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History, experience and culture

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BOZZOLI

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND

AFRICAN STUDIES INSTITUTE

African Studies Seminar Preogramme

Venue and Time

The seminar will be held on Monday at 4.00 pm in Room 319, Richard Ward Building.

Date	Speaker and Title
21.3.83	Belinda Bozzoli *History, experience and culture.*

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> Books and magazines contain generalised notions and only sketch the course of events in the world as best they can; they never let you have an immediate, direct, animated sense of the lives of Tom, Dick and Harry. If you are not able to understand real individuals, you can't understand what is universal and general.[1]

THE HISTORY WORKSHOP

The phrase, 'History Workshop'[2] has a variety of connotations, all of which acquire special meanings in the unique and stifled intellectual milieu of South Africa today. The word 'history' to most who have been through the South African school system (whether privileged whites, or Bantu-educated blacks) conjures up images of great men, abstracted dates, lists of 'causes' and endless replays of the Great Trek. To those who have any access to alternative historical accounts, the capitalised 'History' connotes the distorted and one-sided version of our past which Christian-National Education has imposed upon us, with its teleological view of the unfolding of the *volk*, its objectification of blacks, and its implicit or explicit racism. To those who have escaped these twin evils of boredom and indoctrination, 'history' may signify the more measured tones of the liberal historiography prevalent in English-speaking universities with its powerful critique of racism and tyranny, and its scholarly rigour. But pervading many parts of our culture is a deep distrust of, and disdain for, depictions of the past. Perhaps the overt manipulation of history-writing and teaching by our rulers has bred this sense of disdain; even liberal historiography, although less overt in its intentions, implies a 'ruling class' perspective, with its tendency to focus on rulers, governments, power,

policy and politics. Whatever the reason, it appears that to label an enterprise 'historical' in this culture, is to ask to be mentally consigned to the realms of boredom and pedantry. To add 'workshop' to the word 'history' implies a degree of commitment to labouring in the dusty archives of a forgotten and irrelevant past that borders on crankiness.

As is well known, the 'new school' of radical historiography has over the past decade made some inroads into the cultural philistinism which prevails. The very nature of the radical enterprise has of necessity drawn all of its protagonists into historical work. The roots of our present system of exploitation and oppression have had to be sought and exposed through a re-examination of the past. The hitherto uncharted path of the development of a capitalist system of production has had to be sketched out, and links made between its economic and its wider social, political and cultural effects. The origins of particular classes have been sought in the past and the interactions between classes traced over time. And so on.

It is in this context that one might expect a fourth, alternative, conception of the nature and importance of history to have emerged – that one might see developing a challenge to the rejection of the past, so prevalent in the culture at large. And yet the growth of an alternative conception of history within this country has turned out to be a painfully slow and difficult one, in spite of some acceptance of the main arguments of radical historiography. Two interlocking reasons for this seem to emerge. The first is that the dominant philistinism and anti-historical character of the culture has affected the left as much as the mainstream. The search for immediate relevance in every intellectual enterprise has led all too many aspiring radicals into undertaking quick but perhaps sometimes shallow examinations of current issues rather than the slower, more painful historically-based analyses of major processes of class formation, struggle and interaction.[3] This is not to imply that current issues are not worth studying. It is simply that our knowledge of the major outlines of the development of our society is still so weak, that placing those current issues in any sort of historical and structural context remains, and will remain, immensely difficult in the absence of longer-term, more ambitious, and perhaps less instantly gratifying work.

The second reason for the difficulties experienced in generating an alternative conception of 'history' lies, perhaps, in the strong hold over radical scholarship in this country of an Althusserian, and/or structuralist method of analysis, at least until recently. This is not unconnected with the first reason. The innate distaste for the past which prevails in this culture renders it particularly fertile

ground for the anti-historical bias of structuralist Marxism. Whereas in Western Europe this brand of Marxism emerged in countries with a rich and powerful alternative Marxist tradition, in South Africa it arrived and implanted itself in what was virtually virgin territory in the mid-1970s, and achieved a remarkable and continuing hold over the thinking of many. The primary emphasis in this brand of thought has been on theoretical rather than historical work, and what history has been written has tended to be subordinated to the rigorous demands of theoretical concepts of considerable complexity. Once again, this is not to imply that history is in any way an alternative to theory, or that all theorising is a worthless pursuit. The point is that in the already anti-historical culture in which we live Althusserianism has not made it any easier to develop a radical alternative historical tradition of a rich and wide-ranging nature.

Every epoch and programme of 'people's history' has its own 'terms of opposition',[4] and in the South African context it is these broad problems which have confronted the University of the Witwatersrand's 'History Workshop'. In developing a programme which attempts to rectify some of these problems, over a period of five years it has developed the seeds of a local school of inter-disciplinary work which seeks both to continue the task of re-shaping the study of the past, and to promote the popularisation of its findings. This book is one outgrowth of the former set of activities, while a number of other Workshop artifacts constitute the combined results of the second set. Before discussing the analytical issues raised by this book, it would seem pertinent to say a little more about this wider context of the activities of the Workshop – indeed these activities bear directly upon the nature of the history it seeks to encourage.

Research

From the beginning our objectives have been threefold. The first objective has been to participate in, facilitate and stimulate the writing of scholarly history of a high standard by local people in the main. The original phrase used in the first History Workshop collection *Labour, Townships and Protest*[5] was 'decolonising history' – which captures something of the intentions of the Workshop. It aimed to raise the level of awareness amongst local academics, students and wider groups of the value of historical work, and to instil a love of research. It has aimed to develop a consciousness of the importance of providing alternative conceptions of the past; and it has sought to enrich our

understanding of the local and the regional, as well as the wider national and international context in which such concerns need to be imbedded. By their quality and rigour alternative histories seek to provide a serious challenge to ruling conventional wisdoms. Such history challenges by its content – for it focusses on the lives of ordinary people, rather than on 'great men and women', or abstracted structures and concepts. It also challenges by its methodology – for it makes use of oral and other sources not normally developed by conventional historians. And finally it challenges by drawing from and engaging with other disciplines in a creative way – 'alternative' history benefits by rejecting the confinement of disciplinary boundaries. As Raphael Samuel has written:

> People's history always represents some sort of attempt to broaden the basis of history, to enlarge its subject matter, make use of new raw materials and offer new images of knowledge. Implicitly or explicitly it is oppositional, an alternative to 'dry as dust' scholarship, and history as taught in the schools.[6]

It has been with these aims in mind that two academic conferences have been held under the auspices of the Workshop, and that this, the second publication of conference proceedings, has been undertaken. Research work of a high standard has been sought and encouraged, amongst students, academics and interested non-academics. This prime and central research aim of the Workshop should not be forgotten in the face of its possibly more colourful activities outlined below.

Cultural 'artifacts'

The second aim has been to participate in, facilitate and stimulate the creation of historical or cultural commodities ('artifacts' or 'hardware'). By this is meant things such as popular books, photographs, films, slide shows, recorded oral testimony, etc.; or performances – such as plays, talks and other public events. (Some of these are also artifacts since they can be recorded on tape, video or paper). These are primarily directed towards conveying historical events and processes relating to the history of the underclasses to a non-academic audience. To this end the Workshop has (often in collaboration with other groups) stimulated, produced, or facilitated the production of the modest sum of four plays, one popular history with another on its way, four slide shows, two photographic exhibitions, two talks and performances, one film, and two public lectures.[7]

The second aim should not be construed as being autonomous from the first. Its greater attraction to those who seek contemporary relevance is understandable but based on a misconception. One activity should be seen as flowing out of and indeed feeding from the other. Without rigorous research no popularisation could take place. If the populariser is the salesperson of ideas, the researcher is the worker who produces them. Thus the research work of David Coplan, Eddie Koch, Tim Couzens and others provided much of the material which went into the making of the slide and tape show *The Jazz Maniacs;* numerous research papers provided the background to the slide and tape show *Decade of Defiance,* including much of Tom Lodge's work; Charles van Onselen's essay 'Randlords and Rotgut' was the basis for the Junction Avenue Theatre Company's play of the same name; while Luli Callinicos's popular book *Gold and Workers,* and the slide show of the same name, are both based on numerous studies as well as her own labours. Many other examples of this interaction between researcher and populariser (in some cases the same individual wears both hats) may be cited.

Popularisation and the search for audiences

The relationship is not simply a one-way one. The experience of popularising can illuminate the practice of research in innumerable ways. The populariser, for example, may learn from the people from whom his or her study is drawn. In Gramsci's words:

> Is a philosophical movement properly so called when it is devoted to creating a specialised culture among restricted intellectual groups, or rather when in the process of elaborating a form of thought superior to 'common sense' and coherent on a scientific plane it never forgets to remain in contact with the 'simple' and, indeed, finds in this contact the source of the problems it sets out to study and to resolve?[8]

It is in this light that the third arm of the Workshop needs to be seen – that of its efforts to convey the findings of its research and production of artifacts to audiences drawn from a wide constituency, from all races, and particularly from the working and other poorer classes, in popularised form – at workshop 'open days', through the writing of popularised history, and through whatever other means are available. To this end, the Workshop has mounted two 'Open Days', and promoted talks, lectures and performances. It has had to make special efforts, in a society in which alternative history has shallow roots, to ensure that its audiences

are not drawn simply from the wealthy suburbs and the University, and has succeeded in this to some extent.

(a) *Who are the people?*

Several problems are raised by activities of this kind. One is that of the ambiguous nature of the concept of 'popular culture'. As Raphael Samuel has warned, there are many contenders for the label 'the people' and in Europe he identifies not only left-wing but also right-wing and liberal versions of people's history. As he remarks, 'people's history, whatever its particular subject matter, is shaped in the crucible of politics, and penetrated by the influence of ideology on all sides.'[9] In South Africa it seems to be increasingly the case that the contenders for legitimate use of the 'popular' label are cultural nationalists on the one hand, and more worker-orientated historical materialists on the other. The Workshop, like any movement of its type, finds itself the subject of competition between these and other groups, and risks being swamped or diverted from its purpose by such competition in the battle-torn milieu of South Africa today.

(b) *History-writing from below*

The second problem raised by the act of popular presentation is not unrelated to the first – this is the problem of how to encourage and stimulate the writing of *their own history* and the recovery of *their own cultural past* by people drawn from the poorest classes. The recording of oral testimony has been one means whereby participants' own versions of the past have been made known.[10] However, in an anti-historical culture, with a low level of literacy and of worker organisation, it would seem hopelessly too ambitious to attempt to achieve the level of popular participation in history-writing that exists, for example, in England today. Small efforts have been made in this direction. Dikobe's reminiscences provide one example;[11] the play *Ilanga Lizophumela Abasebenzi*, based on worker experiences of a strike, and performed mainly by workers, another. At the 1978 workshop, garment workers attended, and actively commented on, a slide show of the history of their union, while at the 1981 workshop, worker audience participation in most events was extensive. But audience participation is not sufficient – it runs against the emphasis of the Workshop on the *production*, rather than *consumption*, of historical work. Taking an active role in steering and stimulating this kind of production

has not been easy in a hostile and often shallow cultural milieu; the temptation to take on the role of 'sponge' – of absorbing and squeezing out anything that it happens to encounter – has been difficult to resist.

(c) *Subjectivity and change*

The third problem is that of the status of the 'subjective' aspect of social analysis – a factor which arises automatically out of the kinds of work we have engaged in. While later in this introduction more will be said about the analytical significance of the subjective for the moment what needs to be pointed out is its social significance for those who wish to understand processes of change in the society at large.

While the historical past may be governed by abstract and objective tendencies, those who lived that history, and those who are living its continuation today, experience it subjectively, and their experiences are embodied in the culture around them. Studies which confine themselves to an examination of 'objective tendencies' are not only bound to be sterile and perhaps esoteric; they risk the possibility of losing touch with the perceptions of ordinary people. The abstractionism and perhaps even manipulative tendencies in certain versions of historical materialism – particularly those which seek the 'correct line' at the expense of all other considerations – are not only to be doubted for their implicit elitism, they also generate another risk – that of losing ground to philosophies and interpretations which *are* able to resonate with the lives and wishes of the poor. This is one of the reasons why Gramsci's opinions are so relevant for our situation. He saw the Western European socialist movement losing ground to nationalism precisely because of the tendency of orthodox Marxism

> to reify concepts like 'class', 'state', 'party', and 'mode of production', losing sight of the individual human actors that made up these larger social units.[12]

Or, in Wilhelm Reich's words:

> While we presented the masses with superb historical analyses and economic treatises on the contradictions of imperialism, Hitler stirred the deepest roots of their emotional being. As Marx would have put it, we left the praxis of the subjective factor to the idealists; we acted like mechanistic economistic materialists.[13]

In the United States, too, the history of socialist appeals to the black community is marked by the frequent failure on the part of the socialists to understand, or even acknowledge, the appeal which nationalism has for the working classes. In some cases this meant, ironically, a rapid and easy *capitulation* to nationalism when it showed itself to be a powerful, and not exclusively middle class, force.[14] Unless an analysis can be developed which eschews economistic and vulgar categorisations, and which takes serious account of cultural factors, a similar pattern may be expected to develop here.

This is one of the reasons why working to develop an alternative history which looks at things from below is so important. To repeat Gramsci's phrase, 'If you are not able to understand real individuals, you can't understand what is universal and general.' To escape becoming imprisoned in abstract and sterile theoretical debates; to confront and understand the history and nature of the spontaneous consciousness of ordinary people; to develop an analysis of culture which takes account of class and capitalism, rather than simply race and nationalism, these are all aspects of our project.

Thus these studies, when taken together with the other activities of the History Workshop, represent an attempt to develop a history which, far from being either boring or propagandistic, can be translated readily into other idioms and media. Such a history should resonate with the lives of ordinary people rather than reflect the deliberations of the ruling classes or the theoretical concerns of structuralist abstractionism. It should also aim to define major themes, movements and developments in history rather than sacrifice all broader judgments on the altar of 'immediate relevance', and for the most part confine its theoretical considerations (for these are always present) to the 'middle level' rather than the grander heights. The hope is that in keeping theory close to the empirical a history which is immediate, understandable, and full of insight may be developed.

In exploring these aspects of analysis, four central themes may be identified, and it is through an examination of these themes that we may come to understand the thrust and significance of the papers collected together in this book. This introduction will not take the usual form – of going through each section and paper in order, and providing a brief introduction to the main arguments contained therein. Rather it will put forward its own argument, situating the papers in a discussion of each of the four themes identified – experience, culture, resistance, and region.

EXPERIENCE

The first theme which emerges from this volume is also a central concern of the wider project of the Workshop itself, the theme of 'experience'. Any social analyst seriously attempting to confront the problem of writing about society from below will of necessity have also to confront the problem of the kind of evidence presented by the first-hand testimonies of ordinary participants in the events of the past and the present.

> Mokohare. Now I assume another blanket . . . In crossing the river I become a new man, different from the one I was at home. At home I was secure . . . Now that I am on this side I assume a different attitude from the one where I was soft with other men . . . this side I have to be tough and assume manhood.[15]

Thus goes the song Basotho migrant miners sing to the Caledon River as they cross it on the way to work. How does the social analyst make use of this kind of material? What does he or she make of the masculine ethos, the assumption of a 'new identity', the nostalgia for home, contained in this brief poetical statement?

Two extreme tendencies may be discerned in the literature. In many cases, the tendency is for the analyst to use such material simply in an illustrative or colourful manner. It is thus granted a subordinate status to the less subjective kinds of material which may be gleaned from statistics, reports of events by disinterested observers, circumstantial evidence and structured and semi-structured interviews. It is assumed that conceptual and theoretical issues are to be discussed and solved on a different plane from experiential ones.

By contrast, in other cases, epitomised perhaps by the phenomenological approach, such testimony may be elevated to a much higher status, being regarded perhaps as 'pure', uncontaminated material, itself the source of meaning. Dunbar Moodie's paper 'Mine Culture and Miners' Identity' in this volume contains a critical exposition of this viewpoint as manifested in the work, for example, of Alverson, who wishes to emphasise the autonomy of the experience and self-realisation of mineworkers.

Both of these views of the use of experiential testimony are, I would suggest, extreme. In the first instance, there is possibly a lack of trust in the evidence of ordinary people, and perhaps an assumption of the innate superiority of the conceptualisations of intellectuals. This is precisely where a remote and unappealing Marxism has its roots, a point which Victor Seidler picks up when

he writes:

> It is essential to destroy the widespread prejudice that philosophy is a strange and difficult thing just because it is the specific intellectual activity of a particular category of specialists . . . It must first be shown that all men are 'philosophers', by defining the limits and characteristics of the 'spontaneous philosophy' which is proper to everybody.[16]

This echoes Schutz's idea of 'the wide-awake self integrat(ing) in its working and by its working its present, past and future into a specific dimension of time; it realises itself as a totality in its working acts; it communicates with others through working acts; it organises the different spatial perspectives of the world of daily life through working acts.'[17] And indeed the humanistic thrust of the phenomenological viewpoint, like that of the existentialists, is a welcome antidote to mechanistic determinism. However, its denial of all structural determination and of all social and historical process renders it weak in crucial respects. As Moodie writes of Alverson:

> [his] treatment of the mines is reconstructed from the recollections of miners. Since his understanding of the black miner's reality depends upon narrated experiences *already integrated* into the wider life-worlds of informants, naturally he is able to posit an extraordinary level of autonomy of consciousness on their part.[18]

In the one case, thus, experiential testimonies are not used to the full; in the other they are elevated to a status beyond their inherent value. What is needed is some way of treading a path between these two extremes. The papers contained here suggest four areas in which experiential testimony may be used by the researcher without falling into either of these traps. These are what I have called the qualitative, ideological, interpretative and factual uses of experiential data. I will briefly outline each of these in turn.

By the *qualitative* use of such data is meant the capacity of such material to convey something of the quality of the lives of people to outsiders who have themselves not experienced that way of living, or to the participants in that way of living themselves. One of Moodie's informants captures to perfection the constant threat of death in the work he performed, and the feeling that life on the mines is akin to wartime battle:

> Working in the mines is an agonizing, painful experience. Your work is in an extremely dangerous place. Anything can happen to you at any place. Whenever you go down into the shaft, you are not sure that you will come out alive. You don't want to think about it. But it keeps coming. Whenever an accident occurs and someone is either killed or badly injured, you think of your family and you become very unstable and lonely. You feel you want to see them for the last time, because the inevitable will come to you sometime. Death is so real you keep on praying and thanking God each time you come out alive.[19]

The point need not be laboured. Not only does testimony of this kind allow us to enter into the world of the mine – but it also conveys to us the degree to which the autonomy and integrity of the miner are sustained in the face of harsh experiences. In cases where people whose origins lie in the working and poorer classes have gained some training in writing, their qualitative testimony may be expressed in a poetical or literary form, making it perhaps richer and even more capable of conveying nuance and meaning. The work of Modikwe Dikobe, which has always been valued highly by the History Workshop, seems to possess this kind of quality, for it remains relatively uncontaminated by petty-bourgeois concerns, and able to speak for class and community as much as the individual. He, too, makes the analogy with war and fighting in his depiction of the first migrants to the Kimberley mines, 'Dispossessed':

> You bid farewell to your wives.
> None cried. Because your custom allows
> No crying.
> Soldiers to battle.
> A long column. Day and night
> You walked; tired, fatigued, thirsty, parched throat.
> Feet sore. Some could go no longer
> Died. By the wayside buried.[20]

Telling us that mine labour is like going to battle is thus, on one level, conveying a feeling for the experiences of the poor, a feeling which permits the middle classes to empathise and understand.

Writing down, or permitting to be written down, the experiences of ordinary people has another effect – that of legitimising and concretising them *to the people themselves*. The act of making public and general an experience which may have been perceived until then as private and individual, the act of translating it into another medium, produces a profoundly emotional response: the 'oohs' and 'aahs' of black audiences who attended plays such as *Ilanga* or *Marabi* seem to reflect their awe and amazement as the capacity of the theatrical medium to seize upon their experiences and convey them back to them from without, to make

'objective' the 'subjective'. Of course the middle classes are used to this sort of thing – for the portrayal of their interests and experience dominates our culture (of which more will be said below). But the poor, the subordinate, are less blasé, when their experiences are given external legitimacy of this sort.

The second way in which experiential testimony may be used is the *ideological*. Dikobe's poem is on one level qualitative, as we have suggested, because it enables us to think ourselves into the experience being portrayed. But because 'all men are philosophers' there is contained in the poem a philosophical component. The poet is not simply, moreover, an *individual* philosopher – his words reflect and convey something of the philosophical bent of the people whose views he is trying to portray and whose readership he is trying to gain. Dikobe's depiction of the loss of land and self-sufficiency includes a nostalgia for the affluent, but also patriarchal past:

> You were born in affluence
> Land as vast as sea
> Pegging, pegging each seasonal year
> A plot for ploughing
> Hundreds of livestock you possessed
> Your dwellings a fortress
> Your wives as many as your fingers
> Each night, a different woman –
> Not a word of grouse[21]

The theme of masculinity is echoed in the already-quoted 'Another Blanket' – which reflects the ethos surrounding minework, seen by many as a 'trial of strength, a test of manhood which corresponds with initiation'.[22] No doubt this philosophical view is enmeshed with the perception of minework as akin to the army, and has deep roots in pre-industrial ideologies relating to war and absence from home.

Thus the testimonies we have quoted have a double and perhaps contradictory quality. They are indeed portrayals of an experience, which has an undeniably economic root, but also reflect and embody the attitudes of their authors towards that experience. They are thus invaluable sources for the discovery and analysis of the consciousness of ordinary people, of the mould in which their experience is spontaneously cast. Of course this consciousness may itself be contradictory and contain a multitude of complex strands. To suggest that 'all men are philosophers' is not to say that they are trained intellectuals with a need and capacity to systematise and make consistent their views. Unlike the ruling classes, the

subordinate classes often lack 'organic intellectuals' to make more coherent their philosophies. The philosophy to be found in the testimony of ordinary people is indeed a challenge to the capacity of such trained intelectuals to interpret and understand, without simplifying, or attempting to reduce popular consciousness to those aspects most beloved of the intellectual concerned. Dikobe's poem, for example, contains examples of both a nationalist and a class awareness; the former being reflected in his more nostalgic phrases; the latter in his ultimate acceptance of the inevitability of the new order: 'Take another contract'.

Another oral informant – Mrs S. – whose testimony is being collected by the African Studies Institute – reveals even greater complexity in her spontaneous consciousness. While she is able to point unambiguously to some of the sources of her own poverty and oppression, at different times she identifies different forces at work. Thus her targets for criticism range from the chief, the 'Boers', whites, black gangs, potato farmers, bus companies, employers in general, the 'Boer government', the pass system, policemen, other ethnic groups, the educational system, the system of land and home ownership, and indeed Western civilisation itself. Mrs S's 'nationalism' – her identification of herself as black and African – does not include a monolithic perception of either black or white society. Blacks can be bad and whites good.[23]

The challenge to the interpreter of such testimonies is in giving a materialist and historical explanation of these complexities – in seeking their roots in the past societies from which the informants might come, as well as in the present changing situation in which they find themselves. It is in resisting the temptation to simplify and categorise these complexities, or to see in them only what 'theory' permits to be seen. It is also in tracing the relationship which may, at times, develop between ordinary people with their confused consciousness, and aspirant organic intellectuals who attempt at certain times to capture and transcend the philosophies of the poor.

Helen Bradford's paper 'A Taste of Freedom' shows how this attempt on the part of the ICU was at times successful, not only, as she says, because of the economic hardships which Africans were experiencing and which the ICU sought to rectify, but also because the ICU came to be seen as a movement 'which protected blacks from white injustice':

> Although the initials stood for a fancy title, to us Bantu it meant basically when you ill-treat the African people, I See You; if you kick them off the pavements and say they must go together with the cars

> and the ox-carts, I See You. I See You when you do not protect the Bantu . . . I See You when you kick my brother, *I See You.*[24]

In successfully presenting itself as their 'own' organisation, the ICU achieved a resonance with the consciousness of ordinary people which it later seems to have lost. As Bradford suggests, this was not only because of large-scale repression, but also (perhaps the two are not unconnected) because 'most of the practices of ICU officials were infused with their middle class, liberal understanding of the causes and solutions to oppression and exploitation.'[25]

The testimonies of the poor, far from being mere illustrations which may supplement 'harder' analysis, are themselves a rich source of understanding and meaning, which should not be ignored in present-day South Africa, where many aspire to become the organic intellectuals of the oppressed, and yet attempts to understand the philosophies of those oppressed people remain extraordinarily limited.

The third use of experiential testimony I have called the *interpretive*. The philosophising of those who bear the brunt of exploitative and oppressive relationships may guide the researcher into asking new questions, and they may lend startling insight, at times, into the real, as opposed to the normative, nature of class relations and struggles. Kas Maine, the black sharecropper whose story is told in this collection, summed up the essential nature of his own class position as follows:

> *Die saad is myne, die skare is myne . . . die span is myne, alles is myne, die grond is syne.*[26]

Kas's perception may surprise the social analyst convinced of the superiority of his or her abstract tools of analysis; it also makes concrete what may previously have been a hypothetical analysis of the class character of sharecropping, based on normative statements thereof in documents. The same could be said of the Indian flower seller's interpretation, recorded here by Ruth Tomaselli, of the way in which his particular business involves 'dead value':

> You have got to keep this flower alive and fresh. Faced with this tremendously competitive circumstance under which you survive you learn fast. You've also got to sell these flowers in a short time or you are faced with the prospect of selling dead value.[27]

Here the informant advances the understanding of the analyst, not

only about the world of the individual flower-seller, but about the nature of flower-selling as a general occupation and form of economic activity. When E.P. Thompson talks of class as 'experience' it would seem that these two examples are an approximation of what he meant. While clearly neither informant has an abstract theoretical training, there is a clarity of understanding on their part, based on the fact that 'experience . . . arises because men and women . . . are rational, and they think about what is happening to themselves and their world.'[28]

Another kind of interpretive use of such material appears in Julia Wells's paper on women in resistance in Potchefstroom between 1912 and 1930. Here the informant directly challenges the normative interpretation which many intellectuals might be expected to make. Faced perhaps with figures on Communist Party membership in Potchefstroom, the analyst might conclude that a resonance between Marxist ideas and popular consciousness had been achieved. But this was not necessarily the case:

> There was one man in particular who recruited for these meetings the Communist Party with great fervour. When one man asked him why he should join, the answer was given that he would be able to carry a briefcase, like the organisers do.[29]

Here, therefore, we see this kind of evidence performing an invaluable revealing function, and quite clearly alerting the researcher to explore new hypotheses.

The fourth use of experiential testimony (and there must be many others not identified here) is in the *factual* sphere, in providing evidence which is itself 'hard'. In the case of the history of the poor and oppressed it is particularly important that the experiences of the individual be documented so as to check unwarranted generalisations about whole classes of people, and to provide nuance and variation in interpretations which might otherwise lack these qualities. The story of some aspects of the life of Kas Maine in this volume, recorded partly under the inspiration of Rosengarten's brilliant depiction of the life of a black American sharecropper, *All God's Dangers*,[30] performs precisely this function for students of black history. As Nkadimeng and Relly write:

> The stories of 'ordinary' people often defy the somewhat monolithic view of such people that official and other archival sources provide.[31]

Not only does Kas's story prompt 'interesting reformulations of pre-conceived avenues of enquiry', but it also 'gives us a sense of the detail and complexity of human consciousness underlying

the major events and changes in the rural Transvaal during this century.'[32] It is important to be cautious about the *kinds* of factual uses to which such evidence may be put. Very rarely is it possible to use the testimony of an oral informant to tell us precisely the dates of historical events, or to depict correctly the sequence of history as he or she experienced it. Checking of such evidence against written or documentary sources, or against the testimony of several other similarly-placed informants is essential. However, when it comes to enhancing our understanding of *process* (rather than simple fact), such evidence is invaluable. The complex and fascinating relationship between the persistence of sharecropping and the technological backwardness of white farming is revealed most vividly in Kas's story, for example, as is the nature of the high mobility of sharecroppers and the way in which they make use of family labour.

These various aspects of the testimony of the ordinary people add up to a challenge, it would seem, to some of the theoreticist and abstract formulations which tend to prevail in structuralist Marxism. They suggest a rich and fruitful source of insight and understanding which will allow the cognitive gap to be narrowed between those who write about capitalism and those who bear the brunt of it.

CULTURE: THE DOMINANT AND THE SUBORDINATE

To assume that the portrayal of human experience, and the use of the testimonies of the poor and oppressed, is in and of itself a substitute for the making of abstract statements and generalisations would be to go too far. Moodie points out the inadequacies of a purely individual account of social structure and process, which 'tends to be weak in interpretation of social interaction'[33] Maureen Tayal too, in her consideration here of the part played by Gandhi in the passive resistance movement of 1906-8, uses a different kind of case study to criticise the existentialist notions of Gandhi – 'the need to take responsibility for one's own reality, the need to create that reality through one's own actions' – suggesting that such a resolutely individualist perspective failed to take account of the dragging weight of social, structured, reality.[34] Perspectives which give unduly heavy weight to experience at the expense of all consideration of abstraction and generalisation across societies, structures, regions and classes will necessarily flounder.

However, by confronting experience the analyst finds his or her notions of what constitutes the relevant or appropriate set of

abstractions and generalisations to be substantially challenged. Once serious cognisance has been taken of experience, it proves impossible to sustain the sort of Marxism which seeks only to generalise or perhaps even reify on a large scale and at a high level. To identify '*the* working class' in South Africa, or to discover the nature of '*the* state', '*the* ruling class' and '*the* reserve economies', becomes an impossibility. Those who wish to retain a concern with the general, and yet to gain the richness of the experiential point of view, are at present engaged in a serious re-thinking of broad conceptual issues. I would suggest that this re-thinking is taking place in Southern African studies in at least three different areas – the remaining three issues which concern us here. These are culture, resistance, and the meaning of local and regional research and its relationship to the general.

An experiential perspective forces one away from any notion that culture or ideology is a monolithic entity, as a reader influenced by Althusser's essay on the subject might be led to believe.[35] According to his view, 'ideology'[36] is disseminated by 'ideological state apparatuses', and serves to perpetuate the rule of capital (in whose interests the ISAs work) and to mystify and keep subordinate the lower classes. The view from below will not permit such an interpretation to be sustained. No single culture or ideology can be identified – rather there are many different cultures in South Africa, each with its own history and shape, while not all of the cultural and ideological patterns that exist could by any stretch of the imagination be thought of as functional to capitalism. It would be a gross over-simplification to assume that the different cultural forms taken by the miners' culture discussed by Dunbar Moodie, and the slumyard culture analysed by Eddie Koch, for example, are in a simple fashion the result of the machinations of whatever 'ISAs' might be concerned in the matter. Most of the essays in this volume are informed by a somewhat more complex notion of the relationship between the dominant and the subordinate, and it seems important that some of the dimensions of this relationship be spelt out here.

Dominant class and dominant culture

The first point to be made is that cultural forms are of course not unrelated to the needs of capitalism. A simple 'culturalism' might accept at face value the cultural surface of South African society, and would do no more than reproduce the racial forms which we are setting out to penetrate and explain. Let us reject, then, any idea that the surface reality which is the way culture presents itself

to us is in fact autonomous,[37] and rather concentrate on its relationship to the complex system of class relations which moves and underpins modern capitalism.

The classes which dominate any particular society do, it seems generally acknowledged amongst Marxists, *attempt* to achieve what Gramsci has called a 'hegemonic situation', i.e. one in which

> a kind of permanent alliance exist[s]; where a general solidarity between oppressors and oppressed ha[s]; developed, with cultural processes reinforcing the political and economic domination of the ruling group.[38]

In some situations this attempt may actually succeed. In Southern Italy, Gramsci argued, the poorest, most oppressed region, but also the most conservative, hegemony had been attained. But even in less successful systems, by definition the 'ruling group' has the upper hand. Raymond Williams thus suggests that

> in any society, in any particular period, there is a central system of practices, meanings and values, which we can properly call dominant and effective.[39]

This dominant system of 'practices, meanings and values' is more than simply an ideological 'superstructure', however, more than simply the result of manipulative control by the ruling group:

> It is a whole body of practices and expectations: our assignments of energy, our ordinary understanding of the nature of man and his world. It is a set of meanings and values which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society.[40]

However, the structuralist perspective leads analysts to reify and systematise this 'body of practices' in far too rigid a fashion. Hegemony is not a 'thing'. Instead, it is a process and an arena of cultural struggle. Not only are 'its own internal structures... highly complex and have continually to be renewed, recreated and defended',[41] but its degree of success varies immensely over time and region.[42] This becomes immediately apparent once the perceptions of ordinary people are evoked and their ambiguous relationship to dominant ideologies is revealed. Nowhere is this clearer than in a society like the South African one, where, unlike the Western European examples which provided the basis for Gramscian, Althusserian and other conceptions of 'hegemony', there is a strong colonial legacy. Here, there is a history of military conquest and foreign, or foreign-based, rule; of racial difference

which accompanied that conquest and rule; and of a struggle by dominant groups for the attainment of hegemony which has by no means always succeeded. The cultural resilience of those being subordinated has always been substantial, and has continued to be so long after the era of military conquest has passed. In societies where capitalist hegemony evolved from the vestiges of feudalism, where old hierarchies and class cleavages could be transformed from within, and where indigenous ideologies of deference and subordination could be developed and mobilised, the attainment of a 'hegemonic situation' took an entirely different pattern from that prevailing in societies with a history of foreign conquest. We need to ask what the broad patterns of cultural conflict have been in South Africa therefore, and how they differed from those of Western Europe. We need, perhaps, to draw on comparative analyses of colonial and slave societies to enable us to address ourselves to this question. Only then will we be in a position to draw conclusions about how to interpret experiential testimonies and evidence about the cultural forms of the 'grassroots'.

Hegemony and white society

There has been a duality to the attempt to attain 'hegemony' in South Africa. On the one hand, as Paul Rich points out here in his paper on John Buchan, there has been an ongoing struggle to establish common cultural meanings, to 'constitute a sense of reality' capable of unifying white society.[43] For this part of South African society has not constituted a homogeneous ruling group as the new school of historiography has been at pains to emphasise. White society has its own history of military conquest and class struggle, and essential to the class project of leading white classes – farmers, mine owners and industrialists – has been the establishment of a consensus which overcomes these. Their common whiteness and prejudice against blacks, although it has clear historical and objective roots, is also an ideological and cultural form which has had to be forged and fought for. Thus Rich alerts us to the processes of cultural creation which accompanied the formation of an imperialist ruling class in South Africa at the turn of the century, arguing that the novel *Prester John* was located within the struggle for white hegemony. He supports his argument by reference to the social and cultural climate within which Milnerism was forged, referring to the 'nostalgic pastoralism' of English society at the time. This climate bred Milner's and Buchan's aristocratic vision of land settlement in the Transvaal. He also examines the attempts to forge an alliance between British imperialists and the Boer landed

gentry, which formed the basis of the 'alliance of gold and maize', the push for agricultural modernisation (of which more is said in several other papers in this volume), and the need to create a

> wider ideology of white political and economic hegemony in the nascent South African state, an ideology that could transcend the narrow ethnic divisions of English and Afrikaans speaking whites.[44]

Rich suggests that *Prester John* portrayed some of these themes; its central white character embodied the 'Milnerite virtues of courage, resourcefulness and determination',[45] and the black villain was a figure 'too alien and too absurd . . . to be taken as a serious alternative to white colonial rule.'[46]

The assumption that this hegemonic struggle has always been uniformly successful is not supported by some of the evidence available to us. Stephen Gray's essay, for example, is concerned with the writing of Douglas Blackburn, whose novel *Prinsloo of Prinsloosdorp* has a more ambiguous purpose. While it addresses itself to white audiences, it is concerned to portray alternative cultural conceptions to those which ruled in the late 1890s. Gray suggests that Douglas Blackburn, a socialist, set out in the novel to satirise not only 19th century Transvaal officialdom, corruption and double-dealing as 'the world of business takes over from trek-boer barter traditions';[47] not only the State, under 'Oom Paul', which tacitly sanctioned abuse; but also the 'Outlanders' whose superior subtlety and audacity dwarfed the frauds of Piet Prinsloo, the hero, into insignificance. An interesting reflection of the cultural appropriation of such 'alternative' portrayals appears in the review of the book by the London *Spectator,* which managed to deflect some of the challenges presented in the novel and to absorb only those parts of it which suited the imperial purposes of the time, seeing it mainly as a 'trenchant indictment against Transvaal officialdom'.[48]

The success of the dominant culture, thus, is measured by its capacity to absorb and deflect such challenges from below. As far as white society is concerned, such successful absorption and deflection does appear to have been the norm, in spite of the existence of a plethora of alternative cultural forms.[49] Eddie Webster's paper 'The Colour of Craft' reflects something of this success in its portrayal of the kinds of terms in which the conflicts between white workers and their employers are often waged. In the case of the ironmoulders who are the subject of his paper, their relative privileges as both craftsmen and white English-speakers, within the system, become the bone of contention, rather than the system itself; and these privileges (again, relative to blacks and the unskilled)

are negotiated through a highly bureaucratised structure. Their access to established trade union power and bureaucratic mechanisms provides the basis for their chosen means of self-defence; and Webster mentions their explicit rejection of less routinised methods of protest, such as striking, or machine-breaking.[50] Ultimately they resort to appeals to ideologies of white racial superiority in the face of threats to their skilled status; but this proves a less than secure refuge for them, since employers are prepared to abandon such shibboleths when it suits them, this being the privilege of the hegemonic class.

Black cultural resilience

The relative success of the struggle for white hegemony is paralleled by the relative failure of its counterpart. For side by side with the attempt to ensure white consensus, and indeed interlocked with it in various ways, has been a rather different struggle for the hearts and minds of blacks. From the earliest times this struggle was marked by the uneven capacity of the white ruling classes – in this case leading landowners and farmers – to subordinate black culture. In Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido's paper on *inboekselings* and *oorlams* in the 19th century Transvaal, something of the constantly frustrated economic and cultural ambitions of white landowners is portrayed. For even in the case of a relationship of virtual slavery, they write, 'inboekselings (did) not become mere ciphers for Boer culture' but rather 'resented their position and sought to modify or escape it.'[51] In this they obviously relied on the possibility of escape which existed because of the persistence of unconquered African societies in the Transvaal at the time,[52] the existence of non-slaving neighbouring states, and the growing towns in the region.[53] Cultural superiority seems difficult to impose and sustain when political and military superiority is so tenuous.

Perhaps it is for these kinds of reasons that the paper by Tim Couzens on the history of football reveals a marked coincidence between more successful 20th century militarism and the advance of this particular cultural activity. Economic, political and military domination were accompanied often by indirect, or in some cases directly manipulative, attempts at cultural influence and control over the leisure-time of blacks.[54] Some success was achieved amongst blacks who 'thought it was good for them which they copied from a civilised nation who were the ruling element.'[55] There were reported reductions in crime, drunkenness, gambling and other 'objectionable practices' as a result of the spread of football. But

the connections of soccer with movements of protest and resistance, grew to at least the same proportions as those with missionaries and do-gooders, as this cultural activity associated with colonial conquest was seized upon, and made their own by ordinary players, spectators and officials, as well as nationalists and populists, against the background of a growing capitalist system, whose hunger for markets and commodities ultimately encroached upon the game and transformed it.

A similar pattern of cultural imposition and popular response, against a background of materially-shaped circumstances, appears in Tom Lodge's paper on the 'Parents' School Boycott' of 1955, in which he examines that key institution of cultural struggle, education.[56] He shows, first, that not all schools act in a consistent fashion as 'ideological state apparatuses'. On the contrary, black communities have on several occasions sought and obtained control over the form and content of education, although of course this has always taken place in the shadow of mission and state attempts to shape and control education. Lodge gives a careful account of the kinds of vested interests which are involved in education when he analyses the needs and aspirations of teachers, parents and pupils in turn, contrasting them with those of the post-1948 state with its Verwoerdian conceptions. In the Eastern Cape and on the East Rand, the kinds of local communities which had emerged at the time nurtured a populism which lent support to the ANC and Communist Party. Thus a cultural issue, with a variety of central economic implications, became a matter for widespread resistance.

The characterisation of cultures

While we are a long way from the notion that culture is a monolithic entity, or from the Althusserian view of fully successful hegemony in every case, we are also not proposing that there exists a 'plurality' of cultures, each of equal importance and similar structure. Instead the work here seems to suggest that culture be viewed from a perspective which ties it inextricably to the conflicts between classes; to the attempt by some to dominate others; and to the responses of the subordinated to these attempts. There *are* many cultures, but they are not all neatly arranged in some sort of pluralist circle, each with its own pure history and logic. Futhermore, they are not to be granted autonomous historical status. Rather, they are locked in constant conflict with each other, on the basis of the material conditions of their adherents, the class cleavages in the society, and the historical legacy which informs every conflict. As Lodge and Couzens show, every cultural

institution acquires an economic character, as soon as incomes are to be made from its existence – and those who survive and prosper because of their involvement in a cultural institution, find their interests taking a distinctly material form as well as a cultural one. The complex interplay between these cultural and material issues varies with time and circumstance.

The complexities of these processes are only beginning to be explored in Southern African studies. Dikobe writes:

> Don't visit the native location
> Oorlams they are
> Forgotten their culture.[57]

And indeed the acculturation of the *oorlams* into Boer society, explored here by Delius and Trapido, was more one-sided and detrimental to the people concerned than was usually the case in South Africa. For many others the process of becoming landless did involve the cutting short of cultural continuities. Dikobe himself is keenly aware that new urban settings generated new cultural responses which frequently had roots in the rural past. Indeed the example of the *oorlams* people, whose language was often Afrikaans or Dutch, only serves to emphasise to us how rare it is to find urban groups whose language is not intact, and how awkward is the cultural interface between dominator and dominated when this linguistic homogeneity is absent. While on the mines the cultural gap between groups is coped with through the use of 'fanakalo' – in Moodie's words, 'a language without nuance or subtlety, which is used by white supervisors to order blacks about, and which ensures that relationships between white bosses and black workers on the mine will be as sparse and impersonal as possible'[58] – the possibilities for 'working the system', for retaining a sense of self, and for creating a universe of alternative assumptions and modes of communication are generally vast when the language of the conquering and exploiting class differs from that of the conquered and exploited.

How are we to characterise the different capacities and propensities of subordinate classes and groups to resist cultural hegemony? Raymond Williams makes the fascinating distinction between 'alternative' and 'oppositional' cultures, and in each of these he distinguishes an 'emergent' and 'residual' form. What he seems to be suggesting, in South African terms, is that while the culture of Rastafarian drop-outs provides an alternative to the dominant one, the *marabi* culture of the slumyard-dwellers of Johannesburg, described in this volume by Eddie Koch, could be said to have an oppositional character.[59] While it operated clearly as an alternat-

ive on one level – allowing people to avoid living in municipal locations, generating its own family relationships, music, leisure activities, ideas about children and social welfare – it also bred and embraced elements of opposition to white hegemony, in particular in the struggle over liquor, to the extent that vigorous attempts at controlling and later eradicating slumyard culture were undertaken. The facilitating part played by the existence of rich and resilient cultural forms of this sort in later eruptions of overt resistance should not be underestimated.

An example of a residual culture might perhaps be that of the Afrikaner middle class, with its symbolic roots in the rural past. But it is the concept of an emergent culture that resonates more with the South African examples we have here. An emergent culture could perhaps be represented by Moodie's case study of the culture of mineworkers, which seems to accord with Raymond Williams's description: 'New meanings, and values, new practices, new significances and experiences are continually being created.'[60] In this case, the rhythm and danger of underground work and the all-male, tightly-controlled world of the migrant compound-dwelling worker appear to be the influences that shape his cultural responses – storytelling, hard drinking, 'womanizing', and homosexuality are characteristic cultural growths in this environment. They are, in Moodie's words, 'very different from the peasant culture which they leave behind.'[61] Equally emergent, though quite different in form, is *marabi*. Koch writes that 'the urban milieu became increasingly, although never entirely, dominant in the experience of African proletarians and the unemployed classes.'[62]

The slumyard culture makes an interesting parallel with the Sophiatown, Potchefstroom and East Rand townships which are also described in this volume, in each of which clearly oppositional cultural forms helped give expression to the militancy and popular movements which arose at critical moments. Tom Lodge's examination of the role of gangs in his paper 'The Destruction of Sophiatown', for example, suggests that an activity which in some situations might be conceived of as being of secondary significance to resistance – criminal gang activity – in South Africa strikes at the mechanisms not only of social control, but also of labour allocation, and even the repressive police state itself. Gangs, he suggests:

> were to be found in the vanguard of any communal confrontation with the police . . . the Berliners played a prominent role in the riots during the tram boycott. The Commission of Enquiry also attributed to the 'tsotsi organisations' a major responsibility for the attacks on the police in the 1949 and 1950 disturbances.[63]

Nationalist politicians recognised the capacity of gangs to support resistance, and one of the most prominent in Sophiatown, Robert Resha, attempted to use them to this end. Similarly, Julia Wells's paper on resistance in Potchefstroom suggests that the stable and deeply rooted location family structure nurtured a philosophy of opposition, while Lodge's descriptions of widespread social solidarity on the East Rand add to our understanding of these living areas as cultural reservoirs of a particular sort.

However, to say that a particular culture had an oppositional character is not to say that it was in a continuing state of resistance. The distinction between culture and resistance is made below, and needs to be kept in mind. Nor is it to suggest that all inhabitants had the same cultural attitudes and responses – each of these papers identifies ways in which economically differentiated groups evolved different responses to particular events. But a comparison of the culture of the slum and township-dwellers with, say, the cultural forms prevalent in some white working class suburbs might throw new light on the concept of opposition – for such a comparison makes clear that in the former areas we find a culture in which dominant mores and norms are rejected, not simply bypassed; in which outsiders are unwelcome; and in which the forces of law and order are not regarded as legitimate.

Another conceptualisation of subordinate culture is proposed by John Clarke *et al*, who suggest that there exist 'sub-cultures' which 'though differing in important ways from the culture from which (they) derive, will also share some things in common with that "parent culture".'[64] An example of this might be the subculture developed by those *inboekselings* who did not escape Boer control and domination. Delius and Trapido point to a number of examples of the ways in which the acculturation of children took place – from naming patterns to friendship bonds and the transmission of language. But 'their servile status within Boer society did not prevent these individuals creating their own world and their own opportunities' – and they mention singing and dancing.[65]

These distinctions between various cultural forms are, of course, not hard and fast, rigidly structured categories to be reified, but flexible ways of thinking about culture. Every real culture changes constantly with time, with changes in the material conditions of its adherents and of those who profit from or earn incomes from it, and in the process of interaction with other cultures. The distinctive common feature of all subordinate cultures is that while they are fought for by their adherents, they are not at any point free to form themselves. In the case of even the most oppositional

of cultures, the effects of the dominant culture, the attempts at incorporation, are not to be under-estimated. Genovese has written of slave culture in North America:

> An understanding of the slaves requires some understanding of the masters and of others who helped shape a complex slave society. Masters and slaves shaped each other and cannot be discussed or analysed in isolation.[66]

Genovese's view echoes the existentialist argument, the Sartrean and Fanonist notions of the relationship between coloniser and colonised. But in Genovese's hands these ideas become broadened into a materialist and social conception of that relationship, rather than a purely psychological one – a relationship rooted in class and culture, rather than in the individual 'self' and the 'other'.

A highly successful dominant culture may absorb and crush cultural challenges from below, and the culture of the subordinated is continually either stunted or distorted by these processes. By contrast, the culture of the dominant class may be formed in much greater freedom, although it, too, must be shaped by the character of the material and cultural conflicts in which its adherents are engaged. This inequality in what one might call the 'cultural capacity' of the dominant and the subordinate renders it impossible to conceive of cultures in any sort of pluralist framework.

The degree of success of the dominant culture may be one measure of the character necessarily taken by the state. Strong alternative cultures make it difficult for legitimacy to be entrenched. The relative cultural weakness of a foreign-based ruling class is extremely important here. Rich's paper shows, for example, that the Milnerite ruling class at the turn of the century depended for the formulation of its ideologies upon 'organic intellectuals' such as John Buchan, who drew upon British aristocratic symbols rather than indigenous ones – and this for the purpose of forging 'white' unity merely, let alone incorporating black oppositional and alternative cultures.[67] While the mining capitalists were capable of forging a world view of their own, with a more clearly 'South African' content, they too were handicapped by the continuing 'Britishness' of their cultural conceptions. Local English-speaking capitalists of a later era were also handicapped by the legacy of British conquest, and their 'South Africanism' was not entirely successful in forging even a white consensus, although the period of its hegemony saw the attainment of greater agreement over fundamental features of the South African state amongst whites than had previously been the case.[68]

As far as establishing cultural domination over blacks is concerned, perhaps one could argue that the unrelentingly repressive nature of the South African state is an indication of how unsuccessful this has been. Weak and ultimately unsuccessful attempts at formulating a 'South African dream', with upward mobility for all, parallelling the American attempt to cope with cultural diversity, have taken place under the aegis of the liberal go-betweens, the cultural cushions between dominant and subordinate. And indeed in a colonial-type society such as the South African one, it would seem that the success or otherwise of these 'go-betweens' is the crucial test of the capacity of the system to incorporate subordinate cultures. In many of these papers, thus, we find that liberal (or other) whites, on the one hand, and intermediate 'respectable' or petty bourgeois blacks on the other, are central to the drama over the attempted incorporation of black South African cultures. From the 'informal football' depicted by Couzens, which ultimately became the target for overt and explicit manipulation by liberals anxious to 'relieve boredom, to defuse passions, and as a means of social control,'[69] to the role played by *oorlams* as bailiffs on farms,[70] a myriad of different intermediary groups are identified in these studies. Just to give one example, Wells suggests that the liberal Reverend Mr Sharman played a key role in attempting to mediate between the harsh Potchefstroom location superintendent and the resentful black residents. But his attempt at playing the liberal part was rejected by the Town Council. What is striking about her paper is that it shows how, in the absence of such liberal figures, in 1927 'the location went over *en bloc* to the Communists' and opposition evolved until it took the form of ugly racial confrontation, of an almost 'deep South' character.[71]

As far as most black South Africans are concerned, it would seem that there is no evidence to suggest the view that 'hegemony' has been fully entrenched. Perhaps we could liken the situation to that prevailing in 19th century Germany where intellectual and cultural life was 'limited to a small nucleus of elites who had virtually no contact with the masses', while their ideological influence 'was so contained that it never appeared as an organic part of popular consciousness; the masses therefore moved more freely on their own, without any all-embracing *weltanschauung* or 'organizing principle' diffused from above'.[72] There, as here, coercive power had to be mobilised in the absence of 'organic or disciplinary bonds' binding the antagonistic classes together. The Althusserian conception of successful ideological control whenever capitalism is dominant could not be more inappropriate for South Africa where the low level of political legitimacy amongst blacks and the weak capacity of the ruling classes to establish common

cultural meanings for the society as a whole are reflected in the highly repressive nature of the state. Black South Africans have fought for control over numerous aspects of their lives and culture, in the face of proletarianisation, loss of land, security and social cohesion, with varying degrees of success.

RESISTANCE: STYLE AND CONTINUITY

> What socialist-humanism emphasises above all is the *unitary*, *revolutionary* and *creative* character of the struggle of the exploited class. What the socialist-humanists are trying to do is to recapture through their historiographical work the irrepressible spirit of resistance to class exploitation, to tell the heroic, if often tragic, story of the constant attempt of the exploited class to realise its vision of an alternative society.[73]

The cultural context of resistance is a vital subject for analysis. While an 'oppositional' culture may lend legitimacy to groups who reject domination, it does not, in itself, constitute active resistance to that domination. When we use the word 'resistance' we refer to distinct actions which are directed at the avoidance, disturbance, or destruction of one aspect or another of the system of domination. When we talk of 'culture' we refer to the background assumptions and values which may make those acts both possible and likely. You are more likely to resist pass raids if you have been brought up to believe that policemen are your enemies, rather than representatives of the controlling arm of a neutral state; less likely to see yourself as an opponent of white domination if your cultural universe has been successfully channelled into the modes of the white bourgeoisie. Ordinary perceptions of the meaning of resistance are imbedded in culture. The form of the culture may, in turn, be shaped by the experiences and perceptions of ordinary people, who may themselves have participated in acts of resistance. This process of interaction between culture and experience is nicely depicted by J. Clarke *et al:*

> Men and women are thus formed and form themselves through society, culture and history. So the existing cultural patterns form a sort of historical reservoir – a pre-constituted 'field of the possibles' – which groups take up, transform, develop. Each group makes something of its starting conditions, and through this 'making', through this practice, culture is reproduced and transmitted.[74]

Seeing acts of resistance as being imbedded in culture is not the same as saying they are *caused* by culture. In this collection of studies cultural factors are not granted a determining function of this sort. We would do well to heed Maureen Tayal's iconoclastic observation that the passive resistance campaign in the Transvaal

> grew, not out of a commitment to the pursuit of Truth, but, rather, from a successful appeal to merchant economic interests, threatened as they were – or seemed to be – by the Transvaal administration's reconstruction programme.[75]

And indeed, the other examinations of resistance included here place a similarly central emphasis upon economic factors in provoking acts and movements of resistance. Helen Bradford's exploration of the ICU puts primary explanatory weight on the proletarianising thrust of an agricultural sector in the throes of a transition to capitalism; Koch and Lodge place their emphasis on the threats to living standards and the actual removal schemes in the case of the slumyards and Sophiatown; Wells focusses on the economic functions of lodging, and so on. However, a grass-roots 'view from below' does suggest ways in which the assumptions contained in approaches of this kind may be refined and developed. The simple dichotomy 'deprivation-resistance' gains new dimensions when it is viewed from a new angle.

Resilience as resistance

The first form of resistance to which a different approach may be applied fruitfully is not often thought of as such by, for example, political sociologists, unless it takes a violent or highly organised form. I refer to actions taken by ordinary people to avoid detrimental changes in class and economic status and position, to retain the social and cultural networks they regard as valuable, in the face of the proletarianising tendencies of capitalism. As Malete Nkadimeng and Georgina Relly write of Kas Maine:

> Work as a sharecropper may sound like paltry independence, but within the constraints placed on black farmers in South Africa, it is a considerable achievement for Kas to have remained aloof from the wage labour market for the largest part of the twentieth century.[76]

Kas Maine's story may on one level be unique, but on another it reflects a pattern so general that, according to Tim Keegan in his overview of the sharecropping economy, in 1913 'sharecropping was . . . the dominant relationship of production throughout the

maize belt.'[77] Furthermore, its development and persistence were marked by an unrelenting resistance to attempts to proletarianise them on the part of the sharecroppers, resistance which seems to have taken the form of what Kas calls 'jumping the fence' (i.e. moving from farm to farm).

Resistance of this sort, which may take an *individual* form, but which has vast *social* consequences, is culturally shaped. Compare, for example, the capacity of black farmers to resort to sharecropping with that of their poor white counterparts – the *bywoners*. While the former were able to mobilise family labour by using the patriarchal structures of pre-capitalist times, the latter were not[78] – a fact which contributed substantially to the ultimately (and ironically) more rapid and complete proletarianisation of the *bywoners*. But its consequences were even more widespread; for the ongoing determination and capacity of black farmers to resist legislation which attempted to proletarianise them was one central factor which shaped the character of white agriculture:

> while white landowners lacked capital, their simplest way of improving their land was to make use of the capital equipment and farming skills of their black tenants.[79]

Keegan and Bradford disagree about whether slow capitalisation retarded the capacity of farmers to crush the peasants (Bradford), or vice versa (Keegan). But whatever the sequence of causation, the consequences of black rural economic and cultural resilience were broad, shaping not only the nature of rural capital accumulation[80] but also undermining the power of the 1913 Land Act.[81] As Keegan's conclusion suggests, therefore, this kind of resilience constitutes class struggle which has profound significance:

> legislative edict and administrative fiat have little force in shaping the substance and context of class struggle unless the material conditions are also propitious. The struggle was conducted in the countryside and not in parliament.[82]

The Indian flower-sellers whose history and struggle are portrayed here by Ruth Tomaselli also embody the kind of resilience which we have called 'resistance' – for they have consistently stood up to attempts to confine them to 'inconspicuous, powerless and therefore acceptable limits'[83] – finding ways of circumventing each new set of confining regulations 'through either legitimate or illegitimate means', and challenging not only the wishes of commercial capitalists that hawking be ended, but also the cultural distaste of the city fathers for the 'unsightly' and 'dangerous' classes. However, while Kas Maine's 'paltry independence' was won in the face of the overwhelming tendency of the rural economy towards the proletarianisation of blacks, the street traders' resilience ran with the opposite tide – towards centralisation and concentration of the business, employment of wage labour, and the vicious competition which accompanies these tendencies.

A third example of 'resilience' appears in the paper by Wells, who singles out small-town women as the defenders of their own semi-proletarianised status, their own capacity to remain outside the wage-labour force, by retaining access to incomes from lodgers or beer-brewing. 'In this state of semi-proletarianisation', she writes, 'women remained a creative and challenging force, resisting the pull of the industrial centres towards what they perceived to be a poorer quality of life.'[84]

In many cases 'resilience' spills over into overt and organised 'resistance'. Perhaps when the options for escape from the encroachments of capitalism begin to close, then confrontation with it becomes necessary. This happened in the case of the women of Potchefstroom who moved towards an organised form of protest early on. Helen Bradford's paper examines rural resistance in a period which follows that explored by Keegan, and over a broader area of the Transvaal, and portrays a period and set of circumstances in which 'jumping the fence' was no longer a viable option for most black farmers. As labour tenants or wage labourers, rather than sharecroppers, many confronted the farmers in whose power they were, as well as attempting to escape the proletarianising forces which were increasingly impinging on them. As in other colonial, rural settings (the Kenyan parallel is striking here) resistance against impoverishment and proletarianisation now took the form of a popular movement, cast in an anti-racialist ideology, and embracing the numerous non-economic grievances of the peasantry. The tenuous legitimacy of state and racial aristocracy is called into question by such militancy, while of course the capitalisation of agriculture is seriously slowed, once again.

Heritages of resistance

A cultural and 'grass-roots' approach to resistance leads us to ask what the effect on *culture* is, of acts of protest. The work presented here suggests that in certain circumstances a particular group of people, who may perhaps have lived in one area for a considerable length of time, or who may, even through changes in residence,

have retained some coherence as a group, develops what Lodge calls an 'accumulated heritage of resistance'. Such a class or group confronts its experiences of oppression or exploitation armed with its collective memory of past resistance. Wells's paper is an exemplary depiction of the evolution of a comparatively stable black small-town community, in Potchefstroom, whose experiences of resistance (particularly amongst women) occurred over time and who were reliable, sophisticated and responsive when it came to later appeals to their sense of justice and solidarity: furthermore Wells makes connections back into the rural areas hinting that the urban-dwellers themselves were drawn from the sharecroppers whose independence we have already noted, and who in this case, she suggests, 'registered their protest at the declining benefits of farm work and moved into the towns.'[85] We know from Delius and Trapido's paper that amongst Potchefstroom's early inhabitants were not only refugees from the *inboekseling* system, but also a number of *oorlams* – and the latter might be expected to have contributed to the self-confidence of the community. It is in terms of this 'sedimented' experience as much as of the particular precipitating conditions – lodger permits, pass laws and economic hardship, as well as the absence of liberal intermediaries – that Wells explains the early propensity of these platteland dwellers towards popular protests, on a scale greater than that of the location-dwellers of the Rand. 'What could be done in the Rand locations was unthinkable to the black citizens of Potchefstroom'[86] she writes.

A similar continuity appears in Lodge's paper on Sophiatown where long traditions of association and resistance had grown by the 1950s, to the extent that they were perceived as 'hotbeds of resistance' by the authorities. On the East Rand, site of the 1955 school boycott, according to Lodge:

> a tradition of radical politics had existed for a comparatively long time within its black communities, a tradition which was characterised by sensitivity to parochial concerns and successful intervention in them by African nationalist and socialist politicians.[87]

The growth of a particular 'tradition of resistance', while not autonomous, does involve the sustaining and resurrection from time to time (often for new purposes) of the symbols associated with resistance in a certain context. Songs, phrases, motifs, flags and charismatic figures are the most obvious of these symbols – but there is also the more intangible 'style' which a particular community may evolve over time. There are striking continuities of 'style' between the women's resistance in Potchefstroom and

that adopted by black South African women in other times and places – the assertions that women are 'more courageous' than men, who are seen as cowards and timid; the courting of jail sentences; the defence of home and family against assaults from the state – these are all characteristic of women's movements in general.[88] But both Wells and Lodge point to factors which suggest that this style of women is not entirely sex-exclusive, but has strong roots in the nationalist-populist styles of the ANC and Communist Party themselves, where there is an ongoing defensiveness of home, school and community, a tendency to posit 'the (black) people' versus 'the (white) power bloc', and a rejection of state authority. Other styles appear in this collection: one could identify a 'passive resistance' tradition being resurrected at different points in time by the Indian community and a 'trade unionist' one amongst white workers. The styles of rural resistance are far less well-documented, and we have only Bradford's work to portray for us the style of resistance created and perhaps resurrected from time to time for farmworkers. She points to the spontaneous and often violent character of rural resistance, with its propensity for mass meetings, attacks on farmers' property, and millenarian undertones.

But Tomaselli's paper is a salutary reminder that styles of resistance do not necessarily have an evolutionary and teleological character to them. The hawkers who took part in the passive resistance campaign in the early part of the century are today concerned to tread an uneasy path between constitutionalism and corrupt practices, and continuities of style are difficult to discern. Furthermore, as many of the studies here reveal, it is the state's concern to *break* what continuities there may develop, whether by removal and destruction of particularly cohesive and 'oppositional' communities, or by the suppression of symbols and the banning and imprisonment of leaders. The capacity of each subordinate group to resist, and to evolve and strengthen a style of resistance peculiar and appropriate to its circumstances, varies over time, with material changes, and with general circumstances.

A judgemental Marxism which seeks, in E.P. Thompson's words, to discover 'class' and to define it mathematically:

> to deduce the class consciousness which 'it' ought to have (but seldom does have) if 'it' was properly aware of its own position and real interests[89]

cannot be entertained once an empathetic and grass-roots approach to resistance is adopted. For, 'It' does not exist, 'either to have an ideal interest or consciousness, or to lie as a patient on the Adjustor's

table.'[90]

One of the implicit assumptions in a judgemental point of view is that inadequacies in leadership, organisation or 'line' are to be blamed for the usual failure of the oppressed classes to develop 'proper' class consciousness. And yet a cultural perspective forces us to acknowledge that particular resistance traditions cannot be explained only by reference to these factors. For example the *kind of leadership* that emerges from a certain class or group is partly a function of the possibilities inherent in that group. The fact that Gandhi played a leading role in evolving the philosophy of *satyagraha* is of course important, and provided a symbolic rallying point for the movement; but the central theme of Tayal's portrayal of the passive resistance campaign is that Gandhi's capacity as a successful leader was shaped and even severely limited by the economic nature, culture and experiences of the Indian merchants to whose interests he appealed, and by the structured patron-client linkages those merchants possessed with other Indian classes. The 'great man' theory of history is not rendered any more valid by being applied to the resistance of the oppressed.

Nor is the explanation to be found solely in the *kind of organisation* or 'line' which may emerge in a particular social milieu. For organisations and 'lines' are themselves the embodiment of what is culturally and politically possible. As Wells and Lodge both suggest, the nature of both the Communist Party and the ANC were shaped by the character of the grass-roots struggles in which they were engaged. And while Bradford wishes to argue that the petty-bourgeois nature of the leadership of the ICU meant that it ultimately failed in its attempt to mobilise peasant resistance on a long-term and systematic basis, one might ask what it was about the peasantry of the time that *allowed* their organisation to be co-opted and manipulated to such an extent. Perhaps, like the similar and equally short-lived East Africa Association, the ICU was based upon transient popular grievances. The history of the oppressed will fail if it becomes the history of organisations, leaders and 'lines' – it will succeed if it becomes the history of the people from whom organisations may or may not emerge; to whom leaders may or may not be responsible; and for whom 'lines' may or may not possess appeal.

CLASS, RACE AND REGION

The accusation of 'culturalism' against any analysis which seeks to give weight to cultural factors in the understanding of society and the explanation of resistance and class may reflect a certain narrow-mindedness in some Marxist circles. However, when cultural factors are emphasised *to the exclusion* of any consideration of material and historical ones then the accusation might hold true. So far in this essay lip service has been paid to these 'material and historical' factors, but little idea has been given as to how cultures are imbedded in material reality. And yet contained in this selection of essays are a number of hypotheses about this relationship, while the very criteria for selection of essays for inclusion reflect my own views on the subject.

A serious attempt to write history 'from below' implies a local and regional as well as a national perspective. The consciousness and culture of ordinary people are formed in their day-to-day experiences of life in a very small segment of society. The starting point of 'history from below' must be, thus, that same small segment of society in which experiences are forged. It is this fact which has shaped the History Workshop's focus on the local and the small-scale.

The focus on regional historiography has proved fruitful. In the first Workshop the regional focus was on the Witwatersrand. In this, the second collection, a slightly wider regional focus has been developed to include the Transvaal rural areas as well. We have moved from 'Townships' to 'Town and Countryside'. This regional focus is not born of parochial concerns but has an important basis in theory. On the basis of local studies, we have begun to move towards a situation where we can identify certain peculiarities of class structure, struggle and consciousness in this region; to know some of the reasons, for example, why black resistance on the Rand takes particular forms (stay-aways, popular uprisings and a growing trade unionism) rather than others which may characterise the Cape (squatting, boycottism, Trotskyism) or Natal (mass strikes, 'Zulu' nationalism). Much more work needs to be done on the style and cultural form taken by resistance in one region rather than another.

However, unless studies focussing on the local and small-scale retain a concern for the wider processes of class formation, capital accumulation and state strategy which must impinge upon the smallest of communities in profound ways, they will degenerate into the anecdotal and the parochial. The need is not simply to document what happens in small communities, or classes other than the major ones, but to understand what is unique and what not unique about those communities; to compare and contrast the class experiences of the largest classes with those of the smallest; to understand how the massive processes of capital accumulation on a national and international scale may take on specific regional forms. If these kinds of factors are taken into account our under-

standing of the cultures which emerge from such communities will inevitably take a more sophisticated form – indeed, as was pointed out above, cultural institutions are *themselves* shaped by these factors and should not be conceived of as existing on a totally different plane from the rest of the system.

In the last Workshop collection all the papers focussed on the Witwatersrand, identified then as the 'crucible' of the capitalist revolution in South Africa. Given the growing amount of literature on that capitalist revolution, the collection could draw some preliminary conclusions about the broad character of the Witwatersrand regional economy. Since then, of course, a number of studies have advanced our understanding of this region even further.[91] In moving from the Witwatersrand to the broader region of the Transvaal as a whole, this volume attempts to raise new questions and develop avenues for new answers about the relationships between region, culture and resistance.

A weak rural bourgeoisie

Of course the regional culture of the Transvaal has been observed by many. Herman Charles Bosman's wry portrayals of small-town rural culture make academic ruminations on the subject appear ponderous. In this volume, Stephen Gray's discussion of Douglas Blackburn's novel *Prinsloo of Prinsloosdorp* confronts us with similarly perceptive insights into the character of this province. Blackburn, whom Gray sees as a forerunner of Bosman, portrays the late 19th century Transvaal as an 'undeveloped pastoral Boer Republic, unsurveyed, disunited and a refuge of agricultural beserkers and illiterate anarchists'[92] in which the self-image of Boers as upright, generous and hospitable is shown up for its internal inconsistencies, as they are revealed in all their vulnerability to corruption and greed.[93] Dikobe, too, presents us with a literary image of the Transvaal, from a somewhat different perspective:

> ZARP; mai-is-isi;
> Stupid you were
> Not to say Zuid-Afrikaanse Polisie

he writes. He describes the 'helmeted rider on a white horse':

> Noting, Noting, Noting
> Giving a scornful smile
> As he looked at you
> Turning his face in satisfaction

> Murmuring: 'Blooming Kaffir'

These extracts reflect the fact that the shaping of the Transvaal as a regional entity (if that is what it is – let us not overstate its cohesiveness) began at the time when merchant capital extended its influence northwards from the Cape,[94] and when the dominant class was a Boer one, whose attempts to obtain supremacy over black societies and farmers met with varying degrees of success. While the Boer presence seemed profoundly disruptive to blacks experiencing this process of conquest, the dominant culture does not reflect the basic self-confidence one might expect of an established and entrenched ruling class. The white pastoralists who came to the Transvaal were weak and deeply divided, and all the essays in Part One of this book reveal how long and inconclusive was their struggle to obtain the economic supremacy they sought. Slave, sharecropping and labour tenancy relationships were three steps along the slow path towards the creation of a wage farm labour force, and all of these were the subject of intense and bitter conflicts; the survival of independent African societies for some time made more difficult the process of subordination.

The complexities of rural class relationships, and the difficulties experienced by white farmers in obtaining a clearly subordinated black farm-working force, are reminiscent of the post-bellum American South. So, too, is the texture and, again, 'style' of social and cultural interaction which was bred by this class system. The use of child labour and of physical violence (born of weakness, not strength); the 'trade' in children; the prevalence of desertion as a form of resistance on the part of the *inboekselings;* the functioning of the Boer household as a mechanism for cultural domination over black house-slaves: these characteristics of the nineteenth century Boer economy in the Transvaal continue to inform cultural intercourse in the Transvaal even today. The notion (it is not clear whether based on fact or myth) that children are still liable to be 'caught' by farmers on the lookout for labour is common amongst blacks.

Each stage in the evolution of class relations could be seen as adding another layer to the sedimented cultural experience of both dominators and dominated. Thus the respect which the relatively independent sharecropper earns, because of his 'equal' relation with whites, is acknowledged – even while its destruction is being contemplated:

> when the boy had his whole piece of ground to sow and he was given a half of the crops, he was not a servant but a partner – a master. The moment you draw that line under the new law, that boy becomes your

> servant at once . . . As soon as you draw the line on your farm and say 'You can sow this for yourself,' he is your servant.[95]

The resentment caused by the incapacity of farmers to subordinate a labour force is apparent in the petulant Piet Retief landowner's reaction to demands for payment: 'You people, you shit on my farm, you rear stock on my farm, and you till my land, so you are not going to be paid, you bloody fools.'[96] This cry of frustration must surely epitomise rural relationships in the Transvaal over the past century.

In our search for regional specificity, we should note that this history of non-capitalist economic and cultural relationships does not disappear when capitalist relationships begin to prevail. Wage labour in both countryside and town must bear with it the legacy of slavery, sharecropping, labour tenancy and resistance, and to read off the form of modern resistance in a one-to-one fashion from the technically-defined 'relations of production' would be unnecessarily economistic. While it is obviously true that many of the Transvaal's urban workers are drawn from outside the province, the semi-feudal history of the Transvaal countryside is of great importance to our understanding of the roots and evolution of black and white culture and ideology in all of its regions.

Continuities of region and struggle are apparent in the papers in Part One of this volume. In many the nostalgia of nationalist and populist protest is part of the idiom of resistance. Of the studies that consider urban culture, only Wells's makes a systematic attempt to pursue these continuities, when she locates Potchefstroom's urban population in historical terms, tracing it back to the *inboekselings, oorlams* and sharecroppers we have already examined. Vital to our further understanding of urban protest is the establishment of similar continuities for the township population as a whole. We might ask whether the urban cultures portrayed by Koch and Moodie *are* genuinely 'emergent', and to what extent there is a residual character to them, obscured by our lack of knowledge of rural struggles and culture.

Urban classes not yet formed

While the rural Transvaal may be said to have been characterised by the uneven capacity of the rural ruling class to subdue and subordinate blacks, how may we characterise the urban Transvaal? When it comes to the towns a regional and 'grassroots' approach forces a move away from simple conceptions of urban class relations, while this volume also represents a beginning of the move away

from the assumption that the only important urban centre in the province is Johannesburg. The papers here are evidence of the wealth of forms taken by the relationships between dominators and the dominated, relationships which are not easy to reduce to such categories as 'whites' and 'blacks', or 'owners' and 'non-owners' of the means of production. Instead these papers and the growing body of literature on Transvaal cities and towns postulate a multitude of classes and sub-classes, each with its own local domain, allies and enemies. Not only does Wells provide us with an illuminating comparative dimension, when she looks at Potchefstroom's location, but even on the Witwatersrand itself important differences between East and West Rand townships and class configurations are being pointed out. Eddie Webster, for example, focuses on the engineering industry, perhaps the characteristic capitalist employer on the East Rand, and basis for contemporary union organisation amongst migrant workers. The townships of the East stand in vivid contrast to those of the South West (Soweto), where employment patterns show more variety, more concentration in commerce, and a larger petty-bourgeoisie. Lodge brings to our attention the specificities of the East Rand townships, places characterised by:

> the depth of their proletarian experience, a measure of poverty unusual even among black South African urban people, and because of their relative smallness and the importance of industrial employment among their male and female members, a high degree of social solidarity.[97]

Tomaselli and Tayal draw to our attention the hawking, trading and merchant classes of Indians in Johannesburg, raising crucial questions about the ongoing role of commercial capital in the shaping of urban class relations, about racially-shaped conflicts between different segments of the commercial bourgeoisie over access to the City Council and to the state itself as well as about the nationalist consciousness of Indian merchants. Just as the addition of a rural dimension to our understanding of regional class and protest is eye-opening, so must be the enlarging of our understanding of the urban milieu. Studies of the experiences of blacks whose urban presence is already well-documented – papers by Moodie, Lodge (Sophiatown), Couzens and Koch – benefit from the comparative and historical dimension offered here.

Crucial to unravelling regional specificities is also the accurate depiction of the local dominant classes, their political configurations and alliances, and their economic interests. Commercial, mercantile and landlord capital, and the roles these play in shaping city and town politics, as well as the politically powerful white working

class – are all identified by Koch as having had a crucial influence on urban planning. Tomaselli too gives us insight into the class interests behind city politics as well as the 'sanitation syndrome' – one of the central ideological forms taken by attacks on the lower-class presence in the city.

One striking feature of these papers is that they testify to the incipient and unformed character of many of the classes involved. Many if not most of the groups analysed here remain classes *in the process of formation* rather than fully-fledged classes – just as South African capitalism is a system still in the making rather than a matured one. This is why, perhaps, we need to emphasise the rural connections of the newly urbanised; why we find ourselves constantly emphasising the resilience which many groups have displayed, and indeed are today still displaying, to capitalist relations of production or the difficulties experienced, until recently, in transforming agricultural relations. If to 'reify' Marxist concepts is unacceptable in a fully-formed capitalist society, how much more unacceptable is it in the case of a society not yet fully transformed, where analytical flexibility and consciousness of change and movement are essential prerequisites?

Class and culture

The notion of a capitalism not yet fully formed raises important questions about our characterisation of the classes that are the creation of that capitalism. What is the nature of the relationship between 'class' and 'culture' in situations where classes have barely come into existence, and are far from being fully formed? While so far we have emphasised the fact that cultures are an *embodiment and a reflection* of the fact that some dominate others in a class society, this does not provide us with any idea of the precise nature of the link between the two aspects of 'class' and 'culture' beyond stating its existence in metaphorical terms. To place this question in a comparative light, let us consider the development of classes under more advanced capitalist systems with similar concerns in mind. In the case of Britain we find some who argue that the capacity of the working class to 'realise itself', to become a class 'for' itself and not merely 'in' itself, has always been tied up with the existence of strong class-based communities and the growth of a selfconscious class-based culture.[98] What kind of culture, in these terms, is being forged in Transvaal urban settings and with what implications for future struggles?

While there may be economic classes in the making in South Africa, there have been few 'class cultures'. Perhaps the closest

South African workers have come to creating such cultures is in the artisanal and semi-skilled culture forged by white workers, something of which is reflected in Eddie Webster's paper, and which in some respects may be reminiscent of the artisanal cultures in the U.S and Britain. These are the classes with the longest traditions of self-consciousness and militancy, and, like the U.S artisanal classes, a propensity towards craft and ultimately ethnic exclusiveness.

The migrant workers' culture portrayed by Moodie could also lay claim to being a 'class culture', in that its adherents are all members of a productive proletariat. One would have to ask what the implications are for our understanding of this type of 'class culture' of the fact that it embraces no community – that it is a culture in and of the workplace/compound. In the British case, writers have emphasised the importance of close community connections in the creation of a rich and oppositional class culture. Where pub and family, recreation and leisure, are all intimately bound up with the fortunes of wage-earning members of the community, then the preconditions for a militantly oppositional culture seem to be present. And yet the absence of these connections need not necessarily imply that the culture concerned will be more easily co-opted, or crushed. Migrant workers in Southern Africa have, on the contrary, consistently displayed an alert and highly oppositional class consciousness. The assumption, therefore, that in the case of a male working class the presence of a wife and children at the place of work necessarily must precede the development of a class culture would seem to need questioning.

Indeed, it is in cases where 'wives and children' are most obviously present, that class cultures have failed to develop in South Africa – for the township and slum-dwellers who are the subjects of some of the papers here are often the most settled of workers, and yet it is they who often display the greatest tension between factors of class and those of culture. In the papers by Tayal, Koch, Bradford, Couzens and Lodge, for example, cultural and political expression is based upon an alliance between classes and sub-classes. Workers, petty-traders, the unemployed, the petty-bourgeoisie and other distinct occupational groups tend to coalesce to give cultural and political expression to their experiences.

In Koch's words:

> These, then, were the origins of the slumyard population – a mixture of workers, the self-employed, the unemployed, the unemployable and the middle classes, of men, women and children, and of people from a

variety of rural origins.[99]

Tayal too, talks of the mobilisation of wide support for the passive resistance movement through 'manipulation of the essentially patron-client linkages between the merchants and other classes in the Indian community.' By 'other classes' she means 'cigar makers, bottle-sellers, matchmakers, laundrymen and, above all, hawkers.'[100] And in Lodge's discussion of Sophiatown, it is the alliance between various strata and classes-in-the-making – from stand-holders to gangsters – that is emphasised.

This is not to say that each of these groups, however, has the same input into the coalescing culture. To argue this would be to fall uncritically into a nationalist analysis. Lodge mentions the arguments of authors such as Slovo and Magubane who suggest that this nationalist interpretation is valid[101] – that in spite of the existence of stratification among the black population, there is no major clash of interests. In this they recall Blauner's 'internal colonialist' interpretation of the black ghetto.[102] And yet many of the papers here suggest that as classes become more fully-formed, distinct tensions develop between factors of class and those of culture. Tayal critically examines the leading, and perhaps cynical, role of Indian merchants in the passive resistance campaign; Koch emphasises the power of the working class input into the slumyard culture he identifies; Lodge identifies a shift from petty-bourgeois to grassroots leadership in the case of Sophiatown, while Bradford makes subtle distinctions by region and period, in which different classes and interests prevailed, in the movement which was the ICU. What one might expect is that as class formation proceeds, so the capacity of nationalist, nostalgic and populist symbols to mobilise inter-class alliances of this kind will decline. Neither an economistic Marxism, nor a romantic nationalism, will allow us to understand these processes, for both these approaches lack the synthesis of materialist, cultural and regional understanding that is needed.

FOOTNOTES

I am indebted to Tim Couzens and David Webster for their help in selecting the papers for inclusion in this volume, and to all the other members of the History Workshop for their encouragement, as well as to Shula Marks for many informal discussions. The ideas contained in this Introduction are my own, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of all members of the Workshop or, indeed, those of the contributors in this collection, while I alone am responsible for all errors and weaknesses.

1. Antonio Gramsci, letter to his sister-in-law, in Lynne Lawner (ed) *Letters from Prison by Antonio Gramsci* (New York, 1973) p. 136.
2. The University of the Witwatersrand 'History Workshop' was originally conceived as a local version of the 'History Workshop' first based in Ruskin College, Oxford, but now a national movement on which background material is obtainable in Raphael Samuel (ed.) *People's History and Socialist Theory* (London, 1981) as well as the journal *History Workshop*.
3. Eugene Genovese has a lot to say about the risks involved in sacrificing intellectuality to 'relevance' in his essay (written at the time of student and black revolt and redolent with implications for South Africa today): 'On Being a Socialist and Historian' in E. Genovese, *In Red and Black: Marxian Explorations in Southern and Afro-American History* (New York, 1972).
4. See Raphael Samuel's excellent overview of the history of 'people's history' in R. Samuel (ed.) *op. cit.* p. xvi.
5. See Belinda Bozzoli, 'Popular History and the Witwatersrand' in B. Bozzoli (compiler) *Labour, Townships and Protest* (Johannesburg,1978).
6. R. Samuel, 'People's History', *op cit.* p. xvi.
7. Many of these have been lodged in the Media Centre, Wartenweiler Library, from which they are obtainable on loan; a catalogue is in preparation.
8. Antonio Gramsci, 'The Study of Philosophy', in Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (eds.) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London, 1971) p. 333.
9. R. Samuel 'People's History' *op. cit.* p. xx.
10. The University of the Witwatersrand's African Studies Institute has a well-established Oral Documentation Project in which the testimonies of rural Africans are being recorded, and where numerous other interviews are also lodged. The South African Institute of Race Relations has also recently begun a similar project. Some of the fruits of the ASI programme are already evident in this book.
11. See, for example, Modikwe Dikobe, 'We Shall Walk' and 'The People Overflow: A Tribute to Schreiner' in B. Bozzoli *op. cit.*
12. Carl Boggs, *Gramsci's Marxism*, (London, 1976) p. 63.
13. Quoted in Boggs, *op. cit.* p. 57.
14. On this matter, see Eugene Genovese, 'Class and Nationality in Black America' in *In Red and Black, op. cit.*
15. Quoted in Dunbar Moodie's paper 'Mine Culture and Miners' Identity on the South African Gold Mines', *infra* pp. 194-5.
16. Victor Seidler, 'Trusting Ourselves: Marxism, Human Needs and Sexual Politics' in Simon Clarke *et al.* (eds.) *One-Dimensional Marxism: Althusser and the Politics of Culture* (London, 1980).
17. This exposition of Schutz's phenomenonological perspective is contained in Moodie's paper, *infra* p. 177.

18. *Ibid.* p. 178.
19. *Ibid.* p. 180.
20. Modikwe Dikobe, 'Dispossessed', *infra* p. 50.
21. 'Dispossessed' *op. cit.*, p. 48.
22. Moodie, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-90.
23. Mrs S's testimony is one of several being collected by the African Studies Institute's oral documentation programme. These comments are drawn from an edited version of her story at present being prepared for publication.
24. Helen Bradford, 'A Taste of Freedom: Capitalist Development and Response to the ICU in the Transvaal Countryside', *infra* p. 135.
25. See Bradford, *op. cit.*, p. 146.
26. Malete Nkadimeng and Georgina Relly, 'Kas Maine: The Story of a Black South African Agriculturalist', *infra* p. 89.
27. Ruth Tomaselli, 'Indian Flower-Sellers of Johannesburg: A History of People on the Street,' *infra* p. 215.
28. E.P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory*, (London, 1978) p. 200.
29. Julia Wells, 'The Day the Town Stood Still: Women in Resistance in Potchefstroom, 1912-1920' *infra* p. 286.
30. T. Rosengarten, *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw* (New York, 1974).
31. Nkadimeng and Relly, *op. cit.*, p. 91.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Dunbar Moodie, *op cit.*, p. 178.
34. Maureen Tayal, 'Indian Passive Resistance in the Transvaal, 1906-08, infra p. 263.
35. See L. Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in L. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy*, (London, 1971).
36. Althusser's use of the term 'ideology' to denote an 'external' force which 'hails or interpellates individuals as subjects' would seem to approximate closely to the use of the term 'culture' in many Gramscian and other writings, although by calling it 'ideology' Althusser does somewhat beg the question I am trying to raise here – that of whether or not 'culture' is dictated 'from above'. For implicit in the term 'ideology' is a sense of 'manipulation' or 'ulterior motive', absent from the term 'culture'.
37. This conception of an 'autonomous' cultural and ideological universe has recently been re-stated by Gervase Clarence-Smith in an unpublished paper, 'Ideology and Racism in South Africa'.
38. Boggs, *op. cit.*, p. 206.
39. Raymond Williams, 'Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory', in Raymond Williams, *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, (London, 1980) p. 38.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*

42. For a slightly more extended statement of these arguments see the introduction to B. Bozzoli, *The Political Nature of a Ruling Class: Capital and Ideology in South Africa 1890-1933* (London, 1981).
43. Paul Rich, 'Milnerism and a Ripping Yarn: Transvaal Land Settlement and John Buchan's Novel *Prester John*, 1901-1910', *infra* pp. 413-4.
44. *Ibid.* p. 413.
45. *Ibid.* p. 423.
46. *Ibid.* p 425.
47. Stephen Gray, 'Piet's Progress: Douglas Blackburn's Satire on Capitalist Penetration of the Transvaal in the 1890s', *infra* p. 400.
48. *Ibid.* p. 407.
49. Other examples have been described in the work of Isabel Hofmeyr, for example – see her essay on 'The Mad Poets: An analysis of an early sub-tradition of Johannesburg literature and its subsequent developments,' in *Labour, Townships and Protest, op. cit.*, and her paper presented to the 1981 History Workshop Conference, 'The Political Dimension of South African Literature: An analysis of images of town and country in turn of the century writing'; as well as Charles van Onselen's portrayal of Afrikaner opposition in his 'The Main Reef Road into the Working Class: proletarianisation, unemployment and class consciousness amongst Johannesburg's Afrikaner poor, 1890-1914', originally presented at the 1981 Workshop, and now published in his two-volume work *Studies in the Social and Economic History of the Witwatersrand 1886 – 1914: New Babylon, New Nineveh* (London, Johannesburg, 1982).
50. Eddie Webster, 'The Colour of Craft: changing forms of job protection among members of the Iron-Moulders' Society, 1914-1968', *infra.*
51. See Peter Delius and Stanley Trapido, 'Inboekselings and Oorlams: the creation and transformation of a servile class', *infra* p. 70.
52. Naboth Mokgatle's *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African* (Berkeley, 1971) contains a fascinating account of the capture by Boers and ultimate return to her people of an Ndebele princess, Mokgatle's grandmother; see Chapters 7-8.
53. Julia Wells mentions the fact that small platteland towns acted as a refuge as well; Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 269.
54. See Tim Couzens, 'Moralising Leisure-Time: the transatlantic connection and black Johannesburg, 1918-36' in S. Marks and R. Rathbone (eds.) *Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa: African Class, Culture and Consciousness 1870-1930* (London, 1982).
55. Tim Couzens, 'An Introduction to the History of Football in South Africa', *infra* p. 202.
56. Tom Lodge, 'The Parents' School Boycott, 1955', *infra.*
57. M. Dikobe, 'Dispossessed', *op. cit.*, p. 51.
58. Moodie, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-191.
59. Eddie Koch, 'Without Visible Means of Subsistence: Slumyard Culture in Johannesburg, 1918-1940', *infra.*

60. Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 41.
61. Moodie, *op. cit.*, p. 189.
62. Koch, *op. cit.*, p 158.
63. Tom Lodge, 'The Destruction of Sophiatown', *infra* p. 350.
64. John Clarke et al. 'Sub-cultures, Cultures and Class: a theoretical overview,' in Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (eds.), *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Sub-cultures in Post-War Britain* (London, 1976) p. 13.
65. Delius and Trapido, *op. cit.*, p. 69.
66. E. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York, 1974) p. xvii.
67. Paul Rich, *op. cit.*
68. See B. Bozzoli, *The Political Nature of a Ruling Class, op. cit.*
69. Couzens, *infra* p. 205.
70. Delius and Trapido, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
71. See Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 283.
72. Boggs, *op. cit.*, p. 48.
73. Simon Clarke, 'Socialist-Humanism and the Critique of Economism', *History Workshop 8*, 1979 pp. 137-156.
74. John Clarke *et al.*, *op. cit.* p. 11.
75. Tayal, *op. cit.*, p. 240.
76. Nkadimeng and Relly, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
77. Tim Keegan, 'The Sharecropping Economy, African Class Formation and the 1913 Natives Land Act in the Highveld Maize Belt', *infra.* p. 109.
78. See Nkadimeng and Relly *op. cit.*, pp. 94-5 and compare with Delius and Trapido, *op. cit.*
79. Nkadimeng and Relly, *op. cit.*, p. 97. See also Keegan, *op.cit.*
80. Keegan, *op. cit*
81. *Ibid.*
82. *Ibid.* p. 122.
83. Tomaselli, *op. cit.*, p. 216.
84. Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 300.
85. *Ibid.* p. 271.
86. *Ibid.* p. 122.
87. Tom Lodge, 'Schools' Boycott' *op. cit.*, p. 390.
88. For comparative material see S. Walker: 'Women in Twentieth Century South African Politics: the Federation of South African Women; its roots, growth and decline,' MA Thesis, University of Cape Town 1978, and C. Kros, 'Urban African Women's Organisations and Protest on the Rand from the years 1939-1956', BA Hons. dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1978.
89. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1968) p. 10.
90. *Ibid.* p. 11. See also, for a reference to Gramsci's critical views on this subject, Boggs, *op. cit.* p. 64.
91. See, for example, D. Gaitskell, 'Female Mission Initiatives: Black and white women in three Witwatersrand churches, 1903-1939' Ph.D., University of London, 1981; Tim Couzens, 'The New African: Herbert Dhlomo and Black South African Writing in English, 1903-1956', Ph.D. University of the Witwatersrand, 1980; S. Marks and R. Rathbone (eds.) *op. cit.* Charles van Onselen, *Essays, op. cit.* Paul Tourikis, 'The Political Economy of Alexandra Township', University of the Witwatersrand Honours Dissertation 1982, and A. Sitas, 'The Drought in the City: hostels and metalworkers in the East Rand', paper presented to the History Workshop Conference, 1981.
92. S. Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 398.
93. *Ibid.*
94. The paper by Delius and Trapido, *op. cit.*, refers extensively to this process.
95. Keegan, *op. cit.*, p. 120.
96. Bradford, *op. cit.*, p. 130.
97. Lodge, 'Schools' Boycott', *op. cit.*, p. 387. See also Sitas, *op. cit.*
98. See, for example, Mike Davis, 'Why the U.S. Working Class is Different', *New Left Review* 123, September-October, 1980; and Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Working Class Culture and Working Class Politics in London, 1870-1900: notes on the remaking of a working class', *Journal of Social History* 7, 41. Summer, 1974.
99. Koch, *op. cit.*, p. 157.
100. Tayal, *op. cit.*, p. 241.
101. See Lodge, 'Sophiatown' *op. cit.*, p. 338.
102. See R. Blauner, 'Internal Colonialism and Ghetto Revolt' in R.Blauner, *Racial Oppression in America* (New York, 1975).