

The other four poetry readings were called a 'fringe event' at the Cape Town media launch, and that indeed is what they are for the organisers, despite the fact that some of the finest Cape Town poets, like Ingrid de Kok, Karen Press, James Matthews, Sandile Dikeni, Joy Howard, Rustum Kozain, Carsten Knoch and Ntombintombi Mabika were reading there.

Among the more enjoyable events of the bookweek was the book-launch of the poetry of Barry Feinberg, Sandile Dikeni and Keith Gottschalk by Mayibuye Press with the wonderful African music by Ilanga le Africa. Some of the other poets, however, like Lynne Bryer, merely paraded their bland (in)competence; Joel Krige mouthed some vacuous white noise, and Leslie Miles some unimaginative and mediocre cameos; Philip de Vos was completely misplaced, he should not even have been reading in the children's section, his wit not even funny enough to qualify for inclusion in Slug News, and certainly an insult to any intelligent child over the age of four. In contrast, the subtle snail wit of Gus Ferguson was as enchanting as ever, as was the curling conch sound of the metaphysically coiled Slow Slak Blues Band.

One of the jarring events of the poetry readings was the attempt of the organisers to restrict Garth Erasmus from performing his music and poetry on Boipatong and Bisho: admittedly, the poem was cliched and the performance pretentious, but the idea that a patronising organiser can shove around a highly creative 'black' performer like a music servant of the feudal ages is outrageous. Another incident occurred at the reading on Wednesday, when an inebriated Percy Siphumede attempted to force his mediocre poetry on an unwilling audience.

#### **Rock Art or who were the 'Bushman' artists?**

Martin Hall's critical introduction which drew attention to the colonizing practice of putting the San on display for the benefit of white audiences was a highly necessary distancing from what I sensed to be the real desire of the vast majority of the audience, who in an age when the oppressed have begun to speak for themselves buy expensive coffee table books of what they perceive as 'harmless' and beautiful art which did not formulate 'political' demands. Such desire is re-colonizing a precolonial art which seems comforting because it fits the stereotype of the 'happy native' who has not yet been organised in the ANC. The audience was clearly uncomfortable when confronted with the very powerful and highly creative music of Garth Erasmus.

Yet, as the following anthropological documentary film on San shaman healing showed, his modern serial music is very close to the spirit of the San. Whites with a nostalgia for a past, which whites have brutally massacred, are comfortable with the role of voyeurs speaking about this past, but object if that past is beginning to speak itself. An audience used to 20 second sound bites on TV was unable to adjust to the slowness and deliberateness of a music as it emerges out of everyday activities and apparently random sounds. The hall reacted with a muted hostility to the sounds of a culture they had come to indulge in.

#### **Reviewing**

Writing about books: Literary Critics speak confirmed what I had long suspected: that newspapers are written not by journalists, but by the advertisers, and the bland and vacuous liberal waffling of most of them made it clear that book reviewing is an occupation for those who have failed in all other callings. The debate, in a show of pretentious objectivity, completely obfuscated that much of the reviewing which is used to fill empty spaces on (unsponsored) arts pages, is part of a bitter ideological warfare and the rampant indulgence in personal dislikes and hatreds. Neither did it address the conservative or liberal agenda of the establishment press, and the fact that for economic reasons the vast majority of the inhabitants have no stake in the news empires of the country. Only Andries Oliphant attempted to put at least some of these concerns into perspective.

In the Saving Flight of Imagination (what a title!), Hein Willemsse acted like the star of the show, not like a chair, attempting to displace some of the otherwise very rare voices of women writers at the Bookweek. Of those featured, Welma Odendaal is one of the most powerful voices in Afrikaans prose today, and both Lettie Viljoen and Riana Scheepers compete with the best. Story Tellers on the Move was an enjoyable experience, with both Maureen 'Zozo' Figlan and Kasiya Makaka excelling with their dynamic and highly skilled African story telling, clearly outnarrating the overseas guest Mary Medlicott (none of the three, however, can compete with Gcina Mhlope, who is simply superb).

Eddie de Jager's condescending and patronising lecture in Contemporary South African Black Art drove me out of the Concert Hall after ten minutes: how he survives at the new style Fort Hare with such prejudices is a mystery. Other panel discussions dealt with violence in South Africa, photography,

a rather trite discussion of writing for young people, and one on homosexuality. As one of my friends remarked: you have been to one Weekly Mail Bookweek, you have been to all.

For me personally, the most enjoyable event was a poetry reading, together with Abner Nyamende, arranged by COSAW within their Weekly Mail Bookweek outreach program at Gugulethu Comprehensive High School, for a class of very bright and interested students, asking very intelligent questions afterwards. There, far away from the oppressively liberal atmosphere of the Baxter, I, for a moment, had a glimpse, what a future South African culture could be like.

25 March 1993

Rob Turrell

Dear Rob,

Here is the photo. Hope it is OK. Would you please acknowledge the photographer - Keith Bernstein.

I always fall for a bit of flattery - the sure way to overcome any objections I might have. David Godwin at Cape told me his criticism of The Rift was that there was not sufficient of my own writing in it, because I wrote so wonderfully. At that my will to fight him over the publication date weakened, and ultimately I gave in. Incidentally, when you have a proof of the article (and cover if possible) would you send him a copy:

David Godwin  
Jonathan Cape  
Random House  
20 Vauxhall Bridge Road  
London, SW1V 2SA

v

I think it will be terrific if you do a spell in Cape Town, and will give you a better perspective on SARoB, renew your attachment - you'll not consider withdrawing.

Thank you for sending the Kole and Book Week article. Glad you didn't publish it, don't know Peter Horn, but I did not like the flavour. Re Kole, the article confirms what I know about ALL Nigerians - they are totally unable to comprehend the non-racialism of the ANC, which was why they favoured and still favour PAC, and gave ANC students such a terrible time during the period when students in exile were sent there. That's quite a horror story, of which I received only bits and pieces when interviewing the ex-students. Meeting Breytenbach and Slabbert may have knocked Kole back, but I doubt whether it is a genuine conversion. (But who am I to judge? I've never met him. Sheer prejudice.)

Thanks also for sending article to Village Voice - I do need contacts.

Best wishes

Hilda Brentstein

# Southern African Review of Books

Sterntalerweg 33, D-7900 Ulm, Germany

Tel: (+ 49 731) 38 82 72 Fax: (+ 49 731) 38 82 73 [from 9 to 6] 502 3467 [all times]

Managing Editor: Rob Turrell

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Montag, 12. April 1993

Hilda Bernstein  
57 Lock Crescent  
Kidlington, Oxon OX5 1HF

Dear Hilda,

Thanks for yours of 25 March.

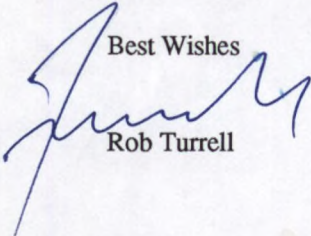
I now have a grammar checker on my word processor and I ran your article through it, and I am writing to tell you that you score badly on the 'gunning fog' index. This surprises me and perhaps it will surprise you. The reason for your low score is the overuse of the passive voice. I had no idea that you did this for the simple reason that your use of the passive voice does not, for me, impair the readability of your text. But then I also discovered that I was not particularly good at spotting the passive voice.

I tried turning some of your sentences around. For example: 'The exact number of our exiles was not known, but was estimated to be around 60,000 — it was impossible to assess with any accuracy.' became 'We do not know the exact number who went into exile, but a rough estimate is 60,000 — it is impossible to assess with any accuracy.' I realised that I was changing the meaning of your sentence by putting in the subject: who estimated? I thought I would ask you what you thought?

*Still passive*

Any chance of Rusty producing something soonish — we go to print in the first week of May with, amongst others, Kader Asmal on human rights. He says SARoB is the only journal he reads in South Africa — I just hope he is as good as you say he is. I have not seen his piece yet. Besides, not quite sure how to put 'human rights' on the cover, whereas it would be easy to put something from Rusty's review on the cover.

Best Wishes



Rob Turrell

17 May 1993

Dear Rob,

At first I thought your letter was a joke; were you really serious? How can any non-American editor even consider submitting a manuscript to a computer-test of correctness? It is the kind of concept that could only come from the US of A. As an editor, I would have thought that you would find the whole idea offensive. I daresay it does help to eliminate a few little grammatical mistakes that you may have missed; but at what cost? Each writer has her/his own voice, and you tamper with it to produce 'correctness' at the risk of producing a universally heady style, eliminating all the quirks of phrase or turns of language that make for individuality and readability. I know for instance, that I often write carelessly so that the meaning is sometimes obscure; but I also feel a certain rhythm in what I wrote, even a poetic feel; unplanned or unconscious, but that's the way it comes out. It doesn't always work but when it does I'm furious if an editor - with or without a computer checker - tampers with it, retaining the meaning - maybe even clarifying it; but destroying the lovely feel of my own arrangement of words.

Second matter: due to pressure of all sorts of things, some connected with the move to Oxford, Rusty has not yet done your book reviews. I apologise to you on his behalf. He says, not this coming issue, but the next.

Third matter: The enclosed article will tell you why my exiles book has not yet appeared. It does not contribute 13 per cent of w/rts budget to corporate overheads. Jonathan Cape are now in breach of contract, and the matter is under dispute as to when and how the book will be published. I would urge you to print my article as it stands, with the publication date given, and let Cape explain why it is not available. The changes at Random House - sacking of editors, taking on or new managers, putting directors over the managers of groups of their houses, etc, etc, just leaves the writers trampled into the ground while the elephants fight about their profits. Don't know what will happen, and could not tell you, within the space of ten letters, how I feel about the whole thing.\*

Just received two copies of SARoB - one addressed to Rusty, one to me. Read Rob Dixon's article, which I heartily applaud. Can't understand why more people don't take on the appalling RW and his malicious theories (based on his support of Gatsha, because RW is writing a bio of Rowley Arenstein, who is legal adviser to the Zulu chief.)

SA situation depressing.

Good wishes

*Hilda*

Hilda Bernstein

\* I was supposed to come to SA in September for the launch of the book at the Weekly Mail Book Meet!

# Southern African Review of Books

Sterntalerweg 33, D-7900 Ulm, Germany  
Tel: (+ 49 731) 38 82 72 Fax: (+ 49 731) 50 23 467  
Managing Editor: Rob Turrell

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Freitag, 28. Mai 1993

Hilda Bernstein  
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Dear Hilda,

Thanks for yours of 17 May. Of course I had my tongue in my cheek re. my grammar checker; but thanks for your assertion of authorial independence. I have just been reading Marr's biography of Patrick White and discovered that he refused to have sub-editors brush up his commas let alone change his sometimes tortuous sentence construction. It was, of course, his prose that drew me to his writing in the first place. I was not surprised to learn that he was only grudgingly honoured in his own country, where 'Professors' wounded him mightily by referring to his writing as 'verbal sludge'.

But fifteen years after *Tree of Man* was published he regretted not having his editor clean up his grammar and punctuation! There is a role for an editor after all. I still believe that any piece of writing can be improved by a second set of eyes. But I have learnt whose prose to leave alone. Zoe Wicomb is even stricter than you are.

Anyway, I want to know the story with Cape. I had actually read that cutting you sent me about overheads, but there must be more ... They have already paid the advance. Have they given you no alternative publication date at all? Tell me what to say re its non-publication at the end of the article — for our Sep/October issue.

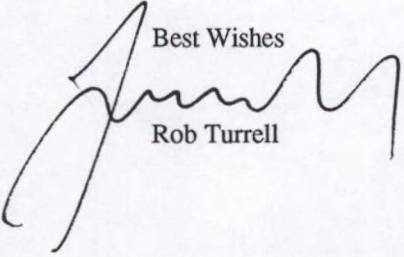
July/August  
Sep/October

copy (29 May)  
copy (30 July)

print (25 June)  
print (27 August)

Best Wishes

Rob Turrell



3 June 93

Dear Rob,

It was quite rash of you to say you want to know the story with Cape, as I had been waiting for an opportunity to set it all down. Here it is - skip the parts that bore you:

THE CAST: Candida Lacey; Mic Cheetham (Anthony Sheil, Land etc); David Godwin.

- 1) The contract was signed with Pandora; Candida was mad keen on the idea of this book, and kept upping the advance to woo me, which she did. Pandora was part of Hyman Unwin.
- 2) Hyman Unwin was taken over by HarperCollins. Candida and Her associate, Brewster, tried to set up their own publishing company and take the books they were keen on, but failed to raise the money. So my contract went to Harper together with Candida.
- 3) I'm not sure of the reasons why Candida left Harper, but she accepted an editor's post with Cape, taking with her two or three books from Pandora. Cape bought my contract from Harper, and Godwin wrote an enthusiastic letter - delighted to take over and honour my contract, etc etc. I think, with hindsight, that this is a large part of the trouble - that it wasn't Cape's book in the first place, but passed on, as it were.
- 4) In December 1991 -date of delivery of manuscript - I had a manuscript ready, but about three times as long as it should have been. Candida asked to read the total manuscript. Together we worked on it until August 1992, when we had re-structured it, cut out two-thirds of the interviews, shortened others, and so on. At this stage it was given to Godwin, who said it was still too long, and also suggested some re-ordering of the shape of the book. I must emphasise that Godwin knew all along that this would be a 'big' book. 'It doesn't matter,' he told me, 'we love big books at Cape.' This was before the critics gave Noel Mostert's Frontiers such a blasting on grounds of unmanageable length.)
- 5) By October 1992 we had made further cuts and re-ordering, Godwin had read the book (so he says) and was satisfied with it - in other words, the manuscript had been accepted as satisfactory. It appeared in Cape's Autumn book list to be published in January 1993, 600 pages, £25.
- 6) In November Candida phoned and told me that 10 days previously she had been 'made redundant', and Godwin would be writing to me. As he did not, I wrote to him on Dec 10th saying I regretted her leaving, and that I would like some reassurance from him; I wanted a firm publication date, wanted to know publicity plans. Godwin wrote a letter - I quote excerpts: 'I have gone through and re-read the whole of the revisions and I think it is a marvellously good book . . . It is a wonderful and marvellous achievement and Cape will publish it well, I promise you.' I wrote back saying yes, but could he give me details of timing, proofs, etc? He didn't.
- 7) My book appeared in the Cape Spring book list, January 93, as publication date July 1993. Between January and April I constantly asked for dates when proofs would be ready, but kept getting putting-off signals. On January 21 (I met Godwin at the beginning of January and again had flattering re-assurances about the book - but no date) - he wrote and said he'd had another look at the book, it needed detailed copy-editing and design work (it had already been copy-edited) and more time to get it into shape, so June/July was not a good date. I had mentioned the Weekly Mail Book Week to him, and he used this as an excuse to postpone publication again until September. He used all sorts of ploys to put me off - he had to consult

with their South African office as to best date - irrelevant things like that. I was very resentful at a further delay and argued against it, but at this stage Mic was not on my side; she seemed all along to want to accommodate to Godwin's plans. She talked me into accepting the September date (and with the prospect of a visit to SA in September to attend the Book Week thrown in - Book Week was very glad for me to come) which I did very reluctantly, and wrote to Godwin to say I would end contention about publication date, but would he please let me have a schedule. This was 25 January.

8) On March 1 I had a letter from Jenny Cottom (managing editor, it said) saying proofs would be ready 11 June. book ready by mid-August, for launching 16 September.

9) At the end of March Mic phoned saying: Bad news. Godwin wants to cut the book to half-size - 300 pages - and publish as a trade paper-back in February 94. On 30 March Godwin came from London to Oxford to see me, and we then had the most unpleasant set-to that I can ever remember. He simply said it was all too expensive, they couldn't afford to send me to SA, as the Weekly Mail wanted them to share expenses, and they wouldn't sell enough copies there (I could have told him that a year before - surely his SA reps know the book market). I was devastated and Rusty was most appallingly rude to him. I said that the contract required publication by October. When we parted I asked him to send me his plans in writing, which he said he would.

10) I received a letter from Godwin which did not set out any plans; he said he had a look at the contract and it stated 100,000 words, and what were my suggestions as to how the contracted length could be met? Now, although the contract stated 100,000 words (it was purely arbitrary - I had no idea how long or short it would be, didn't even know what 100,000 words meant) he had accepted and OKed the manuscript for approx 600 pages, published it in his catalogue, paid the balance of the advance. In addition, Mic wrote to me saying a) Cape were not yet in breach of contract; b) the trad paper-back <sup>would</sup> be 100,000 words as stipulated in the contract; c) It might well be the best way to publish as £25 was too hefty. I was prepared to go to litigation, but was told by many people that it would cost a fortune, and would go on for ages, so the book wouldn't be published anyway.

11) I went to the Society of Authors, where a very nice man named Le Fanu gave me a run-down of the realities, suggested that I or my agent should write asking him either to keep to contract, or relinquish all rights.

12) I informed Mic that I would: re-do the whole manuscript (one of his complaints about the delay was that it was in a mess, which it was, due to the many cuts and changes, but Candida had assured me it was not as bad as many manuscripts that had gone to the printers) and make some further cuts to keep it down to 600 pages. And within two weeks! It was a rash promise, but Rusty and I did it by working constantly in shifts. We took out six more whole interviews (some of the best) and shortened the others, and ran off a clean manuscript (plus the copy-editing changes). I took it into Mic, who phoned and said Godwin would read it that week-end (Easter) and make a decision. By this time I had begun to get a bit firm with Mic, and asked her whose side she was on?

12) On the Tuesday after the long week-end, I phoned Mic and asked for the verdict. She phoned back to say Godwin hadn't had a chance to read it, but would do so the next week-end. At that I became really furious, but really outwardly furious, not inwardly angry, for the first time. I told Mic to inform Godwin that if he didn't give his reply by next Monday, we wanted him to relinquish all rights to the book. Mic argued with me a bit, but I told her that Godwin had had the accepted manuscript lying on his desk since last October, and had done nothing, and I wasn't prepared to wait any longer, and that I wanted his answer in writing by the end of the week. There were lots more prevarications in between, but I won't bore you with them. At the end of the week I got the faxed reply that Godwin confirmed he would be



publishing THE RIFT in March 1994 in hardback and that 'we will not be asking Hilda to make any further extensive cuts.' I forgot to mention that this was in my demand to Cape - that they publish as a hardback, and as the manuscript now stands, without any more cuts.

It was obvious that Mic wasn't going to press for publication before the end of the year, so once more I gave in. Mic pointed out that if we began seeking another publisher, it would be another year, in any case, before the book was published, and that despite what I felt about Godwin, Cape was a good imprint to have. So I agreed.

But now, what went wrong? In the first place, the fact that it was not originally a Cape book seems to me to have a lot to do with it. Secondly, of course, it is the story of publishing today. The billionaire manufacturer of Reebok shoes demands that Random make a proper profit. I'd had this big advance, on a book that in any case was not going to be a best-seller, and Random USA were coming down hard on ~~the~~ British subsidiaries to do better in the market-place (Mic said Random had been hit more than some of the other houses.) Thirdly, once Candida had gone, Godwin didn't know what the hell to do with this 'marvellous' book that was going to cost him more money.

I hope you haven't gone to sleep by now. I have no words to tell you what this whole affair has done to me - it literally made me ill. I keep thinking that everything Godwin said was a lie - he could not have really read the book so thoroughly as he kept saying, because he would realise that it could not be cut to 300 pages - it just wouldn't be a book any more. I want people to be up front, to tell the truth however unpleasant. I hate all the lying and messing around. I believe the book is still an important one, but I also think its validity has been eroded by the long lapse of time. I never want to see or speak to Godwin again, and doubt whether I will want to write another book, because contracts become meaningless when you are up against big firms.

As to what you say about non-publication in September, I leave that to you. I would like to be really nasty to Cape, but I daresay you will not want to lay yourself open to libel. I feel that if Mic had wanted to fight a little harder the book would be in proof-form by now. I daresay that South Africa's new up and coming writers will have an awfully hard time getting work published, however brilliant it is, and perhaps you know much more about the book-market these days.

It was three years intensive work, uncomfortable travel, a time when I didn't do or think of anything else. I felt obligated to all those people who had spoken so frankly and openly. Every interview I cut, particularly at the end, was like killing a child. Moan, moan. Well, there it is. You asked for it. And I quite enjoyed setting out the details.

All the best

Hilda

(I can be wrong - but I think it's really a good & important book)

# Southern African Review of Books

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Tel: (+ 49 731) 38 82 72 Fax: (+ 49 731) 50 23 467  
Managing Editor: Rob Turrell

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Montag, 7. Juni 1993

Hilda Bernstein  
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Dear Hilda,

Thanks for your very interesting letter of 3 June.

It is the cutting which is so dreadful. Did you read what James Currey had to say about Heinemann in our March/April issue? Publishing was a different world then when authors mattered — but he has good words for Godwin! To accept a book, put it in their catalogue and then demand further cuts. That is unbelievably cruel. And if your agent cannot protect you ...

I did indeed want to know more but with a view to when to publish your piece on exiles and what to say about it. I still think your piece should be published when the book is available — Jan/Feb 94. However, I would love to publish in 'diary' form the saga of the publication of your book in the next issue. I have no fear of libel and I think you need have no guilt about being nasty to Cape because there is an object lesson here for all authors.

I believe our SA readers would be keen to know about advances, which do not appear to be paid in South Africa. I do not see how an independent South African literary culture can emerge until authors seek out South African publishers first before looking abroad. And they will not do that until they can earn inside South Africa what they can earn abroad. Perhaps literary prizes can commercialise writing and create a market. Witness the M-Net Award which is worth R50,000 and in the English category went to a first novel published as the first novel from a small poetry publisher (Carrefour). What you have written provides a window on this world. So if you can use your own story to illustrate general trends, I think it would serve a number of purposes: vent your anger; give Godwin and Cheetham unwelcome publicity; and inform authors in South Africa what they should be looking out for.

You would need to include more info on the three following themes — :

- 1 publishing boom
- 2 literary agents
- 3 advances

## 1. Publishing Boom

I bought the first issue of the *Observer* under *Guardian* editorship yesterday and noted a profile on Tim Hely Hutchinson, whose firm Headline has just bought Hodder and Stoughton for £49 million (I thought the merger mania was over?) They bill him as the latest in a line of opportunistic marketing men to move in on general publishing houses. At the same time he has topped the Society of Authors list of most popular publishers for two years in a row.

Hutchinson estimates that 5% of the British population read literature of the kind reviewed in the broadsheets; a disproportionate amount of publishing activity caters to this market for the literature of ideas. Perhaps another 35% read formula thrillers and the like which is where most of the money is. Apparently only 40% of the population read.

Last year Headline made a pre-tax profit of 12% on sales, with a 30% return on capital employed. Random House lost £6 million last year.

So when you write that Godwin wanted to make it into a trade paperback, it sounds as though his marketing strategy had changed in order to make a quick profit and not wait the obligatory 9 months for a hardback and reviews. I cannot believe he wanted to cut the book in order to cheapen production costs? Did you have no control over the sale of your book from Pandora to HarperCollins to Cape? Godwin published Okri and Mostert. How did Mostert get them to publish such a large book (did they do the Seth?)? Mostert's *Frontiers* (1,400pp) is now in Pimlico large format paperback, which is tied to Cape.

## 2 Literary Agents

Why does an author need a literary agent? There are some very interesting comments on agents in Anthony Burgess' autobiography *You've Had Your Time* (Penguin, 1991) pp. 11-12. His first agent was Janson-Smith who handled the likes of Ian Fleming. Burgess was small beer and he was lucky to

be taken on. '... I am not sure what a good agent is. The best agent, it seemed to me at the time, was the one who would try to place a first novel ...' Once he was established he started receiving touting letters from agents: 'I had cranked up the car in freezing weather, and now they would drive from the back seat. What I wanted from my agent was publisher's commissions, foreign sales, film options ...' (He claims he made nothing from *Clockwork Orange*.)

He felt he did a lot better without an agent and now seriously doubts the value of literary middlemen — what else is a publisher? 'The essential trinity is the author, the printer-binder, and the vendor with the cash register.' After talking sensibly after translations (he speaks an embarrassing number of languages) he writes:

[Agents] are buffers between authors and publishers, but, to the author, they often seem closer to the publisher than to himself. They will quarrel with an author and even reject him as a nuisance, but they dare not make an enemy of a publisher. They will push saleability more than literary merit, which can sometimes creep into a publisher's list because of a package deal: I will let you have this undoubted bestseller if you will accept this unprofitable pastiche of Henry James. Done.

Just as publishers were swept away by merger mania, so were literary agents, yours included. Why did they merge with Land? Giles Gordon, remember, did some spectacular sealed bids for literary biographies. I remember reading a comment from Gordon on how much an author should make for a literary agent for her to be taken on, but cannot remember the figure or where I read it. Gordon, of course, has always been in South African things — he was agent for Bessie Head before she fell out spectacularly with him. And Hilary Rubinstein before him. As Burgess says, agents will sell to anyone. They are quantitative people. Did paying you such a large advance contribute to the problems that have followed? I cannot remember the details of your advance but, if it was against all rights, perhaps Cheetham thinks she has done her bit and that there is no more money to be made out of you through translations etc.

Recently, Ross Ainslie dropped into our office in Cape Town with an agent from Curtis Brown (Anne McDermid) in search of info about black women in publishing. Perhaps you could take advice from another agent like her in order to get another perspective.

Literary agents now perform work that publishers used to do: reading manuscripts. They filter books and save publishers a lot of time.

### 3. Advances?

Is the publishing industry unique in this method of payment? Normally the producer only gets paid after a product has been sold to the final consumer. Publishers, for example, who use external reps and distribution firms are supposed to be paid three months in arrears and are lucky to be paid once a year. And then never mind the returns. An architect might take a retainer but will only be paid in full when the building is built. And similarly with films, plays etc. Or is it? A director yes, but an actor in a play will be paid a salary while a film actor will get paid once she has worked and before the film is shown?

Do you have the patience to do this? The story is there in point form in your letter. It needs, as Patrick White called it, oxywelding — the second draft. Tell the story as you have written it to me, but flesh out the particular with general comments as appropriate. I return a copy if you have not kept one.

I noticed a number of books announced in catalogues in 1992, that were reannouncements from the previous year. I assumed this was the result of the recession. I am sure the recession played some role with your book, but to exact the punishment of cuts at that late stage is unbelievable ... you cannot generalise about this ... until you write about it and other authors respond with similar stories.

I also imagined that it was only amateur outfits that would have MDs send you a letter with a schedule and then not stick to it. You really must repeat your account of that meeting with Godwin — Cape cannot afford to send you to South Africa ... that makes my blood boil. And they will not sell enough copies there? How does he know that? How do you know that?

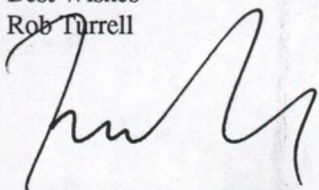
And COSAW in South Africa must learn from this. They have this Nobel Prize money and they do about as well as Cape with you in the relations with co-publishers and authors. And they do not know what an advance is. And they promise to pay royalties on set dates and then cannot be reached for 6 months to correct their errors. Authors have to let each other know what is going on.

July/August  
Sep/October

copy (29 May)  
copy (30 July)

print (25 June) (we will be two weeks late)  
print (27 August)

Best Wishes  
Rob Turrell



25 June 1993

Dear Rob,

I have considered your suggestion re writing up the Cape experience, and have decided not to do it, at least, not now. There are several reasons. I think there are areas - the three you suggested, for instance - that I do not know enough about.

Take the publishing boom, for one. I think most of what has happened is in Joanna Coles' article - did I send you a copy? While it has speeded up enormously during the last ten years, it was already beginning twenty years ago. I think there will always be one or two independent publishers carrying on, or starting up, but they will occupy a small corner of the book-field. The rest is purely business, has nothing to do with what writing is really about, except in the obtaining and exploiting of new 'producers' - hardly writers. This is a bleak outlook for real literature. The academic books will still get published, especially by all the competing US Universities; and fat biographies; and the saleable categories - you know them as well as I; but good new writers - who will take risks, sell 1,000 copies, lose on the advance, of the unknowns?

As far as Cape is concerned, I don't really know what went on there. It is said Random House lost £6m last year. There were obviously big upheavals going on, but I felt like an ant in the grass when the elephants are fighting. It seems as though Godwin also got trampled, as he is leaving Cape. Again, I don't know the inside story but hear that Frances Coady, brought in as group editor of Cape, Chatto & one other, was previously sacked by Godwin - therefore he would not find it easy to work under her. Now Cape can't find an editor to replace Godwin, who despite my experience, seems to be highly thought-of in the book publishing world. Cape has a high reputation - it's a 'good' imprint.

As for literary agents: I tend to think writers need them, but I haven't a very clear view. None of my books were 'placed' by an agent - I had already obtained a publisher before obtaining an agent; but with the enormous output of writing (due to increased literacy, etc), even without the commercial pressures of the corporate boom, publishers will pay less and less attention to unsolicited manuscripts, and for this reason alone agents must have their uses. I felt Mic was trying to get me to fall in with whatever Godwin proposed; but I'm stuck with her, and want to keep on reasonable terms, until The Rift is finished with.

The advances. The advance is really a payment to the writer for giving the publisher the right to print the work; the publisher hopes to recoup the advance through sales. With so many books - runs of 2,000 or whatever - the publisher scarcely covers costs. What was your experience with my book? I bet you lost out on it. When you consider SA writers, with a market that is still so small, it's hardly possible for publishers to give advances. I think that prizes, book promotions ('twenty new writers', such things) are necessary. I've no knowledge or experience of COSAW, so cannot comment. There are such enormous possibilities in SA for writers, a wealth of possible material to draw on, a rich and exciting map - when I think of the 'gpop' novelists here, the static material of the Drabbles, etc, the deadness of the social climate, a kind of flat cynicism that permeates literature and poetry (as Larkin), the extent to which it has all been said, re-hashed, washed out - it makes one slaver simply to think of what SA offers its young, creative people.

I don't know the answers to other questions you raise. Maybe my big advance had something to do with it, but I would have thought it would have the opposite effect - i.e., the need to boost the book, make it more important. HarperCollins did Seth - haven't read it, but everyone enjoyed

it. Did I have control over the change of publishers? I don't know. I simply went along with them, was prepared to let Candida and Co find the book if she had succeeded in setting up her feminist publishing house; Unwin Hyman obviously didn't consult their writers when they sold to HarperCollins, so presumably there was no choice there. I think I could have stayed with HC when Candida went to Cape, but I was very happy to have Cape, rather than HC, do the book.

I don't know. I think Godwin just got in a mess with pressures from the US overlords because of money-loss, and having sacked Candida, and for all I know a couple of others, he was landed with books not quite ready to go to press, and couldn't handle it all. But what he did was totally unforgiveable - to tell me what a wonderful book, what a marvellous achievement it was, to keep it on his desk for six months, making excuses every time I asked for a schedule, to tell me 'Cape will publish it well, I assure you,' - and then to come to Oxford (that is, not summoning me to London, as was more usual) simply to say I want to cut it in half and publish as a paper-back - to believe I would say OK, go ahead - it is all unbelievable, I think he must have been a bit out of his mind at that stage. The press gossip column says 'I understand he ~~has gone to~~ top literary agents Aitken and Stone.'

At present I just want to see The Rift published, and with nobody as yet in charge of Cape, I don't know what is happening.

All the best

Donnerstag, 19. August 1993

Hilda Bernstein  
57 Lock Crescent  
Kidlington, Oxon OX5 1HF  
ENGLAND

Dear Hilda,

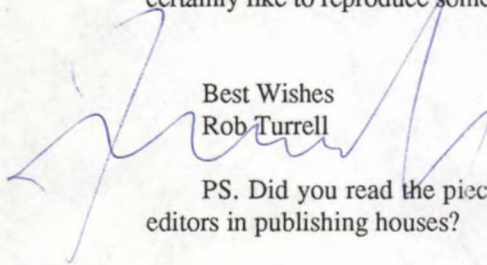
Thanks for yours of the 3 June and 17 August.

It is good to know that things are at last fixed. After all I had written, I included your piece in the July/August issue, because publication seemed so far off. I have also severed relations with Kole Omotoso and it turns out that his English Department is unhappy with him as well; so he will not get tenure which will be a blow to him.

So we will review your book as well and put you on the cover! I asked Tim Holmes to review and he is keen to do it.

I wish Rusty would commit himself to that review, which has always been an excuse to get him to write about the current negotiation process.

Magubane has published a collection of photographs as a history of women in SA, with text by Gordimer and Carol Lazar. Can I get Little, Brown to send you a copy? Not sure whether it requires an analysis of the photos or a piece on women — your little book *Tears for their Struggle*? I would certainly like to reproduce some of the photos.



Best Wishes  
Rob Turrell

PS. Did you read the piece by DJ Taylor in yesterday's *Guardian*, in the tabloid section, about editors in publishing houses?

# *Southern African Review of Books*

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## GUIDE-LINES AND INFORMATION FOR REVIEWERS

### **Style and Audience:**

We think of 'review' and 'response' as two ends of a continuum. At one end lies the traditional academic-journal review directed to an audience of fellow scholars, often erudite, but frequently focussing on trivial, and destructive criticisms. At the other end lies the direct, openly personal response of the 'common reader' to a book whose factual accuracy, careful or capricious use of sources, and political and other framework, he or she can only guess at. Much writing about books tends toward one or the other end of the spectrum. What we look for in SARoB is a review essay which balances the two and captures the best of both in the style of quality Sunday supplement writing. We want reviewers to use stories, information, material — whatever is interesting, of value, or funny in the book under review — *in* the review rather than simply providing a dry, critical commentary on fact or interpretation.

For us to speak to all our readers, it is essential that the writing we publish is not too narrowly scholarly in style. This means, for example, that footnoting should be avoided, and that the jargon of the disciplines should not be allowed to intrude. Fine and clear writing is the essential prerequisite of any review. And in general, the reviewer's expertise in the subject-matter of the book under review should be used to elucidate the material for the information of the reader, and not to score points off the author.

### **Length:**

Average length is ten double-spaced typescript pages (2,000 words). This means that reviews should not be less than eight pages 1,500 words although in the cases of especially interesting books they can run to 4,000 words — two tabloid pages. Reviews that exceed this latter length need to be cleared with the editor.

### **Manuscript Preparation:**

If you use or have access to an Apple Macintosh, we welcome your review on disk (any format). If you work on an IBM PC or clone, we would also be keen to receive your review on disk. IBM files should be on either 5.25 inch disks or preferably 3.5 inch disks and files should be saved as ASCII text only with carriage return at the end of paragraphs and **not** end of lines. Please include a formatted version as well — and state the name of the computer, the name of the software used and its version number e.g. IBM Compaq, Word Perfect, v.4.2.

If your review is not on disk please be sure to double-space your entire manuscript (including quotes, which should be indented if longer than three lines), leave reasonable margins, and send it in as clean a condition as possible (corrections in the margins). If you use a dot matrix printer, please send a xeroxed copy of your review and not the original, so as to facilitate scanning. Give page references for any indented quotes, and include the publisher and date of publication of any other books referred to.

Please include a two or three sentence biographical note for the 'Notes on Contributors'.

Please head your review in the following style:

Suggested Title  
Your Name  
**My Life. Volume One**  
by Godfrey Molo

Ravan Press, Johannesburg, v + 221pp., £4.95 pbk, 12 December 1987, 0 86975 324 X

**Editorial Revision:**

We assume, unless you specify otherwise, that we can copy-edit your review in accordance with house style (on spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.). In most cases, reviewers can expect some further editing for length, style and clarity. If substantive rewriting is needed, we will return the manuscript with specific recommendations for revision. In case we need to contact you to discuss revisions, please be sure to keep a copy of your manuscript, let us know your phone number, and tell us in advance if you will *not* be reachable in the three weeks after you send in your review.

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**Endear yourself to the editor — meet the deadline he gives you, which may or may not coincide with the general or advertising deadline. It helps if you meet the individual deadlines, because then the receipt of reviews will be conveniently spaced for editing and setting. If you are going to be late, please let the editor know — the layout and length of each issue needs to be planned by the advertising deadlines.**

The deadline for re-launch is:  
**30 May**



27/9/93

0865-373042

Dear Rob

I have not received the Magubane book. Nor have I received SARB of July/August. Will send review of Magubane swiftly when it comes.

A publisher called Pathfinder (New York address) have been in touch with me about a book of Mandela's speeches that should be out this month. They say they are sending me a copy asking me to review it for any publication that uses my articles. Do you want me to review it for SARB?

I thought Randolph's article was brilliant. He very cleverly does not attempt to reply to the dozens of individual misrepresentations, innuendoes and lies in RW's article, but removes the basis of his approach. What a pity he did not send it to the LRB - it should have appeared there; no insult to you intended, but do the SARB readers get LRB, or know what Randolph is referring to? You should ask him to do an article/explanation/analysis.

Rusty's article ~~xxxxxx~~ was considerably cut, probably because Colin covered many of the same points. I'm sending a copy of the full letter just for interest's sake.

The Rift is going ahead now for Febraary publication, and I'm happy about it; nice cover; hoping for publicity. What a relief since Godwin left.

Good wishes

Hilda Bernstein

\* But a London address for distribution

1 November 1993

Dear Rob,

I have not seen this since it was launched so I can only remark on what I remember about it. I was disappointed with the interpretations of some of the characters - they simply were not the way I had envisaged and intended. I suppose that's normal. In fact the director, Terry Coles, and the scriptwriter, Alan Plater, did go out of their way to discuss the screenplay in its formative stages.

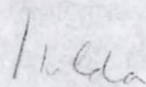
I also remember irritation at various small things that were not 'South African' (the film was shot in Zimbabwe) but they are the kind of thing that will only worry South Africans, and are really not of any importance.

The second part is much better than the first.

BBC hold the copyright, which precludes public showing for gain, but should not concern you.

Let me know if you have any more thoughts on the possibility of a speaking tour.

All the best



Hilda Bernstein

24 August 1993

Dear Rob

Yes, would like to get the Magubane book and to prepare whatever I think suitable.

Pleased that Kole is going - I don't think he did the paper any good. Are you going to take over the main burden yourself?

I am grateful for the publicity for The Rift. Do you need a new photo? I have a whole lot taken by Keith, more recent, more wrinkles, less hair - or did I send you one?

Enclosure from Rusty.

The Di Taylor piece - must have been written about Godwin.

*Good number*  
*Hilda*  
Hilda Bernstein

17 August 93

Dear Rob,

A note to let you know the present position about my book: I saw Frances Coady and Dan Franklin last month. Coady is Group Director (Cape, Chatto, Vintage) and Franklin replaces Godwin as Publishing Director of Cape. Before meeting them I sent Coady a brief outline of what had happened to my book.

They were both very apologetic, and have made arrangements for publication to go ahead. The schedule is for editing to be completed by mid-October, bound copies by Christmas, publication early February.

So, publication at last, eventhough it is more than a year later than it should have been.

How are your own plans, and SARoB going?

Good wishes

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