

Octogenarian

Diary

V

July – September 2019

Muthal Naidoo

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SATYAGRAHA

Passive Resistance

In 1860, indentured labourers from India were brought into South Africa to work on the sugar cane plantations of Northern Natal. These labourers were followed into the country by merchants who came to settle here. In 1893, when one of them needed a lawyer, his family in India sent Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to South Africa to deal with his problem. Soon after Gandhi arrived in South Africa, he was personally subjected to demeaning acts of racial discrimination that made him aware, not only of violence and prejudice, but more significantly of the underlying exploitation of people.

As Gandhi could not turn his back on such a situation, he embarked on the fight to end discrimination. It kept him in this country for twenty-one years, during which time he initiated the Congress movement and worked closely with C.K. Thambi Naidoo of Johannesburg, a fearless opponent of the racist colonial government. As Indians were a powerless minority, Gandhi advocated the non-violent resistance of tyranny that he named *satyagraha*.

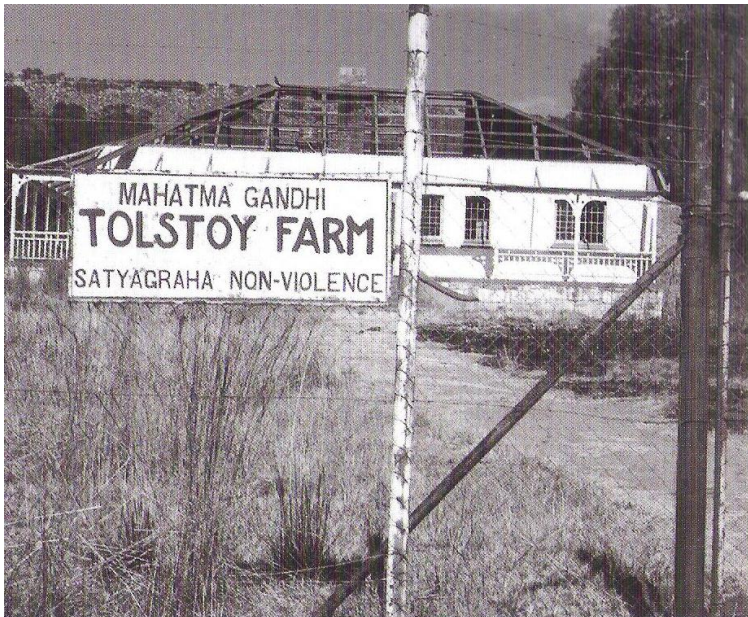
He coined the term from the words *satya* - truth, and *agraha* – force. And *satyagraha* is the assertion of truth as the means to overcome the injustice of oppression. *Satyagraha* is based on the idealistic belief that the truth will set you free.

And a *satyagrahi* is a Passive Resister.

Tolstoy Farm

When Gandhi's friend and follower, Herman Kallenbach, an architect, offered him a farm of 11 000 acres at Lawley, twenty-one miles south-west of Johannesburg, as a refuge for *satyagrahis* and their families, Gandhi gratefully accepted. That was how Tolstoy Farm, named in honour of the Russian author, came into being in 1910.

For Gandhi, the farm was much more than a refuge. It was a training camp; a place where *satyagrahis* could arm themselves spiritually for the struggle against injustice through the practice of self-discipline and self-sacrifice. (*Stories from the Asiatic Bazaar*, p.66)



6 July 2019

**SATYAGRAHA (PASSIVE RESISTANCE)
IS NOT EFFECTIVE IN ITSELF**

Towards the end of June, I began the work of laying out the autobiography of Maniben Sita, daughter of Nana Sita. The Sitas, disciples of Mahatma Gandhi and opponents of racial discrimination, had placed their faith in *satyagraha* and had given all their energy to the passive resistance struggle for freedom from oppression.

In recording their lives, I was reminded of my attitude to passive resistance which I had documented somewhere some years ago. Not only do I not believe that passive resistance works as a means of resisting violence and oppression, I see it as actually inciting violence. And wherever applied – in South Africa in the first decades of the twentieth century and again from the late 1940s to the 1990s and in the USA by Martin Luther King, Jr. – it always fails.

Being a human concept, *satyagraha* cannot be regarded as unequivocal but, as far as I am aware, its ambivalence has never been examined by those who adopted it. Non-violent or Passive resistance repudiates the use of violence in its struggle for democracy. In so doing it claims the moral high ground and that is like a red rag to a bull, and invokes its contradiction.

Its adoption of the attitude of moral superiority enrages and arouses violent physical retaliation. In turning the other cheek, the passive resister issues a challenge to the oppressor's moral code, and implies his barbarity and inferiority in using his power to oppress. That simply enrages the oppressor and provokes his

violent retaliation.

As passive resistance vilifies and challenges the oppressor, it does not change him. Consequently, it simply becomes a means to publicize the suffering of the oppressed and thereby elicit help from those with greater power. And in South Africa it was the international threat of an economic boycott that eventually brought an end to apartheid.

8 July 2019: Human Ambivalence

As ours is a continuously evolving existence, nothing we believe in is absolute, i.e. having only one fixed meaning; our beliefs often imply or induce their opposites. And *satyagraha*, though it is non-violent resistance, induces violence, because it is resistance.

Other concepts that we generally take as absolutes are liberty, equality, and fraternity. But as human concepts, they all include their opposites; they reflect the duality that arises from human duality. Our ambivalence arises from being *individual* in *community*. Concepts such as liberty, fraternity, and equality inspire us to overthrow blatant tyranny—but that is only at the communal level. In our personal dealings we live daily with various forms of exploitation, violence and tyranny.

Governments, rules, regulations, and concepts such as liberty, equality and fraternity are necessary to creating stability. But our understanding of them is merely expedient. As concepts their application is to generalized human beings – identical units in a collective i.e. citizens. They do not apply to the individual as a unique being.

Take the concept of equality for example; at the

communal level it ensures administrative equal treatment and equal opportunity for all citizens. But in society, we, as individuals are, each one of us, unique. And as we are in constant competition with one another, we have winners in every sphere, who, having proved their superiority over others, become privileged persons. So there is no such thing as equality at the individual level.

Equality, therefore, is not a reference to the individual but only to the abstraction of individual being, i.e. a citizen, a formularised person. It is a reference to the means by which society is governed. In society, the individual is reduced to a citizen in order to receive exactly the same *official* treatment as all other citizens. A citizen, therefore, as a generalized, idealized conception of a human being, is not an individual. And customs, rules, regulations and codes of conduct are based on this generalized abstraction of a human being that we call a citizen of society or member of a group.

But we are all individuals, not abstractions of individual beings, so we do not necessarily conform to the ways that society lays down for a citizen, the abstract conception of a human being.

Fraternity is another variation on the theme of the abstracted individual whose adoption of a formula of behaviour reduces his uniqueness as an individual. An army is such a fraternity; it reduces an individual to a kind of automaton that allows him to kill other human beings.

And every fraternity develops a code of conduct, loyalty to which is an absolute requirement. Those who hold different beliefs cannot be brothers; they often become opponents.

Living in society, therefore, is a continuously negotiated existence between being a citizen – i.e. a generalization that conforms to the requirements of society and being an individual, a unique, creative person who exercises his/her initiative, and one whose freedom is often challenged as it can pose a threat to the kind of order that is necessary for stability.

We live in families, miniscule versions of society, and in order to live together in harmony we impose conditions of behaviour – rules and regulations – on one another to which we, as citizens, have to conform.

Rules and regulations devised by human beings are expedients for the creation of safe environments but as we cannot foresee every consequence of their application, they often become restraints that strangle initiative and progress. The rules and regulations that we create to confine our negative impulses do not have the flexibility that is needed to distinguish between what is creatively different and what is destructively different. So we have continuously to re-evaluate and adjust rules and regulations that become constraints on innovation and creativity.

As rules and regulations reflect human short-sightedness, they cannot be regarded as absolute and unchangeable.

Marriage

Marriage is the very foundation of a civilized society. Based on the idea of fidelity, it is an important means of establishing order and stability through the proper care and nurture of the young. So it includes the vow of “till death do us part”.

But the widespread prevalence of unfaithfulness and

divorce reveal that it is difficult to maintain the ideal of marriage. Human beings live in changing circumstances and they change with the times, so expectations of consistency to a set of conventions that do not change, is idealistic. Marriage, therefore, is a symbol of civilized behaviour and as a symbol, it is an expedient, as is the concept of citizenship.

Culture

In our creation of societies, we developed ways of behaviour in systems that arose out of adaptation to the environments in which we lived and we called such systems, cultures. So cultural differences are not inherent but simply the result of adaptation to differing geographical environments. Adherence to a culture allows its members to relate to and identify with one another naturally and confidently as they all conform to the same practices.

And when one encounters someone of another culture, one's primitive instinct of fear of what is different, comes to the fore and often interferes with one's ability to recognize that person as human. She or he is called a "foreigner" or "stranger," and as such arouses reserve, wariness, suspicion, fear or contempt.

Cultural differences then become barriers to human interaction as the focus is on difference. But differences in rites, rituals and codes of conduct are only differences in form. Focus, therefore, is not on the commonality of meaning and intention underlying forms of ritual practice but on the forms themselves. It is focus not on reality but on appearance; i.e. on the superficial that leads to practices such as apartheid.

War

Fear of difference, in its most intense form, leads to war and conquest, the means by which we give vent to our most uncivilized urges. In order to make war, we actually train young men to kill. Nothing can be more uncivilized than that.

10 July: Citizenship

Citizenship, an abstraction imposed on the individual to ensure conformity of behaviour for the purposes of safety and order, becomes a means of identification. But such identification is merely formulaic. It does not express individuality only conformity and makes possible the reduction of a human being to a number, such as the one in an identity document.

And what exactly is identity? Is it merely a response to the formulae we have created for living in society? If so, who or what are those who challenge or repudiate social formulae? If they show us new and more humane ways of living together, they may be considered reformers or revolutionaries. If they merely exploit social formulae for their own ends, they may be considered criminals.

Non-conformists – whether reformers, revolutionaries or criminals – expose conventions and laws as expedient.

No one conforms in entirety to the dictates of society and minor deviations from the norm are simply accepted as individualistic or eccentric.

When I look in the mirror, I see an old, lined, brown face with bags under the eyes, scraggly white eyebrows, a shock of short white hair, and white stubble under nose and chin – in old age one even begins to lose the distinction between

male and female. Despite all this, I am an individual human being who refuses to be abstracted into a stereotype. Though I do conform in appearance to the stereotype of an octogenarian, in spirit, I do not conform to anything other than an individual. I am not a criminal, rebel or revolutionary, simply an individual, who believes in her freedom and conforms only to those conventions that are necessary for safety and harmony.

Living under apartheid, with its racial stereotyping, made it necessary to repudiate an imposed communal identity. And when we denounced race as a component of identity we discovered our common humanity as well as our individuality.

So apartheid turned out to be a blessing in the end.

Postal “Service”?

This morning, I went to the Post Office to post books to a couple of friends. The official behind the counter challenged my use of this Post Office in the mall as there is a Post Office in Lyttelton, where I live. I told her, I did not trust the P.O. in Lyttelton. She took offence and declared that my distrust of one P.O. indicated distrust of all P.O.s. I did not respond as I have indeed long lost trust in the postal system. Today was simply a test to see whether the books I was sending would reach their destinations.

Furthermore, what difference does it make which P.O. I use. The official’s attitude indicated intolerance similar to that experienced under official racism.

But the postal system under apartheid was efficient. After apartheid, many books that I sent off by post, never reached their destinations and soon after 1994, I stopped

using the postal service. Today, twenty-five years after apartheid, I decided to see whether the system could be relied on once more. If my books don't reach their destinations, I shall not use any Post Office again.

11 July: Beds

The legs of beds used to have castors on them and were easy to move around for vacuuming. Now they have these pods that look like small flower pots or huge mugs and have flimsy connections to the base of a bed. Soon after I bought my bed, one of the pods broke off. I had to keep it in place bolstered by a brick. At four this morning, the pod slipped and my bed became a slide. So I spent the morning rearranging my bedroom. I stuck the pod on with double sided tape and put the bed against the wall so it would not move when I sat on it or got in to sleep. I hope that works.

My Diaries

Just before the bed became lopsided, I had been thinking about why I have taken to writing diaries and it occurs to me that I am talking to myself. It is what old loners like me do – only I do it with a laptop. And I am exploring my understanding of existence not with anyone else, just myself.

Everyone has her/his own understanding of existence. For most it is the belief in God; for me, it is based on the idea of an ever expanding universe in which human life is an anomaly because it has a beginning and an end. So I read books and watch DVDs that deal with our attempts to create permanence in our state of impermanence; consistency in our inconsistency.

And on my laptop, which has become my comrade

assisting me in my quest, I write about what I learn.

Fortunately for me, there are experts out there in cyberspace, who, with great scientific insight, are exploring the happenstance nature of existence. Their findings make it possible to recognise the anomalies of human behaviour and the misfortunes that occur as a result of our inability to fully comprehend the vagaries of our inconsistent natures.

I sit at their feet to learn.

12 July: Chasing my tail

Today I decided to go to the bank to make an electronic payment of my electricity and water account to Online Billing Solutions, the company that controls the supply of these commodities. I usually pay cash, but cash payments are penalized so to avoid the penalty for cash payments, I thought I would make an inter-account transfer at the Standard Bank.

I realized that as I would be going to visit Maniben in Laudium afterwards, I would be driving there via Lyttelton Road on which Online Billing is located. So I decided to stop off at their offices to make payment. When I got there, it was to discover that payment cannot be made at their offices; it has to be at a bank or ATM.

As I was on the way to Maniben, I left the banking for later.

I arrived at Maniben's to find her busy dealing with plumbing problems with workmen. She gave them instructions and then came back to me. I had taken my laptop with me as I wanted to show her the cover I had designed for her autobiography. She was happy with the

cover and the title I had devised for her book. She has more information that still has to be written up and included in the book, but she has not been able to write as the cold has somewhat paralyzed her hands. So I will have to wait until winter is over before I can expect anything more from her.

After the visit, on my way back home, I stopped at a branch of Standard Bank to pay my water and electricity bill. Because I wanted to avoid the extra charge that Billing Online imposes on cash payments, I tried to get the bank to make a transfer from my Standard Bank Account into the Online Billing Account, also a Standard Bank Account. I found that it would cost even more than paying cash. The teller suggested an ATM payment but she could not make it work, neither could I at the ATM outside.

In the end, I just withdrew cash and paid it in at the bank.

It just does not make sense to me, that one has to be penalized for paying cash. I realize that money is becoming an abstraction, what with cards and electronic transfers, cash has become a nuisance, requiring actual attention to payment. I have not kept up with modern ether transactions and capitalists penalise people like me because they have to make a small additional effort to acknowledge payments.

13 July

Today I received an email from Marsha House Cann, my friend in New York, informing me that she has not received the books I sent her by airmail, a month ago. So I must conclude that the PO is still being run by those who tamper with the mail. I believe they search for money that may be sent by post.

It will take decades to overcome our conditioning under apartheid which inculcated a culture of exploitation and abnegation that led to all forms of criminal opportunism and corruption. It will take forever for us to overcome such conditioning and to learn to respect ourselves. Being almost at the end of my eighty-fourth year, I don't expect it to happen in my lifetime.

16 July: Prison

Prison represents a completely degenerate form of social reform. It denies freedom of choice which is absolutely necessary to inculcating the self-respect from which flows an understanding of responsible behaviour.

Charles Dickens showed us in *Great Expectations* that if you treat a person with respect, you offer him the opportunity to become respectful in return. Pip's slice of pie that he voluntarily brings to Magwitch, is his recognition of the convict's humanity and it awakens awareness of it in the convict and that changes him. Prisons do just the opposite. The kind of life that imprisonment imposes, confirms in the convict his lack of humanity

Prisons represent a backward method of dealing with offenders. With all the advances in psychology, we should by now have developed new ways of dealing with those who commit crimes; methods that place emphasis on rehabilitation – not retribution.

Apartheid was a form of imprisonment; it fostered criminality.

15 July

At half-past five this morning, I went into the bathroom

to relieve myself and when I found myself lying on the floor, I realized that I had fainted. I was amazed; I have been sneezing and coughing as I have a cold, but that should not have caused me to pass out. When I stood up, I realized that the fall had hurt my leg. There is a swelling around the ankle so now I hobble around like a decrepit.

18 July

To keep the weight off my foot, I spent the last three days in bed. This morning I took a pain tablet and am now hobbling about without too much discomfort.

While in bed, I went on a huge guilt trip, thinking about my father and how his life deteriorated after he lost his job. He became dependent on my sister and me. And when we qualified as teachers, I in 1955 and Seetha, a couple of years later, we became the breadwinners. One day, some years after my mother's death in 1954, my father brought home a widow and her son to live with us in a flat that we were sharing with my newly-wed brother, his wife and her sister.

We had nothing in common with the widow and, sadly for her, as all her attempts to ingratiate herself with us were at our expense, they could not but fail as they placed more of a financial burden on Seetha and me.

It was quite a life change for the two of us; we were suddenly in the midst of a huge family for which we were financially responsible. My father, aware of the burden on us, eventually moved his mistress, her son, my sister and me into a smaller flat and left the other flat to my brother. It made little difference; we were still struggling financially.

Then Dad became very ill. Climbing all the stairs to the

flat was a strain on his weak heart. He suffered a stroke and was taken to King Edward VIII hospital where he died.

Though we still had Dad's debts to pay off for the next few years – we had no idea that we were not legally responsible – Seetha and I suddenly felt free of responsibility for others. We deserted Dad's mistress and her son, moved away from the flat to a suburb outside Durban and left them stranded. It was a cruel thing to do.

**My Father:
M. V. Naidoo**

This picture of my father in his early forties is from a family photograph taken when we lived in Pretoria in the 1940s

My father was a very handsome man.



My father's death suddenly freed my sister and me of the responsibility for others that had been placed on us from the time we were teenagers. We could at last concentrate on our own needs and interests.

But when I think of that poor woman and her son; I feel nothing but shame at having deserted them.

19 July

I am still hobbling about uncomfortably on a sore foot. I will go out today to get an ankle brace.

20 July

I slipped on the ankle brace and for a while, was almost back to normal again.

Does true love require reciprocation?

This morning, I woke up thinking about reciprocation. Most novels revolve around romances and, in general, present heroes and heroines as people who go through a process of desire and longing for consummation. Occasionally there is a lover who loves silently but in vain. Such a lover usually simply serves the purpose of confirming the sterling qualities of the hero or heroine and may fill the reader with sympathy for a love that is not returned.

But is it necessary to sympathise with him or her? Love is not an emotion to regret; a person who truly loves gives that love without the need for reciprocation; it is love given in appreciation of a person's qualities and it is lasting love given freely and unconditionally.

It is chiefly the sexual and emotional desire of romantic love that requires reciprocation. The lack of such fulfillment leads to disappointment and even despair.

21 July

This morning, the swelling around my ankle has gone down and my foot looks fairly normal but I will keep the brace on while I still feel sensitivity in the joint. I still do not walk normally and that is a nuisance.

Oranges

I have had to give up oranges as they give rise to acid reflux in my body. It's too bad; I love oranges.

I am reminded of a scene in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* in which the sisters, Deborah and Mattie with their guest decide to eat the oranges she has brought. Mattie likes to make a hole in the orange, then squeeze and suck out the juice. Deborah considers this vulgar as it is like sucking on a breast; and she cannot abide the word "suck" as well. So the women go off, each to the privacy of her own room, to eat her orange in the way she likes.

In the twenty-first century we are not bound by such strict forms of conduct, but we do abide by codes of polite behaviour. What I realised from the scene with the oranges is that one's personal freedom is always restrained in a relationship. When you live alone, you can do as you like. But if you live with someone, you have constantly to be conscious of not giving offence.

Freedom, therefore, does not mean you can do as you like; human freedom is qualified. It requires understanding of the implications of one's actions and refraining from those that are not acceptable to others. Like all things human, freedom, means one thing at the communal level and something else at the individual level. At the communal level, it refers to democratic equality; at the individual level there is no equality; we are all different.

22 July: My Will

In three months, I turn eighty-four. I made a will some years ago and updated it last year. Here follows the last request in my will:

My Death: I am an atheist and do not belong to any religion or religious grouping. When I die there must be no funeral or rites of any kind. After the necessary legal requirements for death have been completed, my body must be taken from a morgue or hospital or other place to a crematorium and be disposed of there. Bones and ashes must not be collected.

I see graves, graveyards and headstones as the unwillingness to accept the finality of death.

When I die, I know I will become dust and I think it is ridiculous to make graves and put up headstones to dust. In death, as dust, I will not have the capacity to know whether I am remembered or not. So I do not require to be remembered. If I happen to be remembered, as I happen to remember people who once were family and friends, such memories will be private, personal recollections that fulfill personal needs.

As a person who has died no longer exists, it is better to remember the living and forget those who have become dust. The dead live on in the memory of those who loved them but even such remembrance is sporadic.

I occasionally think of my parents, who died sixty odd years ago, my sister, who died in 1993, my brother, Seeni, who died in 2003. I realize that I think of them as I am trying to assuage feelings of guilt for not having been the perfect daughter and sister. It is a form of mourning, entirely private and personal that is meant to remind me to be more considerate of the people I know.

There really is no need for tombstones; intermittent

memories are sufficient. Funerals, graves, graveyards, headstones, in reality, are not for the dead, but for the living, who need concrete ways to remember, “lest they forget.” I consider graves and graveyards a waste of space and effort. The Hindu way of cremation and disposing of ashes makes sense; it is acceptance of the end.

Sometimes graves become great monuments, and having lost connection with those for whom they were erected, take on independent significance. The pyramids, for example, are monumental tombs for those who wished to be remembered for all eternity. But we look at them today and what we see are monuments to human ingenuity. And we stand in awe of those who built them – not of those who had them built as their tombstones. We have no idea of those who were buried within, so as tombstones they have no significance. As human achievements, they are magnificent and we stand before them in awe – not as tombstones – as works of art!

23 July: Royalty

I woke up this morning thinking about royalty; the result of my reflections on Pharaohs and pyramids.

In the old days Kings with despotic powers, went out to hunt and live carefree rip-roaring lives. In modern times, royalty lives in cages, under the supervision of governments. The conventions of royalty and nobility have crumbled under the evolution of democracy and have been reduced to somewhat extraneous national symbols that may occasionally inspire feelings of nationality and loyalty. The need for royalty has become

irrelevant and the institution will eventually disappear as it has no real function in the modern world in which the worth of every individual is constitutionally recognized.



King George VI of Great Britain

In the 1940s, as a school pupil in Pretoria, I remember being marched to the sports ground to see the royal family, King George VI, Queen Elizabeth and the Princesses, Elizabeth and Margaret Rose, on their visit to South Africa. Their appearance in a sports ground in a Coloured area was a racist government's concession to the "Non-European" population.

24 July

I have plumbing problems; my kitchen tap is dripping. At the moment, I am simply placing a container under it.

25 July: Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake*

Last night, I went to set up my Blu-ray player so I could watch Yuri Grigorovich's version of *Swan Lake*. When I opened the box, I found my Blu-ray disc of Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* on top of the player. I had completely forgotten that I had it and was delighted to find it. I watched it instead of the Bolshoi version.



Bourne's *Swan Lake* is very different from the traditional version that focuses on the art of the dance and presents a variety of dance forms from different countries.

In contrast, Bourne's ballet presents a dance drama that explores the tragic events of a love story. In his ballet, the Swans represent the gay community and love has to contend with prejudice.

Music, dance and dramatic action are completely integrated and do not, as in the traditional ballet, simply allow for a demonstration of expertise and the variety of dance. Though it is a tragedy, the first act, set in the palace and in the city, is a comic portrayal of conventional human behaviour and interactions.

As the focus is on dance as dramatic action, Tchaikovsky's music is not simply accompaniment; it creates mood and atmosphere, integral to the development of conflict and emotion. This modern recreation of the ballet brings out the full glory of the music as it accompanies a tale of doomed love.

26 July

Last night I watched the Bolshoi *Swan Lake* choreographed by Yuri Grigorovich. It was the traditional presentation in which the story is marginal and the focus is on the beauty and variety of the dance and the perfection of its execution. That the dancers take bows after each superb display of their ability, is an indication, that the story line is simply a means that supplies a context for the brilliance of dance and choreographic expertise.

Tonight I shall watch the Kirov (Mariinsky) *Swan Lake* choreographed by Konstantin Sergeyev in 1950.

27 July

In the last three days, I have watched three different versions of *Swan Lake*, and loved them all. I am a very lucky person; not many people can indulge themselves in this way.

Being a loner, I can.

28 July: *Mulholland Drive*

I went out to the launderette at eight this morning, did my laundry and came back to watch David Lynch's *Mulholland Drive*. I could not make out its meaning so I looked it up on the Internet, where I found several enthusiastic explanations, none of which made it any

clearer to me. I will watch it again sometime to try to understand what it depicts.

29 July

This morning I received the following email from Professor. Ray Miller:

It has been a while since we corresponded. I simply wanted to check in with you to see how you are doing.

I received the books that you sent to me - WIP Theatre plays and Octogenarian Adventures. I had read the second one online but it is much better to have a hard copy in one's hands to read. Thank you so much.

You had recommended that I read *Luci's Dilemma*. I really enjoyed it very much. As a matter of fact, we have a Season Selection Play committee made up of faculty and students who read plays and make recommendations for us which plays they think would make a good combination for the following year. I submitted your play for their consideration. We'll see what happens.

Tomorrow, I am going to drop in the mail to you a copy of a play that I wrote about the killing of the four students on the Kent State University campus in May of 1970. When you get it, please let me know. I would like to hear your thoughts and suggestions as well.

...

"Let us read and let us dance; these two amusements will never do any harm to the world." - Voltaire

I am thrilled that Ray submitted *Luci's Dilemma* to the selection committee. Whether or not it is chosen for production makes little difference to me; I am just delighted that Ray read it and enjoyed it.

Plumbing Problems

This morning, I drove to Chamberlains, the hardware store, to buy a new sink mixer tap set that I had seen in their advertisement pamphlet. When I got there, the particular model in the advertisement was sold out, so I bought another. I had spoken to Johannes, our caretaker, about installing it. He came to the flat a few minutes after I returned and about a half hour later, the tap was in place – and no more leak.

DVDs

Yesterday, I watched the ballet, *Romeo and Juliet*, starring Carlos Acosta, and today, the opera *Cavalleria Rusticana*.

31 July: *Luci's Dilemma*

I am happy that Ray Miller thought *Luci's Dilemma* worthy of production. I wrote the play in the 1980s, my most productive decade of theatre work.

I wrote it with Etienne Essery in mind. Etienne was an actor in my WIP (Work-in-Progress) Theatre Company.

Like most small, black theatre groups of the time, we presented anti-apartheid plays and plays set in the various oppressed communities of apartheid South Africa. And there were young white rebels, like Etienne, who worked closely with black theatre companies.

The fact that we lived in racially segregated areas actually made it difficult for the apartheid authorities to

curb our activities which were nevertheless quite volatile given the times. There were no theatres in black communities and we played wherever we could find a venue. We did not earn from our shows, and were not professional in the traditional sense. All of us had jobs – I was a school teacher – so our theatre work was done after hours. And as we were engaged in presenting our experiences of living under a racist government, our audiences often included members of the Special Branch.

But *Luci's Dilemma* was never staged. I don't know why. And that has always been a regret. Now just to think it may be performed, is exciting. It is a comedy; I like to think it hilarious, but a sense of humour is a very individual thing.

If it is chosen for production, I shall let my few friends in the States know and perhaps, my niece, – I am not sure. As I am not a believer and the play presents my unconventional views of belief, it may give offence to devout people, like my nephew and nieces.

1 August

It is more than two weeks since I fell and hurt my ankle but whatever went wrong with it, has not yet healed. The swelling goes down at night but when I am back on my feet in the morning, it reappears. It is taking some time to heal.

Pride and Prejudice

Last night, I decided to watch the DVD of Jane Austen's novel. I had taken it out reluctantly, as it is simply a story about the mating game – nineteenth century Mills and Boon. But I had forgotten about the humour and as I

watched the first disc, I found myself pleasantly amused by the match-making antics of the mother, the pretensions of characters like Mr. Collins, and the awkwardness of Mr. Darcy. His proposal of marriage to Elizabeth Bennet is a delightfully comic moment.

Odds and ends

This morning I received an email message about a book left for me at Rogen's Auto Centre. The book is by Siva Moodley, also a writer living in Pretoria. I sent him a couple of my diaries a few weeks ago and he has now left one of his books for me at the auto shop. I have no idea why there. It means a trek into the city – but not today.

I went to the bank to give instructions about an investment that has matured. As the banker kept requiring my fingerprints, over and over, I eventually suggested that she accept my ID book as proof of my identity. I do not know why, but she was unable to read the fingerprints transferred from a little fingerprint gadget onto the computer.

I was forced to wonder whether fingerprints fade with old age.

3 August

Yesterday, I watched the DVD of *Jane Eyre*. I had seen the 1943 film version as a youngster, I am not sure when, probably in my early teens. It starred Orson Welles as Rochester and as far as I am concerned no one else could ever be Rochester.

The Moor's Last Sigh

I started reading Salman Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh*,

a couple of days ago and by now should have completed the book, but I find it difficult to understand and I cannot find any character to hold on to. I guess I am too old and too set in my ways to understand modern works of art.

5 August

I have now given up on *The Moor's Last Sigh*. I will check it out on the web to find out what it is about. I may get explanations that are equally incomprehensible.

Das Rheingold

Last night, I decided to watch the Met Opera production of Wagner's Ring Cycle again. So I pulled out the first DVD, *Das Rheingold* and enjoyed it as much as I did the first time I watched it. I don't know anything about music; I know only what sounds good to my ear.

Wagner, it seems to me, writes his music to suit action and mood so the music does not give way to virtuoso performances by tenors and sopranos making us aware of the range of their vocal competences. That makes the Ring Cycle all the more enjoyable for me. As I am hearing impaired, all I hear of singing that reaches the top end of the musical scale, is unpleasant screeching.

Tonight, I shall watch, *Die Walküre*, which if I remember correctly is more about Siegmund and Sieglinde, than the Valkyries, who are simply instruments to help the couple fulfill their destiny of giving birth to Siegfried, hero of the next opera in the Ring Cycle.

6 August

Yesterday, Tom, bearing gifts, came to visit. He

brought me the most beautiful and unusual jigsaw puzzles that are going to give me hours and hours of pleasure. He also brought me about a dozen of his and Lionel's DVDs, which I look forward to watching in the next few weeks



Tom

Lionel

Tom has been advising me on how to write a screen play for *Luci's Dilemma*, but I had to admit to him that I don't think I have the skills for such a project. I know I could develop them, but the idea of turning the play into a movie belongs in the realm of fantasy and until it becomes a real possibility, that is where I shall leave it.

Talking to Tom, I realize that I am becoming totally introverted. I have little knowledge of the day to day happenings in the world and though I could hear and feel his sadness at the loss of idealism in modern times, I felt outside of it. I am aware that I have receded into a shell and simply accept corruption as a given that goes with political,

economic, social power and governance. Elections provide a momentary hiatus in the abuse of power, but do not end corruption.

I am a cynic and believe that those, who, like Tom and Lionel, hold fast to humane beliefs, are bound to be disillusioned.

7 August: *Gods and Monsters*

I have watched *Gods and Monsters*, the first of the videos that Tom and Lionel have lent me. It depicts the final years of the life of James Whale. After I watched it, I looked up James Whale and was awed by the description of him as a man who was openly gay and lived his life confidently free of sexual convention in a time when it was not legal or acceptable.

So I wondered why a film about the man had to be based on Christopher Bram's novel which depicts the *end* of Whale's life in an awkward relationship with a fictitious, heterosexual gardener, Clayton Boone, a character invented by Bram. I watched the film again to try to find an answer. But all I could see was an imposition on Whale's life of a more conventional, conservative view of homosexuality in a fictitious relationship that reduces Whale to a somewhat pathetic figure teased by this vision of a handsome young man in his last days.

The true story of James Whale, a man who confidently defied convention, would have been inspiring. This depiction by Bram merely confirms homophobic prejudice.

7 August

It occurs to me that I am becoming a total recluse and that could lead to my becoming senile. I have decided that I must not simply curl up and be comfortable; I should at least be aware of what is happening in the world. Perhaps I should get television again or maybe just a radio or newspapers.

9 August: *IF*

I watched the video of *IF* after *Gods and Monsters*. *IF* is set in a boys' boarding school and at every level, depicts the dictum "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." It ends with war, the boys shooting and killing one another. For me, the film illustrates that under the veneer of civilization, we are still animals.

I saw the boarding school as a symbolic edifice of civilization and contrary to what it represents, cultivates that most uncivilizing of situations, a hierarchical structure of absolute power that leads to war – the killing of human beings that we accept as necessary.

We set up military institutions in which we train people to kill. We see that as a necessity and do not examine it as a product of the feral fear that emanates from the corrupting influence of power. *IF* presents a cynical, symbolically realistic, very negative view of life.

Gods and Monsters

This morning I received the following email from Tom:

I have gone into an interesting community website where people like ourselves give commentaries on what they have read:

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/352>

58. Father of Frankenstein

This particular site gives reviews on the book *Gods and Monsters*. Here are some of the reviews. In the light of what these reviewers say, you may want to review your review...

I think Tom is suggesting that I have misinterpreted *Gods and Monsters*, the movie based on Christopher Bram's book, *Father of Frankenstein*. He has sent me three reviews of the book which explain that the introduction of the character, Clayton Boone by the author is an ingenious innovation that exposes the narrowness and prejudice of Boone's uncultivated mind which is in total contrast to James Whale's genius. I shall read them again and review my initial impression that the introduction of Boone into Whale's story diminishes Whale.

Here follows one of the reviews of the book, *Father of Frankenstein* that Tom sent.

Mar 01, 2017 Jesse rated it really like Shelves:
American-Lit, 1990-s, Queer-Lit, read-in-2017

Bram's fictionalized account of the last weeks of iconic horror-director James Whale—most famous for creating the original *Frankenstein* and *Bride of Frankenstein*—can be enjoyed on any number of levels, but what I found so exquisite is how Bram handles his story like a prism or a crystal, constantly discovering unexpected facets to

refract his narrative through: a representation of midcentury sexual mores, a glimpse behind the curtains of the early days of the Hollywood studio system, a defense of the important role art plays in making life meaningful, a dramatization of the long-lingering traumas of the World Wars, a depiction of the experience of aging in a society that values youth and “now”-ness above all else. It is the last dynamic, I admit, that most captivated me, its poignancy smoothing over the occasional clunkiness of the flashbacks. But overall it’s a very beautiful evocation of what can happen when a long and rich lifetime of experiences falls prey to an aging, infirmed body.

The tentative, unexpected *pas de deux* between Whale and his yard man Clayton Boone—all disaffected, rage-y midcentury blue collar white man who feels vaguely gyped by the world—is gracefully

rendered, often foregoing expected narrative pathways to explore more unpredictable territories of desire and eroticism and human connection. Bram is also a careful scholar, and there are some delightful cameo appearances and other wonderful references and bits of trivia for the cinephilically inclined reader to savor, even though such foreknowledge is by no means necessary (indeed, I imagine it would just align one more with the character of Boone).

Gay literature and culture, like so much else, has a tendency to fetishize the presence and perspectives

of youth, and so it was wonderful to find in Bram's characterization of Whale a great gay character of a certain age—complicated and not without sadness but certainly not tragic, elegantly balancing the deep, sometimes harsh wisdom of maturity with a disarming rapier wit. I have not yet seen the 1998 film adaptation, which in some ways is even more widely acclaimed, but will be rectifying the situation soon.

"Before I retired, you might say I had a brief time in the sun. Fame, as it were. I used to make talking pictures..."

It takes Clay a moment to realize he means movies. 'You were an actor?'

'Oh, no. Nothing that grand. Only a director.'

All the reviews that Tom sent me are of the book, *Father of Frankenstein* on which the movie, *Gods and Monsters*, is based. I have not read the book; I have only watched the movie based on it. What I have been trying to reconcile is the injection of a fictitious character, i.e. Clayton Boone, into the life of a real person.

And that is my mistake: confusing fiction with living reality. James Whale, in the movie *Gods and Monsters*, is *not* a real person; he is a character in a work of fiction. He befriends a heterosexual male, also a fictional character, whose homophobia, he hopes, will be the means to his death as he wants to end his life.

The real person, James Whale, according to what I have found on the Internet, was an openly gay man, who lived life on his own terms and did not allow the

prejudicial, sexual convictions of the society in which he lived, to influence him. He was a stage director, director of films and he painted as a hobby.

I gained the impression, from what I read, that being gay was simply a fact of his life; that he lived a confidently gay life but it was not an exclusive influence on his work. He was a man who knew himself and lived life without any concessions to prejudice. Towards the end, when he became ill, he made the decision to end his life.

My impression is that it was a rational and practical decision not based on any whimsical desire for some kind of artistic end. He was very ill and suffering greatly.

This is the note he left before drowning himself in his pool:

To ALL I LOVE,

Do not grieve for me. My nerves are all shot and for the last year I have been in agony day and night—except when I sleep with sleeping pills—and any peace I have by day is when I am drugged by pills. I have had a wonderful life but it is over and my nerves get worse and I am afraid they will have to take me away. So please forgive me, all those I love and may God forgive me too, but I cannot bear the agony and it [is] best for everyone this way. The future is just old age and illness and pain. Goodbye and thank you for all your love. I must have peace and this is the only way.

— Jimmy. ”

He made the decision to end his life and carried it out resolutely, without requiring assistance from anyone.



James Whale poses with a model of Frankenstein's monster on the set of *Bride of Frankenstein*, 1935. (Wikipedia)

In the movie, *Gods and Monsters* the fictional Whale is a man who contemplates death but cannot bring it about himself. He cultivates the friendship of Clayton Boone, a heterosexual man, in order to turn him into his

executioner. But Boone cannot fit into the role planned for him and Whale is forced to commit suicide.

I realize that as *Gods and Monsters*, portrays a *fictional* man named James Whale, in viewing it, one should forget about the real James Whale and simply concentrate on what the film portrays of two fictional men in a relationship in which appearance and reality are aligned with gods and monsters.

In *God and Monsters*, I see the *character*, James Whale, as one whose power as a decisive man is reduced by conceptions of what it means to be gay in a generally heterosexual world.

In my opinion, the movie makes more of the fictional Whale's homosexuality than the real Whale did.

The impression, I get, from the little I have read about the real James Whale is that despite the homophobic times in which he lived, he accepted his sexual orientation as normal and lived a very successful life in a brilliant career.

11 August: *Vicious*

Last night I watched *Vicious*, Series One, a comedy series set in the home of Freddie and Stuart, a gay couple about to celebrate the 49th anniversary of their marriage. Stuart is played by Sir Derek Jacobi and that was a surprise. My favourite version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* features Jacobi as Hamlet, so it was quite unexpected to find him in this comedy.

I am not sure why the series is called "Vicious" – I still have to figure that out, probably humorous irony. It is a hilarious show.

As it is based on marriage, it made me reflect on the institution of marriage.

Marriage at the communal level is an institution set up to ensure the survival of the species. It establishes family as the means of producing, nurturing and educating future generations. That cannot be so in a homosexual relationship; a gay couple does not have the responsibility of raising children unless they adopt. So I asked myself whether marriage is necessary to a gay couple. Is the need for marriage simply the result of conditioning in a heterosexual world that regards the progress towards adulthood as a process leading to marriage?

Marriage, at the individual level, is the result of physical attraction and passion, which are transitory, but ideally lead to a fixed and permanent state of loving coexistence and compassionate understanding..

As gays do not have children to nurture, do they need to marry? Why do they feel the necessity to tie themselves permanently to a partner? Why do Freddie and Stuart live as a married couple tied to each other, when as bachelors they have the freedom to play the field?

Love that leads to marriage, initially involves passion and physical attraction. As two persons who fall in love, get to know and understand one another, they ideally develop a relationship that goes beyond the physical and blossoms into real appreciation of one another for the qualities that each brings to the relationship.

So marriage is not simply a state; it is a process of growth and development; a process, in general, in which romantic love evolves into the genuine regard that keeps a family together. Parents and children live and grow together in mutual care and support, and, as members of a family, develop a special bond of affection and sense of loyalty to one another.

The love and respect that binds a family or a couple evolves from romantic beginnings into one of deep responsibility for one another. So living as a family in love and caring establishes the home as the cradle of humane evolution.

It is so even when a marriage is childless.

But marriage, in general, can no longer be regarded as a permanent state. With greater social and individual freedom in modern times, marriage is becoming an almost impossible ideal especially among heterosexuals. Perhaps gay marriages are more stable as they are set up in defiance of the societal norms that threaten their legitimacy.

12 August

Last night I watched *Prick up your Ears*, based on a true story, which depicts the reverse of a humane relationship. This horrifying film that ends with murder and suicide presents the obverse side of what it means to be human.

Today I watched *Torch Song Trilogy*, a 1988 Broadway Hit that deals with the problems of being gay in the world. The writer, Harvey Fierstein, is also the star of the movie.

The struggle to gain respect that is presented in the film, reminded me of the struggle to gain respect under

apartheid. People become conditioned to the overriding ethos of a system, and, as in apartheid, when they encounter difference they are filled with fear – fear of contamination – as though race or homosexuality is contagious. Prejudice being fear, often leads to violence, as the gang of gay bashers in the movie demonstrates.

Achievements such as Fierstein's are not only contributions to a nation's art and culture, they also help to diminish prejudice by exposing it as irrational fear.

13 August: *A Very English Scandal*

Today I watched *A Very English Scandal* which depicts the happenings in the life of Jeremy Thorpe who adhered to society's view of homosexuality as an aberration. His story is in sharp contrast to that of James Whale.

Despite the times in which he lived, Whale did not regard his way of life as abnormal and consequently lived a normal life and fulfilled the promise of his genius with great achievements. But Jeremy Thorpe, who accepted society's condemnation of homosexuality as deviant and pretended to be straight, was punished for his affair with Norman Scott.

In the twenty-first century gay relationships are no longer illegal; this makes me wonder what other prejudices we still cling to that are backed up by the law.

The Moor's Last Sigh

I am tackling Rushdie's novel again. This time I decided on constant reference to the family tree that is at the beginning of the book to help me keep track of characters and relationships. I had read the first three chapters

earlier and on reading them again, could get past the punning and the Indian pidgin and with the family tree, began at last to follow happenings of the story and to appreciate the humour in Rushdie's wordplay.

14 August: King Lear

Last night, I watched the last of the DVDs lent me by Tom and Lionel – Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Watching it made me realize that film is an excellent medium for a Shakespearean play. With all the close ups, the dialogue becomes so much more accessible.

And watching the play, I saw that it reverses the understanding of family that I presented a few days ago. Mine is an idealistic view and in *King Lear*, Shakespeare shows us that love taken-for-granted is not love.

In a family, however, it is generally taken-for-granted.

We see that in Lear's family, in the pat declarations of love of the older daughters, and in Lear's request for these declarations. Lear's intention of dividing his kingdom in accordance with his daughters' avowals of love for him, demonstrates both his and his older daughters' mechanical understanding of their relationship. Cordelia challenges this perfunctory view of love by declaring her own love for her father in perfunctory terms, i.e. as the obligation of a child to a parent, even though she is the one who genuinely loves her father. Lear takes Cordelia's declaration at face value and is enraged.

Lear is given a second chance to understand the true meaning of love as it is examined further in this scene in the attitudes of the two suitors who have come to ask for Cordelia's hand in marriage. For one, like Goneril and Regan, it depends on the dowry that goes with the bride;

for the other it is true appreciation of the bride herself.

But Lear has to learn the hard way that family relationships do not guarantee genuine love. Members of a family become habituated to one another because they live together but that does not necessarily mean that they love one another. Lear's older daughters Goneril and Regan, are completely indifferent to their father; all they want from him are the riches he is about to bestow.

Shakespeare shows us that love that is taken-for-granted, such as the love in family relationships, evaporates and simply becomes acknowledgement of connection.

15 August: *The Moor's Last Sigh*

In order to keep track of the narrative in Rushdie's novel, I have to distil it from his love of teasing, his propensity for punning and wordplay, his use of pidgin and his humorous view of human endeavours. I have read more than a hundred pages and have now met Moor, whom I assume is Moor of the title, I am not sure; but he is the narrator of the story who, thus far, has been providing me with the family history.

His mother is Aurora da Gama. His family, on his mother's side, claims descent from Vasco da Gama, who established the spice trade at Calicut (not Calcutta), in Cochin, which is now Kerala, in the South of India. His father, Abraham Zogoiby, is of the Cochin Jewish community and it is he who builds the family fortune. Aurora and Abraham have four children, Ina, Minnie, Mynah, and Moor. (i.e. Eeny, Meeny, Miny, Mo – Rushdie having fun). So Moor, in this book, has nothing to do with the people called Moors. That makes the title

of the novel, a tease, as is the name Moor for a Jewish boy.

Having no idea of the diversity of India's people, I had wondered why Rushdie set the first chapters of the novel in the South and how he had developed an ear for the pidgin which I associate with the Tamils of the South. I have to assume that it is not exclusive to the South.

I am beginning to learn about India.

I had no idea that there were Jewish communities in India; the Cochin Jewish community was one of about four. Apparently, most of the Cochin Jews made *aliyah* and returned to Israel after it became an independent State. Rushdie makes reference to this in the novel. Abraham Zogoiby says to his son, Moor: "Many of our Cochin Jews, by the way, complain of the racism with which they are treated in your precious homeland across the sea." (p. 341)

Only a vestige of the former community is left in Kerala and the Paradesi is the only remaining synagogue.

16 August

I drove to Laudium to get all my chronic medications – I have been taking them for at least thirty years. While I was at this medical store, I looked for something that would help with my right ankle which still swells every day. I found something called *Antistax* and decided to give it a go.

17 August

This morning I took one of the *Antistax* tablets and it seems to have helped – no swelling and I am not limping.

18 August: The Myth of Independence.

Though I am a loner and “independent,” I have become aware that we use the mythical word “independent” as though it is a reality. There is no such thing. Perhaps if I were a hermit living alone in a forest, that would to some extent approximate to independence – but only independence of other human beings. I would still be dependent on nature.

Living as I do in the suburb of a city, I am entirely dependent on society for my financial stability, and for all the necessities of life – all the services that are made available to me as a member of society. The word, “independent,” as freedom to do as I wish, is simply an illusion. Our “independence” is limited to the choices that society offers.

Even the choice that I have made to spend my old age writing and self-publishing my diaries, even that, is not an independent activity as I am dependent on the use of my laptop and Microsoft has made me aware that I do so in terms of its provision. Microsoft has indicated that it will shut down its provision of Word and Windows at the end of this year and requires me to buy a new laptop in order to continue writing.

It is our dependence on the services that society offers that leads to capitalist exploitation. Exploitation is the obverse side of dependency; we can never be free of it. We can only try to control it.

The Moor's Last Sigh

This is a modern novel in that it discards the notion of a story with a typical plot that presents a conflict that rises to a climax and is brought to a conclusion. In Salman

Rushdie's novel, he is telling a story in which the events involving characters are not structured in terms of one overriding concern but are significant happenings in the lives of people. Their circumstances are fairly random and the reader encounters a variety of people in their progress through life; and what happens to them is not predictable.

But Rushdie's wordplay makes it difficult for me to keep track of happenings and the names and identities of characters.

19 August

I had been struggling with a Sudoku puzzle and today solved it. I was pleased – thought I had lost my touch. Now I will tackle another impossible one.

20 August: Retirement

This morning, I woke up with my head full of thoughts about Irene Homes Charity Shop where I had worked as a volunteer after I retired from Giyani College of Education.

Actually, I hadn't retired; I was frog-marched off the campus by the students.

Empowered by the end of apartheid in 1994, the students understood "freedom" to mean that they now had the upper hand and could dictate to "racists" like me.

Another female member of staff had been threatened before me. When the students went marching to her home, the Rector and I, who had got there before them, were standing guard outside. Though we had to duck stones, we stayed put and the students eventually gave up. They did not attack us; the Rector was white and male.

When I heard of an eviction by students of a woman member of staff from another college of education in the

area, I realized it was all in the new spirit of democracy.

Only black women were being targeted.

On one occasion some days before I was evicted, the student leaders, having forced the staff into a meeting in the lecture theatre, sat us down in the auditorium and began to hector us about the way things would now work at the college. I was sitting there with my container of muffins which I had been carrying to the staffroom when ordered into this meeting. While we were being harangued, I opened the container, passed it around, and we sat munching muffins while the new leaders preached.

So you see, being anti-revolutionary, I got what I deserved when I was thrown out.

Actually, the students did me a service. I was near retirement age and when marched out, gained two extra years of freedom.

I returned to my home in Pretoria and spent a couple of years in extracurricular teaching programmes in Pretoria and Johannesburg.

Irene Homes Charity Shop

Then one day, I found a flyer in my mailbox calling for volunteers at the Irene Homes Charity Shop. So, in about 2000, I became a volunteer and worked there two days a week. At first, under manager, Carol Parsons, who created such a warm, friendly atmosphere in the shop that it was a great pleasure to work there. The shop was very open and spacious, with easy access to all the goods. The buyers who frequented the shop ranged from middle class whites to very poor blacks who lived in squatter camps.

All were warmly welcomed and treated with respect.

I had been working there for about six years, when

Carol decided to return home to England. Then Waldo Penzorn became manager and we continued to work in the same harmonious way for the next five or six years. Then Waldo, who had reached retirement age, was asked to leave and was replaced by a new manager.

I found this letter that I wrote about Waldo's retirement.

The Board of Management

Irene Homes

Irene

04 December 2009

Dear Board Members

THE CURIOSITY SHOP

I find it difficult to believe that you would jeopardise a thriving concern, such as The Curiosity Shop has become under Waldo Penzorn's management, on the basis of traditional adherence to retirement policies that apply in large enterprises and institutions. It is a pity that you did not exercise the flexibility that you have as a small and private organisation to use your discretion especially in this case where there has been no mismanagement or incompetence. On the contrary, the Curiosity Shop has flourished and contributed a steady and growing income to Irene Homes.

The success of the shop has not happened by magic. It has come about because of good and firm management. Waldo has made those of us who work in the shop aware that our function is to raise funds for The Homes and we have discarded sentimentality without losing respect and

consideration for our customers.

Waldo and Jan Makena have been a perfect management team in the Curiosity Shop. Waldo's focus has been on fundraising while Jan has concentrated on customer satisfaction. Between them they have kept the balance between providing bargains and ensuring a substantial income for Irene Homes. No business can satisfy all customers but the fact that we have a regular clientele that supports the shop is proof that it is well run and is meeting the needs of people. And our regular customers are not only the wealthy; many people working in the area support the shop. Every Saturday morning, ordinary workers are lined up outside the gate before the shop opens.

The retirement of Waldo is a mistake. I hope that it will not affect the success of the Curiosity Shop. Had Jan Makena been appointed in his place there would have been continuity. It is a pity that the Board is still blind to Jan Makena's competence and ability. Not only is he conscientious and committed but is also a man that many customers have come to love, respect and rely on.

Though he does not present a corporate image, he is an enterprising businessman and a personable human being at the same time. He has been a very capable assistant-manager and would have made an excellent manager. He would not simply have been an affirmative action appointee though some still think of him as a "boy." He would have been an appointment on merit.

I am sorry that his qualities are not appreciated

outside the shop. Waldo, who appointed him as his assistant-manager, had the perspicacity to see his true qualities.

Yours sincerely
Muthal Naidoo
(Volunteer for almost a decade)

After Waldo left, the atmosphere in the shop changed. The new manager was more formal and business-like. I did not take to her and soon after, gave up volunteering at the shop.

Irene Homes had been a real haven for me.

Now when I occasionally pop in there, I find it much like any other formal shop and customers are not greeted with a smile, as in the customary way of the old days.

21 August

Yesterday I received a notice from the Lyttelton Post Office of a parcel awaiting me there. I will pick it up this morning. I wonder if it has been opened and its contents searched for valuables.

22 August: *Tragedy at Kent State*

Yesterday, I picked up the parcel from the Post Office and found that it was from Prof. Ray Miller at Appalachian State U. When I got home and opened it, I found a copy of Ray's play *Tragedy at Kent State*. I sat down immediately to read it and found it to be set out quite differently from the usual format of a play. It included stage directions that gave the feeling of a movie script; of a roving camera focusing on different aspects of particular moments.

Reading the play, I saw that Ray and I have similar attitudes to war and to power. This morning I sent him the following email:

Dear Ray

I read *Tragedy at Kent State* yesterday and will read it again today.

My first impression: it explodes the myth of "the land of the free and the home of the brave." In it, we see students for whom war is evil; its exercise simply the expression of corrupt power. The students' resistance to becoming the means, through conscription, of aiding in such corruption, leads to the exercise of that power against them and the evil of war, the instrument of absolute power, is brought home.

Today I sent the following email to Ray:

Dear Doc: I love the innovative way in which you have structured your play – turning it into a kind of multimedia event in which scenes, given a cinematic treatment, are presented alongside videography, formal announcements and dance sequences. I hear the ghost of Brecht boasting to the ghost of Aristotle of how he began the revolution in staging that has led to what will be a spectacular performance of *Tragedy at Kent State*. Congratulations!

26 August: The Bolshoi Ballet

Towards the end of apartheid in the late 1980s or early 1990s, I watched, on SABC TV, a BBC documentary, hosted by Yuri Grigorovich, who took us on a tour of the Bolshoi Ballet. It included historical material and gave us

a view of the ballet training programme, productions past and present and the stars of the Bolshoi at the time.

That is when I became a fan of choreographer, Yuri Grigorovich.



Yuri Grigorovich

Last night I watched my favourite ballet, *Spartacus*, libretto and choreography by Yuri Grigorovich, music by composer, Aram Khachaturian, and Carlos Acosta as Spartacus. In this ballet, music, dance and drama work together as one to create a wonderfully evocative work of art.

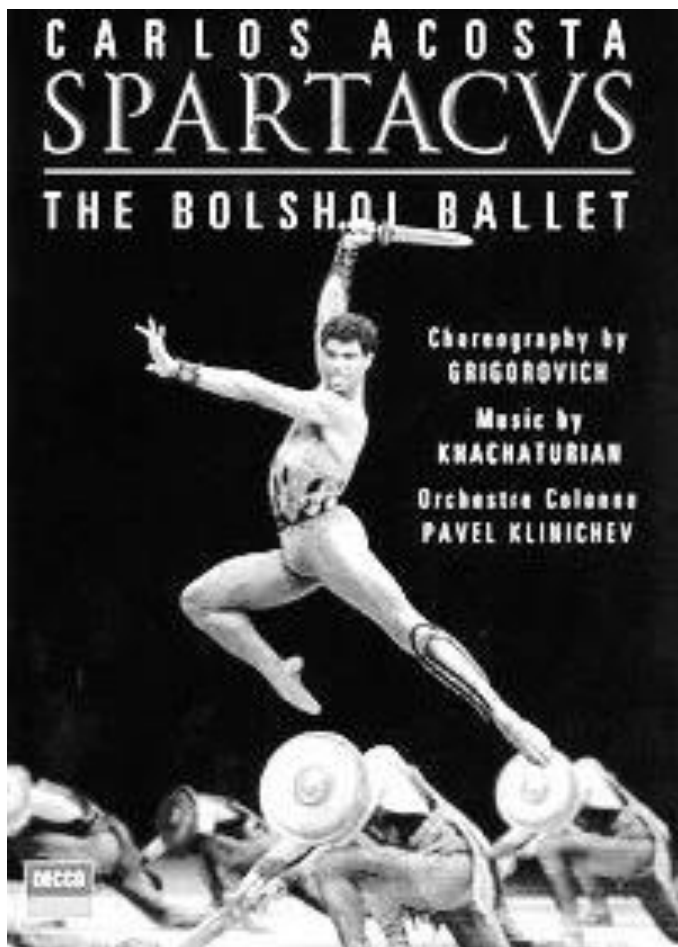


Aram Khachaturian: Composer

When you read about Aram Khachaturian you understand his interest in a ballet in which Spartacus is the hero. His music and Grigorovich's choreography work together in glorious harmony. And Carlos Acosta, the perfect choice for Spartacus, fulfills its wonderful promise.

Ironically, the ballet is about war; ironic, as I regard war as completely barbarous. The fact that we engage in it and have military institutions that train people to kill reveals what we call civilization to be a mere veneer.

But here I am, loving this ballet based on war.



As a work of art, *Spartacus* represents the noblest in human nature, but its subject matter, being war, deals with the basest in human nature.



The Roman General, Crassus, who crushed the slave revolt led by Spartacus.

27 August: “War! What is it good for – absolutely nothing.”

In the last week, I have read *Tragedy at Kent State* and watched DVDs about war. We are human animals and as such completely ambivalent creatures. War emanates from our animal natures and is a response to fear, greed and exploitation.

In the episodes, “War Crimes” of the *Judge John Deed* TV series, a soldier is on trial for killing women and children in the war against Iraq. During his training, he was asked to kill a rabbit that he had been made to care for and feed; he could not bring himself to do it. In

Iraq, it was primal fear – kill or be killed.



A Samurai Warrior

In *The Last Samurai*, a movie that I watched last night, the Samurai are shown in their village as people whose lives are ruled by a strong sense of honour and their attitude to others is humane and noble. But these same honourable men are warriors, who put on armour and hideous masks to ride out, conquer, kill, maraud and destroy. Their masks symbolise the obverse side of human nature – our demonic being. As human animals, we tend towards schizophrenia and war is the natural outcome of our conflicted natures.

27 August: My car, Corky Conquest

Today is Tuesday, but it may as well be Friday the 13th for me.

As I wanted to do a little shopping for necessities, I went down to my car only to find that the little alarm light was off and my remote to switch it on or off had no effect. I

realised that the battery was dead, so I walked down to the Spar Supermarket for my groceries. When I returned, I phoned Morga, manager of Rogen's Auto Service; he promised to send mechanics to come and fix the problem. They arrived at lunch time, changed the battery and took my battery for testing. Apparently I had left my lights on after I had driven the car on Sunday and that had drained the battery.

I must do something about my light switch. If I accidentally brush against it, the lights come on. That is what must have happened and I had not noticed.

While I had been waiting at the complex gate for the mechanics to arrive, the security guard had given me another notice of a parcel at the Post Office. As soon as the battery was changed and the mechanics had left, I drove off to the Post Office. The parcel I picked up was one that I had sent off to Devaksha Moodley containing a couple of my books. Apparently no one had come for it at the Post Office in Durban. I emailed Devaksha informing her that the parcel had been returned.

28 August Postal "Service"

I have received a reply from Devaksha. She was never informed of the package awaiting her at the Post Office. This confirms my view that we can no longer rely on our Postal Services.

Under apartheid, we lived in an officially racist society, but we could depend on the services it provided, even though they were segregated.

Under democracy we live with corruption.

Conditioning

At present, I am reading Slavoj Žižek's *Living in the End Times* in which he describes existence as paradoxes within paradoxes. I have long accepted that in society we live in ambivalence. Whatever we call government – apartheid, democracy, communism – it assumes absolute power and that inevitably leads to corruption.

When considering Apartheid, one looks chiefly at its obvious manifestation of prejudice and oppression; its deprivation of the human rights of the majority of the governed, and we believe that its influence disappeared with the establishment of democracy.

But that is not so; we still live under the power of apartheid conditioning. Official apartheid came to an end in 1994, but the culture of racial segregation and discrimination, instituted from the time of the arrival of the Dutch in South Africa, has been our way of life for about three and a half centuries. That means three hundred and fifty years of conditioning in racism.

As a result, we developed understandings and behaviours derived from racism which, in general, have become instinctive so we are unaware of such influence in our attitudes and actions. Those who were of the ruling race developed a culture of personal superiority and competence; those of the subject races, attitudes of inferiority and incompetence. These attitudes, having been ingrained, did not disappear with official apartheid.

Those who had had the power, freedom and opportunity to develop great competence in all spheres of life, had regarded themselves as superior. Those who had been oppressed, had learned to survive under discrimination through sullen compliance, which bred resentment, feelings

of inferiority, subversion, opportunism, and expediency.

After three hundred and fifty years of such conditioning, these are ways to which we unconsciously resort, and which still influence our attitudes and actions in the present; including the actions and attitudes of those, formerly powerless, who have now become rulers.

So we will have to put up with inferior services until such time as we have truly overcome our negative conditioning. For black people that means learning to value ourselves. And we will only do that once we have freed ourselves from the conditioning that deprived us of self-respect and taught us to see ourselves as inferior and as criminals.

Without self-respect we remain in apartheid.

Rogen's Auto Service

This morning I went into town to Rogen's Auto Centre to collect my car battery. I was at Rogen's by eight and as usual, was treated with great kindness by everyone. After my battery had been tested and reinstalled, I asked about payment but everyone regarded this as quite unnecessary. I am always shown such tremendous generosity here.

It is so unusual in a business.

Rogen's is a place that could serve as a model for real democracy. As I was leaving, I saw Morga, the manager, walking back from a shop carrying two containers of milk. He had not used his authority to order some one else to do the shopping.

Here I see people of all "races": working together with complete confidence in themselves and in one another, in an atmosphere of trust, respect, friendliness

and independence. When you enter these premises, people smile and greet you. At supermarkets, the only other places of business that I frequent, I am generally treated as a commodity.

I realise that it will take years before we are truly free of “race consciousness” and can see one another as human. And it may take centuries before we accept that “race” is a false concept.

30 August: *The Naked Civil Servant*

I thought I had watched all the DVDs that Tom and Lionel have lent me, but yesterday found one that I had not. The blurb on the back of the DVD, states:

The Naked Civil Servant is based on the autobiography of Quentin Crisp, a man struggling to live an openly gay, flamboyant lifestyle during a time when homosexuality was against the law in Britain. His outlandish behavior shocked the intolerant pre-WWII British society and provoked frequent homophobic attacks, but Crisp staunchly refused to compromise his lifestyle and went on to become a cult celebrity and an international gay icon, a 20th Century Oscar Wilde.

In my opinion, this description tends to keep Quentin Crisp in the closet and watching the film, I saw that the closet did not exist for Crisp. He was a man who had that great quality that makes for an exceptional human being: He knew who he was. He believed in himself and had the confidence to live his life accordingly. He was not “struggling to live an openly gay, flamboyant lifestyle”; he

lived confidently gay. It was conventional society that was struggling with his lifestyle; with the freedom that he adopted to be himself.

This is made very clear throughout the movie and is emphasised in the scene in a gay club where all its members are in formal suits camouflaged as straight gentlemen. Crisp comes in and his effeminate appearance, which makes obvious his homosexuality, is regarded as a threat of exposure and he is ousted from the club.

The scene reveals Crisp, not simply as a man of great courage, but also as a man self-assured and confident, perfectly at ease in his ambivalent identity, unlike the men in the club who hide behind false identities.

The blurb on the DVD cover also describes his behaviour as “outlandish”; I do not agree. The word “outlandish” suggests a homophobic bias. Crisp’s dress and behaviour simply reflect the duality of his sexual identity.

It is no different from my wearing T-shirts and slacks though I am of Indian descent. Just as I reject an Indian identity as I am South African, Crisp rejected his identity as heterosexual and presented himself as clearly homosexual. He openly challenged orthodox understandings of gender; and that was revolutionary.

Watching the film, I could only admire Crisp for his great self-assurance, his confidence in living his life as dictated by his nature and his great courage in the face of prejudice. He did not set out to challenge orthodox beliefs. He was simply true to himself.

To thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man.

And Quentin Crisp, without doubt, was a person of integrity; he was true to himself.



Quentin Crisp (1908 -1999)

"When, in preparation for his move to America, he was asked at the US Embassy if he were a practicing homosexual, he replied, "I didn't practice. I was already perfect". (Ed Stefan)

31 August

I have been searching the 'Net trying to discover the significance of the name "Quentin Crisp" a name he chose for himself. His given name was Denis Charles Pratt and he was his parents' fourth and last child.

As "Quentin" means fifth, I can only surmise that as *he* had given birth to and was the "fifth", it was appropriate to call himself Quentin.

1 September: Corky Conquest

Today, I made a real idiot of myself. I got into my car and drove out of the complex. As the robot at the corner was red, I stopped, but when the robot changed, the car stalled and I could not get it to start again. And I was not aware that it had lurched backwards until the driver behind came to tell me I had knocked into her car. The robot changed twice more while I was struggling to get the car started. Then I saw someone behind pushing the car; I think the driver behind me must have organised that. I tried again to start the car and suddenly it came alive and I drove off. I have no idea why Corky had behaved so badly.

I can only think that I must have forgotten to press the anti-theft button before I drove out of the complex. So Corky was not to blame; it is the old fool who drives her, who caused the problem.

2 September

Winter should be over but I am still wearing a jersey inside the flat and at night I still need all the blankets I use in Winter.

3 September: *Numbers*

Yesterday I ordered the whole series of the TV show, *Numbers*. I expect delivery tomorrow. I find *Numbers* interesting as its main characters belong to various minority groups and they don't take their understanding of existence for granted.

4 September

Apparently the courier bringing *Numbers*, arrived, telephoned, got no response and left. It was when I found an SMS informing me that he had tried to make delivery that I realised that I had not heard the phone as it had not been on my person when he phoned. I am terribly hard of hearing. I sent a reply to the SMS, apologising for my lack of response

5 September

I received a message that my DVDs would be delivered today. So I am sitting here clutching my phone and waiting. It is now 11:30 and my phone is still silent. Yesterday the courier arrived just after 9 a.m. He probably thinks he came too early. Of course he has no idea of my hearing problem; one of the disadvantages of being old.

So I wait.

The courier finally arrived after 2p.m. Now I have the whole series of *Numbers*.

What I really appreciate about the show is that its characters do not have a mechanical approach to existence; they believe in searching for the reality behind appearance and they use magical mathematical formulae with which to find it.

6 September: Corky Conquest

It rained last night and that washed most of the dust off Corky. She was most grateful; she has been quietly cursing me for my neglect of her; my laziness in not giving her a regular bath. I had planned to take her to a carwash yesterday but with my screw up of the day before, regarding the delivery of my DVDs, I had simply sat at home clutching my cell, waiting for the courier. I did not even fix lunch, I was so afraid I would miss the phone call.

7 September: *The Novitiate*

Last night, I watched the DVD of *The Novitiate*, and found myself in the midst of a dehumanising situation. The movie presented young girls entering the sisterhood of nuns under delusions of embracing some kind of magically romantic existence as wives of God. What the movie illustrates is that they really enter imprisonment in a formulaic set of conventions which completely deprives them of their individuality, initiative and opportunity to grow and develop. As brides of Christ, they are not married to Jesus, but to crucifixion.

8 September

Spring made a short appearance for about a week, but yesterday, it was back to winter again and all the blankets I had put away, grinned as I spread them out once more. Today is Sunday and I will be off to the launderette just before eight this morning when it opens. I chose this day and time for doing my laundry as the place is usually empty then. But the last couple of Sundays, there were others there before me who commandeered all the

machines and I had to wait my turn. I hope it will not be so today.

9 September: Birthdays

Birthdays are anniversaries and when you say you turn a certain age, it means turning a corner and walking up a new street. So when I turn 84 this year, it really means I have completed 84 years and am now in my new year of 85.

The attendants at the petrol station where I usually fill up constantly make offers for Corky, my car, and I always tell them they can have her when I am a hundred. It has become a joke between us.

I wonder if I will make a century.

10 September: *Cranky Old Man*

I received the following email from my niece, Diricilla (Dris) today.

When an old man died in the geriatric ward of a nursing home in an Australian country town, it was believed that he had nothing left of any value. Later, when the nurses were going through his meagre possessions, they found this poem. Its quality and content so impressed the staff that copies were made and distributed to every nurse in the hospital ... One nurse took her copy to Melbourne .

The old man's sole bequest to posterity has since appeared in the Christmas editions of magazines around the country and appearing in mags for Mental Health. A slide presentation has also been made based on his simple, but eloquent, poem. And this old man, with nothing left to give to the

world, is now the author of this 'anonymous' poem winging across the Internet.

Cranky Old Man...

What do you see nurses? ... What do you see?
What are you thinking ... when you're looking at me?

A cranky old man ... not very wise,
Uncertain of habit ... with faraway eyes?
Who dribbles his food ... and makes no reply.
When you say in a loud voice ... 'I do wish you'd try!'
Who seems not to notice ... the things that you do.
And forever is losing ... A sock or shoe?
Who, resisting or not... lets you do as you will,
With bathing and feeding ... The long day to fill?
Is that what you're thinking?...Is that what you see?

Then open your eyes, nurse ... you're not looking at me.

I'll tell you who I am ... As I sit here so still,
As I do at your bidding, ... as I eat at your will.
I'm a small child of Ten ... with a father and mother,

Brothers and sisters ... who love one another
A young boy of Sixteen...with wings on his feet
Dreaming that soon now ... a lover he'll meet.
A groom soon at Twenty ... my heart gives a leap
Remembering, the vows ... that I promised to keep.

At Twenty-Five, now ... I have young of my own.

Who need me to guide ... And a secure happy home.

A man of Thirty ... My young now grown fast,

Bound to each other ... With ties that should last.
At Forty, my young sons ... have grown and are gone,
But my woman is beside me ... to see I don't mourn.
At Fifty, once more, ... Babies play 'round my knee,
Again, we know children ... My loved one and me.
Dark days are upon me My wife is now dead.
I look at the future ... I shudder with dread.
For my young are all rearing ... young of their own.
And I think of the years ... And the love that I've
known.
I'm now an old man ... and nature is cruel.
It's jest to make old age ... look like a fool.
The body, it crumbles ... grace and vigour, depart.
There is now a stone ... where I once had a heart.
But inside this old carcass ... A young man still
dwells,
And now and again ... my battered heart swells
I remember the joys ... I remember the pain.
And I'm loving and living ... life over again.
I think of the years, all too few ... gone too fast.
And accept the stark fact ... that nothing can last.
So open your eyes, people ... open and see.
Not a cranky old man.
Look closer ... see ... ME!!

Remember this poem when you next meet an older
person who you might brush aside without looking
at the young soul within ... we will all, one day, be
there, too!

PLEASE SHARE THIS POEM

The poem is a cry for recognition of the elderly who, in general, are invisible to most people. When I was young I too treated old people as though they did not exist.

Now at 84, I see an old person in the mirror every day. But unlike the author of this poem, I don't need people to see me.

I see myself. I know who I am.

12 September: David Lynch: *Mulholland Drive*

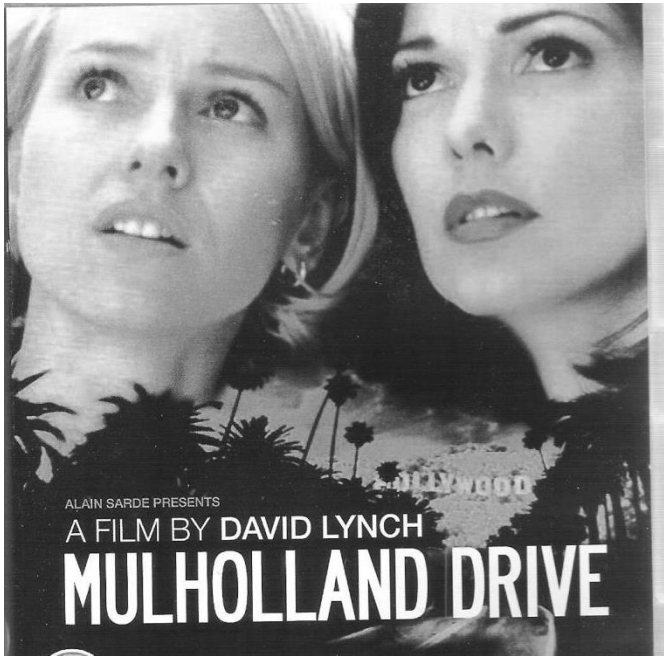
Last night, I decided to watch *Mulholland Drive* again and this time took into account that the title, “Mulholland Drive”, means Hollywood, the film industry. And I began to see this movie as a study of the desire of a young woman for stardom in the Hollywood environment.

It is presented through two women, Betty and the mysterious X, who does not know who she is. Betty, a real person, hoping to gain stardom comes to Hollywood in the hope of entering the film world. The other, X, mysterious and very beautiful, who remains nameless throughout the film, is, as I see her, the ghost of that future accomplishment, a ghost from the future who enters into a relationship with herself in the present.

So this movie presents the reality of life alongside the dream of stardom and through its two main characters, depicts a relationship between the present and the future. While Betty is struggling to become a star, X, her alter ego, is already a star – as the lead in this David Lynch movie, *Mulholland Drive*.

These two characters are really one and the same person;

Betty is Betty of today and X is Betty of tomorrow.



Betty and X

Betty of today, the real person, is the ambitious, young woman of the present. X, her dream self, a ghost, beautiful, bewitching, unscrupulous – is the promise of the future; a prediction of what Betty will become in Hollywood.

X has appeared to give Betty a glimpse into the reality of becoming a Hollywood star. She is nameless – as Betty has yet to become that star.

The movie presents this amazing interplay between reality and dream, present and future: Betty the reality, the

present; X, the dream, the future.

I can now say with confidence and understanding – what an intriguing film! Its concept is mind blowing!

14 September

I have no idea why I missed out yesterday. It was Friday, the 13th so perhaps, subconsciously, I am superstitious. The reality is, it was an unremarkable day in which I simply followed my daily routine.

But I did spend a good deal of time studying my map books. I find that as I don't get about much I am forgetting how to get to places outside of Centurion. I was thinking of taking some of my books to my niece Diricilla and was trying to remember the route I used to take to visit her parents who live in a nearby area.

But I have not worked that out yet.

17 September: The Apartheid Museum

Today I received the following email from my friend, Mike Stainbank, who has been fighting a one-sided battle against power for at least two decades:.

OPEN LETTER
15 September 2019
THE HONOURABLE CHIEF JUSTICE MOGOENG
Office of the Chief Justice
Midrand

Dear Chief Justice Mogoeng

A CORRUPT AND CAPTURED JUDICIARY: 6, 528 DAYS

The transparency on display for the nation on Friday, 13 September 2019, belies your refusal to deny the very serious allegations we have placed before you. Our substantive JSC Complaint 489/2016, read with our letter to you dated 27 April 2018 cogently articulates the central issues. We have long met the burden of proof you demanded on Friday.

Unlike you, we have never enjoyed the editorial attention of a sycophantic mainstream media. Hence it is that our public efforts to expose judicial impropriety, brought into the public domain more than a decade ago, include both paid advertising in newspapers and social media. Our activism pre-dates by far, the questions now being raised about the independence of the judiciary. The erosion of public trust in the judiciary, on our experience, is long overdue.

Given the current public attention, this nation can be served by your timeous response to a single central issue: the purportedly Juristic Person, bearing the exact detail:

THE SOUTH AFRICAN APARTHEID MUSEUM AT
FREEDOM PARK (8 Words)

UNIQUE COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER:
2001/019108/08

DATE OF REGISTRATION: 14 AUGUST 2001

Chief Justice Mogoeng; when next you address the nation, you may want to explain exactly where in the Constitution, your three superior courts – for a period of 18 years - found the authority, to grant orders in favour of a person that

cannot possibly exist in terms of statutory law and most certainly, has never ever existed on paper. This NON-EXISTENT person is first introduced to your courts by way of a brazen answering and supplementary affidavit filed by the original owners of the Gold Reef City Casino License in Case Number: 23679/2002 TPD.

“The business known as Gold Reef City and Casino, which is operated by my company, does not trade or operate as “The Apartheid Museum”. The organisation which operates as “The Apartheid Museum” is a company registered in terms of Section 21 of the Companies Act with registration number 2001/019108/08, by the name of “The South African Apartheid Museum at Freedom Park”, which is not a party to this application. In the premises a separate application for such expungement has now been launched by the said Section 21 Company under case number 32237/2002, which I propose should be heard simultaneously with this application as the same facts are applicable to both applications.” (Nov. & Dec. 2002)

The casino owns a PUBLIC LICENSE. We the people financed the Gauteng Gambling Board (GGB) and Gobodo Forensics to conduct probity checks on aspirant casino bosses. But still, this criminal syndicate of racist Whites and malleable non-white appendages came to court with a bogus company lacking in the constitutional right to sue or be sued in a court of law. The GGB, Registrar of Companies and our National Lottery Commission were fully aware of this.

Chief Justice, the Black student we educate is now asking questions on the rule of law:

1. How did the White Supremacist criminals at Gold Reef City Casino know with certainty that your courts would corrupt statutory law – for their unlawful self-enrichment?
2. How did so many organs of state, complicit in the fraud, know with certainty that they will never be held accountable under Section 165 (4) of the Constitution.
3. Why would Parliament remain silent when the law it has enshrined for effective governance, post 1994, is corrupted by your courts - at the behest of criminals?

Chief Justice Mogoeng; we educate about this racist savagery because we have, post 1994, lived through torment for six thousand five hundred and twenty-eight days. Every morning for the past 6, 528 days, we awake in the hope that your courts would bring an end to the violence, torture, trauma, loss and destitution we suffer. Tomorrow it will be 6, 529 days.

Yours Sincerely

Mike Stainbank.

Registered Owner: Trademark: The Apartheid Museum®

*SIGNED COPY placed under oath – available on request.

VISIT WEBSITE: www.fraud2001-019108-08.org.za

TWITTER: @DefineRacism1

TWITTER: @2001_019108_08

Mike Stainbank, who originated the concept of an Apartheid Museum, produced a brochure in 1998 that illustrated his vision. He distributed the brochure in order to raise support and funds for the project. Having thus made the idea of an Apartheid Museum public, it was appropriated by the unscrupulous and a museum was established as their concept.

Mike's continued appeal to the powers that be for justice, is a cry in the wilderness. Justice is in the hands of those with power and power, as we know, is synonymous with corruption. As Mike's appeal is to those with absolute power, it is an appeal to absolute corruption.



Mike Stainbank

EXCERPTS FROM MIKE STAINBANK'S 1998 BROCHURE

(1)

DECLARATION OF THE APARTHEID MUSEUM

The Apartheid Museum has its founding philosophy rooted in the history of the people of South Africa. It seeks to illustrate that history in a context that takes account of the impact of colonialism and apartheid on every aspect of our lives. It shall, in the telling of the story, emphasise the resolve of a people and their leaders across a spectrum of struggle. It shall endeavour to portray this against a backdrop of South African religious and cultural diversity, in a rich interactive living theme.

The Apartheid Museum shall act as a catalyst in restoring the psychological health and balance of a people devastated by apartheid. This need for psychological redress is the primary challenge facing The Apartheid Museum.

The Apartheid Museum shall pay special attention to the children of South Africa. It shall seek to develop a keen understanding of the history of the people of South Africa by nurturing a critical generation that will respond swiftly and decisively to crush the emergence of any kind of social evil.

The Apartheid Museum shall articulate the impact of colonialism and apartheid on South Africa's neighbours whilst embracing the wider African community as well as other nations. The Apartheid Museum will actively engage the South African nation and the international community in programmes of social justice. It shall use the South African experience to facilitate conflict resolution in a non-partisan manner.

It shall be incumbent on The Apartheid Museum to: engage progressive movements throughout the world; disseminate information to its broad constituency locally and internationally to market its facilities, services and programmes, remain vigilant, alive to change and development relating to issues of human rights and social justice.

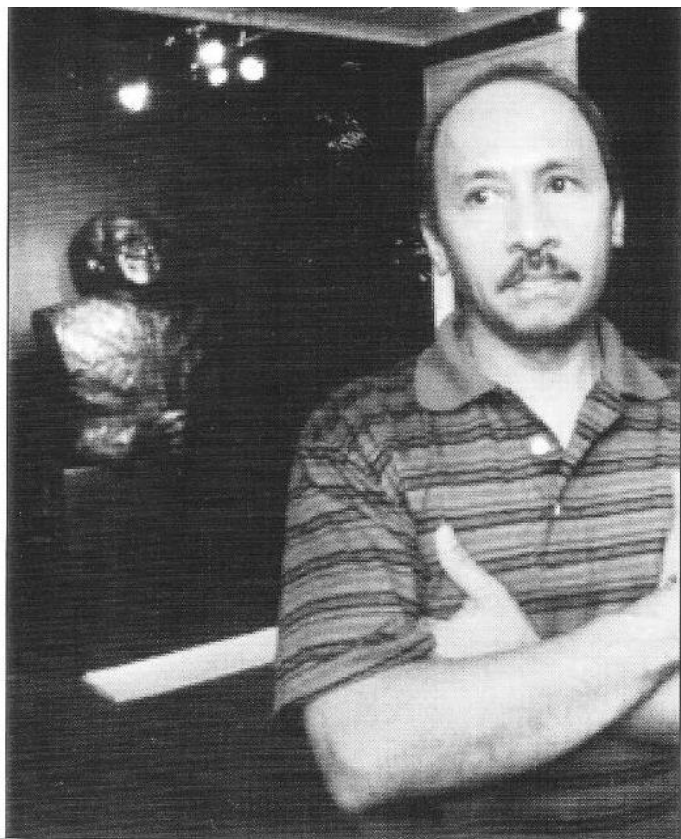
Authority shall be vested in The Committed Board of Trustees, who shall in turn be governed by the constitution of the Apartheid Museum Foundation as a non-governmental, non-profit organisation.

[Mike Stainbank]

(2)

Ben Omar has been Designer, Artist and Sculptor in Residence at Stainbank and Associates for the past eight years, where he has completed client assignments to great satisfaction. However the chosen direction for both Omar and Stainbank and Associates is in historical art, sculpture and monument design, work that may take a lifetime to complete.

The current works, *Biko, Hani, Mandela, Sobukwe, Tutu, 1976, Women* and the futuristic apartheid Museum are an important phase of a journey that began many years ago. Omar's paintings, sculpture and architectural design reinforce the prophetic words of the critic who said, "Here is a very special talent, a person not only with great technical virtuosity but with originality and vision."



Ben Omar

Designer, Artist, Sculptor in Residence

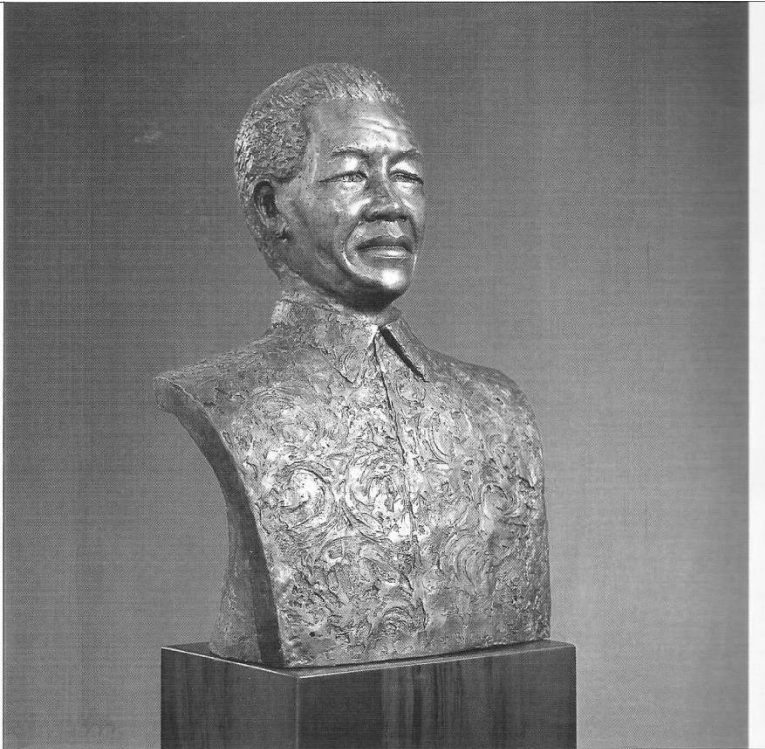
(3)



Ben Omar's Vision of The Apartheid Museum

[The following photos of sculptures by Ben Omar are from the Apartheid Museum Brochure]

[4]



I have cherished the ideal of a democracy and a free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunity. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if need be, it is an ideal for which I am willing to die.

President Nelson Mandela

[5]



We believe in one race only – the human race to which we all belong. The history of that race is a long history of struggle against all restrictions, physical, mental and spiritual. We would have betrayed the human race if we had not done our share. If we are sent to jail there will be others to take our place.

Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe

05 December 1924 - 27 February 1978

[6]



Soweto 1976: The death of Hector Peterson

[7]



WOMEN

“Women in this country deserve far greater recognition for their contribution. I visualize a dynamic sculpture that protests the plight of women, yet honours and immortalizes their immense contribution, through the passage of birth, nurturing, struggle and victory.” [Ben Omar, 29 May 1997]

[8]

Steven Bantu Biko

18 December 1946 - 12 September 1977



"It is better to die for an idea that will live,
rather than live for an idea that will die."

20 September: From my earlier writing

SENIOR CITIZEN

[19 January 2010]

When you become a senior citizen your world changes drastically. Having been declared redundant, forced to retire and pushed onto the verge, you apparently have no purpose except to bequeath if you have anything to bequeath. And if your health takes a nosedive, you fulfill expectations and raise hopes.

In retirement, society no longer recognises your ability to contribute despite the fact that you have become wiser in your old age than you were earlier, when you were a cog in the machine. As a cog you took your existence for granted and conformed to the requirements of the social engine. You went to school, to work, married and raised a family. No one, not even you, questioned the perfunctory nature of your existence. And once you fell out of the machine, nobody could understand how you had fitted-in in the first place.

And afterwards, if you are seen to be involved in any kind of activity, you are regarded with a look of sympathy, “Ah, keeping busy, I see.” You return the look which says, “At least *I*, unlike you, am *aware* of keeping busy.” And only charity shops and institutions looking for volunteers will take you in, give you a chance to ‘keep busy’.

But the real truth is – for the first time in your life, you at last have the freedom to discover your true self. As a pensioner, you have now arrived at that time of your life

when you have to be the most inventive you have ever been – if you are to survive with self-respect.

Without a job, you may assume that your once active brain has nothing to feed it. And it is really starvation of the brain that makes you accept notions of your uselessness. People tell you to do crossword puzzles, Sudoku, play bridge and join senior citizen soirees. But these activities are pastimes; modes of relaxation that are a break from active, creative self-exploration and expression. They don't restore a sense of purpose. They are temporary amusements for your leisure time.

What you really need to realize is that you are still growing. Just because you are over sixty does not mean that you have reached the end point.

No! In fact, you are actually at the beginning of a new adventure!

You are free at last, like an artist, to explore your real interests and recreate yourself. It really isn't too late. With all the experience you have accumulated, you can at last begin the exploration of the genuine you. Before, you were a slave to the machine, always putting aside the things that really interested you for the sake of the job and the family.

Now, for the first time, you are free! Now, at last, *you* can become the trailblazer of *your* life!

But the strange thing about freedom is that for most people it is a frightening condition; like Columbus and Magellan, you have to take to the seas without a map and with only a small compass. However, if you put aside fear and set sail, you will find adventure because *you are creating it*.

If you cling to fear and go back into your memories, you become fixated on the past and become a ghost of

yourself. And as a ghost you exist only as a former incarnation of yourself and you become outraged by new norms, by the way people behave. You constantly compare them to the old ways of doing things and your plaintive refrain is, "That's not the way to do it."

You don't realise that you have stopped living and are trying to stop time by dredging up old ways that you live and relive. Caught in a vortex, you churn up the same happenings over and over; you do not move forward. The desire for what has been and cannot be again, overwhelms you and you retreat from present realities because you cannot find yourself in them.

So you either withdraw to continue a benign but pointless existence waiting for death or, if your outrage gets the better of you, you begin to present with various forms of senile dementia and become a burden on yourself and all those around you.

As you have been marginalized, because you have retired, you tend to think that there is nothing more for you to achieve. True, you are not at the centre of things any more, but that does not mean that you are nothing and your only function is to wait for death. When Copernicus made us aware of the heliocentric universe, we did not commit suicide when we learned that the earth was not the centre of the universe. Instead we began to explore and gained a greater appreciation of our unique situation in an ever expanding existence that provides endless opportunity.

Though society has relegated you to the margins, you are still alive so it is NOT time to retire. It is a time,

according to Hinduism, to embark on the fourth stage of life; it is time to become a sannyasi: “One who, having had his fill of the material world, having fulfilled his family duties, turns to the spiritual path, and dedicates his life to spiritual growth ...”

The reference to “spiritual” need not be a reference to religion unless that is the path you choose to explore. I do not. And I interpret the word spirit in its everyday sense of energy, inclinations, interests, ambitions, and willingness to explore. Each one of us is spirit and free to determine the means of our own continuing growth. Before you retired your growth was structured by society. Now, finally, you are free to explore your hidden potential.

So EXPLORE!

You live in a world in which knowledge increases exponentially so by the time you get to be over sixty, you have become a child again and are at the beginning of new learning. If you love yourself, you will allow yourself to embark on a journey that expands the knowledge you have already acquired, a journey that reveals more of you to yourself. It could be the most exciting adventure that you have ever embarked on.

Excitement does not have to mean the roller coaster ride of an action movie; it is often the quiet but exhilarating encounter with new ways of seeing and understanding. It means *living* – not existing. You don’t realise it but you only existed before, when you were a cog in the machine doing the things that were expected of you. Now you can live. Now you can employ the skills that you have developed to express yourself in new ways. Your life begins again, a private life of personal satisfaction.

25 September: Today I received the following article from my niece, Sharmini Brookes

Homeless men find a home in Shakespeare

Sharmini Brookes

09/25/2019 09:13:15

If you think Shakespeare is passé, overrated, that his language is too difficult or that he is no longer relevant to our age, think again.

In a theatre in downtown Hillbrow, Johannesburg, a motley group of homeless men turn up once a week, washed and brushed, and ready to begin their warm-up exercises. After a cup of tea and a slice of bread they begin limbering up with vocal and breathing exercises before a discussion of the work they are about to perform. The work is more than likely to be either an excerpt from a Shakespearean play, one of his 154 sonnets or a poem from the canon of English poets – D.H. Lawrence, T.S. Eliot, Sylvia Plath, Louis MacNeice or Emily Dickenson.

‘I got hooked on Shakespeare, man. It was an outlet. It made me believe there was more to life,’ says one young man with genuine enthusiasm.

‘I never thought I would be performing in theatres here,’ says another remembering his stint at the

Johannesburg Theatre, 'I used to sleep on the floor at the back of a flat.'

Some of the group are here this morning at the large and comfortable auditorium of the Rosebank Union Church about to perform to a group of Sandton pensioners at the monthly U3A get together.

The group is J.A.M. – an acronym for Johannesburg Awakening Minds – chosen by the men themselves. They are dressed in black leggings and the white J.A.M. logo pops on the front of their black T-shirts.

J.A.M. is the brainchild of Dorothy Ann Gould – director, lecturer and a notable actress in her own right who has shared the stage with South African-born luminaries such as Anthony Sher and Janet Suzman. Athol Fugard's philosophy as expressed in his Notebooks has had a great influence on how she views the world around her and the people who inhabit it: 'people must be loved' and have the 'awareness of the potential of someone else's suffering...'

Having no children of her own, Gould feels she has a lot of love to give. She can no longer drive past another homeless man begging at yet another intersection and not think of the human spirit being crushed behind the forced façade of humility and the unseeing eyes of the hostile, disinterested or simply scared Johannesburg motorist. She wanted to meet these men and discover their human potential. So, at a friend's suggestion, she visited a soup kitchen in the St Michel's and St George's parish in

Mitchell Street, Hillbrow.

The group began as an exercise in therapy and confidence building – allowing individuals to feel they had a right to speech, the right to be seen and the right to tell their stories in a city that has been very cruel to them. Many of these young men are all alone, far from family, sleeping rough, addicted to drugs and living in fear of their lives. Gould soon realised that theatre and Shakespeare offered more. In Shakespeare's plays, she says, 'they discover a huge receptacle that can hold all the emotions they need to release; the rage, the feelings of abandonment, of fear and of hoped-for love'. Gould's current theatre assistant, Unati, believes that just because someone comes from a certain background, doesn't mean they can't do Shakespeare.

They have been rehearsing weekly, every Monday. Since 2013 they have been performing on street corners and in shelters, earning a few rands to pay for a bed in a homeless shelter and a bite to eat. Soon they were being asked to perform at high schools such as St. Stithians, or at the Mayor's banquet and even at the Johannesburg Theatre. Today, although some still live on the streets, many have agents and get bit parts as extras in TV soaps or in student films. Others have found new artistic outlets in painting and have sold their works at markets. Some don't make it. Four dropped out and one was murdered. Others return home to their families. Gould is happy when people feel able to go back home. 'Something has changed in their hearts' she says and that's good.

One of their group, Tebogo Mabusela, was interviewed on Richard Cock's 'People of Note' on Classic FM after being discovered begging on the corner of 4th and 6th in Parkhurst.

He impressed Cock with his articulation, clarity of speech and thought, as well as his knowledge of classical music and Shakespeare.

Tebogo, now 30 years old, had been attending a private school but with peer pressure started smoking marijuana, got arrested for assault, kicked out of school and sent to a prison in Sun City for 3 weeks. He lost all contact with his family. On his release he took to the streets, begging and using the money (perhaps R100 on a good day) to pay for a bed, shower and cup of tea with bread at the Immaculata Shelter in Rosebank. He heard about the acting classes at the Hillbrow Theatre and started to attend. He now has ambitions to be a writer and a poet. He can only do his writing after 5pm when the Immaculata opens and only if he has the money to pay for a bed.

On the show, he recites from memory Shylock's speech from the Merchant of Venice. In reciting, he replaces the word 'Jew' with 'a Homeless Man'.

'It talks about me,' he says. 'How I can get back on my feet. How I need to face the people instead of running away.'

He dropped out of rehearsals for a while but contacted Gould just the other day to ask if he can re-join J.A.M.

Gould will, of course, let him, but she is very firm on discipline. He has not been allowed to perform with the other ten today in Rosebank because he has not put in the work the others have. 'They know the rules,' she says. Attendance every Monday evening at rehearsals is compulsory. She is always moved, however, by the effort they take to find water to wash and to find clothing to look presentable when they arrive despite the hardships they face.

So, on Tuesday 17 September we had the delightful opportunity to hear them perform. We are touched by the sincerity of their performances and the ease with which they navigate the dense Shakespearean prose.

Gould says she teaches them articulation but never tries to change their voice or accent, nor does she impose the somewhat sing-song beat of the iambic pentameter; rather letting the feeling drive the rhythm and the pregnant pause.

Two performers stood out for me, although all have skills to develop. One is Michael Mazibuko, who performed the famous soliloquy from *Hamlet*: 'To be or not to be...' As someone who had himself contemplated suicide, the poem spoke to him and he in turn was able to move us.

'He will never think of committing suicide again,' says Gould.

Michael has also translated Sonnet 25 into Zulu and hopes to do more translations to bring Shakespeare to his people in the townships and rural areas.

Lwazi is the other performer who makes an impression with his soliloquy from *Richard 111*: 'Now is the winter of our discontent...' but impresses me most of all with his captivating recital of 'Snake' by D.H. Lawrence.

Bongani does a delightful rendition of Sonnet 130 – 'My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun' which elicits an appreciative giggle from the audience and Sipho does a heart-wrenching monologue by Shylock from *The Merchant of Venice* again transposing 'a Homeless Man' for the word 'Jew'.

Louis reads a poem he has written himself and hopes to have published one day while Michael and Gift recite 'Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow' from *Macbeth* in isizulu.

A group of five does an entertaining Extract from *Sweeney Agonistes*, 'Knock, knock, knock' by T.S. Eliot and all perform the final song from *Twelfth Night* as well as a speech by Prospero from *The Tempest*.

Of course, there was a standing ovation at the end and a generous collection by the attendees raised R16 157 alongside a further contribution from the church itself. The money will go towards a long-awaited tour to the seaside in Durban and their continual everyday needs of paints, brushes, musical instruments, cell phones, books, newsprint clothes and food.

They perform regularly at the Pizza e Vino restaurant in Auckland Park and are very happy to accept invitations to perform at high schools and other venues.

You can find them on Facebook at:

<https://www.facebook.com/johannesburgawakeningminds/>

Sharmini Brookes

Dorothy Ann Gould and J.A.M. illustrate that life is for living. Whether you are a homeless person or an octogenarian, if you believe in yourself, you become an explorer, making opportunities for yourself and turning your life into an adventure.

As writing is my personal adventure, here are a few of my short stories. They feature a fanciful me as Mynah Bird.

The story, *PNAP*, was written in 2010.

PNAP

Behind the wheel of her Conquest, a car chosen for its name, her short white hair like a bush in the wind, Mynah Bird streaks down the congested M1 from Johannesburg. The blood coursing through her veins at high pressure has always ensured that she live life at breakneck speed.

She has to be home in time for the ICC Twenty20 cricket: the match today, South Africa versus England. Though four by fours, minibuses, pickup trucks, large sedans and trucks dwarf the Conquest, the little car continues to career down the extreme left lane of the M1 highway in the slipstream of an auto-transport tractor trailer carrying three layers of shiny new cars.

Mynah's car is never intimidated by these new-fangled creations that look like refugees from space films. Her car, like her, stands for the age of stolid responsibility and her competition on the highway is always a truck, a Red Baron, throwing out a challenge.

One of these days she will overtake one.

Then, like Snoopy, goggles on her pilot's cap and red scarf streaming behind, she will sail past – Mynah Bird the Conqueror!

An old non-conformist, Mynah, the racing road menace, is well known to traffic cameras in Centurion that are always on the look-out for her Conquest. Strict upholders of traffic regulations, the cameras are not subject to bribery and corruption. For them, all are equal before the law. And there are no extenuating circumstances! Drunken judges who crash into walls will find no mercy here. The moment that Mynah exceeds the sixty-kilometer limit, there is a flash but the bird unawares drives on and is only confronted by her crime when she finds in her mailbox that ominous notice from the Traffic Department with its photo of the car on Jean Avenue breaking the sound barrier at seventy kilometers an hour.

The latest of these unexpected bolts from the blue shows a picture of the Conquest alone, no traffic behind, in front or alongside, on the N3 to Durban early in the morning before workmen have set up their road works. There's the Conquest just past the Tugela Toll Plaza, trying to break all Michael Schumacher's records, going one hundred and fifteen kilometers in an eighty km speed zone. The bird so addicted to speeding hadn't been aware that the speed limit had changed yet again, for the umpteenth time, for road works required for the 2010 Soccer World Cup.

When the unexpected summons from the depths of the bureaumania that battens on the poorest of the poor, arrives in her mailbox making demands on her meagre pension, the shameless old bird is outraged. The fine is an imposition on one whose existence is stripped down to almost its barest minimum. She cannot see that in her recklessness she contributes to the soaring crime rate in the country. Her myopic view is concentrated on personal circumstances and imagined injustices.

The shock of the summons, the last straw, forces her to take stock of herself. She looks in the mirror and is amazed. Standing before her is an irate old woman, goggles perched on the pilot's cap covering the white hair and red scarf flying out behind. In that moment, it smashes into her brain like a meteor – Snoopy is the Red Baron!

They are one! Not separate! Not parts in pursuit of the whole! They have come together as ONE, and are standing before her in the mirror, looking at her. Looking at HER, out of her eyes! HER eyes!

And she sees – Mynah-Snoopy-Baron! Her manifest destiny!

It is an epiphany: the mission of the final phase of her life revealed! And she laughs. What are cameras? – simply divisive instruments, tearing instinct from reason, creating categories of good and evil that destroy the unity of being. Inhuman monsters! Down with cameras! Down! She instantly renames her car, Papo, after Joan of Arc's warhorse, and is ready to ride into battle.

And she would.

But today there's cricket.

She grabs her knitting, switches on the TV and watches delighted as the Proteas bowl, catch and run out the English team for just over a hundred runs. What brilliant fielding! When the Proteas' opening batsmen, Graeme Smith and Jacques Kallis, come to the crease, Mynah is looking forward to flashing fours and soaring sixes, but the batsmen stand there poking leisurely at the deliveries. "This is not a five-day test match," the bird yells at the TV, "get on with it!"

Then while she is picking up the stitch she dropped, Graeme Smith, the captain, is out. In the replay, she sees his shot fly high in the air and land neatly in the hands of an English fielder. Dammit! She can't take her eyes off for one minute and something awful happens. In comes Herschel Gibbs, the roller-coaster man, up one day, down the next. As he too pushes at the ball, Mynah drops a few more stitches. This is a down day. "Get him out, get him out," she yells at the English bowlers. "Get AB or Duminy or Morkel in."

But Kallis and Gibbs continue their calm, unhurried pace to the sixteenth over and Mynah Bird has to pull out eight rows of knitting in which the pattern is no longer visible and gaping holes wink at her from all over. Then Gibbs is out. Thank goodness! Now with AB there will be action, boundaries left, right and centre.

But no! AB is out before she has picked up all her stitches. They're going to lose! All they had to make were a mere hundred and twelve or so runs. She dashes into the kitchen to take a pill; her pulse has overtaken the required run rate twenty times twenty.

When she comes back into the living room, she switches off the TV. *Why am I wasting time? I have work to do.*

She has to devise a plan to rid her immediate surroundings of dastardly traffic cameras, but her mind keeps flashing back to the cricket; if only AB could have repeated his glorious performance against Scotland, six sixes in seventy-nine runs off thirty-four balls. His sixes flow off her retina in replay. The ball, ricocheting off the bat, flies over the heads of the fielders, flies in among spectators, flies onto the roofs of stands, flies over the

boundary, flies into the lights. Each shot captured on camera from every possible angle. Cameras, marvellous instruments, reflect moments of ecstasy over and over and prolong the euphoria of each magnificent boundary. Historians par excellence, cameras provide a living record of events.

She catches sight of the traffic fine on the side table. BUT they should never be used to make moral judgments. Their total objectivity turns them into monsters. Where's the glory in trapping an old woman, driving perfectly safely? Where's the glory in trapping her for a slight, unintended infringement of the speed limit? Where is the traffic's third umpire? Cameras for cricket are fine but without the third umpire – arbiters of justice? No! No! No! Didn't somebody say that justice has to be tempered with mercy? When cameras become policemen, there is no mercy. They have no heart.

Mynah Bird jumps up, *toyi-toys* around the living room and begins shouting, "Down with traffic cameras! Down! *Pansi nga ama-ka-méra! Pansi! Pansi nga ama-ka-méra! Pansi!*" All the dogs in the townhouse complex join in the chorus and for a glorious few minutes there is absolute accord between the bird and the canines. But the harmony is ruined by an indignant call at her gate.

"Stop that racket!"

Mynah desists but her heart has been warmed; the dogs understand – Snoopy is a hero!

But she has a mission!

How to proceed? She doesn't even know where the cameras are. She must find and destroy them. She dashes out of the house, out of the complex, oblivious of the

darkness. Normally she doesn't venture out at night – afraid of being mugged, raped, murdered, hijacked – but here she is walking boldly down the streets.

The night people watch from makeshift shelters, from narrow alleys, from doorways. They recognise her – a sister: old, unkempt, adrift. She doesn't resemble the bird that drives Papo. That bird is an alien, one of the haves, who keeps her eyes looking straight ahead, not acknowledging them. This bird hopping around on the pavement in the middle of the night is one of them – a have-not.

They watch as she stops to look up lampposts, and at fences around buildings. One of them hobbles up to her.

“What are you looking for, sister?”

When she tells him she hates the spying traffic cameras, he invites her to join them around their *bowlah*, a tin drum punctured with holes to let out the warmth of cheerful embers glowing within. Someone offers her a piece of cardboard on which to sit and the leftovers of the meal they have scrounged from a bin somewhere. But she is not hungry. Then as they sit there, smoking dagga and drinking *tshwala* (home-brewed beer), they begin to reminisce and are carried away out of present circumstances.

The bird listens as stories unfold, stories of people who see the frame and, therefore, are outside of it, like criminals. So they sit under the stars, look up to where we have come from and laugh at all those who live within the frame, personify it and call it God. But what's in a name? Naming doesn't mean knowing. Naming, a way to control, hides from us the truth that we have merely projected our limited view on an enigma, an ineffable mystery not easily unraveled.

Lying back with these new found friends, Mynah looks up at the stars, stars that she cannot name, that she condescendingly imagines none of them lying here can, but all of them know that they are looking up at the hieroglyphics that hide the history of our origins. If they could lie here forever, perhaps they would begin to decipher the code. But they were born with bodies and bodies force them to limit their perspectives, force them into the here and now, into hunter-gatherer mode.

And they all hate cameras; cameras in constant surveillance over their foraging. Why do cameras persecute those struggling to survive? Why are cameras out on the streets hounding the ragged and homeless? Why are they not spying on those who commit crimes against humanity? Why are they not in offices of rulers, businessmen, bureaucrats, and all those with power, who preserve the frame that protects their worldly interests?

“*Pansi Nga ama-Ka-méra, Pansi!* Down with cameras! Down!” And they stand up as one and *toyi-toyi*.

They stop when the sound of a police siren, screeching at them from a distance, chases them all into the surrounding bush where they remain hidden until the police flashlights stop probing and the police car drives off again.

When they gather around the *bowlah* once more, Mynah wants to know what they are going to do about cameras. And when she suggests that they find and destroy them, one of the men, Mark Oosey, shakes his head. “No! We must find them, yes! But destroy them? No! We must turn them against Big Brother!”

Mynah, asks, “How can we do that?”

“Only one way!” replies Oniks Manganye, former

Umkhonto we Sizwe operative. “Guerrilla warfare!”

And from among them he names a team of men and women with all kinds of expertise: a former cricket player, a former cat burglar, a former electrical installer, a former electronics professor, a photographic and optics expert, a computer genius and Mark, the strategist, who will plan the operation.

Then as the sun is coming up, the group has to disband. Bulldozers will soon be at this vacant plot to clear it for a new housing development, but they have located another campsite across the road, only a temporary home however. The board there is advertising luxury units with full title for those who want more privacy and are prepared to pay at least one and a half million rand, the price of the smallest units.

The group agrees to meet again at the end of the day when the plan will be unrolled and all homeless people including street walkers, beggars and street children, will be briefed so that operation PNAP (*Pansi Nga ama-Kaméra! Pansi!*) can go into action immediately.

Mynah is amazed. How quickly things get done where there is absolute trust and no bureaucratic processes to protect governors from governed.

But she feels guilty. These people trust her and she’s here under false pretences. *She* is not homeless.

That night, sheltered behind the big hoarding that announces the luxury housing units for sale, the group hears the plan. Some will be taking down cameras while most of the rest will be courting arrest in order to obtain access to police vans, police cells and charge offices where they will reinstall cameras and reprogram computers to

send images to all police stations, police headquarters, all human rights organisations, NGOs, parliament and the Constitutional Court.

Mynah is alarmed. “Aren’t we going too far? Just for my speeding fines?”

One of the ladies of the night pats her arm. “This is not just your fight you know; it’s ours too?”

Mynah doesn’t understand but there isn’t time now for explanations. Mark is still unfolding the plan. The old bird has been paired with the cricketer, Bas Olireva, and tomorrow she is to go to the Curiosity Shop at Irene Homes, where she is a volunteer, to buy a cricket bat and all the cricket and tennis balls she can find.

She sits there staring in shock.

“Oh yes, we know you work at Irene Homes. We know all about you,” says Johnson Tshabane, formerly of the Scorpions Investigative Unit.

So they know I am not homeless. Why have they accepted me?

Mark breaks into her thoughts. “Bring the balls to Zara Salim here and she will convert them into tear gas bombs. You and Bas will provide a distraction while the team is removing cameras and reinstalling them. Don’t worry; Bas will explain exactly what you have to do. You’ll need your car for this. Make sure you remove your number plates.”

Oh my goodness! So they know about Papo too! She can’t understand why they trust her.

The next night, Bas and Mynah begin their rounds of the police stations. They drive to the first one, park Papo a good distance away, creep up furtively: Bas with cricket

bat and Mynah with cricket ball bomb; they hide in the shadows opposite. They are wearing balaclavas. When Mynah had tried hers on at home, Mynah-Snoopy-Baron had disappeared from the mirror and before her stood a Baader-Meinhof with cold, murderous stare. She had pulled the balaclava off in terror. But now, creeping along with Bas, she feels a powerful sense of purpose flooding every muscle and tendon; she is ready to reform a corrupt society in the only possible way – Urban Terrorism!

Bas and Mynah are in position opposite the police station. She raises her arm and bowls. At school, when she played cricket in PT lessons, she was wicketkeeper so she has no bowling skills. But Bas, an amazing batsman is ready for anything. He picks up her feeble toss and turns the ball into a guided missile as he smashes it right through a window and into the station. With hands up for a six, Mynah jumps about in wild exhilaration. If only the Proteas had a batsman like Bas, they would easily win the Twenty20 series.

But there is no time for celebration and Mynah can't stay to watch as police personnel come running out of their premises, coughing and choking, holding handkerchiefs over their noses. Bas grabs hold of the bird's arm and they run off together to Papo and drive off to the next station – and the next and the next. Mynah is mad with excitement; she hasn't had this much fun for years and years and years.

Just after they bomb the last police station, Bas gets a call on his two-way radio: the group installing cameras inside the Home Affairs Building is under siege. Police snipers on the roof of the building opposite are trying to pick-off Dag (short for Daguerre) and Yoshi (Yoshihiso Hirano) on the fourth floor.

The order comes through from Oniks: “Bas, you and the racing road menace go after them. Ride up the parking garage ramps to the roof and teargas the snipers. Tell the bird to push the accelerator to the floor.”

Mynah is trembling, “But, but, but ... “

“Come on, Mynah, no time to lose, Bas yells.

“But, but, but ... “

“No buts about it.” But Mynah is frozen. “Aren’t you the racing road menace?

“But ...”

“Aren’t you the one that traffic cameras catch?”

“But ...

“Aren’t you Mynah-Snoopy-Baron?”

“But ... “

Bas throws his hands up in despair. “Are you not our comrade?”

Suddenly, a pilot’s cap with goggles descends over the balaclava on her head, a red scarf streams out behind and Mynah is galvanised. She pulls the goggles over her eyes and jumps into the car. Papo, vibrating with excitement, is ready to take off. Bas just manages to get in and bang the passenger door closed as Papo screeches off at lightning speed, flashing down streets, and taking corners on two wheels.

When they, arrive at the parking garage opposite Home Affairs, Mynah crashes through the boom, streaks up the ramps to the roof and as she makes a circuit over the flat surface, Bas flings cricket ball bombs at snipers who drop their weapons and run for the stairs.

Then Papo, launched like a rocket into space, shoots off over the parapet. Snoopy-Baron, red scarf billowing

out behind, holds the car steady as it makes a trajectory over buildings and houses, and finally lands safely under an honour guard of Jacaranda trees.

Bas laughs, “You did it! You did it!”

The two-way radio crackles. It’s Mark.

”Mission accomplished!” he shouts. “Good work Snoopy-Baron!”

Papo brings her home but Mynah can’t sleep. The dash through town, up ramps and over roofs runs in continuous replay before her eyes. And she sits shivering with fear.

How the hell did she do it!

The group meets again the next night and Mynah sees that a flat screen TV has been set up against the bill-board. How did they get it? How did they set it up and connect it? She marvels at the ingenuity of the group.

When they are all seated, Mark Oosey turns to Mynah, “Now you will see cameras put to their proper use.”

He calls to Speelberg who turns on the monitor and Mynah is looking over the shoulders of police officials collecting cash and tearing up dockets; at police shouting at an old man being taken down to the cells. Though he is cooperating, he is pepper sprayed, pushed and shoved into a cell and beaten. His relatives, who have been searching for him all night, come into the cell to find him dead.

Johnson Tshabane shouts, “And all because he helped himself to a chocolate in a supermarket.”

Mark adds, “The old man was suffering from Alzheimer’s.”

The scene moves to the inside of a police van; a policeman is demanding sex from sex workers he and his

partner have just arrested. The women refuse, are beaten and raped. Mynah is horrified.

Next, they are inside the Home Affairs Department.

“We wouldn’t have got the cameras in there without you, old racing road menace,” Bas whispers.

The cameras focus on a confusion of hands collecting money and depositing it in pockets, in handbags, in bras while other hands collect fake ID documents, fake passports, fake marriage certificates. Then they are into the Social Welfare Department where money is steadily being siphoned off to ghostly ancestors on behalf of orphaned children, widows and pensioners.

Eleven-year old Jabulani, sniffing glue to keep warm, shouts, “That’s what happened to my welfare grant!”

Finally, they are inspecting six shining silver Mercedes Benz sedans lined up in the garage of a mayor.

Bas laughs, “You have to admire the guy’s restraint; he could have got seven, one for each day of the week.”

Tina, the sex worker, shakes her head. “No, no. He’s a good Christian; he knows that Sunday is a day of rest.”

Mynah shakes her head, “What are my fines compared to all of this?”

“But that’s where your fines are going,” says Mark.

Still Mynah wants to believe, “Well, now that you – we – have exposed these people, action will be taken and we will have helped to reduce fraud and corruption.”

The laughter that erupts from the group threatens to bring squad cars into their midst.

Mynah turns on them. “Why did we go to all this

trouble if it won't change anything?"

"Oh, we've made a change all right," Dag, the optics expert, chimes in, "We've changed the focus. Cameras won't be following your car for a while."

"And," Yoshi nudges Spielberg, "we've got ourselves a whole series of genuine reality shows, not the artificial simulations you get on TV."

Mark puts his arm around Mynah, "Stop fooling yourself. You know you don't believe in the goodwill of those in power."

A bag lady bursts out, "You see how they club together to keep prices high!"

And, a streetwalker shouts, "How they exploit and abuse! How they close ranks to protect one another when their excesses are exposed!"

Oniks, the MK veteran, shakes his head, "As long as you live in fear Mynah, you will never be able to join us."

Mynah knows he is right; hers is a pusillanimous existence. She can't live outside the frame because she can't give up the basics that she derives from the system. So she doesn't challenge. Look how she pays those traffic fines that she so resents. She lives within the frame in fear of its profit-driven power-mongers and their insurance-broker mentality, but she won't challenge. She lost hope after apartheid when she saw that it didn't make any difference who governed.

She gazes earnestly into Oniks' Gandhian features, "So why have you accepted me?"

He pats her hand. "Though you have named your car Papo, you are not Joan, not even Snoopy-Baron. But, hovering on the edge of freedom, you are one of us."

Zara, the chemical engineer, smiles. “When you are ready, you will find us. Not here though. These housing complexes springing up all over, keep us on the move. But you are one of us; you will find us.”

As Mynah heads off towards her complex, Bas calls after her, “In the meantime work on your bowling.”

The next story, ***Singers***, based on a real incident, was written in March 2009, after I had taken part in a film that was being shot in a poor, tiny, obscure, Indian settlement. I had been asked to play a minor role – the mother of the hero of the story; a young man from this settlement.

SINGERS

Mynah Bird is standing at a makeshift fence on a rise overlooking the yard of a settlement of wood and iron houses down below. She is watching the film crew organising the shot of the Mercedes pulling up along the narrow dirt track to one of the houses. The car a symbol of opulence in this obscure, impoverished Indian neighbourhood, reverses and moves forward several times before the director is satisfied with its positioning. The camera swinging from a long boom carried manually by the crew is moved for the shot of the door being

opened. An actress changes places with the stand-in driver, throws open the door and emerges.

Shooting stops while the camera is repositioned to catch the other actress emerging from the passenger side.

Beautiful, sexy, in hipster jeans and boob tubes, long flowing hair streaked with red highlights, the two young women represent singers with hit singles at the top of the charts. In the movie, their characters have returned from the big city to this humble place, the place of their origins, to overwhelm family and neighbours with their huge successes.

Someone passes behind Mynah Bird and she vaguely hears a voice calling out, "I love you." The young man, who is playing her son in the movie, comes to stand beside Mynah and points to a woman talking to spectators leaning against the outhouse and when he says, "She loves you," Mynah realises that the woman had addressed her.

Turning to look at her, Mynah sees a little woman about sixty, talking to a group whose mocking grins and eyes turn the few feet between her and them into miles. The woman is not one of them. Some humour her but none want anything to do with her. In this tiny enclave off the highway, hidden from the big, flourishing town, hidden in a little hollow of trees, a community marginalised and anonymous – a tiny woman begs for recognition from those seeking recognition themselves.

But as apartheid is alive and well even here, the locals are as closed to the little woman, as the town is to them. She is not one of them yet is one of them. The film crew has drawn her here, as it has all the others, in the hope of having her existence acknowledged.

This is the first time that a film is being shot here. When the crew arrived in the early morning, there was only one little boy dogging the heels of the cameramen. Then, as the crew prepared the little garden for Mynah's first sequence of shots, the boy was right in amongst them doing odd tasks, trying to get in. Mynah asked if he could be in the scene with her so the producer put him in to help her feed the fowls.

Later, when Mynah goes to fill a bucket from a tap in the neighbouring yard, the whole commune begins to buzz. This day, being a holiday, many young men are about and watching the many takes as she trudges to and from the tap. They can see that any one of them could be the hero; his mother, their mother. Suddenly, their lives have significance and the power of the energy emanating from them becomes palpable. They want to be more than spectators.

When one of the lights burns out and an indoor scene cannot be shot, the producer and director come up with a card-playing scene outdoors in the neighbouring yard and the young men get the recognition they so desperately crave. In an Indian card game, *thunny*, a simpler, more vigorous form of bridge, they vent their high spirits, laughing and exclaiming as they bang cards down on the table.

They are in!

Not so the tiny woman, standing among these people, and as desperate to be acknowledged, but, being African, cannot be. Fifteen years into democracy, the powerful legacy of apartheid still remains; most people, especially

the poor, still live in ethnic ghettos. This little woman, however, despite apartheid, seems not to understand racial exclusiveness, and cannot accept being outside of the boundaries to which these people conform.

So here she is among people who refuse to accommodate her. She stands before them offering to sing her songs, Indian songs that she learned as a child. Though no one asks, she sings. And they smirk and laugh. They want to watch the two glamorous singers down in the other yard and try to shoo her away. But she wants in.

She moves to Mynah and her 'son' at the fence. She comes to tell them that she can sing. As a little girl she had learnt to sing from the gramophone and the radio. The people in this commune don't like her, she says, because she can sing their songs and she begins a medley of old Hindi songs. Mynah remembers them vaguely from her own childhood; her 'son' recognises them as he is of the Hindi community.

The tiny woman explains that she grew up among Indians and learnt to speak their language. Mynah now understands why she had called out that she loved her; Mynah is wearing a sari – for her role in this movie. The sari had sparked something in the little woman.

She begins to reminisce about her childhood.

Her mother had worked for an Indian family and she, as a child living on the premises, had adapted to their way of life. Now she wants to be part of this community. She bows and greets in the Indian way, hands clasped together as in prayer. Mynah and her 'son' return her greeting and he goes off to take his place in the scene below. When the little woman asks Mynah to bring the camera to film her,

Mynah explains that she has no control over the

filming. The little woman, used to rejection, goes off to where the cameras are turned on the 'son' wistfully watching from a distance, relatives and neighbours welcoming the lovely young singers back to their humble surroundings.

He is playing a part; the little woman is not.

When new lighting equipment arrives, filming goes indoors again and Mynah loses sight of the little woman.

But the next scene is outdoors: the 'son' boarding a taxi to take him away to the big city. The little woman comes to watch with Mynah and the little children who have gathered there. When the director asks for volunteers to board the taxi, all the children run up but the director wants adults; he begs a couple sitting around the corner next to the outhouse. They refuse.

The little woman turns to Mynah who asks that she be included in the scene but the director takes one look at the little woman and refuses. There is no reason why she cannot be included; but he makes the excuse that she has been drinking. Mynah insists that she has not.

But as she has been following the camera around, she has been tagged a nuisance and the director will not include her in the scene.

She leaves, making no fuss. She is used to rejection.

Mynah is ashamed. She should have insisted on the little woman being included. It would have cost nothing to allow her that obscure moment in the film.

The next story *Invasions*, was written as a result of my having discovered a lump and undergoing a mastectomy in 2008.

Invasions

Sitting in her car, which is sunning itself with its nose thrust right out of the garage, Mynah Bird is reading while absorbing her gratis daily dose of Vitamin D. A passing car stops and she sees the driver's lips moving.

She rolls down her window and hears, "Are you well?"

"Fine," she replies.

The car moves off and Mynah goes on reading but her focus has shifted from her book to the passing driver, 007 of the complex. Another inquiry after her health! Mynah suspects Bond of a touch of Munchausen-by-proxy and the bird knows she is a great disappointment as she refuses to succumb to 007's persistent desire for her decline. But 007 is patient; never gives up. She'll get Mynah yet.

After all the bird is seventy-two!

About a week later, when Mynah goes to pay her levy, she bumps into 007, who twice remarks that she has lost weight. The bird does not respond, does not tell her of the strict diet she has been on for several months. She leaves it to Bond's lurid imagination to concoct the calamities that she could see befalling Mynah's health.

So the secret agent goes on another tack. She declares with great concern, "I see you've covered your car's side mirrors with newspaper. Has something awful happened?"

The bird explains, "It is simply to stop the mossies

duelling with their reflections in the mirrors and messing up the car.”

Bond laughs, “Why newspaper? Why not bags?”

It only occurs to the bird much later that the secret agent is revolted by her use of newspaper; Bond’s concern and hilarity simply disguise deep-seated disgust.

007 turns her concern to the family that had until very recently occupied the house opposite Mynah’s. The family had been there about nine months and had moved out about two weeks before the young pregnant wife, Gavaza, was to deliver.

007, my lady of solicitude, is horrified! Gavaza was carrying the child too high; how could they move just as she was about to give birth? She foresees disaster. Does Mynah know why they moved? The bird frowns but offers the little information she has. One always does. Milady’s obvious concern makes her queries seem genuine and before you know it, you are spilling the beans.

So Mynah, playing right into her hands, tells her that the rent was too high and the owner had not responded to maintenance requests.

“Well, I wouldn’t pay much for that house with that high wall.” Milady’s lip curls, “So who are the owners?” The bird has no idea but milady obviously knows. “Doesn’t it belong to the family that was here before?”

The bird shrugs, “You mean the Mantoshas?”

Milady’s response is swift, “Yes, didn’t they buy the house.” Again Mynah doesn’t know so Milady continues, “I wish they would do something about that light over the porch. That awful bulb hangs there without a shade. Can’t somebody do something about it?” The bird says nothing.

“And that dreadful washing line! Why don’t they move it to the other side?”

The washing line is in the backyard of the house but the backyard faces the entrance road into the complex. Conscious of her own washing line, the old bird again says nothing.

Mynah doesn’t pick up that Milady really wants to talk about Gavaza. So Milady is forced to bring up Gavaza’s pregnancy again, “I really worry about that young woman.”

Mynah at least knows that is not her real concern. Gavaza doesn’t need any kind of patronage and certainly no pseudo sympathy. Her family can take care of itself as Mynah had discovered to her embarrassment.

A month after they had moved in opposite the bird, Gavaza had suffered a stroke, was bedridden for about a month and had remained housebound thereafter.

Mynah, who had very little idea of anything happening around her, even right opposite, had learned of the stroke from Milady 007, diviner of disasters and purveyor of false sentiments.

As soon as she heard, the old bird went to visit Gavaza. Once the young woman could move about, she walked with a severe limp as she was partially paralysed down the left side. Frustrated at not having the freedom to move at will, Gavaza got into her car one day, took a turn out one gate of the complex and back through the other but when she got to her garden gate, couldn’t get the car through and struck the side. She called Mynah to come and park the car for her.

The stroke was a mystery in one so young. But when Gavaza told Mynah that her previous home had been

broken into three times and that she and her husband had been beaten senseless on the last occasion, the bird realised that Gavaza had probably developed a blood clot that had travelled to her brain and caused the stroke. As her husband was Nigerian, the bird suspected that they had been victims of xenophobic attacks. On the last occasion, the attackers posing as policemen had demanded and gained entry.

Frustrated by the disabilities resulting from her condition and bored to death sitting at home alone during the day, the husband being at work and the children at nursery school, Gavaza would ask Mynah to take her on little errands to the shopping centre down the road. The bird was happy to oblige but she got a fright the first time they went to the Spar and Gavaza became faint and almost collapsed. Gavaza had to point out to Mynah that she was pregnant – the old bird hadn't noticed.

The jaunts to the shopping centre after lunch became routine. Gavaza would come into the bird's garage, which always stood wide open, call through the kitchen security gate and off they would go to the supermarket.

Then one morning there was an urgent summons at the kitchen door. Mynah who, as usual, was working on her laptop, and had not yet exercised, breakfasted or showered, ran into the kitchen. There was Gavaza explaining that she was out of bread. The bird assumed that her husband had left for work. She looked at the kitchen clock, seven forty-five, the supermarket opened at eight.

Fifteen minutes later, Mynah pulled up outside

Gavaza's front door, went up to the security gate through which, to her surprise, she saw Gavaza's husband and her brother sitting in front of the TV.

The bird called out to ask whether she was still needed but the husband, not listening, simply yelled to his wife who was getting ready. Mynah tried again to ask whether she was needed and again, a shout to the wife. Gavaza came to the security gate to tell the bird that she would be out in a moment. Her look seemed to suggest that Mynah was being unduly impatient. Mynah went to wait in the car.

After a few minutes, Gavaza came out and they drove off to the supermarket.

But Mynah's spirit of goodwill had evaporated. She felt that she was being taken for granted and that brought her good neighbourliness to an abrupt end. Her garage door came down after that and stayed down.

Now here is Milady 007 of the refined sensibilities expressing a vicarious concern for the young wife while actually aiming for the light bulb and the washing line.

A few days later, the secretary of the Board comes to inform Mynah of a general meeting and from him she hears again about the revolting bulb and washing line.

Someone has obviously complained to the Board.

The old bird is now curious about the offending bulb that she has never seen; admittedly she is most unobservant. After washing her car in her garage, she walks across to look for this naked atrocity. When she gets right up to the porch, she sees one of these modern three tube bulbs with a life of 6000 hours hanging from the ceiling.

So that's what 007 goes on and on about; how sad to need such things to boost one's self esteem.

Mynah had moved into this complex about ten years earlier, a couple of years prior to retiring from teaching. She had been chary about coming to live in an all-white complex, but had rationalised her doubts believing that being black, she would be left alone and would have the privacy she needed for her new career as a committed writer. Within a month after she arrived, the white owners opposite, reading the writing on the wall, THE INVASION HAS BEGUN, and fearing metastasis, precipitated it. They fled the complex and let their house to a Sotho family.

Gavaza and her husband, were the third family to move in opposite.

In her first year in this complex, the only black here, Mynah had bothered no one and no one had bothered her. Then some municipal housing requirement or the other had made it necessary to communicate with the Board and after that she lost her perfect solitude. Once communication was established, her garage, which she kept wide open to allow more light into the kitchen, suddenly became quite garrulous and its open mouth was now speaking and inviting the occasional look in.

It even suggested to one neighbour that it would be happy to provide storage space for some of her old appliances. And for amusement it called in the birds to conduct their fencing matches in the cars' side view mirrors. When it shared its revulsion of the newspaper over her car's rearview mirrors, that was the last straw – the loudmouth garage had become an embarrassment.

Mynah shut its mouth and put an end to the jabbering.

She is working on her novel when it happens. She doesn't think of herself as a novelist; she is a short story writer but some four years ago, someone looking for a biographer had approached her and she had agreed to write his life story because that's how she wrote, vicariously, through other people's experiences; and here was someone voluntarily offering his story.

She felt extremely lucky, but soon found that she wasn't adequate to the task because she couldn't get underneath superficial facts. So she asked if she could write a novel instead based on the outline she had been given. That would allow her to use her imagination and would not curtail her ability to express herself. He agreed; all he wanted was to make money and was aware that his life provided a rich source of happenings that could lead to a bestseller and movie rights. But Mynah isn't John Grisham or Stephen King; she is just someone learning how to write a novel.

So four years on, still learning, she is busy creating a honeymoon in Kashmir, when she accidentally touches her breast. That's when she feels it.

Well, well, well! On Madiba's ninetieth birthday!

It's strange how events in Madiba's life impinge on her own. When he was released in February 1990, she had organised a huge celebration at the tertiary institution at which she was teaching and a week later was detained.

Now this, on his ninetieth birthday; of course it's just a coincidence.

So she has a lump. 007 would be delighted but Mynah doesn't tell her or anyone else. Why should she? She is a loner. Besides she doesn't need anyone's horrified

sympathy or funereal looks. As she doesn't have time for dying just yet, she goes on trying to find the rights words for the Kashmiri honeymoon.

The next day, she goes to see Petra, once a fellow volunteer at Irene Homes' Curiosity Shop. Petra had unexpectedly been diagnosed with breast cancer almost a year before, had accepted it as one of those things and had come through surgery, chemo and radiation remarkably well. And as luck would have it, Petra has recently been to Kashmir, so Mynah is killing two birds with one stone; she finds the cliché darkly amusing.

During her visit, she and Petra move quite effortlessly from Dal Lake and houseboats, to lymph glands and chemotherapy, *shikaras* and floating islands of lotus to biopsies, Chinar trees to carcinomas, and Srinagar to radiologists.

Mynah is full of admiration for her friend who mentions in passing that when she was diagnosed it had made her feel very strange. Mynah understands; the discovery of her lump has disoriented her a little as well. Her routine is threatening to fall apart and she is feeling the need to get all her affairs in order, mainly getting all the stuff she has written published.

Now she begins to juggle layout artists, mammograms, printers, biopsies, and a specialist, Dr. Hyde, his name a strangely meaningful coincidence. Happily, the specialist is a tall, good-humoured man with whom she can joke about Jekyll and Hyde and the false dichotomy of good and evil.

Amazingly, he talks of the relativity of time, how one patient sees two months as a long time while another

finds nine months very brief. And when he says that Mynah has been off HRT (hormone replacement therapy) a long time, for Mynah it has been a short time. She realises that as we see events in relation to one another, their contexts lengthen or abbreviate them. Compared to the time she had been on HRT, the two or so years she has been off, is short to her.

She has always been fascinated by perceptions of time. For her, Lady Macbeth's statement, *'I feel now /the future in the instant,'* is most startling, a collapsing of time into a black hole. Other of Lady Macbeth's lines, suddenly occur to her, *'Come to my woman's breasts,/ And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers.'* Now if Lady M had developed breast cancer, one could understand, but this old bird? Mynah expects to take off with a heart attack or a stroke – in the family tradition. But like Cleopatra, she has applied the HRT asp to her bosom herself.

After the biopsy' Dr. Hyde informs her that as far as they can tell, the cancer is localised in the breast. He is in favour of a lumpectomy, calls mastectomy mutilation, but says it is entirely her choice. She agrees to the lumpectomy. He offers the following Wednesday for the operation. But she needs more time and puts it off to the Wednesday after; that will give her ten days to get some of her publication projects in order.

After she gets home, she mulls over the idea of a lumpectomy. With a lumpectomy, you still have to go for radiation every day for five weeks to kill off any remaining cancer cells. She wants them all out in one go. She definitely does not want to prolong being a patient. No, it

has to be a mastectomy. She calls the doctor and changes the procedure.

The next day, she sets off to see her printer and is given a rude shock when she gets quotes for the children's books she wants printed and is forced to give up her grandiose notion of becoming a publisher. She goes home quite defeated and to numb her mind turns on the television, but its vacuous content only intensifies the disturbance in her spirit.

She turns off the TV and slumps into self-pity. She has been so looking forward to getting the books out; has imagined sending them to special friends and taking them to schools to see if they would buy them for their libraries.

She jumps up suddenly, looks at this old bird all crumpled up, feeling sorry for herself, and is disgusted. She will apply for funding! She will publish her books!

In the midst of all this, a few days after the biopsy, a call from her niece, Q, a researcher for a television show. Women's day, August 9, is coming up, would she appear on a show about single women?

Just after she receives the biopsy results, the producer of the show telephones to make arrangements for the interview. Then the blood tests and the day after, the television crew arrives, the interview begins and she is drawn into a minefield of stereotypes and clichés. Trying not to become entangled in myths of soul mates, humans as beings not becomings, and loneliness as the milieu of the single, she hopes she isn't making a fool of herself.

Having to justify never having married instead of celebrating being single, she is in unfamiliar territory and feels hamstrung, unable to convey the single person's sense of inordinate freedom and joy.

After the consultation with Dr. Hyde and his reference to mastectomy as mutilation, she realises she will soon be just the kind of witch people think single women are, deformed creatures. And people insist on addressing her as Mrs. – which she finds insulting. She celebrates being in the singular and pooh-poohs the notion that unmarried women are more prone to breast cancer.

She smiles wryly at this new emphasis on her singularity. Violated by a bunch of oncogenes, she is going to be a single-breasted bird. But rape isn't marriage. She isn't going to hold hands with this insidious partner and its attendant bridesmaids of treatment till death do us consummate.

She will do her best to continue to walk free. She despises the notion of being owned or of owning anyone. It is the notion of ownership that bedevils intimate and familial relationships. And she will not own a carcinoma nor will she allow it to own her.

But there isn't time to reflect on cancerous relationships. She has to make the application for funds for the publication of her children's books. She needs two referees and calls two friends. Next, she has to get part of the manuscripts printed for the application and her colour cartridge needs replacing. Meanwhile she has completed checking the layout of another book, a collection of her plays written in the 1980s.

The two women from Laudium to whom she has given the layout work, being young, are quite rigid. They take new trends in layout design as sacrosanct whether they suit the work or not. Consequently, they haven't seen the need to communicate and discuss with the old bird. Actually, Mynah has been quite disappointed to find that the only contribution they have made to the book is in the choice of fonts. They have simply laid out the book as Mynah had it in the manuscript.

As they work mechanically without reading, they have made wrong assumptions. With either a phobia or fatwa against italics, they have reduced all stage directions to plain type. There is going to be trouble over that. The old bird spends the entire week between tests, consultations with doctors and the TV interview, painstakingly making corrections. She phones, but doesn't seem to have the right number, so she sends email messages but as the young women do not see the need for communication, she doesn't hear from them.

So this project flounders.

Today, 8 August 2008, she spends the afternoon glued to the TV set. It is the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, a celebration of the human physique in the perfection of its form – in Beijing, a Chinese celebration. She sees the history of a people, being inscribed in human pictographs and unfolding on a giant scroll that rolls out over the floor of the stadium. At ground level, cameras capture the thousands of precision performers, a swirling mass of sumptuously dressed individuals that overhead cameras transform into an intricate calligraphy flowing from shape to shape and texture to texture, to record the

splendid accomplishments of the Chinese from the beginning of time.

Fireworks displays, creating and recreating the firmament in many hues and patterns, punctuate the scenes below while flying figures, like spectral beings, engrave the air between. At the end of the mighty epic, battalions of athletes from over two hundred countries, joyous, smiling, troop into the stadium behind national flags. After speeches, former Chinese champions, bring in the Olympic Flag lying inert on their shoulders. It awakens as it rises up the flagpole and flutters out its message of a common humanity.

Finally, the Olympic flame enters the stadium and is relayed through to the last bearer, who is hoisted high into the air. As he runs in his harness, a huge new scroll soon to be inscribed with the tremendous feats and superlative triumphs of the world's best athletes, unfolds on the circular wall of the arena alongside him.

At end of the scroll, he reaches the flue that in a lightning flash draws into the huge torch, towering over all, the flame of *Ubuntu* that dissipates the darkness and becomes a visible symbol of superlative human endeavour!

And the old bird flies with all those thousands of human beings who in these moments in that stadium are held together as one.

And tomorrow, August the 9th, is Women's Day in South Africa, a day that commemorates the march of twenty thousand women to the Union Buildings fifty-two years ago: a historic march, a euphoric flowering of courage in the face of oppression.
