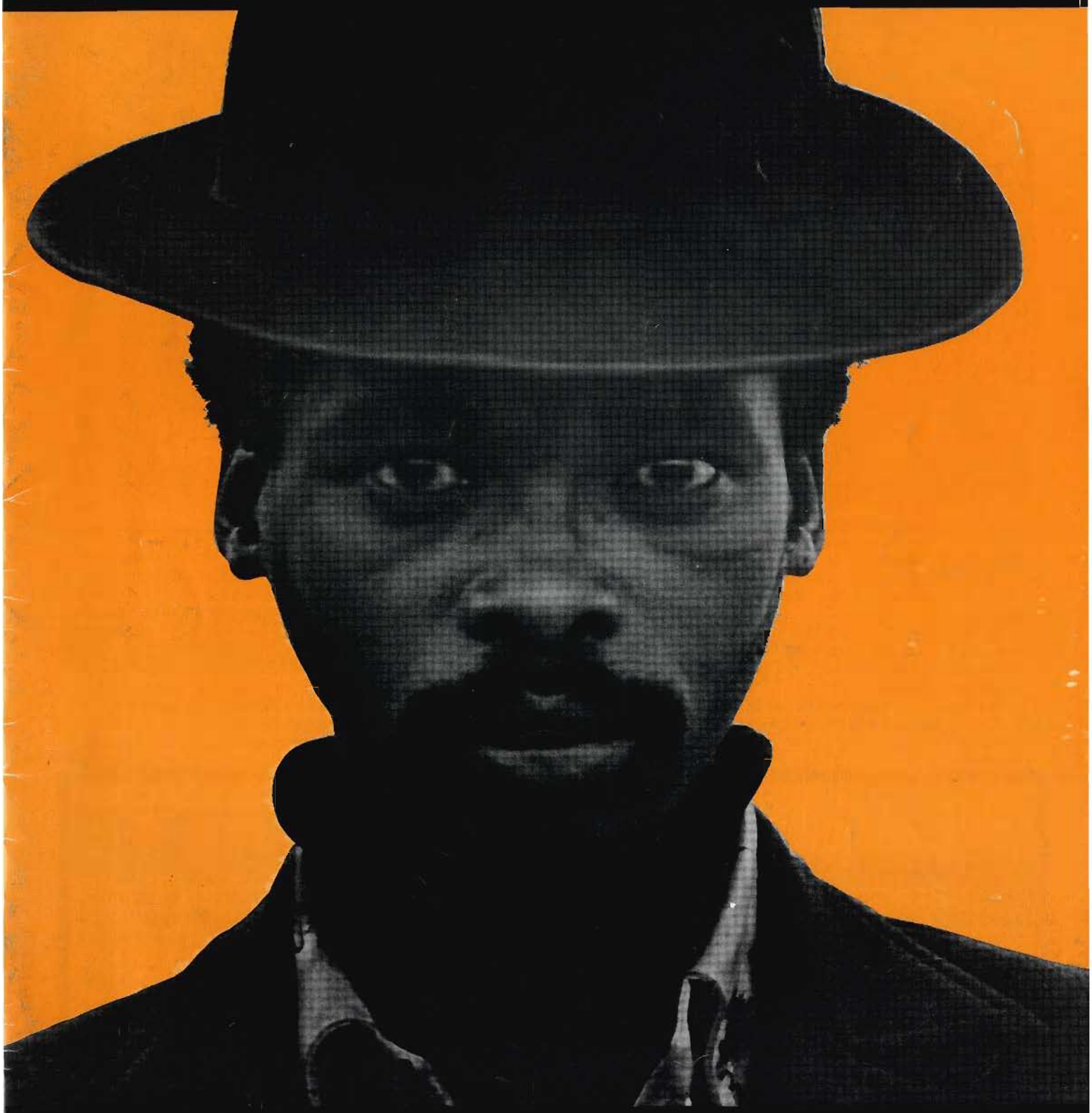
Staffrider

VOLUME 5 NUMBER 1 1982 R1.05c (incl GST)



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A FASCINATING STORY BY
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The boy knocked timidly on the door, while a big fluffy dog sniffed at his ankles. That dog made him uneasy; he was afraid of strange dogs. This made him anxious to go into the house as soon as possible. But there was no answer to his knock. Should he simply turn the door knob and get in? What would The Prophetess say? Would she curse him? He was not sure now which he feared more: was it The Prophetess or the dog? If he stood longer there at the door, the dog might sooner decide that he was up to some mischief after all. If he left, the dog might decide he was running away. And The Prophetess! What would she say when she eventually opened the door to find no one there? She might decide someone had been fooling, and would surely send lightning after the boy. But then, leaving would also bring the boy another problem: he would have to leave without the holy water that his sick mother had sent him for.

There was something strangely intriguing about The Prophetess and holy water. All that one was to do, the boy had so many times heard in the streets of the township, was fill a bottle with water and take it to The Prophetess. She would then lay her hands on the bottle and pray. And the water would be holy. And the water would have curing powers. That's what his mother had said too.

The boy knocked again, this time with more urgency. But he had to be careful not to annoy The Prophetess. It was getting darker and the dog continued to sniff at his ankles. The boy tightened his grip round the neck of the bottle he had just filled with water from the street tap on the other side of the street, just opposite The Prophetess' house. He would hit the dog with this bottle. What's more if the bottle broke, he would stab the dog with the sharp glass. But what would The Prophetess say? She would probably curse him. The boy knocked again, but this time he heard the faint voice of a woman:

'Kena!' the voice said.

The boy quickly turned the knob and pushed. The door did not yield. And the dog growled. The boy turned the knob again and pushed. This time the dog made a sharp bark, and the boy knocked frantically. Then he heard the bolt shoot back, and saw the door open to reveal darkness. Half of the door seemed to have disappeared into the dark. The boy felt the fur of the dog brush past his leg as the dog hurried into the house with sudden alacrity.

'Voetsek!' the woman cursed suddenly.

The boy wondered whether the woman was The Prophetess. But as he was wondering, the dog brushed past him again, slowly this time. In spite of himself, the boy felt a pleasant, tickling sensation and a slight warmth where the fur of the dog had touched him. The warmth did not last, but the tickling sensation lingered, going up to the back of his neck and seeming to caress it. Then he shivered for an instant, and the sensation disappeared, shaken off in the brief involuntary tremor.

'Dog stay out!' shouted the woman, and added, 'this is not at the white man's.'

The boy heard a slow shuffle of soft leather shoes receding into the dark room. The woman must be moving away from the door, the boy thought. He followed her into the house.

'Close the door,' ordered the woman who was still moving somewhere in the dark. But the boy had already done so.

Although it was getting dark outside, it was much lighter than in the room, and the fading day threw some of its waning light into the room. The curtains had not yet been drawn. Was it a last ditch effort to save candles? the boy

wondered. His mother had scolded him many times for lighting up before it was completely dark.

The boy looked instinctively towards the dull light coming in through the window. He was anxious, though, about where the woman was now, in the dark. Would she think he was afraid when she caught him looking out to the light? But the thick, dark, green leaves of vine outside, lapping lazily against the window, attracted and held him like a spell. There was no comfort in that light; it merely reminded the boy of his fear, only a few minutes ago, when he walked under that dark tunnel of vine which arched over the path from the gate to the door. He had dared not touch that vine and its countless velvety, black, and juicy grapes that hung temptingly within reach, or rested lusciously on forked branches. Silhouetted against the darkening summer sky, the bunches of grapes had each looked like a cluster of small balls narrowing down to a point like cones.

'Don't touch that vine!' was the warning almost everyone in Charterston township knew. It was said that the vine was all coated with thick, invisible glue. And that was how The Prophetess caught all those who stole out in the night to steal her grapes. And they would be glued there to the vine, and would be moaning for forgiveness throughout the cold night, until the morning, when The Prophetess would come out of the house with the first rays of the sun, raise her arms into the sky, and say: 'Away, away, sinful man; go, and sin no more!' Suddenly, the thief would be free, and would walk away feeling a great release that turned him into a new man. That vine; it was on the lips of everyone in the township every summer.

One day when the boy had played truant with two of his friends, and they were coming back from town by bus, some adults in the bus were arguing about The Propheteess' vine. The bus was so full that it was hard for anyone to move. The three truant friends, having given their seats to adults pressed against each other in a line, in the middle of the bus and could see most of the passengers.

'Not even a cow can tear away from that glue,' said a tall, dark man who had high cheekbones. His woollen balaclava hat was a careless heap on his head. His moustache, which had been finely rolled into two semi-circular horns, made him look fierce. And when he gesticulated with his tin lunch box, he looked fiercer still

'My question is only one,' said a big woman whose big arms rested thickly on a bundle of washing on her lap. 'Have you ever seen a person caught there? Just answer that one question.' She spoke with finality, and threw her defiant scepticism outside at the receding scene of men cycling home from work in single file. The bus moved so close to them that the boy had feared the men might get hit.

'I have heard of a silly chap that got caught!' declared a young man at the back of the bus. He was sitting with others on the long seat at the rear of the bus. They had all along been laughing and exchanging ribald jokes. The young man, with thick lips and red eyes, was applying, as he spoke, the final touches of saliva with his tongue, to a zol.

'When?' asked the big woman. 'Exactly when, I say? Who was that person?'

'These things really happen!' said a general chorus of women.

'That's what I know,' endorsed the man with the balaclava, and then added, 'You see, the problem with some women is that they will not listen; they have to oppose a man. They just have to.'

'What is that man saying now?' asked another woman. 'This matter started off very well, but this road you are now taking will get us lost.'

'That's what I'm saying too,' said the big woman adjusting her bundle of washing somewhat unnecessarily. She continued: 'A person shouldn't look this way or that, or take a corner here or there. Just face me straight; I asked a question.'

It was said that the vine was all coated with thick invisible glue. And that was how The Prophetess caught all those who stole out in the night to steal her grapes.

'These things really happen,' said the chorus again.

'That's it, good ladies, make your point; push very strongly,' shouted the young man at the back with mischief in his eyes. 'Love is having women like you,' he added much to the enjoyment of his friends. He was now smoking, and his zol looked so small between his thick fingers.

'Although you have no respect,' said the big woman, 'I will let you know that this matter is no joke.'

'Of-course this is not a joke!' shouted a new contributor. He spoke firmly and in English. His eyes seemed to burn with anger. He was young and immaculately dressed, his white shirt collar resting neatly on the collar of his jacket. A young nurse in her white uniform sat next to him. 'The mother there,' he continued, 'asks you very clearly whether you have ever seen a person caught by the supposed Prophetess' supposed trap. Have you?'

'She didn't say that, man,' said the young man at the back, passing the zol to one of this friends. She only asked when this person was caught and who it was.' The youths all laughed. There was a lot of smoke now at the back of the bus.

'My question was,' said the big woman turning her head to glare at the young man, 'have you ever seen a person caught there? That's all.' Then she looked outside. She seemed angry now.

'Don't be angry, mother,' said the young man at the back. There was more laughter at the back. 'I was only trying to understand,' he added.

'And that's our problem,' said the immaculately dressed man, addressing the bus. His voice was sure and strong. 'We laugh at everything; just stopping short of seriousness. Is it any wonder that the white man is still sitting on us? The mother there asked a very straightforward question, but she is answered vaguely about things happening. Then there is disrespectful laughter at the back there. The truth is you have no proof. None of you. Have you ever seen anybody caught by this Prophetess? Never. It's all superstition. And so much about this Prophetess also. Some of us are tired of her stories.'

There was a stunned silence in the bus. Only the heavy drone of an engine struggling with an overloaded bus could be heard. It was the man with the balaclava hat who broke the silence.

'Young man,' he said, 'by the look of things you must be a clever, educated person, but you just note one thing, The Prophetess might just be hearing all this, so don't be surprised when a bolt of lightning strikes you on a hot sunny day. And we shall be there at your funeral, young man, to say how you brought misfortune upon your head.'

Thus had the discussion ended. But the boy had remembered how every summer, bottles of all sizes filled with liquids of all kinds of colours would dangle from vines, peach, and apricot trees in many yards in the township. No

one dared steal fruit from those trees. Who wanted to be glued, in shame, to a fruit tree. Strangely though, only The Propheteess' trees had no bottles hanging from their branches

The boy turned his eyes away from the window focused into the dark room. His eyes had adjusted slowly to the darkness, and he saw the dark form of the women shuffling away from him. She probably wore those slippers that had a fluff on top. Old women seem to love them. Then a white moving object came into focus. The woman wore a white dock on her head. The boy's eyes followed the dock. It took a right-angled turn – probably round the table. And then the dark form of the table came into focus. The dock stopped, and the boy heard the screech of a chair being pulled; and the dock descended somewhat and was still. There was silence in the room. The boy wondered what to do. Should he grope for a chair? Or should he squat on the floor respectfully? Should he greet or wait to be greeted? One never knew with The Propheteess. Why did his mother have to send him to this place? The fascinating stories about The Propheteess, to which the boy would add graphic details as if he had also met The Propheteess, were one thing; but being in her actual presence was another. The boy then became conscious of the smell of camphor. His mother always used camphor whenever she complained of pains in her joints. Was The Propheteess ill then? Did she pray for her own water? Suddenly, the boy felt at ease, as if the discovery that a propheteess could also feel pain somehow made her explainable.

'Lumela 'me,' he greeted. Then he cleared his throat.

'Ea ngoanaka,' she responded. After a little while she asked 'Is there something you want, little man?'

It was a very thin voice. It would have been completely detached had it not been for a hint of tiredness in it. She breathed somewhat heavily. Then she coughed, cleared her throat, and coughed again. A mixture of rough discordant sounds filled the dark room as if everything was coming out of her insides, for she seemed to breathe out her cough from deep within her. And the boy wondered: if she coughed too long, what would happen? Would something come out? A lung? The boy saw the form of the woman clearly now: she had bent forward somewhat. Did anything come out of her onto the floor? The cough subsided. The woman sat up and her hands fumbled with something around her breasts. A white cloth emerged. She leaned forward again, cupped her hands and spat into the cloth. Then she stood up and shuffled away into further darkness away from the boy. A door creaked, and the white dock disappeared. The boy wondered what to do because the propheteess had disappeared before he could say what he had come for. He waited.

More objects came into focus. Three white spots on the table emerged. They were placed diagonally across the table. Table mats. There was a small round black patch on the middle one. Because The Propheteess was not in the room, the boy was bold enough to move near the table and touch the mats. They were crocheted mats. The boy remembered the huge facing that his mother had crocheted for the church alter. ALL SAINTS CHURCH was crocheted all over the facing. There were a number of designs of chalices that carried The Blood of Our Lord.

Then the boy heard the sound of a match being struck. There were many attempts before it finally caught fire. Soon, the dull, orange light of a candle came into the living room, where the boy was, through a half closed door. More light flushed the living room as the woman came in carrying a candle. She looked round as if she wondered where to put the candle. Then she saw the ash tray on the middle mat, pulled it towards her, sat down and turned over the candle into the ash tray. Hot wax dropped onto the ash tray. Then The Propheteess turned the candle upright and pressed its bottom onto the wax. The candle held.

The Propheteess then peered through the light of the candle at the boy. Her thick lips protruded, pulling the wrinkled skin and caving in the cheeks to form a kind of lip circle. She seemed always ready to kiss. There was a line tattooed from the forehead to the ridge of a nose that separated small eyes that were half closed by huge, drooping eyelids. The white dock on her head was so huge that it made her face look even smaller. She wore a green dress and a starched green cape that had many white crosses embroided on it. Behind her, leaning against the wall was a long bamboo cross.

The Propheteess stood up again, and shuffled towards the window which was now behind the boy. She closed the curtains and walked back to her chair. The boy saw another big cross embroidered on the back of her cape. Before she sat down she picked up the bamboo cross and held it in front of her.

'What did you say you wanted, little man?' she asked slowly.

'My mother sent me to ask for water,' said the boy putting the bottle of water on the table.

'To ask for water?' she asked with mild exclamation, looking up at the bamboo cross. 'That is very strange. You came all the way from home to ask for water?'

'I mean,' said the boy, 'holy water'.

'Ahh!' exclaimed The Propheteess, 'you did not say what you meant, little man.' She coughed, just once.

'Sit down, little man,' she said, and continued 'You see, you should learn to say what you mean. Words, little man, are a gift from the Almighty, the Eternal Wisdom. He gave us all a little pinch of his mind and called on us to think. That is why it is folly to misuse words or not to know how to use them well. Now, who is your mother?'

'My mother?' asked the boy, confused by the sudden transition. 'My mother is staff nurse Masemola.'

'Ao!' exclaimed The Propheteess, 'You are the son of the nurse? Does she have such a big man now?' She smiled a little and the lip circle opened. She smiled like a pretty woman who did not want to expose her cavities.

The boy relaxed somewhat, vaguely feeling safe because The Propheteess knew his mother. This made him look away from The Propheteess for a while, and he saw a huge mask on the wall opposite her. It was shining and black. It grinned all the time showing two canine teeth pointing upwards. About ten feet away at the far end of the wall was a picture of Jesus in which His chest was open, revealing His heart which had many shafts of light radiating from it.

'Your mother has a heart of gold, my son,' continued The Propheteess. 'You are very fortunate, indeed, to have such a parent. Remember, when she says: "my boy, take this message to that house", go, when she says, "my boy, let me send you to the shop", go, and when she says "my boy, pick up a book and read", pick up the book and read. In all this she is actually saying to you, learn and serve. Those two things, little man, are the greatest inheritance."

Then The Propheteess looked up at the bamboo cross as if she saw something in it that the boy could not see. She seemed to lose her breath for a while. She coughed deeply again, after which she went silent, her cheeks moving as if she were chewing.

'Bring the bottle nearer,' she said finally. She put one hand on the bottle while with the other, she held the bamboo cross. Her eyes closed, she turned her face towards the ceiling. The boy saw that her face seemed to have contracted into an intense concentration in such a way that the wrinkles seemed to have become deep gorges. Then she began to speak.

'You will not know this hymn boy, so listen. Always listen to new things.

Then try to create too. Just as I have learnt never to page through the dead leaves of hymn books.' And she began to sing.

If the fish in a river
boiled by the midday sun
can wait for the coming of evening,
we too can wait
in this wind-frosted land
the spring will come
the spring will come.

If the reeds in winter
can dry up and seem dead
and then rise
in the spring
we too will survive the fire that is coming
the fire that is coming
we too will survive the fire that is coming

It was a long, slow song. Slowly, The Propheteess began to pray.

'God, The All-powerful! When called upon, You always listen. We direct our hearts and thoughts to You. How else could it be? There is so much evil in the world, so much emptiness in our hearts; so much debasement of the mind. But You, God of all Power, are the wind that sweeps away evil and fills our hearts and minds with renewed strength and hope. Remember Samson? Of-course You do, O Lord. You created him. You, maker of all things. You brought him out of a barren woman's womb, and since then, we have known that out of the desert things will grow, and that what grows out of the barren wastes has a strength that can never be destroyed.'

At the shops, the boy slowed down to manoeuvre through the crowds. He lifted the bottle to his chest and supported it from below with the other hand. He must hold on to that bottle. He was going to heal his mother. He tightened the bottle cap. Not a drop was to be lost. The boy passed the shops.

Suddenly, the candle flame went down. The light seemed to have gone into retreat as the darkness loomed out, seemingly out of the very light itself, and bore down upon it, until there was a tiny blue flame on the table looking so vulnerable and so strong at the same time. The boy shuddered and felt the coldness of the floor going up his bare feet.

Then out of the dark, came The Propheteess' laugh. It began as a giggle, the kind girls would make when the boy and his friends chased them down the street for a little kiss. The giggle broke into the kind of laughter that produced tears when one was very happy. There was a kind of strange pleasurable rhythm to it that gave the boy a momentary enjoyment of the dark, for soon, the laugh gave way to a long shriek. The boy wanted to rush out of the house. But something strong, yet intangible, held him fast to where he was. It was probably the shriek itself that had filled the dark room and now seemed to come out of the mask on the wall. The boy felt like throwing himself on the floor and there wriggle and roll like a snake until he became tired and fell into a long sleep at the end of which would be the kind of bliss the boy would feel when he was happy and his mother was happy and she embraced him, so closely.

But the giggle, the laugh, the shriek, all ended as abruptly as they had started as the darkness swiftly receded from the candle like the way ripples run away from where a stone has been thrown in the water. And there was light. On the wall, the mask smiled silently, and the heart of Jesus sent out yellow light.

'Lord, Lord, Lord,' said The Propheress slowly in a quiet, surprisingly full voice which carried the same kind of contentment that had been in the voice of the boy's mother when one day he had come home from playing in the street, and she was sitting on the chair close to the kitchen door, just opposite the warm stove. And as soon as she saw him come in, she embraced him all the while saying, 'I've been so ill, for so long, but I've got you. You're my son. You're my son. You're my son.' And the boy had smelled the faint smell of camphor on her, and he too embraced her, holding her firmly although his arms could not go beyond his mother's armpits. He remembered how warm his hands had become in her armpits.

'Lord, Lord, Lord,' continued The Propheteess, 'have mercy on the desert in our hearts and in our thoughts. Have mercy. Bless this water; fill it with your power; and may it bring rebirth. Let she and whoever else will drink it, feel the flower of newness spring alive in them, let those who drink it, break the chains of despair, and may they realise that the wastes are really not barren, but that the vast lands that stretch into the horizon is the measure of the seed in us.'

As The Propheteess stopped speaking, she slowly lowered the bamboo cross until it rested on the floor. The boy wondered if it was all over now. Should he stand up and get the blessed water and leave? But The Propheteess soon gave him direction.

'Come here, my son,' she said, 'and kneel before me here.' The boy stood up and walked slowly towards The Propheteess . He knelt on the floor, his hands hanging at his sides. The Propheteess placed her hands on his head. They were warm, and the warmth seemed to go through his hair, penetrating deep through his scalp into the very centre of his head. Perhaps he thought, that was the soul of The Propheteess going into him. Wasn't it said that when The Propheteess placed her hand on one's head, she was seeing with her soul deep into you; that as a result, The Propheteess could never be deceived? And the boy wondered how his lungs looked to her. Did she see the water that he had drunk from the tap just across the street? Where was the water now? In the stomach? In the kidneys?

Then the hands of The Propheteess moved all over the boy's head, seeming to feel for something. They went down the neck. They seemed cooler now, and the coolness seemed to tickle the boy for his neck was colder than those hands. Now they covered his face, and he saw, just before he closed his eyes, the skin folds on the hands so close to his eyes that they looked like many mountains. Those hands smelled of blue soap and candle wax. But there was no smell of snuff. The boy wondered. Perhaps The Propheteess did not take snuff after all. But the boy's grandmother did, and her hands always smelled of snuff. Then The Propheteess spoke:

'My son,' she said, 'we are made of all that is in the world. Go. Go and heal your mother.' When she removed her hands from the boy's face, he felt his face grow cold, and there was a slight sensation of his skin shrinking. He rose from the floor, lifted the bottle with its snout and backed way from The Propheteess. He then turned and walked towards the door. As he closed it, he saw The Propheteess shuffling away to the bedroom carrying the candle with her. He wondered when she would return the ash-tray to the table. When he finally closed the door, the living room was dark, and there was light in the bedroom.

It was night outside. The boy stood on the veranda for a while, wanting his eyes to adjust to the darkness. He wondered also about the dog. But it did not seem to be around. And there was that vine archway with its forbidden fruit and the multicoloured worms that always crawled all over the vine. As the boy walked under the tunnel of vine, he tensed his neck, lowering his head like people do when walking in the rain. He

was anticipating the reflex action of shaking off a falling worm. Those worms were disgustingly huge, he thought. And there was also something terrifying about their bright colours.

In the middle of the tunnel, the boy broke into a run and was out of the gate: free. He thought of his mother waiting for the holy water; and he broke into a sprint running west up Thipe street towards home. As he got to the end of the street, he heard the hum of the noise that came from the ever crowded 'Barber Shops' and the huge Beer Hall just behind those shops. After the brief retreat in the house of The Prophetess, the noise, the people, the shops, the street-lights, the buses and the taxis all seemed new. Yet, somehow, he wanted to avoid all contact with all this activity. If he turned right at the corner, he would have to go past the shops into the lit Moshoeshoe street and its Friday night crowds. If he went left he would have to go past the now dark, ghostly Bantu-Batho post office, and then down through the huge gum trees behind the Charteston Clinic, and then past the quiet golf course. The latter way would be faster, but too dark and dangerous for a mere boy, even with the spirit of The Prophetess in him. And were not dead bodies found there sometimes? The boy turned left.

At the shops, the boy slowed down to manoeuvre through the crowds. He lifted the bottle to his chest and supported it from below with the other hand. He must hold on to that bottle. He was going to heal his mother. He tightened the bottle cap. Not a drop was to be lost. The boy passed the shops.

Under a street lamp just a few feet from the gate into the Beer Hall was a gang of boys standing in a tight circle. The boy slowed down to an anxious stroll. Who were they? he wondered. He would have to run past them quickly. No, there would be no need. He recognized Timi and Bubu. They were with the rest of the gang from the boy's neighbourhood. Those were the bigger boys who were either in standard six or were already in secondary school or had jobs in town.

Timi recognized the boy.

'Ja, sonny boy,' greeted Timi. 'What's a piccaninny like you doing alone in the streets at night?'

'Heit, bra Timi,' said the boy, returning the greeting. 'Just from the shops, bra Timi,' he lied, not wanting to reveal his real mission. Somehow that would not have been appropriate.

'Come on, you!' yelled another member of the gang, glaring at Timi. It was Biza. Most of the times when the boy had seen Biza, the latter was intercepting a girl and talking to her. Sometimes the girl would laugh. Sometimes

As soon as the boy's mother saw him come in, she embraced him all the while saying: "I've been so ill; for so long; but I've got you. You're my son. You're my son. You're my son." And the boy had smelled the faint smell of camphor on her, and he too embraced her . . .

Biza would twist her arm until she 'agreed'. In broad daylight!

'You keep on denying,' continued Biza to Timi, 'and when I try to show you some proof you turn away to greet an ant.'

'Okay then,' said another, 'what proof do you have? Everybody knows that Sonto is a hard girl to get.'

'Come closer then,' said Biza, 'and I'll show you.' The boy was closed out of the circle as the gang closed in towards Biza, who was at the centre. The boy became curious and got closer. The wall was impenetrable, but he could clearly hear Biza.

'You see? You can all see. I've just come from that girl. Look! See? The liquid? See? When I touch it with my finger and then leave it, it follows like a spider's web.'

'Well, my man,' said someone, 'you can't deceive anybody with that. It's the usual trick. A fellow just blows his nose and then applies the mucus there, and then emerges out of the dark saying he has just had a girl.'

'Let's look again closely,' said another, 'before we decide one way or the other.' And the gang pressed closely again.

'You see? You see?' Biza kept saying.

'I think Biza has had that girl,' said someone.

'It's mucus man, and nothing else,' said another.

'But you know Biza's record in these matters, gents.'

'Another thing, how do we know it's Sonto and not some other girl. Where is it written on Biza's cigar that he has just had Sonto? Show me where it's written· "Sonto" there.'

'You're jealous you guys, that's your problem,' said Biza. Their circle went loose and there was just enough time for the boy to see Biza's penis disappear into his trousers. A thick little thing, thought the boy. It looked sad. It had first been squeezed in retreat against the fly like a concertina, before it finally disappeared. Then Biza, with a twitch of alarm across his face, saw the boy.

'What did you see, you?' screamed Biza. 'Fuck off!'

The boy took his heels wondering what Biza could have been doing with his penis under the street lamp. It was funny, whatever it was. It was silly too. Sinful. The boy was glad that he had got the holy water away from those boys and that none of them had touched the bottle.

And the teachers were right, thought the boy. Silliness was all those boys knew. And then they would go to school and fail test after test. Silliness and school did not go together.

The boy felt strangely superior. He had the power of The Prophetess in him. And he was going to pass that power on to his mother, thus healing her. Those boys were not healing their mothers. They just left their mothers alone at home. The boy increased his speed. He had to get home quickly. He turned right at the charge office and sped towards the clinic. He crossed the road that went to town and entered Mayaba Street. Mayaba Street was dark and the boy could not see. But he did not lower his speed. Home was near now, instinct would take him there. His eyes would adjust to the darkness as he raced along. He lowered the bottle from his chest and let it hang at the side from his hand, like a pendulum that was now moving. He looked up at the sky as if light would come from the stars high up to lead him home. But when he lowered his face, he saw something suddenly loom before him, and, almost simultaneously, he felt a dull, yet painful impact against his thigh. Then followed a dull explosion, and there was a grating of metal seeming to scoop up sand from the street. The boy did not remember how he fell, but on the ground, he lay clutching at his painful thigh. A few feet away, a man groaned and cursed:

'Blasted child!' he shouted. 'Shouldn't I kick you? Just running in the street as if you owned it. Shit of a child, you don't even pay tax. Fuck off home before I do more damage on you!' The man lifted his bicycle, and the boy saw him straightening the handles. And the man rode away.

The boy raised himself from the ground and began to limp home, conscious of nothing else but the pain in his thigh. But it was not long before he felt a jab of pain at the centre of his chest and felt his heart beating fast. And he became aware of the stabbing sensation of terror as he thought of the broken bottle and the spilt holy water and his mother waiting for him and the water that would help to cure her. What would his mother say? If only he had not stopped to see those silly boys he may not have been run over by a bicycle. Should he go back to The Prophetess?

The Prophetess

No. There was the dog, there was the vine, there were the worms. There was The Prophetess herself. She would not let anyone who wasted her prayers get away without punishment. Would it be lightning? Would it be the fire of hell? What would it be? The boy limped home to face his mother. He would walk in to his doom. He would walk into his mother's bedroom, carrying no cure, and face the pain in her sad eyes.

But as the boy entered the yard of his home, he heard a sound of bottles coming from where Rex, his dog, had its kennel. Rex had jumped over the bottles, knocking some stones against the bottles in his rush to meet the boy. And the boy remembered the pile of bottles next to the kennel. He felt grateful as he embraced the dog. He selected a bottle from the heap. Calmly, as if he had known all the time what he would do in such a situation, the boy walked out the yard again towards the street tap on Mayaba Street. And there, almost mechanically, he cleaned the bottle, shaking it many times with clean water. Finally, he filled it with water and wiped its outside clean against his trousers. He retightened the cap, and limped home.

As soon as he opened the door, he heard his mother's voice in the bedroom. It seemed a visitor had come while the boy was away.

'I'm telling you, Sisi,' his mother was saying, 'and take it from me, a trained nurse, Pills, medicines, and all those injections are not enough. I take herbs too, and think of the wonders of the universe as our people have always done. Son, is that you?'

'Yes, Ma,' said the boy who had just closed the door with a deliberate bang.

'And did you get the water?'

'Yes, Ma.'

'Good. I knew you would. Bring the water and two cups. MaShange is here.'

The boy's eyes misted with tears. His mother's trust in him: would he repay it with such dishonesty? He would have to be calm. He wiped his eyes with the back of his hand, and then put the bottle and two cups on a tray. He would have to walk straight. He would have to hide the pain in his thigh. He would have to smile at his mother. He would have to smile at the visitor.

And there was his mother! Her bed faced the passage, and he saw her as soon as he turned into the passage to go to the bedroom. She had propped herself up with many pillows. The boy greeted the visitor and placed the tray on the dressing chest close to his mother's bed.

'I don't know what I would do without this boy,' said the boy's mother as she leaned on an elbow, lifting the bottle with the other hand, and turning the cap rather laboriously with the hand on whose elbow she was resting.

The boy returned to the kitchen and sat there listening to the voices in the bedroom. He watched the candle flame dancing before him and felt the warmth of the stove. What had The Prophetess seen in him? He wondered. Did she still feel him? Did she know what he had just done? Did holy water taste any differently from ordinary water? Would his mother notice the difference? Would he leave home and walk away if she did? Who would heal her then?

But clearly, he heard his mother,

'Oh, how I feel better, already!' she said.

'May the Lord's work be praised,' said MaShange.

And the boy felt the pain in his thigh. He had gotten up and walked. He had carried his burden.

And the boy smiled, thinking, it had worked.●

POETRY

DAMIAN RUTH

BEZUIDENHOUT

We rose.
The orderly pulled him to his feet.
The judge had said
'no extenuating circumstances' and 'no alternative'.
The sentence was read.
The boy's eyes sped
from judge to orderly
to his mother
in the gallery.

His brother had taken his bicycle
without his permission.
He had run down the dusty location road,
and stabbed him dead.

Now his body was jerking.
The orderly closed in.
The judge left the court
quite white in the face.
It had taken him two days
to understand the story
because they were country coloureds
and spoke Afrikaans differently
and witnesses contradicted each other.

His mother
leant over the gallery
and asked 'Wat makeer?'
The orderly walked past,
drew his finger across his throat,
and said, 'Hy kry die rou.'

She rose,
silent and slowly it seemed,
her arms reaching out
in tattered coat sleeves,
threw her head back and screamed
NEE, NEE, HY'S MY KIND, MY LAASTE KIND.
EK HET NIE MEER KINDERS NIE!
Her husband stopped twisting his hat
and dragged her out the court.

I used her words to start my newspaper report
But now, eight years later, when I remember it,
I think above all of
not a terrified jerking face
not a scarecrow mother crucified
but of the orderly, Bezuidenhout,
dragging his finger across his own throat.

MARKET DAYS

by Jayapraga Reddy

ILLUSTRATED BY PERCY SEDUMEDI

His mother shook him awake. Somewhere in the depths of sleep, he heard her, while floundering in a tangle of bed-clothes, 'Anil! Anil! Wake up! I'm ready now,' she said.

He opened his eyes and saw her mistily. Yes, she was ready all right. All dressed and ready to go. He groaned remembering that it was Saturday, and turned over. But she had him firmly by the shoulder. 'No, you can't sleep now! Get up!'

It was no use. He would have to get up. Reluctantly he pushed aside the bed-clothes. Still muzzy with sleep, he went to the bathroom. When he had washed he returned to the bedroom to dress. He looked at his brothers who were fast asleep and who would remain so until nine, he thought resentfully. There was Veeran, his elder brother who was in training college, and Subesh, the youngest, who was six. He, at ten, was in the middle and therefore 'handy' as his mother aptly termed it. He hated Saturdays. For Saturdays were market days. It was unfair, he thought indignantly. Why couldn't he sleep on like the rest? Why couldn't she take one of the others? Why him? Until a few years ago it had been Veeran who had accompanied her to the market each Saturday. But that had changed when Veeran became a student at the teacher's training college. But then Veeran had changed completely. He grew his hair, wore fashionable clothes and took to singing pop songs in the bath. One Saturday when Anil had been ill and unable to accompany his mother as usual, she had asked Veeran. He had refused saying, 'Aw, Ma, why can't you stop all this market business! Buy all your things in the supermarkets!'

His mother had been too shocked to answer. Shop at the supermarkets? Never! It was unthinkable! But the truth was, thought Anil, Veeran just did not want to be seen in the market. Going to the market did not fit in with his new lifestyle.

He went to the kitchen where his mother had his tea ready in his enamel mug. She watched him as he drank it in quick gulps. 'Want some bread?' she asked.

He shook his head. She always asked him that. The question was as routine as everything else about Saturday mornings. She stood there, waiting for him patiently, her sari wrapped comfortably around her plump arms, her baskets ready. Every Saturday was the same. She was used to his mood, his silent obedience, his wordless mutiny and unspoken resentment at having to get up so early. He put his mug down and stood up. It was a quarter past six when they boarded the bus down the road.

They got off the bus and joined a stream of people all with the same intention, and headed towards the market. Inside the market it was a different world altogether. The din, it hit one like something tangible. The smell of vegetables and fruit, of crushed orange peel and dirt, and all about you, the press of humanity. You jostled your way through while watching your feet, your money and your baskets. It was a feat that required nimbleness and quick thinking. His mother paused at one of the stalls. With a jerk of her head towards the green beans, she asked, 'how much?'

He told her and she stiffened indignantly. 'What!' she exclaimed. 'Last week I bought beans from a stall that side. Such lovely beans and so cheap!'

'Lady, everything keeps going up.'

the stall holder said patiently.

She expressed her contempt with a snort. Anil hung back bashfully. This was how it always began. The haggling would continue until she had beaten him down to a suitable price. He hoped fervently that none of his school friends would see him. The verbal battle went on. He shifted uncomfortably. His mind wandered to pleasanter things. He would have preferred playing a game of football with his friends in the vacant plot down their road. But it was not to be. Instead he was shuffling behind his mother with the crush of people about him, growing hotter and more tired. At last, she succeeded in getting her price, and she pressed forward, her expression one of smug satisfaction. The same procedure was repeated again and again. The rapidly filling baskets grew heavier and heavier. He hung behind. It was all familiar and yet, it never failed to produce in him a shy embarrassment.

He followed her through the market, his expression outwardly patient while inwardly squirming with resentment, and boyish rebellion. Why couldn't she just buy her things and move on? What would his friends think if they saw him with her as she argued noisily with the stall holders? He shuffled behind as she moved from stall to stall. It was a slow business getting through the press of the crowd, and she paused often to chat to friends and relatives. And now he almost bumped into her as she stopped abruptly when someone hailed her through the crowd. A woman was making her way towards them. When she reached them, she flung her arms

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around his mother's neck and they kissed. He shifted uncomfortably and looked away. 'It's so long since I saw you!' the woman exclaimed with pleasure.

'Yes, very long,' his mother agreed.

'How's Veeran? He doesn't come with you now?' the woman asked.

'No, he's in traning college now. Poor boy, he works so hard the whole week. He must sleep late on weekends,' his mother explained proudly.

'True, true,' the woman agreed readily. 'Otherwise, how's everybody?'

'Oh they are all fine. When are you coming home?' his mother asked.

'I must come soon. I'll be bringing the wedding card,' the woman answered and glanced meaningly at her daughter who stood quietly beside her. The girl turned away with a shy smile. Anil's mother laughed and nodded knowingly.

They stood there for a long time, exchanging bits of gossip and news, forgetting the milling crowds and forming a little oasis of intimacy and familiarity.

At last, the girl gently nudged her mother and reminded her of the passsing of time. They said goodbye reluctantly and moved on. By now the market was packed and the din was intensified. It carried you forward on a tide strong and irresistible. At last their baskets were full and they made their way back to the entrance.

Outside the gate, she made him wait with the baskets while she went to buy the meat and fish. He stood there with the baskets at his feet watching a stream of humanity flow in and out of the market. A woman sailed out followed by her African maid bearing heavily laden baskets. African women with baskets balanced on their heads, moved with an enviable ease. There were trussed fowls in many of their baskets. A few beggars straggled along and further down, a group of Hindu swamis stood in their saffron robes, holding brass trays containing ash and flowers which they handed out at random. Occasionally a few coins were dropped in their trays. African vendors trundled their ice-cream carts along the road. And everywhere lurked the hidden menace of the pickpockets. A market reflects the life of its people and this was just a part of the life that flowed through it daily.

He was hungry and thirsty. There were fruits in the baskets but he longed for an ice-cream or cold drink. There was an assortment of fresh fruit and vegetables in their baskets. A bunch of parrot green bananas, fresh herbs wrapped in newspaper, tomatoes, plump and firm, new potatoes, young green beans, half a jack fruit, a golden pumpkin. There were those special Indian vegetables like the okra, the calabash and the snake gourd. Carrots and peas and a bunch of crysanthemums for the vase. There were mangoes, litchis, apricots and peaches, all warm and velvety and scented, with the blush of summer on them.

It was getting hotter. His hair clung damply to his forehead. A plump woman waddled up to him with a cry of recognition. It was one of his aunts. She lowered her baskets and enfolded him in her arms. She kissed him enthusiastically on both cheeks. She stood back and regarded him with an indulgent smile. He hung his head, his cheeks burning. 'Look how shy he is!' his aunt observed teasingly. 'How you've grown

She plucked a banana from her basket and handed it to him. He accepted it wordlessly. She chuckled. 'Alright I see you don't want to talk to me. Tell mother you saw me, eh?'

And she picked up her baskets and waddled off. He stood there nibbling his fruit.

A white journalist was drifting among the crowd. He had a camera slung around his neck and a note-book and pen in his hand. 'We are doing a survey for *The Mercury* on the market. We would like to know what you feel about the market,' he heard him ask a white woman.

The woman shrugged and answered briefly, 'It's the cheapest place.'

She moved on. The reporter turned to an Indian youth. 'What do you feel? Do you think the market should remain or should there be smaller markets built in each area?'

The man straightened and made an emphatic gesture. 'The market should definitely remain! The market is a vital part of the Indian people's history. It's a colourful part of Durban.'

He went on, expressing his indignation and forthright views. Passers-by paused to listen and some added their views. The reporter nodded and scribbled rapidly in his note-book. 'The city council should seriously think of giving the stall holders a permanent place where they can carry on their business in peace. Smaller markets in different areas would mean less competition and higher prices,' he went on

The young man moved on. The reporter looked around. His glance came to rest on Anil. He came to him with a smile. 'Do you come to the market often?' he asked.

Anil nodded. 'Do you like coming to the market?' he asked.

Anil hesitated. He would love to have answered that question truthfully, but it was so much easier to say yes and not mean it. The reporter smiled. 'Well now, that's nice! Most boys hate going shopping with their mothers. Now, how about a picture for the paper, h'm?' he suggested coaxingly.

And he raised his camera. A click, and he lowered it with a pleasant smile. He nodded, and with a wave, moved off.

So he would have his picture in the paper. He stood there, thinking about it, when his mother returned. When he glimpsed the sheep's head in her basket, his heart sank. Now he would have to spend the afternoon gathering fire wood. She would insert long, flat irons into the fire and use the heated irons to singe the hair of the sheep's head. It was a lengthy process and would take the whole afternoon. Now there would be no chance for him to play. His day was ruined.

He picked up the baskets and followed her. They would have to get to their bus, but he knew from experience that there were bound to be distractions on the way.

She glanced at him and her maternal eye noted that he was tired and fed up. He would be hungry too, she realized, and so suggested that they go to the cafe for something to eat.

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The cafe was crowded. He stood there, dipping bits of bread into the bunny-chow. The hollowed out bread filled with thick, spicy bean curry, tasted delicious. He ate shyly, standing beside his mother. When there was a lull the cafe owner, a balding man with a paunch, leant his arms on the counter and began conversationally, 'How was the market?'

'Oh the market is not what it used to be,' his mother observed. 'Those days things were so different.'

'That's true, that's true,' he agreed, nodding. 'Everything has changed. Things used to be so different, so cheap.'

'But the market is still the cheapest place,' she conceded.

'Oh yah,' he agreed readily. 'Any time. I hear the market is going too.'

They listened in consternation. Anil sipped his cold drink and looked around. The cafe was old with the paint peeling in strips. A stale smell of fish and chips, cake and cold drinks clung to the place.

His mother sighed and reflected sadly. 'The whites took everything from us. Our homes, our farms and now the market.'

At last, they were on the bus. He looked out of the window at the teeming crowd below. Now his hunger was gone and also some of his resentment. Soon they would get off at their bus-stop and trudge up the hill. His mother would pack all the things she had bought and do the cooking. Then later, she would get down to the business of cleaning the sheep's head.

The bus began to move. And lulled by the motion of the bus, his mood changed as he dwelt on the games he would play tomorrow. But now another market day was over. ●

POETRY

KAREN PRESS, ANGIFI DLADLA

UNTITLED

We live in a cynical mode
Fine thoughts and bitter smiles
Turning thoughts like wine-glass stems
Between our fingers

We see history
Before and after the stone flying
From the Bastille past the Winter Palace
To Lansdowne Road
We see the revolution of time
Through the dust of bodies settling
And can only smile

In our international wisdom
We would be as much at home
Anywhere else as we are here
The world revolves once a day
And with it we, and the stone.

Pity us, you who we cannot call brothers:
Our cynicism is greater than we are
And not as great as the stone that flies from your hands.

Karen Press

AUNT KHOLEKILE

Mama, Mama,
Ma —
(was an impulse my
nerve cells had for her.)
'Your mother? — She is not!'
belched a heart virus.

'She is more!'
Life replied later . . .

Erect was she with
ever-plaited head right
fuelling at all times, you
wrong, she'll get you straight!

Aha, Aunt understood my existence . . . !

A lover of flower gardens —
'A botanical garden!' said
people pointing at our home.
A lover of heroic poems —
'Imbongi!' said
people to her.

Aha, we all loved her unique sense of humour . . . !

Nothing for her sake;
all for our sake.
We were the satellites;
she was the sun.

Angifi Dladla

RAY NKWE

by Sipho Cindi

In the past few years a steady stream of our musicians has been passing on to the hereafter. It follows that some big band was definitely in the making. But, with the diverse types of music played by those called, some form of control and organisation was needed up there.

All the musicians called up had, at one stage or another, some dealings with Ray Thabakgolo Nkwe either as a record producer, a showbiz promoter or a TV producer.

So there was no question as to who would be the most suitable candidate for the job. And while bra Ray was on the important errand of producing a group for his TV programme, he was taken from us.

His involvement in music should be well-known by now. He founded the Jazz Appreciation Society and to his death, was still struggling to keep it together although many who started with him took a cool stance at the proceedings.

In that Society he had hoped to have the entire jazz fraternity under one umbrella with musicians being given regular jobs by promotions done throughout the country with at least one performance a month in each major centre that was capable of supporting a big music festival.

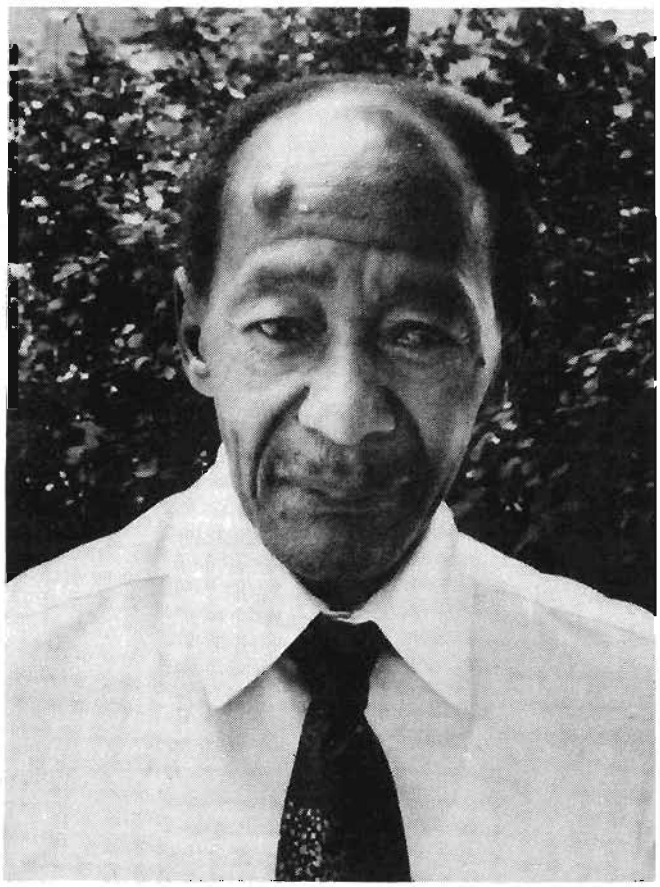
The ordinary fans out there were to benefit in that they would get their records at reduced prices from appointed record bars in the city on presentation of membership cards.

He nearly lost his life at one stage for the Society when he was attacked by thugs while putting up posters for an intended show. One of his helpers from the same Society, Martin Sekgale was killed in the incident. Ray was hospitalised.

Some of the most memorable shows came about through his promotions although he was personally not making much out of it. The Jazz Ministers were presented at the Newport Jazz Festival through his efforts. He also brought that group to the attention of the public through his recordings of them and their appearances at his shows.

May he rest in peace. ●

MIKE MAZURKIE REMEMBERS JACOB MOEKETSI



Jacob Moeketsi, the pianist composer arranger, the loquacious musician, though argumentative to fellow musicians, a respectable man, died recently after a short illness.

I remember his performances I remember 'New Directions'. I remember this happening long before Abdullah Ebrahim, Ornette Coleman and . . . who were the others?

Dollar Brand came and heard Jacob's new sound. And began himself to live that new musical way of life.

Jacob had a hand in every niche of the South African jazz scene. He played with the Harlem Swingsters, the Jazz Maniacs and Shanty Town Sextet, accompanying vocalists, Manhattan Brothers, Miriam Makeba and her group Skylarks and scores of others.

He also arranged and conducted for a host of leading instrumentalists and vocal groups in the country. He was just the greatest, always behind the scenes, the driving force behind so much that is now musical history. He is mourned by his wife, and children who are themselves musicians; altoists and pianists.

Rest in peace, Jacob. ●

Books by Black writers

by Richard Rive

Portraits by Mzwakhe

This short outline traces the development of Black writing in South Africa from 1922 to the present. The title could be misleading so that it needs further explanation. The term Black is used in its political sense rather than its ethnic one. In the South African context it is used to describe the vast majority of the population who are unenfranchised because of the colour of their skin which is not white. To be Black in South Africa means to have no say in the government of the country and to be denied any part in the law-making processes. Writers belonging to this group must inevitably find themselves describing and analysing their position, whether in terms of the grudging acceptance of the status quo of those who wrote before and during the Second World War, or in terms of addressing themselves to those whom they hoped could effect change as the Protest Writers did, or in terms of the introspective assessment of the Black Consciousness writers today. It is hoped that the time will arrive when one is able to describe South African literature as a unitary entity without the need for labels such as Black and White. But such a situation will only be possible once the society within which that literature functions sheds its ethnic and racial divisions.

This outline is restricted to works of criticism by Blacks and works of imagination such as novels, short stories, poetry and plays written in English. Thus important non-literary works such as Solomon Plaatje's Native Life in South Africa (1916) and Ben Kie's Contribution of the Non-European Peoples to World Civilization (1953) fall outside its orbit.

Works falling into different chronological periods will be defined in terms of the differences in their motivation (purpose and intention): theme, genre and intended readership. The different periods are as follows.

1. Early Literature World War II and Earlier. 1928-1942
2. Protest Writing. 2.1. The Drum School. 1942-1970
   2.2. The Soweto School. 1971-1975
3. Black Consciousness Writing. The Staffrider School. 1976-

The first period saw the appearance of nascent writing by Blacks before and during the early parts of the Second World War. This was dominated by Sol Plaatje and the brothers Herbert and Rolfes Reginald Dhlomo. This flowed into the second period, the Protest School which started with the writings of Peter Abrahams and then settled around the writers who contributed short stories to Drum magazine and other left-wing publications of the time. The first part of that period ended with the prose works of Richard Rive and Alex La Guma. 1966 forms a watershed when restrictions and circumscribing of writers reached its peak. Black writing was almost completely eradicated but survived flickeringly as a literature in exile. The second part of the Protest period started with the poetry of Oswald Mtshali in 1971 and continued until 1976 when Mafika Pascal Gwala sent literature in a Black Consciousness direction and writing of this type revolved around the Johannesburg magazine, Staffrider.

1. Early Literature. World War II and before. 1928-1942:

The genre most favoured during this short period was the novel. The few that were written tended to be slight and prosaic. The first to be published was R.R.R Dhlomo's didactic work An African Tragedy which appeared in 1928. Two years later Sol Plaatje's Mhudi appeared, an epic depicting the Great Trek from a Black point of view. Fourteen years before, in 1916, his book of critical essays Native Life in South Africa had appeared. This discussed the effects of the 1913 Land Act on Blacks. During this period Dhlomo's younger brother, Herbert, produced a play about the prophetess Nongqawuse, The Girl who Killed to Save (1936) and a long, Victorian poem which described the magnificence of Natal scenery, called The Valley of a Thousand Hills (1941). Although Thomas Mofolo made an important contribution during this period he wrote in Sotho so that his works became readily available only after translation. His novel, The Pilgrim of the East had been written as early as 1907 but appeared in English only in 1920. Similarly his epic Chaka had been written in 1920 but was published in English in 1931.

The early period produced hardly any short stories, short poems or critical essays of merit. The tone of almost all the works produced was either didactic (An African Tragedy and The Pilgrim of the East), lyrical (The Valley of a Thousand Hills) or a depiction of the noble savage (Chaka and The Girl who Killed to Save). The writing was imitative of writing by Whites and tended to be stilted and banal. The chief motive behind its creation seemed to have been to impress on a patronising White readership the measure of sophistication achieved by the Black author. From such a rickety beginning came the more committed and clearly defined Protest Writing.

2. Earlier Protest Writing.

2.1. The Drum School. 1942-1970.

This period may be defined loosely as writing by Blacks describing their situation to Whites whom they felt had the power to effect change. Such an approach was essentially a negative one, a literature about victimisation, but, unlike Liberal literature, written by the victim himself. There was a strong Black American influence especially by writers of the Harlem Renaissance school such as Richard Wright and Langston Hughes. Their works had a profound effect on the early Protest writers who had been strongly influenced. The two major South African writers of this early Protest period were Peter Abrahams and Ezekiel Mphahlele. Both started their literary careers by producing collections of short stories. Peter Abrahams' Dark Testament (1942) was heavily influenced by Wright's Uncle Tom's Children and Hughes' The Ways of White Folk. Mphahlele's collection, Man Must Live (1947) was less influenced and struck a more

RICHARD RIVE

independent direction. Mphahlele more than anyone else was the progenitor of urban Black South African literature. Before the end of the 1940s Abrahams had in addition produced four novels: **Song of the City** (1945) which showed definite left-wing influences; **Mine Boy** (1946) which was in the 'Jim-comes-to-Jo'burg' tradition (started by William Plomer with **Ula Masondo**); **Path of Thunder** (1948) which was the least successful of the four and highly derivative of Black American novels; and **Wild Conquest** (1950) which leaned heavily on Sol Plaatje's **Mhudi**.

Peter Abrahams had already left South Africa for England in 1939, but even from abroad his influence was dominant for another decade. After he had set the standard with the novel the genre most favoured was the short story. The international acclaim received by Alan Paton's **Cry the Beloved Country** in 1948 created a world-wide interest in literature about South Africa, but publishers now wanted descriptions by the blacks themselves of their position. In spite of a quantitative increase in output, the quality remained indifferent. The style however became more and more strident and declamatory.

The popularity of the short story as a genre may be explained in terms of the rapidity with which it could be written by comparison with the novel which requires a much longer period and a more temperate political climate. Also the publication of short stories was much easier since these could be placed in local and overseas magazines. With the establishment of Drum magazine by Jim Bailey in 1951, and under editors like Anthony Sampson, Cecil Eprile and Sylvester Stein, a group of short story writers emerged in Johannesburg and Cape Town using that magazine and other left-wing publications such as Fighting Talk and New Age as media. Ezekiel Mphahlele was still the most important writer and besides his first collection of short stories, another which was called **The Living and the Dead** appeared in 1961. By this time he had gone into exile. Other writers to appear in **Drum** were Bloke Modisane, Can Themba, Casey Motsisi and Arthur Maimane. In Cape Town James Matthews, Richard Rive and Alex La Guma were writing for that magazine and **Fighting Talk**.

Although most of the writers leaned heavily on Black American writing in style and, in some cases, theme, the works produced were vigorous and lively, depicting life in all its details in Black urban slums such as Alexandra, Sophiatown and District Six. Although the readership of **Drum** magazine was Black the potential readership of these stories was White and the writers were being read both here and abroad. This started when Black writing moved into the international arena with the publication in 1958 of Peggy Rutherfoord's **Darkness and Light** and Langston Hughes' **An African Treasury** in 1960.

The late fifties and early sixties saw an intensification of repressive political legislation. Many writers were forced into exile. Amongst those who had to leave were Zeke Mphahlele, Alfred Hutchinson, Todd Matshikiza, Alex La Guma, Bloke Modisane, Dennis Brutus and Lewis Nkosi. This evoked great interest abroad about what it was like to be Black in South Africa. This resulted in the predominant genre changing from the short story to the autobiography, almost all of which were written in exile. This had already started with the publication of Peter Abrahams' **Return to Goli** (1953) and **Tell Freedom** (1954) both of which were written while the author was in England.

Autobiographical writing reached its peak between 1959 and 1963 when four works appeared – Zeke Mphahlele's **Down Second Avenue** (1959), Alfred Hutchinson's account of his escape from South Africa after the Treason Trials, **Road to Ghana** (1960), Todd Matshikiza's **Chocolates For My Wife** (1961) and Bloke Modisane's **Blame Me on History** (1963).

Very few novels appeared during this period. A.S. Mopeli-Paulus produced **Blanket Boy's Moon** in 1953 in the Jim-Comes-To-Jo'burg tradition, and in 1962 Alex La Guma's novel, **A Walk in the Night** appeared followed by Richard Rive's **Emergency** in 1963. Rive too had started in the tradition of many earlier Black writers by producing a first book of short stories, **African Songs** in 1963. The following year he edited a collection, **Quartet** in which, inter alia James Matthews, Alex La Guma, Alf Wannenburgh and himself appeared.

It had taken more than two decades after Herbert Dhlomo's flowery poetry before another appeared by a Black writer, this time less lyrical. This was Dennis Brutus' **Sirens Knuckles and Boots** in 1963 which was also the only poetry collection of the period. The quantity of plays written was also thin consisting of Alf Hutchinson's **The Rain Killers** (1956) and Lewis Nkosi's juvenile melodrama, **Rhythm of Violence** in the same year. Criticism by Blacks made its first appearance.

Zeke Mphahlele produced his informative **African Image** in 1962 and Lewis Nkosi brought out a somewhat petulant collection of essays and autobiographical writing called **Home And Exile** in 1965.

By 1966 the ranks of Black writers had been severely decimated by political pressures. Peter Abrahams and Bessie Head had gone into voluntary exile well before. Alf Hutchinson was forced to escape the country. Zeke Mphahlele, Todd Matshikiza, Alex La Guma, Bloke Modisane, Dennis Brutus, Lewis Nkosi, Mazisi Kunene, Can Themba and Arthur Maimane left on exit visas. Only Casey Motsisi, James Matthews and Richard Rive remained behind in South Africa and none of them were producing major works.

By 1966 also all writings by Alex La Guma and Dennis Brutus were proscribed since the writers were banned persons.

Then in the Government Gazette Extraordinary of 1 April 1966, the names of six writers, living in exile, were published as banned under the Suppression of Communism Act. Thus in addition to the two writers mentioned above, all writings by Mazisi Kunene, Bloke Modisane, Lewis Nkosi, Todd Matshikiza, Ezekiel Mphahlele and Can Themba were banned. South African writing in English virtually became White by law.

The following works produced immediately afterwards in the period between 1966-1970 were therefore automatically banned – Alex La Guma's **The Stone Country** (1967); Zeke Mphahlele's **The Wanderers** (1970); his short story collection **In Corner B** (1967) and his collection of critical essays, **Voices in the Whirlwind** (1967); and Dennis Brutus' **Letters to Martha** (1969). Only two major works by Blacks were available inside South Africa – Bessie Head's **When Rain Clouds Gather** (1969) and Dugmore Boetie's **Familiarity is the Kingdom of the Lost** (1970) which he wrote in collaboration with Barney Simon. Writing by Blacks which was available inside South Africa, was at its lowest ebb by the end of the 1960s.

2.2. **Later Protest Writing. The Soweto School. 1971—1976.**
After a very barren period with few established Black writers left in the country, there was an observable revival. Once again the genre had changed. This time writing was predominantly poetry. A reason suggested was that the new writers, having learnt from the experience of the earlier Protest writers, were more cautious and hoped that poetry, by its very form, could prove to be less explicit and more covert than prose. The actual writing proved to be as overt and straightforward as Protest short stories had been. A more likely reason was the sensational success of the first collection to emerge, Oswald Mtshali's **Sounds of a Cowhide Drum** in 1971. During the next five years twelve books of poetry appeared. Having set the pace and shown the direction, Mtshali seemed to have faded out, but Wally Serote took over and proved far more prolific. In 1972 he produced his collection, **Yakhal'inkomo** and in 1974 a further collection, **Tsetlo**. Then followed a less successful long poem, **No Baby Must Weep** in 1975. During this period both he and Mtshali went to the United States on scholarships and although Mtshali eventually returned in 1979, Serote chose exile. Arthur Nortje had two volumes appearing after his premature death at Oxford – **Dead Roots** and **Lonely Against the Light**, both published in 1973. Also in that year James Matthews and Gladys Thomas produced **Cry Rage** and Dennis Brutus, **A Simple Lust**.

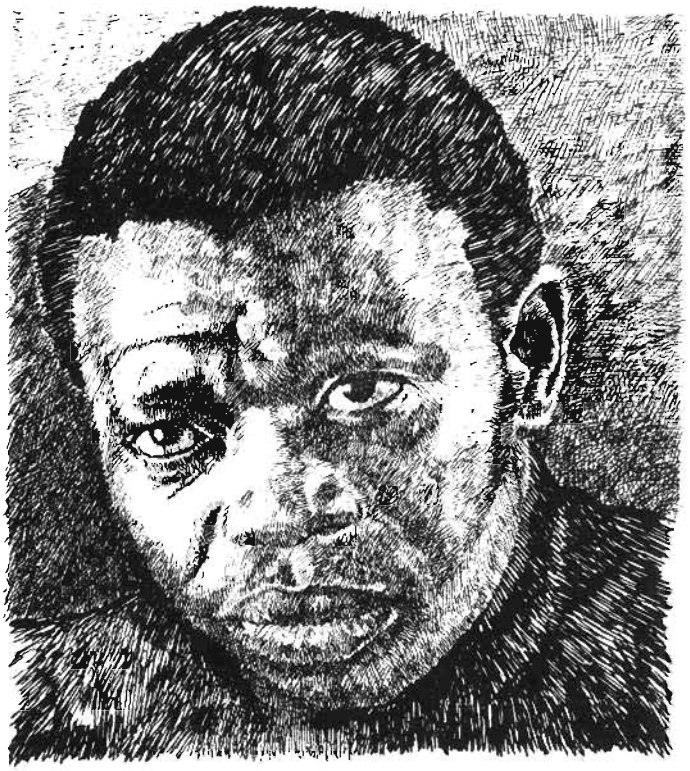
After Mtshali and Serote had left to go abroad, a new major writer appeared on the Soweto horizon, Sipho Sepamla. In 1975 he produced **Hurry Up to It** and in 1976, a further collection of poetry, **The Blues is You In Me**.

Dennis Brutus, Arthur Nortje and Jennifer Davids, the Cape Town poet who wrote **Searching for Words** in 1975, were probably the most sophisticated writers during this period, although their works seemed to lack the raw rumbustious exuberance of Mtshali, Serote and Sepamla.

The poetry was a thematic extension of the short stories of the Earlier Protest School. It was concerned with the position of the Black and described his oppression to sympathetic Whites whom it hoped had the power to effect change. But even such a stand, negative as it might have seemed later, was not popular with the authorities. Again the writers were subjected to severe political pressure. Brutus was writing in exile but since he was banned all his works were proscribed in South Africa. Mtshali and Jennifer Davids were overseas but fortunately their works were freely available. Arthur Nortje had died tragically in England but his works were not restricted. Although James Matthews remained behind in South Africa, having been refused a passport, most of his works were being banned. Sepamla fared slightly better. He had also had his passport refused but during this period all his works were available.

Political pressure seemed bent on forcing the Black writer to moderate his tone and conform, or suffer the consequences. **New Classic**, edited by Sepamla, catered cautiously for new writing, but the volume of good poetry was thin, and prose, drama and criticism almost non-existent. In spite of the promise shown in 1971, by 1976 the position of the Black writer and his writing was as pitiful as it had been just before the publication of **Sounds of a Cowhide Drum**.

3. **Black Consciousness Writing. The Staffrider School: 1976 to the present.**
The Blacks who were writing were still producing poetry but there was a major shift in theme and motivation. The swing was away from an essentially White readership towards a Black one, analysing the Black experience for other Blacks. This introspection implied a rediscovery and reassessment of the Black Identity, very much in the tradition of Negritude and Marcus Garvey's Back-to-Africa campaign. Mafika Pascal



MONGANE SEROTE

Gwala was the writer most responsible for giving Black literature this new direction with his collection **Jol'inkomo** in 1976. This was followed by Sepamla's **The Soweto I Love** in 1977, in which this indifference in approach was clearly discernible when one compared the poems with those in his earlier collections. James Matthews also changed his genre and direction and now produced poetry which defined the Black Identity as it appeared in his collection **Pass Me a Meatball, Jones** in 1977. From Botswana came Serote's **Behold Mama, Flowers** in 1978, a not very successful work although its new direction was clear. Officialdom yet again dealt drastically with the writers and their works since the authorities were jittery about Black Consciousness. Gwala and Matthews were gaoled for short periods because of political activities. **The Soweto I Love** and **Pass Me a Meatball, Jones** were banned. Serote was forced to churn out his angry poetry in exile. Fortunately two young poets writing in this tradition appeared in Johannesburg – Christopher van Wyk produced **It Is Time to Go Home**

PETER ABRAHAMS

(1979) and Fhazel Johennesse brought out The Rainmaker during the same year, some of the poetry leaning very heavily on Aimé Cesaire.

The prose that emerged still had its feet planted in the Protest School. Although Zeke Mphahlele's Chirundu appeared in 1979 it had been written quite a few years before. Miriam Tlali's Muriel at Metropolitan was heavily autobiographical, reminiscent of earlier works of that nature. Ahmed Essop's The Hajji and Other Stories (1978) and Neil Williams' Just a Little Stretch of Road (1979) and Sepamla's The Root is One were far more related to Protest than to Black Consciousness writing. The only prose which moved in the new direction was Mtutuzeli Matshoba's Call Me Not a Man (1979) and some of the stories edited by Mothobi Mutloatse in Forced Landing (1980). Many of the stories in Staffrider seem deliberately geared to a Black readership in terms of a renewal of a Black identity.

This is the position at present. Many writers are still in exile and have disappeared off the South African and international scene. Zeke Mphahlele and Oswald Mtshali have returned. Dennis Brutus, James Matthews and Richard Rive from the earlier school, are still writing. And there is the exciting emergence of young writers contributing to Staffrider and Wietie.

Black writing in South Africa has had a chequered career. At times it has almost expired when harsh, official measures seemed bent on its destruction. In spite of this it has survived. Although its direction today is not clear it must inevitably become indistinguishable from other writing in this country since it will not have a different fight to fight. That will be the time when there will be a national South African literature in which ethnic differences will become meaningless and inconsequential. Today we can only repeat what Wally Serote said in Yakhal 'inkomo:

White people are white people
They must learn to listen.
Black people are black people
They must learn to talk.

The last freedom fighter

by Peter Wilhelm

Illustrated by Mzwakhe

At that time it seemed they were the last men left in the Cabo Delgado.

The last men in the province. The last men in the world? They could wonder that at night, between wakefulness and uneasy sleep. Staring, now at the stars in whose milky immensity the Southern Cross lay embedded like a tragic beacon; on another night, the density of trees or bush overhead their own hard sleeping places. The last men in the world.

They had penetrated far south from their base, taking many months. Down through savannah and swampland, guided by inaccurate maps; through forests in which fiery birds flashed and cried; through abandoned farmland. The testimony of dereliction. Down to the source of the River Palavala.

They had seen the river springing from the rocks at the source. And on their way they had passed through a destroyed village. Burnt, blackened, reduced to black ash and white ash that stirred with flies, insects, wind; ash on ash on dust, covering the death the soldiers had brought in their northward sweep.

On a path to the village: three dry bodies hanging from a tree· the inhuman debris of a force from which there was no refuge but that had passed

over and away.

The village stood in the heart of a green forest. It had been reduced to a mass grave. What remained of the huts stood upright and black like spikes. A great trench into which corpses had been shovelled had been covered over, and, from the loose earth of this mound, spring flowers burst forth – red and violet and white from the humid earth.

The village had no name on their maps. It was unknown to them. An unknown village that the soldiers of the enemy had pillaged and burnt and left, and that the forest had already begun to cover again.

Had there been survivors? They wondered together. Such people, they knew, wounded and desolated, would have been force-marched down south out of the war zone. Taken down to fortified villages and concentration camps.

In the white and black ash they found spent bullets and cartridges, tattered useless clothing and empty tins. And one whitewashed mud wall was swathed with dry blood. They were made deeply uneasy by the sight of this execution place.

They carried a deep fear which they did not fully admit. Since setting out the fear had been with them, always a companion. Even from that first day of setting out they had known the war was going badly. Not just for the four of them, but for all the Movement. The cadres who set out and returned after months, depleted, brought back reports of the devastation wrought by the soldiers of the enemy. Of villages burnt, of men and women and children machine-gunned. They sensed each movement south as a foray against iron ruthlessness.

Their people captured and force-marched south to the concentration camps.

These images were brought back from the desolation and became like legends that fed their fear. Bloody images that hovered at the fringes of dreams.

Supplies and ammunition were low. They knew this. On their maps, when they set out, were marked caches of food and ammunition for them to find. But often when they found those places, those X's on their maps, the stores had been looted or poisoned. Or they could not find them at all. So how could they strike at the enemy? The patrols, the convoys on the dry roads – dry for this brief period of the year before the rains would come and hammer the roads into redness and mud and mire – the patrols and convoys had military supremacy.

When the rains came, that would be the best time to strike, they knew. But the rains held back. And always the reports came back: devastation and desolation.

So they too would have held back. But the orders came and they went south.

In the first weeks of their journey they walked upright and brave, though underneath the fear beat like a heart.

They met refugees or were sheltered in villages that the soldiers had not yet reached. Leaving base had brought eeriness: a sense of silence at their backs, a silence of command. Now, some that they met had radios, or had heard disturbing tales and rumours. Tales and rumours were repeated again and again with a single focus: factions and feuds among the leadership.

There was no way of knowing the truth. If there was no unity left in the Movement. Or if they had before them lies spread by the enemy, distorted echoes that weakened them.

The enemy projected himself in their dreams and imaginings as invincible, like an enormous wall before them which they had to scale armed only with their unreliable rifles and grenades, and the collective courage they gathered about their fear.

They felt despondency seep into them. That and the attrition of the bush: too much time spent together, too much time in their collective loneliness; and their bodies and personalities thrust up too close together so that there was friction between them, and anger at small things.

The uniforms they had worn when setting out – brave camouflage melting into the colours of bush and jungle – became tattered and coated with dust and the dust penetrated deeper than cloth into their flesh so that they carried, too, a collective heaviness, heavier each day, as they marched south towards the source of the River Palavala.

Plans. They had plans. They would find the source and the caches of food and ammunition so that they could strike from strength at the forces of the enemy who ruled from Europe, stretching his power across the sea to the immense and suffering colony.

But too much time was spent together. They were too close. The four.

They began as four but soon, too soon, there were only three. For one night, dark as any they had known, they encountered an army patrol that waited for them in ambush. Word of their movements had been carried to the enemy.

There were lights and automatic gunfire all about them. The searchlights and bullets raking the bush. And then from Mano, the youngest, came a small despairing cry as he was struck and he fell back dead, almost in the arms of their leader Punza. Their fear rose up and engulfed them.. They had to flee. There was no time to bury Mano. Punza dropped the body of the youth and, touching the others, Bula and Cruz, indicated that they must retreat from the area of fire and storm. And so, in fear, they did.

They fled like animals, dropping supplies, in anguish.

Fear. How they mocked each other and their fear the next day, burrowed into the chattering bush for cover, Punza, Bula and Cruz. But mocked in whispers lest they be heard.

The memory of the way they had fled haunted them in that day in which they lay, whispering, pondering their disintegrating maps, hoping for rain, hoping for courage to go on to the river's source; those three left from the four who had begun.

Punza, Bula, Cruz. Those were not their real names. Those were their *noms de guerre,* assumed for the duration of the war, and all carried false identification documents. Punza, Bula, Cruz: three men drawn together by the war. Each from a different tribe. Each speaking now a common language part dialect, part jargon, part assembled from the practicalities of bush life; Portuguese and English too, meshed into the language of their war. Advance and retreat. Be still. Fire. Walk.

Punza was a Communist and a natural leader. He read from the works of Mao; read to them, quoted to them, instructed them. Bula was a big shambling man, most often silent, but always obedient, almost compliant to begin with: but drawn to a more ancient and mythic world than Punza and Cruz. When he spoke, an edge of superstition was in his voice. Punza secretly regarded him as being, almost, unadapted for the war, too close to the life of the village and the rituals of the yearly cycle that

had been there before the coming of the enemy and was there still. Yet Bula was brave; Bula had a great heart.

And then Cruz. Small, agile, practical: but too emotional, sometimes in tears when he fell behind the others in weariness, aware of tears streaking his dark face beneath his bush cap. But he was overawed by Punza, the intellectual leader of them all, and by his severe participation in the Movement – which Cruz, more simply, perceived as nationalist. For he was free of ideology and was often embarrassed by the phrases used by Punza, by 'the inevitability of victory'. He was not certain that anything was inevitable.

Though Cruz would march, and be obedient, he was not sure; but he called Punza 'Comrade', and he called Bula, too, 'Comrade', and he deferred to the judgment of leadership and the necessities of the Movement. Yet when the rumours and tales came of factions and feuds among the leadership, and of foreign sponsors locked in conflict with each other in far-off cities and rooms where finance and strategy were discussed, he felt distant from the Movement and unsure – and, feeling unsure, knew that this was the dirt of uncertainty launched at him by the enemy. Then he felt the enemy as an enormous wall, all-knowing sentries patrolling at the top and seeing down to his deepest heart of uncertainty and fear.

Discussing Mano's death, Cruz said honestly: 'I was afraid. We were all afraid. Is that not so?'

Punza said, 'That may be so, Comrade; but the wise guerilla will not engage against odds greater than him. We must strike at the flanks of the enemy, wounding him, making him bleed, striking again. That is our duty. Strike quickly and retreat: strike and retreat. The people are the water in which we swim like fish.' His voice trailed into silence.

'There are no people,' said Bula, his voice sombre. 'There are no people left in the Cabo Delgado. They are all dead or transported away to concentration camps.'

Punza said nothing. In this moment his ideology failed him.

They lay together longing to be elsewhere. But still there was . . . the Movement.

'Shall we go back and bury Mano?' asked Cruz. He wanted desperately to smoke a cigarette but sensed that the enemy, knowing they were there, would be on the watch and could see them. He attributed to the enemy powers that, rationally, he knew they could not have.

'We can't do that,' said Bula scornfully. 'We can't go back. The soldiers will be waiting for us. But –,' he added nervously, 'I agree that he should not be left lying dead; his body lying there to be desecrated by vultures and jackals, or soldiers. That would be a bad omen for us. Perhaps we should go back and see. Just see – if we are cautious.' And he turned to Punza for guidance.

'No,' said Punza, asserting his leadership. 'You are right: the soldiers will be waiting for us. In this war we cannot go back for our dead or wounded.'

He looked at Cruz and Bula. 'If I am killed or wounded you must leave me. We must survive. That is the truth of it.'

Survive. The word lay in their minds like a pebble beneath the dark waters of a swift stream.

In the branches above them grey monkeys laughed, and birds flashed and called across the wilderness. It was enormously hot and dry. The rainy season had not begun. They knew that on the dusty roads that threaded the forests there would be patrols and informers. During the rains they could operate better: or so they hoped.

In the dryness Bula sat back on his haunches picking at his toes. The sandals he had worn from the beginning were flaking away like flesh; his sandals and uniform lay upon him like his flesh itself, dark and battered by the journey south.

All three felt morose, but not defeated: not yet.

They came at last to the source of the River Palavala. In the foothills of a mountain range, high up, so that they could look down on the unliberated land, there was a confluence of streams and a spring – the source, spilling down over wedges of slaty rock, making pools in which for the first time in months they could wash and refresh themselves.

They refilled their canisters with water, and confidence was restored. Near the source, according to their instructions, they would find a cache of arms and food. Then they could hit at the patrols, destroy fencing, perhaps even blow up a portion of rail that formed a spur to a small cobalt mine, and retreat to the anonymous foothills. This was according to plan; this was going well.

'Now we have a base,' said Punza. He smiled a great deal. They seemed utterly alone and unseen.

But the cache had been found by the soldiers, the arms taken and the food despoiled. There was no indication, however, of when the soldiers had come. There were no signs of footprints or the tracks of vehicles.

Punza made a decision. 'Bula – you and Cruz must scout these foothills. See if the enemy is still here. Bula, you go east; Cruz look to the west. I will find a post above the spring and watch throughout the day.' It was mid-morning. They agreed, and moved to search, quiet, infinitely cautious. At sunset they would rendezvous at a pool that already seemed familiar because – perhaps incautiously – they had swum in it with relief, their clothing drying on nearby rocks. The air sucked up moisture quickly but the pool remained full always, fed from above.

Cruz made his way west with a feeling of unreality. He had no sense of the enemy, though the evidence of the despoiled cache was there. His Schmeisser sub-machine gun was strapped to his back, ammunition around his waist. At one point he found himself humming an old song from the training camp, and silenced himself. Yet there seemed little to disturb his search.

Once he froze at a sound of rustling in the bush; but it was only a wild pig, rooting and snuffling. The sight almost made him laugh, though he had a vision of all the animals returning now, returning to the land that the antagonists had virtually stripped of human habitation.

He came to a precipitous rockfall and crawled to the edge, looking over. There was a road and in it an old flatbed truck on which three soldiers sat disconsolately. The driver was attempting to repair something, the bonnet up. Cruz could see the enemy's weariness and felt a kind of sympathy: they too were strangers here, their presence less validated than that of the wild pig.

He knew better than to fire on the men. There would be many, many others. The Movement had stressed that military contacts were to be limited to absolute necessity. They did not have the firepower to defeat the soldiers in naked combat: their's was the war of the flea. And also, it was known that many of the soldiers did not have their hearts in the war. They were, after all, mostly young, inexperienced peasantry from Portugal and could never bring to

But the cache had been found by the soldiers, the arms taken and the food despoiled. There was no indications, however, of when the soldiers had come.

the war the depth of fanaticism that the generals would like to foster.

Disaffection, even a mutiny, was a possibility if the soldiers were made to feel that the Movement could strike at moments of its own choice, etching like acid into the morale of the soldiers.

Eventually, the truck repaired, the soldiers drove on, and Cruz made his way back.

It was growing dark by the time he reached the pool that was their rendezvous point. Cruz unstrapped his gun, and looked around, feeling sheltered near the pool. Then he saw Punza floating in the water, the focus of a slowly spreading stain of blood. The brutal fact of death lay there. Fear struck Cruz painfully: Punza's throat had been cut and the guerilla floated on his stomach, a silent testimony to sinister forces all around. This was not a matter of ignorant soldiers in a dilapidated truck: this was fierce and purposeful aggression.

'Cruz!' It was Bula, already at the pool before him. The burly man was shaken and uncertain. He came to Cruz and touched him tugging at his sleeve. 'We must go. I found him like this. I was afraid you were not coming.'

They did not sleep that night.

The following day they moved downstream and debated what to do. Cruz felt he must be the leader now. He examined his map. 'We are near Tomar, to the north and west, a small settlement with our supporters there. The headman is one of us, of the Movement. That is where we must go.'

Bula said nothing. Cruz became aware of his silence like a dark third presence. Leaning over he touched Bula. 'We must go there. Remember what Punza said.'

Bula kept silent for a long time. But at last he said: 'South, near Pombal, there is a small group of hills. And there, there are caves. When I was young I lived in a village near there. I know that area well. I do not suppose there will be many people left; the soldiers will have killed them, or taken them. But in the hills near Pombal there lives a spirit medium, an old woman — some say she is a thousand years old. I do not myself believe she is a thousand years old, but she is very old. I have seen her once, and she speaks with the dead, with the ancestors. She might even be able to speak to Mano and Punza. She will tell us what to do. Her prophecies can aid us.'

Cruz did not believe in prophecies. The ancestors, he felt, would not be able to furnish them with ammunition, food or reliable maps. If they were not to admit outright defeat, they should seek help at Tomar from the headman, as he had said. 'No· we must not go south, it is too dangerous.'

But Bula was adamant. He stood, intransigent in his determination. 'The spirit medium is very old and wise. She could tell us; she could throw the bones for us.'

Cruz laughed involuntarily, then choked off his laugh. His sense of unreality deepened. The image of Punza dead in the pool burned in his thoughts. The event stripped him of conviction. He felt tugged into the ancient, mythic world of Bula, felt its attraction: a logic of mysticism as hard, here in the bush, as a bullet.

He said, however, 'This is not a war of bone-throwing, Comrade Bula. This is the twentieth century. We fight with guns, not spears. We fight with the thoughts of Mao and Neto, not with bones and the visions of a spirit medium. Not with dreams and shadows.'

'Dreams and shadows,' repeated Bula. 'The ancestors are heard in dreams and seen in shadows. They have lessons for the living. For us. The Shona know this. The enemy is not of Africa; we are. We must go south.' He nodded at this thought in the noonday half-silence of the forest when the heat beat down and even the insects, the cicadas and large red ants, seemed to rest in a siesta of life and consciousness.

So they went south.

The village had been destroyed. There was no life there, no dogs or chickens or pigs. Just emptiness and streaks of blood. By now they had little food or water. With Cruz trailing, Bula marched to the hills where he remembered the spirit medium

She was there still, and Bula consulted her in a language Cruz did not know. He became uneasy and wandered away from the rank cave in which the woman dwelt with bones and shadows.

He felt oppressed by history and its manifestation in the old woman — her features sunken; withered body framed around the shape of head and hunched shoulders, an aloof but prescient dominance rooted there, authority. An authority that made him profoundly uneasy, since his schooling had been on a mission station and the Catholic fathers had led them to scorn as superstition the old tribal ways.

But in the woman's presence — a presence he left quickly — that ancient forces had been palpable. Bula, the nearer he had drawn to the woman's cave, had seemed to become sturdier, more certain of the path he had chosen. He drew strength from the aura of the spirit medium, a strength Cruz could not face directly, any more than he could the sun. His youth was a factor too: the mission training slipped away and he had a memory of drowsy nights in huts with older people, their conversation excluding him. A memory that was a long time ago, a long way from his war.

They spent the night there, Bula with the spirit medium, Cruz alone beneath a tree, unable to sleep for a long time.

So alone, Cruz became aware of how noisy his surroundings were. Frogs, insects of all varieties, screaming birds before the sun set and rose (voices human and anguished), monkeys — a complex gathering-together of sound. And, as an undercurrent to this complexity, a rhythmic waxing and waning, as if all the wilderness resonated to the beat of an utterly strange and incomprehensible heart. It excluded him: this Africa was not his.

It was hard to separate the sounds and calls from each other. The bird-like calls in the darkness were almost certainly frogs, but not of any kind he knew. Once, a large shape flopped near him and he lit a match to see the ugliness of a bull-frog, large as a cat. The stone-like creature watched him, then flopped away.

Cruz shivered.

As the night drew on and he grew more drowsy, the rhythms of the sound penetrated deep into his body and consciousness. There was a to-ing and fro-ing, a swelling and gathering; and then a diminution of the bell-like sounds. All of it repeated over and over, hypnotically.

Finally he lit a small fire for comfort; and the flickering light drew the insects. Mosquitoes whined at his flesh.

His tired mind sorted through the noise, finding the separate, shriller sound patterns of the creatures. Some he knew. The cicadas were as large as his thumb, mottled black-and-green, and when disturbed individually frothed and raged through the air in the space around the disturbance like tiny vicious buzz-saws. Their vehemence was astonishing, almost frightening. The light and heat of his fire beguiled them

to death and outrage.

He sweated all the time. It was almost as if from every pore of his body the sweat poured out, saturating his tattered clothing, itching on his face in those moments when the wind blew across him and it dried so that when he scratched the stubble it was painful and caked salt came free beneath his fingernails. In one moment of weakness he wept softly. His whole face was wet.

To keep his fingernails short he bit them. His toenails seemed to break off of their own accord. He felt grimy, sweaty and defeated. What was Bula doing with the old woman?

The next day, still alone, as instructed long ago at base, he added a chemical tablet to the water he drank so as to purify it, mixing the tablet in the canister he carried with him. The tablets were running low.

While waiting for Bula he reached into his shirt and drew out a crumbling piece of paper — a 'Playboy' centrefold which showed a naked woman reclining on a couch, her tongue lolling provocatively. This was a private luxury, but now he felt the futility of it. The welling of lust he experienced, looking at the nameless woman, was remote and shameful. Half angrily, he tore the paper and scattered the remains in the ash of his smouldering fire.

At last Bula came, exultant. He had received a message from the spirit medium. 'We must go east — towards the sea.'

'Why?'

'That is what the old woman said. She promised we would meet our destiny there.'

'Destiny? What has that to do with us? Or the Movement? There is no point. We should go north, perhaps even return to base. We have been cut in half.'

'No. East now. Follow me.'

They progressed eastwards, shambling. Cruz felt their purpose wane to meaninglessness. The word of an old woman, and they went east. Perhaps he had caught — like a disease — some of Bula's superstition. Destiny. He mocked the word silently. But he followed Bula. There was no question now of who was the leader.

Terrain changed. After many days they reached a region of grassy dunes, flowing in all directions as far as sight. They were absolutely alone. Here there were the marks of streams that ran to the sea, nearer each day. There was little water. The watercourses were dry, except for milky, sinister pools. If we drink that water, thought Cruz, we will get cholera. Or typhoid. The threat of disease obsessed him.

The chemical tablets were finished. They had to drink the water directly

now, and it had an edge of saltiness, salt there as in the dunes, white beneath their mats of wiry grass. Where there was no water the dust itself seemed to calcify. Sometimes it glittered. The sun burned.

In the late afternoons cumulous clouds swept from the east over them, washing them with shadow. But there was no rain. The rain was being carried to the mountains they had left behind in the west.

Gulls haunted them. They were drawing closer to the sea.

Cruz dreamed of the woman in the destroyed centrefold. She seemed to grow old and ugly, dark and mocking.

Both men became feverish, bitten. When they reached the sea its expanses lay before them like an hallucination, trembling and arid in its wateriness, with a solid aspect that repelled. The coastline was white, the sun beating up at them from naked dunes.

Bula took his clothes off and swam out to sea. Cruz watched him. Far out, his comrade turned and waved: The waving arms rose and fell. Bula was drawn under the waves. Cruz sat upright in fear and peered into the area of disappearance. He saw the waves froth white and red. The fins of sharks were everywhere.

Bula's head shot above the waves and the man screamed. Then he was pulled down again. Forever. Gone. The older man had found his destiny. Gulls hawked in mockery.

Mindless, sick, Cruz buried the guns and ammunition. Now he was nothing more than a tattered peasant. He longed for companionship and walked south to find it, down through the expanses of dunes with the sea crashing on his left and the still solidity beyond the curling waves holding below their surface the dark shapes of sharks that swept restlessly as if waiting for him. A compulsion to swim out towards death seized and he trembled to overcome it.

The journey became one of days and nights passed without thought. Even his dreams became depopulated, like the land. The woman who had entered his dreams left, a final vision which became thin and insubstantial. Memories of political training carried a lustreless monotony when he recalled the lessons. What, finally, had those words and programmes to do with his aloneness and desolation? Had they ever been appropriate to the landscape? The seabirds hawked their ancient commentary.

The cycle of day and night speeded up. He lost all sense of time.

He walked far south without food and little water. Villages first, then the marks of industrial development. He was coming to a large port, and the sea carried a dark burden of oil tankers, long and sliding animals of metal that crossed the line where water and sky met. There were roads now, and houses, people who looked at him, then looked away.

With a stunning abruptness he came to a beach. And there, in amazement, he saw people spread on the sand, their bodies and faces upturned and still. Little speech, little movement. In his fever the beach was not real. It was no destination.

An official angrily turned him off the beach. In the streets of the town people laughed at his raggedness and fixed, strange gaze.

'The people are the water in which we swim like fish,' he thought. But the image of sharks came at him, great slimy jaws with blade-like teeth that ripped at life. He came to a poor township in which the huts were made of all kinds of material — mud, cardboard, rusty tin. The smell of men and women crushed together closely, acrid and unchangeable. This was where the poor lived, as, he recalled, they had always done. The people: the collective reason for the war, the struggle against oppression. A woman took him in and fed him. He lay watching the dirty ceiling. 'What,' he asked, 'is happening with the war?'

'There is no war,' the woman said. 'There is a new government in Portugal. A peace treaty has been signed. Now there are talks in Lusaka.' Her tongue lolled from her mouth. Flies gathered on her face.

'When I am better,' he said, 'I will go north.'

When I am better, he thought, I will go north to find out the truth. When the sickness leaves me. The oil tankers made great mournful sounds as mist came in from the enormous reaches of the shark-ruled sea. ●

THE SEED OF OUR TEARS

Our tears are like rain drops
That spill and splash on the ground
Hiding their atoms behind air particles
Yet these drops can pull a tree towards clouds.

Our tears are the torrents
That irrigate our wish seed
That sprawls in our hearts
Like a baby at birth
Fighting for the registration
Of its life.

The seed shall grow and flourish
It shall grow and bear fruit
And like the child that has grown
To fight pains of life
Its fruit shall be sweet
Yet bitter.

Mokutu wa Moeketsi.

STRANGERS AT HOME

We have grown at home
Like palm trees
Our roots are at home
But unlike palms
We are strangers at home

We have no anchor in the West
No shelter in the East
Neither up North nor deep South
Can kill our thirst
Only home mellows with our waters.

We have never lived outside
Home and only home has been our shield
Our heart beats dance to the home tempo
Where we are strangers.

We are stains of royal blood
Born to be kings and impis
The sun saw us grow on the home soil
Where we are strangers.

Mokutu wa Moeketsi

HEAVEN IS CALLING

I am not a prophet
But I am a man
My senses are all sensitive
My ears heard a
Song which tells
Like a prophet
That someone is coming
She comes in a hurry
To grab her seat
She comes full of mirth
Winds are telling the story
Her perfume will make the air fresh
That a new name is on the way
Coming with tears of joy
On her face
Carrying bags of freedom
Singing songs of peace
Wearing a long dress
Of black, white, brown colours
Her hands are ocean wide spread
To embrace all children of the soil
Her broad and attractive smile
Is the seed of peace
The peace that comes because
Song arms are beckoning
Rhythms are touching
Melodies are earnestly waving
Hungry voices of appeal
Shake the ground
And all are guided by
The heavy loaded drum beats
Beats that come from our hearts
Prayers are knocking in heaven
The sun is my witness
The stars know the situation
The moon sees the choking moves
Clouds try to hide the burning scene
But heaven knows
And my eardrums hear it —
Heaven weeps for 'thina sonke'

Mokutu wa Moeketsi

SOUNDS OF AFRIKA

I heard a sound somewhere,
I felt the state that was there,
Happiness was the living state.
My heart started to beat at a high rate,
The sound was high up the mountain,
With plenty of food because of the rain.

Sounds of Afrika go with time,
Our origin, our only living sign,
When Afrika sings, a feeling is felt,
Her sounds can hold you tight like a belt,
They can make you feel free while you are not,
The melody to your fathom like a sharp sword.

Listen to the songs of working men,
Taste the song striking in the fields by women,
When they lift their tools the rhythm suits the situation
Salty water down their faces like precipitation,
Down in the deep hole the echo showers our ears,
Sounds of Afrika come loud and clear.

Behind bars a song wipes out the tears,
Our sounds unload the burden and kill the fears,
Join the singers and worry less,
If you don't the pain gets worse,
Sing the chains away, if you don't the pain gets worse,
All Africans are in trouble
But when they sing, the troubles vanish like bubbles.

Dancing suits our sounds,
Look at the feet that fly up and shake the ground
A coat of dust covers the bright sight,
The drum beat thunders to make light bright,
Mouths throw sweet voices in our ear drums
Take it, grab it, it is an African sound.

Mokutu wa Moeketsi

MAMLAMBO

by Bheki Maseko

Illustrated by Caroline Cullinan

Mamlambo is a kind of snake that brings fortune to anyone who accommodates it. One's money or livestock multiplies incredibly.

This snake is available from traditional doctors who provide instructions regarding its exploitation. Certain necessities are to be sacrificed in order to maintain it. Sometimes you may have to sacrifice your own children, or go without a car or clothes. It all depends on the instructions of the doctor concerned.

The duties involved are so numerous that some people tend to forget some of them. A beast must be slaughtered from time to time, and failing to comply with the instructions results in disaster. It is said that this monster can kill an entire family always starting with the children and leaving its owner for last.

Getting rid of this fortune snake is not an easy task when one has had enough of luck and sacrificing. Some say a beast must be slaughtered, then the entire carcass must be enfolded with the skin and thrown away. This is done in the presence of an indigenous doctor who performs the necessary ritual to the end.

Someone will come along, pick up a shiny object, and Mamlambo is his. There are many things said about this monster.

Here is an account of how Sophie acquired Mamlambo and what happened to her.

Sophie Zikode was a young, pretty, ebony-faced woman with a plump and intact moderate body. Ever since she came to stay in the Golden City to work as a domestic servant, she never had a steady boyfriend. The only man who lasted longer than any other was Elias Malinga who was from Ermelo. He was the first man she met when she came to Johannesburg and he was the only man she truly loved.

She was so obsessed with love that she readily abandoned any possessions or habits that Elias disliked. In spite of the priority his children and wife in Ermelo enjoyed, she was still prepared to marry Elias Malinga without the slightest intention of disrupting his marriage during their love affair.

One day, after a quarrel, Elias went away and never came back again. She phoned his place of employment to be

told by a friend of Elias that he (Elias) had had enough of her. She never heard from him ever again.

After Elias , Sophie never again had a steady boyfriend. They all deserted her after two or three months. But it no longer hurt. The only name that haunted her day and night was Elias.

Ever since Elias left her she had never loved anybody else. All she wanted now was a husband she could be loyal to. But she just could not find one. Then along came Jonas, a tall well built Malawian who was much more considerate than any of the other men.

For the first time in her young life a thought came into her mind. She must consult a traditional doctor for help. She wanted to keep Jonas forever. She must see Baba Majola first thing in the morning.

The following morning Sophie visited Baba Majola who was a street cleaner. The old man listened sympathetically to her problem while he swept rubbish out of a gutter. He told her to return at four in the afternoon. Sophie was there on time.

Baba Majola gave her a smelly sticky stuff in a bottle. He told her to rub her whole body with it before the boyfriend came, and to put it under the pillow when they sleep. The poor girl agreed amicably.

She did exactly as she had been told to do. She felt guilty as the atmosphere became tense in the little room.

They ate in silence as the clock on the small table ticked away, disturbing the deep silence. Jonas was not his usual self today. He was quiet in a strange manner.

They were sleeping for some minutes when Jonas felt something peculiar under the pillow. It felt cold and smooth.

'Sophie, Sophie,' he called, shaking her gently. 'What is this under the pillow?'

Sophie had felt the strange object soon after they had climbed into bed. But she had been scared to ask Jonas what it was.

'I don't know,' she replied pretending to be sleepy. 'Switch on the light, let's have a look.'

With a trembling hand Jonas fumbled for the switch. 'Gosh, what a big snake!'

Jonas was the first to jump out of bed. Sophie followed. They fiddled with the door until it was open and ran into the brightly lit street.

Semi-naked, they knocked at the servant's room of a house in the neighbourhood to wake up a friend of Sophie's. Sophie's friend was very stunned to find them in that manner.

Quickly they explained the situation and together they went back to Sophie's room. Through the window they could see the snake, lying across the bed. Sophie was very scared, but Jonas. Christ! Jonas, he could hardly speak.

Realising that things were bad, Sophie decided to tell the whole truth. She told Jonas she did it 'because I wanted to keep you forever.' They decided to go to a traditional doctor

Quickly they explained the situation and together they went back to Sophie's room. Through the window they could see the snake, lying across the bed. Sophie was very scared, but Jonas, Christ! Jonas, he could hardly speak.

who stayed a few streets away.

They knocked and after waiting awhile, the doctor answered. He opened the door but quickly closed it again. They heard him say: 'Wait outside there. I can sense something melancholy.'

They could hear the indigenous doctor saying something in a strange language, and the smell of burning muti came to them in full force.

He began to moan as if speaking to gods in a faraway land. He then opened the door and inquired what their problem was. Sophie retold her story.

'Oh, my girl. What you have in your room is Mamlambo,' he shuddered.

'What? Mamlambo!' cried Sophie. 'Oh God, what have I done to deserve such punishment? What big sin have I committed to be punished in this manner?' Tears streamed continuously down her cheeks.

'Crying won't solve the problem, my dear girl,' intervened the doctor in broken Zulu. 'The only solution is to get rid of the snake, and I need your cooperation to do that. I'll give you a suitcase to take to your room, and the snake . . .

'What!' cried Sophie. 'Must I go back to that room again? Oh, no, not me, I'm sorry.'

'The choice is yours, my girl. You either keep it or get rid of it. The sooner

"Listen young man," said the policeman beginning to get angry. "I'm asking you a straight forward question and I want a straight forward answer. I'm asking you for the last time now. I-say-do-you-know-this-woman." He pointed emphatically at Sophie.

the better because if you don't it will be with you wherever you go. It is your snake. The witchdoctor was tired of it so he transferred it to you. So you are duty bound to transfer it to someone else or keep it.'

'Transfer it to someone else! Oh no! Why don't we throw it into the river or somewhere,' Sophie grumbled.

'You can't. Either you transfer it, or you keep it. Do you want my help or what?' asked the doctor in a business-like manner.

'Yes,' Sophie agreed in a tired voice, eyeing her friend, Sheila and the timid Jonas, with the 'I hate to do it' look.

The traditional doctor took a large suitcase from the top of the wardrobe, put some muti inside, and burnt it. He moaned again as if speaking to gods they could not see. He chanted on in this manner for what seemed like ages.

'You'll take this suitcase to your room and put it next to your bed. The snake will roll itself into the suitcase. He saw that Sophie was doubtful so he added. 'It's your snake. It won't harm you.' He continued: 'You will then go to a busy place and give it to someone. That you will figure out for yourself.

They all went back to Sophie's room. The big snake was still there. Having told herself to 'come what may', Sophie tip-toed into the room and put the suitcase next to the bed.

Slowly, as if it were smelling something, the snake lifted its head, slid into the suitcase and gathered itself into a neat coil.

Her mind was obsessed with Johannesburg station where she would give Mamlambo to someone for good. She walked quickly towards the taxi rank, impervious to the weight of the suitcase.

She did not want to do this to anyone but she had no option.

Remembering that taxis were scarce after eight, she quickened her pace. She saw a few police cars patrolling the area, probably because of the high rate of housebreaking in the area, she thought.

It was while she was daydreaming at the bus stop that she realised the car at the traffic lights was a patrol car headed in her direction. Should she drop the suitcase and run? But they had already seen her and she would not get far. How will she explain the whole thing to the police? Will they believe her story? The news will spread like wildfire that she's a witch? What would Elias think of her?

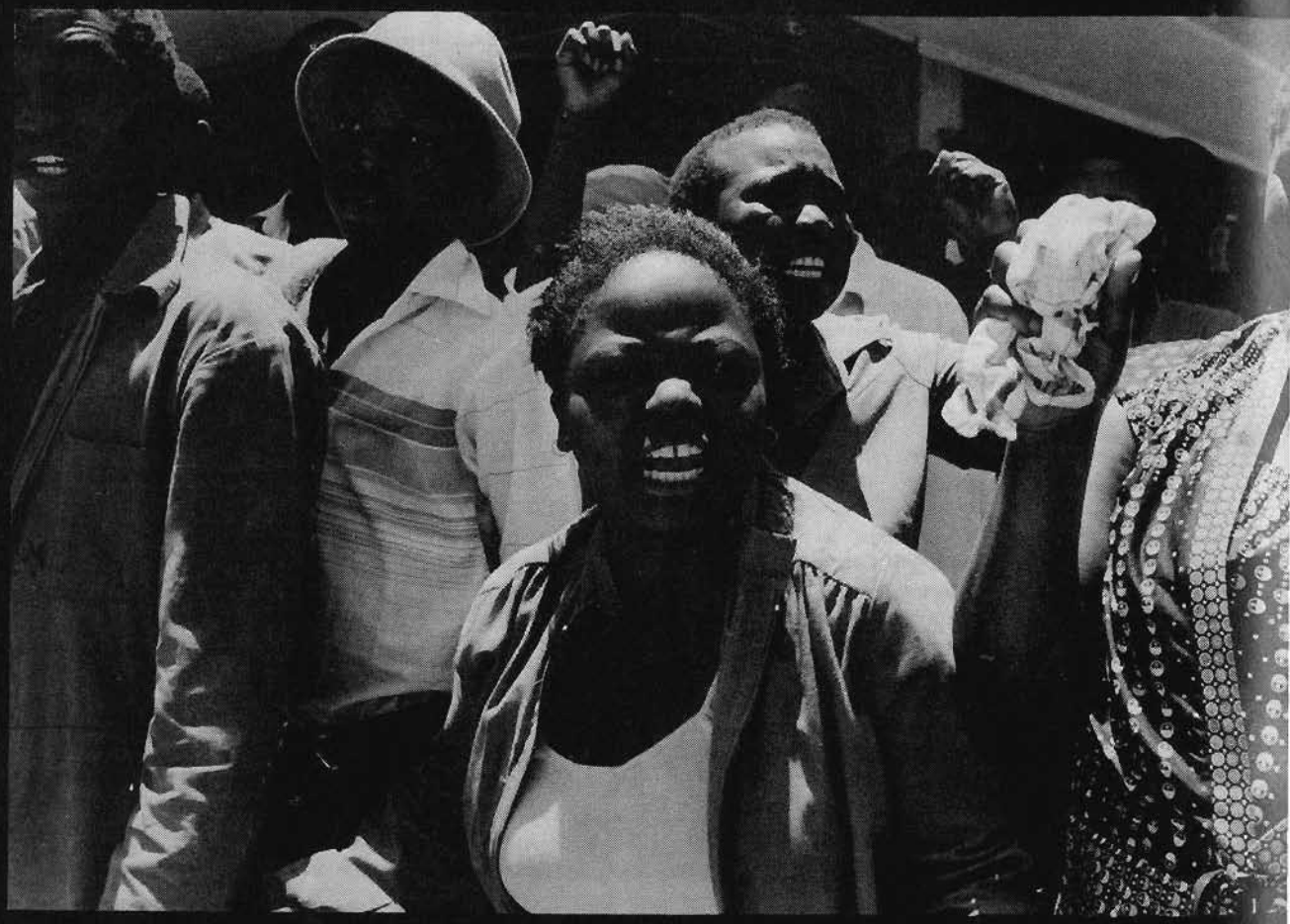
'What are you doing here at this time?' asked the passenger policeman.

'I'm waiting for a taxi, I'm going to the station,' answered Sophie, surprised that her voice was steady.

'We don't want to find you here when we come back,' commanded the policeman eyeing the suitcase. The car screeched away.

She was relieved when the taxi appeared. The driver loaded the suitcase in the boot asking what was so heavy. She simply told him it was groceries.

1



4

6

1 and 2 – Outside the Pretoria Supreme Court after the Silve
ton trial judgement.

3 – Farm labourer who earns R180 a year.

4 – Men's room transit camp Naledi, Soweto.

5 – Labour tenants Piet Retief area.

6 – Transit Camp in Soweto.

photographs by LESLEY LAWSON

3

2

5

Sophie never again had a steady boyfriend. They all deserted her after two or three months. But it no longer hurt. The only name that haunted her day and night was Elias. Ever since Elias had left her she never loved anybody else. All she wanted now was a husband to be loyal to. But she just could not find one. Then along came Jonas . . . She wanted to keep Jonas forever. For the first time in her young life she felt she must consult a traditional doctor for help . . .

There were two other passengers in the taxi who both got off before the taxi reached the city.

'Are you going to the station?' inquired the driver inquisitively.

'No, I'm going to the bus terminus,' Sophie replied indifferently.

'I know you are going to the station and I'm taking you there,' insisted the man.

'You can't take me to the station,' said Sophie, indignant. 'I'm going to Main street next to the bus terminus.'

Ignoring her he drove straight to the station, smiling all the way. When they reached the station he got out of the car and took the suitcase from the boot.

Sophie paid him and gestured that she wanted her suitcase. But the man ignored her.

'To which platform are you going? I want to take you there.'

'I don't want your help at all. Give me my suitcase and leave me alone,' she urged, beginning to feel real hot under the collar.

'Or are you going to the luggage office?' mocked the man going towards the brightly lit office.

Sophie was undecided. Should she leave the suitcase with this man and vanish from the scene. Or should she just wait and see what happened? What was this man up to? Did he know what was in the suitcase or was he simply inquisitive? Even if she bolted he would find her easily. If only she had brought someone with her.

Suddenly she was overwhelmed by anger. Something told her to take her suitcase from the man by force. He had no business to interfere in her affairs. She went straight into the office, pulled the suitcase from between the man's legs, and stormed out.

Stiff-legged she walked towards the station platform feeling eyes following her. She zig-zagged through the crowds, deaf to the pandemonium of voices and music blaring from various radios. She hoped the taxi driver wasn't following her but wouldn't dare look back to see.

'Hey you, girl! Where do you think you're going?' It was the voice of the taxi driver.

She stopped dead in her tracks without turning. She felt a lump in her throat and tears began to fall down her cheeks. She was really annoyed. Without thinking she turned and screamed at the man.

'What do you want from me! What on earth do you want!'

With his worn out cap tipped to the right and his hands deep in his khaki dustcoat pocket, the smiling man was as cool as ever. This angered Sophie even more.

'You are running away and you are trying to erase traces,' challenged the taxi driver indifferently, fingering his cap time and again.

'What's the matter?' asked a policeman who had been watching from a distance.

'This man has been following me from the bus rank and is still following me. I don't know what he wants from me,' cried Sophie

'This woman is a liar. She boarded my taxi and she's been nervous all the way from Kensington. I suspect she's running away from something. She's a crook,' emphasised the taxi driver looking for approval at the crowd that had gathered around them.

'You are a liar! I never boarded your taxi and I don't know you. You followed me when I left the bus rank.' Sophie wept, tears running freely down her cheeks.

'Let her open the suitcase let's see what's inside.' Sheepish Smile went for the suitcase.

'All right. All right.' The policeman intervened. 'Quiet everybody. I do the talking now. Young man,' he said, 'do you know this woman?'

'I picked her up at Kens . . .'

'I say do you know her?'

'Yes, she was in my taxi . . .'

'Listen young man,' said the policeman beginning to get angry. 'I'm asking you a straight forward question and I want a straight forward answer. I'm asking you for the last time now. I-say-do-you-know-this-woman?' He pointed emphatically at Sophie.

'No, I don't know her,' replied Sheepish Smile reluctantly, adjusting his cap once again.

'Did she offend you in any manner?'

'No,' he replied shamefaced.

'Off you go then. Before I arrest you for public disturbance,' barked the policeman pointing in the direction from which the man had come. Then he turned to Sophie.

'My child, go where you are going. This rascal has no business to interfere in your affairs.'

Relieved, she picked up her suitcase, thanked the policeman and walked towards platform fourteen as the policeman dispersed the people and told them to mind their own business.

Platform fourteen. The old lady grew impatient. What's holding him? she thought. She came bi-monthly for her pension pay and each time the taxi dropped them on the platform, her son would go to the shop to buy food for the train journey home. But today he was unusually long in coming back.

These were the thoughts going through her mind when a young, dark, pretty woman approached her.

'Greetings, gogo,' said the young woman, her cheeks producing dimples.

'Greetings, my child,' answered the old lady looking carefully at this young pretty woman who was a symbol of a respectable makoti.

'When is the train to Durban departing?' asked Sophie, consulting her watch.

'At ten o' clock.'

The conversation was very easy with the loquacious old lady. The cars and people on the platform increased.

'Excuse me, gogo, can you look after my luggage while I go to the shop? I won't be long.'

'Okay, okay, my child,' agreed the old lady pulling the suitcase nearer.

She quickly ascended the steps. By the time she reached the top she was panting. To her surprise and dismay, here was Elias shaking hands with

another man. They chatted like old friends who hadn't seen each other for a long time.

Sophie stood there confused. Fortunately Elias' back was turned on her and the place was teeming with people. She quickly recovered and mingled with the crowd. Without looking back she zig-zagged through the crowded arcade.

She was relieved when she alighted from the bus in Kensington. She had nearly come face to face with Elias Malinga. Fortunately he was cheerfully obsessed with meeting his friend. She was scared all the way to the bus terminus, but more so for the taxi driver. Now something else bothered her. The old lady? Who was she? Sophie felt as if she knew, or had at least seen the woman somewhere. She searched into the past, but couldn't locate it.

What will happen to the suitcase? Will the old lady take it?

And Elias? What was he doing there? She suddenly felt hatred for Elias. He had never pitied her, and it was worse when she phoned his place of employment to be a laughing stock to his friends. She became angry with herself to have allowed her life to be dominated by love that brought no peace or happiness, while Jonas was there giving all the love and kindness he possessed. For the first time she fell in love with Jonas. But will he still accept her? If only he could ask her to marry him. She would not do it for the sake of getting married. She would be marrying a man she truly loved.

Jonas and the Nyasa doctor were seated on the bed when Sophie came in. Sophie was surprised to see all Jonas' belongings packed up.

'Are you leaving me, Jonas?' Sophie whispered in a shaky voice.

'No, darling. My father wants me back in Malawi because he can no longer handle the farm by himself. And I would be very happy to take you along with me.'

'But I don't have a passport. How can I go to Malawi without one? And besides, my parents won't know where I am.'

'We are in fact not going today. We will negotiate with your parents next Saturday,' said Jonas pointing at the doctor who sat quietly on the bed, nodding time and again.

It was a cool sunny Saturday when the doctor took Sophie and Jonas to Jan Smuts airport in his small car. Sophie was going to board a plane for the first time in her life. Jonas had made many trips to see his ailing father who wanted him to take over the farm. For a long time Jonas had ignored his father's pleas for him to take over the running of the farm. But now he had finally relented.

Through the car window Sophie watched the people moving leisurely in and out of shops. The trees lining Bezuidenhout Valley Avenue and the flowers in the Europeans' gardens looked beautiful and peaceful as they fluttered in the cool morning air. It was as if she was seeing this part of Johannesburg for the first time.

They couldn't identify baba Banda (the doctor) among the crowd that stood attentively on the balcony, as they stared through the plane window.

The flying machine took off and the crowd waved cheerfully. Sophie felt that it was taking her away from the monster that had terrified her a few days ago.

The buildings below became smaller as the aeroplane went higher, until the undersurface turned into a vast blue sky.

She wondered where in one of those houses, was Mamlambo. But could never guess that it had become the property of Elias.Yes, after Elias had chatted to his friend, he went back to his mother.

'Whose case is this, Mama?'

'A young girl's. She asked me to look after it for her until she returned. But I don't know what's happened to her.'

'Well, if she doesn't come back I'll take it.' ●

Ajaiyi and the witchdoctor

by Amos Tutuola illustrated by Mzwakhe

TAKEN FROM *POLITICAL SPIDER* AFRICAN WRITERS SERIES 58

Several years ago, there was an old man who lived in a village. He was a farmer and had one son named, Ajaiyi. This old man was so poor that all of his friends and neighbours believed that he was really created in poverty by his creator. After several years' hard work this poor old man became too old and weary to work in his farm. But Ajaiyi, his only son, took over from him. He was working hard in his old father's farm and by that he was getting sufficient food to feed his father and himself. Ajaiyi worked as hard as he could until he became thirty years old but yet, he and his father's poverty became worse than ever.

Now, one midnight, it came to Ajaiyi's mind to get a wife of his own as all of his friends had. Having thought so within himself for some weeks, he brought this matter before his weary father:

'My father, how can I get money with which to marry a lady as I am old enough now?' Ajaiyi gently asked his father.

'In fact,' said the father 'According to our custom, it is the father's right to pay the dowry of his son's first wife. But now, it is a pity, as you know, that I am so poor that I have not even a halfpenny to give you to pay for the dowry of a lady. I am very sorry indeed, Ajaiyi,' Ajaiyi's father explained quietly with tears. Then Ajaiyi left him in the room and went to the front of the house. He sat on the pavement and wept bitterly.

After a while, it came to Ajaiyi's mind to pawn himself for money. At the same time he went to a wealthy pawnbroker who gave him sufficient money with which he married a beautiful and sensible lady the following week.

A few months after his marriage, his father became seriously ill so that he died within a few days. But unfortunately, Ajaiyi had no money to perform the funeral ceremony of his dead father. Of course as it would have been a great shame to Ajaiyi if he had failed to perform the ceremony, he pawned himself to another pawnbroker who gave him the money to perform the ceremony.

Now, Ajaiyi had pawned himself to two pawnbrokers. He was working for the first from morning till twelve o'clock and for the second from one o'clock till the sun set. But as Ajaiyi had not sufficient time any more to work on his own farm for his and his wife's living, his poverty became more serious. And as everything was still growing from bad to worse everyday, his wife advised him one day:

'Ajaiyi, will you go to the witch doctor and find out the causes of our poverty and find out as well what can stop it.'

Without hesitation, Ajaiyi went to the village witch doctor. He explained to him about his inherited poverty. But with a sharp and merciless voice the witch doctor replied – 'If you want your poverty to stop, you must buy nine rams and nine empty sacks. Having bought all and brought them to your house, you will put each of the rams alive inside each of the empty sacks. Then at midnight, you will carry all to the grave of your father and put all on top of the grave. But to make sure whether your dead father has taken the rams, go back to the grave the following morning. I am quite sure, you will meet only the nine empty sacks on top of the grave and that means your dead father has taken all the rams. But try to bring the empty sacks back to your house and keep them in the room and you will be surprised, in a few days' time, when all are filled up with money by your dead father to find you will be freed

from your poverty. But you must come and tell me as soon as you have put the rams on top of the grave!'

When the witch doctor had explained to Ajaiyi what to do before his poverty could be stopped, he thanked him and then left his house.

But as Ajaiyi was returning to his house in the darkness, he began to think in his mind. 'The witch doctor said I had to sacrifice nine rams to my dead father before I could be freed from the poverty! But I believe, I will never be free from this poverty because I have no money to buy even a small cock. How much more do I need for nine rams!'

'What did the witch doctor tell you about our poverty, Ajaiyi?' Ajaiyi's wife hastily asked as he entered the house and he explained to her what the witch doctor told him to do. But as Ajaiyi explained further that he had no money to buy the rams and the empty sacks, his wife said loudly:

'Ah, Ajaiyi, you said you have no money to buy the rams! Are we going to die in this poverty? Better you pawn yourself to the third pawnbroker who will give you the money to buy the rams and the empty sacks!'

'Ah! To pawn myself to the third pawnbroker? But I am afraid if I do so, how can I satisfy the whole of them and who will be working for our own living then?' Ajaiyi asked with great sorrow.

'Never mind about our living, Ajaiyi. I believe if you work hard, you will satisfy all the pawnbrokers!' Ajaiyi's wife advised him strongly.

The following morning, Ajaiyi went to the third pawnbroker who gave him ten pounds. Then he and his wife went to the market with the ten pounds. But unfortunately, the ten pounds were not sufficient to buy the whole nine rams and the nine empty sacks. Having seen this, Ajaiyi was greatly perplexed. He told his wife to let them return home with the money. 'Oh, my husband, don't let us go home with this money otherwise we shall spend it for unnecessary things and yet our poverty will remain as it is. But now, let us buy as many rams and empty sacks as it can buy. Then at midnight, you will carry them to the grave of your father. You will explain before the grave that you will bring the rest as soon as you have money to buy them. And I believe, your father will not refuse to accept them because he knew that he had left you in great poverty before he died.'

"Certainly, you are my dead father who will set me free from my poverty this midnight!" Ajaiyi roared loudly as he threatened the witch doctor with the matchet.

Ajaiyi agreed when his wife advised him like that. Then they bought the six rams and the six empty sacks that the ten pounds could buy and they carried them back to the house.

When it was midnight, Ajaiyi put each of the rams inside each of the sacks. He carried them one by one to the grave of his father which was about a half of a mile from the village. Having put all on top of the grave, he explained before it that:

'My father, please take these six rams as the first instalment and I shall bring the other three for you as soon as you help me to get money to buy them.'

Having done all that, Ajaiyi went direct to the witch doctor. He told him that he had carried six rams to the grave. He thanked Ajaiyi with great laughter and then he advised him that he must not keep long before taking the other three to the grave. After that Ajaiyi came back to his house in the darkness. But he had hardly left before the witch doctor and his servants went to the grave and carried the whole six rams to his own house. He killed all for his food and then he gave the empty sacks to his servants to return them to the grave before daybreak.

Early in the morning, Ajaiyi and his wife ran to the grave and both were very happy when they met only the empty sacks on top of the grave for they believed the dead father had taken the rams into his grave. Then with surprise, they carried the empty sacks back to the house. Ajaiyi put them in the room and then he and his wife were expecting the dead father to fill them with the money. But they waited and waited and waited for many months and the sacks were not filled with money and their poverty became even worse. Again all the three pawnbrokers were dragging him here and there for he failed to satisfy any of them. Then he blamed his wife with sorrow: 'I told you in the market that day that we should return home with the money as it was not sufficient to buy all the rams at one time!'

'Ajaiyi, don't let us give up yet, we must try hard. My advice now is to go back to the witch doctor and find out why our poverty is getting even worse than before we sacrificed the six rams to your dead father,' Ajaiyi's wife advised him softly. Again, Ajaiyi ran back to the witch doctor and asked for the reason.

'Ah! your poverty cannot end yet and the sacks in your room cannot be filled with money as you expect until after you have taken the three rams to your dead father!'

The witch doctor frightened Ajaiyi. Without hesitation, Ajaiyi came back to his house and told his wife what the witch doctor had told him.

'What are we going to do next to get money to buy the rams and the empty sacks?' she asked calmly.

If you want your poverty to stop, you must buy nine rams and nine empty sacks . . . Then at midnight, you will carry all to the grave of your father and put all on top of the grave . . . you will be surprised, in a few days' time, when the sacks are filled up with money.

'As you know that we have not even one penny in hand, how can we get enough money to buy three rams and sacks! But now, my plan is that when it is midnight, I will visit my father in his grave. I will say to him, 'You knew that I was in great poverty before you died. But after you died and were buried, you demanded nine rams from me and if I fail to give them to you, I will remain in poverty throughout my lifetime. Of course, I tried my best and brought six for you. But I was surprised to hear from the same witch doctor that you insist on taking the other three rams from me before you would set me free from the poverty which I have inherited from you." '

Ajaiyi explained further to his wife that if his dead father confirmed what the witch doctor had told him to do then he would behead him before he could come out of his grave.

'Ah! Ajaiyi, that is a childish idea. How can you manage to visit your dead father in his grave? Please don't attempt to do that!' His wife was very much afraid.

At midnight, Ajaiyi sharpened his long and heavy matchet. After that he took three empty sacks and went to the grave of his father. Having reached there, he filled two sacks with the earth in such a perfect way that each seemed as if it contained a ram and then he put both on top of the grave. Having done that, he left the third sack and his matchet on the grave and then he went to the witch doctor. He told him that he had put the other three rams on top of the grave. The witch doctor burst into a great laughter when he heard so from Ajaiyi. He thought that he would get three rams that night as before. And he was still laughing when Ajaiyi left him with sorrow and went back to the grave.

As soon as he reached there, he put the third empty sack nearly touching the two which he had filled up with the earth. As he held his long matchet he entered it and cast down in it and then

he was expecting his father to take the three sacks into his grave. Ajaiyi did not know that it was the witch doctor himself who had taken six rams and killed them for food.

After about two hours, the witch doctor and his servants walked in the darkness to the grave. He ordered his servants to carry the three sacks to his house. They hardly put them down before the gods when their master, the witch doctor, began to loose the sacks in the hope of bringing the rams out and then returning the empty sacks to the grave before daybreak so that Ajaiyi might believe that his dead father had taken away the rams. But he was greatly shocked when he saw the earth in the first two sacks instead of rams and he hardly loosened the third when Ajaiyi jumped out suddenly with his long sharp matchet which was raised above his head.

'Ah! Ajaiyi, you were in the sack as well!' The witch doctor and his servants defended their heads and faces with hands with great fear.

Without hesitation, Ajaiyi walked wildly to the witch doctor. He stood firmly before him as he raised the matchet above head and said quietly 'Hun: un! my rams in respect of which I had already pawned myself to the third pawnbroker before I could get ten pounds and . . .!'

'Oh, let me confess to you now, Ajaiyi! It was not your dead father who had taken all your rams but I was the right person who had taken them! I beg you now to forgive me!' the witch doctor hastily confessed as he began to sweat with fear as Ajaiyi was preparing to matchet him and his servants to death.

'But I believe you are my dead father who has taken my rams therefore you are to set me free from my poverty this midnight!' Ajaiyi shouted loudly as he threatened him with the matchet.

'I am not your dead father at all therefore I have no power to set you free from your poverty,' the witch doctor explained loudly with fear. But Ajaiyi hardly heard him speak like that and he snatched his right hand and asked loudly:

'Tell me the truth! Will you set me free from my poverty this midnight?'

'Only your dead father has the power to set you free from your pov . . .'

But as the witch doctor was still shaking and murmuring with fear his servants rushed against Ajaiyi and he too joined them at the same time. All were just trying to take the matchet from him. Having struggled for a few minutes, Ajaiyi overpowered them when he struck many of them with the matchet. Once more, he snatched the right hand of the witch doctor and began to drag him here and there in the room. And as he shouted for help Ajaiyi closed his mouth with the flat part of his matchet. Having seen how wild Ajaiyi had become that moment, his servants kept quiet as well and they stretched their hands.

'Certainly, you are my dead father who will set me free from my poverty this midnight!' Ajaiyi roared loudly.

'But Ajaiyi, I am not a dead man but the witch doctor of this village,' the witch doctor murmured with fear especially when he looked around and saw that all of his servants had already escaped outside in fear of their lives.

'Whether you are a dead man or not, I don't mind, but show me where you keep your money!' Ajaiyi shouted and pushed him with the matchet.

The witch doctor walked with fear to the spot where he kept his money in a big pot before one of his fearful gods. He pointed his fingers to the pot. Without hesitation, Ajaiyi put the pot on his head and carried it to his house that midnight. When he and his wife counted the money which was in the pot it was more than six hundred pounds. So Ajaiyi and his wife were freed from their poverty that midnight. ●

POETRY

ROY JOSEPH COTTON

prison poems

i
ghosts fritter away

shadows dream
of redemption

spirits breathe the blood
of executions

the state is a leper
destined to poison dreams

ii
prison filled
with lambs
while outside it
snows, it snows

prisons filled with snow eyes
while outside it
rains blood

prisons filled
with bloody snow
while outside the
sun sinks into the
pit of the world.

iii
pink doves
in prison;
greyness trying
to love the sky

rose fish
in prison;
stillness trying
to embrace the sun

flesh nude
in prison;
harshness trying
to seduce death

iv
ice shrouds
the prison
filled with
habitual acts
rain greets
the convicts
who wish to
transform death
into the sun

summer reeks
of the stench
of prisons
filled with
the pestilence of
the regime

OUR SCHOOL

Our school is in a field.
That is no good.
We lived in the world: it was a long walk
Back to the school they have given us
In a field. The field is muddy, and stinks.

True, there are many things you can learn in a field.
Useful things. They tell us every day.
They are right. Many useful things.
About nature, and the eternal truths
That grow in fields.
In a field there is no pride, no sin, no lust for the unnatural.
Only natural growth, the evolutionary cycle of heat and cold
And drought and storm damage.
Of this earth we are born, in this earth we must grub and grapple
Till we crumble back into it.
There are many things you can learn in a field.
New things. In the field our empty bellies realised what the world contained
That the field didn't.
And we learnt how little our minds liked
The natural cycle of the field. Drought and storms
And endless scratching at the soil are all right for earthworms.
We are not earthworms.
Anyway, the field is muddy, and stinks. That's why they gave it to us.

We burnt the school.
We left the debris of the worms in the field.
We are coming back into the world. Make room for us.
We belong here.

Karen Press

WHEN I GO HOME

When I go home
I'm going to find
a stretch of road
in the Karroo
that lies flat and straight for miles.
I will come
over the crest of a koppie
and in the distance see
the windmill and its reservoir
next to the road.

I'll sit on the koppie
and look at it.
On the other side of the earth
under the huge pale blue sky
will be a thin line of purple koppies.
Eventually
I'll hear the insects scratching
and maybe a hot exhausted stone
finally splitting.

I'll walk slowly
towards the windmill,
sometimes on the sticky black asphalt
sometimes next to it,
kicking stones
and lifting puffs of dust.
I'll climb through
the barbwire fence,
strip naked
and swim in the reservoir.
I'll sit in the sun to dry.
After a while
I'll climb back
through the barbwire fence
onto the road again.

I lived in South Africa
for 25 years
and never did that once.

Damian Ruth

light and dark

everything seems sunny
the wallpaper shines
the furniture beams
the prospects seem bright

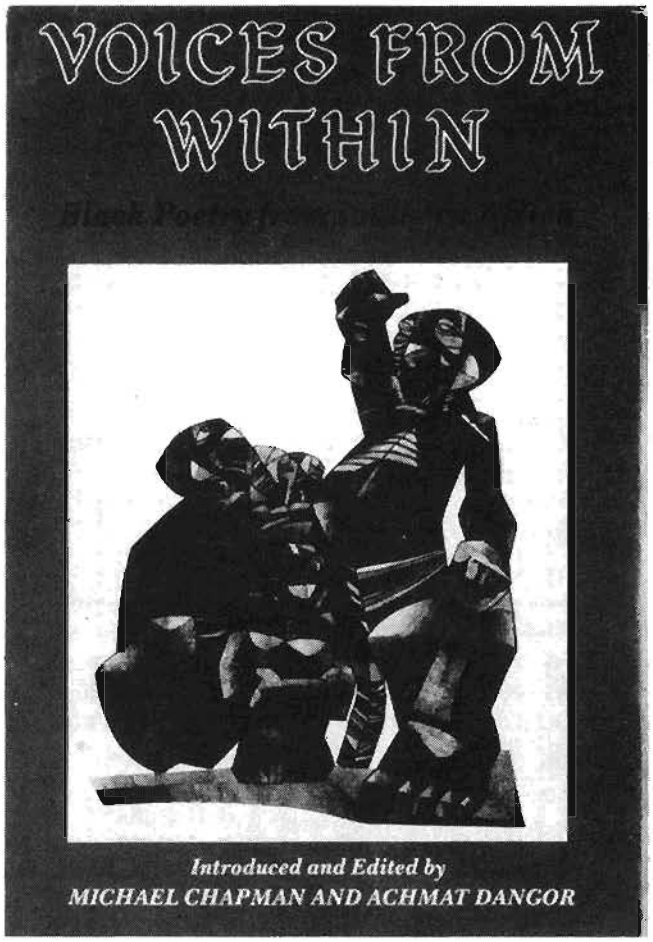
no one sees the horror
creeping in the corner
like a lizard about to
pounce

Roy Joseph Cotton

cops

cops are like red-eyed foxes
driving vans through the pain
cops are silver butchers
thriving in muddy backyards
cops are the protectors
of lace pillows, the protagonists
of golden screams

Roy Joseph Cotton



VOICES FROM WITHIN – BLACK POETRY FROM SOUTHERN AFRICA
introduced and edited by Michael Chapman and Achmat Dangor (Ad. Donker, available in hardback and paperback)
Reviewed by Peter Wilhelm

This is an important and valuable collection. Poems included range from traditional songs and prayers, through sections called 'Pre-Sharpeville', 'Post-Sharpeville', 'Post-Soweto' and work from Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe (though not Namibia).

In broad terms, the purpose of any significant anthology is not primarily to canonise writers –though, as I will argue, this is partially inevitable – but to permit writers and readers an opportunity to assess what has been done, and in what contexts.

An anthology, therefore, lays on the table a necessarily subjectively selected spectrum of achievement; that this one should focus on black writing, at this phase of our cultural development, is no bad thing although, in my opinion, this kind of division will not one day be found necessary.

The editors present some challenging value judgments in their introduction. For example: 'Whereas the first Soweto poetry took as its highest ideal the Western one of justice, the poetry which has emerged since June '76, and which has found an outlet in *Staffrider* magazine, has rediscovered the highest of African ideals: heroism.'

I do not believe that the new black writing should appropriately be called 'Soweto' poetry, except for reasons of convenience. That is to give it a limiting focus. I am sure Mafika Gwala would agree. Furthermore, heroism without justice is naked courage: and that quality, for example, was found on both sides of the battlefield in World War II. I am not sure that it is the highest of African ideals.

Again, the editors lay great stress on 'the participatory ideals of black community'. Yet, as in any other anthology, the writers who are judged to have achieved most are given most space – notably Mtshali, Serote, Sepamla, Gwala and van Wyk. So a hierarchy is sketched out, which implies a degree of canonisation, or critical institutionalisation. Like it or not.

And of course, within the canon of black writing, certain poems have found or demanded such attention and acceptance that they can be termed 'classic' and will be included in any foreseeable future anthology. For example: the beautiful San lyrics; 'Civilised Labour Policy' (by L.R.); Motshile wa Nthodi's 'South African Dialogue'; Jiggs's 'Doornfontein'; Casey Motsisi's 'The Efficacy of Prayer'; Dangor's 'The Voices That Are Dead'; as well as individual works by the four writers I mentioned above.

Sepamla's 'The Blues Is You In Me' is one of the finest poems of the Seventies; it strikes to the heart of personal and collective sufferings and does so in language which takes flight. Van Wyk's 'About Graffiti' is at once dense, funny and prophetic: it can be called a protest poem, but its intelligence and wit make most protest work appear lifeless – protest by the yard.

There are too many poems and 'proemdras' in this collection which are simply fake or dead on the page. Were they written to ensure publication in *Staffrider?* That is a question many black writers should seriously consider about their work.

Space does not permit me much detailed discussion of distinctive writers. But I wish to say of Serote that he is a major writer, who has taken great artistic and personal risks to make work that is moving, disturbing and profound. Meaning and form come together, as in the final cadences of 'Time Has Run Out' (1980):

> too much blood has been spilled. please my
> countrymen, can someone say a word of wisdom.
> it is too late. blood, no matter how little of it, when
> it spills, spills on the brain – on the memory of a
> nation – it is as if the sea floods the earth. the
> lights go out, and hounds howl in the dark; ah,
> now we've become familiar with horror. the heart
> of our country, when it makes its pulse, ticking
> time, wounds us, my countrymen, can someone,
> who understands that it is now too late, who
> knows that exploitation and oppression are brains
> which, being insane, only know how to make
> violence; can someone teach us how to mount the
> wound, and fight.
> time has run out–
> period.

An extract cannot convey the force and honesty of this poem, or that of Serote's growing body of work. Not mere luck or talent goes into this achievement: Serote carries and articulates a burden of consciouness which no ordinary writer can do; in facing so squarely the issues and ambiguities of violence and revolution he touches true tragedy.

In Africa the sole poetic comparison I can make with Serote is the Nigerian Christopher Okigbo, who died on the Nsukka battlefront in 1967 and whose final poems prefigure, accept and sing that death.

But, to make a point which is not of purely African relevance, such writers can only arise if many others – some not even published – help create the literary environment. To that extent, all poetry, indeed all art, is collective – and the individuals who stand out within that collectivity deserve our utmost homage because they speak for all of us. Theirs are the strongest and truest voices from within.

THE UNBROKEN SONG — Es'kia Mphahlele
Published by Ravan Press
Reviewed by Tyrone August

Es'kia Mphahlele regards the writer as 'always the spear-point of a people's sensitivity'. It is therefore within this framework that his work should be judged.

His collection of prose and poetry called 'The Unbroken Song', a selection of work published between 1953 and 1972, is a disturbing example of this philosophy.

The pain and hurt in his work is obvious. The short story 'The Suitcase', written with disarming simplicity, is a powerful indictment of how cruel fate — particularly, it seems, to blacks — is.

'Mrs Plum' is a striking example of the theme of resistance and anger in the work of this pioneer of black writing in South Africa. It is about a typical 'Black Sash', letter-writing liberal.

Mphahlele draws a subtle parallel between her and Lilian Ngoyi, a fearless and uncompromising fighter against the oppression of blacks.

'Dinner at Eight' is another attack on patronizing whites. What is not needed is the 'I like you people, the Africans' kind of liberalism, is its forceful message.

Mphahlele's vehement rejection of white liberalism gives his writing a sense of urgency. There is no time to indulge in patronizing little games. Time is running out for South Africa.

Mphahlele realized this in the fifties already.

His writing is also attractive because it does not try to romanticize suffering. It is painfully accurate in its portrayal of life in what he calls 'the bleeding south of the south'.

The glimpse he gives us of township life is an almost ruthless example. He describes old Newclare with all 'its . . . dirty water, its . . . flies, its . . . horse manure, its . . . pot-bellied children with traces of urine running down the legs'.

No head-in-the-clouds sentimentalism and nostalgia. A true artist. Being part of the most cruel oppression, yet still able to give it an aesthetic dimension.

In the preface, however, Mphahlele is guilty of an irritating element of emotionalism. But perhaps this is excusable. No-one can write about this country and not be disturbed emotionally.

Another appealing characteristic of Mphahlele's work is his theme of hope and resilience. 'This,' he writes in the preface, 'is my unbroken song.' No amount of repression can crush that spirit.

In 1977, after the vicious response of the Nationalist government to the schoolchildren's protests against the education system, he still has the strength to speak about hope.

He writes bitterly in his poem 'The Prayer' that he has returned 'to this killing ground/ . . . Soweto's but an episode/ in our recital of an epic of 300 years.'

But, he carries on, 'the killing ground is moist and ready/ for new seed.' It is remarkable that someone who has experienced so much anguish is still able to feel this way.

Living in exile, away from your motherland, is something only the courageous few can survive. And Mphahlele did for two decades.

It is an honour to have a man of his calibre and intellect in our midst again, and to share 'The Unbroken Song' with him is a privilege. ●

TO EVERY BIRTH ITS BLOOD — Mongane Serote
Reviewed by Jane Glegg

The difficulty of writing about a whole community of people involved in some kind of political struggle is witnessed by the many valiant attempts of the English working class novelists. Mongane Serote has succeeded where they failed. In his novel *To Every Birth its Blood* he has captured that most elusive of creatures, the urban slum neighbourhood, that unique present-day South African anomaly, the township, and made it live in novel form. Others have attempted it before — Boetie, Modisane, Temba, Mphahlele, — and many have given us lively snapshots of certain aspects: shebeen life, street-life, relationships, protests· all have been explored in short stories and autobiographies. But the explorations have either been curtailed, as in the short stories, or made subservient to another function, as in the autobiographies. No-one has attempted to weld all aspects into a comprehensive picture. *To Every Birth its Blood* does just that. It fastens on the old and the young, the drunk and the sober, the promiscuous and the chaste, the idle and the industrious, the living and the dead, and yields them up in their living and their working, their grieving and their cursing, their fighting and their loving, and in their dying, in that 'rumbling, groaning, roaring like a troubled stomach' place that is Alexandra. And from the very beginning of the book, when Tsi and Zola gossip in the graveyard, to the end, when Tsi fails to bring home the clothes Oupa died in, the dead are with us.

The novel opens with the reverberations of Vix's imprisonment among his family and friends, and with dark hints about similar fates awaiting others. The first chapters are narrated by his journalist brother Tsi, whose own relationships and encounters form the dominant material. After Tsi is himself interrogated by the Security Branch as a consequence of his work for a correspondence school and asked about his involvement with the Movement, the focus shifts to another group of characters, only incidentally encountered so far — John, Oupa, Mandla, Dikeledi and Onalenna — and their activities, ideals and escapades connected with the Movement. The narration becomes third person for this section. As the book rounds to its conclusion, we realize that the extended first section has been preparing the ground for the spreading of the Movement throughout the whole community. Through the perspective of Tsi's nephew's death, we look back over a generation to see what has become of Tsi's family and friends as the novel shifts into exile with those of the characters who are left alive.

There is no sentimentalizing — one of the easiest mistakes to make in the presentation of a wronged group of individuals struggling to right that wrong: the characters are as repellant in their weaknesses as they are attractive in their strengths. In a book that deals in depth with people's ideals, their dedication, their struggle to put their ideal into action — in fact with all their finest qualities — there is no trivial tampering with images. Tsi remains the feckless drunkard, agonizing in his drink over those who have paid the price to the end of the book; Onalenna's Yao (and Onalenna has earned a real man if ever woman did) prevaricates with his conscience in order to give his appetites full rein; even Ramono is ruthless in his harshness to his son. Yet the bonds, forged in pain and sealed by grief, that link one life to another, remain unbroken, and lift the characters beyond their petty jealousies and quarrels. the bonds that forge the iron chain of the Movement: the bonds that provide the caring, the sheltering, the helping without which the Movement would collapse.

And it is here, in the portrayal, without didacticism, without political hectoring, without self-pity or raucous protest, of the combined efforts of an entire people to lift the burden from their shoulders, to stand up and say No, whatever the price, that the novel finds its ultimate strength and depth. It is the Movement that resolves the squabbling between father and son, husband and wife, that absorbs the fecklessness, the drunkenness, that multiplies the love and compassion, the caring and the striving and the desperate courage of all the individuals that fight and swear and labour and sorrow their way through the novel.

A slight imbalance in the form at one point rather blurs the emergence of this unifying force. Towards the end of Part One, Tsi's involvement with the correspondence school and his questioning by the Security Branch are set before the reader too sharply, and with too summary a skipping of several years, so that the episode seems somewhat artificial and the reader is left wondering where he has got to and how he has got there. One can see the problems at this point: a shift in time is required to convey the gradual growth of the political impetus, nourished by the impact of successive events. And the reader has, in fact, been carefully and subtly prepared for the ensuing emphasis on the Movement by Fix's imprisonment at the beginning of the book, and by hints about Nomsisi and many others. But he has experienced that imprisonment in all the confusion and ignorance of the characters discussing it, and he needs a more gradual transition to the opening of the section on the activities of the Movement.

The imbalance is more than compensated for, however, as the book nears its end, and the threads are delicately picked up from far back in the novel, and woven both into the reader's consciousness and the history of the Movement — the return of the absent Yao, whose letters we have been reading for so long, the memory of the tiny Oupa, clinging to Mary's skirts and reaching out his hand to his uncle. Our involvement with private griefs and joys and sorrows, our hold on individual lives and fates are never for an instant blurred by the mounting chronicle of political activity, till Serote achieves that ultimate triumph of African humanism, and presents us with an image of intense political struggle in which people care and people count and which leaves us strong in the hope that, ultimately, people will conquer. For all the blood and pain and despair, the foetus will live. This is a book for which South African literature has waited for a very long time.●

TO EVERY BIRTH ITS BLOOD – Mongane Serote
Reviewed by Achmat Dangor

When reviewing the work of a fellow black South African writer there is a constant temptation to 'play it safe': level constructive criticism and praise platitudinously in order to 'encourage'.

However, since Mongane Serote chose not to play it safe, chose the risky adventure of writing a novel of such injudicious boldness, I shall do him the justice of not being objective or even fair.

Very subjectively *To Every Birth its Blood* bestowed a depressing sense of despair upon me. The unremitting scenes of violence and filth and cruelty, stay constantly with the reader in spite of Serote's desperate attempts to instil a heroic spirit in his characters.

And it is this very grotesque conflict within the novel that touched me most of all.

Serote's world (and it is very much his world; one senses him there all the time) is peopled by characters who outlive the '1976' syndrome, and this is their salvation, and the salvation of the world that created them.

The novel is opened by one Tsi Molope, an out-of-work drunken journalist whose odyssey through the streets of Alexandra takes one into a frightening fantasy of violence and death. Gangsters and shebeen queens, murders and drunken orgies, a familiar formula but saved from becoming trite by the writer.

The reader is treated to snatches of sensitive soliloquies and just as you get used to Molope and anticipate him leading you through the novel, Serote disposes of him by turning him into a black executive in an American funded 'Friendship Society'.

Continued on page 48

POETRY — DAVID M'MPHUSU

CHILD IN EXILE
(For D.K.L.)

It is a transatlantic call
A call dancing on the crestfallen waves
Of distances
Rattling my eardrum
Whispering in my ear —
'Greet Mama and Papa
And everybody!'
Those tears welling in my eyes
Red like wounds
I can hear him murmuring how long
Dear Child
Who suckled from the woman i knew
Who carried him unashamed
With dignity
Of a Motherly Pride, Love . . .
Oh dear M. M.
How your mother longs to see you
When you come home
Like the sun rising every morning
I shall expect you any time
Dear Child

David m'Mphusu

SOME ELEMENTS OF LOVE

(for Kathy and Kevin)

Watching him cling to your gourdsful of milk
I stand poised in the infantsmell
waiting for the loveflow
And as it was on his first Day
it hits me and I reel in the sheerwet
fountainpleasure of it
I don't want to learn that it will always
be there

And afterwards
when I lay him nourishedlimp
across my shoulder
and coax the stormfilled winds from
littlehim
I see your ear cocked as you listen
for the love that soughs
in the crook of my arm

It was like that, remember
when he was a tiny speckdrop
and there was so much surf
and wind to love with
that you were richsuspicious
and I suspiciousrich

MY MOTHER

My mother could never carry me
while they used the warmth of her womb
to forge their hearts into hatred

My mother could never wean me
because they dried her out
until her tits were arid tufts of drought

My mother could never embrace me
while she kept house for them
held their children

My mother is
a boesman meid
a kaffir girl
a koelie aunty
who wears beads of sweat around her neck
and chains around her ankles

But, defrocked of dignity
my mother has broken free of the heirlooms
of oppression

These days she dresses in the fatigues of those
grown tired of serving evil gods

Now my mother is dressed to kill

MANY MEN HAVE NEVER CRIED

A man does not know where his heart is
until he has cried
until he has felt the tears
streaming from the weals
of the drenched organ
incidentally passing through the eyes

A man does not die
the day he rubs shoulders with his grave
and his soul crawls into segments of humus

A man dies when he is thrown out
(or when he throws a man out)
of a ten storey building
past the mezzanine of concern
or despair

That's when a man dies
or when I have cried

Many men die every day
Many men have never cried

UP

must be god's phlegm
or the world's asleep
or the earth's upside down
i can't tell

i can see it goes on
and on and on for clouds
and there's sporadic blue
now and then in
bits of fine weather

and i could bounce
on the trampoline fleece
and it's mysti, mute

if i could hear it talk
i'd quote it in whisps
like blown kisses
or let it say how soft
your breasts
will be tonight

The Creative Effort

An analysis of Percy Sedumedi's conté drawing

by Mpikayipheli

Any period in a people's life requires many different kinds of demands. In Azania there are two major demands by the oppressed and humiliated, the cultural and political ones. With these they seek to free themselves from all kinds of oppressive and humiliating forces. 'Carving his way out', (above) is Percy Sedumedi's cultural offering to this noble demand. And like the patriot he is in this important work, he draws our attention to the realities of our everyday struggles in Azania.

When we look at the picture we see the determined working figure with muscular arms and bald head, while determination is dancing with rhythmic pounds of the hammer from the face to the chisel and from the chisel to the hammer. Quick strokes of dark-brown conté are woven in a cross-etching fashion of pen and ink to form a net-like background. The oval head is almost locked inside the arms which form the 'kraal', the gate of which is between the hand clutching the chisel and the right-hand elbow. This egg-like bald head together with the arms and tools in the hands of the worker form geometrical designs — the diamond shape next to a curve.

The positioning of the worker's tools in his hands in the process of carving his way out is excellent. Note the over-emphasis in the handling of the hammer: the head of the tool is almost behind the man's head. This is not practically possible. If one were to strike a certain point with a hammer, you would hardly bring it behind the back of your head irrespective of the amount of force you would want to employ. The point here is that the artist emphasizes the need for the viewer to feel the great force which the worker applies to strike the chisel. In this the artist expresses the great determination the worker in the picture is showing in his fight to carve his way out.

The use of yellow (though the original of this picture is in colour, we still manage to read the important message in black and white) upon which brown is applied gives life to the head and arms; gives a feeling of life to the eyes. Looking at the picture again we notice the remarkable application of the rust-brown conté on the expressive face showing determination and calmness as the man executes his work. We notice also the over-emphasis of self-determination in another area in the picture — the pencil which seems to be piercing through the skin between the ear and the head. This part in itself expresses the need for self-reliance in our on-going creative struggles. This is Percy's tireless effort to depict the determination of his struggling people. It is the portrait of the Azanian people.

Percy, by depicting with sincerity and honesty his struggling people, is ever aware of the deliberate suppression of the creative and fighting spirits of the Azanian masses. This is evident in 'Carving his way out', his important effort towards answering the cultural demand. The struggle the man in the picture shows, as well as many unrecorded ones, shall give other workers courage in their struggles too. Sedumedi's step is another milestone by a responsible artist towards being with the Azanian masses in their many occasions of struggle.

To our artists who have decided to be with the Azanian people everywhere they find themselves, what should be their people's love for work should also be their people's love for food, clothing and shelter. Ha e ye tau, helele thaka! ●

The Mighty Diamonds

'Changes'

'Changes' is the title of this reggae album. I don't know what this title refers to. It must be the change come over the Diamonds themselves who after years of inventive and exciting reggae have now come up with an album which can only be described as dull.

The Diamonds, namely Bunny, Tabby and Judge are backed on this record by the cream of Jamaican musicians including the legendary Sly Dunbar (drums) and Robbie Shakespeare (bass). It was recorded at Channel One and mixed at Tuff Gong (a legacy from the late great Bob Marley). Despite its pedigree this record never quite gets off the ground. 'Pass the Kouchie' track on side one is a presentable enough number and bops along quite happily describing the passing of the Kouchie (pipe), a favourite Rasta occupation. From then on side 1 takes a plunge ending with a very badly produced version of 'Wanna Be With You'. Side 2 is no better except maybe for 'Hurting Inside'.

Perhaps the blame lies with the producer Gussie Clarke because it seems to me that the music lacks a sparkle which could be the result of poor production.

One important thing about reggae albums like this is that the reggae buying public is being duped. Since Bob Marley turned half the galaxy onto reggae converts have been rushing in to record shops and buying. A lack of discernment on the part of buyers can lead to a drop in quality on the part of the producers In other words Rasta dem sit on dem laurels. ●

TWO BAD D.J.

CLINT EASTWOOD & GENERAL SAINT

Reviewed by Owaziyo

These two guys are toasters. Which means they are basically DJ's who started performing by talking and singing while other people's reggae was playing. In turn the best toasters get to have their own reggae to talk over.

Side 1 opens with 'Can't Fake Another Word War' in which the toasters chant down the wickedness of nuclear weapons. 'Another One Bites The Dust' which has also been released on a 12" single is more infectious than Pink Eye.

The album is full of good numbers including a tribute to the late General Echo. Each track will get you upon your feet because this is a dance album. Musicians include Robbie Shakespeare and Sly Dunbar, and on guitar Chinna Smith (who played guitar for Jimmy Cliff in Soweto). Production by Chris Crackwell and Henry Jingo Lawes is superb and allows the amazing talents of the two DJ's to come bubbling over.

This record is on the Greensleeves label. This label is putting out some of the best new reggae sounds and seems to be specializing in Toasters. ●

GIVE IT UP — DISTRICT SIX

Reviewed by Dintwě wa Ramaiphephi

On this album Masekela has married South African and American music, American on side A and South African on side B. It consists of realistic well-woven reminiscences of township experience plus the effect of the influence of the American music it has on his South African or rather African style. This influence no doubt comes about as a result of his long exile in that country since he left South Africa 21 years ago.

District Six has that township feel which is commonly shared by township folks and which they alone can recognize. This is felt when you first hear the saxophone followed by guitars and other instruments, after which the vocals breeze in to blend. Later on Masekela, the trumpet maestro, gets in to hit where it hurts most to complete this township feeling which only ouens and ousies wat van Kofifi, Dikathole and Dark City af kom, can understand, jy maak uit? If you listen to District Six now, you'll listen to it tomorrow.

This marriage of two different cultures makes the lp lose its impact to music lovers who are known to expect something refreshing and permanent.

To those who, like me, are disappointed with side A which is more or less disco music with American tradition, side B more than makes up for it with an abundance of, shall we say, sounds of and for Africa.

VUKA!

An experimental piece

VUKA! Written and directed by Matsemela Manaka
acted by John Moalusi Ledwaba

for
tabang bookholane
and
all those who shed
their blood
their sweat
and
their lives in combat

The original production of the monologue with Fats Bookholane, could not take off because of the death of Fats' son, Tabang. He died in Maputo during the Matola raid.

[At the graveyard. Enter a prisoner carrying the dead body of Nkululeko in a sack. He performs a burial ritual and sings a tribute song and, Hamba kahle. Then he becomes the spirit of Nkululeko speaking to the spirit of his late father.]

that was my funeral
what
the dubulas
they are still there
your son nhlanhla
fell in love
with nokuthula
the daughter
of the dubulas
in their love making
nokuthula became a woman
and fell prégnant
the so-called
damages were claimed
nhlanhla could not pay
but proposed
to marry nokuthula
the dubulas agreed to
the marriage proposals
lobola was announced
that was rather
too much for nhlanhla
two thousand rands
for dowry
everybody was shocked
and you would hear
some ghetto sisters
blowing the ghetto blues

[Mimics] 'there goes nokuthula
mathousands
pushing and pushing
two thousand rands is
too much for a lousy
woman like herself
nhlanhla should forget
about her and have me
for only two hundred rands
pay-while-you-sleep'

that was a talk of the ghetto
one month
two months
three months
no word from nhlanhla
it is said the more disfigured
nokuthula became
the more wrinkled
dubulas face was
then one evening
when dubula had attended
to some family matters
nhlanhla and his beloved
nokuthula chose another way
through the back door
they shed no tears
but fled away

that was the beginning
of an era
those who remained
behind
like myself
began to taste
the smell
of brutality
when dubula burst
into our sleep
very early in the morning
with his knobkierie
flying in the air

[Mimics] 'hey kwedini my boy
mamela listen
tell your brother
xelela umfoweno
unokuthula is my
daughter ngiyamfuna
i want her
do not
answer me back
you think your brother
can have my daughter
for nothing
hey kwedini my boy
mamela listen

i want her back
now ngoku'

we could not avail his daughter
nor could he realise
that we had also
lost nhlanhla
whom we loved as much
as he loved his daughter
if he really did
nhlanhla and his beloved
nokuthula
could not be found
heaven or hell
could tell
a daily verbal
fight
was like rainfall
in summertime
dubula was dubula
he burnt down the house
you erected
the mother of your
children
could not withstand
the battle
she could not live
to witness
a continuous flow
of blood in the streets
of new brighton
she died
fear knocked
into my life and
before i could even
say come in
my blood was already
running like a lightning
current
high above the heavens
i flew to transkei
on a bicycle
before the crowing tone
of the first cock
was heard
i was
already smelling dust
only the sound
of a barking dog
was heard
where the wheels
of my bicycle had .
passed
by midday i had
already passed
east london
and before the dawn
of the next day
i was in the transkei
kamatanzima
umtata
was like a pain
in the penis
most of the dubulas
were working there
i did not wait
for the storm but
sold the bicycle
bought a train ticket
and found
myself in the train
to the city of gold
johannesburg
before
i drowned in the
pool of unemployment
at albert street
i started a one man
business at diagonal street
[*Becomes a street performer*]
as the business was
flourishing
and i was fast
becoming famous
around town
i became worried
of the dubulas
this fame
showed
some flames
of fear
but this fear
did not stop
the business
instead
i became very
intimate with the
meaning of the law
[*With a mask, portrays police harrassment*]
i was stripped of
my business but
some flowers do grow
in dry areas
just at that time of
drought
i got a job at the
johannesburg stock exchange
[*Becomes a window cleaner, singing and interrupting the song by sniffing snuff. He mimes a co-worker*]

phenduka
the white people
a belungu
they say
we must keep
the windows clean
and yet
the country
is dirty
asbeke
look at diagonal
kerk and
west street
papers lying all over
like unemployed workers
at albert street
look
no sense of
appreciation
no love for the
beautiful city of gold [*Pause*]
hey phenduka
look behind you
what a bladdy stock
exchange
did you hear him

[Mimics] 'hi my brother
whats happening man

touch my skin baby
ride on man ride on
you aint gonna
let her start man'

hiso lese
the real
stock exchange
american rubbish bin

baba
i have seen rubbish bins
but soweto
is the best one
she contains
the garbage
of all ages
i saw soweto
the glamorous flower
of resistance
born of the blood
of children
and i saw soweto
swimming
in the pool of pleasure
born of social reforms
mzimhlophe mens hostel compound
is where i lived
i was there when knobkieries
were like fists of students
shouting amandla
there was a dust of blood
in the streets of mzimhlophe
dogs were barking
children crying and
some dying
people were like a forest
on fire
just a swing of one knobkierie
would have the whole township
swinging and twisting
i know
we were born of
battles and bloodshed
but this time
it was a battle amongst
ourselves
this is how the fight
began
[*Becomes a student singing and distributing leaflets. Then as a worker he reacts to the leaflets in his hands.*]

these students have started again
bathini manje
the students representative
council
asks you to stay away
from work
what
stay away from work
they say
baxalile futhe nalo tsietsi wabo
baphi where are they
let them come in here
strues god
they will come in forever
kuzosuza umntwana
a khumbule unyoko
sizobabulala thina

[*As himself*]
little
realising the conflict
students went ahead without
clearing the confusion
we went to work
on our way back
it was happening
we all walked through
pain and bloodshed
people died
we dressed in black
to bury the dead
a meeting was organised
and the famous
regina mundi of rockville
was full to its roof
with rocks of all ages
black people
from all corners of soweto
came together
poor or rich
they were photographed
employed or unemployed
they were televised
doctors bishops principals
teachers attorneys
office workers scavengers
botshotshamabucket
bomanthingilane
you name them
they were there
anxiously
waiting for speakers
to talk about
peace
unity and
reconciliation
this is how
their anxiety was crushed
[*Becomes a priest at Regina Mundi*]
let us all rise
and sing
our national anthem
the words are somewhere
there
on the programme
morena boloka sechaba
sa heso
o fedise dintwa
le matshwenyego
amen hallelujah
sons and daughters
of the soil
before i call
the last speaker
for the day
remember
once more we have
gathered here
because
of our common cry
a few weeks ago
we met over the death
of our children
every day we cry
and
every day we ask ourselves
when are we going
to be one

what kind of tragedy
is this that cannot
bring us together
what pain is this that
cannot make us one
sons and daughters
of the soil
time is running out
allow me to call
the last speaker for the day
over to you mohlomphegi [*As another speaker*]
comrades
we the heart and blood of
afrika
we are fast becoming
endobiotic
in the country of our birth
we are fast
becoming a pest
in the nest
of our creation

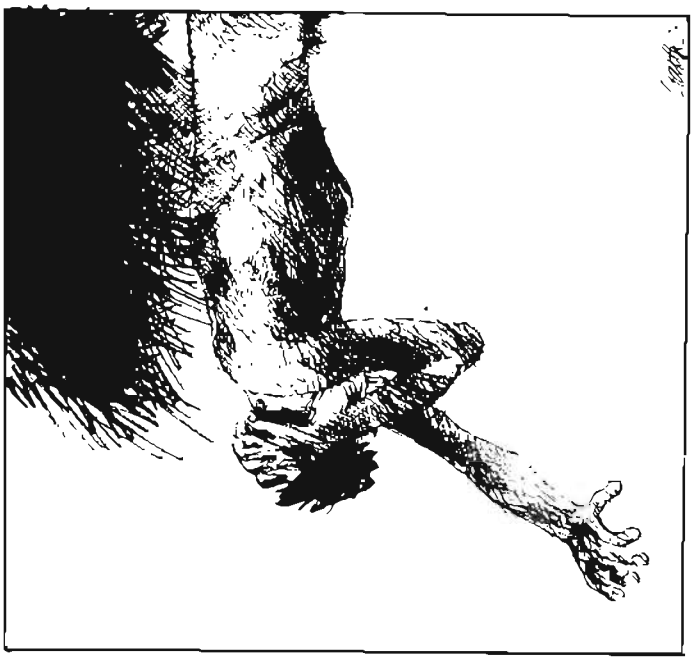
[*As himself*]
who
just who could understand
the bladdy language
in the midst
of such intellectual
outbursts
the dubulas were after
my blood
and i was on the run again
[*Runs to his hotel room and prepares himself for the road*]
now where to·
bophuthatswana is independent
perhaps
i can get tribal asylum
there
yah man ou luke
will give me a place
to stay
do i know
someone there
jeremiah
i have got him
[*Looks for his address in his pockets and finds it on an envelope*]
jeremiah
phenduka
mokwena
p o jericho
via brits
bullshit
i want the house number
not the bladdy post office
anyway
in jericho
i began the search
for phenduka
[Song] i need someone
someone to help me
someone to show me the way
to phenduka
i am not a blind man
i am lost
i come from the city
i have lost my manhood
i come from the city
i smell blood
i come from the city
i need someone
someone to show me the way
the way to phenduka
[*Sits on the suitcases and reads the news*]

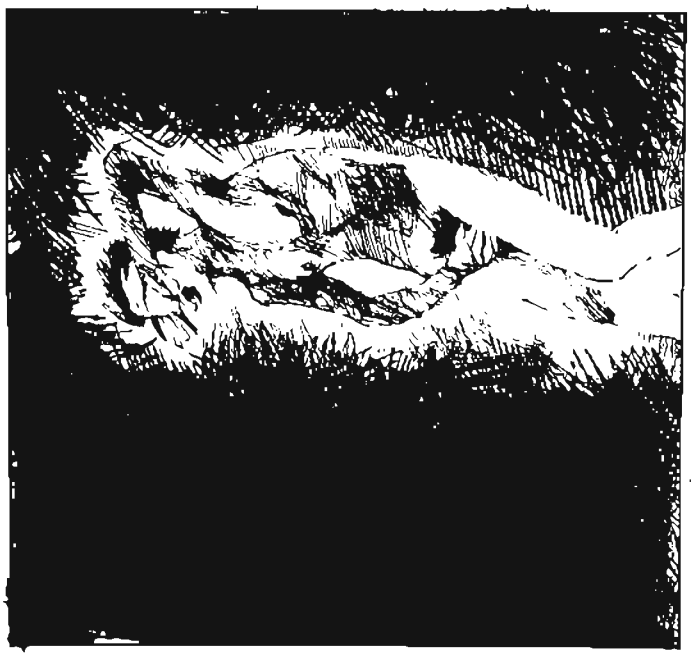
lets see the news
amfokasono
se uyokhahlela la se phesheya
ubabulise labo rabbishe [*Pause*]
its gold again
down goes our souls
underground
up goes phezulu
the price of gold
all the way from
great britain
europe and america
they will come with their
noses about to part
from their faces

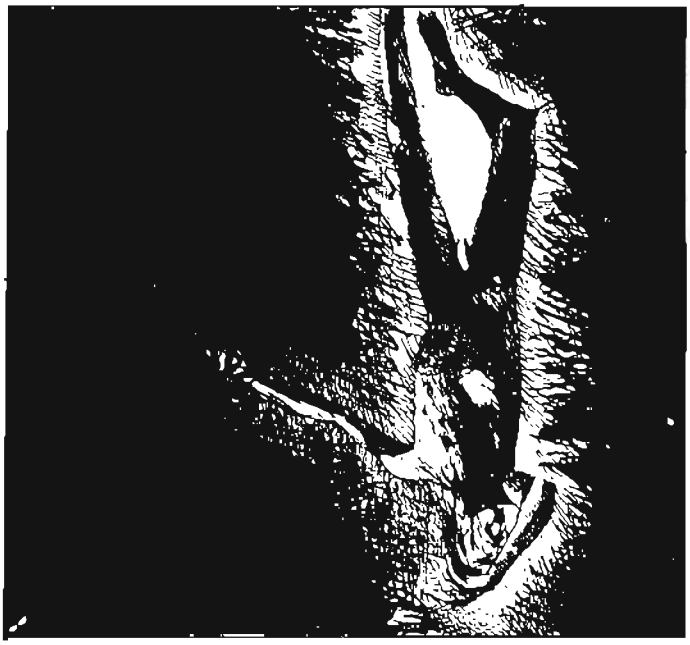
[Mimics] mmm what a beautiful country
beautiful weather
beautiful mountains
and the sun
forever shining
its not the beaurty but gold [*sarcastically*]
men are like drills
they go in where there is a crack
[*Suddenly he registers being surrounded from all corners. Runs to the left, light off, to the right light off, to and fro it's light off. Then into the dustbin*]
is this what
gold does to mankind
money is a maniac
[*Mimics being beaten until he is out of the dustbin, bleeding on the floor. Slowly towards the audience*]

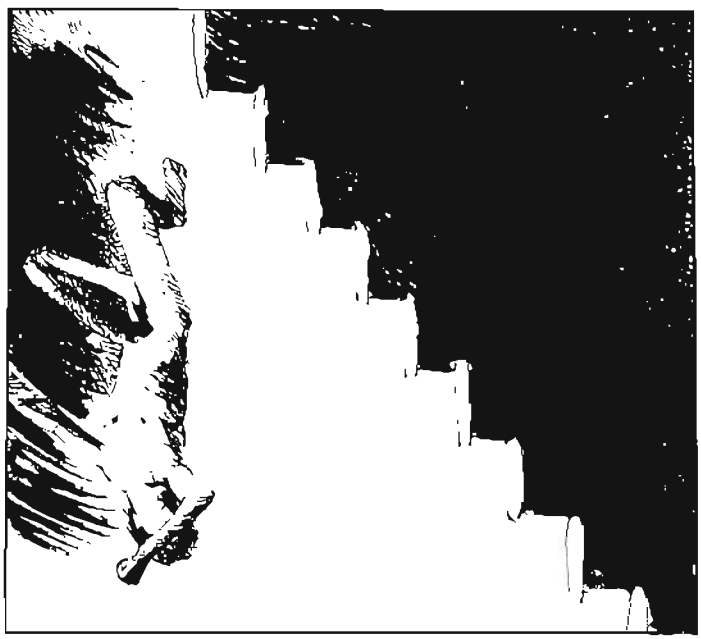
good people
i need your hands
not your eyes
stretch your hands
out of your flesh
and the pains in my flesh
will perish
otherwise my cry
will always interfere
with your comfort
remember
when a poor man's stomach
begins to sing
a song of hunger
it spoils
the rich man's appetite

[*Now to his father*]
baba
the agony in my tears
washed away my fears
i went back home
stopped the faction fight
organised my people
and just before the last flight
my body was mysteriously
found dead
but the spirit lives on
aluta ●









VERSIONS OF PROGRESS

(For Kuntu 'Tame-a-mamba' Moalusi)

> *'What matters for us is not*
> *to collect facts and behaviour*
> *but to find their meaning'*
> *Frantz Fanon*

Man has been to the moon
spreading umbilical concepts
of electronics & space radiation
fast breeding robot men;
Computers have given man
a faded character
– all part of cancer identity;
In ugly mirth we rejoice
over every technological success
and call it progress
Thus welcoming
the Age of the Plastic Man

Yet
we still wonder about the Abominable
Snowman of the Himalayas
We learn of monies poured
into diving schemes to solve
the mystery of the Loch Ness monster
Americans also have their Dollar Quiz
over the Yeti
There's now talk of strange prehistoric
creatures in equatorial Afrika

But
when Zulus spoke with understanding
of the bloodsucking umdlebe tree
that bleats like a goat to lure
its victim
the sages were shocked
Again when my people spoke of
the ivimbela, a flying snake
that only moved in a tornado cloud
dictionaries translated the flying reptile
to mean 'whirlwind'

No surprise then
that baffled colonials called
Langalibalele's rainmaking powers a fake;
Simply that the exemplars of enquiry
were losing step with evolution

Am I surprised
to find the world still without
enough food to feed its mouths?
Still without enough shelter
for its millions?
Worse, what when surplus food is dumped
or destroyed just to maintain gross profit?

My oldman once told me
(I was almost eleven then):
In order not to cheat examples
precedents need not be followed
or lawyers would not have to fight cases

Like other boys of my kinsgroup
I was licensed to eat to my wish
I enjoyed karawala which my mother
prepared with flavouring care
With my friends we ate
the cane rat – ivondwe
We chowed wurumbu
We trapped the chicken-snapping hawk
for meat
We fished the eel, the sea fish
and the freshwater fish
We chowed and swallowed imbazas raw
Nothing happened
Our boyhood appetites were breaking taboos
as different cultures converged
harmoniously
whilst we learned the ABC's of
instant remedy
and instant side-effects

In Afrika
when a snake sticks out its forked tongue
it is pleading for justice
It's not the tongue of the snake
that bites.

LET'S TAKE HEED

Take heed, father
in your wobbles through the night
so piss drunk
you don't know your name

Take heed, son
the bag you just snatched
from the black mama
down in Cross Street
is all she had in this money-world
all she had to feed your own
black brothers and sisters
who narrowly missed
abortion, the seweragepipe
and the Pill

Take heed, mama
your sons don't dodge and hide
from the police
choosing to be criminals
they never wished
to die in casualty wards
netted with stab wounds
moaning: when will it dawn?

Take heed, sister
on your nightland beat
the men that buy your body
also buy your soul
as payment they loan you halitosis offer you VD

Black people, let's take heed

Photo Diary

PETER MACKENZIE

Newclare Tunnel Johannesburg 1982

Bird Park Johannesburg 1981

Continued from page 35

What follows is a phantasmagoria of death and rebellion from the upheavals of June '76 to an indeterminate era where the black fighters, like woodworms within a gleaming piece of furniture, slowly brings the white colossus to its knees.

The young of Alexandra township — heathens, actors, even tsotsis — are transformed into dedicated and desperate soldiers of the 'Movement'.

High police officers are assassinated. Strategic structures, in more than just the material sense, are sabotaged.

It is in the aftermath that the novel loses much of its momentum, the usual torture scenes are trotted out, the hunt for the 'terrorists' etc. etc.

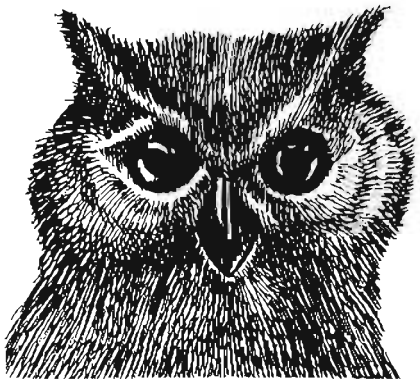
But Serote finally saves his novel from dying beneath a plethora of clichés.

The writing returns to the level where it is at its best: a very personal human level.

Tsi Molope is resurrected, now in exile in Botswana. He sees the escalation of war (South African planes like mythical birds of doom over the skies of its neighbours) through the convulutions of its conscience (pity that Serote should douse the consciousness of his world in so much drunkenness.)

Molope stands in a bread queue in Botswana observing the spectre of hunger and pestilence. Unlike his fellowmen in the streets of Gaborone, he recognises the coming of the apocalypse.

It is Serote's ability to raise his characters and his writing (not without struggle) above the narrow horizons of the township idiom that immediately makes his novel well worth reading. ●



ANIMAL POETRY COMPETITION

A Prize of R100 is offered for the best poem on one of the following animals. Length: a minimum of 4 lines; maximum: 30 lines.

Jackal, cobra, frog, chameleon, monkey, owl, koodoo, warthog, rhinoceros, locust, crocodile, tortoise.

Contributors should include their name and address, and their entries must be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. Closing date 31 August, 1982. Send your entires to:

ANIMAL POETRY COMPETITION
Rhodes University,
Department of English
P.O. Box 94
GRAHAMSTOWN
6140

The Protea
Is not a flower:
It is a dome of fluttering white flags
Tombs of Afrikaner relics,
Monuments of ox-wagons

The Protea
Is the flight
Of a black man's spear
Flung in hostile fear
Of lost possession,
Conquered manhood
Broken pride

The Protea
Is the tears
Of my bonded
Black brothers and sisters,
Falling on Pretoria's marble steps
The voiceless, victims of subjugation

And so, the Protea
Can never, ever be a flower
Not while
The soul of South Africa
STRUGGLES
TO
BE
FREE!

Don Mattera

In our next issue: An unbanned writer speaks. An in-depth interview with Don Mattera unbanned after eight and a half years. And coming soon in the *Staffrider* series, a collection of Mattera's poetry.