

Bird-Monk Seding

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by

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Abstract

This novella is made up of interlinked stories from a rural township in the North West province.

The stories of this surface-tranquil place are told through descriptive passages, vignettes, snatches of dialogue, profiles and picture-postcards, all organically interwoven and entwined, and rendered in non-linear fashion. They are set in shebeens, shops, farmlands and the dusty empty spaces of the South African landscape, peopled by police, tourists, and prostitutes of all sorts. The pervasiveness of violence in all forms has the fictional narrator reflecting on the violence of his own past. A smattering of musicians' musings gleaned from interviews and album liner-notes helps him navigate his way through this morass, the rage and frustration that simmers beneath it all.

JOBURG STREET. Noon. Approaching a four-way stop. Off the bus, walking. Wrinkled, close to the bone, legs wrapped in pantyhose with runs in it. Looking poverty-stricken, threadbare sweater, white woman, grey streaks in her hair, middle-aged, as she turns sideways to check the traffic lights her face is squashed-looking, anaemic, seems like no blood coursing beneath that skin. Mouth thin. The traffic lights open for her, and me just behind her. She is about five metres ahead. A taxi, stopped from cutting across by the red light, is idling there. When she is about a metre from the taxi the driver revs it, hard, it seems to jump, she is startled. I look at the taxi, and the driver is laughing, so is the passenger next to him. The white woman screams, turns to the taxi and shouts: 'jou fokkkon kaffir, jou swart lelike bobbejaan!' The bag i am carrying drops out of my hand, an overwhelming rage attacks me. But i can't make out who i am angry at, the crap taxi driver showing his teeth or the wizened parchment-skinned racist creature in front of me. Two Chinese men come from across the street and they shrink back in fear, looking at...me. The traffic light turns, the woman is across the street, still swearing, the taxi still heaves in laughter, i am in the middle of the street. Other cars start getting their hooters going, I pick my bag up and drag myself back to the pavement to await the next traffic-light change, breathing heavily, hot.

BAVINO SEKETE. That is my name. Sekete is 'thousand' in Sesotho. From there to Bavino M. Bavino the Man, I have been called, by friends. Friendship? My aunt's place, 5100 Tsolo Street, Orlando East. I spent some years there. Have I spoken of Vincent Sekete, my cousin who grew up to be Sasol 3, betrayed to death on the guerrilla-front? OK, at some point in that house, lived a family-friend (as they are called). A gentler person I do not know. So shy he seemed to speak from under his armpit. Glass eye constantly shedding a tear. Looked sad. So caring he would advise us not to eat the atchaar from the corner spot, they used uncooked oil in it. Guess what? He turned out to be Joe Mahlangu, the Lovers' Lane killer. Serial murderer. He killed the Romeos & Juliets of the Soweto corners doing the huggies-&-cuddlies. The police brought him in cuffs to the house at some point, and everyone caught a beat-down, even my five year old cousin. Cos when they asked where the guns were, Mpho ran & got his plastic pistol. This is how they went into the crime-lands to clean the place up of the earth-scum. Muggers, killers, rapists, so-forth, even in infancy. We are talking sunken friendship: It has to be a heavy dirge, some kind of 'death fugue', if I were to compose or write that. Actually I am constantly doing it, always, in different ways. I just need to transcribe my cries.

My childhood, well, all friendships I made, came through conflict: Brawls, arse-whippings. I grew up in various houses built on violence. But that is a topic for psycho-specialist hustlers the pharmaceutical mafia to make cash out of. Right now I am talking about this: blood-splat & mucus splatter connections, you could call it. See, without brutal violence, on all sorts of levels, there is no Soweto. I swapped flesh-cutting with fists, running stone-battles, between us kids while punk-arse adults stood there cheering...sick... Anyway, knives cutting through skin. No, I am not carrying my scars in place of medals. Just spitting a little truth.

Talking about unhealed wounds & my cicatrix that never give up on their itching: this Mark of Cain below my left eye, 5 star is how I got it. My high school mates wanted to run a train, a belt on this girl I had connected with in a tavern. I lived in Phefeni, that night i was in a place called

Emndeni, other side of Soweto. Far from home. We went drinking. I met a girl. Street-corner chemistry & the fire-flames. OK. At some midnight point, this one guy, Thami he was called – classmate & outside-school buddy – he said ‘You guys need a stadium?’ That is what we call a ‘fuck-zone’, a place for some furtive in-out action quick & to the point. We huddled, the girl & i, & came up saying yes, we needed it. He offered up his parents’ backyard room. Happiness, all good & nice in the neighbourhood. Hormonal riot coming on, we went there & got into it, making out. That was the night of my vaginal circumcision. Odd as it may seem. I took a thrust, pain shot through my groin, like dynamite blasting my crotch. Like some razor had gone slash in my loins. I left the place with blood on my pants-front & flowing from under my eye cos then, these guys, friends of mine, came in & stuck an Okapi in my back, demanding that i get off so they could get on. Memories of shit i would rather drop except to say i got cut, the one with the knife was trying to poke my eye out, i think. Well, they too carry reminders of that night. We all do, hearts heavy with piled-up crap.

Fights: the fluids that flowed on & onto those streets rendered ties that bound me to others. The same ones whose heads I tried to lob off, faces I tried to smash in. We walked off from there tight, often. But those others are mostly dead, off their rockers from chemicals braaing their brains to ashes, deranged drunk, all manner of freaks & prison-cell hopping. Society’s stamped perverts. Not long ago I was in White City, I grew up there, as well, and met one of the last of that number. He was babbling, face grey, hair white, toothless, they take him for Locomotive now, off his tracks... he looked like his own grandfather. My son thought him decades older than me. But we’d run together in torn shorts & sole-less shoes that left our footprints on the ground, showing our dusty toes, same time, once.

I have forever been close to those who do not snugly fit, for whatever reason. In Chiawelo i ran with a boy called BOYKIE, he couldn’t speak except through grunts & other non-verbal sounds. Boykie had to go wearing an OK Bazaars plastic bag on his chest cos he drooled, heavily. We would go to Sans Souci bioscope in Kliptown. At intermission get meat-pies, the best this side of things. And half his food would end up in his bib cos his hands were like claws, twisted, he couldn’t hold things with any, shall we say, expertise. Anyway, always, at movie-end, stepping out we’d find the coloured kids standing on the stoep, waiting to fuck us up. But damn, after all the Bruce-Lee-Silver-Fox-Angela-Mao shit on the screen, there was no round-kicker better than Boykie. We would hand out free bursaries of arse-whippings & then run off, Boykie shrieking with glee. FRIEND. He would never leave me behind, not once. Guys would not be wanting to hit him, they would be coming for me. But he was always deepest in the fight-mix cos i was there.

At Turfloop the most hectic activist was a guy without arms, it all ended at the shoulder, both sides. Always had the hottest siyayinyova speeches in meetings. All the way upfront in burning-and-looting time, he’d be shouting ‘comrades, thrash this, smash that; no Com X, leave that one, it is useless, ok Com Y, got the petrol, right who has the matches...’ he was The General of that barmy army. He would be organising the running when the apartheid beasts came. Bad & brave, man. He gave the most kicks when Varara clashed with Zim-Zim, a sad pathology that, but...well...always: Friend. Never any sell out detention-moments.

My old man's first stint in prison was a 12 year bit. What happened, he was drunk asleep on a bench in a shebeen when he was woken up by croaks & gurgle-sounds of sorts. He sat up to find his friend, later to be my uncle, on his back with a guy wielding a panga over him. My old man, China they called him for his slit-eyes, got up & stabbed the guy in his heart. Kaput. They went to court. Guilty verdict. In prison, asked to show his number, he said he only pledged allegiance to his friend. So it was.

Close to his death, Ingoapele Madingoane was a lonely man. His BC comrades would have nothing to do with him. But at his memorial the whole blasted fat piglet lot of them came out spouting platitudes. Friends.

Peter Makurube died of malnutrition and neglect after all the years he put in to the arts of poetry & music. He was persona non grata in all besuited over-flabby frames. Memorial & funeral what happened, all the rats came out screaming praises. Friends.

Mafika Gwala died torn up, soul cut to pieces but spirit still flying high with defiance & an unchanged, solid belief in what he stood for, a world beyond the grasping, clasping, clawed existence some sold on the stock exchange. That man brought me to consciousness. & at the end there he was in abject dire circumstances. Eating away with the sickness coming in from without...& then of course the Farts Minister had a lot of broken, hot wind to blow about how great Gwala was & that they'd been in negotiation to put him in the education-stream. Lies & bullshit. Faecal-faced Friends.

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I am here in the bushveld, trying to write an essay. On Jazz. The links between the Atlantic bone-rat, the flesh-slash slave-wave-surge & this south's noises, down the line. I am a dabbling scribbler and I write, a lot. Of things, and ways. Forms, too. Straddling the line between poetry, prose and all that comes with. I put things on stage. Life's theatre. And in the dust too. Street-corner and academic podium. No matter. I am a sentient being, derelict, no abode fixed in space. Romantically referred to as nomad.

Jim came to Joburg so Bavino goes to Marico. Man in the bush in quest of Bosman's ghost. Finding AWB rabidity. Tranquility so deep it kills. Hate-hounds. Beneath the surface quiet; such racist rabidity. & children dying. Starvation abounds. Raw sewage in the water supply. Crap in the taps. Fate same as in the Free State. Skin matters. Ancient white beards sexing black teens for tins, food exchange. The soul's impoverishment. The starved get their humanity halved. And weekends of sex-tourism. Alcoholic stares everywhere. Deep fear too.

I've spent months doing head-work on this thing. Mista editor said 'Yeah it is great but *no, no*, *no*, I think you should toss it all out & think up another way.' You know, our readers are not, I hate to say this, but they are not *too* smart. This is too, shall I say, *involved*? ...open it up some more, give it space to breathe. So the reader can sink into it without too much work, you know, I am sure you know what I need, having worked with Bantu Educated people and you so... ahm... erudite... you have to slacken things a bit so they can... get it. They have to get it!'

Mista Jazz Vibe editor asks me to say things about myself, a 'bio' for his readers. Ok, here goes:

Until I went to that bush college called the University of the North to study law the only white people I had any dealings with were my Catholic priest, the doctor at the local clinic ... and the policeman. Meaning, one for my spiritual health, the other for my body, and the last to take care of my criminal inclinations, natural since I was bred in a set-up designed to foster such.

The laws of the land said that I could only be born, schooled, grow up, get medical care, worship, have human relations, in a specific area set aside for people blessed/cursed with 'x' amount of melanin. Well, Soweto was and is a slave-labour camp set to the southwest of Johannesburg city. That side of the mine-dumps furthest away from the centre of finance (the city-heart). How things lie around these parts is: from the onset, the centre of the city was white and hues got deeper the further outward you travelled. White brown black and in-between, whatever colours played themselves, from honorary-white (talk Asia) to navy-blue.

I was baptized at Regina Mundi, Catholic, by a Father Coleman. Regina Mundi was later to provide shelter, solace, whatever protection it could to the activists who tossed their beings outward from before 1976 onward. That is where I encountered Black

Consciousness. The art that shattered my little English-gentleman-stuck-in-the-Soweto-ghetto pretensions.

I got the worst formal education this side of the 20th century. The architects of apartheid, sought to make me and mine 'hewers of wood and drawers of water.' They deemed mathematics, for instance, beyond my grasp. Said it would crack my skull. Calling up butt-bare-crap-faced eugenics, they said my brains were more watery than those of white people. And thus I was unfit for the empirical shit. They said it was 'useless' to have me chained to a school-desk when I could more usefully be out in the fields of the white man digging holes and sowing his treasures, or pulling them up out of the earth in South Africa's blasted mines. At any rate, Bantu education was a crime against humanity, I will say until the end of my days. 'Though my soul be black as sin,' for me... 'baa baa black sheep,' ...you would be hard-pressed to find anyone you could, in all sanity, align to a sheep in Soweto.

I was sexually active by the age of 4, not because as the craniometer-wielding anthropologists would claim, black people are over-sexed sub-humans, all flesh and no brain, that is, bound to the skin. But rather that with not a single brain-cell rattling thing to do in that Pavlovian compound, children's bodies turned into laboratories amongst themselves, which indeed they were to white supremacists wielding some power-drunken god's will. And blessing.

June 16, 1976 ...Hector Pieterse the first child victim of the beast, was shot 200 metres away from the house where I was born, 7758 Ngakane Street – the street named after the man seen as the father of African cinema, in some quarters, Lionel Ngakane – opposite the house of James Mthoba, who introduced 'experimental theatre' to these parts and died some years ago under mysterious, violent circumstances.

My mind feeds on human bits and pieces strewn gratuitously about. I have carried the smell of blood in my nostrils for as long as I can remember. I remember, as a child, saying to my mother that I wanted to be a gynecologist, and she was proud...then endless knife-fights and torn flesh, skin pulled roughly apart under okapi and butcher-knife tearing, tomahawk-slashings and the air heavy, wet and warm in some perverse kind of exsanguination cured me of that. Still...the stench of the life-fluids stays with me.

I grew up watching my mother get her face split under the fists and boots of a multitude of men, who, when she (I imagine) could take no more, were pushed on to expend whatever excess anger, energy, fury, fueled by their own emasculation they had left on me. I carry the scars on my back, face, body as a reminder. Anyway...I am here. What more do you want to know?

What more do you want to know?

How, after June 16, 1976, I stood at the door of a gutted bottle store, dressed in slippers torn just so that my toes showed, my nose full of teargas and a case of beer on my head even

though I had never tasted alcohol in my life...across the way was a police truck, teams of uniformed officers-of-the-gore standing there, throwing dead bodies into the back of the vehicle. I was 11 years old.

No, scars are not medals. Never should anyone's art be 'relevant' or of consequence because they went through this or that shit. Some kid munching on an apple in some crap American suburb praying to the tooth-fairy should be equally valid as a child getting its skull cracked by mortar-fire in Afghanistan, another scraping and scratching the lice off trying to grab a crumb of bread in Rwanda and another dying because some bureaucRAT, some rabid rodent in a high office some place wiped its arse on 25 million rand. So too, a couple making romantic love as some psychopathic misogynist is splitting some woman's genitalia apart in some hidden corner of the world. All those are part of our human experience.

Where do I live now? I am a professional parasite and an unapologetic hobo. No matter, I carry Orlando West and all the other places I've lived in wherever I go. I have travelled all about...and still, I remain a Sowetan.

I draw inspiration from across the entire spectrum of the world's literature, fine arts, music... painters Fikile Magadlela, Dumile Feni, Lefifi Tladi, Thami Mnyele have always been crucial to my writing. Visual artists with social conscience. And writers who cut out and stomp on whatever literary conventions enslave, from Lautreamont, Artaud, and Pasolini onward. The South African Blue Notes (Johnny Dyani, Mongezi Feza, Dudu Pukwana, etc) and where they took the music of this land, revolutionising the euro-jazz scene. The Wole Soyinka of 'Ogun Abibiman'. I came to black consciousness via Mafika Gwala. I carry Aime Cesaire in my head. Franz Fanon is my father. Burroughs is central as daddy formal innovator, plus. That is the company I keep. Reclusive as I might be.

My ghetto-youth bibles: Mtutuzeli Matshoba's 'Call Me Not a Man' and Mbulelo Mzamane's 'Mzala'. Matshoba first dealt with ghetto reality at whitelight, searing, excoriating, burn-the-place-down line-them-up-I'll-shoot-them level. Mzamane made me realise that life grows, even at the most despicable, revolting, down-in-the-sewer-sucking-on-faecal-matter-level. My gutter anthem was the ultimate poem of my black consciously-reaching-for-selfhood days, 'Afrika My Beginning' by Ingoapele Madingoane. He died with an axe in his skull, sitting on a toilet. It tells stories, that, about our ends. But life is and will be affirmed, even at the most below-the-back-of-beyond level. Peter Tosh and Fela Kuti said they would be here beyond the ticking of clocks. millennia-long & so far...well, they are.

I was born in Orlando West. Bred thorough all across Soweto. Orlando East, White City, Chiawelo, Meadowlands, Diepkloof. I schooled in Jabavu, Moroka, Jabulani...Even though homeless, at home. Vagabond wordman. I'll yap, write, recite,shoot at times, anything to get The Word out. The Word is paramount. At all times i walk this land. And talk it, too. My name Bavino...if Zola-bound, i'd be Kau, elsewhere Ntanga, or Bafoza, Magenge ... Hola Bavino, heit' Bachana... my Orlando western street corner male endearment term... & that's the story's end, when i get on the train at Phefeni station.

At home boko was haram. A vicious evil aunt thought books bred rats, caused roaches. Put them out in the yard to be rained on, and powdered in the sun. My reading became guerrilla. I grew up on Scope magazine. The same one SADF boys on the border worked themselves up off in order to better rape Namibian children. Yes, Scope, with its starred nipples and cockroach legs...the censor with one hand on the scissors, the other on his genitals ... rubbing away and scrubbing out. Adolescent so it shaped my senses. Grensvegter. Tessa. Die Wit Tier. It was war in glossy pages, on the 'uitlanders'...

My old man peddled marijuana to put me through varsity. Career criminal. Spent more years in jail than our much cosmeticized political veterans. Law is not Justice...check the difference. You want law you go to court. You seek justice; you take it to the street. So I hit the tarmac running. I was a guest in dark places I had no wish for. 'I have seen things' the film says ... States of Emergency. The Varara-Zim Zim chasm. Zulu Dawn, Student Gang Rapists. What they called 'The Belt'. Tiger balm. Thugs. Pangas, knives, axes in flesh. Bodies crumbling down. People hurt. Blood-wet... I carry the smell of that blood in my nostrils, still. Hits me when least expected... Brains peeping out. Intestines gathering sand. Burning looting bleeding batoned skulls bones broken.'uLeft uRight, nyamazane'... Lice & lies at police stations. Screech of keys in locks...then the skin-scratch. The stench of inhumanity in prison. Poison in veins, courses brutally, & bursts out, fierce. Bodes well for hell, this. Iyamemeza iAfrika! Amidst it all, my first son's conception (tumult makes the hormones riot).

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Eyethu Cinema, midnight show weekends. Visuals; image and word. Moving frame by celluloid frame. To be embedded on the walls of my cranium. Granted it was not skull-crack intellectual fare. Swords-n-sandals, cowboys and karatekas. My mecca. Silver and golden foxes. Then in the middle of it, they tossed in porn. The censorship hit against the rocks. Titanic crash. To write cinematic ... the poetry of film.

Eyethu Cinema: Mofolo, edge of the reed-lands and sea-shell sitting there, a purulent sore, warm inside, away from the hostility & the ghetto. Temple of some doom, yes; but what the church should have been also, solace. A place to curl up in the velvet seat and be wrapped. For the time it takes for the double-feature to turn out. Midnight.

Before the feature, the 'showing shortly', what is to come, scenes cut out, the more fire-flamed turbocharged designed to hook, like heroin (oh, Bird, that wire cut deep into the system, right thru the mouth and out the anus...and it could not be pulled out, the day they tried...it had aged you twice, and when it plopped out, so did you) from some next week future...to tell 'come again, what's coming is better maybe than you are about to see'...and then...splashed across the sea the ocean, and speedboats and pretty people on them. And helicopters, and adventuresome others trying to do the yummy ones in...heartstrings pulled and of course at the final moment, our beautiful attraction-worthy ones coming through and then...'Peter Stuyvesant', the main man striking a light and necklacing a cigarette inhaling in time with the female sighs in the audience...& 'the international passport to smoking pleasure'. Then the big, rugged & tough Marlboro man. The virtues of machismo. Battling the elements and coming out winning the beautiful women. & then to wash the mind all clean of dirty thought, Lifebuoy, the red coloured 'soap of champions'. Moving images of the soccer dribbling wizards of the day in their glory. Percy Chippa Moloi, Scarra Sono, Kaizer Motaung turning defenders out. Sport, the thing of aspiration.

Sans Souci. The coloured beyond black factor. Meat pies & sticks & stones. 'Julle fokken kaffirs'. Fights in the dust, battles to scrape the colour off. To get to paleness. & days, when moneyless, the proprietor sitting us children on the stage, the screen a metre away, looking up. The figures on screen all jaunty twisted out of shape, the guns all wobbly jelly.

& then outside, after the film, the coloured factor. The kicks to the stomach and you would be holding in the meat-pie you ate earlier, trying not to throw it out. And the swollen eyes and the dust rubbed in the eyes. Yes, sand to your sight & there is burning in there. And Bruce Lee, Silver Fox, Golden Fox and the Shaolin Temple is in you. And you stand there. And they are yellow around you, and you remember how Mr Ma-Kick jumped up, turned around, twisted & flicked his foot at that crap villain...and you tense, clench muscles, & take off & spin in the air like you have seen...and just then the one kid had come away from the rest to hit you when you were not looking...and you smack him square in the face with the inside of the foot and he takes to the dust mouth open and he gulps on the soil...squealing. & the rest see that the

martial artist has stepped off the screen into the streets of Kiptown and you dig deep into your lungs and let out a yell straight out of Hong Kong and the Kiptown bully-kids take off in all directions...and you are a hero striding home, until next weekend when you come back, and your friends slap your back and Boykie guffaws into his OK Bazaars feedbag.

& then later, all grown. Vietnam in celluloid now: Platoon, Apocalypse Now, Full Metal Jacket, Deer Hunter...ah, power playing with itself. Even when heart-tearing intestines around neck screaming out injustice decimation genocide holocaust it was always about The Power. The Vietnam Ho, Nguyen is nowhere to be felt. Seen perhaps, fleeting as last week's rice in the paddy. The conscience tug, the questioning, the vile inward-going and outward spew...all American. Vietnam just a canvas to toss vomit or kiss-saliva at. All films of supposed conscience just American ejaculation like when the porn comes in between the features, to kill time so when the last film ends the sun has broken. Then we can go home through the reeds with sight enough to see the muggers and night-time marauders lying in wait...yes, when the skin bits come on & there is tucking at meat in the dark and the juices fly & land in the hair in the seat in front...yes the gore, the blood & the bullets eating through bone and sinew... & all the while we were screaming & shouting hoarse for the Ah-Mary-Fucking-Cans!

Eyethu Cinema midnight show. One intermission, a neighbour, chair next to him empty. As the lights went out a woman came, slid across the aisle, a bag of popcorn and a paper-cup. I saw the man had his elbow on the empty seat, fist clenched, facing up, she sat on it. slight, wet sound emanated from the contact. Heavy sigh, I looked away and at the 'showing shortly' flashing across the screen. And shortly after that the Peter Stuyvesant commercial (pretty people in speed-boats and private jets flying across my famished imagination)... that is how I started smoking.

Eyethu was uterine. Warm and liquid in there while outside the wind howled across Mofolo Park, carrying cries with it. and the barks of order from the down-low demanding either money or life. Today, at home with cinematography, I sit in wonder of the censor's snip and snap, thinking: 'none more graphic than lived reality'.

The Omen – the devil child come to lay god's kingdom flat in his father's name.

Swords n Sandals, togas – Brad Davis, Dan Vadis, inhumanly bemuscled top off & in what looked like tablecloths, carting swords that made the air scream in soprano, slaying slavers.

Spartacus & the ten gladiators – the ultra-muscled super-he-men.

Boris Karloff – maggots growing out of one side of his face. The side he'd previously lain on, in his grave, before the rising.../resurrection-blues time. He'd flick it at the enemy and that was that, a torturous death.

Woody Strode – sole blackman anti-hero. Sydney Poitier, clean cut and pasted in dignity. Looking good. Once upon a time in the west. He died within minutes of his ebony prettiness

and shaved skull getting us all black powered each one to FIVE FOR HELL – scary Klaus Kinski encouraging the wearing of scowls, the masks of emasculated Soweto life.

The Unholy Four, that number against a fascist army. We went blasphemous, sacrilege was a thing of love. The magnificent seven. Yes...the numbers kept coming.

And then...The East comes to town – Angela Mao, swordswoman – the cure for gender violence had a name. As she slashed thru carriers of ‘powered’ genitals.

Johnny Robot- Japanese (I fantasized myself with this gargantuan steel-fighter, super-human...none would touch me. but all my friends died violently.)

The west is here, Valdez is Coming, Death Rides a Horse. Terence Hill and Bud Spencer for the comic factor, My Name is Nobody. Lee van Cleef, Clint Eastwood (not acting, they said, just fitted into the frame) – Man with No Name, heroes to the nameless. Or the deliberately misnamed.

Film brought me here. A brutalised child, skin flayed off my back, week-days the torments of school, sadistic teachers who insulted, beat and gloated, and then the ‘after-school is after-school’ threats of others licking mucus off their Dracula-snouted children, I got from film some kind of distilled knowledge. Experience heightened and capsuled for my exclusive benefit.

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In Johannesburg, Moferefere Mehlolo is a pharmacist from the dumps. He is the one who made it out from beneath the garbage, worked himself out from beyond that end. From the grime of his near-existence in this wretched place, from the slime-clogged sewers he hacked his way out, tongue-first. To the fore marched his intellect. Up & away, first of anyone. He comes back, often, finances some students. His brother was artist. & comrade. Friend. & got his little brother hooked on the word-works. Then the brother died. The only person Moferefere felt or, was close to, or loved. He was devastated. A lot carried its way into his being over the years. Pushed, he schooled, came out tops. Made cents writing assignments for his fellow students. Genius child. He came out of campus & was snapped up, dodging racial knives, by pharmaceutical companies. He hates them today, says there is a conspiracy to kill him because he has exposed their nefarious ways. Still, he thinks heaven of me.

Then came the night Lehlohonolo got stabbed with a surgical scalpel. & the music stopped. Backtrack: Lehlohonolo is a hip hop MC of social conscience. Great consequence. A serial verbal innovator formal stylist. His music saved me from a nervous breakdown, on two occasions: Central Europe putting glass to wrists. & then i played & listened to his lyrics. They were ropes pulling me back. To firm land. He calls me 'father'. Sayd my writing carried him forth, from days of uncertainties. & the resultant identity searches. Crises of self. Much black love coming down the decades from all sides. Two young black males locked in brothered celebration of an elder one. Then the knife-flash like fratricide.

Long story short: Moferefere came at Lehlohonolo with a surgical scalpel because he detected disrespect. Offended he had called me 'grootman', saying 'why call him that, do you know grootman means a baboon'. Then he cut him up. & the shebeen queen took centre-stage shitting me out of her establishment. Pea-henning among the drunkards, queen for the night, first time since...blaming me...because he 'came here with you, i saw it' & i hung my heart out. & haemorrhaged. I did not see Moferefere leave, but you could hear his war-mobile high-power cough in heavy-rev, throat deep, sleeked to smooth flow breath. Turboed up right to its veins, & plane-march away. Meanwhile Lehlohonolo's life-juices were flooding up the floor-tiles.

I went up to the shebeen queen, my walk tear-charged. She was sitting on a couch, the level low. So i had to kneel. & try tell her my hurt. She not once looked at me. Her friend, next to her, spoke. Saying how i did not even witness it happen. I had been talking poetry with another. But the queen, all eyes on her, was wallowing in the relish of it, my persecution. I got off my knees, they were hurting anyway, walked away. & no longer wanted young talent around me. & revoked my shebeen-licence.

& that was when I hit the road, bushward.

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In the playback it's the calluses on the percussionist's palms that haunt. Kind of drumming that hands out concussions. Stop-starts bowel movements. Echo-chambered it becomes 'shadow of a mirage'. Auditory illusion, sonic phantasm. Knocks the cranium until white dust comes out. Talking African drum & the bass hum. Deep earth moan calls up soul in dead skin, rotten flesh, calcified bone... 'give the drummer some!' comes the Brown command.

The lamp comes on with a brightness that blinds in my head. Last day, darkest cloud forming, without and inside/ like death is walking over here. And life wants to get out, into the world. & i sit. Gather thoughts together like scattered rags. Grab pen, seek paper, find scraps torn out of old school exercise books, look at the bookshelf off to the right, a rustic bookshelf, some dead farmer had used as a pantry affair to store & display mampoer on, confiture, the bible, and ancient prayer books. A lurid, dabbling child's attempt at water-colour painting. "WAT IS 'N HUIS SONDER 'N VADER' . In block letters on shimmery blue, pink, grey. Framed in brown borders. TWO BIRDS in same colouring facing off and across from each other like swords formed in mortal duel, hostile. The painting is boer naive. Reaching out to a nationalist god getting lost to the teargas in the heavy winds. The water running down my face burns. Napalm must sting like this. Agent Orange. My veins are deranged, standing out thick on my arms, glaring like they are going to burst. I saw a man shot in the face once, with an assault rifle, from close range. It was like you could see white yellow maggots crawling in the red there. From deep where his madness once sat.

Here in the bushveld shebeen the ferment takes hold in different ways. When the ethanol hits, Sis Betty gets delirious, starts telling everybody who will listen her life story. 'Beng' muhle mina, in my days I was the beauty around this place, you can ask Boy, he used to run after me like the horny dog he was. I got all the men on heat when i was around, they will tell you. & even today you can still see it. They drop my name as far as Joburg, these guys. They talk about me like there is no other. They say 'drop dead & thrash around gorgeous me...and now'...she breaks down crying. Aesthetic pleasantness of the past pulling on her tear-glands, & the horses in those depths start galloping.

& Bra Mafisko. He had his legs shot in the old days. The hospital amputated both of them above the knee. He drives a car still, though, automatic transmission. An old Ford Granada. He sits sideways, a walking stick in his one hand, pushes it onto the accelerator to get the car moving & switches it onto the brakes to stop. His taking corners is a thing of beauty. Better than the show-off young thugs in their BMW 325s. They call that car 'hooligan's salvation' because if a guy is getting chased by the police through the streets, his only prayer is to get behind the wheel of a 325, no other, because once he slides in there & gets the key in the ignition, they could barricade the streets & pull out the entire police service, there is no way they are going to catch him.

They lean an elbow out of the driver's window, cool in the breezes, cigarette in the corner of the mouth, better yet a zol. & it is class, driving. BRA MAFISKO is megastar of that. No one can look & pose better at the steering wheel than him. & in the shebeen he sits there, his pants-legs stopping just above the knees, tucked back & held in place with safety pins. He handles his brandy glass like an aristocrat. & talks about the days of his car thieving. Holds court, glories gone coming alive in his face. & it is wistfulness you see there.

Then there are other drinkers who, when the waters flow, throw up the Satchmo in them, and nothing will stop them from singing. In the far corner where the shadows are deepest, sits one who walks funny. Drunken to vomiting once, the sick calling the rats, he had his feet, thick black with toe-jam, eaten by them while he slept. & here too are ones whose drunkenness makes them remember god. & they quote the scriptures.

My grandmother used to do that, hit the bottle & then get the hymns lubricated. She'd start preaching, to no congregation, or the unwilling among us, who had no ear for the righteous. & then she would sing into the night, you would hear it float above the wall easing to a metre from the roof. It would start high, sonorous, with the angels twinkly-toed inside the verses, and then as the night wore on, their wings drooping, they would tire, get their legs wobbly under them, until they came flopping down. & in the end her voice would turn into a whispered sermon. Then fade out completely. & then the snores.

In the shebeen now, these others sing, out of tune, some. But there are others, Maria Callas sweet, Nina Simone soulful & getting honeyed even more with the liquored reinforcements. & then, as the minutes tick on, the saliva starts crawling out of the lip-ends. & they go incoherent. There are the fumigators, trying to quieten the noise of the cockroaches flapping their wings in their souls, to drug them to sleep with the fumes. The ones who breakfast liquid & carry it into the night. The Kippie Moeketsi descendants, who blow on their air-horns & invisible-flute their way through the hours. & then there are the criers. A few sips & they get saddened. Mournful. They snivel, sniff, & the bawling starts, out from on dark places in their insides. & of course those whom alcohol turns into everybody's lover. I sit there and watch. & the abject poetry of it all jumps into my head and takes me over.

'I hit him in that blasted face of his that looks like someone took dynamite to it, just below that air-emptying nose of his and above his snout, & my fist came back with a mucus-streak so i punched him again to clean it, to take the nose-drip off...& then i kicked him just over his donkey dong & i can tell you he will be pissing blood for a month, i'm telling you i left his bladder punctured like a balloon, it was like Legs of Thunder Sikhosana just took a penalty...'

On the benches along the grime-encrusted wall, sitting under the speakers fastened overhead, silent now, everybody wanted some spice to their own stories. A woman was saying, between gasps of air, for effect, pretending to be whispering, but making sure it was delivered like from a theatre-stage to the wings: 'She got him bewitched with that ancient cunt of hers. I bet you the cobwebs she has in there have him believing she is a virgin when everybody knows even the Madikwe river baboon has had a piece of her...sies.'

And across the room, leaning against a stack of crates full of empty bottles: 'Talking about witches, they call that stuff Black Science, you know? But here is the story. He walked with me all the way to my gate and we were yapping, well i was talking & he was just grunting & laughing funny, & i know i have jokes so...anyway, all the while i thought he was just a dwarf, this guy. I mean even when my woman opened the door, looked down at him & for a moment stood like a statue, eyes jumping out of her head & running away, & then screamed like she was giving birth right there and slammed the door so hard i am still looking for the wood to fix it, prop it back onto the frame. I didn't get it, I just thought she was drunker than i was & swore at her. Meanwhile this guy was not just some small man wanting talk, it was a tokolosi, you know, some people's creature of the night...' The hiss came from the speakers then, like a vinyl plate had dropped in the juke-box, snatches of jackal talk over it... 'I was just in when she said oh wait. Pull out let me get in proper position, so i staggered back & stood there swaying, so drunk i was, waiting. The juices holding onto the head. Next thing she took off through the door, running...her auntie came to collect the damn woman's panties the next day. She'd left them right there, on the floor, in the middle of the room, can you believe it. But you must know i don't play with this thing, man. I hit it so hard smoke comes out of it. Auntie said she had to come because the woman could not walk properly. I said oh yeah and i gave it to the auntie, hard; she is grown, that one she could take it'.

Cackles... canned sound coming to drown the talk... 'Well, me, the other one, did you hear what she said when she saw me, the only thing she could get out was 'hm, wena' and she could not even look at me, she was so ashamed. And then she snuck away like some stray raggedy black cat, did you see? You know what i caught her in my yard the other day. Midnight. Naked. Just standing there, staring at nothing. See, i couldn't sleep so I went out to get air. & there she was. Standing transfixed like someone had superglued her to the spot. You know i have 'tightened' my house, mos? My traditional doctor does not play games, he goes up to the mountains & under the water, he is strong that guy, don't mess. & you know they say you must not speak to them when they are caught like that, like mummified? She was bent over forward so i did not have to do anything like position her or whatever. So i just whipped my piece out and stuck it in hard, very deep, my friend. You should have heard her shriek like a demon had its tail on fire. I worked it in & out & you could have sworn i was stabbing the fucking life out of her good & solid. & long. I splashed & drowned that kitty and then I let her go...' The nitrogen kicked in from the juke-box, bass distorted, zero tweets, the midrange insane. Things are not rolling if the music is not hitting against the cranial walls, inside. It has to make your intestines shift. Decibels running in the red. & only then is a party going on. Otherwise it is just a white people's tea-party convention. Dunking cookies.

The Dreamer Artist Activist is here too. He was brutally tortured, some years ago. The after-effects of it have stayed with him. A patchwork of variegated, ill-matched, navy-blue being dominant but with brown & off-white plus some black in the mix, layers laid as with uncaring hand, & holes cut in at strategic point for orifices – that is two different sized, flaring nostrils winged at the ends, eyes, one of them ever opened at half-mast. Mouth with lips larger on the left than the right side, the lower jutting out & curling over the upper, and to the side, ears, the

left with the lobe gone to leave a dead slab of wrinkled flesh hanging precariously, like some thread holding it against gravity. All this makes up what could be called his face. He used to be a pretty boy, before he went 'inside' & emerged looking like Leatherface's wet dream.

I had him over to my house the other day. He was drinking like drowning something ugly inside him, gnawing at his soul. Sadness overwhelming, too powerful for anything else. & the hours dragged on. & it got too late for him to stagger home. I made bedding for him on the floor. Two blankets for him to lay, a pillow & then another blanket to cover himself with. We sat talking: 'Nobody can hold out forever. i don't care how brave you are. The nerves break at some point & you will beg them to let you talk. & tell them even things they never asked you about. The crocodile clips on my balls, man...the electric shocks, i think they burnt something to ashes somewhere inside me, man. There is a deep something in me, i tell you. No, i am not ashamed, i talked. What wakes me up screaming at night is that...i pissed & shat myself...while they watched...' and he sobbed, softly. I could not look at him. & then he got under the blanket. And curled up, foetal. I sat there for a while, then stood up to turn the light off, and got supine in the other corner, opposite him. Time passed & a smell like a mosquito crawling up my nose woke me. I sneezed and sat up. The light on the stoep came in dim through the curtains. & his squatting figure, not a metre away, was there, head bowed. He was grunting. His hands on both knees, eyes shut tight, in the grip of some dream he seemed trying to break out of, squeeze it out with all the strength his bowels could muster, defecating onto my bare floor. A massive load. He sobbed, in broken baritone, his tears running down the drainwater pipe, in my ears.

His face is skin-pieces put together with staples. Not exactly Frankenstein-monstrous but...he is the ultimate ORGANIC intellectual. No patronisation though... not institution-like. Talk hip hop scholarship & the academe thinks saggy jeans, gargantuan tasteless heavy neck-pieces like Burning Spear remade by Third World chanting 'we must pull it...with shackles around our...' yeah, forked wood either side the neck-piece slaves in a line & rope around the neck claiming re-appropriation. Slavery Days, the tune. 'i can't breathe' busting a platinum-mounted verse through the arse must give you stomach-ache...ahm...

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Bud, electric-crackle emotion-bound. Max...in Bird-flight solos deep & high on the melody tip. What wrong could Bird do but lay a harness on that and ride a horse through it all... going out on the course, composition tucked tight under-arm. Baptised in sweat. Thus it is I find self place in the Yardbird Suite. Jazz Hotel. This music is passion. & like sex it comes draped in perspiration.

'It is important to know when to play as when not to', said croaky Miles.

'Let the music breathe', spoke the Blue Notes Moholo.

Mnyele's master-piss was no urine but blood corpuscles. & the fart collectors came. Yes, spurted & squirted hard cos it was beyond ink, pen, charcoal & the canvas was a man's skin. Blown up, later, to pieces in real slime. No slow motion. Mean IT. Minute. & mean it is you say it. No con, scam, hustle. MAKE IT REAL.

The place sits in its own grounds. A duck-pond, fowl run. At the entrance 'clever' signs painted white on blackboard:

Kom eet Of ons vrek Albei van Die Hongor

Warm beer Cold Food Bad Service Come See for Yourself

Free Beer Topless Barladies False Advertising

Husband Daycare Centre – leave him with us – only pay his bill

Home is WHERE you keep your Beer

Soup OFF the day BEER

And just inside & before the restaurant-bar itself, a structure stands in brown bricks & wood banisters, black painted railings, chairs on the veranda around wooden tables, rustic scene. Other tables in the garden, in front of the pond, benches on both sides. Just in front of the well-kept garden, razor-edge cut lawn & a water-painted-like rockery. A sign there, also:

DRIVE CAREFULLY

We only have ONE hospital & two cemeteries.

The veranda is a metre above ground-level, where the garden is. Stairs lead up. Old white woman, wrinkled, small, in a yellow & white summer dress of an era gone, wants to get from the stoep to the duck-pond, looks at the stairs, decides against, & walks across to the edge of the stoep, stoops. I'm scared she'll fall & break something, looks like she's on the verge of cracking, crumbling, anyway, at the very least turning to powder. She puts her arse down on the ledge, her skirt hitched up high & above decency. She starts dragging herself forward,

pushing her little weight along, her path pushing the dust on the floor off to the sides as she passes. She is not wearing panties, her legs are splayed. Thigh-skin showing like scrambled eggs. I know what Champion Jack Dupree meant. Just folds of faded pink & pale & in the centre hairy grey surrounding. This is the bushveld. I blink, fast, a few times & clamp my eyelids tight. Turning my eyes away. I feel the vomit rise. I am being blinded. Deliberately. She is looking straight at me, turning her genitalia same direction, sliding on forward & off the edge of the stoep. I turn quickly away again & keep my sight away for a few seconds. When I turn my eyes again she is standing where the lawn starts. & hobbles off towards the duck-coop in the corner where the lawn ends. The bile rushes into my mouth & I stagger my way to the toilet. My guts hurt. I will not eat. I carry myself on out. Past the graffiti, red on black, on the wall alongside the N4, red on black: SPERMLOAD KILL

The bush stretches here, packed tight, it carries far as the mind can go before dropping down breathless. A hawk seems to be swooping to strike. But no, it is falling, plummeting down, lands on its stomach. Wounded maybe. Or it got too old out up there in the skies polluted beyond and carries its disease here. The bush goes on, inexorably. Inexhaustible, still, even as the without impinges and intrudes. And comes in without invitation. Unwelcome and hostile, bringing with it mirrors.

No, the bush does not want to see its own face. It might force its sight within, to the soul festering in there. Maggots dancing in a fury hell would be envious of this. There is a heavy hate in the air here, hate and heat mixing in a noxious stew. It covers the surface tranquility in blue-green. Worms and fireflies when the sun goes down. And the shadows come out like ancestors laden with the wounding of history.

The township is a scab on the landscape called Seding, off to the side of the N4 freeway, the scar cutting through the bushveld, to other times and places the bush tries to shut itself off from. That road that disappears beyond that mountain range that straggles like a big obese sprawling obscene gymnast, in the distance. A smaller sign of an old injury rests across the road. Cars pull in there to feed. Filling station. And off to the side, ten metres away, a bottle store. Parents, grandparents and their teenaged children dot the grounds, cartoons of Tlokwe before them, as the sun beats down.

And talk: o ja mang ka pol-rekere, *who are you screwing with a cock-rubbber* sies o ska ntlhanyetsa...nyo ya gagwe e nkg a tlhapi...*her pussy smells of fish...don't put your madness on me...what will you do for me black as me? Go and die no difference yes i will kneel before the white at least he can make me live you just poverty fuck you*

And a lodge just behind it, made up a few thatched-roof chalets. Across the way, mornings and afternoons, people walking with bales of wood on their heads. Harvest of the bush. What the bush rejected, tossed out, threw away, vomited out.

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*Across the broken waters... King Sunny Ade takes to the road heading to the House of Dub.
Handing out digits along the route. A map leading out.
'That's my number', declaration like gang affiliation identification.
Man home-bound, dome a bag full. At burst-point. Sounds in it.
Blazing atmospherics like breaking out of the prison of petrified aesthetics.*

BABU owns lots of property here. Nobody knows how he got his money. He came here a while ago, in beat shoes and frayed pants. He was selling revolution to the populace. Babu was an activist for the party before it became government. He was conscientising the black ones. The Afrikaners do not like him too much. I have heard them say so, even the liberals. Anyway, he got a road built that leads past the township. That was when the settlement was still all shacks. Before the tiny mortar and brick structures sprang up as part of the 'human settlement programme'. And then Babu built the filling station with the restaurant attached. Eyes wide, people watched. And now Babu owns land on which he has packed wild animals: deer, zebra, ponies, miniature horses on the one side, along with cattle and goats. Demarcated with a fence on the other side he has set up a 'Predator's Camp' (so says the inscription at the gate), a lion has been heard to roar, sending the houses along the ridge rattling. It is said that he is trying to get a tiger out of India. He has wild dogs too. And other killer animals. People believe all that came as payment from the ruling party for having got them votes.

THE SEWAGE-SEPTIC TANK VAN ALWAYS HURTLES THROUGH THE STREETS. THE STENCH OF IT HANGING IN THE AIR LONG AFTER IT IS GONE. The driver seems to be trying to speed faster than the smell. Hoping to outrun it. I wonder if it stays with him when he goes home, dug into his system. It is a smell like thick, heavy death hanging in the air. Babu turns the corner of the post office, looking across to the butchery with 'Deutschland ueber alles' in graffiti against its wall, strokes his foot-long beard with a manicured hand while keeping the other Swiss-watch steady on the leather-covered steering wheel & headed in the direction of the police station, the library and municipality offices. German engineering tells him all was fine. He is plush in cool comfort outside the hard harsh, tired & hungry thirst-laden bushveld sun, the Merc speaking to him, lulling him. Massage of the senses.

From the opposite end the brown-striped white truck speeds with SEWERAGE scrolled in black along both of its cold drink tin-can shaped sides – the reason why children shouted 'coca cola' every time it careened past. Trying to take flight off the ground, attempting to escape its own stench, it comes on, a predator of the road, snarling deep-throated in menace. In the fine interior Babu sits, waving to all he passed by. Man of the people. Politician personage. He got them voting, didn't he. And look at him now, they love him for it, for the brick houses where once they crawled around in corrugated iron shack hovels. They were grateful, weren't they? They had pay-per-use electricity now. Soon perhaps the tap-water would run less brown.

& then the impact. The truck hits the C-class Mercedes bang on the nose. Metallic intercourse. Miracle of invention. Screams in the street. The truck skids, slides, carries the Merc on its bonnet for a stretch of road. Crunch-time. It seems to hurl it back, both staring each other down. The horse, simple faced, ugly even. The cylindrical trailer, all brown-streaked white with black writing. The trailer groans, coming apart like the tailoring was going. And then brown fluid starts oozing out. From the sides, the black, the tin-can coming apart. People cover distance, fleeing. Like it was blowing up. A splash of faecal matter.

The drunken man sitting on the pavement tries to lift his hands to cover his nose, the limbs will not move. He makes another attempt, fails, shrugs and just sits as the sewage reaches him, sneaking into the holes in battered canvas shoes, rising up to his ankles. He stares, in hypnosis. No baptism to be welcomed, however the heaven promised. The trailer creaks, stretches and sheds exactly half its length. Heaviest and first, the smell, no longer constricted, released from bondage, sprawls. Invisible pall covering the streets. A child vomits on his school-shoes, people gasp, the drunkards across the street paint the ground with vomit, and what they throw up moves to merge with the contents of the truck. A mass-mess. A deluge of brown black yellow green solids swimming in sickly liquid....and then, in the middle of it all, that sewage, the corpse of a baby. Foetal. It seems to move, ever so slightly, borne in the urine & faeces mix. Babu stares, eyes wide. Shockwave upon another. The truck driver, higher up, gawks too. Mouths open to scream and gulp down doses of weighty putrescent stench.

SAMPOKANE is the night-soil-man locked down in Setswana lore. Feared. No bogeyman, him. You see him, each dying day. After you've dug heels in, moved bowels, purged, dropped the filth nothing about you wants, wrenching it out of the system, the rot that makes you shudder to look at, that your nose shrinks from the smell, that you want no part of you touching, that disgusts you should the tiniest piece of it stay stuck to you. The essence of death, in all senses. Sampokane thrives on that, lives off it. He comes to collect it, takes it away, out of your presence, far from your sight. Sampokane subsists off it. After that what could he back away from? Sampokane will kill and eat it. Whatever it is. Sampokane is scare-walking.

Thus it is that Sampokane the faeces & piss-man & Babu the political animal face each other off above the human waste reaching out to climb up their motor-cars tyres, hoping to sneak in to them...above the carcass of that unnamed baby in the middle of it all. & the sun comes screaming down, & the fumes rise, the smell hits hardest. There can be no amen to this from where I sit, a metre above it all. The smell of it hits me down to the stomach & settles heavy enough to keep me seated. Eyes on the scene. That dead baby looks like it is smiling at it all... Fear turns to hate. Mass feeling. Communal. Cowardice turns murderous in numbers. From beyond the street the sounds of excitement fatten themselves on the hoof. People come splashing through the effluent. An old man trips on his walking stick and lands face-first in the sewer-mix. Opens mouth to grunt in pain and some of it goes in, he scrunches his face and digs broken-nailed fingers in the filth and lifts his frame, with all pain draws one leg up by the rickety ankle. Then the other. Sits down in the stench and ugliness. And the numbers run around and past him, to the two wounded vehicles, and the baggage of human waste and...infanticised times.

Thus it is all advance on Sampokane. to force him to EAT the dead baby. Only the two men, Bra Joe Sejabana the Elegant & Maswejana the Pretty Playboy stand against it.

BRA JOE. The Elegant. Barefoot. His feet have developed thick elephant skin. Crackled, heavily. Some dried out river. Drought-stricken. Furrowed much. A layer of dirt-black creeping up from the back of his heels. Unwashed. The sweat, dried up days old and still packing layer upon thick layer up, oozes off him. And in all this, he oozes something unnameable. The aura of the man is diamond to forehead brilliant. The tattered shirt, its tails flapping as he walks. No, he hops, a caterpillar on the street. Spasmodic. On invisible springs. When he sees me he pretends not to notice me walk on by. At the last moment springs out in front of me, hand out, palm pointed up, and mouths in an incomprehensible tongue...never loud or clear, rather a deep gurgle from yesterday's throat, from depths out of sight. Often i drop coins in his hand. Soon as I do he hops on off to the butchery down the road graffitied with 'Deutschland ueber alles, disappears within, is gone for a while, then emerges munching on a stick of biltong. If not the butchery then the Pakistani shop up the road, for loose cigarettes. The smoking of which is a ritual, a show in class. I've seen him sink down onto his haunches, sigh, strike a match, light up and...smoke. Cigarette between index and thumb, other fingers flung out in limp-wristedness, cocked like bourgeoisie handling wine-glasses. The other hand on the other cheek, lost to the world. Cigarette up to mouth, deep drag, smoke held, then released in calculated exhalation through the nostrils, smoke rings too. & i have wondered, never known what had led to this. Middle-class mannerisms in the dust. Time to time a fling of the left arm, a flicker of sleeve to wipe off stray mucus, then back to the cigarette.

Bra Joe is friends with MASWEJANA the Pretty Playboy. They say he was a ladies' man, Maswejana, in his time. Now, not yet in his middle age, he walks down the streets, eyes staring, but at nothing. He is always clean-washed, clothes ironed. But his mind everywhere but here, in this time, this place. His one ear is drawn, like a cartoon character, a few inches out of sync with the other. His face tapers down, egg-shaped, mouth forever puckered, an eternal pout. He drools a lot. He is coherent, though. Speaks, can be heard, but the understanding is elsewhere. They say he was the hottest chicken around town before this, dressed better than any. Township lore though has it he disappointed a woman he was to marry...and ended up like this. Just woke up one day and couldn't put his face back the way it was before he went to sleep. His right leg started shrinking, centimetres shorter than the left. His left turned inward and he couldn't hold anything with it. His one eye, the one above where it should have been, forever streams tears, constantly cries. A sign of his remorse, they say. He walks around, grunting, looking at nothing, but sees enough to ask me for cigarettes only, never money. I stand talking to him, spinning stories, jokes. And he takes it in. And laughs. And when girls walk by, regardless of how they look, he says: 'ba le maswe jaana', as ugly as they are...and that is it. 'You owe me, no no no, man...pay me now when are you paying me?' I say i have to go home and fetch the money i owe him, i will see him later. And he tells me he will wait until I come back.

Days they sit together, Bra Joe and Maswejana, legs straight out on the floor, next to the only ATM in town... smoking, conversing in tongues i cannot understand. Emotionless. And they stay

there for hours. And the world goes by. And they watch the dust, maybe, and its people blow on by. They pass a cigarette between them, smoking each in style, after their own special manner. And they seem lost in whatever dimension. Or space. But locked together in some understanding. Mutual. It's a sight for wonder. And when the odd ATM-user saunters by, draws money and starts walking away, Bra Joe shoots his hand out. And the day goes on. I have seen the laughter on their faces sometimes though. Like they knew things i didn't. No one else could comprehend.

Thus it was on the day of the crash, when the sewer-septic truck and the political-activist-grown-affluent's Merc collide, that Bra Joe and Maswejana threw themselves in the mix. Babbling incomprehensibly and in furious indignation against the sewer-man being forced to eat the dead baby. The only people in the mad mix to throw in their negative, lashing and kicking out against the crowd which brushed them off. And as i gauged my beliefs against my life's worth something solid whacked into my head.

*

The rock against my skull beams me back to childhood-street in White City. Standing there and the crowd to sides and back. Upfront looking down i see my first love, little sister of my friend. She lies there. Half her body, the legs on the pavement, upper body leaning, sprawling out and bleeding, into the street. Her blood draining out and away down the street to the storm-water pipe. Her head, the part that meets the neck, has lifted off, cut away like abandoning the rest of her. Taking flight, off and away. It is like a panga sliced in deep. I could see, in the midst of white, brown, the throat pipe slashed through, it blood-spurts at intervals. I love her. I stand there. The wound is so deep, sharp and eating away that her head is swung far forward and onto her neck...i stood there all of 12 years, the big toe of my right foot showed through my wet canvas shoe and scratched at the skin beneath the patch on the seat of my pants. Her big brother weeping next to me.

Bra Vusi, he was a professional soccer referee. Friends with my mother and her man, Dr Mabinda. The doctor was a veterinarian. He worked at the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals in White City. PDSA. But on weekends and after work people would come to the house with their ailments and he would treat them. He'd write out letters for those who needed a letter to prove to their employers they had taken ill and could not come to work. He made a lot of money, the doctor. The children around the place would look at me with envy in their eyes because my life was beautiful they said. We lived at his house. & we used no ordinary soap to bathe, it was some fine smelling soap called Dove. It was a beautiful house inside. We'd never had furniture like that. And the food we ate...Ah. But...he beat us, often. He split my mother's lips sometimes. I grabbed his leg once when he was about to kick her while she lay on the ground... he hit the top of my head with his fist. A red light came on inside me. Then he kicked me in the stomach... i woke up in the dark. Much time had passed. He had two sisters, nursing sisters... they always saw to our wounds. And say soothing words.

Bra Vusi always came on weekends after the soccer matches, to sleep over. He bought me my first bed, a comfortable one i could really sleep in. He was a gentle person. He always came around with his lady friends, the two sisters who lived two streets down. On this one day the doctor slaughtered a cow and had the neighbourhood come for a celebration of something, I do not know what. And Bra Vusi came too. With his woman friend. Things were fine. People ate. And danced. And sang. Then an old lady spoke nasty words, saying the doctor did not know how things were done. There he was, she said, standing there eating, even before all his visitors had filled themselves. That was not the black way, she said. Some laughed. The doctor had not heard her, i was afraid if he had there would be trouble. But things were good. And then later... after the eating, when some people was preparing to leave, i do not know what caused it but the doctor began beating my mother up. He hit her on the side of the face and she fell, and hit her head against a rock. And he kicked her in the stomach. People screamed, shouted. Some men tried to hold him back. He was fearsome. Bra Vusi came running from inside the house. He had been playing records on the turntable, making music. He ran to the doctor and caught his hand as he bent down to hit her again. The doctor turned on him. Swung. Bra Vusi ducked and spoke to him, i couldn't hear him. The doctor swung at him with his other hand. That is when

Bra Vusi hit for the first time. And again. And again. And then the crowd closed around me, i could not see. When they parted, the doctor's face was a mess. Of blood and bone and broken flesh. His front teeth were gone. I saw that when he spat the muddy-dirt that had formed over his lips. He looked horrible. The shape of his face had changed. His eyes were swollen shut...the people left. My mother carried him in.

The sisters had not been at the feast. They came the next morning. Just after my mother had finished cleaning the doctor's face up. There was much talk in that house. And the sisters had ugly looks on their faces. I was sent out. Bra Vusi had left after the beating, taking his friend. We were alone...we were alone again, me and my mother. We took our things and left. Just two plastic bags. All the beautiful things remained behind. We walked a long way from Chiawelo to White City, my grandmother's, that day. And the heat was heavy.

*

The police come. Big and fat. Slugs dragging their bellies. Authority-riding. Arrogance powered by cowardice, hiding behind the shine of the almighty badge. They take Bra Joe and Maswejana, the two 'mad men', into custody.

The police here hide from the SEXCESSES, and Alsatians used as rape instruments. Numerous cases are reported of farm workers forced to succumb to fucking the baas's dogs. And other farm animals. It scares them. No case number for that. They tear the statement right after the complainants drag themselves on the tail of their shame out of the charge office. The overwhelming number of bestial instances go unreported. They can go to church on Sunday, happy in their station, protectors of the law, defenders of the weak. On Monday baas drops milk off at the gate of the police station. And they grin and lick their lips. And baas walks off happy, vindicated, his milk is sweet, he knows, he sweetened it with his semen.

Forced sterilisations on some farms around here. Abortions performed in barns and agter-kamers. The Madikwe river-bed is baby-corpse lined. Foetuses float on the waters, some days. The water here is said to be the best, country-wise. It feeds the outlying areas. Botswana gets its water supply directly from this river. The flavour must be brilliant. It is all in the taste. The township's water passes through the reservoir in the middle of town, by the time it gets out and into the pipes it has changed colour. And content. Mainly the discharge and excreta of other, less melanined humans.

The talk around is they are curbing the growth of the numbers. People are dying in distressing numbers here. Odd diseases doctors cannot or will not disclose. AIDS is the blanket strewn across them all. There is talk that people on the farms get injected with things no one knows about. And it happens mostly with young women, and men who are 'problematic'.

People point at this white man walking down the street. Last year the police begged him to put his gun down. He had been sitting on the hill opposite the freeway, with a high powered rifle, taking shots at minibus taxis passing. A lot of them went off coughing out blood and with bullet holes in their sides. Inside them, shattered heads and much blood on the seats. Cries. The police came, and spoke to him like a person needing special attention, a child with special. They put him in a police van. and it drove off. He strides across the street now and black people hug the corners until he passes.

There is a training camp some kilometres into the bush. Some days khaki-clad trucks and 2/4 trucks head out there, from wherever, carrying white youths waving guns out of the windows. Ready for civil war. The message comes out to 'move west, like our ancestors...it is time to take it all back...' In the fields towards the freeway, bodies are found, some mornings. And to the back of the town, across the rail tracks. Nobody searches the farms, so nobody knows of the corpses become manure there. And yes, the northwest is prime beef country. No meat better than to be found here. Much of it is human. It is just never said. The meat piles up in the

abattoirs, the butcheries, the chisa-nyamas but the cattle numbers shrink next to nothing. Good farming practice, it is called. Farmers Weekly sings praise, every issue.

I walked to her farm, 5 kilometres outside town. I had stayed there a few times when I first came out here and was looking for a place away from that soul polluting city I am cursed with calling my birthplace. I went to collect my book of poems she had asked to read, she wanted to work a piece into a song. Tranquil, the walk, cool afternoon, the trees ruby & rosy-cheeked. All well with the bush-world. I got to the place, the sun leaning over. I heard the low moans & the high panting just as I was about to knock. The door was off its latch, unlocked, slightly ajar. I pushed it open and it swung in with a bare sigh, as of a wind-push.

Her huge figure was on the kitchen floor, flat on her back. Her maxi-skirt that she normally wore when she strummed her beloved guitar and mournfully sang to the gathered tourist audience at the Bushveld Poetry & Song Festival was up and over her chest, up to her chin. Her eyes were slitted, her cheeks heavy pink, she was all sweaty and breathing like an asthma attack. Her thick thighs were open, her knees high, heels rhythmically pumping up off the floor and down, in time to some rhythm i couldn't hear, until the slurping sounds came through to me. Between those thighs, its short penis-head showing while it jerked its back to & fro, was her dwarfish, shaggy dog with the droopy ears and heavy stench, was working its tongue in and out of the hole in her middle. That huge vagina parted, liquid, and closed as the dog flicked its tongue in and out. Her husband was a live-in teacher at the boarding school 42 kilometres from the farm. In that moment, holding my breath, I thought I understood. Neither dog nor woman seemed aware of my presence. I turned to slink away. As I touched the door her voice, heavy with passion and forcing its way out of that massive body, said: 'Wat soek jy...wil jy 'n gedig skryf?' I crashed out the front door, her laughter, harsh & shrill, unlike that one I had heard in song so many times, ringing in my ears. All the distance back and into the gathering gloom.

*

*Softly soft step into my hard times
Come in smooth into my rough life*

I am the tsetlo-watcher. Witness the hypnosis. In the power-greed death-game.

Old socialist-communist-comrades gone capital is like The Yearn. Ultra-straight man on crack-cocaine sticking massive phallic objects up his rectum when the rush takes on. & Gael said: 'It makes you know the truth about yourself. It is a serum. Gets you paranoid still, and you go scared of even yourself. Your shadow tails you, stalks you, talks menace to you...' the Sexual exhilaration is without outlet though. Builds up to explosion and then just peters out, leaves you whimpering, it is majangling electric wired like the brain cells will explode, and you feel them, on the burn, the ends going to ash. The ultimate white-lit end of it just beyond your reach, and you grasp, your nails wanting to tear out even, if the need arise... and you try a hold on the nothing out there, just... outside your grasp... your arms not long enough... always just micrometres away, you never get to it. And know that for truth but no matter, you have to... so you hurry up and light up away before it disappears forever, you think... but inside you is knowledge of how vain it all is... and that even if it were not and you got to it, you would be smashed to bits, what smithereens means... and that will be the end to miniscule you in the universe floating up there before coming crash-landing on your being. And still you want it. And the hunger makes demands like starvation is your all.... and just one bite will be your salvation. IT IS MASTER, YOU ARE LESS THAN SLAVE: NO RELATION MORE DEMEANING.

But you must obey because your genitals will it, the crotch reaches out, desiring deep. You want to fuck to the end of the tiniest crevice. And the biggest juice-dripping orifice beckons. And you want to squeeze the extent of your very self out of your body, it is a casing you don't need anyway. You need your obliteration in the pleasure promise. So you stoke up white, open the coils. And the glass-pipe hums, mocking. And the rock sizzles and opens its legs for you to come in. Penetration time. You clutch the lighter tight. Don't want it running away and gone. Need no loss now. And the seconds ticking seem centuries... and you flick and flame up, trembling in anticipation. You torch up, and solid turns liquid turns gaseous and your inhalation makes it shoot up your tunnels, seems running in and out all your holes. Like the hair is in shock standing up. Hold it in long as the lungs can withstand without collapsing, coming down hard. Joyous like nothing else ever since time. Hold, keep it in, still, blow out, sigh. & the wash comes. And baptises and blesses. And the warmth floods. And you grab your cock and pull. And it is to cry...it comes closer. & cums inside you. You pump harder. Fuck images flash, dance in your head behind your eyes and a million pussies yawn wet hot open and you sink your skull in them, all of them, same time. And you feel them wrap around you. You are your cock. And cunt. And arse. And sucking mouth. And sucked. Cunnilingused & fellated to all sevens. And still it calls you and you're staggering. All the while you are running on your haunches though, like your legs amputated above the knees. Hard as you gallop can't get there. Just on the point of coming it fades.& it is back to the beginning. Of your time, your existence. You tremble, shake, shiver, collapse into yourself again. Spent. And you did not even ejaculate. The call comes again.

Seduces. And you realise your eyes are closed, so you open them and stare. And the black green yellow red stars exploding behind your eyelids retreat. You flop down defeated.

They come, the bourgeoisie, the 'made-it', in their fancy clothes and over-fed bodies. They like nothing better than to hear the starved say 'thank you' for the crumbs they flip off and flick with manicured fingers. Makes them feel affirmed. While they say The Matter, regardless of how much of it they consume each moment. They need it some more. They don't ask 'for more', they believe it is theirs to take. The Yearn burns. Inside the German limousines, within the uterine folds of the 4 x 4 luxury SUVs, the capacious BMW beasts, the Merc Benz monsters, the luxury animals enfolding them in polish and shine. They don't see the misery. Or more truly, they see it and rejoice, makes them know how far off the dust and away they are.

Mrs Nation-father, after her husband died and fresh from London exile, took her adult son, well into marrying age, on a drive to the edge of Soweto, stopped the big car just off the freeway and opposite the mine-dumps. The ground bones and fine-sifted flesh out there stared. On that hill, clear day (like Sitas spoke of about class struggle), the view was panoramic. And off the side the blonde tour-bus stared out too, and the feeling was zoological garden. She looked across smoke-hung Diepkloof to dust-roofed Orlando as the sun sets, its rays trying in vain to cut through that pollution. It was a sickly yellow-golden as she asked him, his Kente clothed figure over the silk vest caressed, the pearls on his buttered wrists jingling, the struggle heir groomed to perfect fit for the throne 'Do you see yourself marrying any filthy diseased thing from over there?' flicking her Italian shoe off and the french perfume rising off her armpits as she pointed long, perfectly manicured fingers at that slave-labour camp. The diamonds glistened in the gathering gloom off her far fingers. The blood-soaked bits in the diamonds, you couldn't see, shining deep deep within the green blue within, the same colouring the blue-green like Baas foreman looking from above the shafts, content, consenting. Leer off the spitless mouth-side. Glinting in approval. Reclining in over-stuffed couch-satisfaction. Put your ear to the ear, something the bodyguard would kill you in trying to do, you could hear the dying screams rock-broken, limbs twisted at odd angles, boulders cracking the rib-cage to free the punctured lungs, sharp-stuck. They say pigs bleed best. No, go down the mine. & hear the bloodsong, gurgling like pipes gone mad and taking over the psychiatric institution. Even the rats flee before the flood. & the life-fluids spurt, bursting out to promised freedom, drowning out the voices fading to croak above frog-level, but one limp-lotioned hand's dismissive flick and it's muffled. Censored. The heir grinned, like it was joke-time. And the car purred, u-turning and off to affluence's northern suburbs.

The stars come out to play in the bushveld. They cavort, tossing light and tickling the trees. And when the wind blows you can hear the trees giggling, happy. Very close by. It lubricates and scents the senses. The breathing bush whispers its happiness. You feel like you want to touch the sky deeper than Hendrix. The firmament seems like it wants to touch your eyes and it is wondrous, especially if your whole life was tight to the Soweto-imagination-prison habitat. They smile, those stars. & the moon comes out seductive-like, wanting to wrap around you. 'Ah but your land is beautiful' once said the dreamy wonder-struck liberal. He didn't know the cursed & blasted poisoned half of it.

*

Free bopping. Re-bopping. Be.

But Miles walked on just uppers. The soles were his feet's, not rubber. That was left stuffed in the mouths of the dead Congo Belgium colonised. Plantationed in a partitioned continent. And set alight. & then Lumumba's pieces no glue could put together, to make The New Man. & Mobutu Tutued the west & they wrapped him in a corruption-free vest. Saint to the Profane...blow horn.

Bushveld dawn bird-orchestra. Deep growls, horses-n-trailers in the freeway distance, growling changing down. And then off into the Botswana-bound distance or back from there. They pull breath in and out, shake heads and in satisfaction, or bad mood, depending, go on eating up the asphalt. Road-graze. Predatory, still.

Tiny community, Seding. The country's smallest municipality. But the regularity of graves opening up beats average middle-town. You see it in the expressions walking. Always on the verge of waking. And never doing it. Just going through. Doom walks here. Hangs on the shoulders, a monkey clinging tight. An air of resignation surrounds.

'All we have here are our bodies, and they fade. First goes the elasticity under the constant pummeling, the hammering, the getting beat down. They shrivel up each day, get turned inside out until the red parts come out to the sun. Then no grip remains. And without that what is woman? So you cannot earn by it, then...' She looks earthbeaten, jaded is not a description. Standing by the freeway roadside sticking her thumb out at passing motorcars, but only the ones with the sole male driver. Or the ones with no female occupants. She is going nowhere but to the end of a negotiation. And back. And then again. Just a ride to some sweat-laden rustling paper.

She is hitching flesh-sales, she tells me. Just open-faced. Poverty does not know what shame is, she lets me know. Morality is not edible. No destination except perhaps a pot on a stove. If that. 'And the children shall eat.' 'i will shovel shit if it will feed my seed'. That is the wish but often it is first, and then last, a frothing plastic mug brimming with potency's brew. Then, perhaps...next the children will hunger-stare. & she will beat them, accusing them of being spoilt, they ate last night so why the tears. And then her man will beat her in turn. And sleep will come. For all.

Freight train, driver black, in dark glasses though the sun is not burning down yet. Cool like that, leaning against the door as he scans the landscape. Relaxed in the caboose. The carriages rattle down the tracks and the earth shakes, feeling it, minutely shifts, stretches and eases back. On his cellphone, or making a show of it, he waves at the early morning over people waiting at the trackside for the vans and trucks that will take them on day-contracts to the surrounding farms. He gets his siren going in cheerful greeting and there are whistles from the ground. Grey metals

chugging down. Easy in his character. The earth shakes in good nature. The train goes on and under the bridge in the far distance and...

... DAYS GONE, of my childhood. My big cousin Kenny would at dusk grab his overalls and leave the house. His friends standing outside the yard, waiting, already clad in blue overalls and boots. They would go around the corner and a hundred metres down to the bridge between Orlando and Kliptown stations, jump over the little railing, slide down to the tracks below and wait. & the goods train would, minutes later, roll on down, and stop. For supplies and fuel. For water and the energy-matter to be got at the coal-yard across the way. The coal to be loaded on a horse-cart and driven down. & the workers shovel it in. And while that was happening Kenny and his friends would have the padlocks bobejaan-spannered, bolt-cuttered & crocodile-pliered off, clip the padlock's ears, slide the steel doors sideways open, and jump in. A wealth of goods in there. In minutes in the carriages, choosing and throwing out whatever they fancied in there. And on and out. And no one hurt. The Afrikaner driver and his guard, coffee from the coal-yard in hand, all supplies retrieved, would get back in, start up and be gone. & the township would buy what Kenny and his band had to offer.

It went on until the train-guard, on one occasion took a walk down the length of the train and surprised them. A heavy-set, powerfully built red-necked, bush-bearded man, put up a fight and got his head split open at the end of a wheel spanner. Jail-time ensued. And when Kenny came back out the goods-train was no longer stopping under the bridge. The bushveld black train-driver cooling it in his dark glasses and easy manner puts the question of change up in my mind. & somewhere in my depths a sad river stirs.

*

SCREAMSCAPE. A MAP. & a dog litter riff.

'Even my dog is smarter than they are. I tell it to go fetch the sheep. It goes, it gets them, it lines them up. And into the kraal. But them, they are stupid, all bloody baboons...'

'Oubaas don't call me a baboon please'

'Yes you are an orangutan...like the rest of your people'

'Well, but oubaas knows it is oubaas who is more hairy than a monkey's testicles. And pink like the head of its penis...so why is oubaas...?'

Oubaas exploded. Came at him swinging with the whip. Thano knew he could take him on. He side-stepped the first lash and stood watching him. It was at that time that the rest of the workers jumped on Thano, holding him down, hard. One put a knee on the small of his back, and he felt a bone break. 'What...you want to fight the white man, hm? Who are you to stand up to...this man... putting your hands up like that, what, you want to break oubaas' arm...' and then things went black before his eyes.

The farmer owns this world. The farmworker died, it was not baas's fault. Laziness deserves all it gets, even if to be wetted with waters from within. What if the man was too weak to take it like a man, like all of them, why was he special? It was that skin. Not made for it. This is a hard land, it must be harsh. They survive who are equal to it, even the animals know. He got his tools, the ones he used to skin the cattle. A cow was much more business, not this. Easy. He could do it in his sleep. He had, anyway, dreamt this kind of thing, many times. He cut the body up, in the moon's silvery glow. It glistened cold. Like the hatchet and the butcher's knife. And the hammer to drive the chisel into the joints. He cut up the pieces, taking his time. Swearing the dogs away each time. He packed the bits in little clear plastic bags. The next day he would take them to the Bosveld Butchery. They paid well. When time came he would tell the family the man had run away, like all kaffir men do, from their families. What was new?

They had been lifting the brown bottles and cackling like tinkling glass down in their stomachs, from the look. 'I took him to the fried chicken place there, and when i turned around he was chewing up the bones, the white people staring at him in disgust, the one child threw up on the table. So i took him out quick and we went for ice-cream next door. Bought it through the window and i was still greeting the guy in the apron and when i turned my man had eaten up the ice-cream along with the paper wrapping...damn, i am afraid of starvation, the things it can make you do...' & the circle laughed, holding its sides. I went inside the shebeen. Inside one was saying: 'Ok so you got a fine behind, and then, that your talent? See me, walking on water, that is nothing. Forget shark and piranha, want sushi, i'll get you that to go with the bread...'

REQUIEM : Civilisation carriers set humanimal against manbeast. The chains rattle in the coliseum. (& Mafika died, impaled on wood-stake Hammarsdale & the government that had

rejected him affected an undying affection pose. Professed love, the kind that kills.) Blood beats down on the gladiator head splitting, watermelon open. Flesh on meat-heat. Blade-flash cold to cool it. Cultured applause from beyond the barriers. High seats throw down perfume in buckets into the arena, the kill-zone, to drown out the death-scent...then go out to legislate on human rights.

*

& In the slave-sound air laden crackling tropical storm the singing Louis Armstrong was the U Roy's voice-swing on the flying beat. Thelonious Monk kept turning around on the spot babbling silent. & Lee Perry swung around & over again same spot arm out in chant. & it all came down...to the same. coming over AMERICARIB soundwavelengthwise.

*ART, BIRD...no other course than to go opposite the public's direction.
Marrying content & form, what I need least is...acclaim.*

Bird, face to his demise, reaches out for a Jesus, says: 'save me, Diz'. & that is... Jazz.

BBC says that's a slang word for sex...oh, BANG-noises.

(some of its creators hate the WORD.

Davis says 'call it Miles Music', same Miles fired his Sting-historied bassist 'cos there were no silences in his playing...no open spaces.

Same time Miles said Bird was a hog, Trane a pig, so too Rollins, oink-colossus on the saxophone. Interpretation: Mark of the genius is...porcine.

McCOY. Both of them the real. Tyner, Mrubata.

Horns to keys, & both sun-kissed.

*In brutality's own equation, the one lost his daughter to butchery,
otherside the laughter: music's own treachery.*

I wouldn't barter one for the other. Cos Facing the overseer-financier public, it is easier to compromise your art than release a fart. still, some play the piano of flatulence. & others the sax of tummy-runs. This language for me...is neutered.

Trying to put the sex in it...jazz it up.

DIZ. White dance. White dance. Piano at intermission. Then the toilet call.

Coming out a man with a bottle got his blood drawn. Uniform turned crimson.

Big bad beer bottle in hand Diz says he was 'gonna crown' him. But band-hands held him down. Bird cursed the guy called him a 'cur'. Diz found fun in that term.

Diz of love, care & battle...i, too, am going in RED. Cos Diz bled on the record.

Left bone-particles in the vinyl. (before things tail-spun out of control.

'It will take a long time to combine my loosely hanging thoughts'

- Tha Hymphatic Thabs

You can't write in the modern jazz idiom without noting a debt to BIRD.

I misquote, but it is for the Improv-factor of things...on the established.

Polyrhythm and complexity of harmony. The Parker legacy, sir. I am heir.

The base was there before me. Solid. I stand my pen on it. And the paper winces while i wait for the blood. It is where i take it from there on in. Going

stratospheric with the grounded. Down-beat street. Step. 'the melody's more important than the navigation.' And motif is trampoline in this. Bounce on it only to take off and then back again...on the one! The idea though is to take it away from the inherited form. Make a new dream. Four-pronged attack, channeled through one. Mafika Bird Monk & Me.

House, they call the music. My eyes stray to the shacks. Incessant, monotonous, thump of canned programming. I remember once LKJ saying when dance hall sounds moved from live-band instrumentation to the CASIO drum machine it pushed the sounds closer to the streets, gave it more dust, rendered it evermore organic. Creak &... a sandstorm hits the shackland & I avert my gaze. Tension & release the metallic walls expand & contract that percussion instrument, the tube with sand in it, you turn it around & the sand runs down to the other side. Still, the jukebox goes ballistic. Tinny, whinny, ceaseless acoustics slap to the face and the crash of a cymbal. Jah bless the synthetics.

*Purgatory blues like urgent bowel evacuation needed
but a butt-plug is propped-up deep & solid in the rectum.
Sand hitting the sides of the mkhukhu sounds like Mongo Santamaria thinking
coral reef meets tide coming in heavy. Santeria-soulful. Wave of sound. Hell,
sheets like Trane-tracking biting down on his dental pain. It shooting up to vibe
with the Heroin withdrawal one week into his solitary-confined-to-water-diet-self cleanse
before the Ascension.*

*The Caribbean meets the Arctic coming on spastic.
Identity plane-crash. Melt-flesh.*

*

I mini-bused myself three suffocating, sweat-filled hours to the JOBURG VILLE. Expensive dressed in poor veneer. The face slum, the core bourgeois. Bars, restaurant, bookshops where upward mobility gets its chops. Tattered jeans. The designers charge more for the holes and patches. 'BRAKE. Break your fall & CLUTCH' sign at the filling station opposite. Designer poverty too, like bringing illiteracy's scars to seminars.

City built on bones, blood, flesh...its haunted avenues pretend ignorance and blame the past on the present. Dipping tea in the cookies. The water flowing uphill... 5'o clock afternoon swelter, clammy, sweat-filled. Heaving paper-bags & hauling up plastic sacks. The colours darkening. & the sweat flowing heavenward away from it all, the service and toil. Breath-heavy the taxi queues snaking, no... tortoise-moving. Around corners of the downtown & trodden-bound. Hugging the smells of oriental spices, the sweat of armpit, brow, crotch, & between toes turning black jam, fabrics... & cooking. restaurants grunting under the weight of last week's food recycling, and oiled used over and over 'til it runs thick black trying to shed its own weight...the blinds about to go down so too, some hope, the sights. Queue marshals holding court, lording it mighty over the commuters. They can afford it, no options out here.

Passengers hostage to taxi-drivers' insecurities played out as macho-man rules...Never nowhere more expletives, colourful sexual references swearwords anywhere than taxi-world. Take my holy word. Kingdom of the knave, this. In the exhaustion, the torpor of it, the deadening of the long travel after the long slog and the trudge around where food should be...and the snivels, the tears, the...aaah...but the children, ah, the children...for now though the wait....the years gape, up ahead, a grave. And behind, the decades yawn, bored. Even as they swallow. And lick lips afterwards.

And opposite...the stock exchange opens its oiled orifices and dislodges, from deep lubricated sub-terra bowels it discharges venereal...from uterine parking lots ...Lamborghini's, Ferraris, Porsches, never south of here... BMWs, Mercedes that never will touch dust where uncoiffed humanity walks. Per capita never nowhere. And the queues sigh. Eyes on the moment. The convertibles glide past. The SUVs lost in urban slick growl with all leisure, inching away & the masses stares are dead. On target. '4-4 !' shout the marshals, pushing the lined up, chest-heavy, buttock-weight, thunderous legged, squeezing them in to minibuses. & driving past, the monstrosities of affluence, wealth own show-reels unfolding on the screen of the urban streets, licking tarmac... they exude airconditioning, warding off the heat and the humid in things. The queues get their cool by proxy. Comfort by association of the street. What is osmosis? Rub up might get some. Not in the eyes, looking out mocking, from behind tinted windows. And the street & queues watch...And then momentary lapse, miniscule movement in that affluent direction...then realisation bubble burst disappear...truth is...deflation. STEP.

BEFORE THE COMING we capitalised BLACK. And that is the colour he was burnt. Truly. No, blacker than that. Like the car-tyres and petrol set alight on humans. That black. But before that...when the first brain-drop fell on his arm he looked at it, it was his. & he thought the rain was falling yellow now. & when they repeat it they laugh. In the street. Still, the other one, skinny humpty on the metal wall, the performer for toil-drunken applause. The top-of-the-train dancer, the train-surfer... he misjudged, got his takkie caught under some steel railing on top of the train. Couldn't dislodge himself. & when the electricity hit him...above all was the smell. The power-cabling sizzled. On Phefeni station platform people wrinkled their noses and thought of boerewors. The aroma of human braaivleis they smelled. Memories of Vlakplaas.

Walking down the street and a voice behind me says 'heita' and I turn around with a 'hola' out of my mouth and the figure, furtive, shrinking away, a man says with shame in voice 'oh, sorry, timer' and i feel old, punctured, but then again...walking down the street in another place a different time and youths in the street greet with much bowing and scraping and 'ah, greetings uncle', and you smile at the respect and return it to them but then a moment later realise...they were looking at your pants, to see how far your turn-up was from their hands, and what speed they needed to lunge and pull them up and you sailed or flew or swung or staggered up into the air and the one grabbed you by both legs before you hit the ground and the other turned your pockets and they laid you right back on your feet and walking again, centless...in the street...like you had taken no detour...and your head spun and the blue yellow green black stars came. And you turned and looked at...well...nobody – they would not be there. Gone...long gone past whatever corners you know...and, if that way inclined and your anger and fear did not stand in the way, you would have to marvel and chuckle at it all. And say yes, if that was the class they displayed, they deserved your money. And walk on by.

The POPOMALA people, I have seen them nod off, go off and asleep on their feet in the middle of the street, standing among people, sitting on the floor...they go off totally, completely, out of consciousness. And remain rigid, standing or sitting. Minimal heroin, rat poison, marijuana and who-knows-what. They take a toke. That is, prop the pipe up and light up, suck it in deep, hold it. Tight in the chest burning to run out, keep it in, hold it...and when nothing else but chest-crack remains, let it out...and then...the lights don't blink, they blow out. Dead. The man could be drawling out a thing, some coherent bit and then...out. No warning. A heavy kick it gives, that. And later, minutes, hours...they don't know, when they wheel back in, the light explodes and he is there, present. And the system starts gnawing at the nerves, the senses, and it calls for it. It eats out the insides. It wrings the innards, it pythons itself around the veins, constricts the nerves. And IT has to be got...so... 'uncle!'... eat dust.

THINGS beautiful hip brimful of life, they mass the streets, upright eyes future-ward, even in revelry sure...how many destined to go prostrate at destiny's dead feet? No answers here, I turn the corner. Page through. To read more of this booked life. I push myself through the thick, acrid air. Life begins with excretion, nothing pretty there.

They drop out of protective vaginas running to get their smarts calling their mothers whores, tramps, sluts...mouths smutty off venereal discharge. Yes, they are man-loving, 'my niggers

before bitches' but turn butt around tight-clamped talking homophobic. All that after they lip-gloss with semen.

They burnt plastic onto the head and shaft of his penis because...well, the child lied. Said he had been touching her... 'in front' and 'down below'. The more he screamed the angrier the crowd became the more afraid she got and... so, the more she lied. Scared they would harm her if they knew she lied. So they cut off his penis and put a condom on it, set it alight. From the bottom of the shaft up. It burnt climbing. Went out at the head. And someone said what remained was a black mushroom. All laughed. And she still lied. And laughed too, then.

*For them rice & peas
For us lice & fleas*

*

'Should i go for the smoky Dizzy mix OR Lucidity?'

'No, no Lucy Ditty...bring the core, hard. Not the plastic wrapping. No paper-rapping, either, messing with classics mixing them with wackness...'

'Check out Charles Mingus – radical activist super-huge trooper personality short-fuse & the match close to ignition tempered social conscience deep-earth on the bubble-music, & the lava is political engagement...' i say to the one carrying 'beats for the muddy-mix' in baggy-jeans & the wheels-of-steel plus the one with the golden mic and the platinum lyricism, mapping their route to the hip hop battlefields.

Then i spin the disc & there's not furry flurry showing ego-laden off like 'look, ma, i can play!'...plus it's not always i go with BASS-slaps (love it too much for the violence...unless it is "Funkie" Mohapi's Humnana...I hum it deep behind the beat...whiplashed from facing the woofer-air blasting my bowels...just a little off & pressured, a cough that will be suppressed no more. A release i would rather NOT want...some wipe their sweat off with human skins.

The gathered, sweating, angry-to-trembling Afrikaners in the dusty street want it to have been an attempt at rape. An assault on their grasping at white nationhood. The hands are on the guns. The trucks roar, eager to grab whoever it was. Old woman speaking, the one who lives in the house opposite, with her Parkinson's-diseased geriatric husband who can only hobble a quarter step at a time from the door to the gate, and her divorced, middle-aged, bulimic daughter. She speaks fast, her squeaky voice trying to rise above the deep-throat growls of the trucks and their old-republic-clad occupants. She prattles fast about how i am a good person, i live in that little house behind the trees, i help out...and it is to have them not turn their murder-intent and fire-attention on me...Yes, they gathered in, wanting it to have been an attempt at despoiling this white woman.

And the victim...she struts, the attention bringing a little colour, in vain, to her face. She is walking off her soles, bouncing, glad. She looks like crumpled khaki, like brown paper wrapper out in the elements too long. Like she has been through storms, wind, dust then drain-water drenched and cast out in the driving sun. Pink blotched some kind of symmetry across the face. Deep lined, the visage. Trenches cutting in and across. Thin to the bone, you can see the bones sticking out on both shoulders, desperately holding her shirt up. She bathes in the harsh light of her victimhood. For a change because always when she walks past, the boers look at her. Surreptitiously, the grimaces forming, and steal their glances away, never staring. Ashamed. She is no boeremeisie to hold up in pride of the Van Riebeeck and oom Paul Kruger old tradition. She hustles all – black, white – for money in the street. The pale skin peeling off her face. She collects and sells scrap metal across the freeway and... You need not be told but you can see the drug-hunger. The craze behind the skinless eyes.

This day her two children, 6 and 8 ran screaming down the dirt-street and cries filled the air. I ran out. And heard through the trees bordering our properties my AWB neighbour furiously saying, loud-voiced – i later learned it was into her telephone – "kom gou....kom gou" and

blabbering incoherently, other things. By the time i got to the gate there were three trucks and a couple of cars gathered in the street, guns on show. A police car arrives, and the police are bored, one yawning. It is Monday morning. They don't believe this rape story. The AWB neighbour, predatorial, like the smell of blood was in the air and the wounded close by, was wafting and floating around, holding centre-court.

Through the babble it emerged: he tried to rape her...it was 10 o' clock in the morning...middle of the untarred street. And the street has pedestrian traffic. Workers walk the street in their overalls. In their numbers. Why would anyone try a thing like rape in the middle of it? He tried to tear off her clothes....he pushed her onto the ground....yes he ripped her shirt...But the shirt is intact. And the beasts are gathered. And the two children whimper...he was trying to take her phone. The faceless nameless black, trying to steal her cellphone. They want it to have been an attempt at rape.

*

Let the jazz be free, Ornette Coleman came and said. And then did. Set it thus: 'Not interested in mastering forms or styles others invented. / Originate. Innovate. The creativity markings...' as the prose colossus looks at the page while Sonny Rollins caresses his horn, blowing off the bridge & into the wind. Better that than rubber-stopped senses.

The serial killer with the ideology against white supremacy targets white women only. The Ideologically Inspired Serial Killer – white woman, the last bastion of racial supremacy – preservation?

'The black woman is at the bottom of the food chain...oppressed all about by the white power structures, by patriarchy...her own man...the white one held up as the ultimate...the measure of aesthetics, everything spins around pleasing this fake, elevated, supposed to be treasured angelic whose sex, even, is used to sell dreams. The racist, xenophobic cry "would you let a nigger fuck your sister?"... shit, like she is some fruit on a tree you could just pluck at your will and horniness like...without freedom to decide whether to do or not...some inanimate object just waiting there for brother to give the say-so for the knobbing...damn, I wouldn't want her but still...the power behind that is...yes, she is seen as the one gate to the impurifying of that race...so...well...if that was so... I was going to smear the kind of filth on that canvas like they wouldn't stand to look at it...' Pink femalehood, the last bastion of Aryan self-worth and supremacy. The anti-miscegenation murder squads have castrated Black Male going back centuries and to the future....endangered species, Mista Black.

So Serial Murderer goes out to level the splaying fields. No sex, he finds it disgusting with The Aliens, as he calls them. Says when the lies stop floating, the blood too will cease. He has cut up four and going for six when they catch him, the boer-brigade in khakis preserving the purity of their whiteness. 'Serial Healer', he prefers. In a sick land. The newspapers palpitate, as can be expected... his technique: reaching for the deep hate, he eviscerates her then puts a wheel-spanner in the wound, heaves to let the innards out jammed – cell barred, he calls it – in the rib-cage, to free the 'hidden Black' within. A kind of lumber jack. He says also: they are scared Black man will fuck you so you can't walk? I would not dick them if that was the only thing to stop my cock falling off...I got myself an industrial stapler, i ram the labia, attach them to the thighs so they can freely spout all those race-lies without that politically correct mess of human righted hate speechified censorship...I let loose the bigotry excretion...let your pen screech on that." I take note.

My cousin Vincent Sekete went, to bring The Fire. He and his two comrades hit Sasol, Voortrekkerhoogte, Sasol again...and when they came back again, and hid in their safe house...THEY, the South African Defence Force, surrounded them. In their numbers. They had been TOLD. By HIM, the National Hero, leader of the liberation forces, the armed ones. Where the three had sprung from. The animals inside the Kruger National Park rioted. They smelled the blood, & the cordite. They heard the death screams. The Sasol 3 laid the land for 20km

alongside the park fence flat with Defence Force bodies. This was no Guns of Navarone at Eyethu Cinema, double attraction, with Kelly's Heroes, midnight show. No applause or catcalls, no whistlings & excited shouts of 'sterring', 'ntwana'...no. It was betrayal from the top that brought it. The National Hero had sold them out, we heard later. But there was still the last firefight...for hours the soldiers circled above, and crept in the undergrowth. There was much fear in their ranks. And they bled. And died. What they had been taught was a lie, they realised. As many & more flopped down, their chests blown up, heads smashed, legs twisted under them. and the glaze settling over the eyes. And still more came. A white army against three young black men. And the sun beat down, coward yellow like gaseous pus. And it couldn't hold forever. Toppled down from the apex. Leaned over, like holding its stomach to keep intestines in. 'Let them not touch the ground or it is over'. Ulibambe lingashoni. Hold it up, the sun, or it sets with you. And when it went down they followed it down too. They died with it.

After the switch-over, in the new dispensation's stinky after-birth, they, the ones with power, went to dig up the Sasol Three and 'bring them home'. They held a commemoration service at the amphitheatre in the township. And thousands came, and sang praises. And the traitor National Hero made a speech. Talking about honour in life and heroism in death. And the people clapped. And some cried, touched. There was much in the air that was ugly at core, even though glistening golden on the outside. And all went home. And the three remained in the new ground.

(dog turds cooked in vomit. & served with piss gravy.
I appreciate your racial generosity on my plate.
deep stomach filling. I feel it in my lining like history's lint.)

Vegetative state above surface & below the manure
forms promise feeding 'resurrection'?
Pull the plug. Rather a poem breeding inspiration.

STORM – WORM
POEM – FORM

I am content
Revolting within makes me content out
Revolt in here thrusts trust out there
'crowd a people vote for me'

'A heart that isn't tainted -- no greater breastplate!', a street preacher screams into the night.

Maletsholo's daughter slipped, slid off the silver pipe across the Klip river and drowned. Running there i found a crowd gathered, whispering about how it was a sign someone was bound for traditional healership in the family. Children don't just go under the water unless they were called by the ancestors. And also, why would the child have tried crossing the river over this sewer-pipe when the road was a short distance away? They had seen her, some say,

like a trapeze artist on the shiny pipe, one foot snaking after the other. Agile. No safety care. And then she'd slid down, slow, they say, unlike one who'd tripped. She'd grasped helplessly, for some hold, but the pipe was slippery. And so down she'd went. No need for tears though, they said to the mother. The world beyond had called, the little girl had answered. And you'd see, in no time one in the family would be called for initiation to the sangoma realm.

Maletsholo's my aunt. And when my cousin Dinky walked in on a snake in the kitchen and killed it with a ladle: that was a sign. Since she'd had a fortnight of nightmares, waking up screaming some nights, singing in her sleep others, they took her off to the spirit medium and there she stayed for a year. Came back a healer. But first, on this day, Maletsholo's sister who worked at Matlhapa's Funeral Undertakers, where the little girl was taken after being fished out of Kliprivier – Maletsholo's sister, she cooled her alcohol on the dead bodies, she had been known to say, came staggering drunk into the house. She stumbled in and said: 'Oh my sister, look at the tears on my face, i am touched, no i am not crying. Today i washed your daughter, her carcass i mean...and oh, you don't know how beautiful she looked, yessis, i have never seen such beauty on a person dead or alive...it is clear the water-snake licked her face all the time she was down there, it removed all the blemishes and she came out beautiful, oh you don't know how lucky you are, such a gorgeous corpse...i am so jealous, she looked just so lovely...' & Maletsholo toppled down. Collapsed. Out.

*

I walk into the tavern and greet. Everyone. Walk to the toilet and it's flooded. I stand before the urinal filthy liquid climbing up my shoes, socks getting wet. Drip off walk out and outside the door this man, older than me is standing there. Look of fury. He says: 'Yeah, you greeted me, hm, for what? Tell me why, to do what?' Ugly grimace under the sweat and the fat on the face. Unwashed, the water runs black down the cheeks. Like a stun-gun going off, the words. Shock of it sends the electricity hitting my system and I reel. Coiling up. It moves in jerky flows, I move off before the white light comes. He wouldn't be able to stand up afterwards. I see, in my head, that swarthy face split open and the life-fluid spill out.

I hit the pavement soft in my tread, walk into a riot. Service undelivered. No water. No trash picked up. The filth, paper packaging, food left over, dog turds, insanely all over. The mass is out. Overturning dustbins. They fill the street. Noise. Some old women, hawkers, sit on blankets on the pavement. Their wares before them. Second hand clothing. Some traditional medication, herbs and bushels, dried. Vegetables laid out on newspapers. There, fruits shined, on upturned cardboard boxes. The crowd comes on, kick the stuff over, spill bottles. It is black Christmas on the street-side. They throw cabbages & potatoes into the street, out to the gutters. They squelch tomatoes, grab bananas, apples, pears and munch away, not angry now, just laughing. They dig in and take as they please. There is singing. Some dancing. The sellers, the old women, they protest in silence. Object in scared wordlessness. The quietness damming the rage within, the helpless anger and the bile of disgust rising behind their chapped lips. The rioters pick still, choose some, trickle off. I look at the old women trembling under the shawls over their shoulders, shaking drooping heads. & i know something has turned here, some tide. Their children will surely not eat tonight, the looters ate on their behalf. Though mud, when it dries, tastes like chocolate, they say here.

'Their badges serve no purpose. They rush out when the least threatening things happen. I don't know why they call them police. Look, OK, if you slap your woman and she goes there, you will see how many vans will come for you, with those stupid sirens going like bleeding jackals, and the blue lights flashing...but what happened when the filling station was hit, hm? These guys who work there, they were locked in the storeroom at the back. The robbers said you keep your heads down. If you just lift your eyes that is the end of you. We will tell you when you can stand up: right now, stay there on your stomachs, on the floor. Where is the money? Quick...

'They took the money and locked them in there, each one's one arm chained to the steel bench. The next thing, there was a great noise like the earth was getting deep cut, it shook so hard the glass windows broke and the filling station attendants thought they were dying. & the time was not even ten, the night was thin... still, we heard the sound in the township. A kilometre away. So why did the police station not hear it if we could, is it also not in the township? why were the police deaf? The robbers bombed the ATM...in the morning there were bits of paper money all torn up and ink everywhere but I tell you, the police were nowhere...But have some trouble in your house with your people and see...cowards, i tell you.'

He shook his head, his arm rising to his face, leaned back against the bottle-store wall, and took a swig on his quart of Black Label. I grabbed my plastic bag with my six pack, note-book, pen and cigarette box in it, bade him a dry bye and went off down the road, in the direction of the Indian shop.

A small van drove slowly past me, edging close to the shop storefront. A few metres away a little boy in a torn vest and dirty shorts stood looking at the approaching van, inside it two ruddy faced, senior citizen white women. Just when the van drew abreast of him the child broke into a grin, grabbed his crotch and shouted: 'fuckie fuckie, missis...hehehe' at the van and ran off, shrieking, into the undergrowth. The women drove on up to the shop and parked. It started to drizzle. I hastened to get under the cover of the store's roof. On the stoep stood a group of teenaged boys, striking rather odd poses. Like they were modelling. The women, who were old, did not get out of the van. I walked on and put my back against the shop wall, reaching for a cigarette. There was debate inside the van. The boys stood, silently, looking at them. Words exchanged inside the vehicle, shaken heads, disagreement. The one woman, seemingly in charge, was pointing from one boy to the other, going down the line. Saying something to her mate, who was hesitant, from my distance, shaking her head each time, until, at last, consensus, it looked like... the one window got opened, on the side of the commander, who stuck her head out and said: 'Jy met die wit hemp, kom' ... The white shirted boy pointed a finger at himself, 'Ek?' 'Ja.'

He cast a quick look at his friends, disentangled himself, and sauntered over to the van. He leaned into the open window. Negotiations in the skin trade. The commander was pleased, smiled. Her friend seemed embarrassed, looked furtively around, as if to check if anyone was watching as the boy nodded. Looked over at his friends, gestured, finger of one hand pointed at the wrist of the other, saying 'ka di nako, later', and climbed into the back seat. And the car coughed to life, reversed, inched away. A high pitched voice behind me said 'hm, ba ile go mo ja', they are going to eat him. I turned quickly around as a thick, middle- aged woman hastened into the shop.

I stand there. Head empty. And the rain falls slow. The place clears. I need to work on my dress code. My grooming too, i think. I really hope i can, by some stretch of the imagination, be called a 'writer' and we know how those are supposed to be poor. But that is still no excuse for this drunken farmer in a van to drive up and offer me a bunch of 20c coins....and he looked so sad when i refused...baas-turd business, this.

*

So Dave Brubeck White playing at some campus they wouldn't let him bring his bassist within sight of the applause & put him behind the curtain. Disembodied bass-lines. Then what happened? Halfway through he got to: 'hey man, you are playing too far back come out front' & they crashed, killed, destroyed the place. So now the consciously Black hates...come on, man...

*YOU ARE SO BLACK you shouldn't be on SLAVOJ Zizek's lap...
riding his dick so hard every time you open your snout
out spurts eastern European semen...mixed, of course, with your crap...
& you stand there, tongue out, ready to lap it up!...take time out!
(don't be dead & brave putting it on Dave.
Go down Mississippi river running down the legacy of the slave.
Marooned, northern starred out, Unmastered. Comes the cat from Hades
getting the Congo Squared down to Roots.
Making rattles out of broken ankles. Yes, plus the shattered shackles.
Now with convenience stored up & forgotten,
sounds had to choose: record or jail-bars.
There we have it, the music comes bearing scars.*

MAMOTABI'S HOUSE – White City was Black Slum

2 rooms then 3. Ezindlovini. The place of elephants. It could be storming out but inside would be like the inside of an elephant...POTELA's knife cutting through the air at my mother and MAKHULU grabbing it mid-flight...she still bears the scars. Smoke in the night. Lost consciousness. Came to, outside in the air, being fanned.

Where my grandmother's hands were, they were PARCHMENT. Deep lined. I read them. They were my first script. House of hospitality. & great violence. & so its character constantly changed. Fluxed.

Vincent lived there. & brought me first face up with the politics of my reality. Joe Mahlangu with the croaking laugh. It started and stayed in his stomach. At night he'd go out and shoot people coupling.

I grew up between a guerrilla and a serial killer. If i didn't write i could have been either one.

BUNIONS ON MY FINGERS...I PUT IN A LOT OF WORK ON THE PEN.
Left blood on pages. Mine and mosquitoes'.
Metal tip on paper screech...night-time soundtrack.
Closer deeper than the shebeen's when
i double-tongue my thoughts. channel emotion.

'no melody to remember / no beat to dance to'. Armstrong came on, a dong creeping on be-bop arse. He went away dizzied & urethra parkered up so much his pop-eyes stayed on stalks so long they couldn't close his coffin....down the hip hop decades.

Caught in the rhythm-current pull...harmonic scrum...Beat-wave swept over...went down under...in the tug & pull....got choked in the melodics...no CPR, they wouldn't... he had vomit all over his mouth from air-blowing trumpets.

Sonar-Versification from here to Prose-Silence

The knob flicked red on the TECHNICS 1210 MK11 & the arm dropped, the stylus got the wax ahiss: 'titsotsi ta Joni ti ni hlamarisile' Johannes Mangwele on the turntable was ripping guts. The electrified intestines taut, brittle & deadly. No licks these. Cyclical travel into the multi-versified. Out to the sonarsphere.

Good morning blue lights, how do you do, bureaucRAT?
The coppers, they rubber-stop arse...
sodomised with a baton at the police station.
The station commander was found later
licking the chocolate off the baton-head.

Death in the mouth. & a sanguine anus.
Bleeding ulcers in excretion. Chamber-pot orchestra.
Dental infections inflect these words. Verbal cirrhosis.

The touching, the heat, the wetness. The throb & pulse of this...Our Thing.
& lying there, watching you sleep. The beauty of this being. i feel deep wretchedness. Filths me down. & i sink. Into the septic tank of...my self. It flays me, rubs the skin off my bones. i feel like a psychopath. Killing you each day, over and over.
The veins shut down. At the point of bursting. Eaten up & out by my inability to love you.

*

Dizzy Gillespie: 'When i first met Charlie Parker, it was similar to a laser. He impressed me more than anybody to that point. Charlie Parker had a new approach to playing music, we had the music...but we didn't have the...should i say pyrotechnics...'

Cyclical. As black music. Inching towards The Invocation. Calling up the spirits. They need the beat over and over, falling in 'same time'...might be polyrhythmic but has to LAND on the same...BEAT. Write that!

This place is called SEDING, short for 'Leseding', place of light. Quite ironic given the darkness throbbing at its core and spilling out bubbling in the blackest rage when least expected.

Surrounded by farmland in all directions, it is a settlement of about 700 households crammed in tiny structures. Average 7 souls per hovel. It used be made up of ramshackle, corrugated iron shacks that seemed tossed on regardless of aesthetics. Then the new administration's housing programme kicked in.

Smell of cowdung of invisible cattle mixed with petrol gets you lifted, 6am filling station. Only place open for cigarettes. And you realise "we can't go back to the bhesu and umkhonto".

The Marico River 10 minutes walk away, and no Jol'inkomo in the air. The maidens walk by dressed in blue overalls. The municipality's had another call open for 'conservation'. They are signed up to kill the foreign plants growing along the river, more than 200km. The plants, they drain the water. And non-indigenous, must go. And they line their Black experience up. For less than minimal pay.

They call it Heritage Day. When beef gets braaied, nationally. Throws that history into assegai-sharpened-on-not-so-old-bones relief. I have Nongqawuza mornings, watching frock-decked smoke in tiekiedraai twirl rise over the Dwarsberg mountain, and wonder...

At the Culture Centre at festival time Afrikaners bring out the dozen black teens, in loincloths and carting drums, plus an assortment of percussion instruments, to sin-tertain the touristy gawkers.

Weekends it is Bikers Paradise. Early dawn the roar of powerful motorbikes spreads itself across the bush and bounces off the mountains on either side. And they come. On their human-hunts.

'i took a..i don't know...a big beer bottle...i was gonna crown this guy.'- Dizzy Gillespie

'i felt that...ehm...one had to take Heroin to play like Charlie Parker played.../ by doing the very thing that killed... THE WAY WE CELEBRATED Bird's passing was to go out and use some junk.'
- Frank Morgan

*

Max Roach. Give me no temptation towards diss-infestation. Spraying beats like napalm...crash-test dum-dum healing effect, though. The church-ed-up symbolism. after the listen...the ghosts came in person. Blessed spirit reign from land of Ogun to the American.

Leave Segwagwa to crack-walk his hands on those meropa, wrapped in animal skin. Yes, Yakhal' inkomo for those drums to be. Sacrifice, badimo demanded. Leave Thobejane alone, drop the comparison like Shasha's drumstrick breaking the snare's back, then brush-caress the tom, cat!

Albert ...Ailer? Ah, Ayler, year, that's deep sickness.

Hawk ins-&-outs, Coleman. They come to feed, the predator-birds. Blood spurt out the snout spangle-fanged.

Super/sub doesn't matter stand & salute or go out!

BUSHVELD DAYS – caught between the abusive, forlorn, thieves & police crooks---

Early mornings I sit on the kitchen stoep with coffee and cigarettes, and a pair of birds, without fail, come and perch on the telephone line opposite and sing to me. They wear the Botswana flag. Blue, black and white. They nest in the massive tree just behind the wires, there is a hole dug into the bark. I often hear little chirps and squeaks from in there. Their babies.

And then there is the squirrel family. They come running a few metres past me, days. I do not know what happened that day but as mister squirrel dashed past, the one bird swooped and klapped squirrel on the back, hard. Squirrel let out a yell and scampered. A few hours later the squirrel eased its way close, closer even, to where I was sitting. Until it was a metre away. Stood on its hind legs and rubbed its paws, its mouth opening and closing. I told it I understood, it was telling what the turmoil had been about, what led to the fallout with the bird. It stood looking at me for a while, lowered its paws to the ground, and went off.

PIET MAMPOER...well, he distils mampoer on his farm. The police shut him down. Tourists kept falling sick. Their innards burning, being carted off to the hospital 42km away. His stuff was poison, it was said. More than 80% pure. The black people run off the road in panic when he drives down. He can kill you, that one, they say. He has killed a few. Make sure to not be on the road at night when he comes down. He could drive you down, smash you to tiny pieces, gather them up and bury you on the farm, to make the fruit trees grow better.

Bottles broken and eyes empty of life, withered dreamy sights. Despair town place of purgatory. Whose and what sins are these walking down past ghostly ancient walled & haunted

window-eyes of shops that haven't been open in a decade...and the urine marks trail down the dry twiggy legs of mothers and children alike. Emaciated, same as the mongrels sniff-snuff...and mucus dried up with the last rains. In the bush-sun, the heat clogs the pores. Hits the top of the skull and the pain shoots down to the centre of the feet.

She went to report the rape. And the policemen on night duty, the two...gawked, drooled, looking at her torn clothes, the thighs showing. And took her into the station commander's office. There was no one there. And AGAIN the womb screamed against the raping sperm.

The township could take up a quarter of Moleman's farm. He says 'I bought this place for R20 000 in '92, just before the changes. It goes right down to the river...' Moleman is an artist, a painter and sculptor. He was commissioned by the 'democratic structures' to make a sculpture of Sol Plaatje in Kimberley. He made the Plaatje figure seated at a desk, pen in hand. But the councillor of Kimberley, fresh from a trip to Cuba, came, saw the artwork and said no, she had seen the sculptures of revolutionaries in Havana, they were twice the size of a tall man, and were proud warrior depictions. Plaatje should abandon the desk, stand up and wave his black fist in the air.

Pauline says her property is even bigger. Yes this side it also goes to the river. But it crosses the street this side and goes right up to the mountain. "In '92 Fantasma called me, she couldn't breathe she so was excited, she said, 'Come quickly, don't ask questions. Come...and don't forget your cheque-book.' I left my parents' farm in the Free State and came. And here I stayed."

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POGISHO works at the bottle store. He says: 'I have worked for this beetroot-coloured pig-faced guy since i was a little boy, when i should have been at school. Oh i loved my father and mother, bless them. I would have been dressing in a suit and sitting in an office otherwise, i would have gone to college, but they died and i came and worked for this fat fuck. I am nearly 40 now. He pays me R400 per week. 400! And you know what, let us say on Saturday he will give me R100, on Tuesday another R50 and so on until it is R400. No, fuck this. I am not working today. I sat there earlier today with my head between my knees, just sitting, not working. His daughter brought me a plate of food and i took it and tossed it on the ground. I am sick of these people. He came and found me still sitting and said: 'Is jy gesuip?' I just sat there for a while. Then he asked me: 'aha, het jy weer twak-tabak gerook?' And i said: 'meneer, jy is nie my pa nie, my pa het my nie eens daai ding gevra nie...' I was waiting for him to try his baaskap on me, i was going to hit him in his pig-face so hard...

Look, i know everything in this place, prices and all, the stock, everything. I have spent my life here but when he and his wife cannot run the place, like he drinks a lot, you can see by his face, and he conks out sometimes. And his wife falls ill to death a few times but they will never let me run the place or sit behind the cash-machine, they go and get some Afrikaner person who cannot even count or use the machines here and has to ask me...what is that? Like because i am black i will steal? No, i am going to bleksem him moertoe! My wife worked here too, you know that, for some years. She has got a terrible ailment. Her belly-button started swelling up badly, ah it is bad, and what happened? They just threw her aside, not a cent, nothing, to hell with them! He thinks he knows me, okay i will show him something he doesn't know...'

"Dear Anna-Tommy-Carly...this writing thing is cramming my head. & it is progressive overpopulation. Good i can still call it back, exhale, let out, watch it blow up & away, fizzle out & down, flop out of breath, weak & beat settle. BUT 'til when the soft landing, or even take off? What when i can no longer... i can no longer channel, reign, sin rule my kinkdom? Control this cunt-tree of my skunk...i mean skull...prune, cut it down or even burn down to the ash-blue-ball congested ground-nuts?' The writer is in an unsynthesised fix. The literary critic puts his pipe in his navy-coloured-lipped mouth, strikes a match with much practiced flare, his one hand, the one off the matchstick, loosens his collar, sucks deep, blows a hornless rhino smoke-ring & says in all honest hoarseness: 'All texts are pre-existent. Maybe just not manifest. Forget the original impulse. Just write true to the formula & the SA literary awards cabal will give you an award...' The brandy is quite strong tonight, though the same brand as last week's. Emotion adds much alcohol-content to that specified on the bottle. & from the corner my Hendrixian hero, the greatest living session guitarist to ever walk the blue planet, his own idol withstanding, a sad, ultra-sensitive individual whose own compositions i find quite bloodless & too diabetes-factored, lets his electric-guitar toned voice solo: 'It's just like children, fear of the dark. Baseless. Better the born raceless.'" My ultimate rhymester sinks back onto the pillow he has been sitting on. & it is a quiet moment like when the applause dies down & there is no encore.

& nobody knows what the script, or the tracklisting demands. So my hero grabs his guitar. He'd been boring the gathered, endlessly tuning. The strings pulling at veins. Strums some hesitant chords, kills Jimi with the first bar, looks at no one, & lets the lyrics i wrote for him float out. His singing voice walks on clogs, graceless. But the twinkly fingers on the wood carries & it is silent to the last sub-throaty note in this room, pyrotechnical magic-fingered guitar-licking in the pauses.

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Sybelius Scandinavian jingoistic...

Work on. Dyani-bass-powered. African man Zim Nqgawana more melodic Sankara than Varara. Cohen's democracy coming to the US like that Yeatsian beast to Bethlehem.

Nation time Baraka without the anti-Semite. Root of his chameleon-ideology nibbling away, termites. Zion is a cock though in Hebrew. 'Gal, run come climb holy mount Zion', dance-hall jam. Salvation at the dry end of ejaculate. flip the immaculate onto her arse. See the hypocrite skanking to Tosh militant recruiting black soldiers..."

This little Afrikaner boy, must be 16 or so, has just greeted me with the utmost respect: 'Môre, oupa'! Shit can't get stinkier than that. Oh foxsakes. Reminds me of the child in the shop in the Free State, who said to Raks while rubbing his hands together in all humility: 'Askies, Oom Kaffir, kan u asseblief vir my lekkergoed koop?'

All these spin around as I scribble, in the garden of the shebeen, with the one section partitioned off behind a bamboo-wall & I sit there, with beer & small bodied Pogisho, who says he weighs 58kg, & his wife, Mmaphefo, who is 105kg, with a pair of quart bottles & they talk while I listen, in-between jotting down a little scribbling along my way this Sunday morning. Thanya Sepoti, the shebeen/tavern, used to be called Tanya's until the natives twisted that around when the Afrikaner owners gave up in the face of belligerent native drunkenness and sold it to these Chinese immigrants. It is the nucleus of all black activity here.

Pogisho & Mmaphefo, couple, work the graveyard tavern shift. Mixing with the bones & flayed flesh. She is huge, both front and back, that is, a huge paunch that hangs half-way down her thighs, and a posterior that follows far behind when she walks. She is tall too. And extends some distance sideways. He is a slip of a man, tiny. small. He reaches hardly to her shoulder, standing up. It is said all those disparities fall away when people lie down. It must be a mouse-on-a-bread-loaf situation with them. They are loving to each other. Right now they are close to crying, saying while their voices entwine so much I cannot tell who is saying what:

'You know, we have a 13 year old son. & last year, when the year was getting split & everybody was eating drinking having fun, we have these 'scales', you know, the jam-tins, full of Jija, Sekgonyamatlho, we could not afford beer because, well, hey thank the gods for this Chinese guy here, you know him he owned the shop on the corner & the people chased him away but before he left, just as Christmas coming, he gave us things from his shop & our child got a shirt, & fine pants &...ok, it was only the shoes that spoilt things but he looked beautiful like all the other children. The reason, look at it, I have worked there for 19 years, both of us...you found me there, Pogisho, didn't you? You have been here what, 17? Anyway, when I fell ill the white people here did not know me, they would not even let me get into their bottle store. Look, for the first five years I earned R250. OK, those were the days things were not expensive like today. OI, after two years it became R300. In another year R400...oh, per week...yes. After all that time I was earning R400 per week...& every time I have to negotiate again for my money that he promised...you know I had to go to the woman to get a pay-slip for...something...I think a tax

document. & the husband wrote it out on a piece of paper & put R1000 per week there. & I said but I don't get paid this. He said no, tell them you get paid that. & it is a piece-job you are working, not full-time. Hm, he must think I am a child. Anyway, you have not seen me for a while because I said, no, fuck this...after last week I went to him for pay & he gave me R60 for the week, saying he will see me next week. & then his daughter asked me to wash her car & gave me R30. That is terrible. I have to always beg for my pay. After all these years...

& now my son, he is 13. What a beautiful boy, he looks like a girl &...you know, that kid will never, when I want to give him pocket-money, accept it. No, he will say, Pogisho, do you have smokes? & if I say no, he will say no, just let me have R1 & you buy something to smoke with the rest...& now he made me sad, came home & said this Boer wants them to go pick the weeds out of his farm &... he will give them each R10. I nearly cried because I know my child will go there, get beaten up & sworn at & then later after the day in the burning sun get paid R10 &...he will bring it home to his mother, he will not even take a cent...& my tv is dead, I bought him this game with the control you play on the tv screen, so he can't play & I cannot fix it...I want to please my child too, like other parents...but when the tv is fine & I watch it & I see all those children twisting their mouths at their parents & giving them these heavy-ball voices & demanding this & this in their huge houses with all the white values I think what a lucky man I am...& my wife...anyway on new year's day a young guy came & saw us drinking this Jija thing and said no, we were making him sad, so he bought us a case of Black Label, hm...blessed...how do you like that?

One night 2AM. R1500 counted & in the moneybag. More in the till. The last of the customers trickling out... He needs to go to the toilet outside. She is uneasy. Premonition. She tells him: urinate inside, behind the beer-crates. He says no, they work there, they will suffer the stench. He goes out the back, just around the building's corner, pulls out, splashes, one eye on the front-door. Sees two men watching him from directly opposite the door with the steel grating. They move towards him, he does not trust them, so he nips his piss & moves towards the back door. His left forearm is in Plaster of Paris. They grab him as he opens the grille. Struggle ensues. One guy hits his hand with an object he doesn't see. He staggers back, tries to fight. They push him in. After cracking his lip.

Meanwhile, on the other side, through the front door, a man comes in, orders a single loose cigarette. He is short 30 cents. They empathise. Hand it to him. From behind the bird-coop cage. Little hole cut through to fit just one hand or the passing of a beer-bottle. The knifings. She pisses where she stands. The urine-smoke rises from the spot directly between her legs. Her 'in-betweens' she calls it, the area between one leg and another. Pogisho slides through after she has hit the man at the front right in the middle of his head with the steel-centred wood-covered cue-stick and he reels back, dazed. & Pogisho splits the one guy's lip open with the Plaster-of-Parised arm. He slides croc-like, all fours, fast & smooth through the urine surrounding her frame & still dripping down from her vagina. He slides in and hits his head against the opposite wall inside the chicken-coop-like enclosure & she slams the grille shut. They decide to wash the blood out of their mouths with Carling Black Label. Man & woman.

Each with their own quart. They gurgle & swallow, blood & alcohol, & their bond is sealed further. Arms around each other as the hours pass on, slow, towards daylight.

BAAS calls at 4 AM, gets the news, he calls the police station. The fat policemen, two policeman and two women, arrive, swearing. Hurling insults at her, saying she is a known drunkard. 'What is this shit all about?' It is that drunkard woman!' 'Hey, why did we get out of the police-station? Do you know how busy we are?' 'We have no time for your poison-guzzling weepiness &... shoo, you stink!' 'Where are the robbers?' the policewoman asks, as if they expected her to hold them there while waiting for the cops' arrival. They are full of disdain. Badge-powered., & made manly by uniform & gun on child-bearing hip. They hobble away. Leave the stench of their office to follow after them. Not a cent was taken.

Dawn breaks. Baas comes in, checks the money, turns around and says he is missing money for 3 beer cases. Mmaphefo weeps, heavily, pulling it all from her guts. Missus arrives. Accounts are tallied. R15000 in the money-bag, R3000 in the till. Blood and piss all over. She thanks Pogisho and Mmaphefo, still bleeding where they were cut up, with R300. Mmaphefo lets the tears roll at the cheap price of their Black lives. & still, their 13 year-old child will grow. Their son. Despite it all. If that crowded graveyard across the dustway doesn't call.

I've heard stories. They dug a shallow hole and put a metal sheet on top & left it. Maybe the rain would come & make music. Perhaps it would bake in there like the ancients. Both the hard hit & the soft massage put you to sleep. I feel like with Fusion they brought syrup. Sewers went open hand & the drumstick is the brush so as not to push the drums central, some kind of caress or anaesthetic.

How you sound Baraka?

Black F/Art...you decide Pa-Ra-Pa-Rap

Horns & Drums kicking in is quite narcotic. 'Wailers are we...' Pa-Ra-Pa-Rap. Black Dada inching closer to wreck. Dud. I heard Eliot read & it was... inching deeper inside my car. Nihilismus, despite the hate, rage...was so white, just dressed in blackskin. Anti-Semite.

Termite at the houtkop, even.

I wished for Black Noise crash like under a psychopathic smith's hammer off rhythm

Fist to fist became knives, axes, machetes then cowardice graduated that to guns then the safety of cowardice hit you from long way come the Bomb-masters & now...from the comfort of the lounge in here, meet the Drone.

The sister of the shebeen queen joins us & I try to get a recipe for fried cabbage, like my grandmother used to make. She is 24, holding the fort while the owner is off to church, she says, says some customer who has just gone into the house was stinky & she hates being here,

can't wait to be away. She is caramel pretty-faced & wearing thick make-up & long fake eyelashes, eyebrows cut to razor-edge. Her belly hangs over her jeans. Her legs thin, though. The whole impression incongruous. & she says she is not of this place. Just visiting her sister 'with the Chinese child'. Soon gone. She cradles a glass which she says contains Coca-Cola & offers it to Mmaphefo so she 'could take some of the edge off the alcohol.'

She is taking extra-studies for her matric & she knows my son has gone through university in Joburg, could he come help her with her mathematics? & no, he will be perfectly safe but as I know, everyone gets tempted. & if there is temptation & he does not rape & there is agreement between them then why should I worry? She speaks over everyone else & others argue ingredients & cooking-mode so she rips my pen & notebook out of my hand & writes, telling me there is no better way...then giving it back with a huge, satisfied smile. I open to the page & read:

Instruction of cooking cabbage
Cutting onion + green pepper + carrots and frying it, with oil
After that you put cabbage in pot,
Containing it with, carrots, green paper + together with salt.
And Raja medium.

At this point she, Mmaphefo & her husband start arguing between them Someone says seasoning after the pot has started boiling or cooking is a bad idea because when I eat, like say if it is a chicken dish, the meat itself will be tasteless, in this case the cabbage, but all the flavour will be in the gravy, don't I know that? Anyway, before cooking the cabbage I should wash it & set it aside for the water to get drained out.

& someone says no potato, it puts water in the pot. & another says hell no, cabbage & potato same time. To boil. & salt too.

& I write in my book:

Not a HOWL (that's massa's, jackal caught in my t/rap
Mine is a field-holler...Your dollar's not worth My dog-collar...

I went off to try cook my 'churchical' screaming cabbage.

NO NO NO. My AWB neighbour is getting rather familiar these days. Calling my number under silly pretexts. Tonight saying she has no water and 'do I have some?'...fok...why am I watering right-wing-shit?... I hope she hasn't searched out 'black power' online and seen how the smut-people have perverted it and now, perhaps, I have become desirable... 'oh lawd have mercy'. Her husband ran off with a black woman, let us not forget.

THE SHAMAN came here and worked as a gardener tending the church-grounds. In time he ran off with the predikant's wife. But not much of a distance, though. They live a two minute walk away from the NG Kerk where he used to work and she to 'wife'. Now he does nothing with his

days but sit on the stoep welcoming visitors and keeping this one room in the house where women are not allowed to enter. People believe he has something supernatural about him. Moleman says he walked with him in the Kgalagadi and at odd points he could not see him even though he was by his side. He would be present but just not there, in a corporeal sense. The shaman is extremely thin, frail, fragile. He loves hugs. And when you embrace him you can feel his spine protruding from his back through his clothes. It is hard to imagine him having sex with her. She is extremely strong and energetic. A pure-breed of an Afrikaner vrou but...she loves him lots, you can see it when she looks at him. Something you cannot point at passes over her face. Other men around here fear having him around their wives. They sneak in close and check the extent and quality of the hug when their wives move in for their fair share. He just needs to hug people. That is just how he is. I have decided to have no gardener in my yard for as long as I still can handle a sickle. I never do, though. I offer others a little money and watch them work. I have put a no-hugging law in place in my home. I am wary.

I bring a complaint about the crap conduct of a couple of cops, to the police station commander, a black woman. She listens, eyes wide, then does the Pontius Pilate, saying the matter is 'above' her, she will have to consult her superior, a white Afrikaans male working in a police station in a different town altogether. This is rather sad, calling on Mkhulu-baas, or what? I don't know. I thought she was 'boss' there, referring to her officers as her 'children', so..hm...i wait for the 'feedback' she promised.

Parked at the intersection of the N4, a couple stands next to the car, on the pavement. Waiting for traffic to pass before driving across. A police van comes and stops, edge of the inner lane, waiting for a truck coming in the opposite direction to pass so the police van can turn. The driver glances across at our car, sees us, eyes grow wild, he turns looking at us. What is going on?

At the Municipality Office, a staff of ten crowds in there, it is attached to the tiny library. They loll around all day, exchanging gossip. Never been known to do any work. Now and then someone will come in wanting a photocopy. R3 for a page. If coming off the printer (there are a couple of computers for public use) each page costs R1. I never got the logic.

They flap tongues in there, the workers:

'What use is a man if he does not buy you things'....'oh, that poor man walking down the street, you know that is not his child that woman claims is, no, she gave pussy up to the neighbour'... 'how do you know?'...'everybody knows.'

The police station is one street down. Unlike city ones anybody can just walk in and up to the charge office. None of those security bars and turnstiles one finds in Joburg or Soweto where the police have to barricade themselves against potential attack.

The post office is on the same street. The same post office I went to get my post sent by overnight mail and the two women, the teller and the cleaner, burst out laughing, hugging their sides when I enquired. They thought it a world class joke and told me to come back after two

days. 'who has ever heard of mail posted yesterday and you come just the next day to collect it, where is this man from hahaha...'

I have never seen anybody except the Afrikaners walk with any purpose here. Snail life. Everything is slowed down to drug-induced pace, like. You cannot see the slime trails. The drool off faces you can, though.

I have heard 'nnywana gago' and 'marete a rrago' from the mouths of children and adults here more than anywhere else. Foul mouths are plentiful here. The expression is coarse. Parallels the existence. People swear, it is written into the relations. Sex is on the level of the shop-counter.

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Montgomery? Tabane's worse in the killing-fields. Strum or pluck like a bomb hit electric-storm struck. Guitar-strings wrapped around your soul. Lilt or growl & anything in between when the strangulation need comes so you have to pick nearer the neck than..k/not! & then shovel the dissonant shit out like the musical night-soil-man leaning the chamber-pot against the door so in the morning when you open for some fresh air the dead stench, faeces & piss spills in. Take that, you tone-deaf!

TAKALANI runs the public library. Takalani, first time I saw him I thought him a psychopath, someone no woman or child would be safe around. The man is huge, tall, looks retarded (gets off on showing people gory pictures in magazines, scenes of torture, innards showing, mutilation, while cackling like a hyena, looking at the horror, or disgust in whoever he is displaying it to...) Takalani is in charge of the water services. And also runs the little library attached. He is good with children, Takalani, they crowd around him and he reads stories to them. Gives them quizzes to help them with their schoolwork.

Takalani gives the impression of being off his head. First time I saw him, even before the pictures, I thought him capable of slitting your throat and feeding off your liver, or lungs, or...and drinking your blood to wash your brains down. On Friday Takalani listens to a query about the filth in the water. And says 'yeah well, it is Friday, I am closing the office. What, it is two hours too early? So what, I want to go and drink now, at the shebeen, my weekend is starting. The water is brown, true...but what can I do? We do not have the chemicals to clean it. We will see it next week.'

And one street down, at the clinic, next to the police station, the queues lengthen, children howling pitifully, clutching their bellies. And the adults look on, keeping it in. Running stomachs in here. And the cemetery a block up keeps eating up new ground, inching closer to the cemetery. And the houses look on, eyes wide, as the jungle of death-mounds creep closer still, like the jungle beyond. Look on the positive side of it, the BLACKS ARE OCCUPYING LAND IN DEATH they cannot in life. EACH DAY MORE SPACE TAKEN, 'izwe lethu!' The land is ours their forebears screamed under white rule, but they do not scream for it anymore. They die to take it back.

In the Indian shop this drunken almost-to-crawling woman looks at me and says: 'oooh, I like this brother with the old fashioned beret...I am going home with you, lovey...' I run off without what i went in there for.

SPENCER works at the Indian shop. Works for the guy who short-changes the old and the illiterate. And when forced to give change he hands sweets over. Spencer tells me what not to buy at the shop, and points out foodstuff that is past its expiry date but still sits on the shelf for the unvigilant. Spencer put the Chinese-man who ran Thanya Sepoti shebeen onto this young woman from a deep place some distance away. He played match-maker. And ducked a knife from her boyfriend. Spencer made off with her, with the Chinese guy, fresh to the land, huffing

by his side. She moved in. Off to the side of the shebeen there is a three-room structure used for residential purposes. She moved in and now there is a baby afro-chinese running around.

Anyway, the shebeen got off running, packed month-end and weekends. The money piled up. & then Spencer moved in. And the Chinese guy (along with his numerous brothers) moved out, never to be seen again. Her sister got called over, roped in. And now Spencer does it to both of them. On the sly. I saw him stumble out of the shebeen at dawn. I asked if he was now The Priest. He said well, he couldn't just keep going to church all his life. Yes, now he is the one who holds services and gives sermons and benedictions. The shebeen is a place of worship, see? For Spencer the whole deal had been a business plan and now he was raking in the profits.

SETUMO has a scar running right across his throat from when someone tried to off him. His voice seems to cut from some place than his mouth. A weird ventriloquist act. He is a good guy, works for the justice department. Advised me once to report the police to the Independent Police Investigation Directorate, he offered to drive me there, for their intimidation and extortion tactics. On this day, though, he stands next to this woman and shouts across to me: 'Hey broer, she says she wants me, what do you say?' I suggest that he let her have him. He then says: 'No, she has expired. I mean when she was still fresh I wanted her but she refused. Now that she is past her expiry date she comes running...'

SEKGONYAMATLHO...the brew that gouges the eyes out. None of the drinkers knows what goes into the making of this concoction. Some say among the ingredients: Head of dead dog, battery acid...if none, then methylated spirits, also known as 'blue train', King Korn (corn meal), yeast...and then it is said also the brewer's bathwater after use, especially after the vaginal wash, when 'bush has been douched', even menses, and that is when it is at its yummiest. In places it is known as 'uhamba nobani', who are you with? If alone, you do not get served. Reason being it is so heavy one needs to crutch in the form of a fellow drinker afterwards, to walk home. Other places still, 'mokoko-o-ntjhebile', translated into 'the cock is watching me', owing to the hallucinatory nature of the effects. A potent, murderous liquid that makes the colour run out of the skin and grey rise to the surface. The eyes go dull, blood around the black sun in the middle.

It is syphilitic here. A decaying presence hangs over the place. Like something has been dying for a while. And keeps on. Pus flowing from every orifice. Paradise forest, sold by lies. Deception keeps the tourists coming. The veneer of it. The wind through the bush. Yes at night the stars come to rest on the visitor's head and a dreamy quality comes over you. 'The water is sweetest here', the tour-talk sales prattle goes. But raw sewage flows thick through the taps around here. At least water for the township. The farmlands get their water from deep in the earth and off the Marico River. The dweller in the coop...well, the municipality's whim with chemicals decides between sickness and health.

Primary school children carry plastic bottles of Sekgonyamatlho to school, hide it up in a tree. All through the day they keep running out of class and coming back looking 'livelier'. And then the mother is called to school and she goes to get her own morning supply before going to see

the principal or whoever has called her. By the time she hits the gate her mouth is more mobile than her legs. Announces her arrival outside the school gate with expletives, a proficiency in the use of abdominal references directed at whatever forces of authority reside within. Swearing as out of the deepest void.

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I had a record on the Technics 1210 & the damned cat thought of diversion, jumped on the vinyl wanting to DJ. Not the kind of scratching that DJ Premier would approve of. Then I brought an LP home, sat it on the carpet while hooking up the machine & the dog came in and pissed on it. I guess a statement of criticism of the album. In total or just the liner notes? Perhaps the notes within?

Children get pregnant in their numbers. Adults sex children with their parents' consent. The spermers more often than not their fathers' age. Mention it and it's enmity turf. Talk ill of it at your peril: 'he is her man, he takes care of her... Who are you? ...hm...will you feed her if you say she must not lie with him?' Numerous assaults, plentiful wounds have come of such.

'Ah, the Whites protect their property' says the social worker. Referring to the white males who come for carnal pleasures in the township, get children pregnant...well, they pay for their seed. And all is good. Blessed baas.

The Department of Health distributes prophylactics, for free. Within an hour of its van departing, condoms are strewn all across the township. Toddlers blow them up for balloons.

Social grant. R300 per child. Grant day is a party. First though, groceries. 1kg sugar, 2.5kg maize meal and that is it, until next month. The shebeen is fun time teeming. Mad laughter and loves. Dancing dust-up. And the toilets overflow and waste streams out. Babies on backs. Next day, next to the condoms, the blood, faecal matter...disposable diapers.

The school provides a bus, rickety, rusted, paint-peeling but locomoting well from corner to schoolyard. Transport there and back, for free. Feeding scheme serves lunch of brown bread, peanut butter and skimmed milk... bell ring, assembly prayer and stomach grumbles. Within minutes of school starting the child, dressed in a shirt a week's dirt-clogged because no soap, sweated in until the stench stayed, and faded, onto the skin, asks 'Teacher, when are we eating?' The child went to bed hungry, and woke with it and came to class.

The Superior In-breeds – entire families, granny mother aunt daughter grandchildren all twisted up, drool laden faces squashed in on themselves like someone trying to kiss themselves...the attitude of supremacy, still...they call the Black a primate who should be made to 'fear the night again, like with our ancestors...you are the only white tribe in the world to stand for these animals...it is a disgrace...god gave us dominion over these stinky sheep...we need to take the ground back, bit by flesh-bought bit....as we move back to the western province' their kin say. They are already there, where the sun sets. Visages warped. Like sick. Vomit bubbling under the facial surface. The pallor cross between carrotty and banana-tinge... Theo, in between singing the praises of his 'viking forebears, why i stand close to seven feet' says 'you know we used to be ashamed, we had a national shame, us Afrikaners...of breeding with our own daughters and sisters. But that time is gone, no more.' Across the Marico street dust, the in-bred family crawls. He looks aside. Like willing me not to see them.

When Pauline sits down, her dog, it is close to the earth, short and long, i call it Tapyt...it is never washed, dusty, has the smell of wet dirt on fur...it smells from a distance...well, when she sinks down to her seat the dog jumps up next to her and muzzles up, inching its nose deep between her legs, into her crotch. And she doesn't seem to notice its pink penis-head sneaking out of its woollen scabbard. I want to throw up.

SHIMI has been working for Fantasma and Albert since he was 15, that was 25 years ago. He earns R1200. She got him out of school, he says. Makes up for his feelings of emasculation by baas-boying his fellow workers. Part of it comes from...well, since baas is so brittle, shaman-fragile he doesn't walk, not even shuffle, he breeze-floats and settles light as dust on morula, his stomach-length beard butterflying before him... and missus shakes the earth when she walks, boundless, inexhaustible...well, baas really can't keep up so Shimi is a walking-talking human dildo. Perhaps that is why he is the lackey, telling on his fellow workers to his madam. Runs things in the fields like he owns them, and maybe he does, by dong-right.

'Them bitches' tongues come unfurled', said Bushwick Bill. And i think of the road ahead, trying to raise the race. Hard when the Geto Boys thump through the speakers, their hard man Willie D snarling: 'preaching that positive that you can keep / cos your positivity aint getting motherfuckers paid!'

Miscegenation times....what is slime in the 'holy books' of pigmentation is loin-rhyme out of church and ideology. The colour codes that rule.

And Mista Doty says: 'They ask me what happens to the foreskins after they get cut. Well, they are useful. We sew them together into a handbag. See, when you have to travel you just rub it up and it becomes a suitcase. Watch out for the rain, though...' further and further... 'i caught my son masturbating in the bath yesterday...asked him what the hell he was doing and he said 'it is mine, i can wash it as fast as i want'... 'he dreamed he was peeping on the girl in the flat across the tracks from his window...she was lying there naked, and his dick started travelling, you know...going to her...crept across the rail lines and climbed up the wall...and just when it was about to slide in he heard the sound of the train, coming...you should have seen him reeling his cock back...and the train came hurtling down...he screamed...and woke up.'

Fluffy, strengthless hair of malnutrition. Brittle stick figures.Their colours greying. Sickly brown runny underneath, peeping out. The gait unsteady. Windblown. as if about to topple over. Watery eyes. Dusty ankles.

Wall of poverty closing in...all a mendicant...father mother children, can't tell, kids speaking in faded adult tones...impoverishment early given to defilement.

Truck stops otherside the street – a teenage had her thumb out this side, standing next to a grown woman, baby on back. Gal walks across the street, head turned up to the driver's window, woman shouts across: 'don't forget to get the money first, before anyone...'

We drive past, group of pre-teens...one shouts: 'ke kope ranta, mosadi!' (give me a rand, woman!') ...sounding like her grandmother.

TILMAN THE GERMAN CULTURAL ATTACHE at the Orphanage, his embassy funds it and he is the money-bag-handler...giggly boy children, a couple in torn shorts gathering their clothing, come running to the car...

*

Mista VEG is pink-faced, heavy-breathing and weighs about 200kg. He drives a truck laden with farm vegetables. He goes up and down the streets and stops at intervals and people gather around the truck and buy. Mornings he does his route and afternoons parks opposite the post office and just sits in his car. After a while one black teenage girl or another walks up to the car, climbs in. And off the truck drives. Hours later it comes back and the girl gets deposited at the same place. And walks off carrying a plastic bag brimming with onions, green beans, peppers and other veggies. & the look on the teen's face as she passes is defiant, like daring you to say anything about it. Today though, another girl shouts across the street: 'Hey, you, what are you doing with my property? Be careful, I will scratch your face.' And the one freshly off the truck voices off: 'Mista veg is not mine, sister...he is ours. We share him.' She steps up to the other and they disappear into the shop. Sisters in miscegenated paedophilia.

Why fuck what you deem beneath you? No pun. If so inferior, filthy, sub-human, bestial...why copulate with 'it'? pink loins on fire...the race of desire...lust gone bust...once below the waist, racism goes to waste...the closer the groping it, hers the more progressive.

GRANDPA TELKOM and the brother who's kept his judgement for oblivion. 'I am scared to speak. I don't want to end up at The Flag,' says the brother, bowing his head under the heckling derision of his fellow workers at the bottle-store. & in the afternoon bushveld sun, the trees yellowing in the heaviness of it all, the beer goes down heavy, sits rock-hard on the stomach. His little sister has just stepped out of the van with Telkom scrawled across its side. In the driver's seat sits a fawn-complexioned old man who could have been her great-grandfather. The brother says he knows the old man sexes her, and the family knows too. They let it go. And he zips his snout up. She might take him to prison-land should he speak out.

Starvation, dehydration...the water, when and if it comes, not often chocolate-coloured, of faecal complexion, truer even...i'm looking at death by immurement.

'Ga re tshabe makgoa, rona' – song and dance children of the dust...marimba squad, they get pushed to the fore in loin-cloths for the tourist season. I hear them proclaim their lack of fear of the whiteness of the land-rule. They are not like their parents, each twelve-year-old of them says. But they play their percussions, and dance, and play 'native'. Their tips gets sliced in half by the lady organiser of the tourist office. She says the half she takes is for their future use. She owns a game farm.

SASSA days – the shebeen – wretched humanity – social granted a stamp to perennial debt –

*Give you the 6 foot...cough in it. Coffin shit.
The truth of the mad hatter
Is...how the subject matters
to the crown/clown.
(tongue in chick. thinking of Cunnilinguists...*

*hip hop heirs to the bop.
'i speak here...of...nomenclature...'
'sorry, can't help you. I don't know any Norman Clutcher
or whatever his name is...'*

THE MAN WHO KILLED THAMI MNYELE lives on a farm down the half-tarred road about 4 kilometres from the centre of town. He has wooden depictions of wild animals crafted onto the gate. People here say he is a mass murderer.

Psychedelic storm – the skies are HENDRIXIAN –

CATCH THEM WHILE THEY ARE YOUNG, and they do. The truck-drivers going their cross-country routes. And they pay the girl-children to splay themselves and get stuck, and afterwards you see them, the children, slink into the Indian shop and get bread, jam and milk. There will be food at home that night.

CHRIS the transgendered gay coloured boy-girl hustler: 'The more manly butch rugby bier-en-boerewors aggro-types are always the first to throw their legs over their heads. It works for me because even though on the outside I am a boy-girl, in the bedroom I am the alpha male...at home they are expected to be strong, overbearing, providing ,very manlik... but inside they just want to be fucked by big black cock, and me well, I am not black enough but what can they do, you know? you would be surprised how many of them fantasise about just spreading and taking that swartpiel... I have not been without lovers in Madikwe...that man who owns half the restaurant on the N4, he is married and everything, to that fat ultra-racist woman, well...he was my lover for the first three months I was here...

in the mornings they drive their wives to work, eyes straight ahead stuck on the road, but afternoons when they come back you should see how slowly they cruise past here, hoping to see my arse in high heels in the garden...we party, and we are not serving koeksusters here, doll...well, it starts with brandy and coke and then somewhere down the line someone accidentally does something and by then your senses are swimming around and then someone puts something in your mouth...and hoo, can you imagine my legs up high on the wall and high heels and I shag deep, baby hoo...you know for the boers with all that macho stuff it is easier to come out as gay than as a vegetarian... odd, hey?' Chris continues: 'After the sin-breeding...in-breeding...that is, the incest, the seed turning inward, the deep-rooted cross-race homosexual urges hiding beneath the boer-bull mask is the Afrikaner's greatest secret. Ask me, I know, I have fucked more than enough of the straight raging racists...'

& then they killed Chris. To keep it all hidden. Maybe it came out of double/triple/more-dick-parking. Maybe jealousy. Or just...well, it was another Vlakkplaas on a Madikwe farm. His boer-lovers chopped him up & fed him to the flames while they swilled the famed brandy-and-coke. & he burned through the night. & the sunrise was bushveld beautiful as always.

*

*Snap—spine
crackle-heart
then again...pop-eyeballs
Come in wearing a cardiac-vest?
It pierces thru, that Black magic like voodoo-needle.
Life is improvisation.
Soloing in and out of existence
The devil's own reticence
me and him in rhythm...
I'm riffing off Scott-Heron*

THAPELO BEATDOWN – I walked the dusty, mud-watery streets of Seding to Thapelo's home. Looks and stares all around. The anger, frustration, disappointment, betrayal must have shown purple on my face. I strode, warpath mapped out. To his sickly father putting his torn shirt on over his protruding rib-cage as i turned the last corner to his yard. He glanced furtively around and i saw his younger son run into the house and close the curtains. No matter. The man's voice, tiny, brittle, fragile with illness, the cheekbones cutting into the fleshless skin on his mask-face, his nose dripping, eyes off the sockets...i had bought food for him, was waiting for money to get his children school uniforms...he looked at me and turned away. And shuffled.

Words were not plenty. I said: 'Your child is going to die. You would too, this minute, but you are on your way anyway. You don't love your children, you wouldn't lie otherwise...I came here, and you looked at me, in the eyes deep, talking about your pain, and then shit-faced said your child had not stolen my things, he was here the whole time. People saw him run out of my place, with my things. They know him, he grew up among them, they had faith in you too, like the woman who works at the shop. She says she called out to him when he ran past, carrying things in his arms and he pretended not to hear, did not even give a look back. And I trusted you, came to you and you lied.'

And i see the little boy, Thapelo's brother, break into a smile when he thinks i am not looking. Then Thapelo turns the corner, dressed in a new shirt. And he comes up all angelic smiles. And i hit him hard, side of the face, and he spins around and crashes into a muddy puddle. And the shirt catches it. And i lift him by the shirt front and hit him again. The light flashes white in my eyes as he thumps back in the dust. And as he lifts his head and i prepare to stomp on it, i see beneath his head, a brick...and i know, in that instant, my shoe on his face and his skull would crack. And i see him try catch a string of brain ebbing out, and a blood-line writing its way into the earth...into the mud and dust. And i know...this is death waiting. I return my foot back to land...turn, look at the father, he stands there, arms folded. The little boy is looking too, blank-faced. i look at Thapelo screaming out 'it wasn't me!' I know he lies. Like his father. And that he is laughing, like his brother. And i feel defeat. i turn and walk away. People are out of their yards, standing in the street, getting entertained. I walk away.

*

Don't ask me anything regarding music. I know nothing about it. Thank you. Like U-Roy: 'lyrics.../ addicted to music.../ hear when me seh I could never refuse it.../ i'm addict/ gawd!/ i'm a music addict/ lawd!' No junkie 'knows' the drugs they are on. Props and Reachers. The Hype. Fashion accessories for the arm but never the bandstand. They look good so the refracted gleam falls on the musician. They would be hangers-on if at the play-end the music-maker wasn't so beat he had to hang on, drape himself around them. They are more like hangers, then. Home to the artists, who are the plungers. Like in a pool, or a toilet-bowl. Flip it in the other direction: they are also the poison. Mortal coil unfold, check under the bed, or in the closet & they are there.

James Phillips at Jameson's, coming off stage in all passion-held weariness, hitching his guitar up against disillusion, looked over the post-musical mess at their Colgate-toothed love shown, & whispered his exhaustion: 'they do not get enough until there is nothing left to be given...'

'Praat Afrikaans of hou jou bek!'
Nazi farmers spout superiority.

The Germans cometh – the volunteer students knobbing black – the farmers march – send a delegation to the embassy -- thou shalt not fuck kaffir!

Pauline claims progressiveness & so does her equally obese-to-bursting husband, Thabo. He teaches at a multiracial school for boys. Go to their house & meet the unwashed bodies, heavy stench, the pig-weight sitting heavy – green the water in the sink stacked with the filth of last week's unwashed plates, to report sighting of a car accident. 'What race was the driver ...you know they raped a white woman – in Zeerust they killed a white old couple...' First the pigmentation, that will provide explanation, give reason, & all else will follow. The guiding principle for the weighing of human worth.

CHINA CHILD, SHEBEEN MOM. FATHER GOT HERE SOMEHOW. They own the shebeen, mom & dad. Within a month of his arrival they'd hooked up. He speaks Mandarin, strictly. Her tongue is Setswana, only. They communicate in...BODY. Their child is now learning to walk. & talk. Wonder to watch as they try one to grab the other's words out of the air as they fly over, & above. They call it Love. Mzamane named such 'animal instinct'. Their story is getting mixed in with the MADIKWE MYTHS like the water snake heralding the EVIL core BENEATH the TRANQUILITY cosmetics that get splashed across the Tourism Board's brochures selling the clean living pure air breathed before the oink factor shows face.

A series of terrible noises from up the tree opposite. For quite a while. I am used to gunshots. These bush-sounds...no. So i locked my doors, closed my windows. I could hear my AWB neighbour in hysterics, yapping fast in Afrikaans (on the phone, I found out later)...anyway after a bit a police van came screeching into my yard. fok, I forgot the noises in the tree and thought 'oh damn, there we go again, they are here to get me'...but then no, they ran into the cluster of

trees and started screaming: 'shoo, klim af, gaan by julle', clapping their hands all the while. My neighbour piped in: 'Hy moet weg gaan, hy gaan my honde afval...hy soek hul kos.' Hell no, she starves the blasted things. I am forced to feed them on the sly. She caught me at it once. Anyway, they replied: 'It is just a monkey up there. No harm. These type monkeys do not attack dogs, harmless creatures, no danger at all.'

I waited till all the noise died down, no more screeches and shouts, before I opened my door. Hell no, what do I know about monkeys. Fok, gimme okapis and pangas any day...ah well...another Marico day. By now my neighbor must be knowing not to rely on me for ANY help on ANY matter whatsoever. Her dogs are full of complaints, they say her AWBism has grown deeper since her husband ran off with that Motswana woman. The dogs want out, their sensibilities are being polluted, they say. Time to break out...thus it is... you see me running around trying to get a pair of wire-cutters.

USED CONDOMS & soiled diapers... shake-shake cartoons... i am stocktaking in the bush. Amid human faeces and dead birds, fighting with stray dogs for space, in the night and drunkenness people couple there. And leave trails.

Sitting in the taxi yesterday, enroute to the Marico. These two mature ladies start talking about a man they are afraid of. You wouldn't think it of him as he 'smells of water'. But see, he turns himself into a neckless chicken when the police come looking for him, on account of his dagga-peddling activities. On top of that, though, and in the service of the community...say, for instance, someone steals from you. Well, you go to mista 'neckless chicken', he inflates a soccer-ball and oh oh, the thief starts bloating up, swelling outward, with the accompanying pain, of course, wherever s/he is, getting really large, outrageously so. Should they then repent and bring your stolen property back, and of course if you are in a forgiving mood, you go back to mista 'neckless chicken', he deflates the soccer-ball and with a loud, gigantic fart the thief whooshes right back to their original size. Gore-dam. I now understand the Daily Sun.

*

CHARLES MINGUS Ah Um...like Overture with an upright. Rebel-axeman. Insurrection-time.

Ornette got mass-divisive to self-define. Miles walking his croak like lightning-strike but still, oh delicate, god. Not many more...not playing bon-bons. They scratch the chicken.

Let them sleep who are tired.

Beam me back to '59. Jazzing it up in Revolution line and time. We are wired.

They mourn Bird by ingesting heroin. His be-bopping buddies.

THE R5 MAN: 'we do not live well, today, on the wall...' He comes up to me, sitting on a low sofa with the covering gone over the cushion. Resting against the wall of the liquor store. 'They have changed things, up in the head, the people i live with. They were not like this, handling me in this bad manner. It is my mother-in-law's house we are living in. You could look at us & think we are having a good life, no, you would be wrong. When they eat i just sit there, watching them. There is no plate for me. Even in the morning they drink their tea & just look at me like i am not even there. i watch them feed. & i say this is not how we live, where i come from...i am from Hartebees. My people are there. Life is no longer good, here... hey, don't you have R5 for me, please. Some people said they would help me & i was happy but then they said i must go to them in Zeerust...you know, i hate Cape Town, you know why? There you can walk the whole day & not see one stompie to smoke. Here it is better...'

Rough, dry cough wracks him until his body shakes. In the middle of it he digs into his frayed jacket, pulls out a small plastic bag filled with cigarette stubs, most of them smoked close to the filter, different brands. He digs into his pants pocket & out with a strip of newspaper. Sores twin-lines along his lips, his trousers are stuck, in places, holding tight to his legs. A yellow-green colour & a sour odour coming off the sticking. Something festered in there. Septic. Purulent. Like gangrene. The sickness is deeper than the surface rot, something says. 'I used to work on the mines. Platinum. It left my insides...numb.' I think of a sick, retarded beat.

He starts milking the stubs of the little tobacco lodged behind the burnt ends, onto the paper. A little pile forms. Getting bigger. In the end he has quite a bit, a lot of it black. There is some brown, though. He works the pile with care into enough for a joint. He wets the length of it with his tongue. Searches for a matchbox, shakes it, tiny sound from within. One matchstick. Works the flint. With a flourish, lights. Inhales, blows a couple of fancy smoke rings & leans back with some satisfaction. Takes a few drags. 'Ah, let me haul myself away. Don't worry, you can help me another day. Be blessed.' He goes away, dragging his skinny frame, it seems. In his old, ragged Pringle jacket, Arrow shirt underneath, Stetson hat so threadbare you can see the shiny black beneath the brown & Crockett & Jones shoes with the heels gone. Leaves me with questions. He used to be the best dressed chicken in town, from the look of things. 'Can't remember most of the places i have been to. When i did. Whom with, mostly. The years around & into the spaces & the other way. Faces, bodies, too. Minds...not so much.

Mountains range the landscape. Make the mind feel shut in, bush-logged & locked green. Patchwork of yellowish-light brown dotted like patches on the head, ring-wormed, that rock. Sight of a lone dirt-road winding & running up until it disappears. A steep decline there. And the mountain growing large from there. Still a distance. The N4 freeway cuts through this side, down it a T-junction, beginnings of what becomes the dirt-road. Cut across, past the sign that reads: "ABORTION. Safe & pain-free. WOMB CLEANING. Dr Joy" ...& the doctor's phone-numbers. It is rental floss. Fleece.

I had a small studio, once. Non-music lovers raided it. 'Drop the words out', like Louis Moholo said at Brotfabriek, Zurich, angry with me constantly 'sitting on the beat': 'that is the problem with jazz-groupies, you guys never let the music breathe.'

No one rhythm-thread is worth dwelling on 'too long'. That is, past whatever purpose it intends serving. 'Keep it moving' is my governing principle.

ABEL is the potential salvation of this place. The only person i meet i can talk books with. He writes, & well too. He says he feels 'out of place in the township. & at that water resource spot where i work. You know when you want to discuss things people don't get, don't want to, no interest. You start feeling like you are forcing issues...so i just lock myself up. Read my books. & write. Talk to myself. But now i have you. Look, this is my thought. Most South African literature is dead. Across race, genre, generation...i draw no inspiration from it. I am not knocking people but stating what is to me, as writer and avid reader, a fact. This to me is a jump-off point. I did not come into writing because some SA writer fried my brains, but precisely because they did not. I wished for more. Starting out, I wrote because i could not stand what i was reading – uniform in its dearth of imagination, i felt like i was locked behind a marshmallow wall. The padding could be eaten from here to sugar diabetes...'

Abel continues: 'Madikwe is so under-represented in SA popular imagination it is criminal. In many ways it is the microcosm of the country. All the forces, human & otherwise, are here. Or come to dip their sticks in these waters. Its superficial presentation, the tranquil face, hides much that is beyond ugly. An aged white man in shorts, the veins standing green on his pallid legs, said that, in a queue at the post office while overhearing me praise the quiet, the air that actually does flow around here, the stars coming down at night. It never occurred to me to look up at in Joburg. Too busy checking my surrounds, self-preservation the prime-obligation. Madikwe incorporates the country's deep beauty & pointless, immediate brutality.'

THE ALCOHOL FLOWS & Abel's passion rises: 'Herman Charles Bosman – bushveld writing...both Vooorkamer & oom Schalk Lourens...he is my main man. Brother of Makana, lover of the land, yes, still... Bosman's blacks, like the Vietnamese in Hollywood depiction... Platoon, Apocalypse Now, Deer Hunter...are really just ciphers. Boat-people outside, almost, of the field of vision. Never really central, or 'felt', even. Prejudices are bounced against, the ignorance of the perpetrators thrown at them, but they are never really characters, people, themselves, the victims of such. Even though the intention is to show up the 'throwers', better yet, the

'tossers'...can't you imagine them standing in wind one hand pumping...must be why the flowers refuse to grow in the bushveld, acid-sperm kills them.' He pours bourbon to the top of his glass. Who knows it might be the last I offer him. 'Publishers manufacture 'writers' for us, award-winning creatures, you speak to some of these people & it is clear they can't have written the books that bear their damn names. It is a scam.'

Abel lives beyond the sign by the roadside that says:

*Another Human Settlement development
Construction of 600 sustainable human settlements units
No of units: 600 Land size: 53 hectares
Project value R 696 72 000.00
Typology: rural development Jobs created: 300
"Working Together We Can Do More"
Dept: Human Settlements Rep. of South Africa
Anti-corruption phone number: 0800 00 28 70*

JUST BEYOND THIS SIGN, a few metres after turning left, is the entrance to Wag 'n Biekie Sport Bar & Restaurant
BUCKET list & ICE BEER
SLOW DOWN BAR AHEAD
¼ cheeeeeeken served wiff Bunn coleslaw & chips R49

....a disused Morris mini, yellow, the top gone. Abel never goes there, he cannot afford it. We are only here because I offered.

*

DADDY U ROY (closest to Botswana's Ratsie Setlhako in terms of phrasing) swinging on the beat albeit to a drum & bass-driven riddims. The Motswana had used the Segaba, a bow instrument. One wire leading down to a calabash, played with a length of wire. AFRICAN relative & forerunner to the euro violin.

'don't distress it...never you bore a hole in one riddim'.

- Josey WALES, reggae dj, calling on the band for a different riddim to be played because they had been playing one for a while, even though the audience was enjoying it. 'SOUNDING THE PAGE' is what I want to call it.

You realise that the graveyard has expanded its reach, it is moving in, from the outskirts now it is climbing onto people's backyards. & someone says: 'very soon it will go on & up to the rooftops. & that is where the corpses will be placed, the dead will rest there, above the houses...will be laid to rest looking out. Yes, overlooking, overseeing things. Is that not what badimo do?'

'Uncle, what works in this place is...sex. If you have a job, there is not a day you can go without a woman... people use their bodies here. And you know the deaths that brings', a young guy working at the filling station tells me.

Back at the liquor place, across the freeway from Wag 'n Biekie. Always when i go there, the little, short man who works there, in his maroon t-shirt with the blah blah liquor emblazoned onto his pocket & jeans, is talking to the one who works next door, in the scrapyard, suffering from a great stutter-problem but always the one holding the invisible microphone. I have heard him give advice to people who have brought their metal there to sell, while he prepares the industrial scales : 'Squash it, that will make it weigh more'.

They talk of the young man in his German machine and the woman leaning against the car opening her zip & showing him her pubis while her friend stands behind him & says 'Yeah, buy us alcohol & she will send you...you know, she will wrap her pussy around your head & squeeze...' & the man with his stomach hanging to just above his knees, nestling on his thighs saying 'You know these speed limits are stupid, i mean, the 120 kilometres-per-an-hour on my machine is not the same as on that rickety Ford Escort...' The two always engage me in animated talk, the reason seems to be that sometimes i buy a couple of bottles for us.

And things get pumping. 'Ah, men call me Bee Gee but women, well...they say my name is Razor, no need to ask why...it leave it loose, torn, cut up, tattered, bleeding in little pieces. & they come back. always.' He makes a brazier. An old metallic wash-tub. Rusty. Paper. Goes behind the shop, comes back with wood, shaking his head. A length of wired-fence worked into a square. A kind of sieve. Gets a fire built. chicken pieces tossed on the wire. "We bought them at that woman, you know Rainbow Chicken? Well, their chicken often trample one another to death. & they sell the dead ones to her. She pulls the feathers off, cuts them open, throws the

intestines & stuff out & sells them, clean, R15. Better than BJ's restaurant over there, oily two piece chicken R 49! What is best ? We buy this whole one for R15. & cook it the way we like it. Unlike my boss, you know his house in Rustenburg? Oh, huge house, in the kitchen...fridges everywhere. & booze, lots of it. Never runs out. & when I am there...I sleep IN THE HOUSE...hm, inside,' He looks over for impression made, continues: 'They live Setswana. The problem with him & his wife, no, they cook meat and eat it with the blood still on it. Shit, can you imagine? Man, no! & when they give me food it's like they are chasing me away. Liquor, yes, give me heaps but food...so I say oh, put it in a bag for me, I will take it home. & when i get there I cook it, long & proper the Black way. See, that is why his ankles are swollen, they are like this, have you seen an elephant, like that. They say it's cancer. No, it is the half-cooked meat they eat...what white man do you work for...does he put the meat on the stove 'til it's proper, cooked, to the bone? No, see?' I remember Macka B's 'food scandal' raga joint, & smile. Wriggling toes like granny. To the soundless riddim-track in my head.

In the hair-salon, my people's sign:

TRETEMENT-R40
COULOUR-R60
FREEZ-R50
DABRET-R100
WOOL STYL-R130
POMEDY-R60
EXTENTION TONG-60
TO START DREAD-R300
SOFT DREADS-R150
YAKI-R200
BIG BRUSH AMERICAIN-R25
PLATING REMOVAL-R30/80
WASH AFRO-R45
WASH EXTENTION-R50

Whoever said that the Nigerians and Jamaicans have us beat as far as administering blows to that queen's yap?

*

Riding WITH RHYTHM DEEP WITHIN.

Johnny Dyani said: 'Music must have a rhythm. I'm fed up with this avant-garde that says you must have no time. I want a rhythm I can relate to because any move anyone makes has rhythm – some is graceless and some is informed by grace, but it's the rhythm of life. People in Europe don't identify with the drum or relate to drum culture and that's a pity.'

And Dudu Pukwana maintained: 'You can't play without time. Time is there, it's natural, like day and night. There's a drum inside you, while it keeps on pumping it keeps on living and that's time too.'

Innate rhythm, a sense of 'time' in the words falling.

Writing notes, my beer bottle by my side, snug on the coverless cushion. A huge police truck pulls up, one policeman alone in the truck. Sgt Oink i call him since he tried some intimidation moves on me & i promised to puncture his balls. He stares at me, climbs out, i continue writing, look up when he is a metre away, gauging the distance to my bottle. Thinking i can slice off half a child-bearing hip from where i sit if he comes any closer. He pulls his nose up, trying to have it touch his hair-line. Looking like Porky without all that greasiness, he gives an even uglier impression. I look him in his repulsive mug & he walks past. Starts throwing fat weight on the scrapman, claims he has been receiving, paying for & moving stolen scrap-metal. Last week the police arrested the white boy whose family own the place, he spent two nights at The Flag. It is said the competition is behind it. i never knew scrap could be contraband. i sit there, write, take a swig. i hope Oink remembers i promised to chop off his raisins. He pretends i no longer exist. Suits me. Rolls his watery buttocks back into the truck & makes it roar, over-revving for effect, not looking at me all the while. Screeches tyres while making off. i scribble on.

They roll in their scrap-metal. Two shrunken black 'til blue-in- the-face women, the faces themselves showing evidence of years of alcohol tracks and violence – the one's jaws are twisted out of shape & extra-long, hanging to the left. They find a younger one, no older than 17, the scrap-metal man thinks 19, rather. She is in whispered talk with an older man. They disappear behind the building. Elephant grass there, people often go there to urinate.& the women sit there, they are owed for metal they brought three days ago, they have lost the receipt. The scrapman keeps them hanging, they sit for an hour. Says one to the other while they wait for their young friend to get back from her business:

'Lift your skirt like this. Over your head. & show them what you've got. They will give us R4. We want to go drink strong...'

'You must open wide...'

'You know she had her legs so open & there was not even an itjhuu coming out of her mouth. So young, and him so older. Oh what he had, shoo, i had to close my one shot, two balls.

Razor & Scrapman at the snooker table.

Across the way the women: 'I don't sell body. I have a man.'

'Nnyo ya R20, no no no...R20 for cunt. Not happening. Not even R50, i won't give it to him. & worse when i know he has a drum in those pants & i agree? Never in hell.... He must forget. But this girl does not know what no is, it is always yes, anything for cents, not with me.'

PPC CEMENT, STRENGTH GUARANTEED. The lorry rolls past. Earlier, this white man in a van, had said it reminded him of himself: 'That is me, my friend. Look, i can sex, me. My wife knows it. I am fokkon heavy, me.' He had been alternating between screaming, bragging & exhibitions of race-arrogance: 'Hey, where's the rest of my change. This Three Ships is R222.90, i gave you R223. I am a millionaire, me. You don't give me my shilling i take all my money back. Simple. I will buy somewhere else. Down the road here.' He always comes here with his one worker in the passenger seat. Will never himself go into the shop, being so fat it would take a long time for him. But he does not trust his worker to go into the bottle store with his money. He shouts across & to the counter for Bee Gee Razor to come out, up the window, take the money & the order, go back inside, get the alcohol & bring it out. & the change is always an argument-starter.

From somewhere, words: 'They stuck a gun up his arse, pulled the trigger & you could see the shit shoot out of his mouth'. & now Razor sings a song: "don't be a bull to other people's children". & the women giggle. Getting more agitated by the minute until i dip in my pocket because they have been saying: no, just give us R4, you can pay us the rest of the R23 later, so that we can go have some JIJA. I ask what that is & get told by scrapman it is a perversion of GINGER. Refers to the deadly concoction whose base is ginger powder, otherwise known as SEKGONYAMATLHO around these parts. Poor people's entertainment. Like sex. I have seen that. & people on it.

The other woman reappears, her male company not. She smiles. They leave, with haste. Already feeling the taste of it. I will miss the talk when even my skin shrinks & turns inward.

Half an hour passes, the disappeared man comes stumbling from behind the building, zipping up. Says: 'no,man. Sy is flenter, daai kind. There is nothing there left. Niks. No grip, nothing. It is like swimming in mud. No feeling, nothing. The muscles are nowhere in there. Ek nodig nie selke goed weer. I am not the one for it. I don't want her stukkend poes ever again. Fok. It is amen.' Minutes later the young woman reappears, enraged, shouts at him: 'hey wena, I want my poes-money!'

*

DUB –

Kodwo Eshun:

As soon as you have echo, listening has to completely change.

LEE SCRATCH PERRY – science of the mixing board:

'I put my mind into the machine and the machine performs reality.'

This music is...description & being...of place & character is supreme. The language use true. Salvages dignity & a deep humanity from the misery & human degradation & wreckage. A sense of lived reality.

I grab my bag, stick the rest of my provisions in my rucksack, & head off homeward. Halfway there, the sun coming on dead-weight top of the head, a 4x4 van comes down the road. Two white men inside. Metres away from me the driver swings it hard & off the road & onto the dust-track i am on & then twists the wheel hard & off & back on to the road & the passenger shrieks, laughing. 'What the fuck's that? Pale pig shit arse!', i shout. & stick my fuck-your-mother-finger up high. I catch the driver's face in the rear-view mirror, the van hurtling away. No rocks around, i would have smashed the back-window. Moments like this i miss my Okapi. Fine, reliable, user-friendly knife, that.

I traverse the deserted streets. Later, shadows swallowing things up. The place's orifices, entrance & exit points. Looking for the khakis in their war-van. The circus is nowhere showing. I carry myself home. Breathing hard. The war abandoned mid-march. It turns within. Someone's out there playing a trumpet in the twilight. I can't see them for the bush. Might be a serenade. Bosman said the moon does strange things to people here, like making them romantic.

Reminds me of Theo. He came to live in what used to be the servants' quarters. He was always on my case with stupid jokes about how the native is now in the 'big house' and ex-baas in the 'girl's room'. & he would crack up. I suspected something venomously bitter beneath the laughter. He would constantly talk about how not racist he was. THE ORGANISATION that put me here got him there, his brother sits on the committee. He came from the Cape, had stories of smoking marijuana with Rastas.

One early evening he came at me, frothing about how he was a descendant of Vikings and could smash anything to dust. By which he meant me. He stood about a metre taller than me, and i am not a midget. He was swinging, wildly. I snaked hand into my pocket & pulled out my Okapi, it glistened in the moonlight. It flashed a few centimetres close to his chest, once twice. He laid the gate flat, running. He crashed through the bushes and was gone. The next day the committee called me to a meeting, saying he was blabbering, eyes wide, could hardly register, what had i done? I said i had just got so scared i reached into my pocket in a panic, for my cellphone. It is shiny, the phone. I wanted to call one of them because i thought the giant was

going to kill me. They said he mentioned a knife. i said i could understand that. In the light of that moon a shiny phone could be mistaken for a knife. I never saw him again.

I am still here. & the moon is up there.& some toneless person is playing the trumpet. In the gathering gloom.& if i ever heard an elephant fart, no, a rhino, in the water, like some people play the piano as they do, letting their bowels loose to evict the wind that 'has not paid the rent', as Rockwell puts it. It would sound just like that trumpet, I think. Then the muezzin from across the way kicks in. & this early evening i imagine some infidel clutching the muezzin's testicles tight in a vice-grip, not letting the balls drop until the chanting is done. The mosque is behind the trees too. I thank whatever god. & behind the trees on the other side of the house comes the tinny, dissonant, ear-piercing-because-so-sharp one-beat noises of the shebeen's juke-box. I am surrounded. Even the mini-fridge in the kitchen hums, 1000 bees-power, it sounds like. Scraping the walls & the floor of my eardrums. Chalk on blackboard. Knife on tar/concrete. Water-torture. These images have been used before, that doesn't make them invalid. I am in the sonic-middle. Field of concentration. Heavy flatulent sonar-artillery. Writing this, the paper starts cackling away, the pen's screech burning rubber i can even smell the ink. Mockery. I scratch my head in frustration and nails on scalp are a cement-gravel mixing machine turning. Tinnitus. The Trinity's Arse. I pop double pills to sleep.

Defection. Like THE GODFATHER OF G-FUNK, from social class. & defecation on it, too, ideological allegiances & embraces... Not always glorious, check Baraka. Of Black Music. & BLUES PEOPLE. Super-star/trooper-scar...melanin race to the 'house of the rising sun'.

Reminder: you carry them along with you regardless of load-shedding.
Reflection eternal? It stinks on & with you...you sweat it –
the art-makers, unlike fart-shakers, should not exist above their social milieu.

*

This was written on bourbon, beer & cigarettes. A little food & good pussy. Should have been composed in semen on bubble butt-cheeks. A POLLOCK splash of seed across uterine walls. Instead...sensitive, pain-charged like sniper-shot Fikile charcoal & pencil-lines. Figures in praise of black people's beauty. Even with the worms crawling out from within the canvas. I am my art. In it i pound, cardiac.

JAZZ

THE POLITICS is written into the music. That horn speaks louder than any banner frapping red. It's art attack crack-piped dreams tremors, shivering out of pores, hollers, squawks, squeals, shrieks, moans, ecstatic groans, in and out of the church of SELF. Jazz like AMIRI tried make us envision spilling out street dirt heaven-hellward. Surrounds of heaving flesh & thrashing skin flared nostrils & gaping holes. Orifices & openings in the ground. They say there is a Black ore up there.

VUSI XIMBA – maskandi man with a concertina & concerted effort at social-build beyond the Dracula-chest-plate-pierce humorous, dies without respect cos 'to the stake with the conscious artist' rattled tribal out of the race-haunted castle.

RATSIE SETLHAKO looming over all this, the father of it all. Setswana microphone killing – Ratsie Setlhako & his descendants (Culture Ambassadors, Culture Spears, Matsieng – music & theatre on vinyl, plus traditional dance – tshwana & tinto) the past rendered contemporary.

'Why you coming to the gig drunk, PHILIP?'

'You, they, all treat me like a machine....well, machines need oiling otherwise have me play dry and the music might creak...my pistons get gone. Stop your talk, I need medicine. No, i have to get lubrication...' reaches for a brandy straight. & once plugged in & amped, the sounds are fluid. Fire-liquid.

Another time another crutch...i think Hendrixian psychedelics. Heroin Birded. Clutch in, breaks off. gear in one...acceleration out into the otherworld. KIPPIE climbing from the death-pits all chirpy off the buzz in the booze.

My bushland playlist:

JAZZ MINISTERS: 'Sekumaxa.' For years since 70s coming off the dust of Soweto i hadn't heard it. Then out of the khaki Bushveld, rustling down & through the trees til it stirs roots and the leaves shake. Leaves my beard breezing in the sonic-storm. Nostalgia times.

DYANI & BRAND: 'Ntsikana's Bell'. Mbizo hell-howls & the veins distend chill vibes down the back, I forget I had a pinched nerve, was it a slipped disc untwining over that other spinning...disc-plate.

SAITANA – RUFARO: 'nihuma Joni'...I...come...am from Johannesburg. I am sin seeking purity in the bush. The ancestors came out here for roots. & herbs. Medicinal beyond the chemicals infesting the jozi head-&-heartscape.

AFRIKA: 'iyamemeza iAfrica'. he machine flips it to Side B & 'Mosi oa Thunya you are a hero' & i am off my head to Turfloop Emergency years, teargas & baton-crack-head & the needles running from ground up after the jump from three floors up cos the riot police kicked the door in & detention's not pretty.

MAGWELE: 'Titso ti ta Joni ti ni hlamarisile'. About Soweto thugs & how he got mugged. & I remember Phefeni Station, up near the entrance to the subway. Okapi-flash & then the rattle of bank-notes punctuated by screams fading off into the distance behind the heels hitting the back of the fleeing head.

JOHNNY DYANI: packing Bhaca choirs in the upright bass. Amabutho arrangements. You hear the march in the lines. The time is HERE. Ntsikana's Bell. El the cat sniff-snuffing across the Bushveld undergrowth. Seeking out man-killing rats. Biped feline. Piano tinkles and 'reaches the deeps'...no superstars twinkle here. Humility immersed within the heavy humidity. Clothes cling to backs, chests heave, heavy.

Oh, to get to the heart of...things.

Strings need keys to open heartlocks, the natural mystic, am I romantic?

A dollar for the Mbizo, entrance fee to the gathering of the spirit tribe.

Open the keyboard you find bloodlines in the bowels of the piano.

Brand knows this so the fingers are spider kisses rasping out of gutter note-lips.

Lumps historical in the throats make German guttural?

Bleed of the music hall was why Mbizo went about in gumboots (no play)

perhaps so the blood on the dance-hall wouldn't reach through past his pores...make unheralded entrance.

Technics turntable tricks.

Fables of a hostile past world gone mystical to birth a new earth?

Question: between the scratches does the record itch?

Perry's haunted mixing desk.

Never try modify my high cos in the come-down

I might crack your illusions, shame-ranger.

I stopped drinking the fizz sweets when a bee bit my upper lip. It looked the direct opposite of Louis Armstrong's with its indentation. Put paid to my trumpet ambitions. White people put me where I am. That was Satchmo coming out. Tomming. I am ever activist. New man, right, Black.

They say if you want to hear the Devil speak, play it Black. That's when the demons screech. Candomble is Satan's bitch, they believe the Book inside Vodoun. Santeria is not witches shrieking but body-sacrecy-sound giving rise to creation. Freedom-spirit rage-rise in.

I watched Sons of Negus play & heard the Voortrekkers' fear come through in question: 'How can they march to such a weird beat?' asking of antiquity, African warriors – speared behind the shield. No low hide. All exposed & deep into the flank. All up & down the Rands. Beyond the Day of the Generals. Crescent moonshine.

& the shit flows down the street. They wish umbrellas around their feet. Or chain-link. But the rattle-some is to slavery bound...other ...matter in the Rain, how is it going?

Fire burn.

ORNETTE is the coal-man. Blaze it catch Santa coming down chimney-town. No diamonds, just flames on the soles of his feet. He played a plastic toy-thing and out floated sound so organic it showed the slave-ship sinking shapes of jazz to come. humming heaven down.

The way in is the path home. Weigh in like for the block at slave auction. The jazz in the spot is hot but never tourist. You can't buy in. Bloodstains in the inner notes every...I go in to wash off my week-day sin. Bird-note springs from his throat to grab mine. Suffocation, palpitations. I reel out for write in the spirit. RITE air. Watch granny jus wiggle her toe... said Mutabaruka, calling out to the congregants 'Dub in...dub in...'

Kinky Rasta gone drunk inna Babylon. Best place for that, no fitting, no doubt. All music is thief-stuff. The lies that bind, we are in jail here, the man said. Kleptomaniac. The thunder-current in the singing. Lightning in the picking. Nothing pastoral cotton heads. PASTORIUS. So real. Surreal. Seems my human is so bad I always have to wave a stop-n-go flag saying: 'joke coming, approach with caution.'

My up & down beat name of it is aye you won't know me by looking at my face. Try my bass, therein you'll find my truth. Walking. Plus every foetus still all the way in & live...loves BASS. The unborn kicking? It takes Dub to bring it peace. The reggae people, they write One Drop & Rockers lines for the in utero-trance-mission.

'Check the teeth of the sound. Will it bite? Muscles...how does it k/not?' LEFIFI and his drums. Dashiki spear-burn. MALOMBO Jazz-men & makers. Julian Bahula. We are percussive, here, at home. What difference but the spirit blowing the cattle in. kraaling. 'We are the elephant'-rhythm tattooing the Africaland.

MAX ROACHING it West African to raise the sun back in cold Apacheland. Decimation of its bloodbeats. Getting a tenth off. Tithes to the gods left back in the Drum-motherland. Some have no knowledge of the age: 'play the drums' can mean 'give out bursaries...in free arse-whuppings'...'cos percussion is born also on bed-rock, & sea-shells, following close on chains around smashed wrists.

'The Creator Has a Master-Plan'.

Got the quill dipped in a Black Star for the ink. Wrote it across the firmament.

That is why the Jazz goes Free out into space in search.

SUN RA riding through the universe on a Repatriation-rhythm.

BIRD was so great, I heard that mistakes he made...on record...other players are still getting that shit rehearsed...itching to get the errors perfect.

No 'cuss-cuss' to my brothers & sisters in the Americas...flavour of the jam that is the gore on the Atlantic floor. Salt-water over bone sounds. Like how the cordite-wave against black bodies pounds, might be lark & shark opposite but the effect is the same: obliteration!

Bermuda triangle sucks up & mangles of sound, senses fallen into the vortex. Bird-line. Hope at the end of the rope. Swirl & whirl, the trill & the jar, thrills & fears. Single file or packed in multiple chords.

*Not bubbles he blows time pro-spirit, is capsules not anti-body...(I re-phrase on the rebound)
Ancient romance memory present disharmony but his playing is transport out. Call of the galaxies. But them, the blabber-preachers laying lines elementary like 'she is a baby making factory & he dick in torn overalls just walking & talking no, rocking and spurting...'*

MZWANDILE BUTHELEZI gave me an art-work opposite anaemia. Red paint of black. 'Blacks look so good when they bleed', some Caucasoid photojournalist told Santu Mofokeng, handing in pics for the day's spread. Black man in the gutter dying. Snapped, like his neck at impossible angle. Mzwandile's piece like a bit of flesh come off back of the head, close to the jugular, no, that split open & the corpuscles scattering out-fingers of callous labour plucking barbed wire bowing to upright bass-strings...(to pull the guys out of the wood, not to prostrate, get it right) sparks & blood flying off wood & metal in all directions, getting out, escaped slave-notes

...& the beast of rebellion has come loose, off the madding machine. Look, first it was freed off the tree & now...from it gets liberated...SOUND! When I saw it I knew a LIVE THING. The wood breathing. Getting hurt? More like doing the hurting. Pain in there, deep. Regardless. Giving or taking, no matter. From whom to where the HARM?

*

The Mothers of Invention were ecstatic over what they had laid down. Smiling proudly when Zappa walked in. They got it played back to him. He listened, & then tore the whole thing down, saying..it was too...beautiful.

An earlier time, a different place. The band had rehearsed six tunes, were ready to lay tracks down, some takes. Bird walked in, stood around, listened, walked out, never to return. Later he was asked why he'd abandoned the session. He said: 'it was just too beautiful...i couldn't...'

I hide in here against the humans getting pulped beyond these walls. For company 2 Potatoes, 1 garlic clove, 1 onion, 2 tomatoes, 2 peppers, 1 cabbage. 1 5l bottled water. 2.5kg mielie meal, 1 250ml pre-used vegetable oil, 1 salt shaker. 1 stale half-loaf white bread. 6 empty green beer bottles in the corner. A small plastic bag containing a number of cigarette stubs. A two-plate electric stove, rusted so the white it originally was is spotted with brown-black blotches. The one plate no longer works. The working one is jammed at one heat-speed. A melamine-topped two-door, half-sized kitchen cabinet, chipped in several places. A built-in concrete sink. Three beat pots, different sizes, the one lacking a lid, a pan. A single coir mattress nestling in the corner, 3 blankets, 2 frayed, threadbare dish-rags. The house itself used to be allocated to railway workers, train-drivers, to be exact, for lay-overs. Solid brown structure a metre above the water-mark. The roof leaks in places, the pelmet creaks in the wind. The paint that runs for half-a-metre down from the roof has been peeling off for years now.

These complete my housing arrangements. In this community i am rich. My books do not enter the equation. My 3 pants 5 shirts 3 of them tees, my 1 pair of running fake-leather black shoes, don't either. Like the trees clustered around the place, all corners, moving in. A veritable bush. They are old & gnarled, the trees. Branches resembling zombie-skeletons with their limbs drooping near liquid, at night. Eyes cast down, not looking at the world but trying to get within, into the soul. To eat a hole through the chest & bury the head inside. Sad looking vegetation, here. I gaze at the scene just once in the morning, upon waking & quickly look away before the trees spot me. Feel Peeping Tomish, shameful. Staring at the trees showing their unwashed nakedness. Cousin to the Kgalagadi desert, this place. Kin to the arid.

At the shop a white customer speaks to the assistant, black male. The assistant nods, vigorously, walks through a door & into a back room. He is gone for a couple of minutes. The white man stands there, hand on hips, humming some tune. The assistant re-appears carrying a wrapped package. The other assistant, also black blurts out, top of his voice: ' You there, Spencer, when a white man sends you to do something, you must run'. The shopkeeper, hitting the till, chuckles, pleased, exchanging looks with the customer. He jackals his face in a wide grin. He mutters: 'Kaffirs, man!' He is Indian. The white man giggles, cuts it short.

I stand there, gagging. Their deal done, I walk up to Spencer, standing there eyes angled at the floor, become an embarrassed child. I am looking for batteries, greet him, he doesn't respond, i

wait a while, then ask him where the batteries are to be found. He raises his eyes, shamed turned to disgust all over his face. Looks me up & down like i'm some object of repulsion... & walks off, leaving me standing there. Shopkeeper, other assistant, customer gathering his things off the counter, all pretend i don't exist.

I have heard black customers get insults, their mothers' genitals, their fathers' impotent scrota, hurled at them as if it was normalcy. & the customers take it. I walk to the door, turn, stand there, stare at each of them, look at the clock on the wall, 15 minutes to closing, & walk out, sit on the stoep, & wait for lock-up time. Someone is not going to sleep well for the next couple of days. I have seen in the municipal offices, police stations, all governmental buildings, hospitals, at the supermarkets, how the bow & scrape works across skin-colour, how prostrate tongues push lips apart into sickly grins at sight of whiteness.

Flip that coin, have Black stand there & watch the phantom vomit take flight at their face across the till-machine. How Black demean Black. At the bank, in restaurants, waiters giving the impression they deem it beneath them to be serving one pigmented like them. Airport security officers wrinkling their noses like Blacks smell. Black policemen brutalising their people with greater savagery if a white fellow grunting pig be in attendance. It wells up in me, i have heard it said without any irony that 'the greatest black is lower than the lowest of the worst white', the lava of it bubbles, threatens to spew out, i swallow it back and push it onto my forearms. Telling it 'patience, later, for now...we sit. No ambush, they have to see it coming. I want to be VISIBLE when they get to the door to close & lock it. Know i am waiting. I will not hide in the undergrowth on their way home. No, we do it here. The minutes will pass. & they will come out...'

The clock in my head ticks. The fuse starts burning. En route to the psycho-dynamite. Adrenalin surge pumps close to bursting. It is not angry blackman time. All rage is collected, stored deep. I pick up a heavy rusted metal pipe leaning against the wall, sit on the stoep, & wait. Knowing the pipe will not break but the brain-cells will get working on with it, will be much inspired as a result of the contact-sport. Head-split. Crack so air gets in, cool the brain to proper thought.

To distil. Decades' pen-rage. Drop one line more powerful than an entire novel. Have Fikile, Dumile & Thami live here.