunks: two tiers along each wall. 'No mattresses provided,' says the black man at my elbow. And Crown Mines were the richest on the Reef. If you in your spacious houses set on Northern Suburbs rolling lawns — three gardeners working on Good Friday (and the maid), drinks served to friends upon the front verandah, Mercedes in the parking lot — if you should still remain in any doubt at this flashpoint in history of man's stupendous inhumanity to man, go there and take a look. Remove the profit margins from your vision. Imagine the dreams dreamt there by those who mined your gold. Imagine the quality of sleep achieved in such conditions, slotted in like corpses in a morgue. Look at the shithouses which, like those in your children's nursery school or crèche, do not have doors. Perceive the foundations of the national economy. The cornerstones of privilege. The outrage. The indignity. Imagine hand grenades. And petrol bombs. Go home and be afraid.

Heather Bailey/Crown Mines  
*photos, Les Lawson*



' The idea of a special page for women writers is anathema to me. '

CUT

He tossed me bad dreams  
at the breakfast table  
gifts from his private nights  
notes from the underground

His honesty was of a devious kind

I shared the images  
the severed wrists  
the tapping of the stick  
the leaking roof  
the dance upon the hill

Terror was close at hand  
darkened the sun  
put purple in the night  
Sometimes  
from the corner of my eye  
in the corner of the room  
I briefly saw  
the movement of his monsters

That way lay madness.

I cut the jungle vines  
the umbilical cords  
the tangled thread  
the pack  
the marriage vows

I cut  
and cut again

LETTER TO AN EX-HUSBAND

I don't know what to say  
to you  
and so I never write  
but sometimes  
memories of you  
fill and fulfil me.  
I have a child  
who smiles at strangers  
beguiles a busload  
(the guru comes at last  
out of the Cape Town dawn)

I would not be with you  
nor would have been without —  
no anger now  
but a raging wind  
nowhere bound,  
no sound  
but remembrance.  
A whole dead sea of distance  
fills with life.  
Sometimes you think of me.  
Send word.



photo, Les Lawson.

ATTIC

Choosing to live in fantasy  
I did not prosper  
reality grew deafening in my ears  
I suffered headaches  
and insomnia

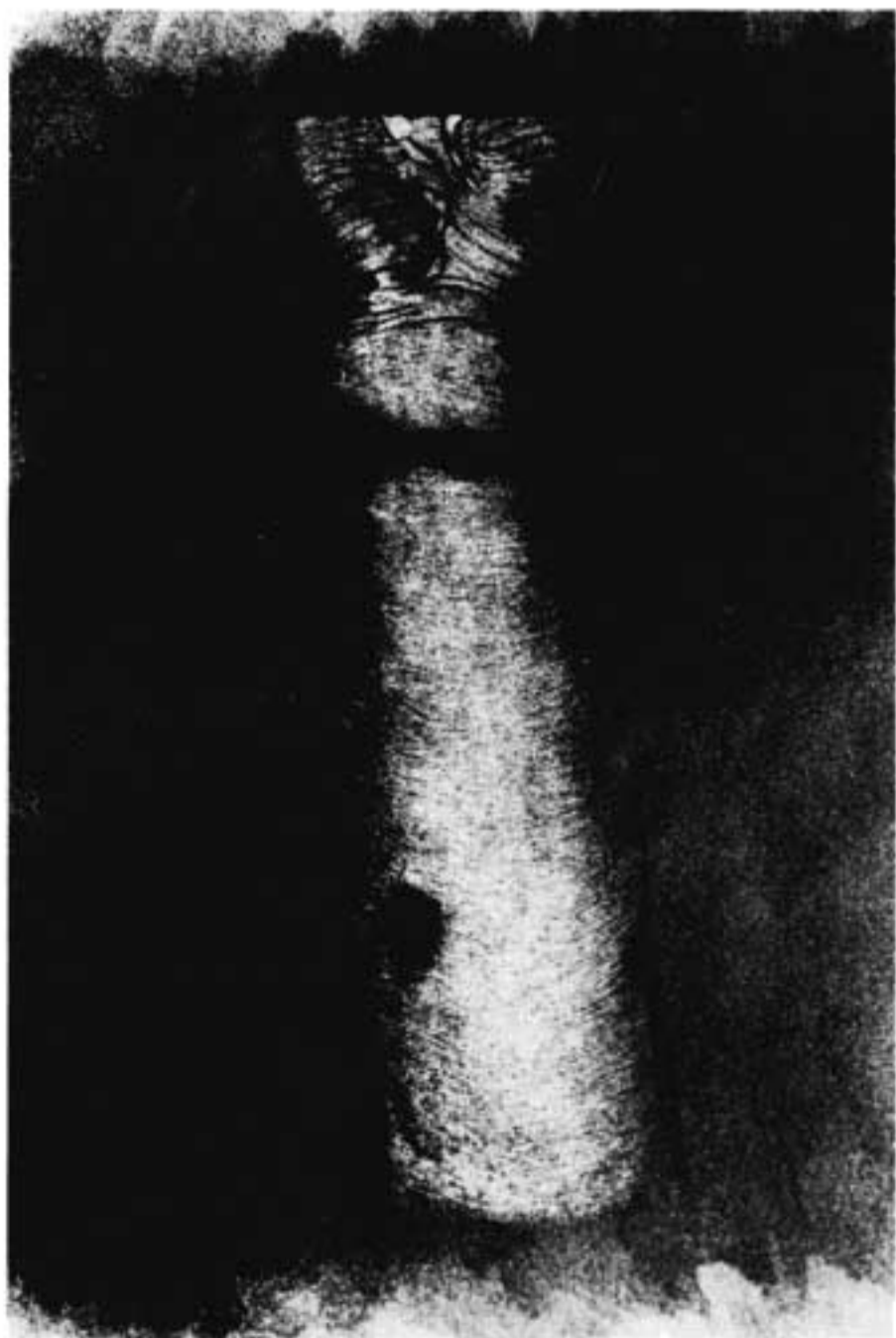
I shifted archetypes  
you tumbled from my bed  
Icarus upon the indifferent sea  
Narcissus in a pool.  
I even bent to catch you  
as you slipped away  
down down the attic stairs  
into a new mythology  
with one small holdall  
nothing more  
leaving the books upon the shelves  
the records on the floor  
the totems  
the taboos  
broken irreparably

the sculpted deathhead  
at the open door

In contemplation  
of the textures on the wall  
the crumbling plaster  
crack and bulge and stain  
the slow disintegration of a home  
I visited the outposts of myself  
I bore the pain  
I saw the temple curtain rent  
from end to end  
the pillars crumble  
and the heavens fall.

I even bent to catch you  
as you slipped  
down down the attic stairs

I laid your last remains  
upon the bed  
you did not wake again



Paul Stopforth's recent exhibition of pictures at the Johannesburg Art Gallery continues to extend his concern with deaths in detention in South Africa. Executed in an unusual technique utilizing graphite and floor wax, these details of dead hands and feet, as if taken from the autopsy table, are based on photographs taken for legal purposes.



### Programme of solidarity

Southern Africa PEN Centre (Johannesburg) has embarked on a programme of solidarity with silenced and restricted writers. All activities held have been in dedication to the banned writers, respectively: Don Mattera, November 1979; Mzwandile Maqina, January 1980; Vuyisile Mdeleleni, February 1980 and Juby Mayet, May 1980. The ladder grows longer when we consider writers in prison and those in exile who may not be read in South Africa. It is such circumstances that have influenced Moss Petlo's impression of writers in distress. (right)

### Censorship conference

At a Conference on Censorship at the University of Cape Town, 21 – 25 April, attended by some PEN members in their personal capacities, the following points emerged:

1. **The State continues to rely on overkill rather than finesse for the success (surely undoubted, in terms of the death toll?) of its censorship system.** Even the erstwhile chairman of the appeal board, Judge Snyman, pictured the apparatus within which he used to function as a helpless juggernaut. The sophisticated functionaries of the system can't, it seems, control the hatchet-men on the secret committees. Hence the State itself appealed against the bannings on *Burger's Daughter* (Gordimer) and *Droë Wit Seisoen* (Brink) – when it was clear that the authors themselves wouldn't, on principle, appeal.

2. **The State nevertheless wants to demonstrate *verligtheid* on the censorship issue.** Else why unban? Starting with names like Gordimer, Brink and Le Roux seems to point to the public relations aspect of the exercise. All are internationally-known authors. Also, they're visibly *literary* in the highbrow sense.

Still, leniency towards black writers is also something that the South African censors have been advocating for some time – in letters giving the reasons for banning nearly all the books by black writers which have appeared. Moreover, this leniency is advocated on unashamedly political grounds (the safety-valve argument) as well as literary ones. So the chances are that sooner or later the censors will appeal against their own banning of a black writer.

3. **As far as black writers are concerned – and many white writers like Nadine Gordimer are in full support – the censors must be left to play their games without assistance: there will be no appeals.** Censorship is essentially a tool of the political apparatus. All that can be negotiated is the relinquishing of political power by those who use censorship to hold on to it.

Basic to this argument is the perception that to appeal, or otherwise negotiate with the censors, is to lose the strategic advantage gained by the dramatic confrontation which at present defines the cultural arena in South Africa. To adopt a negotiating posture at this stage, to ask that one's work be unbanned while the work (for example) of Nelson Mandela or Govan Mbeki remains banned, is to risk the fate of a literary Muzorewa. For the State is clearly interested in dividing writers into 'permitted' and 'forbidden', 'internal' and 'exile' etc. For the majority of black writers, therefore, the whole momentum of cultural struggle requires that the writer should not back off in the present confrontation.



Drawing, Moss Petlo/Katlehong

4. **Opponents of censorship in the legal profession, liberals and some pragmatic radicals are now exerting strong pressure on writers to abandon this standpoint and to inundate the Board with appeals.** The organisers of the Conference lobbied throughout the sessions, and afterwards, for the establishment of a committee that would co-ordinate the amelioration of censorship by fighting a steady succession of appeal cases.

The presence of Mr James Ferman, executive chairman of the British board of censors, gave a particular slant to their initiative. It was to be expected that Mr Ferman would emphasise the lessons of English experience. What was disappointing was the latitude he was given to display a fundamental ignorance of the South African conditions under which those lessons were to be learned. Basically the Ferman thesis was that censorship in South Africa was very like censorship in Britain fifteen years ago. By means of a carefully co-ordinated legal campaign, in which no precedent would lack a sequel, the forces of enlightenment could triumph here as they have in Britain.

In fairness it must be added that the champions of the appeal as an instrument of practical opposition to censorship do not all exude the same naiveté. They argue that not to fight by appeal is not to fight at all, and that no clear line can be drawn when it comes to collaborating, or not collaborating, in one's own oppression. If one lives within a system, one must fight within it.

A lawyer who opposes the system in South Africa has a duty to recommend alternative legal channels when he sees these are not being utilised. Having done this, however, he must await the response of those who might use those channels – in this case, the writers. At this stage it remains unlikely that many of those writers whose works are banned in South Africa will appeal – this was confirmed at the Conference, and again at the Dinotshi Arts Festival in Ga-Rankuwa when Siphosiphiso Sepamla tested the audience's reaction to the appeal issue.

# iLollipop

A picture story by Vicky Alhadeff



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# **Rastaman in Zimbabwe**

