

Rob Turrell
Southern African Review of Books
Sterntalerweg 33
7900 Ulm
Germany

Tel: +49 731/38 82 72

Fax: +49 731/38 82 73

21/1/89

Dear Rob,

In the guide-lines you sent me, you mention erudite academic-style reviewers who 'frequently focus on trivial and destructive criticisms.' And ask that reviewers use their expertise for the information of the readers and 'not to score points off the author.'

I consider this is exactly what Alisdair Brown has done.

I don't know if you will find room to publish all of my riposte, but I suppose you will let me know if you want to make considerable cuts.

Still awaiting your letter -today is Saturday. Our local post is hopeless - any first-class letter from London takes a minimum of two days. Hope you got my article, which I posted yesterday - or the day before.

All the best

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Dear Rob,

r

I have re-written the whole article, as I was aware when I sent it off that it was too thin. Don't know whether it will meet with your approval and if you feel you can't use it I will shed bitter tears over the time wasted when I should have been working on THE BOOK.

However, perhaps we could discuss it if you wish.

I did not think I could take it any further than I have done ~~in~~ into the realms of present strife in SA as this would - it seems to me - have taken the review too far from the book itself. In any case that is too important and complicated a question to be dealt with as a sort of side issue arising out of a book review on another subject.

Incidentally, in Toronto I was invited one evening by a group of doctors to hear a South African medical journalist (black) give a talk on the health situation in SA. After the formal talk, we got launched into a passionate discussion on present violence, in the course of which he blamed the ANC & related organisations for not educating their members. He was not pro-Buthelezi, but not an ardent supporter of the ANC either. A very intelligent & articulate man.

I thought the Kentrige review wasn't too bad - not the enthusiasm of Tom Lodge and Woods, but the publication of such a review in the Star must be good. I was amused to find that he and Lodge give two different interpretations: Kentrige thinks the final third of the book 'sometimes appears tacked on to complete a book which sets out seriously to describe the political events in SA' leading to Rivonia trial, & the trial itself. Lodge thought the trial section had been lifted up for reasons of publicity expediency, and that the book was primarily a personal memoir. Don't you love reviewers?

Pleased that 1,000 have been taken by Heinemann US (? your handwriting is unreadable). Would be interested to know if you get any single requests from Toronto - I gave out leaflets to all I met.

I will be in London this coming week-end, probably Thursday onwards.

Heinemann

27/10/90

MY LIFE IN THE STRUGGLE BY MAGGIE HERSHA.

I had mixed feelings about this book, some of which seemed to me to be well worth publishing, and some very dull.

In general, the book comes to life when the writer is describing her own personal experiences; her childhood village life, her going for training as a nurse, her jail experiences. These have a pleasantly fresh authenticity.

The book dies when the author starts writing up political history. For example, beginning on page 109, second para onwards to 112 or further. Even the description of the Congress of the People - it lacks any excitement or vitality. It continues more or less on this way, then springs to life again on page 153, the participation in the women's anti-pass campaign.

Perhaps I should mention here the complete absence of any real analysis when it comes to any issues which can be said to be controversial. For example, the calling off of the women's anti-pass campaign by the ANC executive has been bitterly criticised. Although I do not believe that there can ever be a clear resolution on this question (did the men call it off because they resented the women running something so independently, not under their control? Or didnt want the inconvenience of their wives being in jail - so paid fines - or was it a correct political action at a time when the women's tactics were bound to fail?) at the same time I feel something should have been said about it.

On the history of the ANC/PAC/Sharpeville episodes, this has been written up more thoroughly and far better by several other writers. Perhaps some brief explanation needs to be made, but I would incise a great deal of this section.

There is something very appealing in the writing when it seems to have the direct, authentic voice of the writer. But then there are passages that become sterile, that could have been written by anyone. I do not know to what extent this might be due to over-meticulous editing, but somehow the writer's voice is too often lost.

I would take out certain passages and put them at the end of the book in the form of appendices. For example, if it is intended to print a family tree, then quite a lot of the trail of relatives' names at the beginning to go together with the tree, to be read when the reader has then become so interested in Maggie Hersha that they want to know all these details. I would remove the speeches at Robbi Hersha's grave, letters, etc, and put them also in the appendix.

The 'plus' side of the book is that it is the first time I have read an account of this period by a black woman, and one who has participated in a very vital period of resistance history. In my opinion this gives it a certain value of its own. I think that its main readership would probably be among South Africans, but at the same time I would not discount some readership in other countries.

30th January 89

Dear Rob,

I am extremely happy that the contract has been signed - life has become good again. There was never any doubt that I would sign up with you, but at the same time, I was anxious not to lose Mic, as I will need her (I hope, depending on longevity and production capacity) in the future. Good agents are hard to find. I hope that you, too, are reasonably satisfied after all the hassle, and that in the end - whatever went on between Mic and Pandora - that you did not get a disappointing deal.

There are just a couple of minor corrections on the two enclosed. Shawn spells her name with a 'w', not a 'u' - it is spelled correctly further on. She was naturally upset about the review, but there is nothing like a bit of controversy to get people talking about SAB of B - this weekend, in London for an ANC conference, we had heated discussions (not at the conference, of course, among people who were there) and have probably extended your circulation by two or three.

One more comment: I thought (apart from Brown and Hirson) that this issue was the most interesting one so far. I read it all. I thought Tom Lodge's review was fair and pertinent. The stuff about Bechuanaland was rivetting - what a pity that man died! And I very much enjoyed all the book reviews. Nicholas Haysom was first class. Why can't your reviewers write as readably as Kevin Shillington? And where do you find all these clever academics?

Too much education can damage the faculty to use language simply.

Hope to hear from you soon about sundry practical things such as book jacket, whether you want me to approach anyone about 'rave' quotes, and who, etc.

SA Writers

25 a Greencroft Gardens, South Hampstead, London NW6 3LN
Tel.: (01) 624-5700

7/9/89

Hilda Bernstein
Somafco
POBox 680
Morogoro
Tanzania

Dear Hilda,

Sorry to take so long to reply to yours of 18/7 — holiday in Germany and then another review to put together — we have been going for two years; one-hand clapping.

I enclose a letter from Tom Lodge which I opened by mistake. He wanted to write to you some time ago, and this is it.

Also enclose leaflets for your friends and remember I have about 10 of so hardbacks that you signed while you were here.

I have written to a number of US publishers and 3 of them want to publish. I will pursue the best offer but I thought I would let you look at a letter from Pantheon, who I had hoped would take the book. The letter is written to Zoë Wicomb, who is on our editorial board and whose collection of short stories was published by them. Diane Wachtell thinks the world of her; but Diane is the fiction editor and I am sure it should have been read by a non-fiction editor. Anyhow you will get the drift that they want to publish contemporary stuff; which has been the litany all along with general publishers as opposed to academic ones.

Much to my disgust David Philip turned your book down in the most off-hand fashion; and they have just reprinted Charles Hooper's *Brief Authority*. I understand that the rejection was largely the doing of a young editor who errs on the conservative side. It looks like a political decision. But to write such an offensive letter just does not make sense. Similarly for the publicist at the Women's Press to be so rude (they are publishing Alice Walker's new novel, which is very bad). How can you be rude to editors and reviewers when you are a publicist — contradiction in terms.

I'm also pursuing a German, Spanish and Danish edition.

Our current SARB has an extract from Mandla Langa's new novel. I'm afraid it is very bad; but it was a marketing decision on our part more than anything else. The debate about good writing proceeds apace in South Africa and there are some leading lights (Farouk Asvat) who argue that you do have to write well — but they take a lot of stick. Still, perhaps Mandla ~~has~~ is looking for a popular audience and maybe that is right: it is time to create an heroic literature (border literature) but with the guerrilla in a positive role.

I'm afraid the ANC has pulled out of their promise to take 1,000 books. Anything you can do? Ishmael simply said that they had not planned for it, and would not know what to do with the books. I think the obvious thing to do is to send it into South Africa and not try to sell it. I could send it to a number of addresses (Cosaw, COSATU, etc) and get it into township libraries. Surely that would be an excellent thing, with people crying out for resources.

Ishmael admitted that they were committed to taking a thousand, but I suspect that he thinks if he ignores me I will go away.

Spoke to Essop Patel about distribution through Cosaw and he was not very enthusiastic. He seemed to think that whether they were paid for or not in SA, the same ennui would follow. Just sit in some office or other. Oh! dear. But it must be the right thing. No SA publisher, so the ANC pays for the book to be made available in the townships. The principle is right!

Let me know when the Guardian is going to carry your piece.

Best Wishes

Rob Turrell

SA Writers

25 a Greencroft Gardens, South Hampstead, London NW6 3LN
Tel.: (01) 624-5700

Tuesday, October 24, 1989

Hilda Bernstein
Somafco
POBox 680
Morogoro
Tanzania

Dear Hilda,

Thanks for yours of 27 Sept; and for the names and addresses which are wonderful.

You will know about the release of the Rivonia Men and I enclose a piece that I arranged in the *Independent*. I had written to Dowden (the Africa editor) before about a review — they do a review a day plus the books page on Saturday — and he wrote back to say that he felt guilty that he had missed it first time round. And then they were released and so he had a splendid opportunity. The aerial picture they carried I had not seen before and is, I think, very suggestive. Strange that the house/farm is now owned by Al Venter the right-wing military writer.

The review by Suzanne Cronje also appeared in the *New Statesman* some time ago and I forgot to send it to you.

I have just arranged a big order of the book from Zimbabwe via Hugh Lewin. Although he said interest in SA books was minimal in Zimbabwe, he placed an order for 500 but at a massive discount to make it available to readers at a reasonable price — the Zim\$ is very weak. In many ways it is just as good, if not better, than arranging to have it published locally. I have still not sold enough copies (2,500 or so to date) to cover costs yet and the ANC withdrawal, combined with raised interest rates (overdrafts now at 20%), makes the publication of the next few books very dodgy. I have decided on Maggie Resha's autobiography; another about the Indian location in Pretoria by Jay Naidoo — beautifully written; and the selected letters of Bessie Head. Yours and Bessie Head are supposed to make the publication of the other two possible, but we will have to see what happens to the sterling crisis here.

Still hoping for something out of SA. You will know that your *Tears and Triumphs* has been unbanned and so that leads to a curious situation. You are listed but your book is available. I must say that publishing and distribution is all a muddle. Take Zoe's book. She refused to allow Virago to sell it in SA a couple of years ago when she could well, and still could, have done with the cash. And now she finds the ANC rep, Mandla Langa, blithely having his new book published in

SA by Taurus. I think she can justifiably feel irritated; and there is no formal policy statement to exile writers to say that the cultural boycott has ended etc, despite what we have carried in the Review and all those conferences.

Last week I went to a do given by the *Guardian* to mark the publication of their Weekend issue on Africa. They had sent out a press release to various people saying what would be in it and I noticed that your name was not on it. There was Nkosi, Ngugi, Achebe et al (even Ann Harries on the politics of SA food) but no Bernstein. So I rang Ian Mayes and he was most apologetic, saying how much he liked the piece but that (a) he only had 40 pages rather than 48 and (b) yours was rather long. Or at least that is what I think he said. He also said that he was busy trying to place it in the main *Guardian*. I think that is code for saying they are going to drop it. Have you thought of other journals? How about us? I'll ask Ian Mayes for a copy. We would not be able to pay, but you would be able to place it elsewhere as well without any complications.

Anyway the do in the Board room was rather splendid; more Africans than Europeans; food supplied by a restaurant rejoicing in the name of Ethiopia 2020 (there was an awful lot of goat consumed); and music to suit the occasion. Alan Rusbridger is the editor, round Trotsky spectacles but a public school boy to the core, while Ian Mayes (twice his age) a seasoned hack, but one of the nicest I have met. What a combination. The *Weekend Guardian* is really no competition to the *Independent Magazine*, but the difference in production costs is phenomenal. They claim it has helped the *Guardian* maintain its position. I wonder.

The best offer I have had in the US is from St Martin's Press but they want a royalty inclusive deal for 1,000 hardbacks. This would give you £500, but a royalty inclusive deal is, of course, not as good as getting a royalty. Given their obsession for contemporary books, it is only the academic divisions that are going to look at your book. I'm afraid it is either going to be this or nothing at all. You must sort this out with your agent. I will communicate their offer to her and then leave it up to you. Reprints normally don't attract royalties at all. Charles Hooper got nothing out of David Philip for the republication of *Brief Authority*. You must have accepted Pandora's offer; I spoke to Bloomsbury and they just laughed at the sum. You are certainly on to a good thing there — a little credit to Julie for the introduction to *Candida* — and I wish you well. Just read about the shenanigans at the Frankfurt book fair; like dealing on the futures market.

Bob Wishes

RSB

SA Writers

25 a Greencroft Gardens, South Hampstead, London NW6 3LN
Tel.: (01) 624-5700

Monday, November 27, 1989

Hilda Bernstein
Somafco
POBox 680
Morogoro
Tanzania

Dear Hilda,

Just a short note to tell you two things.

I have had a better offer from Indiana than from St Martin's; Indiana offer a royalty and in the long run that has to be a better arrangement. They appear to be particularly keen and have spoken to Tom Lodge in New York. They want an introduction giving more biographical details about yourself and Tom has volunteered to do it, if you did not want to do it yourself. It does strike me, though, that an introduction from Walter Sisulu would be even better. Is this something you could arrange from your end? It could also be used in the South African edition — both Donker and Taurus want do a local edition although I have not, as yet, seen their terms. My preference would be for Taurus (progressive, Marxist Afrikaners — they have published Breytenbach's new novel in English) as they have blithely said they would ignore the fact that you were listed. Donker is unlikely, on past experience, to pay a royalty, but I may be wrong.

The other thing is your *Guardian* piece. I spoke to Ian Mayes about it on Friday; it arrived on Saturday; and he rang me to find out what I thought of it on Monday (today). My enquiry certainly seems to have woken him up. He is very keen to run it now, and says the events in Eastern Europe have kept it off the analytical pages (second leader) in the *Guardian* proper. He has cut it quite extensively, but it is still substantial and I would not be surprised if it appeared on this coming Saturday. I must say, Hilda, that I was disappointed with it and did not think it was something I could use in SARoB. I was, of course, a little circumspect with Ian Mayes, but he was certainly perturbed that the *Guardian* might lose something to us. So I hope they do run it as the publicity would be marvellous.

I want to send copies of your book to the Rivonia men, but just need to find their addresses.

Lenin
RSB

January 10 1991

Dear Rob,

As I understand it a literary journal such as SARoB is aimed at a double market: at people whose academic background gives them a special interest in literature per se, or in history, sociology and related subjects; and at the general lay public who are interested in books, specifically those concerned with Southern Africa. I am one of the latter.

I realise that sometimes it must be difficult to strike a balance between these two. In your own 'Guidelines for Reviewers' you write of the traditional academic review directed to an audience of fellow-scholars at one end, and the direct, openly personal response of the general reader at the other.

My complaint is that too many of your writers use language and constructions that exclude all except those reared and educated in the same traditions. I find them inaccessible. Sociologists are among the worst offenders (don't misunderstand me - some of my best friends are, they really are!). They have developed a language of their own, a sociology-speak, a circumbendibus, an ambagiousness (you see, I can do it too with the help of a dictionary) that makes quite straightforward concepts impenetrable and abstruse.

I have felt this for a long time. Sometimes, even with a dictionary beside me, and after reading a paragraph several times, I am unable to penetrate the chaparral (thicket) they erect to obscure their ideas.

Let me illustrate this from your last issue. Benita Parry's review of J.M. Coetzee's Age of Iron. It is titled: Thanatophany for South Africa: Death With/out Transfiguration. I didn't even understand the title. 'In borrowing Coetzee's neologism for the title of this review', she writes, 'I have tried to suggest that a novel ~~thatchiis~~ so eloquent in its imprecations of a degraded present, is unable to accommodate a politics of fulfilment and metamorphosis, registering no utopian prefiguration of a tomorrow . . . and looking to the past for softer times. But because the narrative of Elizabeth Curren's dying occupies a different discursive space from the construction of South Africa's bloody interregnum, a story that speaks an intimacy with death can contemplate a personal redemption which, sharing nothing with a 'smooth passage to Nirvana', is an epiphany to the ~~conservation~~ conservation of integrity . . .'

I don't know what that means.

Or: 'The authenticity of a text self-consciously situated in the humanist tradition, would appear to be guaranteed by declarations of adherence of decencies, and allusions to the Classical Age and The Classics, to elite music and quality prints - an idiom which in fictive terms is appropriate to the genealogy, education, tastes, social position and moral disposition of a good white woman of Cape Town'. And so on.

Too often in reviews there are references, names, that are simply unknown to those of us who lack a higher education. We haven't studied enough of the classics, we do not move in the right circles, we are unfamiliar with the current literary fads. I am not asking your writers to pander to our ignorance, to render every sentence simple and open; but to please bear in mind that we don't all belong to the same club; that simple writing can be appreciated as much by academics as by the non-specialists;

while the reviews written for the select coterie - those with the same background and education - do exclude the rest of us.

After all, the whole idea is to open up to your readers the contents of books they may be interested in, as well as to provide a forum for discussing the concepts, theories, arguments and literary merits of the writers. Will your readers respond to my complaint with a defence of obscurity?

Hilda Bernstein

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Tel: (+ 49 731) 570 94 Fax: (+ 49 731) 15 30 50

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Monday, March 16, 1992

Hilda Bernstein
Old House Farm
Dorstone
Hereford HR3 6BL

Dear Hilda,

Read your letter in the LRB re Johnson and the CP and Jews. That man really does have a bee in his bonnet about the SACP manipulating the ANC as some sort of Jewish conspiracy. I wonder whether you have seen this piece (enclosed) by Everatt who you were interviewed by some while ago. Puts a very different gloss on things — but how correct is he?

Dagmar got a good job here (Director of the Volkshochschule) and so we have moved and I still dabble in Southern African things while being mainly a child-minder. The Review effectively lapsed, but curiously enough, I met somebody here in the Church, the Evangelical Church, and I think we may be subsidized by them (Church Commission for Communication). They funded Ravan, fund *Die Suid Afrikaan* and the SA Council of Churches. The anti-apartheid movement here in Baden Württemberg is run by the Church and perhaps is so in the rest of the country as well. And, critically, subsidy is not a dirty word as it is in England.

Anyway, I have had to polish up on my church contacts and have written to Father Huddleston for a recommendation. But what is ideally needed is a clergyman in SA. As Herr Köhler said to me 'If you can get a recommendation from Frank Chikane it is virtually through with the Commission'. But that will be so difficult. I notice that Father Huddleston's *Return to South Africa* is dedicated to you and that he quotes your SARoB diary in the intro. If there is anything you can do with him to ensure a good endorsement, I would be very grateful.

Kole Omotoso, the Nigerian author, has been appointed to the Chair of English at UWC and I am hoping to devolve most things to him; providing the Church can subsidise an office and a couple of jobs in town. Still I keep my hand in and I wonder whether you would ask Rusty to review two books on the CP and socialists for us: Ellis and Sechaba, *Comrades Against Apartheid: the ANC and the SACP in Exile* and Callinicos, *Between Apartheid and Capitalism. Conversations with SA Socialists*. The latter book includes interviews with Cronin, Bundy, Mayekiso, and Alexander.

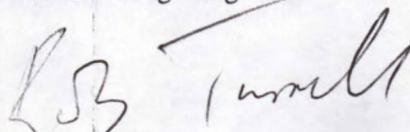
I have been doing some lecturing here and have come to look at the Review in a different light — as a resource. Hence my desire to keep it going, but hoping that the energy can come from others. I showed some films on SA and asked a friend in the BBC to send me a copy of your film of your novel, *Death*. Apparently they had lost one part and only had a master tape of the other. Do you have a copy? I would dearly like to see it.

I read that the recession gets worse and that English people may still plump for the Tories. Ouch! We managed to sell our house without losing money and the sense of relief was palpable last week when it all went through. We have been forced to give up Greencroft. End of an era. Curiously enough, my friend Liz from Cape Town (works for the Guardian) has just bought a flat next door, a repossessed flat, so there is a continuity of sorts. Recession is a sort of cleansing process for capitalism, swilling out the weak or vulnerable, leaving those fittest to survive. So many people are leaving London now — cannot afford to live there any more without job or generational support.

I look forward to tomorrow in great trepidation. If De Klerk loses, the consequence are too terrible to think about.

Hope your exile book is coming along well.

Best Wishes



14th April 92

Dear Rob,

I was away when your letter arrived, and have only just come back. We finally took our courage - and our cheque books in our hands and went to SA. After 27½ years., We went for three weeks and stayed six. First in Jhbg, seeing many old friends, having lunches and dinners and parties - have you forgotten how much South Africans socialise? A marvellously warm welcome. Driving and walking around, trying to orientate ourselves in a town with ten times as many hideous 'modern' blocks as before, and masses of roads; if there is one thing you can say that apartheid did, it built roads. Amazing how easy it is to get around Jhbg, light, free-flowing traffic on all those new roads.

We then took off on a great tourist's tour: by car to Cape Town, stopping on the way, getting the feel of that wonderful landscape. Stayed with the Wolpes in CT, then did the whole bit - Wilderness, Knysna, Storms River, Garden Route, finally Transkei, Pondoland, South Coast, Durban. It's a magnificent, overwhelmingly beautiful country and the sharpest impression is the growth of the huge, terrible gap between rich and poor. The Transkei is a sort of rural slum, overcrowded huts roofed with rusting iron, no land, not even place for a mealie patch. People just sitting around. And then the gorgeous white seaside resorts, the 'summer homes', the playgrounds of the whites. You are torn between joy in the landscape - those coastal places still so superbly unspoilt - and pity at the ravages of apartheid.

I liked Jhbg streets, Hillbrow, the street sellers, the intense liveliness and colour that opening up to the population has brought.

A party on the night we arrived in CT - Kadar Asmal's house warming - have you considered him as a contributor? He writes very openly and well. A party the next night to celebrate the result of the referendum. Lots of talking. A visit to UWC, talked to Odendaal about all my superfluous interviews, which they want for their historical records.

I think you should make a great effort to get the Review going again; it fulfils a function not covered by anything else; at its best was very useful. I hope that you can get it subsidised, and will speak to Trevor H, but it may be too late by the time I contact him. Wish I could help with Chikane, but I've never met him. Can't Serote or Vigne do anything? Rusty would be interested in reviewing the two books you mention. Regarding the film of 'Death', Odendaal also asked if it can be shown in SA. We have a video, and will see if copies can be made. The BBC is singularly unhelpful.

Searched for World that was Ours everywhere, and only saw one or two copies in a shop in the ANC building. Exclusive Books, which carries all the SA stuff, had none. Everyone keeps asking where can they get it. I promised to send copies to various people, but where can I get it? What have you done with all the unsold copies? Allistair Sparks has just managed to get a copy, praised it enormously; did you read 'The Mind of SA'? Excellent, I thought.

You were lucky to sell your house. Very upset about election results. Everything stagnant and nasty - except it's Spring. Thank you for sending the Everett article - we met him in CT; had not time to read the article yet. My exiles book is still being cut down, and various bits of editing - footnotes, etc, so it won't be out for quite a while. I'll be so glad to be shot of it - going on too long. ~~Are~~ Don't know if I told you, but Jonathan Cape are now the publishers - they purchased my contract from Harper Collisn, who had swallowe Hyman Unwin Pandora - ~~xxxxx~~ you know how it goes in the publishing world. Still, '

Do let me know about getting some copies of the book. Regards to L your German?

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Montag, 4. Mai 1992

Hilda Bernstein
Old House Farm
Dorstone
Hereford HR3 6BL

Dear Hilda,

Thanks for your letter and amazing to hear that you had returned.

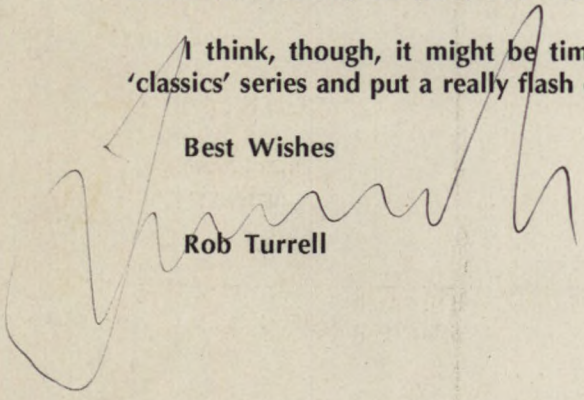
Well we did get the money from the church and we can continue. But it means 2 double issues to catch up on before I go to Cape Town in June (I have not been back for 10 years) to try and set up an office with Kole and others. Can Rusty review those two books I sent by the end of the month? Perhaps there is an extract that we can take out of your exile book?

Father Huddleston wrote a marvellous testimonial, as did Archbishop Tutu and somebody from Intertextual Theology. It is all very exciting to have some money to plan with after 5 years of this.

Heinemann in the US say that your book is not doing so well because it is dated, while the Bessie Head will become a good back issue number. Taurus bought 250 copies of your book for South Africa in 1989 and have not reordered. I asked Eve Horwitz (Wits UP) late last year and have not had a response. You can get books direct from Central Books (Bill Norris) on (081) 986 4854.

I think, though, it might be time to ask Penguin (Geraldine Cook) to put it into a 'classics' series and put a really flash cover on it — I still have 1,000 or so copies left.

Best Wishes


Rob Turrell

13 June 92

Old House Farm, etc.

Dear Robb

Going through some old sketches - boxes full of them - I came across a drawing of Bessie Head that I did in August 81 when I visited her. I thought I would send it on to the Khama Memorial Museum, but wondered if you or Randolphe would like it, or to take a copy of it, if you can use it in any way.

Lots of good stuff in SARoB. Keep it up!

Cape have just published their Autumn & winter catalogue. My book is priced at - wait for it - £25. Do you think anyone will buy it - even my best friends? Who buys books at that price?

Hilda,
You promised
something in
writing? Any
chance?

Southern African Review of Books

6 Russell Street
Woodstock 7925
Cape Town
Tel: (+27 21) 462 2012
Fax: (+27 21) 461 5407
Coordinator: Lisa Combrinck
Editor: Kole Omotoso

53 Cornwall Gardens
London SW7 4 BG
Great Britain
Tel: (+44 71) 937 1402
Editor: Randolph Vigne

Sterntalerweg 33
7900 Ulm
Germany
Tel: (+49 731) 38 82 72
Fax: (+49 731) 38 82 73
Managing Editor: Rob Turrell

Hilda Bernstein
Old House Farm
Dorstone
Hereford HR3 6BL
GREAT BRITAIN

18. September 1992

Dear Hilda Bernstein

I expect you had given up SARoB as just another fly-by-night publication, inspired by idealism and run on the proverbial smell of an oil rag. But no, after four years of regular publication we have been lucky enough to find a sponsor in Germany, where I now live. This will enable us to make a proper start in South Africa, where most of our readers should be and where we hope to become the voice of a new southern African community of academics, intellectuals and writers.

I visited South Africa in July for the first time in ten years and was lucky enough to find Lisa Combrinck, a young poet, to take on the role of coordinator (she now conducts a difficult transcontinental relationship with me — I once said long-distance relationships never work but I never learn) and to set up office with the weekly newspaper *South*. The bi-monthly magazine *Die Suid Afrikaan* is soon to move into the *South* building as well. Our first issue, since we lapsed in November 1991, was published on 3 September and was sent out as a supplement to *South* (circulation 15,000) in time for the well-known *Weekly Mail* Book Week in Cape Town. For the first time the Cape Town leg of this event was co-sponsored by *South*. The despatch of subscription copies has been delayed but you should receive your copy within a month.

The Nigerian writer, Kole Omotoso, who has been appointed Professor of English at the University of the Western Cape, has the task of indigenising the publication in Southern Africa. He has a wide experience of book and journal publishing in Nigeria in the 1980s. Randolph Vigne, whose experience in the publication of 'small' literary magazines is of an earlier vintage, becomes our London editor and provides an important link with the metropole. Our editorial board is expanded to include Njabulo Ndebele and David Bunn, both of the University of the Western Cape.

If you have written for us in the past, I hope you will continue to write for us in the future.

Best Wishes
Rob Turrell

There were no issues published between November 1991 and August 1992.
A double issue 20 & 21 (June/October 1991) was published in April 1992.
Issue 22 (September/October 1992) was published on 15 September 1992 in Cape Town and we are now back on dateline target.
Subscriptions run according to issue number and not year.

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

Montag, 26. Oktober 1992

Hilda Bernstein
Old House Farm
Dorstone
Hereford HR3 6BL

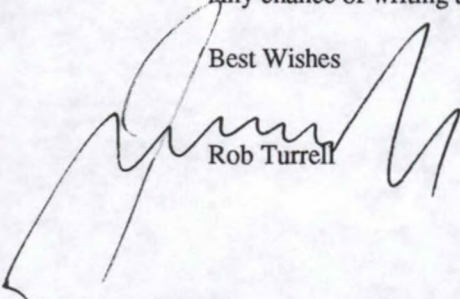
Dear Hilda,

I enclose a review from Heinemann.

European copies of the issue printed on 3 September still have not arrived. Lisa, our co-ordinator in Cape Town, decided to do the labels by hand when she could not work it out on the computer hence the delay. She is so slow to do anything and similarly with Kole. But they have to learn to do it. I am beginning to appreciate the early numbers more and more.

Any chance of writing a 'Writer at Work' item for us?

Best Wishes


Rob Turrell

And you book?

18 January 93

57 Lock Crescent
Kidlington
Oxon OX5 1HF

Dear Rob,

Enclosed is the article on writing a book about exiles. It's the usual subjective non-intellectual Bernstein stuff, and is probably too long in any case. Don't know if you can, or want to, use it, but please let me know.

Constant postponements of publication (for what always appear to be legitimate reasons) have depressed me. It's all been going on too long. Director of Cape, David Godwin, reassures me that 'It is a wonderful and marvellous achievement and Cape will publish it well,' but hey still delay it.

What's happening with SARoB? How are things going?

By the way, that review you sent me by David Anthony of Oakes College, UCSC - what journal did it come from? I get these great reviews and everyone tells me what a wonderful bit of writing it is, etc, but nobody seems to buy the bloody thing!

Best wishes

Hilda Bernstein

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Managing Editor: Rob Turrell

Dienstag, 19. Januar 1993

Hilda Bernstein
57 Lock Crescent
Kidlington, Oxon OX5 1HF

Dear Hilda,

Hope the move wasn't too strenuous. All the best in 93.

Not sure whether the Jan/Feb issue was sent to your new or old address, but I expect mail is forwarded to you. Mary Benson writes that we have become awfully dry and Randolph thinks that the writing is just so bad. Quarrels with Kole in Cape Town on the lines of Europe vs Africa have begun and I am not sure where this will end. Albie Sachs did a nice 'Book That Changed Me' (Reitz's *Commando*) though.

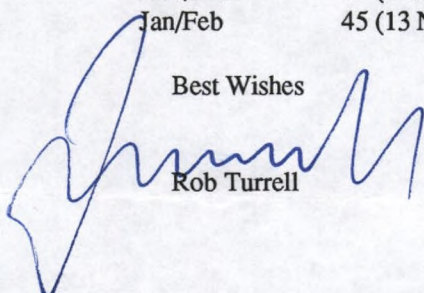
South readers are not really our readers but it looks as though we are going to tighten the knot simply for advertising reasons. They did quite well for us in the last issue (I have not received a copy yet either). We have to get into the universities more effectively.

Our sponsor on this side (the man who encouraged the Church to provide) is going out to SA as one of the UN violence monitors. He has a totally unenviable task. In fact, I fancy he would be more effective in Bosnia, Somalia or Iraq than in SA. How is a white man going to follow what is going on in PMB or Rand townships?

I am told that the Simons have completed a sequel to *Colour and Class*. I do not know when it will be published but can I book Rusty for a review? Is there any chance of your completing your ... 'writer at work' or 'writing about exiles' or an extract? in time for the March/April issue?

Issue	Copy (week)	Print (week)
March/April	4 (29 Jan)	8
May/June	13 (2 April)	17
July/August	21 (29 May)	25
Sep/Oct	30 (30 July)	34
Nov/Dec	39 (1 October)	43
Jan/Feb	45 (13 November)	49

Best Wishes



Rob Turrell

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Managing Editor: Rob Turrell

Montag, 1. Februar 1993

Hilda Bernstein
57 Lock Crescent
Kidlington, Oxon OX5 1HF

Dear Hilda,

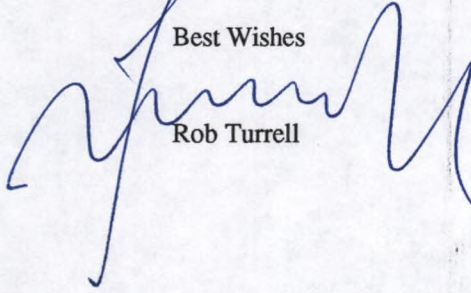
Thanks for 'discovering exiles' — marvellous stuff (rec. 22/1). Only quibble is that I thought your intro re James Philips lost the reader right at the beginning and I have cut it down to one para. I am sure you wanted to pay him a tribute, and I hope that I have left that in. But it is important to get people to read on ...

I want to put your picture on the cover (regret not having done so back in 1989), but I cannot do it for this issue. In fact, this piece will be a trailer and in the July/August issue we will have a review and you on the cover. Yours and the review will cover some of the same ground, but there are some other books being published on the theme of exile at the same time.

I hope Rusty does not mind me writing to him through you, but could I ask him to review the Lodge/Nasson book rather than the Simons (I may have misunderstood this, because he has a book *African Marriage and Family Systems in Southern Africa* out in 1993 — not for Rusty I think). If there is to be an election within the next 10 months, we have to have some superb political analysis and crystal ball gazing. I am sure Rusty can do it. The Lodge/Nasson is about the 1980s but it can be used as a springboard for an analysis of how these elections are going to go. Perhaps, he could also mention Govan Mbeki's books in passing. If he is interested I will have Mbeki's, *The Struggle for Liberation in South Africa: a Short History* sent to him as well. For the May/June issue?

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Best Wishes


Rob Turrell

no later
depending
on when
some
copies
are
available

P.S. Any idea about
an SA publication
date?

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Montag, 1. Februar 1993

Hilda Bernstein
57 Lock Crescent
Kidlington, Oxon OX5 1HF

Dear Hilda,

I have had to rethink your piece, under some pressure from Cape Town, and we have decided to carry it in the September/October issue. I am trying to disentangle myself from editing and allow them greater control. I am not at all sure why this issue of exiles is contentious, but see Kole's piece in the last issue reviewing that small book of interviews with exile writers. He appears to be very dismissive of exiles. On the whole he appears to be dismissive of a large number of issues I hold dear, but there is little point in having an African as co-editor unless he does set the agenda. I just worry that editorial standards will collapse. Anyway the upshot is that I could not win the day for having both you on your book and a review of your book. So I would prefer to have you on your book; and to have you when the book is available in the book shops in South Africa — hence the September/October issue.

I would prefer a print of yourself rather than a negative; so that I can make a negative myself for the computer.

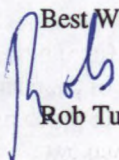
Kole is playing newspaper politics, using contacts in Nigeria; and I am alarmed as some of the off-hand comments he has made about Indians and Coloureds in the ANC. The whole ethnicity issue (witness the current dissatisfaction of Western Cape Coloureds with the negotiation process) seems to be a universal phenomenon. I have just read Enzensburger in *Granta* and a review for SARoB of the Studs Terkel book *Race*, which really paints a very subversive picture of the prospects for ethnic integration in SA and the US. Terkel's evidence suggests that African-Americans were 'better off' in the US in the 1950s. Extraordinary.

Anyway, not to paint to^odispirited a picture — although communications with Cape Town have not been as smooth as I anticipated — we have Kadir Asmal in the April/May issue, Shula Marks, and a range of new African reviewers.

We have not been able to pay reviewers since the first volume. I cannot recollect ever suggesting we could to Rusty, unless he received an old copy of our guidelines through you. If you remember, we managed to get the *Guardian* to pay you for your Mandela diary, and then used it ourselves as well. I would really like to have reviews from Rusty and perhaps could try a similar arrangement. We are now a southern African publication, although with subscribers abroad, and that is our market. For example, there is a piece on ethnicity in the March/April issue which will appear in the *New Statesman* if it survives and in the *Village Voice* in the US. And we are also going to carry a piece by Ngugi which appeared in the *Guardian* back in 1990, but which I never read at the time.

We would just like to have Rusty's (and your piece) first.

Best Wishes



Rob Turrell

4 February 93

Dear Rob,

Re article first:

No objection to cuts re James, but felt that you should add a one-line reference to the fact that he trained choirs, otherwise it doesn't fully ~~to~~ up with the line at the end.

Some literals: Page 1: I think you should add 'ANC' where indicated. Either a single concentration or else 'were'. Does 'Diaspora' need a capital 'D'.? The way the Kundera quotation is split makes it very awkward. Suggest 'Police files,' wrote Kundera, 'are etc.

Page 3. Comma spaced wrongly.

Page 5: 'parents') A dash after 'reasons'. Delete semicolon after 'erected'..

The title of the book is The Rift. 'The exile experience of South Africans' is a sub-title in smaller type. In your heading they run together.

Publication date: Godwin says the book is to be launched in SA first - at the Weekly Mail Book Week, about late August; in Britain first week in September. He will make proofs available to you in May if necessary. So you can jiggle the article/review around with that information. May I suggest Allister Spark as the reviewer? He was very enthusiastic about TWTWO.

Me on the cover: Not those awful Kennedy scrawls, I hope? I have more recent photos taken for Cape and can send negatives if you wish.

Rusty's reviews: He is prepared to do these books, and says he will try to have it ready by 2 April, but it may be May. But he's an obstinate bloke, and insists that he was to have been paid. A lifetime of standing up for what he considers to be his rights - he feels he has a right to payment, understanding that it was stated.

The copy of SARoB arrived about the same time as your letter. I have informed them of change of address. There were one or two interesting articles, but I somehow felt the contents were a bit thin.*

Best wishes

Hilda

Hilda Bernstein

* but hope you will overcome all the difficulties of new locations and people, as it does seem to me to fill a real need

12 March 93

Dear Rob,

Have been pondering over your last letter with a great deal of unease. I wonder how you came to appoint a Nigerian to edit with you and Ralph and think it would be disastrous if you to 'disentangle' yourself from the diting and allow him greater control. I don't know Kole, nor anything about him, but South African experience of Nigerians is a very bad, sad one. They have their own agenda, they cannot understand why SA blacks don't want to drive all whites into the sea, and for this and other reasons they are hostile not just to the ANC, but to the kind of policies that are associated with it and those who support it. Please think again about your own position - after all, you established SARoB with no capital or backing, kept it going - how can you relinquish editorial control at this stage? Of course, having three editors, one in England, one in Germany and only Kole in SA is not an ideal situation, and I can see that it must get more difficult for you to exercise control from Ulm (wherever that is). But if one felt real confidence in your on-the-spot editor, it would be different. I can tell you that the Nigerian experience was a very difficult, even tragic, one for all the exiles to whom I spoke.

I am told by Cape that the Book Week is the first week in September in Johannesburg, and I will then go down to Cape Town. The whole idea of my writing about writing the book was to arouse interest in it long before it was available. I cannot see the logic of publishing the article at the time when you should be publishing a review. And will Kole have the decision on who reviews? I still would like Allister.

I am getting a print of my photo and will send it on soon.

I will nag Rusty about the review. He's been very busy (still is) trying to make a decent house of this little semi box that we bought.

I share your feeling of disturbance over 'ethnicity'.

Think over this question of editorial control

Best wishes

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Managing Editor: Rob Turrell

Mittwoch, 17. März 1993

Hilda Bernstein
57 Lock Crescent
Kidlington, Oxon OX5 1HF

Dear Hilda,

My intention to make myself redundant has been ignored in the much the same way as a lot of my 'diktat' (or 'imperial faxes') from here about how to run the Review. Perhaps just as well. I think I can go out to Cape Town as a visiting Prof early next year and things will have improved by then. Since the John Birt affair, being a freelance academic does not carry so much stigma.

I enclose a piece on Kole (it is nonsense that he was forced to flee from Nigeria). He is stimulating and exciting; the fact that he is non-South African is attractive. Plus I met him in London and he 'wooded' me/the Review. Nobody inside South Africa ever expressed so much enthusiasm. I always knew that he was a writer and not an editor; his grammar is worse than my daughter's. I wanted his flamboyance and PR to work for the review. I hoped he would leave the editing to me. But then he started playing 'kaffir, kaffir' and objecting to being my 'messenger boy'.

Anyhow Randolph, whom Kole respects because of the *New African* in the 1960s, may sort this one out. Kole is in London next week for the Black Book Fair in Camden Town Hall.

Re the Kole cutting: publishing with the enemy. Does it matter any more? People have shorter memories than elephants.

I enclose a piece which we did not carry on the last WM book week; it was dated when we got it, it read like a report and the noise of grinding axes was too deafening. Still it does give a flavour that you will not have had from the newspaper reports.

Hilda, I know what your intention in the writing about writing the book was. But you still cover a lot of ground that a reviewer will traverse as well. And I would prefer to have something by you any day in preference to a review. And I get to put you on the cover, which is the compromise I think I struck in having you later in the year. A small tribute from me. *

It will be like an extract and we have often carried extracts in preference to reviews of important books in the past.

I had already asked Tim Holmes to review your book by the way. Perhaps he will do it now for some other SA journal. Sparks will review for the British/US press. I arranged for Rob Nixon to review it for the *Village Voice* — I sent him a copy of your article.

Best Wishes

Rob Turrell

A P.S. I did float the idea of giving your article to Die Suid-Afrikaan^{er}. But I would be sorry to lose it.

Still Trapped In The Conditions Of Their Moral Abhorrence The Weekly Mail Book Week, 6 -13 September 1992, in Cape Town by Peter Horn

Despite the fact that the Weekly Mail announces its bookweek as a 'forum for writers to speak about the subjects closest to their heart' (WM 21.8.92), its program tells you differently. The book week is a book week and not a writers' festival, i.e. the reason for its existence is the wish of publishers and booksellers to sell books. Nevertheless the bookweek did have its interesting moments.

Literature and Nationhood

The intellectual highlight of the Bookweek was, without a doubt the debate, South African Literature and the Construction of Nationhood, between Najabulo Ndebele and Kole Omotoso, introduced by Brenda Cooper. In his very first sentence Ndebele challenged the pious attitude that writing and politics should be kept in separate drawers, pointing out that where the social opportunities for artistic development are so unevenly distributed as they are in South Africa, speaking about culture means speaking about politics.

The Weekly Mail Bookweek itself again and again demonstrates this state of affairs, where a few claim what has been produced for all, and where the interests of the affluent book buyers are paramount over the development of culture in a wider sense. Where the state of literature mirrors in a very fundamental way the imbalances in the country, the future of our culture is inextricably bound up with the struggle for liberation. The long-lasting affirmative action of the state and parastatals in favour of whites has produced a literature which at best showed a bad conscience about what 'we' had done to 'them', at worst was callously indifferent within their aesthetic playground to the struggle of the oppressed to regain their humanity in a culture of their own. But even the moral abhorrence of the liberal white writers which gained them world-wide acclaim trapped them in the conditions of their abhorrence. Because of this white South African literature is limited to a narrow range of concerns within a particular set of historical circumstances: It owes its achievements to the special legitimising opportunities as well as to the agonies of conscience that nurtured its growth.

Ndebele did not deny the lasting relevance of that literature, but pointed out that at the same time writing in the indigenous languages was marginalised as non-literature (some kind of ethnographic material), and black writing as 'non-standard' literature, essentially naive, crude, untutored, inexperienced, and ultimately incapable of defining a literary culture. Although some white writers may not have intended it they thus effectively oppressed other literatures, and appropriated in this way South African nationhood to themselves as a privileged group.

Ndebele maintained that what the future may hold for literature in South Africa is a general loss of focus, with the possibility of new creative problems arising in the quest for a new society. The future of literature in our country, Ndebele concluded, is inseparable from the future of democracy and the difficult task of working towards it. Writers and artists of all kinds need to be centrally located in that struggle for democracy. The nurturing of their imaginations and new artistic skills will take place within that struggle and will be informed by it. Kole Omotoso expressed his scepticism about the ability of democracy to solve the problems of South Africa, arguing that even Europe in its accumulative phase was not democratic, and that democracy was an imposition by the metropolis.

Challenging the Metropolis at the Mayibuye Centre

The great majority of the audience missed what were probably the other two most topical and important debates for writers at the Bookweek, because they were placed at Mayibuye Centre. In the session on Monday, Challenging the Metropolis as Marketplace for Third World Literature, Kole Omotoso, Rustum Kozain, Vernon February and Andries Oliphant wrestled with the problem that it is the publishers and critics of the metropolis who decide not only what the Metropolis reads of 'Third World' literature but also what other 'Third World' countries can read.

It was suggested that what we need is a 'Common market' for African and generally 'Third World' books and publications, and a network which allows the circulation of those writers who do not write for the metropolis but for the 'Third World', who do not pass the screening devices of the 'First World', and are therefore excluded from this world-wide intellectual traffic. Kole Omotoso made the point that whatever he published in Britain had to satisfy someone in Britain, and that material from Africa was subjected to much editing to 'make it readable' to a European audience. On the other hand, book distribution in Nigeria was controlled by multinational companies, and indigenous Nigerian

publishers had to be creative to develop new channels of distribution, such as supermarkets. Rustom Kozain, while analysing the way in which the metropolis appropriated the products of the periphery, cautioned against overlooking that the Metropolis is also inside us, and that we need to challenge the canon of the metropolis in ourselves.

Vernon February drew on his experiences in Surinam to describe the struggle of a creole culture to establish itself there and to gain recognition in Holland. Andries Oliphant described how book publishing and the book trade were dominated by vested interests, and that a new culture could only flourish with massive support for publications, libraries and literacy campaigns in communities so far excluded from a literary culture.

Multiple Literatures: One National culture?

It is generally taken for granted that a nation is a community of people whose unity was established by the fact that all its members spoke the same language, and thus had no difficulty in understanding one another and that linguistic unity was a sufficient basis for literary identity. Polyethnic and multilingual states like ours do not fit that description of the nation state. Sizwe Satyo stated in the panel discussion on Multiple Literatures: One National culture? (with Neville Alexander and Sidney Zotwana) on Tuesday that this panel-discussion marks the start of the process of engaging in the task of breaking down the ethnic and linguistic boundaries that have kept us apart for such a long time that we were beginning to forget what our brothers and sisters in the other linguistic or ethnic camp looked like.

Working across these artificial boundaries should enable us to comprehend the lives and times of not only the various South African writers but also South Africans generally. Neville Alexander contended that the mix of cultures and ethnic groups which constituted South African society could not be unscrambled except by force; but that on the other hand, there was no common single culture in South Africa, nor was this possible. While we would be able to create a core culture to which everybody could subscribe, the various cultures of South Africa would continue to exist. He insisted that culture and language was not co-extensive, and that culture was the product not of language but of communication. If the view that a multilingual society is not possible were correct then we would end up with a partition of South Africa.

Sidney Zotwana pointed out the way in which Xhosa literature was used by the missionaries and the state to produce good Christians and good citizens. Literature is a force that is not only affected by social circumstance, but in turn affects society. Literature has the power to either subjugate or liberate. It is a not so subtle form of racism to disregard the concerns of the majority of the population, which was reflected in the composition of most other panels at the bookweek. They were nearly pure white, with the occasional token black, and they revolved around issues of concern to upper middle class whites, and were far removed from the issues of South Africa today. On the other hand, these panels which foregrounded the real issues of the writer in a society of transition quite 'naturally' were predominantly black, because blacks are the experts on these topics.

Who owns which words?

The prose and poetry reading, In their own words, brought us two writers who are a must at any Cape Town festival: John Coetzee, whose muted rendering of the first chapter of his most mature novel yet, *Age of Iron*, was for me an exciting experience, and Andre Brink, who rendered two extracts from his novel *An Act of Terror*. Far less convincing was the rather bland and unfunny extract from Mike Nicol's novel, *This Day and Age*, who merely showed that he is not in the same league, and Serote's reading of his poetry. I respect Mongane Serote, I believe he is one of the best South African poets, but to invite him to read from his worst volume of poetry ever, *Third World Express* (David Philip 1992), shows a lapse of taste, when Kelwyn Sole, who just published his powerful *Projections in the Past Tense* (Ravan Press 1992), is not invited, only to be explained by the fact that the committee responsible for the program knows about big names but nothing about quality.

One may even suspect that they do not read books, and that their criteria are notoriety rather than quality or poetic merit. Ironically, on the evening of the massacre at Bisho, a member of the audience asked Andre Brink whether he thought that a market still existed for political writing in South Africa. The perception that the need for 'politicised' writing has ceased in 1990 with the ritual of burying apartheid is a gross insensitivity to what happens in what whites perceive as 'black on black violence': they deny responsibility for what is still apartheid violence by making the victims of the massacre responsible for their own murder, and thus no longer a fit subject for the literature of guilt which they call 'political'.

Collection Number: A3299

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