

SOUTH AFRICAN POLITICAL PRISON-LITERATURE BETWEEN 1948 AND 1990:
THE PRISONER AS WRITER AND POLITICAL COMMENTATOR

by

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SUMMARY

This thesis examines works written about imprisonment by four South African political prison writers who were incarcerated for political reasons. My Introduction focuses on current research and literature available on the subject of political prison-writing and it justifies the study to be undertaken. Chapter One examines the National Party's policy pertaining to the holding of political prisoners and discusses the work of Michel Foucault on the subject of imprisonment as well as the connection he makes between knowledge and power. This chapter also considers the factors that motivate a prisoner to write. Bearing in mind Foucault's findings, Chapters Two to Five undertake detailed studies of La Guma's The Stone Country, Dennis Brutus's Letters to Martha, Hugh Lewin's Bandiet and Breyten Breytenbach's The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist, respectively. Particular emphasis is placed on the reaction of these writers against a repressive government. In addition, Chapters Two to Five reflect on the way in which imprisonment affected them from a psychological point of view, and on the manner in which they were, paradoxically, empowered by their prison experience. Chapters Four and Five also consider capital punishment and Lewin and Breytenbach's response to living in a hanging jail. I contemplate briefly the works of Frantz Fanon in the conclusion in order to elaborate on the reasons for the failure of the system of apartheid and the policy of political imprisonment and to reinforce my argument.

Key terms

South African political prison-writing; apartheid; political imprisonment; knowledge and power; imprisonment and political commitment; Alex La Guma; Dennis Brutus; Hugh Lewin; Breyten Breytenbach; Michel Foucault.

To those South Africans who refused to be silent - the
struggle was not in vain.

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Introduction

Most countries, at some time in their history, have held political prisoners. From the Roman Empire in ancient times to, more recently, countries such as the United States and South Africa, there have been individuals incarcerated for political reasons. Significantly, political prisoners have, over the course of the years, documented their prison experiences, resulting in a broad range of political prison-writing. The jailed fifteenth-century French poet, François Villon, for example, produced Ballad des Pendus, while awaiting execution, Lady Constance Lytton wrote Prisons and Prisoners, based on her experiences in an English prison at the turn of this century, and Alexander Solzhenitsyn in The Gulag Archipelago (1974) described his internment in the Soviet prison camps established by Stalin. More recently and in the third world, Ngugi wa Thiong'o has written Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary (1989), Nawal el Sa'adawi has penned Memoirs From the Women's Prison (1991) and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Aung San Suu Kyi, has published a collection of essays, Freedom From Fear (1991), which includes an account of her term as a political prisoner under house arrest in Burma (Myanmar).

In this introduction my objective, *inter alia*, is to draw attention to the scope of material available on the topic. Anthologies and commentaries on general prison-writing are available. Collections such as Gertrude Katz's The Time Gatherers: Writings From Prison (1970), which deals with prison literacy in a Montreal prison, and Frank Earl Andrews and Albert Dickens's Voices From the Big House: A Collection of Fiction by

Long Term Convicts (1974), which contains material by these two convicts, are non-specific in focus and are not concerned with the analysis of writing, political or otherwise. Victor Brombert's The Romantic Prison: The French Tradition (1978), Philip Priestley's Victorian Prison Lives: English Prison Biography (1985), Judith A. Scheffler's article 'Romantic Women Writing on Imprisonment and Prison Reform' (1988) and H. Bruce Franklin's Prison Literature in America: The Victim as Criminal and Artist (1989), as indicated by their titles, furnish different perspectives on prison literature. Mildred C. Andersen's doctoral thesis, Autobiographical Responses to Prison Experience: An Examination of Selected Writings of the Late-Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (1988), undertakes a substantial critical analysis of prison writing in general, using for major consideration works by Oscar Wilde, E.E. Cummings, Herman Charles Bosman and Brendan Behan.

My studies have also acquainted me with Barbara Harlow's 'From the Women's Prison: Third World Women's Narratives of Prison' (1986), Miriam Cooke's 'Prisons: Egyptian Women Writers on Islam' (1988) and Suha Sabbagh's 'Palestinian Women Writers and the Intifada' (1989). The predominant focus of these articles, however, is on women interned in the third world. Articles on Yugoslav camp literature, including Tomas Venclova's 'Prison as Communicative Phenomenon: The Literature of Gulag' (1979) and Matt F. Oja's 'Toward a Definition of Camp Literature' (1989) provide insights into imprisonment under oppressive regimes but their emphasis is obviously not as geographically wide-ranging as, say, André Brink's essay on political prison-

writing, which is included in Writing in a State of Siege (1983).¹

Writing by South African political prisoners spans more than forty years, extending for most of the time the Nationalist government was in power. Numerous books, many written by South African political prisoners, were banned and were accessible to non-South African readers only. Such banned books include those by Albie Sachs, Ruth First and Moses Dlamini, to name a few.² The number of previously banned books available in South Africa has, nevertheless, substantially increased as a result of political changes beginning in 1990. Works devoted exclusively to the South African political prison-system are Govan Mbeki's Learning From Robben Island (1991), Jürgen Schadeberg's Voices From Robben Island (1994), Neville Alexander's Robben Island Dossier 1964-1974 (1994) and Harriet Deacon's The Island: A History of Robben Island 1488-1990 (1996). The autobiography of Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom (1994), chronicles Mandela's twenty-seven years in prison, and Goodbye Bafana (1995), by James Gregory, Mandela's jailer at one time, offers an insight into the relationship between these two men.

Geoffrey Bould's anthology, Conscience be my Guide (1991), contains an assortment of writing by political prisoners from different countries, including South Africa. Barbara Schreiner's collection, A Snake With Ice Water (1992), includes interviews with and excerpts from the written work of political and non-political women prisoners. Both compilations include brief introductions but no critical consideration of the narratives presented. Harlow in Resistance Literature (1987) devotes a chapter, 'Prison Memoirs of Political Detainees', to prison

writing and incorporates a consideration of First's prison narrative in her book, Barred: Women, Writing and Political Detention, while Iain Davies evaluates the prison writing of Breyten Breytenbach in some detail and mentions the work of Ruth First in Writers in Prison (1990). Both studies are broad in focus, however, and not specific to South Africa. Kate Millett in The Politics of Cruelty (1994) also includes a chapter on South African prison-writing but to draw her conclusions she uses novels, such as those by Sipho Sepamla and Miriam Tlali, rather than accounts by writers who were imprisoned for political reasons.

J.U. Jacobs and Sheila Roberts deal specifically with political prison-writing from a South African perspective. Jacobs, in particular, has written articles including 'Narrating the Island: Robben Island in South African Literature' (1992) and 'Texts Under Arrest: The Autobiographical Writings of Helen Joseph' (1993), as well as a number of short pieces focusing on aspects of political imprisonment, including interrogation, confession and the writing of the prison memoir. Roberts's approach in 'South African Prison Literature' (1985) is more general. Both have written articles on Breytenbach's prison literature. Hermina van Vuuren's M.A. thesis, Poetry in Prison: A Study of Breyten Breytenbach's Five Volumes of Prison Poetry in Translation (1991) and Ileana Dimitriu's M.A. thesis, Reconstructing the Hostile Space: A Zen Buddhist and Psychological Reading of Breyten Breytenbach's *The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist* (1992) also deal at some length with Breytenbach's prison work.

Cecil Abrahams, Frank Chipasula, Janet McArthur, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, M.J. Salt and Bahadur Tejani have authored articles concerning the poetry produced by Dennis Brutus in prison and, in addition, there is Ria de Meester's M.A. thesis, Dennis Brutus' Prison Poems: The Grim Assertion of Some Sense of Worth (1980). I am also familiar with C.J. Driver's article 'The View From Makana Island: Some Recent Prison Books From South Africa' (1975), which provides a review of published South African political prison-literature, including D.M. Zwelonke, Brutus, Hugh Lewin and Sachs. Furthermore, I am aware of Anthony D. Cavaluzzi's 'Exiled Within: Voices From South African Prisons' (1990), which is an article on the writing of Molefe Pheto, Lewin, Moses Dlamini, Indres Naidoo and Caesarina Kona Makhoere, and with Cherry Clayton's examination of prison narratives by South African women, in her article, 'Post-Colonial, Post-Apartheid, Post-Feminist: Family and State in Prison Narratives by South African Women' (1992).

Michelle Aarons's M.A. thesis, entitled Prison Experience in the Work of Some South African Writers From Lessing to Cronin (1988), contains five chapters, three devoted to the works of political prisoners, namely First, Zwelonke and Jeremy Cronin. Mitzi Meriwether in her Honours thesis, Liberating Women Prisoners: Issues of Race and Gender in the Prison Literature of Ruth First, Bessie Head and Caesarina Kona Makhoere (1993), focuses her attention on writing by the three women named in the title; and Rosemary Folli's M.A. thesis, A Tent of Blue and Souls in Pain: Creative Responses to Prison Experience With Emphasis Upon Existential and Autobiographical Elements Within Selected South African Prison Writings (1994), considers the work

of Bosman, Brutus and Cronin, two of which were political prisoners. In her Ph.D. thesis, Self, Life and Writing in Selected South African Autobiographical Texts (1994), Judith Coullie analyzes a broad selection of autobiographical texts by Albert Luthuli, Ellen Kuzwayo and Breytenbach to name a few, while Sandra Young in her M.A. dissertation, Negotiating Truth, Freedom and Self: The Prison Narratives of Some South African Women (1996), concentrates her attention on the political prison-writing of First, Makhoere, Emma Mashinini and Maggie Resha.

Except for these works and a number of articles which touch briefly on political prison-writing in a relatively narrow sense, I am not aware of any further research or published documents that exclusively consider in detail the accounts of political prisoners in South Africa. I have accordingly elected to examine a selection of South African political prison-writing in some depth, having been drawn to a consideration of the workings of power in such a situation. The writings I have chosen were written by Alex La Guma, Dennis Brutus, Hugh Lewin and Breyten Breytenbach, individuals who were imprisoned because of their opposition to apartheid. Interned under changing legislation,³ at different times and in different jails, all four political prisoners were professional writers and political activists before internment.

La Guma was a member of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and a representative of the African National Congress (ANC). A prolific writer, he produced articles for newspapers and journals, short stories and novels. He was charged with treason, banned under the Suppression of Communism Act, placed under house arrest and interned under suspicion of promoting the

work of the ANC and the SACP. He was detained several times during the mid 1950s and early 1960s and held in a variety of prisons, including Maitland and Roeland Street jails. Brutus, an outspoken supporter of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee, was banned under the General Law Amendment Act, which loosely defined the crime of sabotage. He was interned on Robben Island in 1963, accused of breaking his banning order and was subsequently placed under house arrest until his departure from South Africa in 1966. In addition to producing several volumes of poetry, Brutus has written a number of articles on political issues and South African literature.

Lewin, a member of the Armed Resistance Movement (ARM), was charged under the Sabotage Act and served seven years in Pretoria Local and Pretoria Central Prisons from 1964 to 1971. A journalist by profession, Lewin has written a number of poems, a short story, a variety of children's books and an account of his prison experience. Breytenbach, one of the founding members of the political organization, Okhela, was charged under the Terrorism Act and sentenced to nine years in prison. His term was served at Pretoria Central and Pollsmoor Prisons and he was released in 1982. He has produced full-length works (fiction and non-fiction), numerous collections of poetry and several articles that focus not only on political topics but on literary issues as well.

In my selection, as indicated, I have tried to accommodate some diversity in political ideology, as well as variety in generic form, hence the focus on fiction, poetry, prison memoir and autobiography. Except for a discussion of enforced homosexuality and a number of references which document both the

male and the female political prison-experience, gender considerations are of no particular significance in this study. My choices of writers have not been made with these in mind; nor, indeed, have they been made along racial lines. As shown earlier, several women have written about their prison experience, but only Joyce Sikakane and Ruth First fit within the parameters of this thesis. Sikakane, who wrote for The World and The Rand Daily Mail newspapers, has not been included here, however, because in her book, A Window on Soweto, she devotes only sixteen pages to her arrest, detention, trial and banning. I have also excluded First, a journalist by profession because she was not actively working as a writer at the time of her internment - a banning order had prohibited her from doing so - but was training for a new career as a librarian. Since political affiliation is one of my concerns, First's membership in the same organizations as La Guma, and the depth and range of La Guma's work significantly influenced the final choice. First also had something in common with Brutus. Both were charged under the General Law Amendment Act and imprisoned in 1963. While First's written account of 117 days in Marshall Square police station is an important document, I have selected Brutus's writing instead, as he was one of the first political prisoners to respond in writing to his imprisonment on Robben Island, arguably the most notorious prison in South Africa. It should be noted, however, that the political prison-writing of women and all of South Africa's diverse races is widely referred to in the thesis.

Since my interest in this study extends to literature produced in reaction against a repressive regime, it is crucial

to discuss the dual function of the writer. As committed opponents to apartheid, La Guma, Brutus, Lewin and Breytenbach, imprisoned for their writing, thoughts, political affiliations and/or actions, were unable to respond to their confinement without commenting on the system that interned them. Thus, a close analysis of each work has to include a detailed review of each writer's political convictions. It is also necessary to consider how these accomplished and respected writers use their ability to place their unique experiences within a literary framework. Indeed, as Brink points out in Writing in a State of Siege, 'whether [a writer] writes about...silence or violence, about history or the contemporary scene, about private fears or the socio-political dimension of man, the writer's primary concern is with the quality of his work' (1983:170). A further reason for examining these selected works is that they provide a historical perspective on the way in which the system of apartheid operated in South Africa.

Throughout this study, in addition to focusing on the form, content and language of each text and, as mentioned, highlighting the political convictions of the individual writers, I shall stress significant similarities in and differences between the individuals. For purposes of comparison and clarification, I shall refer to other political prison-writing as well.

For the benefit of readers other than South Africans, I shall explain unfamiliar concepts and references. I shall indicate sources by means of the Harvard method and shall distinguish the authors' occasional use of dots from my ellipses by means of the word 'sic' in the quotations cited. As many of

the narratives are published in the United States, much quoted material contains American spelling.

Notes

1. I have referred, here, to a select number of books and articles on the subject of prison literature. My bibliography includes a more comprehensive list and, for additional information, I refer to those bibliographies which appear in Ioan Davies's Writers in Prison, Barbara Harlow's Resistance Literature and H. Bruce Franklin's Prison Literature in America.
2. I shall discuss these and many others in the chapters that follow.
3. I intend to examine these laws in some detail in Chapter One.

CHAPTER ONE

POLITICAL PRISON-WRITING

The National Party assumed control in South Africa in 1948 and held power until the election of Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) in 1994. For over forty years the Nationalist government devised, instituted and 'perfected' a system which would suppress opposition to the policy of apartheid.¹ Laws were enacted which led to the banning, detention, torture and imprisonment of numerous people. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an account of the most significant of such laws and to examine the Nationalist government's internment of political prisoners and its response to wide-spread claims of human rights' abuses. I intend simultaneously to assess the findings of independent reports on the subject and to follow this with an examination of the way in which writers react against a repressive regime, with particular emphasis on political prison-writing in South Africa. In addition I shall consider the factors that motivate a prisoner to write, in order to show varying responses to imprisonment, and I propose to conclude the chapter with specific reference to the work of Michel Foucault on the subject.

In 1950 the South African government passed the Suppression of Communism Act, a sweeping bill that outlawed the Communist Party of South Africa and made it a crime to be a member of the party or to advance the aims of communism. The act also permitted authorities to take action against those people and organizations suspected of inciting opposition to apartheid

policies. The Public Safety Act, which empowered the government to proclaim a state of emergency, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, which sanctioned corporal punishment for those who protested against any law, followed in 1953. By 1960, the government had banned the ANC and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) under the Unlawful Organizations Act which, like the Suppression of Communism Act, also provided for the conviction of any person who was a member of a banned organization.

Further legislation was introduced throughout the 1960s, including the General Law Amendment Act of 1962, which loosely defined the crime of sabotage. In addition, authorities were now permitted to place banned persons under house arrest, an extremely prohibitive measure. In her autobiography, Side by Side, Helen Joseph, the first person in South African to be placed under house arrest, describes what the next five years of her life would entail:

No longer could I leave my house after 6.30 p.m. or at any time during the weekend, or leave the magisterial area of Johannesburg, or be in any black area, or factory, or communicate with any banned or listed person. Nor could any of my friends visit me in my home, or even walk down my garden path, nor could I attend any gatherings, social or political. Over and above all these prohibitions, I was compelled to report to the Central Johannesburg police station every day between midday and two o'clock, except of course on the days when I was confined to the house (1993:122).

Under the General Law Amendment Act, any person suspected of a political crime could also be detained without warrant and held without trial for ninety days.

A more oppressive piece of legislation followed in 1965. The Criminal Procedure Amendment Act made it legal for detainees

to be held in solitary confinement and anyone likely to give evidence for the state in a criminal or political trial could be detained for a period of 180 days. Detainees were permitted to have access to state officials only and no court had jurisdiction to order the release of any detainee. In his autobiography, No Life of my Own, Frank Chikane explains how these measures affected him. As a member of the clergy, he was interrogated and detained because the police were convinced that he was conspiring with the people to whom he ministered:

Throughout my time in Rustenburg prison I was kept in solitary confinement without access to a lawyer or visits by the family. I was not allowed any reading material....It took me about three months of arguing with the magistrates who visited me once every three weeks, according to the regulations, before I got a copy of the Bible (1989:33-34).

In 1967 the Terrorism Act was passed and the bill provided for indefinite detention without trial as well. Indeed, in Diana Russell's compilation, Lives of Courage: Women for a New South Africa, Feziwe Bookholane recalls that she was detained for over a year before being convicted and sentenced to eight years in prison for inciting people to leave the country and undergo military training (1991:60-61).

In 1976, in response to the Soweto unrest, the government introduced the Internal Security Amendment Act, which enabled the Minister of Justice to ban and detain, without trial, anyone suspected of subversion. In A Life, Mamphela Ramphele, a medical doctor, remembers the day she was served with a banning order that effectively banished her to another area of the country as well. She was confident that there had been a mistake when she

noticed that both her name and identity number were incorrectly entered on the document:

I pointed this out to Captain Schoeman; he simply asked me to indicate the corrections to him, and proceeded to alter the document accordingly, making a mockery of the legal requirement that the banning orders be given 'under the hand of the Minister', as the document piously proclaimed (1996:119).

While the South African government continued to pass laws designed to silence any opposition to the policy of apartheid, they fervently denied the existence of political prisoners. Major General Jamie Roux, Deputy Commissioner of Prisons, for example, told a group of journalists: 'There are no political prisoners on Robben Island. They have all been convicted of criminal offences' (Amnesty International Report 1978:79).² This is a curious reaction, since numerous prisoners on Robben Island have spoken about the deliberate separation of political and non-political prisoners, which would seem unnecessary if all prisoners were criminal offenders. Alexander,³ for example, in Robben Island Dossier 1964-1974, discusses the way in which prisoners were divided for work purposes:

All political prisoners are sentenced to "hard labour", a very vague term, which is interpreted most whimsically, depending on policy, temperament, and atmosphere at the various levels of the prison bureaucracy.

Unlike common-law prisoners who, at least theoretically, have the possibility of receiving training in some skill or other, the political prisoners on Robben Island have none (1994:29).

Consistent with the government's negation of the status of political prisoners was the refusal to disclose how many people

were in detention. In Muriel Horrell's compilation, A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa, it is noted that the Minister of Justice declined to release this information, based on his assertion that it was 'not in the public interest' to make these figures available (1970:63). Indeed, the suppression of information was an issue that continued to dominate and plague the negotiations following Mandela's release from prison in February 1990. And, until the issuing of the Groote Schuur Minute in May of that year, the situation regarding political prisoners remained unresolved, as Mandela recalls in his autobiography, Long Walk to Freedom:

The primary issue discussed was the definition of political prisoners and political exiles. The government argued for a narrow definition, wanting to restrict the number of our people who would qualify for an indemnity. We argued for the broadest possible definition and said that any person who was convicted of an offense [sic] that was politically motivated should qualify for an indemnity. We could not agree on a mutually satisfactory definition of "politically motivated" crimes, and this would be an issue that would bedevil us for quite a while to come (1994:505).

Another subject that provoked considerable debate was the human rights' record of the South African government, which consistently denied that torture occurred. Numerous individuals and organizations, nevertheless, gathered information that challenged the government's position. The Detainees' Parents Support Committee (DPSC), for example, collected seventy affidavits from detainees asserting that torture was used on a widespread basis and that exposure to cold, 'hooding' and electric-shock torture were common practices,⁴ while the ANC publication, Torture is Part of the System,⁵ contains a

comprehensive list of various techniques used by the security police:

...reports were recorded of frenzied security police violence, including hitting with fists, slapping, kicking and beating with any weapons at hand - sticks, batons, hosepipes, gun butts and other objects. Victims of this type of state terror had their toes crushed with chairs or bricks, their heads banged against a wall or a table, and were dragged about by their hair (1984:11).

In his definitive study, Detention and Torture in South Africa, Don Foster includes several statements by detainees, which support claims of systematic psychological and physical torture, as this example appropriately shows:

I was suspended into a jack where I was handcuffed below the knees and my arms, and an iron bar was forced between my arms and legs, and I was left hanging between the two tables. I was being pushed and I was told to tell the truth. They put a rubber tube on my face. And I was bleeding from my nose and somebody was stabbing me with a sharp instrument at my private parts - for about four to five hours (1987:128).

Similarly, an Amnesty International report, Political Imprisonment in South Africa, contains well documented examples of human rights' abuses and concludes that 'the pattern that emerges, on examining the available evidence, is one of torture being used almost on a routine basis by security police and that the Government, by failing to remedy the situation, appears to condone the practice' (1978:56).

In some cases, torture was so extreme, that the detainee died in detention, an issue that the South African government responded to with a variety of explanations. Excuses ranged from slipping on a bar of soap in the shower, to falling down the

stairs, to hitting the back of the head against a wall. When a prisoner, Sifundile Matalasi, was found dead in his cell, the authorities claimed that he had used his socks to hang himself, while Edward Mzolo's death was not only denied but the Minister of Law and Order contended that he had not been detained in the first place. Another detainee, Ahmed Timol,⁶ was held under the Terrorism Act and fell to his death from the tenth floor of Security Headquarters. Brigadier Piet Kruger, Deputy Chief of the Security Police, described Timol's demise in the following way, as reported in Hilda Bernstein's South Africa: The Terrorism of Torture: 'We who know the communists know that when they plan to use violence they make their people swear an oath to commit suicide rather than to mention the names of their comrades. They are taught to jump out before they are interrogated' (1972:1).

When it was difficult or impossible to deny human rights' abuses, the government argued that South Africa was not unique and that repressive measures were used all over the world. Julie Frederikse reports in her book, South Africa: A Different Kind of War, that Louis le Grange, Minister of Law and Order, told a Foreign Correspondents Association:

I know that South Africa is being blamed for the number of deaths in detention. I know it is a particular point of debate, but the fact of the matter is, ladies and gentlemen, that one must also look at these matters in perspective. I am not trying to say that one should take these things for granted - not at all! It is a very serious matter when anyone dies in detention. But, is this now so exceptional in the world? I can quote you figures of countries from where some of you come which is much higher than any figure that South Africa has had for the last ten years (1986:119).

This response is as ludicrous as suggesting that genocide in Rwanda is justified because similar massacres have occurred in Nazi Germany, Cambodia, Yugoslavia.

At this point one has to pause and ask how the South African government managed to imprison and detain so many people and yet conceal most of the information pertaining to the prison system. Their deception was achieved through collaboration, secrecy, denial, and, perhaps their most powerful vehicle, the Prisons Act. Before I discuss this ordinance, however, I should like to examine the case of Black Consciousness leader, Steve Biko, whose death in detention highlights the way in which the government conspired with the police and some doctors and lawyers in order to conceal and suppress evidence.⁷

Biko was arrested on 18 August 1977 and detained under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act.⁸ He died less than a month later on 12 September 1977. The post-mortem report concluded that death was caused by extensive brain damage. The Minister of Justice, James Kruger, nevertheless, asserted that Biko had been on a hunger strike, while the attending doctors, Lang and Tucker, maintained that Biko was shamming, despite the fact that they had found him lying on the floor, hyperventilating and with froth at his mouth. A lumbar puncture had also revealed the presence of red blood cells in the spinal fluid, which is an indication of possible cerebral haemorrhage. An inquest was held and, although the cause of death was never disputed, the verdict, as recorded in Bernstein's No.46 - Steve Biko, found that no one was responsible:

The cause or likely cause of Mr. Biko's death was a head injury, followed by extensive brain injury and other complications including renal failure.

The head injury was probably sustained on the morning of 7 September during a scuffle with Security Police in Port Elizabeth. The available evidence does not prove that death was brought about by an act or omission involving an offence by any person (1978b:115).⁹

The inquiry revealed much about the South African judicial system, in particular the inability of judges and magistrates to protect human rights.¹⁰ The ANC report, Torture is Part of the System, contends that the reason why the system failed was because the judiciary collaborated against political prisoners:

The evidence of police witnesses is almost always accepted by the courts, despite the widespread allegations of torture which are repeated in detail, often to judges and magistrates who have presided over innumerable court hearings and hear similar allegations from countless detainees. There has been no statement from judges or magistrates condemning police practices... (1984:4-5).

Bernstein, in the work cited, maintains a similar position but claims that legal power lay in the hands of the Security Police and that a trial had nothing to do with justice, since the decision was predetermined: 'The outcome', Bernstein maintains, 'rests entirely with the Security Police. The outcome is in fact already decided, behind closed doors, and the trial itself is only the final procedure; coming before the judge is the *only public act* in a play largely prepared in secret; the acting out of the final part of the script' (1972:49).

In the light of the above, it is logical that co-operation enabled the South African government to remain secretive about

the treatment of political prisoners.¹¹ Thus, the police were able to set up a camp in the Mkambathi forest near Lusikisiki, in the former 'independent' homeland of Transkei, where they interrogated and tortured a group of men detained under the Terrorism Act.¹² Similarly, when Mthayeni Cuthsela, one of the detainees, died in detention, the police returned his body to his family in a sealed coffin and refused to issue a death certificate, despite the official claim that death was due to natural causes.

Through these actions the police attempted to deny what had occurred in the forest. Negation, as mentioned earlier, was a common technique used by the government, which went to great lengths to prove its innocence. Andrew Mlangeni in Schadeberg's anthology, Voices from Robben Island, for example, recalls that swift, superficial changes took place in order to impress foreign observers:¹³

A few days after our arrival we were taken out for the first time to work in the courtyard, little knowing that people from Britain would be arriving...[sic] I think they represented the Daily Telegraph. They found us knitting jerseys. The prison authorities said, 'This is the type of work we are giving them, not hard labour'. The moment they left, everything was taken away and stones and big rocks were brought into the yard on wheelbarrows (1994:23).

When denial was not sufficient to suppress information, the government banned or restricted publications and organizations. They refused a request by the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit detainees on a regular basis and banned a Christian Institute report entitled Torture in South Africa. In response to Foster's Detention and Torture in South Africa,¹⁴ the

Minister of Law and Order suggested that the report was politically biased and that the findings had to be proved in a court of law. To enforce its assertions, the government had at its disposal the Prisons Act, which made it an offence to publish what the government perceived as false information with regard to the administration or to the experience of a prisoner. Thus, the report about Robben Island by the Australian journalist, David McNicoll, appeared in The Rand Daily Mail on 12 July 1973, with several omissions.¹⁵ His interview with Nelson Mandela provided the reader with the following:

Now, you have asked me many questions. I would like you to listen to some complaints.

(Sixty-five words deleted: the Commissioner of Prisons says "the allegations...are false" and draws attention to Section 44(f) of the Prisons Act which makes it an offence to publish a statement about jails knowing it to be false) (1973:13).

What the government did not want the South African reader to see were the following words, as included in Mandela, Tambo, and the African National Congress:

These [complaints] refer to earlier days on this island, before the present commandant came and things improved.

Often they were bad. Prisoners were mercilessly beaten up. I was on one occasion stripped and made to stand at attention, stark naked, for an hour. This is no way to treat someone of my standing. We have had a bad time because of the arbitrariness of the authorities (Johns and Davis Jr eds 1991:165).

The Rand Daily Mail had also published a series of articles based on the experiences of the political prisoner, Harold Strachan, who was interned in Pretoria Local Prison. The newspaper was convicted of reporting on conditions in South

African jails and one of the authors of the articles was imprisoned. Inevitably the prosecution had persuaded the court that there was nothing wrong with the prison system. Horrell attributes this to the evidence provided by State witnesses: 'Instead of initiating a frank examination of the prison system and what more could be done to improve it', says Horrell, 'the Government had instituted a series of cases, mainly punitive in their scope, at which witnesses for the State had given a complete and unsatisfactory denial that anything was wrong' (1970:58). New procedures were introduced as a result of this case and, from 1974, all information regarding prisons and prisoners had to be forwarded and checked by the Media Liaison Section of the South African Prison Service. Any additional comments made by the Prison Service had to be published and given equal priority. A. Mathews, in Freedom, State Security and the Rule of Law, suggests that this form of censorship resulted in

A sophisticated form of press co-optation which has ensured, and will ensure in the future, that newspapers will not go overboard on prison conditions....An editor who publishes a dramatic expose in breach of the arrangements is likely to be prosecuted; and one who submits to the scheme for verification is unlikely to make shocking revelations (1986:152).

In the same way that the National Party restricted information concerning the prison system, so its members enacted laws that would restrict artistic expression, particularly writing. A government responds in this manner only if threatened or intimidated by the power of the written word. In South Africa the government obviously feared the consequences that freedom of expression might bring, hence the harsh censorship laws, the

banning of books and the imprisonment of writers. It would appear that the desire to suppress the production and consumption of literature and to limit the flow of information is an acknowledgement that literature can be powerful, my next point for discussion.

In order to examine this conviction more thoroughly, it is necessary to focus on some of the legislative measures introduced by the South African government, most notably the comprehensive censorship regulations, which affected not only writers (including journalists), but artists, photographers and producers of plays as well. The government imposed its first sweeping restriction on writers in 1966, when it banned numerous writers in exile under the Suppression of Communism Act (1950). This meant that people like Ezekiel Mphahlele, Lewis Nkosi and Mazisi Kunene were unable to have their works published and read in South Africa. Writers living in South Africa were subjected to similar restraints. Author, Don Mattera, for example, was banned, during the early 1970s, for a period of nine years, which had distressing consequences for him, as he explained in an interview with Essop Patel in 'Out of the Twilight': 'it was the most trying time of my life....I moved into this lonely world, the world of the forgotten, the world of the twilight people...and you die' (1983:8-9). Playwright Athol Fugard, on the other hand, was subjected to a different form of repression. When his play, Sizwe Bansi is Dead, opened in 1972, Brian Astbury recalls that

On the opening day the police visited us and informed us that we would not be allowed to open. This at 4.30 in the afternoon. We took hurried legal opinion. At 8.00 o'clock - with a full-house audience clamouring at

the doors - we were told that we would all end up in jail. We cancelled (1979:np).

Works that were published often appeared with parts of the text missing. Thus, Gordimer's The Black Interpreters, published in 1973, had portions blacked out because of a mistaken banning order on the poet Madlenkosi Langa.¹⁶ Newspapers suffered as well and during the 1986 state of emergency many appeared with blank spaces in news reports, as Harvey Tyson, a distinguished South African journalist, explains in Editors Under Fire:

As censorship grew steadily tighter and tighter during the 1980s, government censors were forced, year by year, to think constantly of how to control not only what the newspapers printed, but what they did not print - empty space. It must have driven them to distraction. Especially after they finally discovered, after a decade's duel with newspaper editors, that they could no more ban space than they could stop people thinking (1993:263).

Tyson's observation that the government could not stop people from thinking is pertinent. There are also numerous examples of how possession of banned literature kept the spark of freedom alive. In Frederikse's The Unbreakable Thread, Mongezi Radebe, a political activist, discusses this connection:

...if you go on a farm where people are completely illiterate, it is not impossible that you should come across an old ANC or Communist Party book or some political book that would be regarded as subversive by the system....

I know, for instance, people in Heilbron whom I had never thought were politically aware, and I got friendly with one and he gave me The Struggle is My Life by Mandela....A man selling coal, who was a delivery boy - I had never thought that he had been to school, and I knew him not to be in a position to read anything or write his name, but he gave me that book.

So it was like that in townships all over (1990:158-159).

Censorship regulations created extreme reactions. While a writer may choose whether to write or to remain silent, a decision that may then be transposed into opposition to or acceptance of the system, the artistic process in South Africa was affected by the deliberate creation of a climate of fear and suspicion, leading people like Ali Mazrui, a well known African scholar, to conclude that the decision to write depended on the courage of the writer. In Contemporary Black South African Literature: A Symposium, Mazrui says that 'the artist, the writer, the teacher' had to 'balance, first, the fear of the prison bars; secondly, the fear of death; thirdly, the fear of exile. Different political systems in Africa include different types of fears, and the balance between these fears determines the response of the writer or the artist' (Lindfors ed. 1985:92). On the other hand, once a reader gained access to banned literature, the experience was so meaningful that some individuals report a significant change in personal direction. Tim Jenkin, a political prisoner who escaped from Pretoria Central Prison, describes his political education in and membership of the ANC as a product of his exposure to banned material. In Escape From Pretoria, he elaborates:

I began to devour books by the ton and inevitably read some that I knew would not be allowed in South Africa. The fact that these were banned at home lent them a certain fascination. After a while I made a point of seeking out these books, not because I agreed more with the viewpoints expressed in them but because I felt that I had to broaden my horizons as much as possible while I had the opportunity. From them,

however - especially the ones about South Africa - I learnt that there was another way of looking at my country and that the policies of its government were not altogether defensible (1987:4).

Restriction of expression and reading material, then, had diverse effects. There is no doubt that for writers and journalists the censorship regulations posed a significant problem, particularly when the South African government had the ability to imprison and torture writers and to close down newspapers, as Tyson records in the work I have mentioned:

When the newspaper named The World was shut down by the government, press freedom finally died in this country. Although closure of The World could not stop its editors and journalists, and those on other newspapers, from stating their opinions or reporting many facts which the authorities wanted suppressed, we knew that from the moment they came to take Percy Qoboza away no newspaper was safe in South Africa.¹⁷ The courts could no longer protect us. We were free only so long as we had the support of a large section of the public. We could operate only so long as the government was too afraid to do what many authoritarian states had done in the rest of Africa and the world (1993:162).

The deliberate repression of literature and of the print media is a powerful weapon of control. The writer is faced with the choices of not only whether to write or to remain silent, as previously suggested, but also whether to conform or to oppose the political situation. Within the limitations established by the government, the writer must reach a decision about how to deal with censorship restrictions and whether self-censorship is necessary in order to guard against recriminations. Often this choice manifests itself as a desire to write but to avoid

publication. S'ketsh and New Classic, outlets for creative writers, were considerably affected by this attitude. Writer and editor, Sepamla, tells Tony Emmett about how the quantity of material he received was reduced because of writers' fear of the post. They were afraid that their submissions would 'fall into the wrong hands and they might be spotted' (Emmett 1982:177).

In a climate of intimidation, the creative process is often severely hampered and writers must confront problems associated with compromise and loss of integrity. Similarly, publishers have to address their situation, particularly in regard to government reprisals and economic losses. Ad. Donker, Taurus and Renoster are some of the publishers who accepted the challenge and Ravan Press openly acknowledged its support of writers who refused to appeal to the Publications Board. In an interview with the poet, Oswald Mtshali, in the 4 July edition of The Star, Mike Kirkwood, one of Ravan publishers, discusses this commitment when he notes that Ravan Press attempted to 'convey the solidarity that exist[ed] between the black writers and Ravan Press as a publishing house'. These writers, Kirkwood acknowledges, had 'taken a stand on principle against appealing and we as a publishing house support[ed] them wholeheartedly' (Mtshali 1980:21). The situation Kirkwood describes, however, may be viewed in two ways. On the one hand, an appeal is undesirable because it suggests an acceptance of the policy of apartheid. On the other hand, it would appear that the government succeeded in inducing a state of self-censorship, which may have been more effective than direct intervention.

The response to certain literary works by the South African government and the manipulation of literature needs further

discussion at this point, in order to highlight what I view as an official acknowledgement of the threat of literature because of its power. James Kruger, Minister of Police, succinctly revealed this official recognition at the National Party Congress, when he mentioned the threat of 'Black Power Poetry' in connection with the Black Consciousness Movement's desire to undermine the apartheid system. His view of this threat, as noted in Emmett's 'Oral, Political and Communal Aspects of Township Poetry in the Mid-Seventies', was gleaned from a document which stated that poetry should be written on subjects 'that kill' and that 'black drama must be revolutionary' (1982:175).

Moreover, Stoffel Botha, Minister of Home Affairs, told the South African Houses of Parliament that some kinds of theatre would not be tolerated. He justified his assertion with the following comments, recorded in the 19 May edition of The Star that, 'in certain communities, spontaneous theatre was used to agitate the audience....When the show ends, the audience is so emotionally charged that they will not calm down before everything in the vicinity, from buildings to cars and even other people, have been attacked' (1988:4).

Since members of the government believed that literature had the power to influence, provoke and incite people to action, it is no surprise that they, too, used similar methods to achieve a specific goal. Matthew Krouse, in an article in the periodical, Spark, provides an example of this response, when he recalls that, while serving in the South African Defence Force (SADF), he received a poem written by the Chief of the Defence Force, General Geldenhuys. The poem printed on blue card with a

reproduction of the General's handwriting was intended to provide moral upliftment; it read as follows:

Dear fellow-soldier,
your presence in the
unrest areas
in these times
is vital
for our country and its
peoples
you must do your
share
to return our country
to normal
this we do, amongst
others,
by protecting the vast
majority of people
from a small element
of murderers, arsonists
and those seeking
violence.
Stay calm. Set the
example.
It is not easy, but I know you can
- I trust you
Lekker wees (1990:13).

At this stage, I should like to digress briefly in order to examine the South African government's ability to manipulate all facets of the media. The purpose of this discussion is to show how the government attempted to control media in the same way that it controlled literature and it is my intention to highlight how both print and electronic media were used in order to affect public opinion and to discredit the opposition. The South African government and the SADF provided funds and technical assistance for numerous television and film productions. The object of this initiative was to ensure that projects were

developed that presented South Africa in a positive way and that convinced South Africans of the need for military service and the importance of military operations.¹⁸ Thus a film like Back to Freedom, made in collaboration with UNITA forces,¹⁹ relied heavily on anti-Cuban and Russian messages, while the television serial, Recce, aired on the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), glamorized war and the heroic acts of members of the SADF. Victoria Brittain, in Hidden Lives, Hidden Deaths, also points out that South African radio transmitters were used to broadcast information all over Southern Africa. The scope of these broadcasts was varied but the intention was to present South Africa in a complimentary light:

...powerful South African radio transmitters have been used to bombard local populations with lies. Radio Truth for the Zimbabwe dissidents, Voice of Free Africa for MNR,²⁰ Voice of the Black Cockerel for UNITA, regularly retail stories of battles, government deaths and diplomatic support for the rebels, which are dreamed up in South Africa....There is frequent favourable reference to South Africa, Israel and the United States and equally frequent condemnation of Soviet policies...(1990:122).

Perhaps the most profound example of the way in which the South African government sought to control and manipulate the media was the Muldergate affair during the 1970s. The scandal exposed how the government had set up or had taken over a series of publications and media outlets, including newspapers, photograph agencies and travel magazines, both nationally and internationally. The Citizen newspaper, based in Johannesburg, was secretly funded by the government, and the black magazines Hit and Pace were started with funds provided by the Information

department. Hortors, a South African publishing and printing company, received large amounts of money from this department, as did Valiant Publishers, News Photo Agency and Afripix. The South African government used a frontman, John McGoff, in order to purchase The Sacramento Union, a daily paper in California, and a controlling interest in the United Press International Television News, London. The government also financed a takeover of the Morgan Grampion Publishing Group in Britain and La Nouvelle Société de la Presse in France.²¹

Why did the South African government go to the length of acquiring and controlling newspapers and publishing companies? The only rational answer in this case is because they recognized the power of media and literature and the way in which approving stories about South Africa might affect international opinion and foreign investment. My discussion earlier has revealed how the government attempted to suppress information about political prisoners and human rights' abuses. The manipulation of media and literature allowed the government to continue to deny allegations and to create a climate in which it was possible to control public opinion and international confidence in South Africa. Secrecy and collaboration were secured and guaranteed.

Consequently, it is no surprise that prisoners were subjected to a constant flow of biased information. In My Fight Against Apartheid, Michael Dingake, imprisoned on Robben Island for fifteen years, says that government-sponsored publications were often delivered to the prisoners in censored form;²² and, in Robben Island Hell-Hole, Dlamini, a political prisoner who spent two years on the Island, speaks about the official choice of literature as well as of films in prison:

There had been a lot of speculation on the type of films to be shown. The majority view is that they are going to be films on the Bantustans and its leadersThey are going to be drummed repeatedly into our heads until we think, speak and dream only about Bantustans. Since mid-1964, they have been busy feeding us with the monthly government propaganda organs like Bantu printed in English which is really for the Bantustans (nd:176).

Since the South African government was well versed in the way in which to manipulate media and, perhaps because it feared subversion, it follows that its members would also hamper the release of any literature about prisons in South Africa. Books written by South African political prisoners challenged Nationalist policy by counteracting the silence and disinformation produced by the government and were accordingly banned in South Africa for decades. They were, nevertheless, published overseas and helped to reinforce the international appeal for an end to apartheid. Now widely available in South Africa, such prison works provide evidence about a time in South African history that needs to be evaluated. By piecing together snippets of information it is possible to build up a picture of the way in which the prison system operated and the manner in which political prisoners were treated. In the chapters that follow, I intend to pay a great deal of attention to their treatment but, at this point, in order to show the diverse responses to imprisonment, I should like to focus on the factors that motivate prisoners to write.

Owing to the traumatic nature of any political prison-situation, it is extremely difficult for such prisoners to come to terms with their confinement. To write about the ordeal is

perhaps one way of dealing with the experience, although reliving the pain of internment is difficult. Writing has a cathartic effect, however, allowing the writer an emotional release. Trade unionist, Mashinini recalls in Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life that while she would have 'liked to forget' certain 'very painful moments' in her past and in her present, she found 'that putting on paper some of these terrible times was therapeutic', and that if she could live her life once again, she would 'willingly follow the same path' (1991:xvii).

The need for reaffirmation is another motivating factor, since it allows a writer to place a prison experience in a larger context. Political activist, Zwelonke, maintains in Robben Island that writing his book filled him with a sense of nostalgia, not for prison, but for the individual he had become: 'I am proud of the man on Robben Island. He rejected a slave-life. He chose to fight' (1989:2). For some, writing about imprisonment is logical and inevitable. Poet, Mongane Serote, in Soweto Poetry, affirms that nine months of solitary confinement affected him to the point where his writing would always be linked to and influenced by his prison experience: 'if I was going to continue writing, there was no way I could go on as if I was not aware that there is solitary confinement, torture and deathI could not ignore the fact that the interests of the oppressed [were] defined in terms of imprisonment, boycotts and strikes' (Chapman ed. 1982:113).

Many prisoners cannot forget what they have endured and must write in order to inform others about the way in which the system operates. These prisoners want to remember and then to share the experience to ensure that people will never forget an important

part of their history. This intention is revealed by Mosiuoa Patrick (Terror) Lekota, who spent six years on Robben Island. In Prison Letters to a Daughter, he asks his daughter, Tjhabi, to promise to share his letters:

You must promise me that you will share these letters with other children and people of our country. You see, you are not the only person who wants to know why I and other people were put in prison and are still being imprisoned by this government....

Will you then start by sharing this letter with your brother and sister, companions and schoolmates? And as you grow older help other people understand what I am about to say to you? It is the treasure of the people of our beautiful country - South Africa. Preserve it, my child, and carefully pass it on to those who will grow up clutching the hem and pleats of your skirts (1991:11-12).

Linked to the desire to remember and to share the South African experience was the motivation to remind the reader of the many political prisoners who remained in prison. Lewin, for example, cites Bram Fischer, Jock Strachan and other political prisoners in his dedication in Bandiet and other prison accounts contain portraits of people like Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe and Govan Mbeki, so providing insights into the characters of individuals who played an important role in shaping South African history. Dingake's comments on Mbeki are an example of this:

I would miss Govan 'Zizi' Mbeki. We called each other 'swaer' (brother-in-law), I don't know why, but that's how it was, 'brother-in-law'. Zizi, the most senior (age-wise) of our section, belied his age by 'befriending' the youth and participating in their frolicsome games, monopoly and ludo. Always full of beans, Zizi (1987:230).

As mentioned, one of the reasons for writing is to divulge information about the prison system, and yet the extraction of information from prisoners themselves is what characterizes the detention process. While the prisoner is constantly coerced into making a statement, particularly when told that colleagues have co-operated, the overwhelming response is to remain silent. When released, the desire to recount the ordeal provides a sense of relief and yet the prisoner remains cautious in order to protect prisoners who remain inside. Breytenbach confirms this dilemma in The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist:

In some instances I have used the real names of people involved, mainly because it would have served no purpose to camouflage them. In many other cases I have modified or replaced the names - but behind every name there's a real person, and you may rest assured that the people concerned will recognise themselves (1984b:308).

Motivated by the desire to disclose information and yet restrained by the problems of self-censorship, the writer is placed in an awkward position. For Lewin, the situation was further complicated by his belief that writing about the experience might flatter those who had been in charge of meting out his punishment: 'I hesitate to write anything about what I have experienced - not because it worries me , nor because I think it unimportant, but because it may give satisfaction to men like Aucamp and Swanepoel. They are the sort of men who wield power in South Africa today and they are men who like hearing about themselves' (1976:14).

Some political prisoners have suggested that their reason for writing goes beyond telling a personal story, extending to

the inclusion of a collective concern that highlights the problems facing an entire group. The intention to place a personal situation within a group context allows the political prison account to function on two levels. Thus, the 'I' becomes 'we'; the prisoner becomes every afflicted man or every tortured woman. Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, Tshenuwani Simon Farisani, explains this in Diary From a South African Prison:

In one small sense this is a personal story, but in another wider, more realistic sense it is South Africa's tragic story....It is not my intention to create a martyr out of one who spent only 442 days in four detentions. Many others have been held longer....This is our experience: our oppression, our torture, our suffering. Our death. Our hope. Our inevitable victory. Our freedom(1988a:8).

Prisoners' stories while distinct and varied are therefore capable of articulating a broader concern and it is when a writer admits that his or her prison experience is not unique that its wider significance becomes apparent. Dlamini confirms this point:

We had represented man in his struggle against tyranny, oppression and exploitation just as other men had done since time immemorial; and we left others to continue the struggle until such time that people shall live in brotherhood in South Africa irrespective of their colour, race or religion (nd:197).

The association of the individual with the collective plight serves to link the worlds inside and outside the prison. Prison becomes a microcosm for South Africa: the conditions in prison, including the segregation and the treatment of prisoners, are an extension of the policy of apartheid. Lewin draws attention to

this connection in Bandiet: 'It confirmed my view of Central as a mirror of the outside South African society: a rotten regime, devoid of moral justification, maintaining control through deceit and double-dealing, and, in the process, befouling everyone' (1976:176-177). First, in 117 Days, mentions the same point, which she regards as an illustration of the absurdity of the policy of apartheid. Held at Marshall Square police station, she notes how as 'a prisoner', she was 'held under top security conditions, was forbidden books, visitors, contact with any other prisoner'. Like 'any white South African Madam', however, she 'sat in bed each morning, and Africans did the cleaning for the "missus"' (1982:37).

Ultimately, though, prisoners write as a form of resistance.²³ In prison they write because they are denied access to writing materials and the covert writing or memorizing of a poem becomes an act of defiance. Prisoners write using whatever materials are at their disposal, including pins, match sticks and toilet paper, and they hide their work in order to protect it from the authorities. Sachs was so frustrated by having to write with a slice of cheese and a fishbone, during his 168 days of solitary confinement, that he took the matter to court asking that he be granted the same privileges as awaiting-trial prisoners, notably the right to exercise and to receive reading and writing materials.²⁴ Sachs was one of the few prisoners who won his appeal, although Breytenbach was allowed to write but not to show his work to another person, whether prisoner or warder.

On release, prisoners often seek publication of material produced in prison in order to resist the system that interned

them. In his Preface to The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs, Sachs tells how he 'wrote...by hand, rapidly, in secret, and relied on friends to have [his material] typed....It was a bitter period, and writing was more than a release....It was the only joyous activity [he] could manage, an intimate form of clandestine resistance' (1990:np). Alexander associates resistance with the exposure of conditions in prison:

It was an unspoken injunction understood by all prisoners who were released from the island that one of the most important contributions they could make to the well-being of those they left behind was to let in the light of public scrutiny on the goings-on in that prison. We knew that the "vile deeds" of the prison authorities could not withstand the light of day. Any exposure, no matter how mild, would have the effect of (at least temporarily) reining them in and thus gaining metaphorically (and in some cases literally) a lease on life for the inmates (1994:vii).

Farisani's opposition takes the form of a challenge. His rejection of official doctrine suggests the presence of 'overwhelming evidence of torture [that] has been amassed by former detainees and by trialists, by the church, and by political, lawyers', medical, and other human-rights groups'. Unfortunately, however, 'all of this...[was] routinely brushed aside by the South African government and judiciary as "communist propaganda, an evil crusade, a total onslaught to discredit and destabilize our good government, our Christian society, democracy, Western civilization, and the capitalist economy"' (1988a:7). Zwelonke's resistance, as expressed in Robben Island, stems from his sense of frustration at the irrationality of the political system in South Africa:

If you do admire the work of a free mind, why do you restrain the mind of the black man in South Africa? You give it inferior institutes of learning. You brainwash it to accept apartheid, the machinery of its own destruction. You lock it up on Robben Island.

This is a hell of a frustration. I had decided to bar my mouth from telling the story of the place. But I am going to write about it; it is easier that way. It has been a closed book, and now I am opening it (1989:3).

What is evident from my discussion is that these accounts are characterized by the need to keep the spirit of defiance alive in order to maintain the struggle within and without South Africa. As acts of defiance, writings about the prison-experience by South African political prisoners, who were imprisoned because of their opposition to the policy of apartheid, contain overt political commentary. In dedicating his Robben Island Hell-Hole to Robert Sobukwe and all Azanian patriots, Dlamini focuses on the fight for freedom: 'the struggle...is not like a coat which you can put on when it is cold and remove when it is hot. You must continue with the work outside from where you left off. There is no holiday in the struggle. A revolutionary never rests. And remember our people are being killed - dying day in and day out' (nd:195).

In the Introduction to Joe Slovo's autobiography The Unfinished Autobiography, Helena Dolny admits that Slovo agreed to write the book because he wanted to 'express his views on some of the more sensitive political issues' (1996:xvii) and in The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist, Breytenbach concedes that his motivation for writing the book was to produce 'a

political text' - 'if it turned out to be more "literary" than expected it can only be because I couldn't help it' (1984b:309).

In the Preface to First's 117 Days, Ronald Segal mentions that, based on the political value that a book would have, he persuaded her to record her experiences of life in prison; and Sachs articulates the specific intention for Island in Chains, co-written with Naidoo: 'our objective was to convey the meaning of Robben Island through the experiences of one prisoner told extensively and concretely'.²⁵ They hoped that 'each reader [would] be stirred by the story it tells into thinking about the contribution he or she [could] make to the closing down of the Island prison, [and] the release of all political prisoners in South Africa' (1982:278).

The function of Mashinini's Strikes Have Followed Me All My Life is to 'serve as a living memory of the evil of the apartheid regime' (1991:110). Colin Bundy's introduction to Govan Mbeki's Learning From Robben Island summarizes the purpose of Mbeki's prison writings:

...the lessons from Robben Island gathered in this publication - offer to historians and political scientists valuable raw material for any study of the ideas and ideology of the ANC-SACP alliance. They provide activists with a distillation of practical lessons about political organisation, learned in the most testing conditions....they are pages in a truly international literature - a record throughout the ages of the creativity and indomitability of people imprisoned for their beliefs. These prison essays mark a victory in the continuing contest between the pen and the sword (1991:xxix).

What is significant about Learning From Robben Island is that its essays were produced in prison as part of a syllabus designed by

the ANC to educate prisoners on Robben Island. The results were encouraging, as Mbeki recalls:

We took people from the lowest level, who came to the Island illiterate, and they had to be taught. I remember one group I had - I started with them when they were illiterate - started them up. And by the time they left Robben Island they were able to write letters home....And they spoke English. And, so we did that. Most people when they came to Robben Island were at about the JC [Standard 8] level, and by the time they left they were doing degrees and things like that (1991:xx).

Prison became a place of learning, a place where prisoners could hone their skills in preparation for a new South Africa. This is a point I shall examine in some detail in the chapters that follow, since it is my intention to demonstrate that, notwithstanding the Nationalist government's attempts to silence the opposition, imprisonment and the like served, if anything, to empower political prisoners and to strengthen resolve and determination. Jenkin, in the work mentioned, describes this process of re-education in prison:

There is no way that political imprisonment can serve to rehabilitate a political prisoner. For a political prisoner 'rehabilitation' means re-education and in South Africa this means adopting the ideology of apartheid - hardly likely even for a prisoner broken by the experience. Had the authorities attempted to 'rehabilitate' prisoners it would have been resisted with everything at the prisoners' disposal. They knew this and it is for this reason they did not try their hand at it. All they could hope for is that the experience would serve to mellow the prisoners or sap their resolve to fight apartheid when they get out. It usually did the opposite (1987:116-117).

In the light of the above, it is obvious that imprisonment had a positive impact on some political prisoners, despite the harsh conditions they endured. I believe, too, that one of the reasons why the experience had such implications was because imprisonment provided an opportunity to spend time with people like Mandela, Sisulu and Fischer. Black Consciousness leader, Seth Mazibuko, says in Mandela, Tambo, and the African National Congress that he is grateful that he was sent to Robben Island because his life changed after he met Mandela:

I consider the Boer sending me to 'The Island' an honor. What it did for me! How I changed! All because I met Nelson Mandela and learned from him and the others. I had been brought up to believe that Mandela was an animal. Our parents taught us: 'Don't get involved in politics because you'll end up a terrorist and go to prison like that Mandela.' But how I learned (Johns and Davis eds 1991:159).

Prison became a training ground for future leaders and ironically, the South African government provided the tools that strengthened the opposition. 'So what was the purpose of this imprisonment?', asks Ebrahim Ebrahim, who was sentenced to twenty years on Robben Island:

It was not a deterrent - it became a school of revolution. It hardened you, it made you more conscious, it matured you. People came in with a lot of funny ideas, but when they left prison they were in a position to give leadership and direction to the struggle. As more and more people returned from the Island, the whole struggle was strengthened (Frederikse 1990:133).

The threat of banning, detention, torture and imprisonment did not succeed in reinforcing Nationalist policy. Similarly, the government's enforcement of a code of silence regarding the

treatment and internment of political prisoners and its censorship of literature, journals and newspapers did not achieve the desired effect: nor did an elaborate and costly propaganda campaign manage to uphold the policy of apartheid indefinitely.

At this point in the discussion, it is necessary to examine this claim in relation to one of the aims of this study, which is to demonstrate that South African political prison-writing is as much about the power of the prisoner as it is about the power of the prison system and, by inference, the South African government. In order to investigate the way in which power operates in society, I shall refer to the work of Foucault, one of the most important French philosophers of the twentieth century. Indeed, Lawrence Kritzman, in the Introduction to Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture, claims that 'no other thinker in recent history...so dramatically influenced the fields of history, philosophy, literature and literary theory, the social sciences, even medicine' (1990:vix).

I plan, in this section, to focus on Foucault's definitive research on the subject of imprisonment and I shall pay particular attention to his critical observations on the topics of exclusion, delinquency, surveillance, discipline, 'the carceral', knowledge and power. Furthermore, I intend, where relevant, to relate my commentary to the system of political imprisonment in South Africa. Before embarking on this discussion, however, it is useful to provide a brief outline of Foucault's background in order to establish the events and experiences that informed his writing.

Born in Poitiers, France, in 1926, Foucault received the *licence de philosophie* in 1948, the *licence de psychologie* in

1949 and the *agrégation de philosophie* in 1952. He subsequently earned the *Diplôme de psycho-pathologie* in 1952 and was awarded his *Doctorat es lettres* in 1961, writing a thesis entitled *Histoire de la Folie à l'âge Classique*. Foucault produced an eclectic body of work on subjects ranging from clinical medicine and insanity to imprisonment and sexuality. Some of his titles include *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse of Language*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, *Madness and Civilization* and *The History of Sexuality*. He combined academic pursuits with an active political career and was one of the founders of the *Group d'information sur les prisons* (GIP). The organization investigated prison conditions in France and aimed to increase public awareness through a series of protest rallies. Foucault also fervently supported the Solidarity movement in Poland, wrote articles for an Italian newspaper on the revolution in Iran and demonstrated against General Franco's execution of militants in Spain.

While Foucault preferred not to identify his political position, he conceded in a conversation with Paul Rainbow, entitled 'Polemics, Politics, and Problemizations: An Interview', that he had been 'situated in most of the squares on the political checkerboard, one after another and sometimes simultaneously: as an anarchist, leftist, ostentatious or disguised Marxist, nihilist, explicit or secret anti-Marxist, technocrat in the service of Gaullism, new liberal etc' (Rainbow ed. 1984:383).

When considering South African politics in general and political imprisonment in particular, it is imperative to refer

to one of Foucault's major concerns - exclusion. In his book, Madness and Civilization, Foucault observes that the insane replaced the leper as the principal person excluded from society. 'Leprosy disappeared, the leper vanished', Foucault explains, but the 'structures remained'. Frequently, Foucault continues, the methods of 'exclusion would be repeated, strangely similar two or three centuries later'. As a result, 'poor vagabonds, criminals, and "deranged minds" would take the part played by the leper' (1988:7).

Foucault sustains this line of thought in Discipline and Punish,²⁶ when he suggests that the criminal, like the leper and the madman, is isolated from society. Labelled as a 'delinquent' and incarcerated in prison, the criminal is cut off from the outside world, in much the same way as the madman is marked and imprisoned in an asylum.²⁷ Similarly, in The History of Sexuality, Foucault argues that society brands and excludes any individual who is considered sexually deviant:

On the list of grave sins, and separated only by their relative importance, there appeared debauchery (extramarital relations), adultery, rape, spiritual or carnal incest, but also sodomy, or the mutual "caress". As to the courts, they could condemn homosexuality as well as infidelity, marriage without parental consent, or bestiality. What was taken into account in the civil and religious jurisdictions alike was a general unlawfulness. Doubtless acts "contrary to nature" were stamped as especially abominable, but they were perceived simply as an extreme form of acts "against the law" (1990:38).

It is important to note the close correlation between Foucault's concept of exclusion and Elleke Boehmer's definition of the term 'otherness', one of the defining features of post-

colonial literary criticism. In her book Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, Boehmer maintains that colonized people were regarded as "primitives", inferior to Europeans' and that this representation was built on 'the powerful strategies of exclusion and repression' (1995:80). Boehmer asserts as well that 'the naming of other peoples - as irrational, barbarian, Indian, animal-like - was simultaneously an act of evaluation, usually of downgrading' (1995:80). In The Colonizer and the Colonized, Albert Memmi makes a similar point when he observes that the very existence of the colonizer required that a negative 'image of the colonized be suggested'. He implies as well that these images became 'excuses without which the presence and conduct of a colonizer...would seem shocking' (1991:79).²⁸

The similarities between the attitudes towards the leper, the madman and the delinquent, and the labelling of the colonized people are clearly apparent. This concept of 'otherness' is relevant to my study for a number of reasons. In one respect, the system of apartheid ensured that the different racial groups in South Africa were completely segregated. Laws such as the Population Registration Act of 1950 classified the population according to race. As Helen Suzman pointedly observes in her autobiography, In No Uncertain Terms, a white person was defined as a person who 'in appearance obviously is a white person and who is not generally accepted as a Colored person' or who, as an individual, is 'generally accepted as a white person and is not in appearance obviously not a white person' (1993:99).

South African government officials frequently referred to the inferiority of the majority of South Africans as well. Hendrik Verwoerd, the Minister of Native Affairs,²⁹ for instance,

introduced the Bantu Education Act, by asserting that, as inferior beings, black South Africans would be deprived of certain opportunities, because 'in terms of the government plan there is no place for the Bantu in the European community above certain forms of labour...[.]the Bantu must not believe that he will graze on the green pastures of the white man' (Govan Mbeki 1996:22). In The Mind of South Africa, Allister Sparks notes that the 'stereotypical image of the black African - as stupid and feckless, mildly dishonest but generally good-natured, a child dependent on whites for guidance' (1991:215) - contributed towards the erection of physical and psychological barriers which separated South Africans from each other.

As noted, the South African government effectively isolated most political opponents as well. Like lepers, people who disagreed with the policy of apartheid were labelled as communists, and legislation such as the Suppression of Communism Act, which I discussed at the beginning of the chapter, made it illegal to be a communist or a member of a communist organization. It is necessary to mention here, however, that the Act defined a communist as 'a person who professes to be a communist or who...is deemed by the Governor-General...to be a communist on the ground [sic] that he is advocating...any of the objects of communism' and as a person who is aiming 'at bringing about any political, industrial, social or economic change in the country by unlawful acts' (Roux 1978:379-380). In addition, all those regarded as subversives were isolated from the South African public through measures such as house arrest, forced exile, banishment and imprisonment, procedures that I have already considered at some length.

In Madness and Civilization, Foucault makes another important point about the way in which people are expelled from society, linking the exclusion of the madman with people's 'fear and anxiety'. He explains that in the eighteenth century, people were 'in dread of a mysterious disease that spread, it was said, from the houses of confinement and would soon threaten the cities' (1988:202). Not only were people in fear of those inside the asylum, but they dreaded the possibility that through infection they, too, might be classified and confined for reasons of insanity.

The South African government used fear and intimidation to convince the majority of South Africans that if suspected of any wrongdoing, imprisonment and all it entailed were a certainty. Communists and terrorists, those whom the government deliberately sought to exclude from the general population, were portrayed as a major threat to the security and the well-being of all citizens.³⁰ In her book, South Africa: A Different Kind of War, Frederikse illustrates this point when she relates how South Africans were brainwashed into believing that the communist onslaught was imminent. She reports that it was common for students, attending veld school,³¹ to receive the following lecture:

The communist says, 'Give me a child between 0 and 6 and I will win the war'. They are not in a hurry - they want the whole world and they won't stop anywhere. The insurgents will try to create chaos, as we saw in the Soweto riots. They were part of a communist onslaught....The so-called freedom fighters on our borders are not fighting for freedom, but for communism. This can be seen in urban terrorism. In Soweto there are hundreds of terrorists (1986:9).

The lecturer goes on to say that it was essential to 'make use of our superior knowledge to outwit the communists. How do we get this knowledge? Listen to the radio. Read all the papers....We must be like David against the Philistine Goliath, and South Africa will triumph against the Red Onslaught' (Frederikse 1986:9). What is interesting about this address is not only the distinction between good and evil, between civilized David and barbaric Goliath, but that knowledge is advocated as a way in which to outmanoeuvre the enemy.

I intend to return to an examination of the relationship between knowledge and power at a later stage. At this juncture, however, it is prudent to concentrate on a second topic for discussion - delinquency - which Foucault uses in a way that needs explanation. As noted, he suggests that the criminal is always branded as a delinquent but that 'delinquency is for the most part produced in and by an incarceration which, ultimately, prison perpetuates in its turn' (301). While Foucault describes delinquency as 'a form of illegality' or at least, as having 'its roots in illegality', he argues that it 'is an illegality that the "carceral system", with all its ramifications, has...enclosed in a definite milieu, and to which it has given an instrumental role in relation to the other illegalities' (277). Accordingly, he regards the 'delinquent' as an 'institutional product' (301) and argues that prison inevitably produces delinquents because of the physical conditions to which the majority of prisoners are subjected.

Foucault adds to his discussion on delinquency by posing the question, 'why and how is the prison called upon to participate in the fabrication of a delinquency that it is supposed to

combat?' (278). He answers by suggesting that the formation of a delinquency has a number of advantages. First, by isolating offenders and removing them from the general population, a 'swarming mass' is turned into a 'small and enclosed group of individuals' (278), on whom a perpetual watch can be kept. This delinquency, Foucault determines, is 'a politically or economically less dangerous...form of illegality' (277) because prisoners, once isolated from society and under constant surveillance, are easier to control and manipulate.

In the case of South Africa, under the apartheid government, this argument does not always hold true, despite the authorities' attempt to exercise control. As I have shown, political prisoners on Robben Island, for example, made productive use of their time in prison and when released, were determined to continue the fight for freedom and were equipped with the skills to do so. As I shall demonstrate during the course of this thesis, the presence of these individuals, committed to the struggle against apartheid, had a significant effect on the final political outcome that resulted in the first, fully democratic, national elections in 1994. Surveillance of these offenders against the government had not achieved a politically 'less dangerous...form of illegality' but had directly contributed to a decisive political solution to over forty years of minority rule.

What Foucault sees as a second advantage for the authorities in relation to that which he terms 'the fabrication of delinquency' is, nevertheless, particularly relevant to the South African prison system. Here I refer to the use of what he calls 'concentrated, supervised and disarmed illegality' in relation 'to other illegalities' (278). Non-political prisoners, for

example, policed themselves, as Natoo Babenia recalls in Memoirs of a Saboteur. He comments that the prisoners on Robben Island had their 'own law of the jungle' and their 'own law courts, with a magistrate, prosecutor and defence lawyers'. Once a sentence was passed in such a court, there was no appeal process, whether the sentence was death or a 'blow to the head with a mug filled with sand' (1995:134). It was easier and safer to allow non-political prisoners to control themselves and political prisoners as well. Babenia recollects that political prisoners were terrified by the power accorded to non-political prisoners by prison authorities:

The criminals soon drifted into sight, sizing us up. They ambled between us leering with weasel eyes, their shorts pulled so far down their bums stuck out. They were looking for *laaities*: wives....The Afrikaner warders rejoiced and encouraged the criminals to indulge in sodomy and taunt us' (1995:125).

Foucault is of the opinion that any system of policing which aims at a permanent form of surveillance applies not only to those in prison but to society as a whole. In order to clarify this point, it is necessary to consider Foucault's claim that surveillance not only operates in combination with the term in prison, but also as a method of observation used before and after imprisonment. Initially, Foucault explains, 'police surveillance provides the prison with offenders' who, once interned and in close contact with other offenders, are converted 'into delinquents, the targets and auxiliaries of police supervisions' (282). It follows then that there is a direct relationship between the way in which delinquents are organized in prison and the manner and ease with which they are supervised. Foucault

argues that, even when offenders are released, surveillance will 'send back a certain number of them to prison' (282). He qualifies this statement by asserting that the enlisting of spies 'and all the results of non-rehabilitation (unemployment, prohibitions on residence, enforced residences, probation) make it all too easy for former prisoners' to become recidivists (281-282).

In order to augment his discussion on the concept of surveillance, Foucault provides a detailed account of Jeremy Bentham's proposed Panopticon, a circular building with a tower in the centre.³² The tower, Foucault explains, 'is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building'. The cells have 'two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower', and one 'on the outside', which permits 'the light to cross the cell from one end to the other'. As a consequence of this arrangement, all that is necessary is to position 'a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell...a condemned man' (200).

The envisaged result of the Panopticon design is that the crowd is eradicated and replaced by a group of isolated individuals, on whom a task may be imposed. Furthermore, the way in which the facility is managed ensures that the prisoner 'is the object of information, never a subject in communication'. Thus, the prisoner 'is seen, but he does not see', a situation that Foucault concludes 'is a guarantee of order' (200). Mashinini, in Strikes Have Followed me all my Life, poignantly describes a similar controlling effect of being monitored,

without seeing the monitor. Through a window in her cell, 'somebody in the corridor could see you', she explains, but it was impossible to 'see out' (1991:61). 'It was a frightful thing', Mashinini continues, because while trying to sleep, you were aware of 'two eyes piercing' through you, making you feel like an animal in an enclosure (1991:64).

As noted, what is valuable to this study, particularly in relation to the function of power in society, is not only Foucault's exposition of the way in which surveillance operates in prison, but also his description of the manner in which the permanent policing of delinquents is accompanied by the perpetual surveillance of the population. In Discipline and Punish, he asserts that the supervision of the population is 'silent, mysterious, unperceived vigilance...[sic] it is the eye of the government ceaselessly open and watching without distinction over all citizens' (280).³³ Foucault infers that the surveillance of the population, like the observation of prisoners, allows for greater control, but points out that control is possible only through the enforcement of discipline.

Throughout Discipline and Punish, Foucault examines the connection between 'different disciplinary institutions' (139), particularly in relation to his belief that being part of society is like being in prison and vice versa, an aspect of his work that I shall now focus on. He describes the administration of Mettray, a correctional facility for young offenders, which opened in France in 1840 and which he calls a 'cloister, prison, school, regiment' (293). Inmates were divided into small groups which, according to Foucault, followed five parallel models - 'the family', 'the army', 'the workshop', 'the school' and 'the

judicial' prototypes (293-294). Internees were separated into small groups consisting of "'brothers" and two "elder brothers"'. They were 'commanded by a head' (293), and supervised in the workshop by foremen. In addition, an hour and a half of schooling was provided every day and insubordination was punished on a regular basis.

Thus, Foucault argues, 'the superimposition of different models' meant that the chiefs at Mettray were 'not exactly judges, or teachers, or foremen, or non-commissioned officers, or "parents", but something of all these things in a quite specific mode of intervention' (294). Foucault's assessment of the function of discipline is echoed in his conclusion that the goal at Mettray was to produce an individual that was both compliant and proficient, and he asserts that it is this objective that links the prison to 'a whole series of "carceral" mechanisms' (308).

At this point it is pertinent to consider more closely how the topics under discussion relate to the subject of power. Moreover, it is necessary to reflect on the relationship between power and the internment of offenders in a facility where constant surveillance and discipline ensure control.³⁴ To examine this connection, it is necessary to outline Foucault's perception of power, again as presented in Discipline and Punish. In this work, he traces the movement from spectacular public executions to more subtle forms of punishment in order to show the progression towards greater and more deceptive control of the general population. To demonstrate this point, the work opens with a graphic description of a 1757 execution, captured in all

its ghastly detail by Foucault, who explains that the accused, Damiens, will have all his flesh:

...torn from his breasts, arms, thighs and calves with red-hot pincers, his right hand, holding the knife with which he committed the said parricide, burnt with sulphur, and on those places where the flesh will be torn away, poured molten lead, boiling oil, burning resin, wax and sulphur melted together and then his body...consumed by fire...(3).

The gruesome staging of an execution in a public place and the joining of drama and pain was in time replaced, Foucault declares, by a 'less immediately physical kind' of punishment, which was a fusion of 'more subtle, more subdued sufferings' (8). Foucault depicts this as a transition 'from one art of punishing to another, no less skilful[,] one', from the practice of public execution to the internment of prisoners 'in architectural masses...guarded by the secrecy of administrations' (257). Power then becomes more pervasive and at times, Foucault suggests, more effective when it observes rather than punishes; 'it is everywhere and always alert' (177).

In Kritzman's collection of interviews and essays entitled Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture, Foucault, in an effort to clarify his earlier thoughts on the subject, proclaims that it is necessary to answer the question 'what is power?' (1990:102). Moreover, he claims that it is critical to contemplate how power is used and to determine what happens when one person wields power over another. In the same essay, he indicates that, in his opinion, there are a number of misunderstandings about the way in which power is utilized in society. Foucault, for instance, believes that instead of

regarding power as that which 'prevents people doing something' (1990:102), it is necessary to consider it in a positive light.

Elsewhere, Foucault confirms that 'what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse' (Rainbow ed. 1984:61). Foucault makes an important link here, when he associates power with knowledge and, in the earlier work, Discipline and Punish, there is a reference to the productive relationship between the two. Power, he says, 'produces knowledge....power and knowledge directly imply one another....there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations' (27).

Foucault sustains this argument by suggesting that the correlation between power and knowledge should be analyzed according to 'the subject who knows, the objects to be known', rather than in association with 'who is or is not free in relation to the power system' (27). He maintains that to have knowledge is to have power and that the reorganizing of knowledge creates new forms of power. 'In short', he continues, 'it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge' (28).

In the chapters that follow, I intend to draw attention to the connection between power and knowledge, emphasizing both the

negative and the positive aspects that characterize this relationship. In addition, I shall refer, where appropriate, to the topics already discussed, including exclusion, delinquency, surveillance, discipline and the 'carceral', in order to demonstrate that South African political prison-writing is as much about the power of the prisoner as it is about the power exercised by the regime.

In addition, an examination of selected texts will provide information about a time in South African history that the Nationalist government attempted to conceal; in particular, the way in which the political prison-system functioned. My discussion will include a brief overview of relevant socio-political issues and the argument will be reinforced with examples from a variety of resources pertaining to the political prison-experience. Ultimately, however, my main focus in the next chapters will be on the chosen texts and their authors - Alex La Guma, Dennis Brutus, Hugh Lewin and Breyten Breytenbach - and how they were both negatively affected and, ultimately, empowered by apartheid and their prison experiences.

Notes

1. Apartheid was a legally enforced system of race segregation.
2. No author is attributed to this publication. I shall cite this under Amnesty International in my bibliography.
3. Alexander, an educator and political activist, was arrested on a charge of conspiring to commit sabotage and spent ten years on Robben Island.

4. In Don Foster's Detention and Torture in South Africa, the practice of 'hooding' is described in detail, if not with complete clarity:

They put a kind of canvas bag over your face and then they close your nose and your mouth, and by that time actually you are sitting on a seat and then they take a bag, the one which they normally use for belts for the convicts. So they put it here, then they call it the handcuffs - they put the handcuffs here as well as here. Then they tie them to a seat and you sit like this (1987:132).

5. No author is attributed to this publication. I shall cite this under African National Congress in my bibliography.

6. Ahmed Timol, a teacher, was never charged with any crime and was never brought before any court.

7. The Biko incident echoes the death in detention of a prisoner, Joseph Mdluli, in 1976. The South African government attempted to suppress the post-mortem results and detained Mdluli's lawyer, Griffiths Mxenge, under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act. Ultimately, the Pietermaritzburg Supreme Court found that nobody was responsible for the death. In 1981 Mxenge was found savagely murdered at the Umlazi Cycle Stadium in Durban. When the court dismissed, as speculation, the charge that he had been assassinated for political reasons, his wife, Victoria Mxenge, herself a lawyer, declared that she would identify her husband's killers. She was murdered in 1985. In August 1997, three policemen, Dirk Coetzee, David Tshikalange and Butana Almond Nofomela, who were implicated in the murder of Griffiths Mxenge, were granted amnesty by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

8. Section 6 of the Terrorism Act relates specifically to detention without trial and allows the arrest and detention of any person suspected of being a terrorist.

9. Five white South African policemen have now confessed culpability for the killing of Biko and have applied to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for amnesty. Initial evidence has been given in the case and hearings are expected to reconvene in the latter part of 1997.

10. In Death Squads: Apartheid's Secret Weapon, Patrick Laurence points out that few policemen were convicted for the deaths of detainees. Prosecution was an exception, not a rule:

Only one policeman was convicted for the death of a detainee: Sergeant Harms van As...was convicted of culpable homicide after a detainee, Paris Malatji, was found dead with a bullet wound in the middle of his head (1990:66).

11. Foster, nevertheless, observes that 'numerous cases for damages have been settled out of court, indicating tacit admissions of irregularities' (1987:102). Those who received payment included Mrs Mdluli and Mrs Biko.

12. Colonel Swanepoel, who was in charge of the camp, mentioned that it had been set up in the forest because 'secrecy was one of my motivations' (Bernstein 1972:7).

13. Mlangeni, like Mandela, was sentenced to life imprisonment. He was released in 1989, having spent twenty-six years in prison.

14. Foster's study, however, was undertaken under the auspices of the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cape Town.

15. Alexander provides a detailed criticism of McNicoll's article:

...one startling distortion (not necessarily deliberately done) is present in the article; the portrayal of Mandela as one who is obsessed with the idea that because of his professional and political status outside prison, he resents being treated as inferior to Coloureds and Indians inside prison. No doubt, Mandela used the example of a man such as he was outside in order to ridicule the excuse that Africans are supposed to be "inferior" because in general they have an inferior "standard of living" in South Africa - but surely his point was that there is no good reason for discrimination as between any two prisoners in South Africa. This crucial point was missed, or omitted, consequently distorting the image of one of the least snobbish and most modest men in any South African gaol (1994:90).

16. Jane Grant, in 'Silenced Generation', explains how it was that the omission of quotations from two poems by Langa was an error: 'The quotations...were incorrectly deleted, due to a mistaken belief that Madlenkosi Langa had been banned. It was actually Mr Langa's brother, Benjamin, who was banned in October 1973' (1977:43).

17. Percy Qoboza was editor of The World when he was arrested and held under Section 10 (1)(a) of the Internal Security Act.

18. In the same way that the government blamed communist indoctrination for the death in detention of people like Timol, so the SADF defended their projects as a response to communism. John Gilmore, in 'The Role of the SADF in the Film Industry', makes the observation that:

...the SADF trains more people in film and video than any other organisation....The most important part of this training is the attitude and approach that is developed in the young trainee, that film and video is a weapon to be used in the fight against the 'Communists' (1990:23).

19. UNITA, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, received financial and military support from the Nationalist government.
20. MNR, the Mozambique National Resistance, also received aid from the Nationalist government.
21. Additional, detailed information on illicit funding of publications and on the Muldergate scandal is contained in Richard Leonard's South Africa at War: White Power and the Crisis in Southern Africa (1983:161-197).
22. In My Fight Against Apartheid, Dingake views Nationalist Government censorship of their own propaganda, 'in pursuance of their perverted policy of keeping prisoners uninformed', as 'an absurdity to outdo all their absurd policies of the past' (1987:202).
23. Harlow in Resistance Literature, enlarges this claim:
...authoritarian control over the "power of writing" is especially evident in the case of political prisoners in the ban on all writing and reading materials which is generally imposed on these detainees. Such a ban, itself provoked by the particular aptitudes of political prisoners, serves to condition in an important way one of the crucial modes of prisoner resistance: writing (1987:125).
24. This case is known as Rossouw v Sachs, 1964.
25. All references to Island in Chains, as told by Indres Naidoo to Albie Sachs, will be attributed to Naidoo.
26. All references to Discipline and Punish will be from the 1995 edition. Henceforth only page numbers will be given.
27. It is noteworthy, as Deacon points out in her work, The Island: A History of Robben Island 1488-1990, that Robben Island

functioned not only as a prison, but 'also occasionally housed quarantine cases...and a few insane people' (1996:2). In addition, a hospital was established on the Island, which treated the infirm, the demented and those suffering from leprosy.

28. Franz Fanon similarly observes in The Wretched of the Earth, that colonialism may be compared to 'a mother who unceasingly restrains her fundamentally perverse offspring from...giving free rein to its evil instincts' (1968:211).

29. Verwoerd became the prime minister of South Africa in 1958. He was assassinated in 1966.

30. In Schadeberg's Voices From Robben Island, Aubrey du Toit, a warder on Robben Island, explains why he was scared of political prisoners:

As an Afrikaner I grew up believing that the ANC, PAC, Umkhonto we Sizwe meant the Communist enemy...your hair stood on end when you heard the name Nelson Mandela. These are the people who are going to take over the country. The Afrikaner people were frightened of them (1994:47).

31. Only white students were allowed to attend 'veld' schools, which lasted a week and took place in rural areas. 'Veld' is the Afrikaans word for uncultivated pasture.

32. Bentham's experimental prison design was never implemented.

33. Here, Foucault's ideas are similar to those expressed by George Orwell in his novel 1984.

34. In terms of political imprisonment, discipline functions in two ways - as a means of controlling prisoners and as a way of prisoners controlling themselves. In The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs, Sachs refers to the latter when he records that he forced himself to arrange his 'activities every day', devising a strict

'regime', which enabled him to 'effect some degree of control over [his] life' (1990:167).

CHAPTER TWO

ALEX LA GUMA: WRITER AND FIGHTER

Writing about conditions in South Africa was one of the major concerns of Alex La Guma, who believed that a writer was obliged to inform and educate the reader in order to create change in the country. In an article entitled 'Literature and Life', he explains this responsibility:

When I write in a book that somewhere in South Africa poor people who have no water must buy it by the bucketful from some local exploiter, then I also entertain the secret hope that when somebody reads it he will be moved to do something about [sic] those robbers who have turned my country into a material and cultural wasteland for the majority of the inhabitants. But this is already being done in South Africa, and I would be satisfied to know that I had something to do with it (1970:237).

It is clear that La Guma did not distinguish between the creative endeavour and the political role, and that he viewed the craft of writing as a means for active participation in the political arena and to further the liberation struggle.

To place La Guma's convictions in their context, it is necessary to discuss his involvement in political affairs and his approach to writing, with particular emphasis on his written response to the totalitarianism of the South African state. I intend to follow this with a close analysis of La Guma's novel The Stone Country, so as to demonstrate how the book provides information about the treatment of prisoners (both political and non-political) and about South Africa, in general, during the

apartheid era. To further the discussion, I shall refer to Foucault in order to examine La Guma's work in relation to the concepts of power and empowerment. In addition, I shall consider, for the additional insights they offer, La Guma's novels In the Fog of the Seasons' End and Time of the Butcherbird, as well as a selection of contemporary political prison-writing. To show that despite imprisonment, he remained committed to the goals of the liberation struggle, I propose to conclude the chapter with an examination of the way in which prison affected La Guma and, again, I shall consider the relationship between prison-writing and the prisoners' empowerment.

Born in 1925 in District Six, La Guma was exposed to politics at an early age. His father, James La Guma, was a member of the Communist party and a union organizer. La Guma acknowledged that his father had a profound influence on him and, in an interview with Cecil Abrahams in Alex La Guma, he said that his 'father had a great deal to do with molding [his] philosophical and political outlook and guiding [him] towards the reading of serious works, both political and literary' (1985:3). Although interested in education, La Guma was passionate about other concerns. He volunteered for the Spanish Civil War at age thirteen and for the Second World War two years later. Refused participation because of his age and physical immaturity, he left school without matriculating and took a job in a warehouse. His interest in studying persisted, however, and he continued his education as a night student, matriculating in 1945.

In the workplace, La Guma became increasingly political,¹ joining the Young Communist League in 1947 and the Executive

Committee of the South African Coloured Peoples Organization (SACPO) in 1955. He was selected to represent the SACPO at the Congress of the People, where the Freedom Charter was drawn up, but his group was detained en route to the meeting.

Characteristically, La Guma did not allow the incident to diminish his optimism about the outcome of the Congress.

Reporting in the 7 July issue of New Age, he commented:

The task ahead of the South African Coloured Peoples Organization and the other sponsoring organizations is to carry the Freedom Charter to every corner of the land and to acquaint all those who are outside the liberatory struggle with the ideas embodied in it (1955:5).

New Age, a left-wing publication, had approached La Guma to work for them as a reporter and this was the start of his career in journalism. Between 1955 and 1956 he wrote several articles that exposed and commented on socio-political issues, including a piece on Roeland Street jail, based on his own experiences in prison. Entitled 'What Goes on in Roeland Street Jail', the article asserts that 'none of the periodic statements of prison authorities have succeeded in glorifying its grim record. It is a place where criminals are always punished, but seldom reformed' (1956b:6). In 1956 La Guma was arrested with one hundred and fifty-five others, including Mandela and Sisulu, and charged with treason. Because the treason trial was initially held in Johannesburg,² La Guma was separated from his family and unable to continue with his profession. Despite these hardships, he remained hopeful, as illustrated in an article entitled 'They all Have Their Troubles, but Nobody Complains':

I tried to find complaints, regrets, tearfulness among the accused, but instead there is only confidence, geniality and high spirits, all combined with indestructible determination. Here is the spirit of man, the will to go forward, the courage to look ahead and submerge personal hardships for the common good. Here is the bricks and the mortar, the muscles and the sinews, the life blood that go into the building of a new life (1957:4-5).

After a year of deliberation, the majority of the accused were released, including La Guma. Victory was marred, however, by the events at Sharpeville and the declaration of a state of emergency in 1960. Because of the emergency regulations, all acquitted treason-trialists were again arrested, including La Guma, who was detained for seven months. He was interned again in 1961 for organizing a general strike and banned under the Suppression of Communism Act a year later. The ban had far-reaching implications, since he was not allowed to take part in political activities and had to resign from New Age. The South African government's attempt to restrain La Guma's political and creative endeavours nevertheless achieved a result the authorities did not expect. Unable to work, La Guma focused on his creative writing, managing to produce several short stories and a novel, A Walk in the Night, which appeared in 1962. The book was based largely on his experiences while growing up and dealt with the socio-political problems encountered by the Cape's coloured community. La Guma explained this point to Abrahams with particular reference to the title of the novel:

One of the reasons why I called the book A Walk in the Night was that in my mind the coloured community was still discovering themselves in relation to the general struggle against racism in South Africa. They were

walking, enduring, and in this way they were experiencing this walking in the night until such time as they found themselves and were prepared to be citizens of a society to which they wanted to make a contribution (Abrahams 1985:49).

This idea is consistent with La Guma's assertion that, for him, literature, society and politics cannot be separated and that the policy of apartheid created a situation where art for art's sake could not be contemplated. In an essay entitled 'The Condition of Culture in South Africa', he concluded:

It is perhaps possible, within the environment of developed societies, to create with a certain amount of confidence the impression that art, culture, the level of civilisation of a people, have nothing or little to do with socio-economic and political forces within these societies; that culture has nothing to do with politics. In South Africa this is not possible (1971b:113).

By 1963, La Guma was back in jail, this time under suspicion of aiding the underground movement of the ANC.³ On release he was placed under a five-year house arrest, having to apply for his wife, Blanche, to live with him. And a Threefold Cord, his second novel, was published in 1964 by Seven Seas Publishers in East Berlin and again La Guma used the book as a vehicle to comment on living conditions and social problems.⁴ From 1964 to 1965 La Guma worked on The Stone Country, the novel which describes some of his experiences in prison and which I shall review in more detail. After serving four months of detention in Roeland Street and Maitland prisons, under suspicion of promoting the work of the banned Communist party, La Guma and his family finally decided to leave South Africa on a one-way exit permit.

His departure in 1966 was motivated by his desire to remain active in the liberation struggle, as discussed with Abrahams:

...it was more of a mixture of decision and requirements of the sort of political struggle. It was felt that after having spent four years under house arrest and going into the fifth year with the prospect of another five years there was no point in remaining locked up in one's home indefinitely. One could be more constructive and freer outside. So we came to Europe to carry on what we were doing on another front (1985:16).

In exile La Guma continued to write and remained active in the political arena, undertaking numerous speaking engagements for the international Anti-Apartheid Movement. The Stone Country appeared in 1967 and he was awarded the Lotus Prize for literature by the Afro-Asian Writer's Association in 1969.⁵ His response to the honour was appropriately articulated in 'Address by Lotus Award Winner':

The Lotus prize for literature that has caused me to be here, points at several considerations. It is a tribute to my own humble contribution to the store of Afro-Asian literature. It is also a declaration of solidarity with the people of South Africa who are fighting the worst forms of oppression.

If this award should go to anyone, it should really go to the [sic] South African people. For in truth, without the people of South Africa, I could not be a writer. Who has inspired me to set down those thousands of words in the books published with my name on their covers? The lives of the people, their love, their hates, their sorrows and joy, their hopes and aspirations, all these things stand behind all worthy works of art and culture. Without the background and inspiration of the people, art, literature would degenerate into meaningless scribblings (1971a:195).

The discourse highlights La Guma's assertion that the author's duty was to write about South Africa, not only as a reaction against the South African regime, but in order to inform people about conditions in the country. La Guma clearly felt that he had been successful in this regard, since he considered the award as a show of solidarity with the people of South Africa.

In 1970 La Guma became chairman of the London district of the ANC and in 1971 he edited a book, Apartheid, which included a collection of essays and poetry on the subject of South African racism.⁶ In the Fog of the Seasons' End appeared in 1972, followed by A Soviet Journey, which documented his travels and experiences in the former Soviet Union. Time of the Butcherbird was published in 1979 and was the first La Guma novel to be written entirely outside South Africa. Being removed from his subject did not trouble La Guma, who reasoned that an accomplished writer creates from the imagination: 'I do not agree with those people who argue that a writer cannot write about a situation when he is not present on the scene', he maintained (Abrahams 1985:16). While La Guma was inherently positive, his approach contrasted with the attitude expressed by other writers who had been frustrated and debilitated by the years in exile. In Chirundu, Ezekiel Mphahlele, the South African writer and critic, explained that his 'homecoming was another way of dealing with impotent anger. It was also a way of extricating [himself] from twenty years of compromise, for exile is...compromise....a ghetto of the mind' (1981:x).

During his period of exile, La Guma was elected secretary-general of the Afro-Asian Writers' Association and became chief

Caribbean representative of the ANC, with residence in Cuba. He also began work on a new novel, which he tentatively titled 'Zone of Fire'. He died in 1985, a few weeks after receiving the title of Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters from the Republic of France. Earlier, in correspondence with La Guma and as reported in the December issue of Sechaba, the French Ambassador in Pretoria remarked that the award was made 'at this moment of support for the Black communities of South Africa, who are victims of apartheid' (Sechaba 1985:13). In response, La Guma, in the same publication, noted: 'Your appreciation of my efforts is appreciated with deepest warmth and at the same time pride that the life and struggle of my people could inspire my work and earn me such distinguished recognition' (1985:13). These sentiments echo the views expressed in 'Address by Lotus Award Winner' and confirm La Guma's lifelong commitment to the people of South Africa and to the struggle for liberation. Jan Carew in an obituary for La Guma reiterates this opinion:

Through your writings and your life, you made a mockery of that shallow claim that African writers should cloister themselves in ebony towers and leave the politics of liberation alone. For you, art and literature were lightning rods catching the incandescent glare of truth and transmitting it not only to your own people but to people all over the world who are struggling to make the world a better place to live in (1985:180).

La Guma's life may, then, be defined by two elements: his active participation in political affairs and his unceasing interest in creative writing. That he managed successfully to combine a career in politics and literature was no accident but an extension of the principles to which he constantly drew

attention. In 'Address by Lotus Award Winner', he asserted that a 'real writer can never divorce himself from the life of the people, from the struggle for human happiness, freedom and social justice' (1971a:196). In South Africa, however, the connection between the writer and the people was affected by a complex system of 'realities'. La Guma explained:

When we sit down to write a book, I or any of my colleagues around me, we are, as writers, faced with the reality that 80% of the population lives below the bread-line standard; we are faced with the reality that the average daily population of prisoners in South African prisons amounts to 70,000 persons. We are faced with the reality that half the non-white people who died last year were below the age of five years. These are the realities (Wästberg ed. 1968:22).

In not only responding to the environment he described but in also declaring that it was a writer's duty to react against the authoritarian regime and inform the reader about living conditions in the country, La Guma's purpose, as mentioned at the start of the chapter, was to alter people's opinions about South Africa. Not surprisingly, he linked this goal with his creative impulse:

...as far as inspiration goes, I think what I found is that it has inspired me to expose the situation with a view of changing people's ideas about what is happening in South Africa - or their acceptance of ideas, so that they can move forward to take down the barriers which exist between different peoples....the problem is the compartments into which people are divided that imbue them with set ideas, set opinions about their positions - and the difficulty is getting people to rid themselves of the situation (Duerden and Pieterse eds 1978:93).

La Guma's concern was to show what most South Africans endured but he recognized that the situation, though grave, was not unique and that human rights' abuses were encountered world-wide. When writing about conditions in South Africa he hoped, therefore, to draw attention to the global struggle for freedom, as he mentioned in 'Literature and Life':

The murders perpetrated by the imperialists and colonialist plunderers are just as abhorrent in Vietnam as they are in South Africa; and those who cherish freedom, humanity and progress are hailed with joy equally in all parts of the world. We all come from various countries, we speak various languages, and we are travelling along various paths, but all towards a single goal (1970:238).

This view is reiterated at the start of The Stone Country,⁷ with La Guma's inclusion of an epigraph by the American socialist leader, Eugene Debs, which reads as follows:

While there is a lower class, I am in it.
While there is a criminal element, I am of it.
While there is a soul in jail, I am not free.

This epigraph highlights La Guma's belief in the universality of suffering, since no-one can enjoy freedom while people all over the world are being oppressed. In addition, it sets the scene for the novel, which centres on the socio-political issues that criminalize and imprison large numbers of the South African population. In order to place these issues in context it is necessary, at this point, to provide a synopsis of the novel.

The Stone Country tells the story of George Adams, a coloured man, a political prisoner in Cape Town's Roeland Street jail. Arrested while distributing illegal leaflets, Adams is exposed in prison to the machinations and violence of prison

gangs. He meets The Casbah Kid, on trial for murder, and Butcherboy, the leader of a gang, who is killed in a bloody scuffle. He also encounters Gus, Morgan and Koppe, who are planning an escape that ultimately proves to be unsuccessful.⁸

The novel is based on La Guma's personal experience of imprisonment and is dedicated to 'the daily average of 70,351 prisoners in South African gaols in 1964'.⁹ This is significant, not only because it shows his concern for the prisoners but also because he does not distinguish between political and non-political prisoners. Many are in prison as a result of the system, the innocent victims of a racist society. The Casbah Kid, who is guilty of a punishable crime, has grown up in squalor, and is socially, economically and politically disadvantaged. These circumstances do not exonerate him but explain why the crime may have occurred. In conversation with Adams, The Casbah Kid expounds:

For so long as I can remember, my old man, he was a drunk and a bully. So many times I have seen him beat my ma without mercy, with a buckle belt or his fists. Sometimes he hit her with a chair. He could knock her senseless with one blow and then kick her while she lay there. So many times, also, he whipped me. Most of the time for nothing, for no reason. I don't know where he got money, but he spent it on wine. Most of the time we had no food to eat. My ma sent me out to beg at people's doors (142).

Similarly, La Guma depicts Butcherboy as a product of a socio-economic world where morality, dignity, education and opportunity are lacking for the majority of the population. It is inevitable, therefore, that Butcherboy is involved in illegal activities because, as Foucault elucidates in Discipline and

Punish, 'criminals, who were once to be met with in every social class, now emerged...from the bottom rank of the social order', from 'that class degraded by misery' (1995:275-276). Moreover, maintaining control through violence and intimidation, Butcherboy is, appropriately, compared to an animal:

Gang leader, and incidentally cell boss by virtue of his brutality and the backing of bullied and equally vicious toadies, he was as mean as a jackal, blood-thirsty as a wolf, foul as a hyena, and the group whom he had trapped in the corner shuffled nervously on their feet, and avoided the palaeoanthropic glare (30).

The creation of a prison environment that resembles the outside world is one of the ways in which La Guma continues to draw attention to socio-political issues. Roeland Street jail is described as a structure built during 'Victorian times' (17) but with a façade that has, ironically, been 'brightened with lawns and flower-beds: the grim face of an executioner hidden behind a holiday mask' (17).¹⁰ This Victorian exterior places the system in a historical context, showing that the prison was built under British rule and was inherited by the Nationalist government. It suggests the continuation of oppression under a different guise. The brasswork 'polished to perfection' is contrasted with the interior network of 'cells, cages, corridors and yards' (17), an antithesis that augments the disparity between appearance and reality.

The interior of the prison in The Stone Country is one of harshness; as cold and uncompromising as stone:

Guards and prisoners, everybody, were the enforced inhabitants of another country, another world. This was a world without beauty; a lunar barrenness of stone and steel and locked doors. In this world no

trees grew, and the only shade was found in the shadow of its cliffs of walls, the only perfume it knew came from night-soil buckets and drains (18).

Through the use of words like 'stone and steel' and 'lunar barrenness', La Guma creates a stark environment, a wasteland devoid of natural beauty. Adams feels 'like an immigrant entering a new and strange country' (20), so that the reappearance, in prison, of aspects of the outside world is unnerving:

In this half-world, hemmed in by stone and iron, there was an atmosphere of every-man-for-himself which George Adams did not like. He had grown up in the slums and he knew that here were the treacherous and the wily, the cringers and the boot-lickers, the violent and the domineering, the smooth-talkers and the savage, the bewildered and the helpless; the strong preyed on the weak, and the strong and brutal acknowledged a sort of nebulous alliance among themselves for the terrorisation of the underlings (37).

The menace and the desolation of the environment are appropriately captured in the title of the novel, The Stone Country, and the guards who enforce the rules have 'expressionless faces' and 'frigid eyes' (18). The Roeland Street jail is used as a setting for the presentation of a broad range of social problems. As suggested at the close of the previous quotation, one of the most serious issues La Guma deals with is the existence of gangs in prison. These gangs of coloured people are seen as a natural response to the violence of the apartheid system, to the living conditions of the community and to the environment of the prison. Indeed, Foucault stresses, in Discipline and Punish, that prison 'makes possible, even

encourages, the organization' of what he terms 'a milieu of delinquents, loyal to one another, hierarchized, ready to aid and abet any future criminal act' (1995:267).

As noted in Chapter One, it was not unusual for the South African government to use such prison gangs to intimidate inmates. In The Stone Country this is evident in the actions of the Superintendent, who has to maintain control because 'the Prisons Department expected him to keep proper order and to run the prison without its internal demerits being exposed too much' (109). In order to retain authority he, nevertheless, relies on Butcherboy for support, a role that Butcherboy is willing to assume in exchange for privileges. Thus he is part of the system and part of the problem because he prefers to support the regime rather than challenge it. After an altercation between Adams and a guard, Butcherboy is summoned to take care of the situation:

Behind him, the guard looked over at Butcherboy, the brute man, who lounged against the rough, stone-constructed wall of one side of the yard, and smiled a wintry smile, saying, "He's mos one of those slim men. He's looking for trouble."

And Butcherboy shifted his great shoulders against the wall and grinned, saying, "Old boss, he is looking for trouble. A clever" (62-63).

Similarly, prison officials, eager to demonstrate their supreme power, encouraged non-political prisoners to threaten and harass political prisoners, as Dlamini explains in Robben Island Hell-Hole:

All of them were hand-picked by the enemy from the most notorious maximum prisons of South Africa to come and demoralise and humiliate us with the assistance of uncouth, uncivilised, raw Boer warders so that we would

never again dare to challenge the system of apartheid colonialism.

But the hoodlums were still our problem - they were a national problem - in fact, they were a national tragedy. Many comrades, myself included, had had patience and forbearance in politicising many of them since the first politicians arrived in Robben Island. The result: only a few especially among the independents opted for either the PAC or the ANC. The majority belonged to gangs, had their own constitutions, aims and objects (nd:165).

Adams is faced with a similar situation and has to comprehend a complex social network in order to place his own political beliefs in perspective. He undergoes a process of discovery that helps him to recognize the importance of politicizing the inmates, my next point for discussion.

The people whom Adams meets in the Roeland Street jail show little or no interest in improving their condition because they are uneducated and have few expectations. They are concerned with the danger in their lives and do not have the ability to contemplate change. They are merely trying to survive in a hostile environment and are surprised to learn that people are imprisoned for political offences:

"...Why they pull you in, mate?"

"Political," George Adams called back.

"Political?" the voice asked. "You mean you can go to jail for politics?"

"Ja," George Adams laughed. "They reckon I'm planning to upset the government" (91).

The warders feel threatened by Adams because he is different, more politically conscious than the other prisoners, and are determined to use his political awareness against him. They automatically exclude him, calling him a 'communist' (62) and a

'kaffir' (24) and accuse him of being too clever. When he is admitted to prison, the warders deal with him in a confrontational manner, drawing attention to his colour and to his physical development:

"Another ---- Communist," the man at the table said. "What, are you a kaffir? This ---- jail is getting full of ---- Communists." Then he grinned, a grimace that split his hard face like the mark made by an axe-blade. He turned to the one taking the thumb-prints and said, "Look here, *ou kerel*. Look at this. You reckon he'll get to be Prime Minister?"

The other looked around and sneered while he took a print. "Hell, not *him*. He's too bloody small" (24).

Adams is not intimidated, however, and remains determined to oppose the system that has imprisoned him. When told that the only way to survive is to stay out of the guard's path, Adams concludes that, while the advice is 'probably right', he will not 'give the impression that he would back down for anything. Once you showed you were scared or nervous about something, they were on you like wolves' (52). He is not afraid to challenge official power and remains committed to political change. His dignity and moral resolve are reinforced, too, by his acceptance of the situation. He has no 'regrets about his arrest': 'You did what you decided was the right thing, and then accepted the consequences. He had gone to meetings and had listened to the speeches, had read a little, and had come to the conclusion that what had been said was right' (74).

While the majority of inmates are politically ignorant, there are characters who display an understanding and a political view of their own. Yusef The Turk, whom La Guma describes as a 'gentleman gangster' (38), seems to comprehend what Adams

represents and calls him, 'the professor'. Yusef says it is his duty to protect Adams from people like Butcherboy; and even Morgan, an escapee, shows an elementary interest in politics: 'A man go to jail for almost anything nowadays, hey. Talking against the govvermen'. I'd like to do some talking against the ---- govvermen'' (101). Adams learns a great deal from his interaction with these people, which helps him to a better understanding of the issues involved in the struggle for liberation. Butcherboy, for instance, enforces a system of law and order that appears to be as harsh as the South African judicial system:

A not uncommon occurrence in prison was the "trial", by the most depraved and brutalised inmates, of some unfortunate who might have raised their ire by rebellion, by boot-licking a guard, by squealing on fellow prisoners, or by provoking vengeance in some way or other. Mock courts, much more dangerous than real ones, were held in the cells and "sentence meted out" (82).

Control is then maintained through violence, as Yusef The Turk explains to Adams:

Listen, mate, this is a jail, see? This kind of thing happen now and then. They built this jail, so let them run it. The thing is, hey, that inside here people settle their own business and don't have nothing, or little, to do with the white man as possible (96).

Violence characterizes the power wielded by prison authorities and the power exercised by non-political prisoners. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault contends that, while prison 'is supposed to apply the law, and to teach respect for it',

paradoxically 'all its functioning operates in the form of an abuse of power' (1995:266).

Throughout The Stone Country, Adams is most affected by his relationship with The Casbah Kid and it is this interaction that significantly deepens his political understanding. Initially, The Casbah Kid is not concerned with political issues and he is difficult to convince about the importance and function of change. His fatalism, his hardened attitude and his lack of self-worth worry Adams:

You poor sod, you poor, poor sod, you going to die and you don't give a damn about yourself and about anybody else; except maybe if you had been shown the way, and right now you're learning, even if it is too bloody late (92).

This observation is important because it connects education with the path to revolution, 'the way', and reiterates La Guma's belief in the value of learning. His article, 'African Culture and National Liberation', asserts 'that knowledge is a weapon in the struggle for final emancipation, that many failures arise out of lack of education'. For La Guma, furthermore, 'it becomes a duty of the liberated countries to give everyone access to education' because it 'takes knowledge to participate in the revolution with intelligence, purpose and success' (1973:58). Here La Guma clearly associates knowledge with power and it is significant that, as the novel progresses, Adams manages to interest The Casbah Kid in the possibility of change. Towards the end of the work, The Casbah Kid questions Adams closely:

"Hear me, mister. All this stuff about our people getting into the government, too. You reckon it will help people like us? People in prison, like?"

George Adams said to this strange boy who was also a murderer: "There will certainly be more sympathy, I reckon."

"You reckon that time will come?"

George Adams said, feeling sad: "You'll see" (118-119).

Abdul R. JanMohamed, in Manichean Aesthetics, accurately interprets the relationship between Adams and The Casbah Kid as an opposition between determinism and the potential for change:

George's political work and "agitation" in prison, then, constitute the political imperative of this novel. La Guma clarifies the nature of this imperative by contrasting the Casbah Kid's fatalism with George's belief in the possibility of change and by thus identifying fatalism as an attitude produced by brutality and deprivation, whereas the will to change, embodied by George, is defined as a product of self-respect, dignity, and a sense of equality (1983:247).

Change, Adams realizes, is dependent on the passage of time, and when Gus and Morgan's attempt to escape fails, La Guma uses the incident to comment on the fact that meaningful change is impossible without proficient and serious planning, and that the struggle for liberation is a time-consuming endeavour.

JanMohamed reinforces this view, emphasizing the passionate, though misguided, nature of the escape attempt in The Stone Country. La Guma implies, says JanMohamed, that 'neither can one easily overturn apartheid's entrenchment in violence nor can a new enduring community be established by sudden and dramatic changes: freedom from [the] apartheid government can only be achieved by steady, incremental efforts of the whole community' (1983:248).

I have discussed in some detail Adams's political development and the way in which La Guma places his characters and their crimes in a socio-economic context. At this point, it is necessary to examine, more thoroughly, the way in which La Guma comments on conditions in South Africa. The title of the work, itself, refers not only to a prison but to the country as a whole, since the large prison population is mostly a result of the policy of apartheid; evidence of the neglect and denial of human rights. In The Stone Country, the prison, like South Africa, is racially segregated, and domination and regulations exist as they do outside. Although Adams and his colleague, Jefferson, are arrested together, they are separated in prison because Jefferson is black. This procedure is an extension of external forces, as Jefferson explains: 'This jail is a small something of what they want to make the country. Everybody separate, boy: White, African, Coloured. Regulations for everybody, and a white boss with a gun and a stick' (20).

The contrast between the racially segregated sections in the prison is obvious and is used by La Guma to draw attention to the dislocation inherent in South African society. The white section of the jail appears to be relatively empty and there is a surprising atmosphere of relaxation: 'the prisoners, most of them in shorts and bathing trunks, sunned themselves or chatted with their guard. There were very few of them, compared with the numbers in the other section' (63). In comparison, the coloured part of the prison is characterized by heat and overcrowding:

The heat seemed packed in between the bodies of men, like layers of cotton wool; like a thick sauce which moistened a human salad of accused petty thieves, gangsters, rapists, burglars, thugs, brawlers, dope

peddlars, few of them strangers to the cells, many already depraved, and several old and abandoned, sucking hopelessly at the bitter, disintegrating butt-end of life (80-81).

La Guma's vivid description, enhanced by his use of imagery and ironic contrast, creates a detailed and interesting picture: human beings are compared to the varied inanimate contents of a 'salad', obviously tossed together, or are depicted as 'sucking' parasites; and the air, 'like layers of cotton wool', takes on a claustrophobic rather than a life-sustaining function.

In his depiction of the prison, La Guma shows not only the complexities of South African society; but also that the prison, as touched upon earlier, seems to be merely an extension of the outside world:¹¹ 'jerking on his shoes', Adams 'irritably cursed the guard...the jail...the whole country that was like a big stone prison, anyway' (58). The warders, like the whites themselves, are imprisoned by their ignorance, victims in the society that they have created. It occurs to Adams, too, that all the guards are 'practically prisoners themselves, that they lived most of their working life behind stone walls and bars; they were manacled to the other end of the chain' (106). Mbulelo Mzamane in "'Robben Island": Our University' also regards 'prison in South Africa...[as] a microcosm of the life outside; South Africa is a larger version of Robben Island, which has become a "symbol of colonization, dispossession of this country"' (1989:97).

As in the constant interplay between the forces outside and those inside the prison, there is an interaction between the victimizers without and the victims within the prison walls.

This is highlighted by the judge, when he sentences The Casbah Kid to death. In pronouncing sentence, he makes the following observation:

The activities of gangs and individuals who roam around with the knife as their companion can no longer be tolerated. The State and local authorities are involved in immense expenditure in improving social conditions. The efforts to allow people to live better lives are being undermined by elements, such as the one before the court, who have established terror and confusion (166).

It seems that La Guma also uses this scene to emphasize the inconsistencies in the law, which is an issue that I examined in Chapter One. The implied prejudice of the ruling class is presented in the person of the judge, who appears to abuse his privileges. He does not consider the violence implicit in law-enforcement and shows no interest in mitigating factors. While the accused 'comes from a class and from surroundings where violence and drunkenness are an everyday occurrence', says the judge, 'this cannot be accepted as an excuse' (166). In contrast, La Guma believes that violence is a product of socio-economic forces and is critical of the system of 'justice' and those who uphold it.

Foucault is equally critical of the incongruities in the legal system. In Discipline and Punish, he explains his position by asserting that in a court of law there are invariably two particular 'classes of men, one of which always meets on the seats of the accusers and judges, the other on the benches of the accused'. As a result, he concludes, 'the language of the law, which is supposed to be universal, is, in this respect, inadequate' (1995:276). Furthermore, Foucault

argues that judges, described as 'scarcely resisting employees', assist 'in the constitution of delinquency...in the differentiation of illegalities', in the administration, 'colonization' and application of particular 'illegalities by the illegality of the dominant class' (1995:282).

While La Guma portrays South Africa as an immoral society that maintains order through violence, he nevertheless recognizes the universality of the human condition, as discussed earlier. Thus, while prison is a reflection of South Africa and vice versa, it is also a representation of the world at large. One of the most significant ways in which La Guma is able to comment more broadly on the universal nature of imprisonment is through the character of Adams. La Guma does not depict him as an embittered, violent radical but as a man whose strength comes from his belief that all people have the right to dignity and that freedom must include this. Adams does not articulate a specific group's ideology. He has general moral concerns and is willing to stand up for what he believes in:

...Adams broke rank and walked up to the fat guard who was watching the issue of the supper. He looked up as George Adams approached, and his eyes did not change, but maintained their gravelly look.

"What is your trouble now?" asked the frozen voice.

"I didn't get a mug when I came in."

"So it's you again, hey?" The blonde moustache twitched slightly. "That's just too bad, jong. No mug, no coffee."

"I'm entitled to a mug, isn't it?" George Adams asked, looking at the yellow-lashed eyes. "I can't help it if the man on duty didn't hand out the stuff." (75).

In 'Culture and Liberation', La Guma claims that:

What we respond to when we read a poem or novel is not only life, but also its artistic merit. But life does not merely mean breathing in and out, it involves also man's struggle to reach higher levels of civilization, of social, economic, and cultural status, the mighty struggle to conquer his own disabilities and forces of nature. So then life must include struggle for liberation from all that hinders his development...(1979a:27).

It is noteworthy that La Guma draws attention to artistic merit, since in my opinion it is because he is a skilled writer that he is able to extend himself beyond the realm of the familiar in order to show universal ideas through characters like Adams.

I propose now to support this observation by focussing more closely on La Guma's creative ability in The Stone Country. La Guma uses an interesting image, for example, to highlight the desire and the struggle for freedom. The opposition between prisoner and warder, between one form of power and another, is emphasized through a depiction of the interaction between the prison cat and a mouse:

The cat lay on its belly, forepaws extended, watching the dazed mouse with cruel, glowing, yellow-green eyes....In the eyes of the spectators, it appeared bored and lazy, but its whole body was tensed, alert, waiting for the next move of the mouse. The head of the mouse twitched, darting from side to side, looking for refuge (125).

The mouse is small and defenceless, while the cat is self-assured and menacing. The tension between the two, in the way in which the cat stalks and pursues the mouse, reinforces the idea of tension between captor and captive:

The cat was watching the mouse crouched between its paws. It lay on its belly again, breathing on the

dusty-grey creature with the bright beady eyes and tiny panting jaws. The mouse had its body drawn taut into a ball of tensed muscle, waiting for another opening, refusing to give up hope....

Then the cat made a mistake. It rose up on all fours. Without hesitation the mouse streaked straight forward, under the long belly and out past the swishing tail. There was a vast roaring sound in its ears. It was the laughter of the onlookers.

The cat spun round; too late. The time taken to turn by the cat gave the mouse a few seconds headway and it was off, hurtling across the square again. Something huge and shiny - it was the boot of a guard - tried to block its passage, but it swerved skilfully, and its tiny muscles worked desperately, and it headed into the shade (126).

La Guma captures the sense of danger by describing the cat as 'cruel', drawing attention to the piercing, 'glowing' eyes. Similarly, the effect is intensified by the opposition between the 'bored and lazy' composure of the cat and the 'taut' and 'tensed muscle' of the mouse. When the mouse, against the odds, manages to escape, the moment of triumph is viewed by the prisoners in a personal way. The guards, on the other hand, are left, like the cat, with a feeling of dissatisfaction:

The paw struck again, just as the mouse dashed in, raking the slender tail, but the mouse was gone, and outside the spectators were chuckling over the disappointment of the cat as it crouched waiting at the hole (127).

The idea of a cat-and-mouse game between warder and prisoner is used in a similar way by Niehaus in Fighting For Hope:¹²

The day after receiving Jansie's letter I was whistling in the courtyard. The same warder commanded me to stop - prison regulations forbade singing and whistling. Usually it was wiser to avoid three days of porridge and water in solitary confinement, but not

that afternoon. I retraced my steps, still whistling my "happy" song and expecting to be called back. Nothing happened. The warder was dozing on his chair in the shady corner of the courtyard. Was it merely part of a cat and mouse game, or had he seen the contempt in my eyes? (1994:43);

and First in 117 Days also uses the image of a mouse but in order to describe the interrogation process. She compares herself to 'a pet white mouse in a toy ferris wheel' (1982:51).

The choice of such animal imagery emphasizes La Guma's depiction of the relationship between prison warders and the inmates and between the negative and the positive application of power. While La Guma refers to both victimizers and victims in animal terms, it is noteworthy that, in Madness and Civilization, Foucault explains why prisoners, like madmen, were regarded and depicted as animals. In that work, he establishes a link between 'a certain image of animality' (1988:72) and the exclusion of the insane from society. 'Madness', Foucault contends, 'borrowed its face from the mask of the beast. Those chained to the cell walls', were not 'men whose minds had wandered, but beasts preyed upon by a natural frenzy' (1988:72). The portrayal of the madman, like the representation of the prisoner, produced, in Foucault's opinion, 'the imagery responsible for all the practices of confinement and the strangest aspects of its savagery' (1988:77).

As mentioned earlier, people and their behaviour are elsewhere described by La Guma in animalistic terms, too. Butcherboy has an 'ape-like torso' (31) and eyes as 'savage as a wild boar's' (53), and the prison is like a jungle, where the strong intimidate the weak:

This was the country behind the coast-line of laws and regulations and labyrinthine legislation; a jungle of stone and iron, inhabited by jackals and hyenas, snarling wolves and trembling sheep, entrapped lions fighting off shambling monsters with stunted brains and bodies armoured with the hide of ignorance and brutality, trampling underfoot those who tried to claw their way from the clutch of the swamp (81).

The impression of a world of menace is created by La Guma through the selection of words like 'snarling wolves', 'monsters', and 'brutality', and through the tension, already shown, between the hunters and the hunted. The image of a battle between the strong and the weak also reinforces La Guma's view of the confrontation in South Africa where the ruling class are seen as people armed with hatred and violence, and the majority are underdogs, desperately trying to escape from the constraints of the apartheid system. The operation of power is again emphasized.

The tension between these opposing classes is heightened by La Guma's use of language, especially dialogue. In Art and Ideology in the African Novel, Emmanuel Ngara draws attention to La Guma's display of 'language variation to reveal the speech habits of a social group....two social groups stand out as having marked dialectical characteristics: low-class Coloureds and the uneducated Afrikaaner [sic] policeman' (1987:92). This use of speech patterns and the interweaving of English and Afrikaans with slang is also particularly successful in the novel, as illustrated in a conversation between Solly and Butcherboy:

"Hear me," Solly was telling Butcherboy. "Reckon and think. That is I in that canteen. The Wellington Arms, mos. You know mos that place, don't I say? Awright, there I is. Reckon and think, I'm having a small white at the bar when this juba come in."

"What juba?" scowled Butcherboy.

"Wait, man. Listen. I'm telling, you, mos. This rooker come in come up to the bar, and he is just like this: 'Gimme a banana lick-your.' Well, I look at him, and I reckon: 'Banana lick-your? Banana blerry lick-your? What you reckon this is, pal? The blerry Gran' Hotel?" (31).

In another example of his skill as a writer, the recurring image of the wind is used by La Guma in The Stone Country, to anticipate an event or to conclude a sequence. As the story progresses the symbolism of the wind and its connection to the struggle for power becomes apparent. Initially, it is described as a 'breeze which had sprung up during the night' (50), while later it changes into a wind that 'howled and tore at the wire mesh' (147). The wind's action is related to the characters' internal changes and it also heightens the tension created during the attempted break-out:

Below him, Koppe shivered with fright, one foot already on the bar, a hand clawing upwards. The wind wrestled with him, trying to pluck him from the wall and blow him like a scrap of paper into the dark yard below. He wanted to scream in fear (152).

La Guma confirms that he deliberately attempts 'to use nature in terms of symbolic potential and also because the characters have to act against some background' (Abrahams 1985:72). By the end of the novel, prior to the execution of The Casbah Kid, the wind, now forceful, anticipates a larger, more significant change in the country itself, almost like the wind of change:¹³ 'Outside, the wind was starting to rise again, and George Adams could hear it whispering secretively through the cell blocks and the outhouses of the prison yards' (167-168).

Thus the novel ends on a positive note, reinforcing the resolve that Adams embodies. It is as though victory for the oppressed is imminent and we see this in the composure of The Casbah Kid who, on his way to the gallows, is no longer a figure of failure.¹⁴ The youth's spark of emotion suggests his acceptance of death rather than his defeat:

Fingers with bitten nails touched the screen, and for an infinitesimal instant there was a flicker of light in the cold, grey eyes, like a spark of faulty electricity. The bitter mouth cracked slightly into one of its rare grins (168).

It is significant, too, that the conclusion of The Stone Country is affirmative, since this strengthens my conviction that La Guma was not broken by his experience in prison. On the contrary, La Guma remained committed to the struggle for liberation and believed that victory was inevitable. 'The Condition of Culture in South Africa' incorporates his vision of the future:

In the face of tremendous odds, in the face of the pressure put upon us, we do not fear the future, confident of the final emergence of the true ideals of humanity, culture and progress in our country. Although many of us have been forced into exile, to live as refugees in strange countries, I do not believe we have become so demoralised as to doubt the final victory (1971b:121).

I intend to return to this discussion at the end of the chapter in order to examine, in more detail, the way in which imprisonment affected La Guma. At this point, however, I should like to focus on La Guma's novels, In the Fog of the Seasons' End and Time of the Butcherbird, as they provide additional insights into his political and, associated, creative development.

In the Fog of the Seasons' End tells the story of a coloured man, Beukes, an underground worker for an illegal political organization, and of his black colleague, Elias Tekwane, who is betrayed to the authorities.¹⁵ Tekwane is tortured to death by the security police and Beukes becomes responsible for co-ordinating the safe passage of three potential freedom fighters, who have to be transported across the border for military training. The novel demonstrates a progression in political thought - away from the idea represented by the protagonist in The Stone Country, who is politically aware and able to suggest to his fellow inmates merely that dignity and freedom are possible and inevitable - to an acceptance and support of armed struggle in In the Fog of the Seasons' End.¹⁶

In order to place both the narrative and La Guma's convictions in context, it is valuable at this point to provide a brief historical background to the armed struggle. The banning of the ANC, PAC and South African Communist Party (SACP) in the early 1960s and the government's use of force to crush non-violent resistance contributed to the ANC's decision to establish a military wing known as Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK). In his book, No Easy Walk to Freedom, Mandela claims that, when the determination was reached, 'the ANC heritage of non-violence and racial harmony was very much with us. We felt that the country was drifting towards a civil war in which Blacks and Whites would fight each other. We viewed the situation with alarm' (1989:170). Initially MK engaged in a sabotage campaign which did not involve loss of life, but the government's continued threat of strong action eventually led to the adoption of a programme of guerrilla warfare. In The Unfinished Autobiography, Slovo, a member of the

High Command, explains that, in terms of the objectives of an MK document code-named Operation Mayibuye, 'hundreds of activists would leave the country to be trained in the techniques and art of organising and leading a guerrilla struggle....they would, with the help of some of the newly independent African states, return with the minimum necessary armed equipment to a widespread set of strategic areas which had already been selected' (1996:146).

La Guma situates the events in In the Fog of the Seasons' End against this background and it is my opinion that this novel places La Guma's belief in the need for armed struggle in the context of his political thinking. Violence and intimidation permeate In the Fog of the Seasons' End and initially the decision to take up arms is set in motion by the torture of Tekwane:

The prisoner fought for breath and struggled to avoid the blows. He could smell his own vomit and the detective's urine on his clothes. Strength drained from his body like water from a burst bottle. The young one drew his revolver and struck at the prisoner's writhing shins with the barrel (7).

To achieve this portrait of pain and suffering, which reflects his own experience and his knowledge of the prison system, La Guma uses emotive language, such as 'struggled to avoid the blows' and 'writhing shins'. This explicit description adds to the reader's understanding of the harshness of detention and of prison conditions, and resembles the statements made by numerous detainees. Helao Shityuwete,¹⁷ for example, details his ordeal in Never Follow The Wolf:

Putting a stick in the loop of the leg irons, the policeman ordered me to move back and pulled me over. I landed on my back with a thud. Another policeman joined in to help hold the stick at the other end. They started running, pulling me round the room. Then the rest of the gang, some armed with broomsticks and hosepipes, joined in, chasing after me, hitting out wildly. Those who could not find something with which to beat me used their boots to kick out at me (1990:139).

La Guma's Tekwane is detained in the Central Police Station which, like the Roeland Street jail, is depicted as a more frightening facet of the outside world:

Behind the ugly mask of the regime was an even uglier face which he had not yet looked on. You went through the police charges in the squares, the flailing clubs, the arrogant rejection of all pleas and petitions, blood dried on the street like spilled paint where a shot body had lain, but here, behind the polished windows, the gratings and the Government paintwork, was another dimension of terror (3).

The constant interplay between internal and external forces, between the corruption in prison and the perversion of South African society, reaches a climax when Beukes is wounded by the police. Desperate for medical attention but afraid of being exposed to the authorities, Beukes seeks attention from a doctor who is willing to treat him without reporting the incident. Their interaction displays the contradictions in the law and in the society that creates it:

If the law punishes a crime, murder, rape, then I could bring myself to assist it. I would consider reporting a murder, a case of assault. But if the law defends injustice, prosecutes and persecutes those who fight injustice, then I am under no obligation to uphold it. They have actually given us an opportunity to pick and

choose. Things happen in our country, Mister Beukes. Injustice prevails, and there are people who have the nerve enough to defy it (161).

The doctor's assertion that violence is an obvious response to the oppression that the government perpetrates is in opposition to the comment made by the judge when sentencing The Casbah Kid in The Stone Country. Although I observed in Chapter One that certain members of the medical community were willing to co-operate with the police, it is clear that La Guma's character of the doctor, in assisting Beukes, is in opposition to such co-operation. His view is particularly apparent in the claim that the South African government manipulates and abuses the legal system.

La Guma focuses on several socio-economic issues in In the Fog of the Seasons' End, which places the characters in the context of their situation and demonstrates the progression of the liberation struggle from passive resistance to active retaliation. Tekwane has been brought up in a rural area, the son of a migrant worker.¹⁸ When his father is killed in a mining accident near Johannesburg, the economic impact and the injustice of the apartheid system are evident:

One afternoon Elias's mother returned from the post office and he heard that 'The Pension' was finished. The mine had awarded her forty pounds compensation, to be paid at two pounds a month, and that day she had been told that she had drawn the last of it the previous month. Of course, the mine had neglected to tell her, among other things, that the widows of White miners killed alongside her husband had been awarded fifteen pounds a month for the rest of their lives (74).

The land that Tekwane and his family plough and depend on for a livelihood is described as barren, with 'stunted trees' and 'parched gullies' (74), providing an image similar to the one of the wasteland depicted in The Stone Country. In contrast, the white suburbs are lush and cultivated, with 'green foothills' (8) and 'sundrenched beaches' (112). The children in Tekwane's village are malnourished and must depend, like scavengers, on the food tossed by passengers from a passing train:

Sometimes packets of half-eaten food were tossed out to the shrieking children and when the train had passed, whistling into the sun-scorched distance, they would turn back panting, to gather the jettisoned leftovers. There would be partly-bitten sandwiches, broken biscuits, some chicken bones with a little meat left on them sticky with jam from crumbled cakes, burst oranges and chipped candy (74).

A portrait of suffering in the face of others' excess is created by La Guma through the description of 'jettisoned leftovers' and 'partly-bitten sandwiches', prompting the idea that the white's refuse becomes the black's sustenance. The humiliation suggested by this experience recurs in different guises throughout the novel.

When Tekwane, for example, applies for a pass in order to seek work in the city, the authorities demand that he take off his trousers, so that they can determine his age. Despite his protests that he is seventeen, they decide otherwise:

The first official said, 'He has taken the girls out into the bushes too, I bet you. Write twenty.'

'Right, boss,' Red-braces said. To Elias, 'You fasten up the trousers. We do not need to see it any longer.'

Elias said, drawing up his trousers and feeling shamed: 'I am seventeen, seventeen, seventeen.'

'Twenty,' Red-braces said. 'The boss has said you are twenty, and twenty years you are.' (127).

Beukes recalls an incident, in his youth, that had a significant effect on him:

'My aunty took me to a circus once when I was a lighty,' Beukes said. 'I didn't like it. The actors kept their backs to us all the time and you couldn't see anything they were doing. When I asked my aunty why, she told me it was because we were sitting in the segregated Coloured seats and the actors performed mostly for the Whites, even if we paid the same money. I never went to a circus again after that' (40).

It is also significant that Isaac, who is employed by an American petroleum company as a messenger, eventually leaves the country for military training. In South Africa, he is called 'boy' and is noticed only when 'an order had to be given or when a favour was required' (111). As a black man, the 'other', he is degraded and treated with disdain, as this interaction with the white telephonist displays:

'Oh-er-Isaac, will you please get me...'

But Isaac scowled at her. 'I have been called to Mister Goodnight's office, Miss Barrows,' he lied skilfully, mentioning the name of the managing-director of the company. 'Very urgent.'

'Oh, then on your way back,' she persisted wearily. 'Or you could ask one of the other boys. I need some Alka-Seltzer badly.'

'Righto, Miss,' Isaac replied, passing on. Boys, boys, boys, he thought, you could grow to a hundred and they would still call you a boy because you were black (110-111).

Based on these experiences, it is not surprising that the characters choose to become involved in the armed struggle:

Now, sitting there in the hot, steamy kitchen, [Isaac] thought that all this kowtowing to stupid idiots who cherished the idea that they were God's Chosen just because they had white skins, had to come to an end. The silly bastards, he thought, they had been stupefied into supporting a system which had to bust one day and take them all down with it; instead of permanent security and justice, they had chosen to preserve a tyranny that could only feed them temporarily on the crumbs of power and privilege. Now that the writing had started to appear on the wall, they either scrambled to shore it up with blood and bullets and the electric torture apparatus or hid their heads in the sand and pretended that nothing was happening. They would have to pay for stupidity the hard way (114-115).

Ironically, the white excess, described in the train incident, will degenerate into crumbs, and again we are reminded of issues raised in Chapter One; namely the brutality of the system of apartheid and the official attempt to deny any wrongdoing.

During his interrogation, Tekwane, when asked to collaborate with the police, protests by saying that 'his' people have been 'torn...from their homes, imprisoned...not for stealing or murder, but for not having...permission to live'. 'Our children', he laments, 'live in rags and die of hunger. And you want me to co-operate' (5-6). His outrage is obvious and, although he realizes that the police may kill him, he nevertheless remains committed to the struggle for liberation. 'You are going to torture me, maybe kill me', Tekwane responds, but 'that is the only way you and your people can rule us. You shoot and kill and torture because you cannot rule in any other way a people who reject you' (6).

La Guma's personal reaction to the need for armed struggle is perhaps best understood through the character of Beukes. As

Adams and La Guma are linked in The Stone Country, so Beukes and La Guma are connected in In the Fog of the Seasons' End. Beukes, for instance, leads a clandestine existence, which provides the reader with an insight into the quality of La Guma's life under house arrest:

In spite of fatigue he moved with the caution of someone grown used to hiding, to evading open spaces; the caution of someone who knew that a man alone in a street was as conspicuous as a pyramid, but that in a crowd one could become anonymous, a voice in a massed choir (107).

When Beukes explains to his wife, Frances, that he is determined to become more involved in the struggle for liberation, there is a suggestion that La Guma is reliving an interaction with his own wife, Blanche:

They had sat opposite each other with the plates of cabbage stew between them and Beukes had gazed at her across the table. He had said, 'Well, it's nothing that's wrong actually.'

'Well, you better tell me now' [sic]

'It's that they want me to do this work. It will mean that I got to leave home.'

'No, man, not that. Not for good, hey?'

'Well, not necessarily. Maybe only for a while at a time. You see, I'm one of the few the police don't know about. I don't reckon so, anyway.'

'Do you want to do it?'

He had said desperately: 'I don't have to. But, well, there's so few, so damn few now to do the work. With all those people in prison we got to almost start all over again. We've got to keep it alive, see?'
(136-137)

It is logical, therefore, to assume that, when Beukes responds to the conditions in South Africa by recognizing the need for armed struggle, La Guma is voicing his support as well:

Beukes stood by the side of the street in the early morning and thought, they have gone to war in the name of a suffering people. What the enemy himself has created, these will become battle-grounds, and what we see now is only the tip of an iceberg of resentment against an ignoble regime, the tortured victims of hatred and humiliation. And those who persist in hatred and humiliation must prepare. Let them prepare hard and fast - they do not have long to wait (180-181).

These sentiments are partly echoed by La Guma in an essay entitled 'African Culture and National Liberation', where he links knowledge with power:

In Southern Africa where cultural advancement or frustration depends on the whims of the racist oppressors, the people have taken up arms in order to exercise their right to reconstruct and rehabilitate the personality of the South African people; to open the doors of universal learning and culture; to gain access to the knowledge and science withheld by the white racists, knowing that in order to achieve this we must also control the material, social and political keys (1973:59).

Although there is no evidence to suggest that La Guma was directly involved in military action, he nevertheless knew many of those who worked in the resistance struggle, as he acknowledged to Abrahams:

I knew these people. They were my friends. They came from all walks of life. Every race. Every religion. We worked together. And when one of us was arrested, we were all worried. But we knew we had to carry on, come what may. I am proud to have been associated with them. And I think one can say that this story is my way of remembering them. Thanking them (1985:113).

Appropriately, La Guma dedicated In the Fog of the Seasons' End to a close personal friend, 'Basil February and others killed in

action, Zimbabwe, 1967'. There is a suggestion that one of Beukes's contacts, Isaac, who is part of the group going across the border to be trained, is Basil February. The description of the sunrise that follows is one of hope and triumph rather than approaching doom: 'The sun was brightening the east now, clearing the roofs of the suburb and the new light broke the shadows into scattered shapes' (180). While remembering his dead colleagues, La Guma emphasizes that victory is near and, like The Stone Country, In the Fog of the Seasons' End concludes on a positive note. Despite socio-economic hardships and a lack of human rights, despite torture and death, Beukes is confident of the future. As he bids Isaac farewell, he is filled with pride and anticipation. He recognizes the connection between the training of freedom fighters and impending power and is optimistic that change is on the horizon: 'He stood there until the van was out of sight and then turned back to where the children had gathered in the sunlit yard' (181).

Time of the Butcherbird,¹⁹ La Guma's final published novel, and the only book written entirely outside South Africa,²⁰ also provides an insight into the operation of power and into the ongoing struggle between government and opposition forces. Before discussing this point, however, I shall outline the history and the aims of the Black Consciousness movement in order to provide a frame of reference for the narrative.

In 1959, the government passed the Extension of University Education Act, which prohibited black students from attending so-called white universities. New tribal colleges, under the direct control of the Minister of Bantu Education, were especially established to 'accommodate' these students and, ironically, it

was at these colleges that new political organizations began to emerge. In 1969, for instance, a number of students broke away from the white dominated National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and formed the South African Students Organization (SASO), which was officially inaugurated at the Turfloop tribal college near Pietersburg. Biko was elected President and in his book, I Write What I Like, he explains that 'what SASO has done is simply to take stock of the present scene in the country and to realise that not unless the non-white students decide to lift themselves from the doldrums will they ever hope to get out of them. What we want is not black visibility but real black participation' (1986:5).

Biko's reference to black students lifting 'themselves from the doldrums' is significant, particularly in relation to the dominant ideology of the Black Consciousness movement, which urged black South Africans to rid themselves of the psychology of inferiority, to build their own value systems, to become aware of their economic and political power, and to take pride in their blackness. The movement advocated a non-racial society but, as Biko explained, the entire system in South Africa had to be reconstructed before black and white could live together. In the aforementioned book, Biko elaborates: 'If South Africa is to be a land where black and white [coexist] without fear of group exploitation', it will come about 'only when these two opposites have interplayed' and have created a feasible integration of 'ideas and a *modus vivendi*'. It is impossible, Biko continues, to conduct 'any struggle without offering a strong counterpoint to the white races' that infiltrate South African society so successfully (1986:51).

The Black Consciousness movement attempted to function within the law, particularly through community projects, and recognized that patience and long-term development were an essential part of the liberation process. The movement quickly spread from universities to schools, gaining in popularity. Unfortunately, the student protests that culminated in the killing of unarmed Soweto students in 1976 had serious consequences. All Black Consciousness organizations were banned and, as discussed in Chapter One, several leaders, including Biko, were murdered or detained. Many students were driven into exile or left the country to train as guerilla fighters.

La Guma sets Time of the Butcherbird against this background and the plot centres on Shilling Murile, who has spent eight years in prison. He is bent on revenge and returns to his village to kill Hannes Meulen, who, with a colleague, Opperman, was responsible for the death of Murile's brother many years ago. The community to which he returns, however, is under threat of removal, an issue not previously discussed by La Guma. He explained this shift in emphasis as follows:

I believe that one of the most serious social problems of South Africa is that of mass removal of millions of African people from their well-established homes and the government program to establish or reinforce "Bantustans." In addition, of course, it is not only the fact of the "Bantustans" but also the attitude of the people and the resistance that's been put up on various levels in the rural areas to this policy (Abrahams 1985:115).

The novel, dedicated to the dispossessed, opens with a powerful description of a forced removal:

The dust settled slowly on the metal of the tank and on the surface of the brackish water it contained, laboriously pumped from below the sand: on the rough cubist mounds of folded and piled tents dumped there by officialdom: on the sullen faces of the people who had been unloaded like the odds and ends of furniture they had been allowed to bring with them, powdering them grey and settling in the perspiring lines around mouths and in the eye sockets, settling on the unkempt and travel-creased clothes, so that they had the look of scarecrows left behind, abandoned in this place (1).

Characteristically, La Guma creates the impression of a wasteland through the use of 'dust', 'brackish' and 'scarecrows', which intensifies the sense of desolation and dislocation. Murile moves into the landscape, dressed in a jacket that 'was a cast-off top of khaki serge battledress' (13-14) and there is a hint that revolutionary violence is imminent. It is as though the characters in In the Fog of the Seasons' End have returned from military training, ready for action.

As mentioned, Murile's mission is motivated by the earlier and violent death of his brother, Timi, at the hands of Meulen and Opperman.²¹ At the time, in a scene reminiscent of the torture sequence in In the Fog of the Seasons' End, Murile and Timi, the two brothers, are tied to a fence post and left overnight:

The two men coughed and choked, wriggling in their bonds. Timi coughed, sneezed and sprayed mucus, moaning as he sagged against the electric flex that held him to the fence post. Shilling Murile wrestled with the flex but Opperman in his rage had been brutally efficient. The rubber-bound wire held them fast, sunk into flesh, clamping the veins, muscles, bones. Struggle against their pinions brought only painful torture, so after a while they gave it up and waited for morning (75).

When Meulen and Opperman return the following day, Murile, anguished because his brother has died during the night, attacks them: 'The spike of bottle-glass slashed the length of Opperman's left forearm, opening it to the bone so that he screamed with pain, staring at the belching blood; Meulen clubbed the black man's skull with the butt of the shotgun' (77).

Ironically, Murile is sentenced to ten years hard labour for the attempted murder, while Meulen and Opperman are fined. When the judge pronounces sentence, the 'legal' irregularities of the South African judicial system are again highlighted:

As for the death of the Bantu Timi, the judge said that there had been provocation. Meneer Meulen had not intended the death of this Bantu, but he should have acted with more thought. Nowadays everybody was very conscious of the necessity to show the white people in a good light in relation to the black population, and Meneer Meulen's actions did not help. Inside the country certain liberalistic elements and Communists would capitalise on such mishaps as this, and overseas the enemies of the country like the Communists there as well as the OAU and the United Nations would also take advantage of such events for their attacks....The judge had no alternative but to render a severe reprimand and a stiff fine (77).

Foucault's view of the prejudice inherent in the judicial system, as touched upon earlier, is particularly relevant in relation to the judge's biased proclamation. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault, elaborating on his previous argument, explains that 'it would be hypocritical or naïve' to presume that 'the law was made for all in the name of all'. Instead, Foucault claims, it would be advisable to acknowledge that the law 'was made for the few and that it was brought to bear upon others'. Thus, he

concludes, 'in principle it applies to all citizens' but in theory it is applied 'to the most numerous and least enlightened classes' (1995:276).

La Guma continues to draw attention to legal issues throughout the novel, particularly with reference to mass removals. In Time of the Butcherboy, the community is being relocated in order to make way for white development and financial gain. The blacks, despite their historical connection to the land, are shown no compassion and are bluntly told by the Commissioner that their appeals to the government have been denied. Mma-Tau, a member of the community, and an exponent of Black Consciousness, refuses to accept this decision and urges the people to protest the removal. In an emotional plea she reminds them of the suffering they have endured under the system of apartheid:

...men are of two kinds, the poor who toil and create the riches of the earth: and the rich who do not toil but devour it. The meaning is this: that the people demand their share of the fruits of the earth, and their rulers, of whom the white man is a lackey, a servant, refuse them a fair portion. And it is this: that the people insist, the rulers deprive them of work, drive them from their homes, and if they still resist, send their lackeys to shoot them down with guns (47).

Like Tekwane in In the Fog of the Seasons' End, Mma-Tau recognizes the power of the South African government but is bold enough to defy its officers in order to maintain her integrity. Preferring 'dignity in hell' to humiliation 'in their heaven', she declares that 'if they want to throw us out', then they should 'come and chase us all over the hills first' (86).

A direct and violent confrontation ensues between the police and the community, different from the passive resistance shown by some characters in the other novels. Through his portrayal of the collective strength and determination of the community,²² La Guma again draws attention to the universal struggle for liberation. As Mma-Tau explains, 'a whole people is starting to think of collecting a collective debt, the time for collecting this debt is drawing on. All over the country people are feeling it' (80). The protestors are confident, defiant and described as a 'mass of singing people' (114), while the police are 'grotesque' (115), armed with 'automatic rifles' and 'long riot staves' (114). Against these odds, it is unlikely that the people will succeed and yet the reaction is significant because it shows their 'unwillingness to be enslaved' (118). Indeed, as Memmi contends in The Colonizer and the Colonized, victory for the oppressed is not entirely improbable, because 'the colonized can wait a long time to live....regardless of how soon or how violently the colonized rejects his situation, he will one day begin to overthrow his unlivable existence with the whole force of his oppressed personality' (1991:120). Time of the Butcherbird thus concludes with optimism. The drought that has plagued the country is about to come to an end and, in contrast to the desolate scene that opens the novel, the landscape is now described as 'golden' (119) and the prospects for change are possible.

By focussing on the problems involved in mass removals, La Guma is able to comment on the situation affecting the entire non-white community in South Africa. Murile is black and his experience of prison and the law is similar to the experiences of

Adams and Beukes, particularly when Murile observes, in a now-familiar image, that South Africa is a prison itself: 'our people go to prison every day. Are not our leaders in prison? We are all in prison, the whole country is a prison' (80). La Guma is consistent in showing the socio-economic deprivation of the non-white community in order to place his character's actions in context.²³ The world that they inhabit is depicted as harsh and desolate, from the 'lunar barrenness of stone and steel' (18) in The Stone Country to the 'long, dry, broken dusty stretches of reddish-yellow land' (13) in Time of the Butcherbird. La Guma deliberately uses this vision of South Africa to educate the reader about the country:

...somebody asked me a little while ago why I always wrote about the weather in South Africa. Well, part of the fact is that the weather plays a part in creating the atmosphere and it helps to describe the scenes and so on. There is also the fact that overseas people believe the South African regime's tourist propaganda that it is a country with perfect weather. I had an idea that rather we could use the weather as a feature of South Africa, but also in terms of its symbolic potential, and thus at the same time make it or try to make it genuinely South African. In other words, I am contesting the official propaganda of South Africa's natural beauty and trying to show the world that the tourist poster world of wonderful beaches and beautiful golf links is not the total picture (Abrahams 1985: 71-72).

By presenting the weather as a deterrent rather than an attraction, La Guma asks the reader to consider another perspective. Gerald Moore examines, in Twelve African Writers, La Guma's characteristic emphasis on environment and his use of prose that 'lifts the glossy surface off Cape Town's tourist

brochures like a scalpel, and shows us the swarming misery of existence for the majority of its citizens' (1980:108). At times, however, La Guma's description of nature serves a different purpose. And a Threefold Cord, for example, portrays Cape Town as a bleak, wet and miserable place, and yet the novel concludes with a brief glimpse of hope: 'As he looked out at the rain, he saw, to his surprise, a bird dart suddenly from among the patchwork roofs of the shanties and head straight, straight into the sky' (1988:112). Similarly, in the final pages of The Stone Country, there is a feeling of confidence, rather than of disappointment: 'The wind had died away, and it looked as if it would be another hot day. The sky was pale, washed-out in the warming dawn; a flock of pigeons, flying in haphazard formation, streaked off and over the prison, headed towards the sunrise' (162). In the light of the above, it is clear that La Guma's work is defined by a persistent sense of optimism and that, despite personal and professional hardship, he was not defeated, but empowered by life in prison, my next point of focus.

One of the reasons why La Guma maintained a positive attitude was because he had confidence in the process of liberation.²⁴ He recognized that power was not possible without knowledge and that the education of the South African population was of vital importance to the success of the resistance struggle. He acknowledged, as well, the problems encountered by the majority of non-whites in South Africa and yet believed, as seen, in the inevitable victory of the struggle for freedom. Adams in The Stone Country articulates this conviction, when he contemplates the encounter between the cat and the mouse:

You were on the side of the mouse, of all the mice, [he] thought. The little men who get kicked in the backside all the time. You got punched and beaten like that mouse, and you had to duck and dodge to avoid the claws and fangs. Even a mouse turns, someday (127).

The same belief is presented in In the Fog of the Seasons' End, with the inclusion of an epigraph, Martyrs, by Conte Saldon Tidiany:

Banquets of black entrails of the Black,
Armour of parchment of wax,
Fragile and fugitive when facing the burning stone,
Will be shattered like the spider web,
In the fog of the seasons' end.

La Guma also maintained that the success of the liberation struggle must be considered in relation to the past. In 'African Culture and National Liberation', he says that 'we look back at the past in order to uncover values, assess them from the point of view of modern times, and attempt to determine and understand their place and role in history and modern civilisation' (1973:57). In Time of the Butcherbird, Kobe, protesting the forced removal, also focuses on the past but his concern is with its persistence:

We have been told that we must go from our land, from the land of our ancestors. But it is a very difficult thing to uproot an old oak of many years. The roots of such a tree are very deep. Certainly one can take an axe and cut down such a tree, that is easy, but the roots remain and are very hard to dig up. So you see, the tree really remains. The tree goes on (12).

These examples clearly demonstrate both La Guma's belief in the close connection between the past, the present and the future and his assertion that a people's history provides a frame of

reference for the liberation struggle. A knowledge, an understanding and an appreciation of the past, then, propel the struggle forward, securing a certain victory. The portrayal of Tekwane's death in In the Fog of The Seasons' End is significant:

There was the darkness of the sack again. Talk, talk, talk. But the ghosts waited for him on some far horizon. No words came, only the screaming of many crows circling the battlefield. *Wahlula amakosi! Thou hast conquered the Kings!* The far figures moved along the far horizon. *He! Uya kuhlasele-pi na? Yes, where wilt thou now wage war?* Far, far, his ancestors gathered on the misty horizon, their spears sparkling like diamonds in the exploding sun (175).

A confrontation is imminent. In a 1956 article for New Age, La Guma anticipates this idea: 'Day by day the unity of the oppressed peoples of the world grows stronger', he affirms, adding that 'from Africa to Asia the forces of anti-imperialism, peace and friendship are marching forward' and that 'the sun of colonial slavery and war is setting fast' (1956a:3).

Despite the subject matter and the portrayal of a dismal state of existence, therefore, La Guma's novels are positive comments on the ultimate success of the liberation struggle. In In the Fog of the Seasons' End, Beukes declares his satisfaction in the fact 'that we are now working for armed struggle. It gives people confidence to think that soon they might combine mass activity with military force. One does not like facing the fascist guns like sheep' (143). In Time of the Butcherbird, Mma-Tau states that one 'day we will have guns too' (87) and when Murile acquires an automatic shotgun he mentions that he intends to 'find out what can be done with it' (118). It is obvious that La Guma came to consider that the use of weapons was inevitable

and necessary in order to achieve freedom and he frequently voiced this opinion. In 'Literature and Life', for instance, he asserted:

The people of Vietnam, the people of the Portuguese colonies, of Namibia.[sic] Zimbabwe [sic] South Africa who are today waging an armed struggle for national liberation and independence simultaneously struggle for the rebirth of their national cultures. In these parts of the imperialist dominated world the armed struggle helps solve the contradiction between imperialism and the aspirations of our peoples to national rejuvenation. Deprived of the right to live according to their own values, our peoples are engaged in a struggle that will lead them to full expression in terms of their own history and culture (1970:239).

As I have tried to show, La Guma felt that literature, like the armed struggle, has an effective role to play in any liberation movement, whether in South Africa or elsewhere. His concluding remarks at the 1967 African-Scandinavian Writers' Conference emphasize the necessary commitment:²⁵

The South African artist finds himself with no other choice but to dedicate himself to that movement which must involve not only himself but ordinary people as well. So that I say that in our society we are prepared to run guns and to hold up radio stations, if it is necessary. I say this because I believe that, whether we are European writers or African writers or American writers, all human activity which does not serve humanity must be a waste of time and effort (Wästberg ed. 1968:24).

In Chapter One I suggested that imprisonment strengthened the resolve of many prisoners and that the experience of prison was empowering. La Guma, whose spirit of defiance was not broken by detention, prison, banning and house arrest, was no exception. He remained devoted to the goals of the liberation struggle,

certain of its ultimate success, and consistently strove, in his creative writing, to educate the reader about conditions in South Africa in order to alter opinion and to bring about change in the country.²⁶

Notes

1. La Guma, who worked as a clerk, a bookkeeper and a factory worker, helped to organize a strike in 1946 for better working conditions at Metal Box Company.
2. The first sessions of the trial were held in Johannesburg, amid mass demonstrations. Later the proceedings were moved to Pretoria. During a period of five years, the prosecution attempted to prove that the ANC had become a communist organization. The trial concluded in 1961, when all the accused were found not guilty.
3. La Guma was interned for five months and his wife, Blanche, was also detained. In Abrahams's Memories of Home, Blanche recalls how she 'knew that Alex was being detained at the same prison as [she] was, for he sang back in reply to songs that [she] sang, like light opera, the songs which [they] sang at home' (1991:12).
4. The novel deals with life in a suburban slum. It was published in East Berlin because, nothing La Guma, as a banned person, said or wrote could be reproduced in South Africa.
5. Indira Gandhi presented La Guma with the award in Delhi, India. Angolan poet, Agostinho Neto, and the Vietnamese writer, To Hoai, were also honoured.

6. In his Introduction to the collection, La Guma stated that his intention was to inform the reader and to gather international support for the struggle against apartheid: 'It is hoped that this volume will contribute toward a better understanding of what it means to live under apartheid; and that it will rally further support for the heroic South African people who have once again launched an armed struggle for liberation' (1978:15).

7. All references to The Stone Country will be from the 1991 edition. Henceforth only page numbers will be given.

8. Koppe, though reluctant, agrees to participate in the escape attempt. Ironically, he is the only one who succeeds.

9. This dedication appears in the Heinemann edition of the novel (1982:np).

10. The physical description of the prison is similar to La Guma's description of the Roeland Street jail in an article, 'What Goes on in Roeland Street Jail':

In Roeland Street, Cape Town, with the blue bulk of Table Mountain in the background, stands the mass of brick and stone which is the city jail. In spite of the carefully tended lawns and flowers which front it, this place has never been able to disguise the cold atmosphere about it, and none of the periodic statements of prison authorities have succeeded in glorifying its grim record (1956b:6).

11. A similar view is presented by Jacobs in 'Breyten Breytenbach and the South African Prison Book' (1986:96).

12. Niehaus, convicted on a charge of high treason, was sentenced in 1983 to fifteen years in prison.

13. In 1960, the British Prime Minister, Sir Harold Macmillan, made a famous speech to the South African parliament in Cape

Town, during which he referred to the 'wind of change' sweeping through the African continent and to the increasing rise of national consciousness.

14. This point coincides with Dieter Riemenschneider's view in 'The Prisoner in South African Fiction': 'As much as [La Guma] detests the absolute selfishness of prisoners, he makes them feel, through gestures or words, that he is on their side. He makes the reader understand that criminal offences are a consequence of the social-political situation black people find themselves in in South Africa' (1979:53).

15. All references to In the Fog of the Seasons' End will be from the 1986 edition. Henceforth only page numbers will be given.

16. Samuel Omo Asein, in 'The Revolutionary Vision in Alex La Guma's Novels', suggests that the progression towards a more radical stance echoes the changes in La Guma's political career, and that the armed struggle 'promises hope and ultimate liberation from the scourge [sic] of the oppressor' (1978:85).

17. Shityuwete, a member of the South West African People's Organization (SWAPO), was sentenced in 1968 and spent sixteen years on Robben Island.

18. In his collection, Apartheid, La Guma demonstrates a clear concern about the migrant labour system: 'The majority of the people, the non-Whites, are subjected to the worst forms of colonial subjection; they are neither independent nor free. They are landless, voteless and compelled to provide cheap labour to produce the fabulous wealth which is bargained for in the stock markets of Johannesburg, London and New York' (1978:13-14).

19. All references from Time of the Butcherbird will be from the 1979 edition. Henceforth only page numbers will be given.
20. In conversation with Abrahams, La Guma mentioned that:
- As I informed you before, I tried to draw pictures of the coloured people in my earlier books. Having dealt with them to a certain extent, I then turned to other scenes in our society. I started in In the Fog of the Season's [sic] End where we not only have coloured people but the rest of the society comes into the picture. In Time of the Butcherbird I discuss the various communities in the country and their relationship (1985:116-117).
21. By the time Murile returns, Opperman has died of natural causes.
22. In 'African Culture and National Liberation', La Guma points to the role of the masses in the struggle for freedom. He says that 'the strength and vitality of the revolution is derived from the awakened creative energy of the masses and their aspiration for a new life, enlightenment and culture'. Moreover, he reasons, 'real progress cannot be decreed from above', since 'living creative progress is the product of the masses themselves'. We must, he concludes, 'raise the lowest sections of the population to the state of making history' (1973:58).
23. Mphahlele offers a similar insight in an essay entitled 'South African Literature vs the Political Morality', when he says that La Guma 'documents the setting in all its sordid and oppressive detail to show how human character can be held hostage, ravaged, or even exiled, by the political and economic structures determined by a ruling class' (1983:9).
24. La Guma considered that the progress and success of the liberation struggle depended on the establishment of specific goals. This view is explained in 'Culture and Liberation':

Other things apart, this [success] depends also on whether the liberation movement establishes the precise objectives to be achieved on the way to regaining the right[s] of the people it presents and whom it is assisting to make its own history, to control freely the disposal of its productive forces, with an end to the eventual development of a richer culture -- popular, scientific and universal (1979a:35).

25. The theme of the conference was 'The Writer in African Society, Individuality and Social Comment'.

26. Brutus makes a comparable remark when he notes that La Guma's 'dedication to the struggle for freedom and justice in South Africa made him blunt in his opposition to racism or oppression and forthright in his commitment to a free South Africa'. Brutus believes that La Guma also 'put his talent as he put his life, at the service of the struggle for freedom in South Africa' (Abrahams ed. 1991:5).

CHAPTER THREE

DENNIS BRUTUS: POET AND PATRIOT

A fervent desire to inform the international community about conditions in South Africa motivated Brutus, a poet and human rights activist, to travel to Baden-Baden in 1963. His mission was to address the International Olympic Committee in an effort to have South Africa excluded from the Olympic Games. He did not suspect that it was going to be an eventful endeavour. Before he was able to leave the country he was arrested and then released on bail pending trial. Undeterred, Brutus decided to leave South Africa via Swaziland and then Mozambique. Since he had a Rhodesian passport this seemed completely feasible; however, he had dramatically miscalculated the resourcefulness of the secret police, as he explained to E. Ethelbert Miller in 'An Interview With Dennis Brutus':

From Swaziland I went to Mozambique; that was a big mistake. When I got there the Portuguese Secret Police were waiting for me. They arrested me, and turned me over to the South African Secret Police who took me to Johannesburg in a car. When I got out of the car with my baggage, I just put my bags down on the sidewalk and took off. It was 5 o'clock in the afternoon and the street was crowded. I didn't think they would shoot me; I was wrong. They shot me at close range in the back. It was close enough to go right through my body, penetrating my gut, my stomach. They never had to take the bullet out because there was no bullet; it just went clear through me. I was taken to a hospital and finally sentenced to prison and now had an extra crime because I had escaped from the police (1975:45).

This sequence of events is significant. It highlights the brutality of the South African government, which imprisoned Brutus on Robben Island shortly after he was injured. It also demonstrates Brutus's courage and his persistent defiance of the system of apartheid, an issue I intend to draw attention to throughout the chapter. In his writing, Brutus provides the reader with a great deal of information about life in prison and I propose to use the volume of poems, Letters to Martha, to demonstrate this point.¹ In addition, I shall refer, where necessary, to a selection of Brutus's poetry from other volumes, as well as to other contemporary political prison-writing; and, in order to consider the relationship between Brutus's work and the concept of power, I shall refer to Foucault. I shall also examine the way in which Robben Island affected Brutus as a person and a poet, and show that, while his management of the prison experience changed over the years,² the image of prison continues to permeate his poetry. In conclusion, in order to show the nature of the relationship between his politics and his literature, and to illustrate his consistent desire to educate the reader about South Africa, I intend to explore how he managed to combine the roles of teacher, poet and activist. Brutus's prison experience, however, cannot be discussed in isolation and must be evaluated in terms of the years that preceded and those that followed his imprisonment.

Brutus was born in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe), in 1924. His parents returned to South Africa shortly after his birth and he grew up in the coloured township of Dowerville, Port Elizabeth, a modest community of about one hundred homes. Although economically deprived, his parents were

extremely house-proud, as he recalls in an essay entitled 'Childhood Reminiscences', and 'they too tried, in their small house, in discomfort and with a constant battle against penury, to be genteel' (1968:94). In the same essay, Brutus notes with affection that Dowerville was home to a collection of fascinating people:

There was gentle Ben Jeptha, a pillar of our small community and a leading figure at the small school-cum-church which served most of the people in Dowerville. And big Bill Johnson, the American negro boxer and sailor who had settled with his coloured wife - they owned the first gramophone I ever saw, one of those enormous horn-things; years later, when I first heard the hoarse gritty voice of Ma Rainey - mother of the blues - it was the image of Jim Johnson's huge horn-trumpet she evoked. And there was Nurse Courtiers, who had the only telephone in the area, and Mr Ruiters, who was a special person because he was the principal of the school. There were also the black sheep in our community - women whose lives, I gathered vaguely, were only to be talked about in undertones, and not in the presence of the children, and drunken Pappiegaan, who rolled up the street at the weekends, and his no-good son Harry, who popped in and out of reformatories (1968:93-94).

Brutus's parents were school teachers and his mother was prominent in church activities. She stimulated his interest in English literature by encouraging him to read and to recite poetry, most notably the work of Wordsworth and Tennyson. His father, however, as Brutus remembers, was aloof:

In my childhood years, I remember him as a stern and a brilliant man, surrounded with books and papers and much preoccupied with his work. We saw little of him, and when he spoke to me, it was because he had to scold me or to inquire with amused contempt what I had been up to lately (1968:94).

Growing up, Brutus did not attend school on a regular basis. A nose injury which led to spontaneous and incessant nose-bleeds kept him at home, where he spent a great deal of time reading newspapers and magazines. This life-style did not restrict him from pursuing his passion for football and cricket, although the playground in Dowerville was more hazardous than expected, as he reveals in the following poem:

It was a sherded [sic] world I entered:
of broken bottles, rusty tins and split roof tiles:
the littered earth was full of menace
with jagged edges waiting the naked feet:
holes, trenches, ditches were scattered traps
and the broken land in wastepLOTS our playing field:
this was the world through which I learnt the world
and this the image for my vision of the world
(1978b:31).

From time to time Brutus managed to attend a primary school run by nuns and then at the age of fifteen he entered junior high school. He received a City Council bursary which allowed him to continue his studies at Fort Hare and he graduated in 1947, achieving a Bachelor's degree with a distinction in English. He joined the social services at the request of the Bureau of Coloured Affairs and started teaching in 1948. In no time he became disillusioned with a system of education which he considered second-class and was appalled by the ideas he was expected to endorse:

I was told I had to teach black kids they were inferior. I was told "they don't need to know European or American history because they're never going to get there - its none of their business." I refused to accept this....I would answer any question they asked, including questions about the political system, and

whether or not they were inferior. So it was inevitable that I was served with an order which made it a crime for me to teach (Miller 1975:44).

Brutus's comments in this quotation may be related to the concept of exclusion which I referred to in Chapter One. As head of the school's sporting activities, Brutus observed a system of segregation similarly allied with the idea of inferiority. In an article entitled 'Sports Test for South Africa', Brutus argues that 'sport in South Africa means "white sport"' and 'selection on merit - the fundamental of sport - is meaningless...except in relation to the 3 million White South Africans'. Since non-whites are never 'considered for a national team, no matter what [their] ability or how clearly [they] merit[s] selection', South African sport, Brutus concludes 'is a fraud' (1959:35).³ In response to these practices, Brutus founded the South African Sports Association in 1958 with Alan Paton as patron. Brutus's aim was to draw attention to racism and to the exercise of governmental power in South African sport. He desired especially to arouse the interest of the International Olympic Committee, whose charter calls for no discrimination.

Brutus's opposition to government policy did not go unnoticed and in 1961 he was dismissed from his teaching job and forbidden to write and to publish. He was banned from taking part in any meeting with more than two people and from joining any sporting organizations. Despite these restrictions, Brutus remained defiant and, although confined to Johannesburg, he invented reasons that allowed him to travel. He elaborates on this strategy in Palaver: Interviews With Five African Writers in Texas:

...for the hell of it, I used to think up excuses for having to travel. I would persuade my wife to find a pretext (she was about 700 miles away from me); I would smuggle a note down to her and back would come a telegram, "Baby seriously ill," or something like that. I would have to go to court, and there would be a legal process by which the banning order...would be set aside for twenty-four hours or forty-eight hours....I liked those trips because I was doing what they were telling me I couldn't do. I was defying their orders and actually conducting underground political activity at the same time (Lindfors, Munro, Priebe and Sander eds 1972:27).

In a further gesture of disobedience, Brutus wrote under an assumed name and enrolled at the University of the Witwatersrand for a law degree. He also managed to get a job with a private school in Vrededorp, a place that he describes in one of his poems:

Through jagged streets in Vrededorp
under the papery pre-dawn moon,
past peeling houses, roachey shops,
obscenely hoarse tubercular rooms,
clutching your keep-sake fragment's gold
"Endure, Endure"! I cried aloud (1975b:2).

In 1962 he secretly assumed the role of secretary for the newly formed South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee and in 1963 he embarked on his notorious trip to Baden-Baden which ultimately led to the imprisonment on Robben Island.⁴

Brutus's first collection of published poems, Sirens, Knuckles, Boots,⁵ appeared while he was serving this prison term. The volume did not go unnoticed by the authorities:

...the book came out while I was in prison and I was in fact interrogated about it and a further charge would have been brought against me, except that I quite honestly couldn't remember the date at which I had sent

these poems off. And if they could have fixed a date I think I would have been prosecuted (Duerden and Pieterse eds 1978:57-58).

Ever resolute, Brutus did not allow this harassment to subdue his creativity and even in prison he continued to write poems, including a few on scraps of toilet paper, which were later included in the volume, Letters to Martha. His finding the means to do so is similar to the resourcefulness of other prison writers, as Nkrumah reveals in Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah: 'There was', Nkrumah affirmed, 'only one way' to 'keep in touch with the Party outside those whitewashed walls - by writing'. His entire 'life then centred around the problem of how to get hold of a pencil and a supply of paper....The paper looked like being a major problem until [he] suddenly saw the answer staring [him] in the face. Each day [prisoners] were given a few sheets of toilet paper' (1989:128).

Brutus was released in 1965 and like La Guma was immediately issued with a further banning order, which again restricted his movement, this time for a five-year period. The ban also hindered his involvement in any community, sport or political activity and his ability to write and to publish. He did, however, continue to write poetry, clandestinely,⁶ which he considered a form of protest, as he points out in 'Protest Against Apartheid':

I think one may say in all seriousness that to write at all once you are banned from writing - and it doesn't matter whether you write well or badly - constitutes a form of protest against apartheid in South Africa. The consequences of this are perhaps even more serious in that they extend beyond the particular person. It means that a large number of articulate people who

could write, who would have things to communicate, are cut off from the community. They may not speak to it, address it, or express their thoughts. It works the other way as well. Not only may they not speak, but those who want to listen cannot listen - it cuts both ways (1969:94).

Clearly affected by the restrictions and yet determined to remain defiant, Brutus was faced with a difficult decision. Married with eight children, it became impossible for him to support his family and in 1966 he received a one-way exit visa which allowed him to leave, but never to return to South Africa. The emotion of the journey is captured in the final stanza of a poem written in flight:

Peace will come.
We have the power
the hope
the resolution.
Men will go home (1989:96).

Brutus's determination and his belief in the ultimate victory of the struggle for liberation are similar to La Guma's. Undefeated even in exile, Brutus remained active in his efforts to have South Africa excluded from the Olympic Games, which he managed to achieve. Initially he lived in London and, since he had been one of the first prisoners to be released from Robben Island, he assumed an active role in the campaign to inform the international community about prison conditions. While thus employed, he worked as Director of the World Campaign for the Release of South African Political Prisoners. He appeared before the United Nations and the Red Cross and held numerous press and television conferences in order to draw attention to the situation on Robben Island.

In 1968 he published Letters to Martha, which also includes poems written after his release from prison. In 'Poetry of Suffering: The Black Experience', he indicates that some of them, as mentioned above, 'were written in prison on toilet paper, or after coming out of prison. Some of them were found in prison, and when they were, they were destroyed. And so they were reproduced subsequently' (1973:5). In African Writers Talking, Brutus explains that because of his banning order, it was 'illegal to write poetry, but it was legal to write letters'. Thus, his poetry 'had to be in the form of letters...to people'; hence the title of the volume, which refers to Brutus's correspondence with his sister-in-law, Martha, during his brother, Wilfred's, internment (Duerden and Pieterse eds 1978:58). A year later Brutus published a small volume called The Denver Poems and accepted a teaching position at the University of Denver. The University of Texas published his Poems From Algiers in the same year, which includes several poems dealing with the dislocation of life in exile.⁷ The opening poem 'And I am Driftwood' captures this sense of alienation:

And I am driftwood
on an Algerian beach
along a Mediterranean shore

And I am driftwood.

Others may loll in their carnal pool
washed by tides of sensual content
in variable flow, by regulated plan

but I am driftwood...(1972:5).

Always eager to defy the South African authorities, Brutus even managed to produce a volume, Thoughts Abroad, which was

available in South Africa. The book, written under the pseudonym John Bruin, appeared in 1970. The following year Brutus moved to Northwestern University in Illinois to teach literature with a special emphasis on African writing and proceeded to launch the International Campaign Against Racism in Sport, which was partly responsible for the banning of the Rhodesian team from the 1976 Olympics. The collection of poems entitled A Simple Lust, which appeared in 1973, describes life in prison and in exile. This was followed in 1975 by China Poems, which was written during a stay in the People's Republic of China. These poems deal with general subjects like nature and age and they are marked by a departure in form. Not more than a few lines, the poems are influenced by the Japanese haiku and the Chinese chueh chu, as the following example, included in Stubborn Hope, illustrates:

A fern
can seize the artist
with its beauty (1978b:77).

In the same year, he published the volume, Strains, which included a collection of verse written in the early 1960s in South Africa, as well as more contemporary verse composed over many years and spanning a variety of cities and places.

During the 1976 Montreal Olympic games, Brutus campaigned for the exclusion of New Zealand, citing that nation's continued sporting relationship with South Africa. As a result of his efforts, most of the African nations withdrew from the games. It is interesting to note that his continued determination to prevent discrimination in sport is presented in his poetry as well, reinforcing the relationship between his politics and his literature:

The New York Times reports they say they are hurt;
the telex carries news of an Australian decision;
in dorpies and plains in the Free State
the rugby-players writhe, running their hands
over the bruises of defeat in Britain,
West German friends renounce their neo-nazi posture,
a truncated tour mocks them with uncertainties
- everywhere the sportsmen draw in their robes
and withdraw, fearful of contamination,
while the foul ichor oozes from their wounds -
Indeed I flog fresh lashes across these thieves!
And they bleed.....[sic] (1978b:42).

This poem appeared in the volume, Stubborn Hope, published in 1978.

With the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, Brutus was placed in an awkward position and again faced deportation, although this time from the United States. Born in Zimbabwe and in possession of a British passport and an American visa, he was told to surrender his passport and obtain a new one from the Zimbabwe consulate. In the interim, his United States visa had expired and he was ordered to leave the country.⁸ Legal proceedings ensued and continued throughout 1981 and 1982 until he was finally given permission to remain in America. The strain and the financial burden were exhausting, as he explains in 'Shall I be Deported from the USA?':

I have this tremendous demand on my time: the litigation, the fight to stay in the United States and not to be deported. And this in turn has run up an enormous legal bill. I have to do additional speaking engagements just to raise money to pay legal expenses. So I have less time than ever and it makes it difficult to write (1983:16).

Despite these time-constraints, Brutus produced a volume entitled Salutes and Censures in 1984. He was also the recipient of the

Langston Hughes and Paul Robeson awards, both instituted by important African-American civil-rights activists and artists.

Brutus's interest in writing and teaching continues today. He has held the position of Professor of Black Literature in the Department of Black Community Education Research and Development at the University of Pittsburgh and spent eight weeks teaching at Oxford University in 1990. He was finally allowed to return to South Africa in 1991, after an absence of twenty-five years, giving his first poetry-reading under the auspices of the Congress of South African Writers and taking part in the New Nation Writers' Conference. The following year he assumed a visiting lectureship at the University of Durban-Westville. He published Still the Sirens in 1993 and currently resides in the United States.

From this narrative it is evident that Brutus has managed to combine the roles of teacher, poet and activist, a point that I shall return to in due course. Similarly, his protest against the South African government was constant and determined, a response that he explained at the 1967 African-Scandinavian Writers' Conference:

...I cannot claim any credit for gun-running. I have not in fact carried any guns. The nearest I have got to carrying guns was to let other people fire their bullets into my body. I do not know if this can qualify as gun-running. In fact my point is that this is irrelevant, it does not matter. I mention it in passing. I am not concerned with how a man expresses his involvement; I am desperately concerned that he should. He must express his concern with human beings, not as a human being but also as a writer...(Wästberg ed. 1968:49-50).⁹

To 'express his concern' and in order to draw attention to conditions in South Africa, Brutus, as previously mentioned, wrote about his prison experience, my next point for consideration.

It is necessary when discussing Brutus's imprisonment to describe both what he encountered when he reached Robben Island in 1964 and his response to the situation. Located ten kilometres off the coast of Cape Town, Robben Island was a maximum-security prison for black males. Mandela, Sisulu and Govan Mbeki were among those interned on the Island. Prisoners suffered at the hands of their white warders, who subjected them to frequent acts of physical brutality and psychological persecution. Despite the cold, wet climate of Robben Island, inmates received few items of clothing and were expected, moreover, to exist on a sparse diet even though they worked long hours. In Schadeberg's compilation, Voices From Robben Island, Mbeki elaborates not only on the prisoners' diet but on the way in which apartheid operated in prison:

African prisoners were put on the F diet scale which meant mealie pap in the morning with a little bit of sugar, boiled mealies at lunch, and in the evening it was back to mealie pap, but without sugar. Three times a week we got some meat. The D diets were for the coloured and Indian prisoners. They also had mealie pap in the morning but with milk, sugar and a mug of coffee. And for lunch they had mealie rice with fat in it, and bread in the evening....and it was smeared with dripping. We had no bread (1994:29).¹⁰

When Brutus arrived on Robben Island he was in no condition to endure these harsh measures, since he was still recovering from bullet wounds, as Naidoo recounts in Island in Chains:

A day or two after my admission, about two hours after being locked up for the night, the door opened and I saw a pale body come flying on to the floor of the hospital cell. When the doors were relocked I ran to the body and recognized my comrade Dennis Brutus lying there semi-conscious....[and] in tremendous pain....His whole back was red and blue and there was a deep gash right across his stomach. Although there were no marks on his head, his face was contorted with pain and he could hardly speak, just mumble; one of our comrades offered his bed and we made it up and carried him to it (1982:103).¹¹

The journey to the Island had not been easy. Brutus was chained with sixty other prisoners and transported by truck from prison in Johannesburg to Cape Town. The arduous trip was punctuated with a stop in Colesberg, where the prisoners were fed, as Brutus recalls in the following lines:

Cold

the clammy cement
sucks our naked feet

a rheumy yellow bulb
lights a damp grey wall

the stubbled grass
wet with three o'clock dew
is black with glittery edges;

we sit on the concrete,
stuff with our fingers
the sugarless pap
into our mouths

then labour erect;

form lines...(48).

In this extract from a poem in Letters to Martha, the sense of chill is intensified by the suggestion that the concrete floor is capable of sucking the last remnant of warmth out of the body. The picture is one of bleak desolation, where the grass is 'stubbled', as sterile as the 'cement' of the man-made structures, and is comparable to La Guma's description of the Roeland Street prison as 'a lunar barrenness of stone' (1991:18). Brutus uses similar imagery to depict the hostility of the environment on Robben Island:

Cement-grey floors and walls
cement-grey days
cement-grey time
and a grey susurrations
as of seas breaking
winds blowing
and rains drizzling...(38).

In this poem, the clash of the elements against the 'cement-grey' structure emphasizes the harshness of the setting; and the boring routine of prison existence, suggested by the words 'cement-grey days' and 'cement-grey time', reinforces the impression of the futility of his situation. Brutus notes that, despite these conditions, the most precarious element about life on Robben Island was the relationship between political and non-political prisoners:

When we got to the Island in 1964 -- I'm told things have improved somewhat since then -- when we got there, there were one thousand and one hundred political prisoners, and there were two hundred prisoners who were serving life for various criminal acts -- multiple murders, perversions, indeterminate sentences for an unending series of house-breakings, burglaries, assault and offences. These two hundred prisoners were put in charge of the political prisoners. It was their job to

discipline us, feed us, take us to work, see that we worked hard (1973:7).

Zwelonke, in Robben Island, provides a specific example of the way in which non-political prisoners, directed by a white warder, treated the political prisoners:

Mr Mlambo...was made to dig a pit big enough to fit him. Unaware of what was to follow, he was still digging on when he was suddenly overwhelmed by a group of convicts. They shoved him into the pit and started filling it up. He struggled to climb out, but they held him fast. When they had finished, only Mlambo's head appeared above the ground. A white warder, who had directed the whole business, urinated into Mlambo's mouth....When the warder had finished, his face was covered with piss. Then vicious blows of fists and boots rained around the defenceless head sticking out of the ground. Some grazed it, some softer blows landed and some savage ones did not....He did not cry out or speak. When they were tired of the fun, they left him to help himself out of his grave (1989:14).

Non-political prisoners routinely used violence in order also to control and intimidate which, as seen in my discussion on Foucault, exposed political prisoners, at times, to an even more threatening environment. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault explains that these conditions were deliberately created in order to 'give free rein to some' and to put 'pressure on others'. Thus, by 'excluding a particular section' not only from society but from other prisoners as well, and by 'making another [section] useful', it was possible to 'neutralize' certain individuals and to 'profit' from others (1995:272). To his dismay, Brutus discovered that, in an environment designed to pit one prisoner against another, ordinary objects were used by

prison gangs as deadly weapons. This is demonstrated in poem 2:¹²

One learns quite soon
that nails and screws
and other sizeable bits of metal
must be handed in;

and seeing them shaped and sharpened
one is chilled, appalled
to see how vicious it can be
- this simple, useful bit of steel...(3).

Fear is coupled with humiliation when, in the next stanza, Brutus describes a practice that was standard procedure in prison. Known as the 'tauza' or 'thawusa', it involves the searching of body parts in order to check for hidden weapons. This is also mentioned by Dingake:

Leeuwkop was also notorious for filthy body searches. On admission prisoners were thoroughly searched - stripped naked and forced to thawusa - an acrobatic dance that exposed the rectum. Even after the thawusa warders' gloved fingers poked into the rectum to ensure that no cash, dangerous weapons or any contraband was concealed deeper down this most private organ... (1987:136).

There are two sources of violence that multiply the danger for the prisoners: one from the searchers and the other from those who hide the weapons. Brutus captures this sense of menace through his contrasting the sharpness of the weapons with the softness of the flesh:

and when these knives suddenly flash
- produced perhaps from some disciplined anus -
one grasps at once the steel-bright horror
in the morning air
and how soft and vulnerable is naked flesh (3).

The ferocious use of weapons becomes a reality in the next poem:

Suddenly one is tangled
in a mesh of possibilities:
notions cobweb around your head,
tendrils sprout from your guts in a hundred
directions:

why did this man stab this man for that man?
what was the nature of the emotion
and how did it grow?
was this the reason for a warder's unmotivated
senseless brutality?
by what shrewdness was it instigated...(4).

'Tangled', 'mesh' and 'cobweb' suggest entrapment, while the rhetorical questions in the second stanza reinforce the idea of Brutus's confusion about the motivation for such 'senseless brutality'. Remorseless violence is an issue frequently contemplated by other writers about life in prison. As shown in Chapter Two, La Guma, in The Stone Country, recounts several instances of gang violence. Dlamini implies that savage outbursts by such groups are often spontaneous rather than premeditated, which is a departure from Foucault's claim about the maintenance of organized control by other prisoners:

When we returned to prison, we went for tauza as usual. One member of the Big Fives was standing naked in front and was about to hand over his clothes to a warder when suddenly someone from nowhere produced a crude instrument and stabbed him on the shoulder.¹³ Blood spurted out. There was another thrust and yet another in quick succession. At first there was confusion as prisoners, including warders panicked and scampered about. Later on the warders regrouped and charged at the assailant. Just then another convict produced a knife and plunged it into the neck of another Big Fives member. Screaming, the man went to

fall near where the warders were still assaulting the first assailant. The second assailant was also grabbed by the warders and pummelled (nd.:110).

The cruelty of the captors and the violence of the prisoners is highlighted by Brutus who, in the final stanza of the poem under discussion, provides a series of hypothetical questions and answers concerning prison brutality:

desire for prestige or lust for power?
Or can it - strange, most strange! - be love,
 strange love?
And from what human hunger was it born? (4).

Homosexuality and Brutus's attitude to it are explained in the words 'strange love', which he views as an inevitable consequence of the prison system. Indeed, Foucault asserts, in Discipline and Punish, that one of the 'ways of exercising power over men' is by 'controlling their relations' (1995:198); and, while Brutus is concerned with the connection between homosexuality and power, he is particularly alarmed by the way in which homosexuality is used by both warders and non-political prisoners as a powerful means of humiliating the political prisoners.¹⁴ He expresses his distress also in the following words from 'Poetry of Suffering: The Black Experience': 'perhaps the most horrifying was the fact that the warders would use these criminal prisoners for sexual assault on the political prisoners. It was seen as a way of breaking their morale' (1973:7). In the same work, Brutus continues to voice his disapproval of enforced homosexuality in prison and gives the reasons for his reaction:

...my disapproval is not based so much on the act, but on the use of the act as a deliberate technique for destroying a man's own self-regard and identity, his own morale....what is striking is that first they would

starve a prisoner into submission. His food would be withheld. If he declined to submit, he would be beaten into submission. When he had reached the point of consenting, then he would be left alone. No food, no water -- though still an occasional beating. They would drive him to the point where in desperation he was begging for sexual assault. Because this was the kind of price they would exact from him, and he understood that there would be no food and no water until he had consented (1973:7).

As described here, the act of sexual assault is paradoxical: it is resisted and wanted at the same time, as revealed in poem 7:

Perhaps most terrible are those who beg for it,
who beg for sexual assault.

To what desperate limits are they driven
and what fierce agonies they have endured
that this, which they have resisted,
should seem to them preferable,
even desirable...(8).

There is no perverse pleasure in the sexual act, only a feeling of desperation. Through the use of the words 'endured' and 'resisted', Brutus creates a counterpoint between such suffering and defiance. Prison is clearly a world with different values and expectations, forced homosexuality being one of them, as the closing stanzas demonstrate:

It is regarded as the depths
of absolute and ludicrous submission.
And so perhaps it is.

But it has seemed to me
one of the most terrible
most rendingly pathetic
of all a prisoner's predicaments (8).

Not surprisingly, Brutus returns on many occasions to the theme of sexual assault and in poem 15 again mentions the dehumanizing effects of imposed copulation:

Extrapolation
is the essential secret of our nature
- or so one may call it:

the capacity
to ennoble
or pervert
what is otherwise
simply animal
amoral and instinctual

and it is this that argues for us
a more than animal destiny
and gives us the potential
for the diabolic
or divinity (16).

The use of alliteration in 'animal' and 'amoral', in 'divinity' and 'diabolic', underlines the relationship between man and animal and emphasizes the former's potential for heaven or for hell. Poem 6 has also suggested this potential:

Two men I knew specifically
among many cases:
their reactions were enormously different
but a tense thought lay at the bottom of each
and for both there was danger and fear and pain -
drama.

One simply gave up smoking
knowing he could be bribed
and hedged his mind with romantic fantasies
of beautiful marriageable daughters;

the other sought escape
in fainting fits and asthmas

and finally fled into insanity:

so great the pressures to enforce sodomy (7).

For some prisoners, the psychological effects of what they see as the distortion of the sexual act are as distressing as are the use of force and intimidation to maintain control. Equally disturbing is the humiliation that results when sexual favours can no longer be relied on to provide personal benefit. Poem 8 illustrates this point:

"Blue champagne" they called him
- the most popular "girl" in the place;
so exciting perhaps, or satisfying:
young certainly, with youthful curves
- this was most highly prized.

And so he would sleep with several
each night
and the song once popular on the hit-parade
became his nickname.

By the time I saw him he was older
(George saw the evil in his face, he said)
and he had become that most perverse among
the perverted:

a "man" in the homosexual embrace
who once had been the "woman" (9).

In this progression from man to 'girl' to man again, the role reversal and loss of looks is presented by Brutus as a movement from youth and popularity to old age and degeneration. Innocence becomes 'perverse' experience, with a negative rather than a positive aspect. It is notable that, in And Night Fell, Pheto also talks about homosexuality but suggests that, while homosexual prostitution is a response to conditions set up to

humiliate and forcefully subdue the prisoners, it is often a means of security. In describing his detention in The Fort, formerly a prison in Johannesburg, he says:

It is here that the toughest, most notorious ghetto gangsters are held, and where several gang murders have occurred; here that some prisoners become "mistresses" of the feared long-timers and others who have survived through their brute strength. Sometimes, if not always, men become mistresses of others for protection (1985:178).

Like sex, even religion becomes a commodity in prison and is used as a bartering tool, as this excerpt from poem 4 displays:

Particularly in a single cell,
but even in the sections
the religious sense asserts itself;

perhaps a childhood habit of nightly prayers
the accessibility of Bibles,
or awareness of the proximity of death:

and, of course, it is a currency -
pietistic expressions can purchase favours
and it is a way of suggesting reformation
(which can procure promotion)...(5).

As evidenced in many prison-writings, the Bible is frequently the only reading material available, so the prisoner, to fill in time, often turns to studying it. Religion, however, has different meanings for different people and the words 'purchase favours' and 'procure promotion' suggest that religion, like love, can be misused and lend itself to forms of deceit. Moreover, bartering is advantageous to both prisoners and warders, a mutually beneficial relationship that may be understood in terms of what Foucault calls a 'useful delinquency' (1995:280). In Discipline and Punish, he maintains that, if

'illegal practices' are supervised, it is possible to extract from them 'an illicit profit through elements, themselves illegal, but rendered manipulable by their organization in delinquency. This organization', Foucault concludes, is a device for managing and 'exploiting illegalities' (1995:280).

Bartering, enforced homosexuality and gang violence are, as seen, components of prison life that disturb Brutus, and yet the suffering and pain that his family must endure are equally traumatic. In fact, Foucault indicates in Discipline and Punish that the dislocation of the family unit is one of the tactics used by authorities in the creation of delinquency. He explains that 'the inmate's family' is thrown 'into destitution', when the head of the family is sent to prison. In addition, children are reduced 'to abandonment, the whole family to vagabondage' (1995:268). While Brutus, in the ninth poem, does not refer to his family in terms of destitution, he reflects on their sense of loss, on the way in which those outside must also suffer. Since little or no information is released from prison, the family must struggle to survive, must often remain ignorant of what the prisoner is experiencing:

The not-knowing
is perhaps the worst part of the agony
for those outside;

not knowing what cruelties must be endured
what indignities the sensitive spirit must face
what wounds the mind can be made to inflict on itself;

and the hunger to be thought of
to be remembered
and to reach across space
with filaments of tenderness
and consolation....(10)

Brutus uses the term 'hunger' to describe both an emotional and a physical need on the part of the prisoner and his family. Both parties must cope psychologically with the dissolution of the family unit; there is a need to be remembered and a desire to cross the divide in order to provide some sense of comfort and security in precarious times. Even the smallest piece of information is reassuring:

And knowledge,
even when it is knowledge of ugliness
seems to be preferable,
can be better endured.

And so,
for your consolation
I send these fragments,
random pebbles I pick up
from the landscape of my own experience,
traversing the same arid wastes
in a montage of glimpses
I allow myself
or stumble across (10).

Thoughts are randomly collected and carefully presented by Brutus to surmount the prison regulations and, more especially the censorship of letters, and there is also an impression that he is selective in order to spare the family pain. The snippets of information that Brutus does share are compared to 'pebbles' and his experience becomes the 'landscape' of reference. 'Arid wastes' is a disturbing image, reinforcing his depiction of Robben Island as a wasteland.

The responsibility a prisoner feels for his loved ones is articulated in several prison accounts, as demonstrated by Koigi wa Wamwere in Conscience on Trial:

How is everybody at home?...It is terribly painful thinking about it all. I know our entire family must have been acutely agonized by my detention....and therefore...sorrow stricken....detention is by no means death. Neither is it the worst of things that could happen to a family....It is imperative now that all of us be able to go through this ordeal in one piece (1988:36).

In his letter, written during detention as a political prisoner in Kenya, wa Wamwere shows the depth of familial concern that, as a rule, never leaves a prisoner. Cut off from the outside, the only contact is with inmates and warders. Brutus reveals, however, that there are occasions when even this precarious relationship can be constructive. In the tenth poem, he concludes that:

It is not all terror
and deprivation,
you know;

one comes to welcome the closer contact
and understanding one achieves
with one's fellow-men,
fellows, compeers;

and the discipline does much to force
a shape and pattern on one's daily life
as well as on the days

and honest toil
offers some redeeming hours
for the wasted years;

so there are times
when the mind is bright and restful
though alive:
rather like the full calm morning sea (11).

Brutus uses phrases such as 'bright and restful' and 'calm morning sea' to reinforce the idea that there are positive aspects to prison life. This is in sharp contrast to the brutality and the sexual behaviour he depicts elsewhere. He 'welcome[s] the closer contact' and suggests that an understanding and fellowship between inmates is possible and that discipline and routine give structure to everyday existence.¹⁵ 'Shape' and 'pattern' are positive words and the work the prisoners must do, although backbreaking, is described as 'honest toil' that gives the individual a sense of accomplishment.

This is an interesting departure from the sentiments expressed by Brutus in 'Poetry of Suffering: The Black Experience', where he mentions the futility of prison labour:

It's a very dull kind of occupation. If one were only breaking stones, I guess that would be bad enough. You were given a wheelbarrow load of stones every morning at about seven and you were required to reduce it to gravel before the sun went down. If you failed to do that, you got no food, not that day and not the next day. So it was quite important for you to reduce the stones to gravel. And when you were done, at the end of the day, the gravel was scattered along the roadway. There was really no use for it, and it was done in a sense to remind you how futile your work was... (1973:5).

Routine and discipline afford the prisoner a sense of control over his existence and, thus, some small measure power; and the contrast between the positive and the negative qualities of prison life, and the need to find a redeeming aspect in its monotony, are features that surface in many prison writings. Sachs talks at length about how he partitioned his day in order to guard against boredom and how the prolonging of simple

activities provided him with hours of stimulation (1990:53); and Fikile Bam,¹⁶ in Mzamane's "'Robben Island": Our University', maintains that he used his time in prison as an opportunity to communicate with the most vital group of people he had ever met:

By and large, taking the whole experience, it is one of having a sense of inner victory within me. Prison is a waste of time; ten years is a waste of time of our life. But, at the same time, it's the sort of experience which I don't feel that I regret having gone through, especially for the good company one actually had in prison. I've never again had such a group of people around me with whom you could communicate in so meaningful a way (1989:97).

Brutus was also affected by the people he met in prison which, perhaps, made the ordeal more manageable and certainly contributed to his constant protests against the South African government. He mentions men like Mandela and Sisulu in many of his poems, and in 'Robben Island', for example, he recalls:

In a long shot down the rectangular enclosure
stone-walled, with barred windows I find myself
anonymous
among the other faceless prisoners

I see myself again bent on my stone block
crouched over my rockpile
and marvel

I see the men beside me
Peake and Alexander
Mandela and Sisulu
and marvel...(1984:38).¹⁷

In the poem 'Yes Mandela', included in Staffrider, Brutus writes of Mandela's fortitude:¹⁸

in the salt island air

you swung your hammer, grimly, stoic
facing the dim path of interminable years...(1991:11).

Brutus reminds the reader that these and other courageous men have suffered greatly, and that knowledge of them must be promoted and memories fostered. This last point is again raised in a poem from A Simple Lust:

And remember
the men on the island
on strips of matting
on the cold floor
between cold walls
and the long endless night (1989:126).

It is noteworthy that, as in these lines, when Brutus remembers Robben Island he emphasizes 'the long endless night[s]' and the bleak desolation, as suggested in the repetition of the word 'cold'. Clearly, he reinforces here, and elsewhere, the negative rather than the positive aspects of prison existence. This highlights the psychological trauma he suffered, which I shall now discuss.

The prospect of spending countless days behind bars is an early source of Brutus's disturbance. Not surprisingly, poem 1 illustrates his anxiety:¹⁹

After the sentence
mingled feelings:
sick relief,
the load of the approaching days
apprehension -
the hints of brutality
have a depth of personal meaning...(2).

Once convicted, the sense of relief is complicated by the uncertainty of the future. Brutus chooses the words 'mingled', 'sick' and 'load' to reinforce his impression of the complexity

and the burden of his situation. In contrast, however, the second stanza is unexpectedly affirmative:

exultation -
the sense of challenge,
of confrontation,
vague heroism
mixed with self-pity
and tempered by the knowledge of those
who endure much more
and endure...[sic] (2).

Strangely, the first word of this stanza creates an atmosphere of celebration and the ensuing lines reveal how the ordeal becomes more manageable when Brutus weighs feelings of self-pity against the knowledge that there are others who have persevered, an idea that is supported by the repetition of the word 'endure'. The need to overcome such comprehensible self-pity is addressed by other prison writers. First recalls her process of adjustment:

I embarked upon a campaign to accommodate myself to the prospect not of ninety days in a cell, but years. The sooner I got used to the idea, I decided, the more easily I would bear it. Once convicted I would be able to read, study, perhaps even write; at worst I could store experiences and impressions for the day I could write. I would struggle to erase self-pity (1982:57).

Brutus on many other occasions highlights the mental strain of imprisonment and several poems from Letters to Martha emphasize that the determination to survive offers a difficult challenge. However, to meet these challenges and to overcome hardship is an accomplishment that provides the prisoner with some sense of power, one of the positive aspects of the prison experience. In poem 16 Brutus concludes:

Quite early one reaches a stage
where one resolves to embrace

the status of prisoner
with all it entails,
savouring to the full its bitterness
and seeking to escape nothing:

"Mister,
this is prison;
just get used to the idea"

"You're a convict now."

Later one changes
tries the dodges,
seeks the easy outs.

But the acceptance
once made
deep down
remains (17).

As time passes, moreover, it is even possible to take advantage of the system, as Makhoere, a political prisoner who spent six years in several prisons, divulges in No Child's Play:

In prison, whether you smoke or not, if you have the opportunity of buying anything, buy cigarettes; it is the best bartering commodity. When the International Red Cross came, they gave us cigarettes and chocolates. We didn't tell them that we did not smoke, we just took them and put them in our rooms. We ate our chocolates and exchanged the cigarettes. There are prisoners who need them. We gave these men cigarettes, they gave us newspapers (1988:42-43).

While every prisoner, surely, 'tries the dodges' (17) and learns to outwit the authorities, Brutus, nevertheless, emphasizes that, to maintain his sanity, it was necessary to accept the predicament. In poem 13, he describes a way to come to terms with the experience:

"At daybreak for the isle,"

and
"look your last on all all things lovely,"
and
"So, for a beginning, I know
there is no beginning."

So one cushions the mind
with phrases
aphorisms and quotations
to blunt the impact
of this crushing blow.

So one grits to the burden
and resolves to doggedly endure
the outrages of prison.

Nothing of him doth change
but that doth suffer a seachange...[sic] (14).

Nonetheless, the implied sea journey from Cape Town to Robben Island is a journey from one set of circumstances to another, a tempestuous journey that will result in profound change and the trauma I am at present discussing. 'Impact' and 'blow', in the second stanza, suggest an external menace, a violence the prisoner must prepare for psychologically. As indicated earlier, Brutus was repeatedly subjected to harsh treatment and many of his poems focus on this aspect of his prison experience:

On torn ragged feet
trailing grimy bandages
with bare thin legs
I puttered around the prison yard awhile
while politicians learning of me gaped
wondering how they had managed to make of me
a thing
of bruises, rags, contempt and mockery.

In time things grew better (1978b:29).

Frail and weak, Brutus was ill-prepared for life on Robben Island and, when prison authorities decided to move him to solitary confinement, the experience had a significant effect on his sanity, as he points out in 'Dennis Brutus: An Interview'. At first, he 'was in a small cell that was supposed to accommodate thirty-five, but in fact 65. It was crowded', and he looked forward to the prospect of a transfer to solitary as a 'relief'. 'In fact, however, after a month or two [he] began to have hallucinations, and...attempted suicide, and...had to be hauled out of there' (Thompson 1983:73). Many political prison-writers have documented their suicide attempts. First, for instance, swallowed an entire phial of pills (1982:131), and Niehaus tried to hang himself:

Throughout that night I paced my cell....By early morning I was crazed with fear and lay on the cold concrete floor, naked, banging my head against the wall....Wearily...I tied a knot around the bars of the window and then made a loop around my neck. The rope jerked and pulled tight, a strong whistling sound echoed through my ears like that of the steam train at Zeerust. Darkness descended (1994:42).

Solitary confinement over a period of five months affected Brutus on many levels and it is clear that punishment and deprivation characterized this official exercise of power, which is in complete contrast to the objectives outlined by Foucault in Discipline and Punish. Foucault, for instance, notes that the purpose behind placing the prisoner in isolation was rehabilitation, not punishment. Thus, 'alone in his cell, the convict is handed over to himself; in the silence of his passions and of the world that surrounds him, he descends into his conscience, he questions it and feels awakening within him

the moral feeling that never entirely perishes in the heart of man' (1995:238).

Brutus is obviously not concerned with his conscience but, *inter alia*, with the fact that, during his period of isolation, the mental strain almost destroyed his confidence in his ability as a poet. While in 'solitary', he was able to 're-examine' his poetry, leading him to conclude that it was 'too elaborate'. As a result, he endeavoured to have it all destroyed; 'it seemed...so much of a show-off and self-display' that he was embarrassed by it (Thompson 1983:73). Poem 5 in Letters to Martha poignantly describes both this mental pressure and the personal struggle Brutus waged within himself during his period of confinement:

In the greyness of isolated time
which shafts down into the echoing mind,
wraiths appear, and whispers of horrors
that people the labyrinth of self.

Coprophilism; necrophilism; fellatio;
penis-amputation;
and in this gibbering society
hooting for recognition as one's other selves
suicide, self-damnation, walks
if not a companionable ghost
then a familiar familiar,

a doppelgänger
not to be shaken off (6).

Brutus creates, here, a nightmarish scene through the use of images that suggest ghouls and demons. The impression is intensified through the reference to sexual perversions like 'coprophilism', 'necrophilism' and 'fellatio'; and 'echoing',

'whispers', 'gibbering' and 'hooting' provide an accompanying auditory effect.

While it is clear that Brutus suffered physically and psychologically, many others withstood even greater hardships, and he mentions in the interview with William E. Thompson that some of the men from the resistance movement were 'beaten and tortured, some of them maimed for life':

I saw a professor of mathematics, a brilliant man, who sat all day in a corner of his cell on Robben Island, in a heap, like a sack of potatoes. His brain had been shocked so many times with electrodes that he was like a vegetable. He wasn't like a human being any more. But what puzzled me about them was that these people had the determination to continue the struggle (1983:76).

It is perhaps this image of the professor, mentally, emotionally and physically destroyed, that Brutus presents in a poem from Salutes and Censures:

Sometimes they squat on the floor
sometimes they crouch in corners
sometimes, like emptied sacks
they spread limply on the ground
and sometimes, in damp dark patches
they sit like mouldy vegetables:
they are the political prisoners
who nurse in their broken frames
the frail flame of humanity
while monsters growl to snuff it out:
it burns in these men and women
splendid and inquenchable
as the red miles of sunset (1984:36).

Despite their 'broken frames', Brutus marvels at the desire for life, which he describes as 'splendid and inquenchable'. The fortitude of these political prisoners inspires Brutus and eases

his mental strain. Imprisonment has not succeeded in breaking the human spirit; and in poem 14 he stresses that, on Robben Island, ordinary prisoners in their perseverance were, indeed, heroes too:

How fortunate we were
not to have been exposed
to rhetoric

- it would have falsified
a simple experience;
living grimly,
grimly enduring

Oh there was occasional heroic posturing
mainly from the immature
- and a dash of demagogic bloodthirstiness

But generally
we were simply prisoners
of a system we had fought
and still opposed (15).

Prisoners are faced with a difficult choice and must decide, as in poem 16, whether endurance depends on acceptance of, or opposition to, not only the prison system but the political system that has interned them. Having chosen to accept his imprisonment and painfully recognizing that trauma is part of the prison experience, Brutus, nevertheless, remains defiant towards his captors and uses the words 'still opposed' to confirm his personal commitment to the struggle.²⁰

The link between a resolve such as Brutus's and the positive aspects of power are, in Foucault's opinion, logical because there 'is no power without potential refusal or revolt' (Kritzman ed. 1990:84). Foucault also explains that 'those who resist or rebel against a form of power' cannot simply 'criticize an

institution', 'cast blame' or 'denounce violence', but must query how 'such relations of power' are rationalized (Kritzman ed 1990:84). Thus, in protesting against the prison system, it is necessary to understand and then denounce not only this institution, but the political process as well. As a writer Brutus acknowledged that, in considering whether to articulate his opposition to the South African regime and the system that interned him, he was faced, as discussed in Chapter One, with four choices. He outlined these at the 1967 African-Scandinavian Writer's Conference:

He [the writer] must either write or he must be silent; he must go to prison or at least find himself in political opposition. All these possibilities are open to him. But because of his necessity to write, this need to liberate himself, this need to be true to himself, he is almost inevitably going to find himself in collision with his society (Wästberg ed. 1968:84).

In the same essay Brutus suggests that a writer's commitment is linked to the desire for freedom:

In South Africa commitment is not a problem. You do not have to be hero [sic] to be committed, you are compelled to be committed, you are involved in a situation so fraught with evil that you are brought into collision with it. That is the only way of asserting certain human values and the fundamental value that the writer is so insistent on claiming for himself, the value of freedom, freedom of expression - what else is he seeking in his writing but precisely the freedom? (Wästberg ed. 1968:33-34).

Thus, the writer, like the prisoner, yearns for independence and liberation, a longing that Brutus repeatedly draws attention to in Letters to Martha. I shall now give consideration to this lack, since freedom is a basic human right, and to lose it, not

of one's own free will and for a long period, possibly forever, can result in trauma - physical, psychological, spiritual and emotional. Poem 17, for example, focuses on the absence of physical freedom as experienced by the prisoner:

In prison
the clouds assume importance
and the birds

With a small space of sky
cut off by walls
of bleak hostility
and pressed upon by hostile authority
the mind turns upwards
when it can -

- there can be no hope
of seeing the stars:
the arcs and fluorescents
have blotted them out...(18).

The first two stanzas set the scene and contrast the confinement of the prison cell with the wide-open expanse of the sky. As in most prison-writing, the prisoner's space is defined by walls and bars that restrict the view of the outside world.²¹ Brutus's observation of birds provides the stimulus for a contemplation of liberty:

the complex aeronautics
of the birds
and their exuberant acrobatics
become matters for intrigued speculation
and wonderment

clichés about the freedom of the birds
and their absolute freedom from care
become meaningful...(18).

Brutus, released for a moment from his mental suffering, uses words like 'aeronautics' and 'acrobatics' to achieve a sense of movement, and the enjoyment of the experience is heightened through the choice of 'exuberant' and 'wonderment'. In this last word, there is a feeling of marvel and even of childlike innocence. In the final stanza the focus shifts to the clouds:

and the graceful unimpeded motion of the clouds
- a kind of music, poetry, dance -
sends delicate rhythms tremoring through the flesh
and fantasies course easily through the mind:
- where are they going
where will they dissolve
will they be seen by those at home
and whom will they delight? (18).

The clouds possibly provide a comforting link between the prisoner and the family, yet they also serve to reinforce the contrast between internal restrictions and external freedom, another source of psychological trauma. Brutus, like La Guma, uses this contrast, however, to comment on broader aspects of freedom. In the same way that prisoners and writers desire to be liberated, so every person has a need for independence of movement and of choice:

It must be absolutely basic for a human being to be free, it is part of our psyche, our nature. It's as elemental as the need to breathe or to eat or to sleep, to excrete, or to make love. Freedom is an appetite, a lust which we have. And if you can't have it, you'd rather die than go without freedom (Thompson 1983:76-77).

The loss of liberty and the consequent quest to redeem it take on another dimension in poem 12, which deals with the deprivation of music, a lack that prison authorities hope will suppress all

enthusiasm for life, aiming by creating apathy at suppressing opposition. The need for sound is viewed, by Brutus, as similar to the 'appetite' for food, the hunger for the former growing more intense as time passes:

Nothing was sadder
there was no more saddening want
than the deadly lack
of music.

Even in the cosy days
of "awaiting trial" status
it was the deprivation
and the need
that one felt most.

After sentence,
in the rasping convict days
it grew to a hunger
- the bans on singing, whistling
and unappreciative ears
made it worse.

Then those who shared one's loves
and hungers
grew more dear on this account -
Fiks and Jeff and Neville
and the others

Strains of Eine Kleine Nachtmusik
the Royal Fireworks,
the New World,
the Emperor and Eroica,
Jesu, joy of man's desiring.

Surreptitious wisps of melody
down the damp grey concrete corridors

Joy (13).

The poem progresses from a 'deadly lack/of music' in the opening stanza to the sheer emotion and energy of the closing line, 'Joy', reinforced by the reference to compositions that are uplifting and suggestive of celebration and triumph.

Music has the ability to counter trauma and the powerful, if temporary, effect it can have on the psychological well-being of prisoners is well documented.²² In My Fight Against Apartheid, Dingake talks about the impact of music, which proved to be both soothing and inspiring for prisoners (1987:156), and, in And Night Fell, Pheto recalls the rousing comradeship that resulted from the singing of songs:

As soon as the steel doors and iron bars of these two cells next to me were locked, the recent arrivals would start singing. It did not matter whether the prisoners knew each other or not. They all knew the ghetto songs, the prison songs that I first heard at Jan Vorster, then here at Hillbrow. Many of these inmates were paying their fifth or sixth visit to jail. Anyone would start a song and the rest would pick it up. I would also join in and in a short time the whole police station would be singing, in sympathy with each other, and as an encouragement to each other (1985:163).

Music also has a unifying effect, establishing a connection between the personal and the collective suffering of the prisoners. In the same way, Brutus's individual trauma links him to the ordeal experienced by an entire group of South African political prisoners. In 'An Interview with Dennis Brutus', he broadens this connection to show how his regard for human rights encompasses a concern for South Africans as well as a global compassion. Clearly, the mental strain of imprisonment, and the loss of physical, psychological, spiritual and emotional freedom,

strengthened his belief in the need for a universal struggle for liberation: 'To me, you see, the notion that my struggle is an international struggle is not something I have to theorize about; it's a living thing' (Miller 1975:47). Brutus's assertion echoes La Guma's statement in 'Culture and Liberation':

...the anti-colonialist struggle has drawn millions of people together from all parts of the world. The colonized countries, the newly independent countries...the metropolitan countries...all form this mighty force, reinforcing each other in the struggle for the progress of all mankind. South Africa has no longer become a localised issue (1979a:34-35).

The longing for liberation, to which I have pointed, is presented in poem 11, where freedom depends on a release from the restraints of prison through a change in the political system:

Events have a fresh dimension
for all things can affect the pace
of political development -

but our concern
is how they hasten or delay
a special freedom -
that of those the prisons hold
and who depend on change
to give them liberty...(12).

Brutus asserts that a new way of thinking is required to release South Africa from its prison-like state but is concerned about the speed of change, which can 'hasten or delay' independence. While this poem does not deal with Brutus's trauma in particular, it nevertheless reinforces the link between his mental anguish and his constant yearning for freedom, a freedom about which he is uncertain, as the final poem demonstrates:

I remember rising one night

after midnight
and moving
through an impulse of loneliness
to try and find the stars.

And through the haze
the battens of fluorescents made
I saw pinpricks of white
I thought were stars...(19).

The image of the solitary figure is diminished when compared with the expanse of the night-sky and is used effectively to emphasize the sense of isolation. The future is unpredictable, as suggested in the lack of clarity implied by 'haze', and yet the 'pinpricks of white' suggest a glimmer of hope, a hint of freedom:

Greatly daring
I thrust my arm through the bars
and easing the switch in the corridor
plunged my cell in darkness

I scampered to the window
and saw the splashes of light
where the stars flowered.

But through my delight
thudded the anxious boots
and a warning barked
from the machine-gun post
on the catwalk.

And it is the brusque inquiry
and threat
that I remember of that night
rather than the stars (19).

Brutus creates, here, a tension between light and dark, between his own imprisoned situation and the beauty of the starry sky. The feelings of pleasure and optimism are destroyed by the

threatening intrusion of the guards, whose jarring movements are described by the word 'thudded'. Notwithstanding his belief in the inevitable success of the struggle against apartheid, it is significant that, in this final poem, Brutus concludes with a feeling of despondency. The memory of prison life is one of constant threat and menace and perhaps it is this recollection that has strengthened his resolve to continue to inform people about conditions in South Africa, as he mentions in the interview with Miller:

I was the first man to come out of Robbins [sic] Island alive. No other prisoner at that time had come off the island. So I could give people a rundown on conditions. I did this at the United Nations, before the Red Cross, for the press and television, and did in fact achieve some improvement in the conditions of the other prisoners. But they're still there, and one of my jobs is to try and get them out (1975:46).

The desire to draw attention to the plight of prisoners and, more specifically, to inform the international community about conditions in South Africa, my next point for consideration, is articulated in many prison works, including Alexander's Robben Island Dossier 1964-1974 (1994:vii). In the Postscript to Naidoo's Island in Chains, Sachs says that Naidoo, after his release, 'was called upon by the UN to testify on conditions on the Island, and invited to address audiences in the USA, Holland, Norway, Belgium, the United Kingdom and other countries' (1982:278). He met these requests without hesitation. In South Africa, too, Naidoo spread information about Robben Island by word of mouth, which 'did much to keep the flames of resistance burning' (1982:278). What distinguishes Brutus from these and other political prison-writers, however, is the ability, already

mentioned, to combine the roles of activist, poet and teacher.²³ Brutus confirms this point in Out of Exile, when he says 'I suppose I'm an activist in several areas, one of which is academia, one is as a writer, and one is as a political activist interested in social justice'. Brutus admits as well that he is 'comfortable' with all these roles and does not 'see any one as dominant' (Goddard and Wessels eds 1992:68).

Brutus's goal in educating people about prison and the system of apartheid was to change international opinion and encourage protest against the South African government. His objective, the dissemination of knowledge, and its relationship with power, are clearly apparent because, as Foucault declares in Discipline and Punish, 'power and knowledge directly imply one another....there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations' (1995:27).

In 'Poetry of Suffering: The Black Experience', Brutus claims that 'most South Africans living in exile tend to concern themselves with the predicament of those who are still in the country....This is the kind of thing I do...trying to make people more aware of conditions in South Africa and trying to move people to exert some pressure for change' (1973:3). Many of his poems address this concern and describe his travels around the world:

I come and go
a pilgrim
grubbily unkempt
stubbornly cheerful
defiantly whistling hope

and grubbing for crumbs of success
out of all near-defeats

I shuffle through the waiting rooms
and the air-terminals of the world
imposing and importuning
while the politely courteous
acquaintances
co-operate
help arrange my departures
without any pang of greeting

I work my stubborn difficult unrewarding will
obtusely addleheaded clumsy:
some few things happen
and I plod or shuffle or amble
wracked with anguished frustrate hunger
and go on (1978b:25).

Brutus writes of a difficult and at times a frustrating task. While he tried to be positive, as suggested by the words 'cheerful' and 'whistling', his animated demeanour was often met with indifference, as 'politely courteous' in the second stanza implies. He explains how, 'when you go on a campus in Australia or elsewhere, one of the problems you have to contend with is not merely the ignorance and the innocence of the people you speak to, but when they have this kind of unpleasant knowledge thrust upon them, they dislike it' (1973:4). Brutus acknowledges that his mission was arduous but he accepted the challenge because he felt compelled to tell people about conditions in South Africa. These lines from the first poem in a section entitled 'Postscripts' in Letters to Martha support my claim:

rather I send you bits to fill
the mosaic of your calm and patient knowledge
- picking the jagged bits embedded in my mind -
partly to wrench some ease for my own mind.

And partly that some world sometime may know (20).

Brutus's approach here is two-fold. He admits that writing about the prison experience on Robben Island has helped him to come to terms with his trauma and he points to his endeavours to affect public opinion. To be effective, though, he has had to appeal to a broad section of the population. This has had implications for his literary approach:

The first thing I decided about my future poetry was that there must be no ornament, absolutely none. And the second thing I decided was you oughtn't to write for poets; you oughtn't even to write for people who read poetry, not even students. You ought to write for the ordinary person: for the man who drives a bus, or the man who carries the baggage at the airport, and the woman who cleans the ashtrays in the restaurant. If you can write poetry which makes sense to those people, then there is some justification for writing poetry. Otherwise you have no business writing (Lindfors, Munro, Priebe and Sander eds 1972:29).

In the same interview he remarks, too, that 'by reporting a simple experience I ask people to make up their own minds. But I don't try to persuade them as to how they ought to make up their minds' (1972:32).

Brutus, however, has been criticized for his presentation of a 'simple experience' in a direct manner. Mphahlele is of the opinion that, in 'Letters to Martha, the long thundering line and awkward phraseology have given way to a subdued diction. And yet so much of the collection lapses into talkative verse which sounds like tired prose: like a guitar string that has lost its tension' (1972:91-92). Similarly, Tejani believes that Brutus fails because what he has to say 'seems so strikingly familiar. Verse which contains no surprises indicates some essential flaw -

either a language problem or an audience problem or just a blunted intuition' (1973:138).

Ogunyemi, however, remarks not only that Brutus 'maintains a detached mood and achieves self-effacement' (1982:69) but also that his poetry has a specific purpose:

It is intended to arouse the moral awareness of the international community, to get us to view seriously the individual scenarios that take place in South African prisons, and by extension, in South Africa itself. Brutus' strategy is to engage in a quiet, unobtrusive, and insistent attack on his enemies....Part of his attitude is a modesty and humility that will not jubilate over victory in any form (1982:68).

Jasper A. Onuekwusi concurs (1988:67) and R.N. Egudu notes that 'through images and diction that are imbued with freshness and vision - Brutus proves himself a capable poet fully committed to his social responsibility' (1976:143). In my opinion, it is 'his intellectual protest' that has contributed to Brutus's success in educating people about conditions in South Africa.

While Brutus emphasizes his personal despondency and the psychological trauma of his prison experience, he nevertheless expresses his belief in the ultimate victory of the struggle for freedom. In a poem from Stubborn Hope, one which is reminiscent of a scene in La Guma's In the Fog of the Seasons' End (1986:175), Brutus observes:

Behind the dark hills
the spears of dawn advance;
shadows and cobweb mists
shrink into gullies, ravines,
holes in the ground:
the terrible ghosts
pale, before terror, to nothingness;

the fieldflowers, drenched and bowed
lift with the coming light:
the long night lumbers grudgingly
into the past (1978b:95).

Brutus suggests that change and a transfer of power are inevitable because those involved in the struggle to end apartheid are informed and resolute. In another poem from the abovementioned volume, he says:

At odd moments
my bullet scars will twinge:
when I am resting,
or when fatigue
is a continuous shriek in my brain:
and straightway
I am stiffened with resolve
and am aware of my task
almost with reverence
and with humility (1978b:43).

Filled with 'reverence' and 'humility', Brutus, after his release, continued to protest against the South African government. Thus, his internment on Robben Island did not destroy him as a person or as a poet. Instead, the prison experience intensified his determination. 'We are all committed', he explains, 'at least to one value, the assertion of human value, of human dignity....we have a special function when we see human dignity betrayed. When we see humanity being mutilated, we have a function as human beings to stand up against these things' (Wästberg ed. 1968:34).

Brutus always regarded hostilities and restrictions as an opportunity to effect change and he considered his commitment as a logical response to the need for freedom. Threat and challenge motivated him and he shared his record of the painful experience

on Robben Island in order to reveal the severity of conditions in South Africa. His writing constantly returns to his prison ordeal as a point of reference, as a way to present his thoughts on relevant issues. In my opinion, the poem that best illustrates the multiplicity of these concerns is the following from Stubborn Hope:

I am a rebel and freedom is my cause:
Many of you have fought similar struggles
therefore you must join my cause:
My cause is a dream of freedom
and you must help me make my dream reality:
For why should I not dream and hope?
Is not revolution making reality of hopes?
Let us work together that my dream may be fulfilled
that I may return with my people out of exile
to live in one democracy in peace.
Is not my dream a noble one
worthy to stand beside freedom struggles everywhere?
(1978b:95).

What is noteworthy here is the emphasis, like La Guma's, on universal concerns, on the international struggle for freedom, rather than on personal heroism. By reflecting, in Letters to Martha and elsewhere, on the consequences of his political commitment, he is able to offer information for both the present and the future. As I have shown, in using his experience and his poetry to educate people about South Africa, he links knowledge with power and combines the roles of poet, political activist and teacher.

Notes

1. All references to Letters to Martha will be from the 1978 edition. Henceforth only page numbers will be given.
2. Brutus explains that, 'in time', the experience 'became less intense...more manageable. I could at first only write about it from the outside, but later on I could live inside it, to some extent' (Lindfors, Munro, Priebe and Sander eds 1972:32).
3. The Freedom Charter adopted at the Congress of the People in 1955 states that the 'colour bar in cultural life, in sport and in education shall be abolished'. In recent years, significant changes have taken place. South Africa participated in the 1992 and 1996 Olympic Games, and continues to compete in all international sporting competitions. Recently, the city of Cape Town lost its bid to host the 2004 Olympic Games, when Athens was selected as the venue.
4. It is interesting to note that First, in 117 Days, includes an account of Brutus's capture and imprisonment. She remarks also on the stringent security that surrounded Brutus after his emergency surgery at Coronation Hospital and claims that when 'his doctor, a woman, tried to see him after the operation', she was stopped by two policemen, who threatened to 'arrest' or to 'shoot' her (1982:47).
5. This volume was awarded the Mbari prize for poetry. Gordon Winter in Inside Boss: South Africa's Secret Police writes, however, that Brutus refused the prize money:

...the commandant handed him a cheque for £150. With it was a letter stating he had won the money as the first prize in a Nigerian poetry competition. Dennis was jubilant. The money was desperately needed by his

wife and children....But then came gloom. As Dennis ran his eyes over the accompanying letter he noticed something which caused him to hand the cheque back to the commandant. 'I'm sorry, sir, but I must ask you to return this to the sender.'

When the astonished commandant asked why, Dennis pointed to a clause in the rules stating the poetry contest had only been open to non-Whites.

'Well, that's all right,' smiled the commandant, 'you are a non-White.' Shaking his head, Dennis replied, 'It's true that I'm classified by Pretoria as a Coloured person....The contest was not open to Whites. That makes it racialistic, and I will not associate myself with anything of that nature.'

The much-needed cheque was sent back (1981:212).

6. In 'Protest Against Apartheid', Brutus refers to La Guma when discussing these constraints:

...if you want to write, and if you feel occasionally that you ought to write, it introduces a rather special urgency or intensity into your work. I have met Alex la [sic] Guma's wife recently. He was working on a novel while he was under house-arrest. She told me how the pages, as he completed them, would be deposited under the linoleum so that if he was raided while he was writing, the Special Branch or political police would find only one page in the typewriter but wouldn't find the others (1969:94).

7. These poems were written while attending the Pan-African Cultural Festival, an event that encouraged Brutus to contemplate his 'Africanness'. In Poems From Algiers, he concludes that, as a 'non-totemistic "new" African artist', he 'will simply take his place in the whole of world culture while always bearing certain distinctive features as a result of his origins and experience' (1972:26).

8. Carew, in a letter published in The Drum, outlined Brutus's fate if expelled:

If deported to Zimbabwe, Professor Brutus will be in danger at the hands of the South African Secret Police who are operating in that country. If deported to South Africa, he will be immediately jailed under the terms of an exit-permit he was required to sign upon being exiled by the South African apartheid government (1982:53).

9. At the same conference, La Guma stated that he was prepared to run guns.

10. Several writers, including Mandela (1994:342-344) and Alexander (1994:36-37), have discussed the different dietary categories.

11. Despite his condition, Brutus was relentlessly assaulted by the warders. Naidoo continues his account:

There were twenty in [Brutus's] group....They were all ordered into the sea to pull out seaweed, and as they waded in knee deep they were mercilessly set upon by the warders who beat them black and blue with batons and rubber pipes....Dennis, who was particularly weak, was their main target, receiving more blows than anybody else, until he virtually lost consciousness (1982:104).

12. In Letters to Martha, the poems that deal specifically with Brutus's internment on Robben Island are numbered.

13. The Big Fives were a notorious prison gang on Robben Island. Made up of non-political prisoners, they were among those used by the warders to keep the other prisoners in line.

14. Dlamini describes this humiliation in some detail:

...a prison gang known as the Big Fives...was assisting the warders in the ill-treatment of political prisoners...[and] with the connivance of certain warders, locked up some of our comrades in cells where the criminal convicts of the Big fives [sic] were in

the majority and where during the night our comrades would be overpowered and assaulted(nd.:26).

15. Mandela describes a similar response to life in prison:

Prison life is about routine: each day like the one before; each week like the one before it, so that the months and years blend into each other. Anything that departs from this pattern upsets the authorities, for routine is the sign of a well-run prison.

Routine is also comforting for the prisoner.... Routine can be a pleasant mistress whom it is hard to resist, for routine makes the time go faster (1994:340).

16. Fikile Bam was a member of the Yu Chi Chan Club, a radical group that studied guerilla warfare. He was sentenced to ten years on Robben Island.

17. George Peake, a member of the South African Coloured Peoples Organization, was sentenced to a term on Robben Island, for planting explosives outside a Cape Town prison.

18. Similarly, in an article entitled 'On Mandela Released', Brutus observes: 'Our own courage and resolution were steeled by the image of Mandela. Still erect, still dignified, still resolute'. It is difficult, Brutus, continues, 'not to be moved by this unsurpassed emblem of courage in our time, not to have tears of joy at this superb icon, this vindication of the commitment to struggle, to justice' (1990:53).

19. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, in Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary, refers directly to Letters to Martha and mentions that this poem 'captures very accurately the emotions of a new political prisoner' (1989:144).

20. Mandela says that the political prisoners on Robben Island had decided to 'fight inside as we had fought outside. The

racism and repression were the same'. In addition, Mandela refers to the relationship between knowledge and power when he suggests that endurance and survival were based on knowledge of 'the enemy's purpose before adopting a strategy to undermine it'. Prison was 'designed to break one's spirit and destroy one's resolve' and, Mandela concludes, 'survival depended on understanding what the authorities were attempting to do to us, and sharing that understanding with each other' (1994:340-341). Thus, knowledge promoted a move to power.

21. David Evans was imprisoned for five years in Pretoria Local and Pretoria Central prisons. In a poem entitled 'Lovepoem From Prison', he pensively reflects:

it takes the dark to make me see
the daytime eye (being blind to all but fact)
sees just the gate, the bars, the walls
and not beyond...(Feinberg ed. 1980:14).

22. In a poem from A Simple Lust, Brutus mentions the way in which the singing of the African national anthem inspires the prisoners:

Today in prison
by tacit agreement
they will sing just one song:
Nkosi Sikekela [sic];
slowly and solemnly
with suppressed passion
and pent up feeling:
the voices strong and steady
but with tears close and sharp
behind the eyes
and the mind ranging
wildly as a strayed bird
seeking some names to settle on
and deeds being done
and those who will do the much

that still needs to be done (1989:109)

23. Here, I am in agreement with Achebe's view on the function of the teacher. In his essay 'The Novelist as Teacher', included in his collection, Hopes and Impediments, Achebe explains that the teacher must help 'society regain belief in itself and put away the complexes of the years of denigration and self-abasement' (1989:44)

CHAPTER FOUR

HUGH LEWIN: A JOURNALIST'S STORY OF IMPRISONMENT

In 1964 Brutus was still interned on Robben Island and Mandela, Sisulu and Mbeki were serving a sentence of life imprisonment. On 9 July of that year, Hugh Lewin, a journalist and a member of the Armed Resistance Movement (ARM), was arrested and sentenced to seven years in prison.

Appropriately, Lewin's written account of his imprisonment is entitled Bandiet: Seven Years in a South African Prison.¹ I propose to demonstrate that the book is particularly relevant to this study because of the way in which it documents the political prison-experience, this time from a white perspective: Bandiet was one of the first published narratives written by a white political prisoner in South Africa. In the account, Lewin draws attention to conditions in Pretoria Local and Pretoria Central Prisons and outlines the aims and objectives of the ARM, a group about which little is written and to which I shall give consideration in due course. I shall refer to the work of Foucault in order to demonstrate how Lewin furnishes the reader with an insight into the operation of power in prison. In addition, he provides unique information about prominent, white, political prisoners like Bram Fischer and Denis Goldberg, whose courage and resourcefulness provide an exemplary form of power, and this is an aspect of his writing I intend to underline in the current chapter.

To enhance my discussion I shall also refer to Lewin's short story 'The Phone Call' and, in order to highlight the way in which he details both the positive and the negative aspects of

his imprisonment as well as the division between the 'outside' and the 'inside', I shall examine his poetry as well. In my conclusion, I will attempt to demonstrate that, while Lewin's consciousness of self was altered, he, too, was not defeated by prison and that, despite his internment, he remained committed to the struggle for freedom in South Africa. Before pursuing these objectives, however, it is necessary to consider Lewin's background and the events that led up to his membership of the ARM and his subsequent imprisonment.

Born in Lydenburg, an agricultural town in the Eastern Transvaal, on 3 December 1939, Lewin was the son of an Anglican parish priest and a nurse. His parents, William and Muriel Lewin, moved to Irene, a village close to Pretoria, when Lewin was a year old and sent him to boarding school at the age of eight. He attended St John's College, an exclusive, private, boy's school in Johannesburg, where he remained until he matriculated in 1956.

Two aspects of these formative years are notable. First, Lewin's interaction with Father Trevor Huddleston, who exposed him to the harsh conditions in Sophiatown, a non-racial, impoverished suburb of Johannesburg.² In Bandiet Lewin asserts:

During my last years at school I spent a number of Sundays as a guest of Father Trevor Huddleston and the other fathers of the Community of the Resurrection, in Sophiatown. Here, for the first time, I was brought into direct contact with the poverty and suffering of the African community that lived there. I listened to their conversations and heard them speak about their frustrations, caused by the laws which prevented them from improving their lot, and about their hatred, especially for the pass laws which disrupted their lives.

In the white community, my father was a poor man. But by comparison with the Africans whose homes I went to, he seemed very wealthy. This difference between whites and blacks set the laws which governed them against the whole Christian teaching which was the basis of my life (11-12).

The second point of interest is the way in which the discipline and routine of boarding school trained Lewin for a greater challenge, more specifically, for his years in prison: 'It prepared me to accept an endless and often meaningless routine. It taught me to cherish and to be deprived of privacy. It taught me to expect arbitrary pettiness from the authorities' (154).

After completing an extra year of post-matric studies, Lewin attended Rhodes University in Grahamstown. While there he joined several non-racial organizations, among them the Liberal Party, whose members included the author, Alan Paton, and the outspoken journalist, Jordan Ngubane. Lewin was also a member of the national executive of the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) and had his passport withdrawn after attending a student conference in Nigeria. While at Rhodes he was approached by a friend to become part of a group called the National Committee for Liberation (NCL), which came to be known as the ARM. A small non-racial group, socialist in orientation, the ARM had approximately twelve members in Johannesburg, a few in Durban and Port Elizabeth and a larger contingent in Cape Town. Informal in structure, the group's purpose was to engage in acts of sabotage in order to 'shock the whites into an awareness of the conditions under which the blacks were living' (12). Targets such as pylons, power-standards and railway-signal cables were

carefully selected in order not to endanger human life, and the motive was to startle, not to kill.³

Despite the fairly amateurish acts of sabotage carried out by its members, the ARM achieved a measure of success in destroying their targets when they were able to obtain a large quantity of dynamite from a coal-mine store. Lewin acknowledges in Bandiet that he took part in three of the eight acts of sabotage carried out by the ARM. Lewin believes, however, that their strength lay in their ability to create the illusion of a larger, well organized group. This was accomplished by the co-ordination of attacks between Johannesburg and Cape Town and, since 'Africans' were 'involved in [their] group in Johannesburg...it was...possible - in fact necessary, because of the apartheid society - to hit targets both in white and black areas' (16). Notwithstanding the impression given by Lewin's statement, Stephanie Kemp, a member of the ARM, claims that black support for the organization was minimal:

I think what the ARM didn't recognize was the importance of African nationalism - as a concept, as a real thing in this process - so that they recognized a sort of non-racialism that obliterated all that. You know, people were just people, and the fact that they were African or white was unimportant. Yet it was important for them to establish their credentials by ensuring that they had some black support - and they had very, very little (Frederikse 1990:95).

Lewin completed his Bachelor's degree in 1960, hoping to follow in his father's footsteps and attend Theological College in England. Instead, he realized that he was not prepared for the demands of the priesthood. He spent a year teaching at a preparatory school in Pietermaritzburg and then pursued a career

in journalism, working as sub-editor on publications for black readers, such as Drum and Post. While the ARM's sporadic acts appeared futile to him, he remained in the organization despite his reservations. He points out, nevertheless, that he 'thought of leaving...South Africa' but a 'sense of guilt' and a 'feeling that [he] was part of a problem which [he] could not escape from by running away' (13), deterred him from going.

He was arrested in July 1964 and initially held at Jeppe police station, where he was interrogated and assaulted. He was forced to stand for long periods and deprived of sleep, until he agreed to co-operate with the authorities. The experience was traumatic; during the 'first day and night they had not only broken [him], they had changed [him]. They had taken [him] from [his] world...and made [him] a part of their world'. As a result, he 'felt too scared, too alone, too ashamed to fight the change' (31). Lewin's feelings of fear and dislocation were intensified a few days later. A bomb, planted by John Harris, a member of the ARM, exploded in the Johannesburg railway station. One person was killed and several were badly injured. Paradoxically, the bomb, which 'shattered the ARM policy of avoiding harm to people', was planted 'a fortnight after the ARM had effectively ceased to exist. When John's bomb went off, most of the ARM members were either out of the country, or in detention' (16).

The police were adamant, however, that Lewin and the ARM were responsible for the blast. They drove him to the station and showed him the scene of devastation:

'One of your bombs has just killed fourteen people there.'

I laughed. It was ridiculous, so unthinkable. I had to laugh, as van der Merwe, furious - 'Your bomb!' - bundled me into the car.... 'Fourteen people!' they shouted, 'your bomb! You're going to talk tonight.... Fourteen people. Tonight you'll die.' Van der Merwe stopped the car in front of the Greys: 'Tonight, Lewin, I'm going to kill you' (34).

Hoping to extract information from Lewin, Lieutenant van der Merwe 'began hitting' him, with 'hard fists to the head and face, mainly around the eyes and ears'. All Lewin 'could think of was to scream', until he 'found [himself] down on the floor in the far right-hand corner of the room with van der Merwe standing over [him]' (34-35). The violent clash between Lewin and Van der Merwe is essentially a struggle for power, and it is worth noting that in Discipline and Punish, Foucault connects the practice of torture to a 'battle', to a 'victory of one adversary over the other' and to a 'duel' (1995:41). Moreover, Foucault links the extrication of information by means of a prisoner's confession to 'a power relationship' (1990:61). In The History of Sexuality he explains this association: 'The confession is...a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence...of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge' (1990:61).

Van der Merwe's assault prompted Lewin to sue the Minister of Justice for damages but, characteristically, none of the authorities was found guilty of any offence. In South Africa: The Terrorism of Torture, Bernstein discusses the outcome in some detail: 'The police maintained' that Lewin 'had been so

horrified by the scene at the station that he had turned and fled back to the police car, and so anxious was he to get into the car that he struck his face as he entered'. A prison doctor who examined Lewin 'found he had bruising around both eyes consistent with being struck by a fist' but claimed 'the injuries could also have been caused by Lewin striking his head against a car door. The case was dismissed' (1972:37). This incident is yet another example of the way in which some doctors and lawyers collaborated with the police and prison authorities in order to conceal evidence which, as mentioned in Chapter One, was the norm rather than the exception. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault explains this process of co-operation when he notes that the 'whole penal operation has taken on extra-juridical elements and personnel', resulting in 'the power of judging' being 'transferred, in part, to other authorities than the judges of the offence' (1995:22).

Physically and psychologically battered, Lewin was moved from Jeppe police station to Pretoria Local Prison. Lewin compares 'walking into prison' to 'walking into a butcher's fridge' (41) and, like La Guma and Brutus, describes the prison as having a sterile environment, with 'no curtains, no carpets, no heaters, nothing decorative, nothing unnecessary....Essentials only' (41). The desolation of the surroundings enhances Lewin's sense of vulnerability, particularly when he is told to strip:

From the gloom at the end of the corridor came another warder....The corridor, and the silent man [,]...seemed for the first time to mean prison. And when he took me into his office at the end of the corridor and said 'Strip', I realized I was there, really there (41).

In Bould's anthology of prison writings, Conscience be my Guide, Rommel Roberts, imprisoned for organizing a bus boycott, writes of a similar process of stripping:

My sense of who I was, my identity and ambitions were suspended. I was totally stripped...[sic]I scrutinised my cell for traces of other human beings in an attempt to hold onto reality against the perpetual feeling of utter weakness.

The stripping of all dignity and ability to control attacked my grip on the situation (1991:145).

Indeed, Jacobs, in 'Confession, Interrogation and Self-Interrogation in the New South African Prison Writing', confirms that political prisoners always write about the stripping process, as a 'particularly traumatic stage of the induction into prison is the stripping naked of the prisoner' (Petersen and Rutherford eds 1992:117).

In Bandiet, Lewin describes how he feels naked, having lost his own freedom and his dignity, and when he relinquishes his personal possessions, he also surrenders his privacy, his identity and his personal power:

You are stripped of everything inessential. You are stripped bare and given back only what they think is necessary. They strip you at the beginning and they go on stripping you, endlessly, to ensure that you have only what they think is necessary. You are stripped bare of everything that you can call your own, constantly stripped bare of anything that you make your own; you are stripped bare in an endless process of peeling off your protective covering and leaving you naked (41).

The connection between the loss of liberty and the ritualistic stripping of power may be examined, too, in relation to Foucault who, in Discipline and Punish, maintains that the

body of the prisoner 'serves as an instrument or intermediary: if one intervenes upon it to imprison it, or make it work, it is in order to deprive the individual of a liberty that is regarded as a right and as property'. The body then becomes 'caught up in a system of constraints and privations, obligations and prohibitions' (1995:11). This image of being stripped, the intervention upon the body and the subsequent loss of control, is one of the most powerful images Lewin uses in order to describe his response to imprisonment at Local:

This was the stripping process at its most essential. Just a cell, with nothing in it; nothing that could give you any semblance of control - no light switch, no windows which you could open or close, no taps to turn on or off, no toilet to flush, no pictures, curtains, carpets, no phones, radios, newspapers, and no handle on the inside of the door (50).

In this excerpt, Lewin points to the direct relationship between stripping and the loss of power when he notes that 'any semblance of control' was eliminated. He is also referring specifically to his three months in solitary confinement. He spent a further two months awaiting trial and was charged in November 1964 under the Sabotage Act.⁴ As mentioned earlier, he was sentenced to seven years in prison. Notwithstanding his expectations that, as a convicted prisoner, he would be aware of 'some tangible change...to mark the transition from detainee to prisoner', Lewin experiences only 'a further stripping down to a towel which was not large enough to go once round one's waist' (76). Despite Lewin's claim, Jacobs rightly argues in 'A Proper Name in Prison: Self-Identification in the South African Prison Memoir', that 'the consciousness of self' is 'modified by the

experience of prison' (1991a:6) and that 'to enter prison is to acquire a new language and a new name for the self, and thereby a new subjectivity' (1991a:7). Indeed, Lewin does concede that as a 'full' prisoner he 'officially' became a bandiet (75) and, as I shall demonstrate in due course, he learnt not only a 'new language' and ways in which to withstand his imprisonment, but his 'consciousness of self' altered as well.

Literally and emotionally exposed, Lewin enters prison and waits to receive his new prison clothes, his 'underpants, vest, khaki shirt, khaki longs, socks, shoes, short-sleeved jersey, corduroy jacket, brown felt hat'. There is 'one bright exception' to this dull 'brown and khaki' apparel - 'a red handkerchief' (75). This allocation of clothing is in complete contrast to the procedure described by Shityuwete, in Never Follow the Wolf, where each prisoner has to 'strip and find something from the pile to put on....two pairs of shorts, two khaki shirts and two canvas jackets. There were no shoes and we were still barefoot'. Moreover, says Shityuwete, the 'clothes were...unsuitable for the cold Cape climate' and extremely dirty (1990:183).

Lewin is aware of the distinction between black and white prisoners at Local Prison and, by highlighting his experience from a white perspective, he is able to draw attention to these differences and to the way in which apartheid operates in prison. While he manages to keep warm (wearing 'most of [his] clothes, including the overcoat') and is comfortably enclosed in his cell, the black prisoners are working outside, having arrived 'in their two-by-two team before the early morning shadows had disappeared'. They are clad only in 'short khaki shorts, khaki

shirt and small khaki jerkin' (62). They are without socks, shoes, or jerseys.⁵

In contrast to these black prisoners, the white political prisoners are given no work for several months. Eventually, however, they are required to repair mailbags, a task Lewin welcomes 'with a sense of relief to think that it was something to do, something almost active which might lead to something else' (93). Lewin responds like Brutus who (despite his disclaimer elsewhere) in poem 10 in Letters to Martha describes hard labour as 'honest toil', which offers 'some redeeming hours' (1978a:11). In fact, Foucault maintains in Discipline and Punish that one of the 'fundamental principles of the prison' should be to provide work that 'must not be regarded as the complement and as it were an aggravation of the penalty, but as a mitigation, of which it is no longer possible to deprive the prisoner' (1995:268-270). It is clear, nevertheless, that political prisoners were given mailbags to repair as an additional form of punishment.

Lewin's detailed account of the distinction made between black and white prisoners goes beyond a comparison of dress and work. He mentions, for example, that in the white section of Local Prison, three prisoners share a cell (130) and that toilet pots are enamel with a lid and a sealing rim (58). In addition, white prisoners are given a steel dixie for food (91) and 'half-a-dozen large drums of steaming water' (90) for showers. In the black section, twenty prisoners occupy a cell (130) and are given toilet pots that are unsanitary, made from iron, 'uncleanable, and often without lids' (58). Warders call the blacks 'kaffir' and 'houtkop' and take pleasure in hitting them over the head

with a wooden truncheon (130). 'However grim [his] conditions', Lewin recognizes that, as a white political prisoner in Local Prison, he is privileged: 'In our special section of what was basically a black jail, we had always been aware of the difference in treatment between us and the blacks' (130).

The treatment Lewin receives is noticeably different when he is moved to Central Prison. His depiction of Central is similar to La Guma's description of Roeland Street jail, particularly in relation to the architecture and lay-out of the building:⁶

The entrance to Central looks like a medieval castle: you enter the prison through two huge wooden doors set into a crenellated façade of stone and pass immediately through a portcullis of heavy bars into a small forecourt. This forecourt forms a no-man's land between Outside and Inside...and, once you're inside Central as a prisoner, you never get back out beyond the forecourt. You go from the forecourt through a heavy steel barred door: from open-air lightness you are led into a dark narrow passage and, like a lion at the circus, through another steel grille-door out into a huge inner hall, a hollow and echoing cathedral dome of heavy grilles and bars and cold stone walls (109-110).

It is significant that Lewin draws attention to no-man's land as the link between the freedoms he had 'outside' and the constraints that he will encounter 'inside' its walls. Like La Guma and Brutus, Lewin also accentuates the stone and steel of the structure in order to create the impression of sterility. The prison environment is desolate and depressing as the words 'dark', 'narrow', 'hollow' and 'echoing' suggest, and it reminds Lewin of the description of Central Prison by the well-known South African writer, Herman Charles Bosman:

Cold Stone Jug is what Herman Bosman called it. Forty years before we arrived there, Bosman had been sent to Central for murdering his step-brother: condemned to be hanged, he was later reprieved and spent eight [sic] years in Cold Stone Jug.⁷ He wrote an absorbingly funny book of his experiences at Central - Cold Stone Jug, which I read for the first time inside Cold Stone Jug. In forty years, very little had changed (109).

Lewin's first encounter with non-political prisoners is at Central Prison. While many of these prisoners were convicted of crimes such as armed robbery and rape, they nevertheless received better treatment and more privileges than the political prisoners.⁸ Andy, imprisoned for non-political reasons, remarks to Lewin that :

The bandiete at Central had heard...that [the] politicals had been having a rough time. No remission - yes, that was bad, he agreed. And no news. And bad grouping too: look at us, with all of us still in C group, and some still in D after two years. No criminal, said Andy, ever started his time in D group - that was for punishment (116).

C and D groups are 'among the least-privileged of that society, with the least chance of social advancement and, together with the long-timers[,]...at the receiving end of all the hierarchies of buck-passing' (131).

Lewin concludes that, because of their status, the white political prisoners at Local Prison are 'the blacks of the Central society', 'sharing with the rebels and recalcitrants all the worst jobs in the place'. As 'the scurriers and the carriers...caught in an official Catch 22', the 'politicals' are 'kept down', whether they behave or misbehave, oppose or accept 'the system'. Lewin concedes, however, that 'the catch worked

equally' for those non-political prisoners who 'had bad prison records which were against them whenever they asked for improvement' (130-131). He recognizes, however, that the experience taught him a great deal about being black in South Africa. He remarks that he 'had to go inside to know what it's like to be black' (14), to learn about 'the endless and inescapable drudgery of menial and mindless tasks [that] could produce resentment and tension'. While 'common suffering' could create 'solidarity' between the victims, Lewin notes it could also lead to feelings of 'frustration and anger' (131). From these observations it is clear that Lewin's consciousness was altered by his experience of prison.

Lewin is of the opinion that the high population in South African prisons at the time and the number of executions were a result of the policy of apartheid: 'I could see why so many...ended up...in prison...at Central - the place where you live to the sound of men being killed, officially. Central Prison is South Africa's hanging jail' (138). Capital punishment, an extreme instance of the exercise of power, had a profound and life-altering effect on Lewin and, in Bandiet, he is seen to be utterly appalled by this aspect of prison.⁹ In order to discuss his response, however, it is necessary to examine his initial reaction to Central Prison. One of the first aspects that he draws attention to, for example, is the auditory presence of those in the death cells, whom he refers to as the 'Condemned':

The fifteen of us from Local were dumped in the Hall, three rows of puzzled, somewhat intimidated politicals, pushed into line against the wall and told to shut up. Stilte/Silence. But there was no silence

in the Hall's hugeness: from directly behind the notice opposite us - Stilte/Silence - came a chant, a rising and falling chant of hymns, slow, mournful, filling the Hall's emptiness, eerily drumming through the bars, amplified by the bare walls. The chant of the Condemned. You can never, at Central, forget the Condemned, up in their cells behind the notice in the Hall saying Silence (110).

There are other prison writers who recall the singing of the condemned prisoners. Makhoere, in No Child's Play, tells how, at Central Prison, the condemned prisoners slept during daylight hours and sang at night; she explains how, 'very late in the night, maybe one or two in the morning, you would hear them singing. And you would know that these people were going to hang' (1988:97). Niehaus emphasizes that such singing is particularly memorable the night before an execution. The silence, though, is equally haunting. In view of their proximity to the death cells, the white political prisoners 'could hear the desperate screams' of the condemned men during the hours of darkness. 'The night before they were to be hanged, they sang until the early hours of the morning, and then a dreadful silence fell' (1994:127).

Lewin's perturbation at life in Central Prison was intensified because of his earlier friendship with John Harris, who was hanged for planting the fatal station bomb:

How would I feel, knowing that every day, twice a day at least, I was walking past the place where they killed a friend of mine, past the place where John Harris had been hanged? That, there, that in front there, that was where he had died; that was where they brought him through, that was where they packed him up, nailed him down, and they took him away that way....I couldn't escape it. It was there. I was there. There

was nothing I could do about it. It was not that I could not live with it; it was only that I had to live with it (148).

Lewin observes, too, that Harris was not remembered for the crime he committed but for the fact that he was hanged. Accordingly, prisoners were intrigued, rather than disgusted, by Harris's death, and 'remembered him and...had their stories about him, like the stories they [had] about most whites who hang'. He 'went well - singing..."We shall overcome"', they recalled, but 'the boere, so the story went, didn't give him a chance: gave him an extra long drop, just in case' (148).

Harris's death left Lewin with 'a feeling of immense sadness', a response compounded by having to watch 'the lines of life tread past the door behind which people die an official death' (148). Lewin's account of what happens at a hanging is, therefore, horrifyingly detailed in order to emphasize the inhumanity of what prison officials consider a routine procedure, 'an official death':

That day, said one of the young boere in the shop, they hanged six of them at the same time....The man who does it, he said, is very good with them: he puts the blindfolds on quickly and easily and talks to them all the time and pulls the lever without the guy even really knowing it's going to happen when it does happen....Sometimes - not every week - there's sawdust scattered on the pathway....Why sawdust, I asked. For the blood....There's often lots of blood at a hanging....It comes from all over the place. When they hang women...they have to strap them up between the legs beforehand (142).

Lewin recalls that hangings took place on Tuesdays and Thursdays and that the sounds from the gallows building were as intense as the singing of the condemned prisoners:

On Tuesdays and Thursdays...you come through into the soccer yard and stand waiting in teams. The gate ahead - the gate next to the wall of the gallows building - is shut. You stand, silently waiting. The workshop boere, in their overalls, stand waiting too, silently watching to see that you stay silent. You can hear knocking. From behind the wall ahead, the wall beside the gallows, you can hear a distant knocking. You stand in the soccer yard in the early morning and hear knocking. Sometimes a prolonged knocking, sometimes not much knocking - as they put on the coffin lids (141).

The effect of this description is powerful, particularly with the repetition of the word 'knocking'. Lewin continues to emphasize sound and its chilling effect on the prisoners as, for example, in his recollection of the hanging of a young black woman, 'brought...through as the lights came on'. The silence 'outside [their] windows' is suddenly broken by 'whimpering and crying, deep sobs of crying moving across the yard', sounds that Lewin identifies as those made by 'a woman, a young woman...gulping deep whoops of weeping' (144).

'The Condemned' are not generally seen and yet, because they are heard, their presence is a compelling force: 'inside the Hall boer's office, was the daily tally of prisoners...you could see the tally for B2, the Condemned, always at about seventy or more, awaiting execution' (144). When Lewin encounters Diesel, a white condemned man, whom he meets the day before his hanging, Lewin is moved by the experience:

I was coming in from the shops and he was crossing towards the Condemned's visiting room....I wasn't watching where I was going...and we collided. He looked down...smiled an apology and walked on, accompanied always by his boer. He looked calm. It was the first time I had been so close to anyone from B2 and I couldn't help noticing that his jacket had tabs on, instead of buttons. No buttons, I was told, so that they couldn't kill themselves before being executed (145).

Lewin is impressed by the bravery in the obvious 'calm' of Diesel and of others like him who are 'able to go out all right, to go out singing', even though they 'are so alone, facing the rope, walking out alone to die'.¹⁰ Lewin is disturbed, nevertheless, by the 'warders and a priest and a doctor' who are responsible for 'getting you dead as soon and as officially as possible' (149).

The effect of the encounter with Diesel had a considerable impact on Lewin, inspiring him to write a poem entitled 'Hang', which is included in the anthology, Poets to the People: South African Freedom Poems:

They came for him next morning
a mild summer day
the sun shining outside, already warm
they came at five.
the man still called the Sheriff
and two lieutenants
and three chief warders
and four head warders
and five section warders with keys
all relaxed and very attentive
then the Commandant
the doctor
and the priest
allowed only so far as the double doors
where he stood helpless

waving a sort of blessing
as all the officials
led the one man
through the double doors
the sun beginning to play through the skylight
into the room with the high windows...(Feinberg ed.
1980:86-87).

Lewin draws attention to official red tape when he lists eighteen individuals involved in the execution of one person, and the contrast between the group and the 'one man' reinforces the impression of the vulnerability and the isolation of the individual; as the poem continues, this becomes more pronounced:

They were all very nice
all of them murmuring
and he nodded back, dry-lipped
and patted hands with his section warder
as the hood was put over his head
everybody shuffling, silent
watchful
unsure of being part of the action
all so, as it were, common-place
the recognisable faces and uniforms
like wanting to speak aloud during a church service
with his feet squared in by the lines
of the trap on the floor...(87).

Through the use of words like 'shuffling' and 'unsure', Lewin creates a sense of uncertainty in the watchers' movements. The reader is reminded, however, that, until recently, hanging was 'common-place' in South Africa and he underlines the grim reality and the mechanical precision of the practice when he mentions 'the hood' and the 'feet squared in by the lines'. In the next section of the poem he uses sound to achieve a spine-chilling effect:

and he turned his head with its hood

looking for a noise
as the trap
 burst
 inwards

 open
 slip
 fall

 tight taught [sic] jerk
 CRACK...(87).

The motion that culminates in the word 'CRACK' creates, simultaneously, a gruesome visual image. Once the trap is released, the moment of death arrives suddenly and Lewin highlights the abruptness through the use of 'open', 'slip' and 'fall'. The concluding lines are direct:

 A body is left to hang for twenty minutes
 before the doctor declares it
 finally
 totally
 officially
 finish and klaar
 a corpse (87-88).

In this last stanza, the 'man', presumably Diesel, is dehumanized. He is no longer a person but like a carcass at the abattoir. Bureaucracy dictates that the body must hang for twenty minutes and Lewin reinforces the irrevocability of the execution through the choice of 'finally', 'totally' and 'officially'.¹¹ Lewin's description of capital punishment is as horrifying as Foucault's depiction of a public execution, which I discussed in Chapter One.

Lewin's greatest challenge at Central Prison is to preserve his sanity. In order to cope with the proximity of the hanging

section of the jail, he observes that it is necessary to maintain a distance from it:

You learn to live with it at Central because - for all the blood on the ground and for all the singing, the stories, all the awareness and the closeness - still there is a final remoteness which keeps you separate. The routine keeps you unthinking about it, lets you walk past the gallows every day and not notice it, lets you care and yet be remote. As long as you can walk past every day, there's always Them-in-there and Us-here: them is for dead, us is us, alive. So you stay remote (149).

Lewin draws attention to the distinction between 'Them' and 'Us', between 'inside' and 'outside' but, paradoxically, although Lewin is in prison, he is 'outside', while those awaiting execution remain 'inside'. While Lewin is aware that to 'stay remote' is not necessarily a humane response, he seems to suggest that a degree of insensitivity is unavoidable:

But even more hideous than the gallows themselves was watching at Central how it was possible to accommodate to the horror - how you could become accustomed to it, how you learn to live with it and accept it. So too have people become insensitive in the outside society (153).

It is evident from the discussion, however, that Lewin was intensely affected by his eight months at Central Prison and was unable to detach himself from the terror of a predicament which included the knowledge that executions were taking place.

Driver, in 'The View From Makana Island: Some Recent Prison Books From South Africa', correctly suggests that Lewin's 'understated' voice slips in the chapter on hangings, allowing 'the horror [to] peer through' and that 'one of the motives of

Bandiet' is to expose a 'horror of capital punishment' generally (1975:116). This is my next point for consideration.

Lewin is vocal about his thoughts on hanging as a form of punishment and believes that it does not work as a criminal deterrent (149). He suggests that 'any person, in any society, should know what it is like to live in a hanging jail' (14) and claims that his experience at Central Prison helped him to clarify his views on capital punishment. Only after his term there does he 'realize, fully, the utter horror of capital punishment, what it involves and the responsibility it imposes on man' (152). Moreover, he does 'not think that any man can carry out the demands of the system or live with the system without himself at once becoming degraded, corrupt and brutal' (152). Prior to his imprisonment, Lewin was 'against' capital punishment and 'was horrified at the thought that South Africa was responsible for about half the world's executions'. He had not, however, given the matter serious consideration: 'it was merely one among many horrifying facts about life under an apartheid government' (152). As a consequence of his experience, Lewin can 'no longer regard things in the same light' (225), a further admission of his psychological modification. In his final contemplation of capital punishment, in Bandiet, he concludes that this issue 'is not peculiar to South Africa but it assumes particular significance in the South African context' (152); that:

Central [Prison] is a mirror of the outside apartheid society: the violence inherent in the laws of apartheid - in the laws which break up families, which deny freedom of movement or expression, which deny to men their basic humanity - this violence has its

natural counterpart at Central in the gallows, the essential symbols of official violence (152-153).

Davies observes, in Writers in Prison, that 'prison writing is centrally about violence. The beginning of the sense of violence is the awareness of death' (1990:16) and in these lines, Lewin not only highlights the violence that characterizes both South African society and Central prison but, like La Guma and Brutus, maintains that prison reminds him of South African society as a whole; that prison is a microcosm of the outside society. In explanation, Lewin, expands his comments on the way in which apartheid operated in prison. When describing South Africa's three 'famous' prisons, he notes that the Johannesburg Fort housed '(in strictly segregated sections) both black and white awaiting-trial prisoners' and that Robben Island was where 'all black political prisoners' were kept. While Central Prison was 'the maximum security jail for white criminals', it distinguished itself as one of the 'few places in South Africa where black and white live[d] legally alongside each other' - in 'the death cells' (109). Bandiet highlights the segregation of those prisoners who were not on death row, however:¹²

We were, of course, whites only: apartheid applies as completely inside as it does outside, ensuring that blacks and whites - even if arrested and charged and sentenced together - are kept always separate. The black politicals are all on Robben Island off Cape Town, the whites in Pretoria (77).

Lewin gives an account of the white political prisoners with whom he spent time at Local and Central Prisons,¹³ a group I now intend to focus on. A 'total of twenty-seven white political prisoners' at Local Prison are described - a diverse group, with

occupations ranging from Q.C and attorney to surveyor and journalist (77-78). Lewin is initially cautious in his interactions with them; they are 'strangers to each other' and 'very different sorts of people, often with strong ideological and psychological differences' (79). Nevertheless, despite these and other divisions - professional, social, political and religious - the prisoners are united in their opposition to the South African government, having 'all, without distinction, landed in prison' through a conviction that 'those in power were corrupt and evil, and maintained their position through fascist-type control' (95).

In comparison to the sentences of many of these prisoners, Lewin's seven-year term is insignificant because it is 'something definite', with a 'finite horizon' (77). For Bram Fischer and Denis Goldberg, two notable figures whom I shall now discuss at some length, 'it is life, It [sic] is life' (212). Lewin, who admired both men because of their determination and the power implied in their self-control, is one of the few political prison-writers to provide an insight into the time they spent at Local and Central Prisons;¹⁴ both of them were serving life-sentences for conspiracy to commit sabotage.

Fischer, fifty-eight when he was sentenced, was not only an important figure in the struggle to end apartheid but, as Lewin notes, Fischer's Afrikaner background placed him at a distinct disadvantage:

Bram Fischer has always been a very special sort of bandiet for the boere. His father was Judge President of the Orange Free State, where his grandfather had once been prime minister. His could not have been of a more eminent South African, Afrikaans family....The

boere tend to regard him as the leading Black Sheep of the Afrikaner Nation: they view him with distinct fascination, sometimes with veiled respect, sometimes open admiration. And sometimes they derive malicious pleasure from tormenting him, rather as if tormenting him gives them social status (212-213).

Fischer, like Breytenbach (whom I shall consider in the next chapter), was considered a traitor, not only by the government but by the warders at Local Prison. As a result, the prison authorities, in order to prove their superior power, went to great lengths to belittle and even to destroy him. As Lewin observes, Fischer was 'puzzled, lost as a bandiet' and, tragically, 'slowly ground down', being forced by the head-warder, Du Preez, to 'clean the toilets, with a brush and a rag, down on his knees in front of the bowl'. Lewin remarks that it 'was du Preez's finest moment:¹⁵ standing command over Bram Fischer, Q.C., as he scrubbed the shit-house with a brush and rag' (213-214).

Lewin was particularly moved by Fischer's inner strength and control, shown in his ability to remain 'polite and courteous' (213), in spite of relentless humiliation and psychological cruelty:

Unlike du Preez (who always called Bram 'Fischer! Fischer!') the other boere liked to call him 'Bram'. The younger warders liked calling him Bram as a way of proving their authority....More senior officers made a point of being shown to him, looking him up and down, the prize exhibit - hello, Bram, they say, Hoe gaan dit?/How goes it? Bram, always polite, nods and answers, and asks about their health (214).

Bandiet details two further incidents which involve Fischer and his intimidation by prison officials. The first concerns a

visit from Thys Nel, Deputy Commissioner of Prisons. Drunk and disorderly, Nel arrived one Saturday night to inspect the prison. He was accompanied by a friend and it seemed as though Nel's motive was to provoke the Jewish prisoners, while entertaining his companion:

...the Deputy Commissioner of Prisons, with friend, [was] out for an evening's entertainment. Jew-baiting, with the normal inhibitions of protocol removed by a good dinner and the absence of anyone besides a row of red bandiete. I heard the talking down the passage, then could recognize Nel's voice, raised angrily against Rowley Arenstein, just down the row - and Rowley's patient, persistent replies. 'Jood,' said Nel, 'Jew - you're a communist because you're a Jew - you're a Jew so you must be a communist.' And similar pleasantries. Then a slouch further along the corridor, to Bram's window, next to mine. 'You're a fool,' said Nel, 'a lawyer and they all say you're so clever - but I know you're a fool, and you'll sit here forever' (215).

In his direct and forthright manner Lewin relates a second episode, highlighting the cruelty of the warders, who use the power of their authority to suppress the prisoners physically and psychologically. Fischer's son, Paul, died in February 1971 from cystic fibrosis. Fischer was informed of this by his brother who, despite the sadness of the situation, was not allowed to meet him face to face but had to deliver the news in the presence of guards and through a partition.¹⁶ Fischer was denied permission to attend the funeral but was granted special visits to co-ordinate funeral arrangements. Once plans were made, these visits were abruptly stopped, supposedly in order to maintain state security. Lewin was sufficiently affected by this incident

to write a poem entitled 'Another Day (For Bram Fischer)'. This extract captures the inhumanity of the officials:

They call it the visitors room
His brother
peering through the perspex
into the wooden box
told him:
Your son died this morning.
through the perspex
into the wooden box
keeping the State secure
Your son died this morning...(Feinberg ed. 1980:84).

Lewin creates, here, a sense of emptiness and coldness through the use and the repetition of the words 'perspex' and 'wooden box'. The words also reinforce the bleakness associated with the visitor's room, while the sombre tone of the poem is augmented by the reiteration of the words 'Your son died this morning'. The absurdity of the restriction is emphasized when it is suggested that contact is forbidden in order to uphold the safety of the state. Such a response is similar to the treatment Cronin received when his wife died unexpectedly during his seven-year prison term. Cronin's pain and the callous handling of his loss echo the Fischer episode. In his volume of prison poetry, Inside, Cronin expresses his grief:

I saw your mother
with two guards
through a glass plate
for one quarter hour
on the day that you died.

'Extra visit, special favour'
I was told, and warned
'The visit will be stopped
if politics is discussed.
Verstaan - understand!?'

on the day that you died.

I couldn't place
my arm around her,
around your mother
when she sobbed.

Fifteen minutes up
I was led
back to the workshop.
Your death, my wife,
one crime they managed
not to perpetrate
on the day that you died (1987:77).

In continuing my discussion on Fischer, I wish to depart briefly from Lewin's Bandiet. Mandela respectfully remembers Fischer as a 'stoic...man who never burdened his friends with his own pain and troubles. As an Afrikaner whose conscience forced him to reject his own heritage and be ostracized by his own people, he showed a level of courage and sacrifice that was in a class by itself' (1994:339-340). When Fischer fell gravely ill in 1974 (an episode not witnessed by Lewin, who was released in 1971), the authorities refused to furnish adequate medical attention. Niehaus provides a poignant account of the way in which prison officials treated Fischer and draws particular attention to the relationship between Fischer and Goldberg during this period:

Dennis [sic] had seen his good friend Bram Fischer slowly dying of cancer after years in which they had fought together for each and every privilege....One afternoon, while we were both taking a shower, he told me how Bram had slipped and fallen in that shower. He had broken his hip, but...the medical officer refused to have X-rays taken. Although Bram was in extreme pain, he was refused permission to take his meals in

his cell. Dennis and Johnnie Matthews...had to carry him down the stairs to the dining room every day (1994:124).

Eventually, Fischer was diagnosed as having a splintered hip. He was also suffering from advanced prostate cancer and, while it was obvious that he was dying, the authorities continued to maltreat him. Niehaus notes that Fischer's final days were characterized by isolation and suffering, spent almost entirely in 'the prison hospital, where he lay alone until a few days before his death'. Eventually, he was moved to his brother's farm near Bloemfontein, where he spent his last days. Ironically, 'a special proclamation had been issued which declared the house a prison. He had been sentenced to life imprisonment', Niehaus notes, 'therefore he had to die in a prison' (1994:125).¹⁷

Lewin writes also about Goldberg's caring and compassionate behaviour (193) but describes his relationship with Goldberg, sentenced at age thirty-one, in a different, almost light-hearted way. He recalls, for example, that the group was allowed to produce a play at Local Prison.¹⁸ Despite limited resources, they managed to create scenery and costumes, with prisoners like Goldberg, an engineer, using his expertise to build elaborate stage props. Lewin is clearly impressed by Goldberg's ingenuity:

...Denis produced, amazingly, two full-scale doors: both constructed from cardboard cartons, they came complete with frames and handles - and they opened and shut as needed. The old stage-end of the yard was transformed that year - December 1967 - because Denis, with usual thoroughness, insisted on trying to construct a curtain. Some curtain: it had to stretch some thirteen yards across the width of the yard and Denis made it with an elaborate cantilever pattern of

string, stretched between the bars of the cells overlooking the yard, which was (just) strong enough to hold up half-a-dozen blankets (199-200).

Goldberg's accomplishments gave the group of political prisoners a sense of pride, achievement and, by inference, collective strength as well. In addition to the stage props, Goldberg also produced a programme with 'scurrilous biographies of each of the players, and the final credit to "the Special Branch and Prisons Department, without whose efforts these actors could not have been brought together"' (193-194).

Lewin focuses on Goldberg's creativity and, in this last quotation, on his sense of humour, notwithstanding his situation. Like La Guma and Brutus, Lewin also shows that, in his own case at least, life behind bars was not always intolerable. In the account of another episode, he tells how Goldberg was partially responsible for effecting change at Local which, again, gave the political prisoners some sense of control:

Denis Goldberg was called to the O.C.'s office and found there his father, introduced to him by a senior officer from Prison Headquarters. There had, said old Sam Goldberg, been some articles in the papers which made him fearful about his son's treatment; he had gone to Headquarters to ask about it and was now here to see how his son really was. Was he OK? Did he have any complaints? Yes, said Denis, he was OK - and complaints, yes, he had many complaints. He outlined a large number of them to his father and the attendant officer...(91).

Goldberg's resilience and his modest demeanour made an impression on other prisoners as well. Evans, for example, in a poem entitled 'And Denis Goldberg' declares:

Many those

who saw
who knew
and even cared.
Doubtless they get their due elsewhere.
Fewer those
who knew the cold twist through the gut
the vomit taste of fear:
because they felt - and chose and dared
these words for them, for you.
You knew
the yardstick of success
knew the test of comfort, pleasure
chose another measure of your life
- no more than your brother's.
We value it no less (Feinberg ed. 1980:20).

Jenkin mentions that 'Denis was one of Mandela's compatriots and as such one of the names we held in greatest esteem' (1987:75); and, Jenkin notes, Denis was a man who, despite his sentence, remained dedicated to 'the cause', a commitment that was 'an inspiration and made us feel ashamed of feeling sorry for ourselves'. Goldberg, Jenkin continues, had 'been in prison since we were young teenagers and...would still be in prison after we'd served our sentences'. Despite these 'prospects', Goldberg's 'strength and commitment' were not weakened and while 'it should have been us helping him...it was he who helped us by reminding us that our sentences were just "parking tickets"' (1987:76).

It is significant that Evans, Jenkin and Lewin acknowledge Goldberg's unwavering and inspiring commitment to the struggle against apartheid. While Foucault mentions in Discipline and Punish that one of the ways in which to 'exercise power...over men' is through the mind, which is 'a surface of inscription for power' (1995:102), it is evident that both Fischer and Goldberg

resisted what Foucault refers to as 'the control of ideas' (1995:102), and the relationship between their resolve and their power strengthened Lewin's personal determination as well. In addition, Lewin was struck by Goldberg's optimism and responds, as seen, by drawing attention to moments in prison life that were agreeable because of Goldberg's spirit. Lewin thus achieves a sense of balance by combining the negative with the positive aspects of prison life, a feature I shall now examine in more detail.

By reminding himself and the reader that, even in the most difficult circumstance, there is often a moment of relief, Lewin is able to provide a unique insight into the political prison-experience. Indeed, these occasions also shed light on the way in which other political prisoners are seen to react when receiving small but significant privileges. On Christmas Day, 1964, for example, the prisoners obtain some 'old, very dry, very dark tobacco' which they roll crudely into cigarettes, using brown paper. 'Still newly abstinent at that early stage of [their] sentences', they smoke 'hard for an hour or so' and are 'soundly sick' (191). Lewin writes about the prisoners' efforts to keep in touch with popular culture and changing trends, how they 'trac[e] a whole social revolution' (218) by following the advertisements in publications like Huisgenoot and Fair Lady:¹⁹ 'who'd ever heard of "panti-hose" in 1964? Or mini's? Or seen men in long hair? We had to discover from visitors what "psychedelic" meant' (218).

In response to the visit of Helen Suzman to Pretoria Local Prison, Lewin reports, the group was allowed to buy chess and draught sets and were given a tennis ball, a cricket bat and a

record player with loud-speakers. In addition, prisoners were allowed to buy records, which also enabled them to 'keep up with changing musical tastes' (211). Initially, the group listened to 'Mozart horn concertos, a Richter recital, an Oistrach recital, Chopin's 1st piano, and a Bach harpsichord recital' (188). Later, their selection became more eclectic and often proved to be unpleasant. Fischer provided the Chief Record Programmer with a list of requests every day. When it was Issy Heymann's turn, the results were amusing:

Issy Heymann's young son mentioned one Sunday that we must, but must, get Jimi Hendrix - so dutiful 58-year-old Issy ordered Jimi Hendrix....The night Issy Heymann's order arrived, the entire section of white politicals - most of whom had been in prison since 1964 and many of whose musical appreciation stopped at Strauss, if not Beethoven - was subjected to an uninterrupted full side of the Best of Jimi Hendrix, played at full volume (211-212).

Issy's attempts to exchange the record for 'something else, less noisy' were in vain and received the following response: 'If you want to buy kaffir music...you must listen to kaffir music. No swapping' (212). The lightheartedness was short-lived but significant, and the resolve of the commanding officer, Schnepel, brings the situation back to grim reality.

The relationship between prisoner and jailer is almost always dealt with in prison literature, and Lewin depicts this connection mostly in a negative way. He describes the head-warder, Du Preez, as 'the man who, for the next four years, was to make our lives hell' (41) and who has 'the power of life and death over us' (96). Du Preez is shown to be inflexible and petty, and Lewin stresses the head-warder's antagonism and his

exploitation of the position of power over the political prisoners. The hostility and the ruthlessness of this man are obvious. Not only is he 'a petty tyrant' but he also 'effectively controlled every aspect of [the prisoners'] lives and so his tyranny was absolute and inescapable' (82). Foucault explains how the mechanisms of power operate in order to ensure the kind of authoritarian domination that Lewin refers to:

In prison the government may dispose of the liberty of the person and of the time of the prisoner; from then on, one can imagine the power of the education which, not only in a day, but in the succession of days and even years, may regulate for man the time of waking and sleeping, of activity and rest, the number and duration of meals, the quality and ration of food, the nature and product of labour, the time of prayer, the use of speech and even, so to speak, that of thought, that education which...regulates the movements of the body, and even in moments of rest, determines the use of time...takes possession of man as a whole, of all the physical and moral faculties that are in him and of the time in which he is himself (1995:236).

This comprehensive power is reinforced, in Du Preez's case, by his innate ability to manipulate rules:

Du Preez's genius was not in inventing hardships, nor even in contravening the regulations. His strength lay in knowing - more by an instinctive cunning than any marked intelligence - just how far he could push the regulations without breaking them. He was, I suppose, the ideal prison warder in that he maintained, with deadly consistency, an active antagonism towards the prisoners (84).

This portrait of a man who is shrewd and sadistic has something in common with Barbara Hogan's description of the wardress who was in charge of her during her internment at Diepkloof Prison. Hogan asserts that the wardress²⁰

...would be nice to you and the next day she would be reporting you. The kind of institution that a prison is means that a wardress will always protect her own interests because she is working in an institution that demands that she reports on everything that you do. It even demands that she finds fault, demands that she act out the institutional role. So there is no genuine relationship there, it is purely manipulative (Schreiner ed. 1992:24).

Lewin considers that Du Preez's tyranny is based 'on the implementation of triviality' (82). In order to substantiate this claim, Lewin makes use of an interesting device in his book, namely diary entries, which cover the years 1966 and 1967. This is in complete contrast to the rest of the work but is an astute way of making notes and observations about particular events. These entries clearly illustrate Foucault's observations relating to the link between power and the regulation of the prisoner's life: Lewin regards these notations as 'a sort of profit and loss account' of the conflict with Du Preez, which again draws attention to the ongoing struggle for supremacy between prisoner and warder, and also considers these entries as a way in which to 'remember how ridiculous and petty were the things that caused the crises in our lives' (179). The following example provides an illustration:

- 21.11.66 Du Preez finds Bram Fischer washing his hands in the newly built basins in our bathroom and combing his hair in the newly installed mirrors. I thought, says Bram, they were for us. Moenie dink nie, says du Preez - don't think; a prisoner must never think.
- 22.11.66 Yes, says the commanding officer, those are your basins and mirrors. You may use them.
- 23.11.66 Du Preez bans any books being taken into the yard at exercise time.

24.11.66 Du Preez bans all talking while mailbags are being sewn. The O.C. confirms the ban on books in the yard (180).

Du Preez treats subordinate warders in an identical fashion, which reinforces the impression of his harshness. Likewise, head-warder Delport, on Robben Island, was, according to Naidoo, feared and hated by warders and prisoners alike:

He was a slave driver. Under him, prisoners were hung from the ceiling and the worst atrocities took place, and for years we never saw him smile, not even when the warders were making their crude jokes; we would see him shouting at them or reporting them for the most trivial offences. The warders hated him as much as we did - even his family, we were told, stood in fear of him (1982:118).

While paying attention to the cruelty of Du Preez's actions, Lewin nevertheless portrays the attempts of some warders to be reasonable. Warder Dunn, for example, treats the political prisoners with respect and tries 'to communicate a sense of understanding' (103).²¹ Similarly, Captain Schnepel agrees to meet with the group in order to discuss grievances, an interaction that Lewin considers 'the most reasonable moment of my time inside' (207). In describing the positive and the negative aspects of the relationship between prisoner and jailer, Lewin achieves what C.J. Driver calls an 'understated, observant, careful voice' (1975:116). Ultimately, though, Lewin recalls that no officials 'could afford to act too reasonably towards the politicals' (207). In the same way that Brutus remembers 'the boots seeking a prisoner's gall' (1978a:41), so Lewin recalls 'the pettiness and meanness' that seemed 'contemptible' (225). In relation to the discussion on power, it is significant that he

sees prisoners as involved in a struggle, in an elaborate 'game of cat-and-mouse, with the bandiet-mouse permanently at the receiving end' (122). Lewin contends that 'we, the mice, could do nothing more than exploit to the full whatever leeway we thought they, the cats, would allow' and that 'we as mice had very little, or nothing, on our side' (47). It is noteworthy that Lewin and La Guma portray the relationship between warder and prisoner in a similar way, using cat-and-mouse imagery in order to stress the negative, dehumanizing aspect of the political prison-experience. While La Guma also observes that prisoners are like 'entrapped lions fighting off shambling monsters' (1991:81), Lewin, in comparing prisoners also to caged animals, extends the comparison to suggest that the routine of prison life is akin to the ritual of a circus performance, with the prison warder directing the actions and behaviour of the prisoners.

Lewin declares, however, that it is 'not so funny when the cage is closed off from the audience, who can't see in, with animals who can't see out' (210). The scene is surreal because audience participation is barred and there is no sense of enjoyment, since only the leader derives a measure of macabre satisfaction. Despite Schnepel's ability to be reasonable, Lewin still calls him 'a prancing ringmaster acting God' (210), again highlighting the omnipotent power of his jailers.

Lewin uses the idea of a performance ritual in another context as well. He contrasts the daily inspection at Pretoria Local to a pantomime show, drawing attention to the serious but, at times, ludicrous nature of the procedure:

Every morning at Local Prison - at 6 a.m. or 7 a.m., opening-up time...the duty officer march[es] through

each section of the prison, accompanied by a duty warder and preceded into each section by the section warder. It is the section warder's duty to greet the Inspection Team by vigorously stamping his feet at the entrance to the section, then to proceed down the section screaming *Staan reg!/Stand straight!* as he flings open and flings closed each cell door. The startled bandiet behind each door sees remarkably little of the performance but hears remarkably much (202).

The ceremonial unlocking of prison doors, the marching and the shouting are part of the spectacle and draw attention to the way in which sound is used to scare the prisoners into submission. First also reinforces the impression of the negative effect of sound on the prisoners when she claims that she identified 'the wardresses by the sound of them long before [she] saw them' (1982:30) and that her 'ears knocked with the noise of a police station in operation'. Although her cell was 'abandoned in isolation', it was 'suspended in a cacophony of noise'; and despite the din of 'accelerators', 'exhaust pipes' and 'car doors', she was aware of 'the silence' of 'prisoners in intimidated subservience' (1982:16). These descriptions remind the reader of a poem from Letters to Martha, where Brutus, in contrast, suggests that a lack of sound and, more especially, music created a 'hunger' and a 'saddening want' (1978a:13).

In an environment characterized either by the jarring presence or the relative absence of sound and in which a game of cat-and-mouse is enacted, it is inevitable that the prisoner should contemplate ways in which to survive or, as suggested earlier, 'accommodate to the system' (55). As noted, Lewin's initial response to seven years in prison is one of doubt and

apprehension. He is certain that he can never 'serve that long' and questions how 'anyone [can] survive seven years in prison' (77). In time, he learns, like Brutus, that survival depends on two 'apparently contradictory' things. One, as seen, is the ability to adapt:

...you must accommodate to the system sufficiently for you to be able to ride with it and not be ground down by it. This, in itself, requires that you somehow maintain a balance between appearing to be acquiescent to the system and losing your self-respect in doing so (50).

Secondly, in the perpetual struggle for power, 'you must constantly fight the system, cheat it at every possible stage, and find as many ways as possible of beating it - which also requires that you maintain some balance between success and failure, for to be beaten too often is demoralizing' (50).

To counteract adversity, therefore, a definite and a practical position must be adopted. Lewin concludes, however, this positive response to a negative situation may include dishonest means. To 'survive prison', he believes, you must 'become a successful criminal. Only as a practising crook can you gain any comfort for yourself or retain any sense of personal dignity' (50). At Central Prison he discovers how to become a criminal and I am of the opinion that the acquisition of a new, though illegal, skill has an empowering effect on him because his decision to immerse himself in the subversive culture of prison equips him with the competence and the personal strength to survive his ordeal. From Andy, a non-political prisoner serving a twelve-year sentence for armed robbery, Lewin learns to 'smuggle, particularly...tobacco'. Tobacco, Lewin realizes, is

'the basis of the Central economy' and while, 'officially, only A and B groupers were allowed to smoke', unofficially, 'everybody who wanted to smoke, smoked - at a price'. As a result, Lewin learns to transfer tobacco 'from those who [have] it to those who [haven't]' (117). In the process, he discovers, like Brutus, that 'nothing [has] value unless it [can] be traded: tobacco, boom, bodies, friendships - they [are] all commodities'.²² Nothing, however, has 'a greater value from the official point of view than information' (166).

The acquisition of information, like the acquisition of material goods, is an aspect of the political prison-experience that many writers meticulously document. While political prisoners were not allowed any news, a ban Lewin considered as a way to 'aggravate and embitter every aspect of life in prison' (221),²³ prisoners, nevertheless, contrived ways in which to gather news. Mandela writes that on Robben Island 'we regarded it as our duty to keep ourselves current on the politics of the country, and we fought long and hard for the right to have newspapers'. It was not until 1980 that prisoners on Robben Island were allowed to buy newspapers. Before then, Mandela recalls, 'we devised many ways of obtaining them' but, at first, 'we were not so adept':

One of the advantages of going to the quarry was that warders' sandwiches were wrapped in newspaper and they would often discard these newsprint wrappers in the trash, where we secretly retrieved them. We would distract the warders' attention, pluck the papers out of the garbage, and slide them into our shirts (1994:362).

The prisoners, then, were able skilfully to turn a negative state of affairs into a positive circumstance. At times Mandela even sanctioned bribery as a means to procure information, and reveals how 'the warders always seemed to be short of money, and their poverty was our opportunity' (1994:362).

Ahmed Kathrada, also sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island, confirms that political prisoners 'had to try all sorts of methods to get news - stealing, bribing, blackmailing and begging' (Schadeberg 1994:41-42). Lewin mentions that at Local they constantly 'pumped' officials for news but 'with absolute failure' (222). One warder, however, 'talked about every rugby player under the immortal sun, and particularly about the rising stars' (222), allowing the prisoners to judge 'the progress of the world situation' (223) by way of the rugby tour. In his short story, 'The Phone Call', Lewin highlights, on the one hand, the inaccessibility of information and, on the other, the prisoner's constant determination to keep in touch with current events at any cost. 'The Officer's phone' in the carpentry shop 'was thought of as an unlikely source of smuggled enlightenment'. There was 'greater potential', Lewin claims, in the possibility that the Officer would 'bring to work more than just the comics and sports section of his newspaper', or would forget 'to return to his pocket the mini-radio'. The telephone, consequently, 'remained firmly in the realm of Outside, inconceivable as a part of Inside' (1991:43).

A telephone is, nevertheless, 'an aggravatingly tempting symbol of broken barriers, instant link with the great world of events and news outside' (1991:42). When the carpentry-shop

officer is summoned to the Chief's office, a moment of opportunity arrives:

...[the prisoner] scuttled back to the unguarded phone and sat down opposite it in the Officer's chair.

What to do? He was now four years into his sentence and, after four years of isolation, he found suddenly he could remember no phone numbers. No, one: the number of his original home, at the village outside Pretoria, going back fifteen years (1991:44-45).

Lewin stresses the pathos of the situation, as the prisoner is unable to recall any other number and is uncertain whom to telephone. Eventually he procures a number from a telephone directory but realizes that he needs an outside line:

The prisoner lifted the receiver, holding it carefully, strangely, and coughed to clear his throat.

A woman's voice sounded: "Ja?"

He coughed again and said gruffly, thickening the accent as much as possible: "Lyn, asseblief. Line, please."

Silence. She said nothing. Had she suspected? He held on, his fingers straining on the handset, beginning to sweat (1991:45-46).

Lewin pays attention to detail, using the words 'fingers straining' and 'sweat' to reinforce the sense of urgency and tension. When the prisoner reaches a friend, James Knowles, the interaction is awkward:

"...tell me what's been happening.? Quickly, I've not much time. What's new?"

"Oh, nothing much really. We're all well. Oh, Dad died last year and I'm now in charge here, with Raymond. You remember? No, nothing's happening really, nothing..."

"James, quickly, what's the news? I've not seen a newspaper for four years. What's the NEWS, man, the news?" (1991:47).

The prisoner is frustrated when James interprets the request for news on a personal level and the ambiguity of 'What's new' adds to the confusion. James acknowledges the misunderstanding - 'Oh dear, yes, well, I see what you mean' (1991:47) - but is unable to solve the problem. He cannot locate the morning paper, nor recall any important news items other than 'a car crash' and that 'the rugby team had lost'. And 'internationally?', the prisoner demands: 'The Sino-Soviet dispute? Middle East? America? Vietnam? Europe? What's been HAPPENING? What's happening in the townships? Anything happening HERE?' (1991:47).

Ironically, James is able to respond to the request for news with personal details and local information only. Clearly, he and the prisoner interpret news differently. The newspaper, a valuable commodity for a prisoner, is of little worth to James, who concludes that 'nothing's happening', highlighting the prisoner's feeling of disappointment. The effect of the telephone conversation is poignant and the prisoner is left unsatisfied and disillusioned: "'Yes, all right, James, thanks.'" The prisoner shrugged and tried to comfort his Outside friend: 'It didn't matter, really, and everything would be all right' (1991:48). The effect is, nevertheless, double-edged. While the prisoner has failed to acquire news, he has managed to use the telephone. Thus, he has succeeded in infiltrating the 'sound and secure' 'armor' of the 'State's interests' (1991:50), a small but certain victory.

Similarly, Lewin, as implied earlier, learns how to take advantage of every opportunity. Religious services, for instance, provide the 'ideal and unhurried opportunity' for the smuggling Lewin has described, and he deduces that for 'the price

of sitting through two hymns and a sermon, you could arrange to collect most things' (172). I have briefly mentioned Lewin's discovery that sex also has a price and that in prison the buying and the selling of sex is commonplace. He writes, too, that 'everybody at Central - bandiete and boere alike - discussed the sex trade openly':

it was, after all, the most immediately available source of social interest and was one of the few free areas of gossip between warders and bandiete....The official practice, as opposed to pronouncement, was to encourage rather than discourage the sex trade (160).

It is interesting to note that Foucault connects the selling of sex to delinquency and, in Discipline and Punish, he claims that, in establishing a price for sex and in generating 'a profit' from it, 'the delinquent' involved is an 'illicit fiscal agent operating over illegal practices' (1995:279-280).

While Lewin's focus on the sex trade is different from the already discussed use of sex as a way of humiliating prisoners and so creating a climate of power over them, Lewin, like Brutus, regards homosexuality as a negative component of the political prison-experience. He is shocked when a head-warder at Central Prison, Lappies, tells him that it 'keeps the peace' (160) and is equally distressed by Lappies's voyeurism: 'When you're on night shift', he says, 'you can...peep through the judas-holes....It's amazing...what some guys will get up to when they're...locked up together in a cell' (161). To highlight his concern, Lewin narrates two stories. The first deals with a young prisoner whose screams particularly affect Lewin. One night Lewin hears cries that are 'lingering, hideous in the lonely silence' (158) and, when he asks an official about the noise, he is told that it is

'nothing much really: the boy was raped in the married quarters at Sonderwater', a prison outside Pretoria, and 'is still crying about it' (158).

The prison officials are heartless but the prisoners are also callous, as the second story reveals. Dopey, in prison for robbery, is described by Lewin as a person who 'should have been in hospital. He wandered around the workshop all day, harmlessly chatting and singing to himself', often in 'long discussion with...Eileen, the girl in his head' (158). Dopey is an innocent, a seemingly perfect target for Don, who is serving a life-sentence:

...[Don] had been locked up in a cell with two others for the night...and, wanting sexual relief, had gone for it where it was, right there on the mat next to him. The fact that Dopey had objected was - with a shrug - 'stiff'. There'd be others (159).

After rejecting Don, Dopey 'continued his chat with Eileen' (159), a response that, in some respects, reminds the reader of one of Brutus's poems, included in the 'Postscripts' to Letters to Martha:

A studious highschoolboy he looked
- as in fact I later found he was -
bespectacled, with soft-curved face
and withdrawn protected air:
and I marvelled, envied him
so untouched he seemed to be
in that hammering brutal atmosphere.

But his safety had a different base
and his safely private world was fantasy;
from the battering importunities
of fists and genitals of sodomites
he fled: in a maniac world he was safe (1978a:22).

Lewin concludes from what he observed around him that 'prison authorities wholly ducked the problems involved in locking men away', and that 'their attitude seemed to fluctuate between a sneer and a giggle' (161-162).

The relationship between male prisoners, however, is not always sexual. As shown, Adams in La Guma's The Stone Country develops a friendship, which is based on understanding, with The Casbah Kid. Brutus refers to the interaction between prisoners as a 'welcome' opportunity to get to know 'one's fellow-men' (1978a:11), which highlights the empowering effect of companionship; and Niehaus maintains that although living in close quarters created conflict, friendships were formed, especially, when a prisoner was treated unfairly:

During the period in which Rob and I were at loggerheads, I was denied certain privileges because I was found with a newspaper in my cell to which I was not entitled. Rob took up the cudgels on my behalf and encouraged the others to take part in a go-slow cleaning strike in protest. The result was that everybody, including Rob, lost their privileges. It was a tremendous sacrifice, because these privileges, such as the right to have physical contact with one's visitors, were like a lifeline to us (1994:128-129).

Lewin also comments on the fellowship between political prisoners at Local Prison, relationships that despite the 'infinite possibilities for tension' were, as noted, reinforced by a common purpose, their 'active opposition to one thing, apartheid'.²⁴ This 'established bonds which...were immediately strengthened by [the] day-to-day existence at Local' (79).

Comradeship is one of the positive aspects of the political prison-experience because, in essence, life in prison is

characterized by loneliness. Lewin responds to his personal solitude by means of a poem, entitled 'Touch', which I have included because, despite its references to violence and suffering, the poem, focuses on Lewin's desire for nothing more than a physical, non-sexual connection with another human being. This is an indication that he was still engaged with life and was not destroyed by his lengthy term in prison:

When I get out
I'm going to ask someone
to touch me
very gently please
and slowly,
touch me
I want
to learn again
how life feels.

I've not been touched
for seven years
for seven years
I've been untouched
out of touch
and I've learnt
to know now
the meaning of
untouchable...(Feinberg ed. 1980:84-85).

In these lines, Lewin successfully uses the word 'touch' in many ways. He has had little contact with family and friends and has been denied the opportunity of having a meaningful sexual relationship. He is an 'untouchable', excluded because he is a prisoner, a 'bandiet', and he has to relearn how to give and to receive affection. As the poem progresses, Lewin concedes that, in the bizarre world of prison, touch is not uncommon but it occurs in an entirely different context from his earlier life:

Untouched - not quite
I can count the things
that have touched me

One: fists
At the beginning
fierce mad fists
beating beating
till I remember
screaming
don't touch me
please don't touch me...(85).

Touch takes on cruel and ruthless connotations, suggested by the use of words like 'mad fists' and the repetition in 'beating beating'. Lewin is recalling the violence of his interrogation and, in contrast to the thought conveyed in the first stanza, the prisoner now shows himself desperate to be left alone. The next stanza describes another experience where touch is repulsive:

Two: paws
The first four years of paws
every day
patting paws, searching
- arms up, shoes off
legs apart -
prodding paws, systematic
heavy, indifferent
probing away
all privacy...(85).

Lewin skilfully selects the word 'paws' to dehumanize the warders. When they search the prisoners, the warders are like animals, lacking in humanity and kindness. The alliteration in 'prodding paws' and 'patting paws' emphasizes the sense of intrusion and violation, and 'probing away/all privacy' recalls the stripping image that Lewin uses so successfully in Bandiet.

The words 'probing away/all privacy' also recall an excerpt from the latter, where he relives an ordeal during a search for tobacco:

I stepped up to him (his name, I think, was Snooiman) and put feet apart...the packet between my legs feeling obscenely large. Snooiman tipped both shoes up and peered into them...then heavy pats along the sleeves, jerking up into the armpits, then carefully rubbing around the back, down to the waist, around to the front, sliding down over the hips. Then he knelt down...so as to be better able to feel all the way down my outer legs, and round the ankles, and up, inside along my calves, then knees, inner thighs (I've had it, I thought, had it) then firmly into my groin, two hands pushing in on both sides, easing upwards (he's missed it) then one hand easing down again, firmly feeling me, cupped (120-121).

The final stanza of the poem, 'Touch', concludes with a plea for tenderness and compassion. It is a request from a prisoner who, after seven years of imprisonment, is desperate for a human encounter that is gentle and loving. Jacques Alvarez-Pereyre rightly notes that Lewin, in expressing his desire to respond to gentle touch, 'lays himself bare to an extent that very seldom exists in prison literature: the emotion the poem evokes is, for that reason, perhaps, so much greater' (1984:88). The last lines read as follows:

I don't want fists and paws
I want
to want to be touched
again
and to touch.
I want to feel alive
again
I want to say
when I get out
Here I am

please touch me (85).

Lewin's expression of a need for meaningful human contact is similar to feelings described, with great poignancy, by Mandela:

In May of 1984, I found some consolation that seemed to make up for all the discomforts. At a scheduled visit...I was escorted down to the visiting area by Sergeant Gregory, who...ushered me into a separate room where there was only a small table, and no dividers of any kind. He very softly said to me that the authorities had made a change. That day was the beginning of what were known as "contact" visits.

He then went outside to see my wife and daughter and asked to speak to Winnie privately....Gregory escorted her around the door and before either of us knew it, we were in the same room and in each other's arms. I kissed and held my wife for the first time in all these many years. It was a moment I had dreamed about a thousand times....It had been twenty-one years since I had even touched my wife's hand (1994:450-451).

In the same way that in Lewin's poem he reflects on the need to be touched, so he ponders what it will be like to be free, dreaming of liberty incessantly. Only 'in the last two years' of imprisonment, he recollects, 'was it possible really to imagine' that freedom 'would happen at all. Before then, Out was just the distant blissful unseen horizon' (225). The day before Lewin was released, he was transferred to the Fort, the prison where he was initially held in solitary confinement. 'It was a useful reminder', Lewin concludes, 'ending up as I'd begun' (227). While this statement relates specifically to the building in which he was interned, it refers as well to Lewin's state of mind. The prison experience did not destroy him. He remained as committed to the struggle for freedom as he did on the day he was

imprisoned. His commitment is my final subject for contemplation.

When the time for release approached, Lewin had mixed emotions.²⁵ He was pleased to be leaving and yet was hesitant to leave the familiar world of the 'inside'. He also felt guilty that prisoners like Fischer and Goldberg must stay behind. More than any other emotion he was 'bored, bored, bored with the whole stupid mean facade' and was thankful that the prison officials 'would soon be unable to touch or menace [him] any further'. At the close of Bandiet he describes himself as having been 'just another performing flea' enclosed in 'an empty box for a fixed time, then spewed out invisibly, leaving behind not even a slight mess' (225-226). When a friend arrives to meet him at the Fort, however, he is greeted with the words 'Hello Bandiet' (229), a welcome that Jacobs draws attention to in 'A Proper Name in Prison: Self-Identification in the South African Prison Memoir' when he says that, 'in using the 'epithet *Bandiet* as the title of his book, Lewin acknowledges his prison experience as a formative component of his South African identity' (1991a:7). It is evident, then, that despite his claims, life on the 'inside' affected Lewin and altered his perception of self.

In terms of his political commitment Lewin, nevertheless, was resolute and states that as a political prisoner he had done nothing wrong (129). Lewin's claim points to the inability of the South African prison officials to achieve the kind of submission which Foucault describes as 'disarmed illegality' (1995:278). Jenkin also confirms that in 'political imprisonment the prisoners show no contrition' (1987:117) and Niehaus asserts that he 'never felt like a criminal' and, therefore, 'was not

ashamed of the green prison uniform' (1994:132). In addition to his lack of remorse, moreover, Lewin shows no embitterment about his incarceration: 'Just as, at my trial, I could not apologize for the actions which had got me into the box, so too now I cannot regret that this has happened to me' (14).

Lewin was given four days to leave South Africa and he headed for England, having applied for a British passport when his South African passport was withdrawn. He worked with Canon Collins and the International Defence and Aid Fund and as a journalist for The Guardian, South, and The Observer. In 1981 he moved with his wife and two children to Zimbabwe and there became the founder of Baobab Books. He returned to South Africa for the first time in 1991, when he was granted a restricted visa to speak during the Weekly Mail Book Week in Cape Town, and currently lives in Johannesburg where he works for the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism. In addition to his poetry and his short story, he has also written several children's books. Bandiet, however, is his most notable publication, a book that Lewin was at first hesitant to write, fearing that it might compliment and so empower, rather than criticize, the South African prison officials. He explains this point further:

Aucamp was the man responsible for the treatment of political prisoners. 'I don't care,' he once said, 'if people overseas know I'm in charge. I'm big enough to take it.' Aucamp will like to know that people outside South Africa know he was in charge of the politicals. That, he will think, is fame....

Swanepoel will also like hearing about himself. Swanepoel was Chief Interrogator of the South African Security Police. He was the man who was in charge of interrogating political detainees. While Swanepoel was

in charge of interrogating detainees, at least nineteen people died in detention.

I know Swanepoel will laugh when he reads that. I know he will laugh when he reads that I say that, a fortnight after I first met him, he swore he would kill me. Swanepoel will get satisfaction from that, knowing that someone is writing about him and describing the fear he generates in the people he is interrogating (14-15).

In spite of Aucamp and Swanepoel, however, Lewin concluded that the book had to be written 'because they are not the only people who are South Africans and they are the least important of the people I met during seven years as a bandiet'. Men like Bram Fischer, Denis Goldberg and Dave Kitson inspired him to write the book. Lewin also had in mind 'the others in Pretoria. And the others, worse off because they are not white, on Robben Island. All bandiete, with a long time ahead of them as bandiete, because they believe in a decent society and were prepared to act on their belief' (15).

Lewin was concerned with all political prisoners and this consideration is clearly demonstrated in Bandiet. The work not only documents the political prison-experience from a white perspective but draws attention to the comparison between the treatment of black and of white political prisoners, to the positive and the negative aspects of internment, and to the distinction between 'outside' and 'inside'. It describes what life was like at Local Prison and highlights the horror of Central Prison, the hanging jail, particularly in terms of the operation of power in prison. Lewin, as the above excerpt reveals, was inspired by people like Fischer and Goldberg, and the narrative affords the reader an insight into the characters

of such courageous men. Ultimately, though, Bandiet confirms that, while Lewin's awareness of self was altered by the term in prison, his resolve, nevertheless, was strengthened and, like La Guma and Brutus, he remained committed to the struggle against apartheid.

Notes

1. All references to Bandiet will be from the 1976 edition. Henceforth only page numbers will be given. 'Bandiet' is an Afrikaans word meaning convict or prisoner.
2. When Lewin met Father Trevor Huddleston, he was Provincial of the Community of the Resurrection in South Africa. He was also Superintendent of St Peter's School, the first school in the Transvaal at which blacks could matriculate.
3. Umkhonto we Sizwe, the military wing of the ANC, also engaged in acts of sabotage, hoping to inflict as little harm to individuals as possible. Mandela points out that this aim was not always possible. When a car-bomb exploded at an air-force office and military-intelligence installation in Pretoria, nineteen people were killed and over two-hundred were injured: 'The killing of civilians was a tragic accident, and I felt a profound horror at the death toll. But...I knew that such accidents were the inevitable consequence of the decision to embark on a military struggle' (1994:451).
4. The Sabotage Act was passed in 1962 and was comprehensive in scope, as Foster points out:

The Act provided that any person who committed any wrongful and wilful act whereby he injured, obstructed, tampered with or destroyed the health or safety of the public; the maintenance of law and order; the supply of water, light, power, fuel or foodstuffs; sanitary, medical or fire-extinguishing services; postal, telephone, telegraph or radio services; or the free movement of traffic; any property; or if he attempted to commit such offence, or conspired with or encouraged any other person to do so; or, if in contravention of any law, he possessed any explosives, firearm or weapon, or entered or was upon any land or building, should be guilty of sabotage (1987:22).

5. Makhoere also explains her experience of the differences between the treatment of black and of white prisoners and observes that white prisoners wore 'stylish shoes and sandals', and dresses that 'were all smart'. It was impossible, she claims, 'to identify any one of them as a prisoner'. Instead, they were 'mistaken for newly employed wardresses or visitors' (1988:21).

6. In The Stone Country, La Guma refers to the prison as 'closed in upon itself in a warren of cells, cages, corridors and yards' (1991:17).

7. Lewin's claim is incorrect. Bosman actually served about four years in prison.

8. Lewin claims that prior to their imprisonment at Central Prison, the group of white political prisoners there had little understanding of the way a jail operates and the manner in which non-political prisoners are treated (95).

9. Herman Charles Bosman was similarly affected by the experience of living in a hanging jail. In Cold Stone Jug he says that 'the hangings are the worst part of life inside the

prison....[They] loom like a shadow over the prison all the time, like an unpleasant odour, and they make life inside the prison a lot gloomier than it would otherwise be' (1991:14-15).

10. Menzi Thafeni, on death row for killing a policeman, talks about the courageous way in which his friend, Jacobus Konze, faced execution:

At the last minute Konze was granted a stay of execution, and returned to his cell pending a clemency appeal.

'When a person comes back...they can never be the same person again,' said Menzi. 'It is like they have come back from Hell. They have been to visit the death.'

Konze, Menzi felt, was already dead in his heart.... 'On 7 March they came to him and told him to pack his things. On 14 March he was taken to the gallows machine. When he was taken away that morning he was shouting for me as he was walking. He shouted, "Menzi, my time is over now, but you must not be in sorrow, you must not cry" (Rostron 1991:300).

11. In Bandiet, a warder tells Lewin that the body is left to hang for twenty minutes in order to 'see that they're dead' (142).

12. Denis Goldberg mentions that

One of the bitternesses of prison was that we were deliberately kept away from our [black] comrades....The officials said to me, 'We maintain a policy of apartheid even though we know you don't - we will never put you with them.' It's a very bitter thing. We lived together, we cooked for each other, but we couldn't be in prison together (Frederikse 1990:85).

13. Many white political prisoners at Local Prison, including Lewin and Goldberg, were transferred to Central Prison in March

1966. They were returned to Local eight months later. Fischer was not moved.

14. It is interesting to note that, in a statement to the court, Fischer also wrote about Lewin. In Mary Benson's The Sun Will Rise, Fischer is reported to have said that his decision to break the law was not unique: 'My own case is but a single one which illustrates to what our laws have driven such widely different persons as: Chief Luthuli, Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe, Dr. G.M. Naicker, Nana Sita, Hugh Lewin, Jean Middleton, Alan Brooks and thousands of others, young and old, men and women' (1981:42).

15. Lewin is not consistent in his presentation of the surname 'Du Preez'. I am adhering to the convention of capitalizing the initial letter of the prefix where it is not accompanied by a first name.

16. Makhoere was subjected to similar treatment after the death of her father:

These apartheid gods, they can be inhuman, cruel. When my father died they knew about it, but they kept quiet. Then they came to tell me, in the midst of a quarrel....They refused to permit my people to come to tell me...they used the information as a knife in my heart, and expected me to weaken, to turn hysterical, to crack into pieces (1988:81).

17. Mandela, who was 'deeply' affected by Fischer's death, argues that it was 'the state's relentless harassment of him that brought on the final illness that took him too soon'. Mandela believes, too, that Fischer was 'hounded...even after death - the state confiscated his ashes after his cremation' (1994:410). These contemptible actions demonstrate the pervasive exercise of official power over Fischer's family.

18. Prisoners on Robben Island were also allowed to produce plays and to organize musical concerts. Steve Tshwete, who spent twelve years on the Island, describes how they

...organised choral groups, musical combos, a film club, a reading society and ballroom dancing groups. The guys who were involved in ballroom dancing before prison taught us the waltz, the foxtrot, the quickstep and so on and there would be competitions in the cells....We also had a number of comedians and storytellers on the Island who sometimes entertained us while we were chopping stones (Schadeberg 1994:39).

19. When prisoners received these magazines, they were often heavily censored, with pages out and 'a single line of type painstakingly removed from the Contents section' (218).

20. Hogan was sentenced in 1982 to ten years for High Treason.

21. Ironically, Dunn committed suicide. Lewin notes that they were 'considerably shocked to hear [the news]' and that no 'warders would ever discuss the matter' (103).

22. As noted in the previous chapter, in poem 6 and 9 of Letters to Martha, respectively, Brutus talks about tobacco and sex as commodities.

23. It is of interest that, when he was released, Lewin walked out of the gates of the prison and across the road to a cafe where he bought a newspaper; the first newspaper he had read in almost seven years (228).

24. Not all political prisoners experienced the bonding that Lewin describes. In Island in Chains, Naidoo, for instance, describes the constant tension that existed between the ANC and the PAC (1982:236-239), an aspect of the political prison-experience that Dlamini also refers to in Robben Island: Hell-Hole (nd:181-184).

25. Jacob Zuma also describes his mixed emotions at the time of his release and what it meant to leave his comrades of ten years: 'it was a very painful and emotional process....You had shared pain with them and had come to understand them very deeply. I remember that there was total silence on the boat leaving the Island because of this overwhelming emotion (Schadeberg 1994:57).

CHAPTER FIVE

BREYTEN BREYTENBACH: HIS WRITING AND HIS POLITICAL COMMITMENT

Four years after Lewin was released from prison, Breyten Breytenbach, a South African poet, painter and political activist, illegally entered the country of his birth with a false passport. The purpose of this 1975 visit was to recruit two trade-unionists to help promote the Black South African unions from an office in Europe. Breytenbach hoped, as well, to gather support for Okhela, a political group which was based in France and which I shall discuss presently. He was arrested shortly before boarding his return plane, tried and sentenced to nine years' imprisonment. Before reviewing these events, however, it is necessary to outline the major issues I shall examine in this chapter.

In an essay from a collection entitled End Papers, Breytenbach asserts that

...a writer, any writer, to my mind has at least two tasks, sometimes overlapping; he is the questioner and the implacable critic of the mores and attitudes and myths of his society, but he is also the exponent of the aspirations of his people (1987:99).

From this excerpt it is apparent that Breytenbach believes that the writer has a social and a political responsibility, a point I shall consider in some detail. Breytenbach, imprisoned for his political activities, was granted official permission to write in prison, with certain restrictions. To understand the significance of this concession, it is essential to explore his situation in relation to the concept of power, referring also to

Foucault. In addition, it is necessary to contemplate the problems associated with writing in prison and the topic of censorship.

In prison, Breytenbach completed his novel, Mouroir: Mirrornotes of a Novel, which I shall examine briefly, and after his release he wrote The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist.¹ This provides the reader with an insight into political imprisonment at Pretoria Central and Pollsmoor Prisons. Using the abovementioned works and a selection of Breytenbach's poetry, I intend to discuss the psychological implications of his detention and subsequent incarceration. In particular, I propose to focus on the relationship between prisoner and jailer and the struggle for control. I shall also draw attention to the way in which Breytenbach describes, like Lewin, the mental trauma of living in a hanging jail. In conclusion, I shall demonstrate that, in Breytenbach's case as well, imprisonment did not destroy his commitment to the struggle against apartheid.

To explain the events that led up to Breytenbach's arrest and imprisonment, it is necessary to summarize the years prior to 1975. Born on 16 September 1939 in the small town of Bonnievale, in the south-western region of South Africa, Breytenbach describes his Afrikaans parents as emanating from 'poor peasant stock' (1988:124). He had a twin brother who died at birth, a sister and three more brothers, one of whom was a Special Forces officer in the South African Defence Force.² In A Season in Paradise, Breytenbach recalls his childhood with affection:

Our home was a wonderful place where, among other things, miracles occurred. It had...a red verandah in front and a white one in the back. Also a kitchen, hallway, a bedroom for our parents, and a "den" for the

boys with beds which provided cover when Ma was about to prod us with a cane or a broom handle, and where full piss-pots were kept as well. Between the bedroom and the "den" was a bathroomy type of chamber. Covered with goose-bumps we would occasionally hear Ma walking around barefooted here, her feet making sucking noises as though they were sticking to the cement floor. Or we would hear Pa sneezing and wheezing as steam bubbled out through the door, clinging in tiny wet traces to the hallway walls. Here we were grabbed and scrubbed without fear or favor until our heels, rough as those of a kitchen fowl, were rough no longer (1994:30).

Breytenbach received his primary and secondary education in the Cape Province and attended the University of Cape Town to study for a degree in Fine Arts. During this period he joined a small group of writers, painters and actors who met in Green Point, a suburb of Cape Town. Richard Rive, a coloured South African writer, recalls in his book, Writing Black, that this was an important and vital group of South African artists:

Jan Rabie was the father figure and we would meet socially at his Green Point home. Besides Breyten there was Marius Schoon, Ingrid Jonker, Gillian Jewell, Joost Grapouw, Leuntjie, whom he later married, and Gaika. And at one of our parties, of cheap wine and stale potato crisps, an intense young man with blazing eyes came up to me and said, 'With your arrogance and self-assurance I'll make an actor out of you.' It was a fledgling playwright called Athol Fugard (1981:73).

Despite his regret at leaving this group, Breytenbach decided to discontinue his studies and to travel abroad. He left South Africa in 1959 on a freighter bound for Europe and worked for a time as a factory labourer in England, as a portrait painter in a night-club in Nice and as an English teacher in Bergen. In 1961 he settled in Paris, where he started painting

and writing poetry in Afrikaans.³ He met and married a Vietnamese woman, Hoang Lien Ngo, whom the South African government considered non-white and, by inference, inferior. Accordingly, their marriage was deemed illegal by the South African Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and Breytenbach was not allowed to return to South Africa with her.⁴ As a result of this official exclusion, Breytenbach chose to remain abroad effectively as an exile, a condition which, in an interview recorded in Goddard and Wessels's Out of Exile, he implies was not entirely unbearable:

Nearly every single person I've known, although he's lost a lot by having to go into exile, being deprived of his immediate environment - and sometimes of his linguistic environment and of his family - has gained enormously on the other side in terms of education, in terms of moving into societies which are more or less normal when compared to the South African one, and broadening one's mind with travelling. I wouldn't for a moment regret all these years that I've spent away from South Africa (1992:62-63).

Living in Paris during the radical 1960s deepened Breytenbach's commitment to change in South Africa, particularly since he was exposed to a broad range of transformations that were taking place all over the world. In Judas Eye and Self-Portrait/Death Watch he details the political events that had an impact on him:

'We' lost Chile and, for a while, Argentina and Greece; but 'we' won Vietnam, Laos, Portugal, Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Guinea-Bissau. 'They' killed Lumumba, Luthuli, Ben Barka, Martin Luther King, Mondlane, Guevara, Malcolm X, Amilcar Cabral...[sic] The Russians nipped in the bud the Prague spring (1988:128).

Breytenbach was also aware of significant developments taking place in South Africa and, although removed from the situation, he followed events closely:

...in South Africa there bloomed the massive campaigns of resistance to Apartheid, led by the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and the African National Congress (ANC) - culminating in a chain of bloody repression with the Sharpeville massacre as its apotheosis. The black nationalist formations were banned, so too the South African Communist Party. People went into exile or entered the prisons. Nelson Mandela set out on his long walk to freedom, his dead life, his martyrdom (1988:126).

Motivated by his own opposition to the South African government and encouraged by the success of revolutions in Asia and Africa, Breytenbach started collaborating with a group of militants and 'moved with Black Panther hijackers, with revolutionary Brazilians, Kurds, Greeks' (1988:127). He continued, nevertheless, to pursue a career as a painter and a writer and exhibited his paintings in Edinburgh, Paris, Arnhem and Amsterdam. His collection of poems, Die Ysterkoei Moet Sweet [The Iron Cow Must Sweat], and his book of short stories, Katastrophes [Catastrophes], both published in 1964, were awarded the Afrikaans Press Corporation prize. Breytenbach hoped to return to South Africa to accept the award but his wife was denied an entry visa into South Africa. In 1967 he produced a book of poetry entitled Huis van die Dowe [The House of the Deaf], followed in 1969 by Kouevuur [Gangrene]. Both publications received the South African Central News Agency prize.

In 1970 Breytenbach wrote two volumes of poems, Lotus and Oorblyfsels [Remnants]. In the latter, included in the collection In Africa Even the Flies are Happy, his political convictions are obvious, as these lines from the poem, 'Please don't feed the animals', demonstrate:

I am Germanic
I am cruel
I know my Saturday and my Sunday
I know how it should be
and when
my seed is pale
I am the eye in the night
I come with my Saracens full of culture
my jets full of progress
I irrigate the desert
and tame the natural resources
I suck the oil from the earth
and construct latrines on the moon
listen
and tremble...(1978:49).

In this extract, Breytenbach is referring in general to the forceful actions of the South African government and to the role of the Afrikaner in supporting the system of apartheid in particular. Because of Breytenbach's heritage, he, too, is unavoidably associated with these deeds, hence the use of the word 'I' which refers both to Breytenbach and to the Afrikaners. 'Saracens full of culture' and machines that 'suck the oil from the earth' are viewed by Breytenbach as weapons of destruction,⁵ rather than instruments of progress, and he cautions that one should 'tremble' rather than praise these developments and excessive displays of power.

Following the publication of a story, Om te Vlieg [In Order to Fly], in 1971, and the collection of poetry Skryt

[Cry/Write],⁶ in 1972, Breytenbach was astonished to learn that both he and his wife would be allowed to visit South Africa. They were granted a three-month visa and arrived in Johannesburg on 30 December of that year. It was a trip that Breytenbach had dreamed about, as he reveals in a poem from In Africa Even the Flies are Happy. In the following excerpt from 'The hand full of feathers' he anticipates what his home-coming will be like:

And I'm standing there large as life
on the lawn next to the small cement pond
where the new outhouses have been added on
 somewhat worn by the long journey
wearing a top hat
a smart suit
carnation in the jacket
new Italian shoes for the occasion
my hands full of presents
a song for my ma a bit of pride for my own pa...
(1978:30).

During his visit, Breytenbach visited family and colleagues and, persuaded by the writer, Brink, he agreed to take part in a summer school organized by the University of Cape Town. He delivered a paper entitled 'A View From Outside', which clearly demonstrated his political commitment as well as his thoughts on the social and political responsibilities of the writer. In the introduction to A Season in Paradise, the work that chronicles Breytenbach's trip to South Africa, and which includes 'A View From Outside', Brink describes the speech as having almost 'the same resonance in South Africa as the famous "Winds of Change" speech in the South African parliament by British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan, in the wake of the Sharpeville massacre of 1960' (1994:14). In order to comprehend fully the scope of

Brink's claim, I intend to return to 'A View From Outside' later in this chapter.

Breytenbach returned to Paris determined to continue his political activities. He devoted a great deal of attention to the development of the previously mentioned political group, Okhela, which he helped to establish with a few white South African exiles in early 1972. Since Breytenbach was arrested and imprisoned in South Africa because of his membership of Okhela, it is appropriate at this juncture to digress briefly and to outline the structure and goals of the organization.

In The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist, Breytenbach notes that he felt compelled to become involved in the freedom struggle but could not do so 'within the framework of the existing political organisations' (60). He had supported the ANC for many years, which he regarded as the 'oldest, most respectable political organisation in South Africa' (62). Breytenbach was concerned, however, at the close allegiance between the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP), and believed that the SACP had too much control over the financial, military and ideological structure of the ANC. Because of this alliance, he could no longer support the ANC, hence the formation of an alternative organization, the objectives of which were 'to free the whites of fear and timidity' and to break 'the national political power bloc' (Van Dis 1983:4).

Initially, Okhela arranged for its members to make a few clandestine visits to South Africa in order to gather information and to establish a base in the country. The group also secured the promise of funds to support union activities in South Africa

and managed to penetrate the South African embassy in West Germany, with significant results:

...we managed inter alia...to lay our hands on enough secret material to prove that the two governments - Bonn and Pretoria - were flouting the international decision to withhold nuclear research from the South Africans. In fact, we were able to show conclusively that there was collaboration from the Germans in enabling the South Africans to start their own programme manufacturing, ultimately, nuclear arms (64).

When Breytenbach secretly visited South Africa in 1975, he hoped to ascertain the possible scope for activities by Okhela in the country and, in meetings with white militants and members of the underground, to establish the aim and function of the organization.⁷ The secret police who arrested him at Jan Smuts Airport incorrectly assumed that Okhela was a much larger organization and accused Breytenbach of numerous crimes, including smuggling weapons across the border and plotting acts of sabotage. Ironically, they alleged, as well, that Breytenbach was a Russian agent. After two months in detention he was finally charged under the Terrorism Act and sentenced to nine years in prison.⁸ In 1977 he was brought to court on new charges of terrorism and again Breytenbach and Okhela were accused of acts of violence. Breytenbach was found not guilty on all charges, barring one, which was in any event, unrelated to terrorism. He had smuggled letters, poems and drawings out of prison and had to pay a nominal fine. Okhela disintegrated in 1979, when an important member of the organization, Barend Schuitema, returned to South Africa. It was revealed that he had been a spy for the South African government.

Before I discuss Breytenbach's imprisonment and the authorities' decision to allow him to write in prison, I wish to focus on his writing in reaction against an autocratic regime and, in order to do this, I intend to highlight three issues: Breytenbach's political beliefs, his statements about Afrikaners and his opinions on the role of the writer in society. Breytenbach describes apartheid as a 'system with which nobody ought to be allowed to live' and suggests that apartheid 'splintered the opposition to the system' (59). As a result, South Africans shared no common ground and were 'strangers to one another' (59). Because of these divisions, it was inevitable that the black community would reject white South Africans. In his paper, 'A View From Outside', he explains that 'the black man wants to have less and less to do with us, he no longer pleads for his dignity like a "responsible" convert, he simply takes it without a by-your-leave, he seeks allies and arms' (A Season In Paradise 1994:158).

In the same paper, Breytenbach stresses his 'fight' for the creation of a South African society in which all citizens would have an equal share and a decent place in which to live. Once this was accomplished, it would be possible for people to take responsibility 'for each other on an equal footing' (1994:153). Breytenbach was concerned, however, that time was running out and that South Africa was on the brink of radical changes. He believed that the 'fires' of black nationalism would be 'fanned', would 'flare up even brighter and more destructive[ly]'

(1994:158) and, in A Season in Paradise, he predicts the outcome:

...our country is on the brink of drastic changes - or, put a better way - revolutions. What will remain of

our Afrikaans by the end of the century, and in what context, and who will then be to blame? We can, said repeatedly and once again: be part of the problem or part of the solution. What will those revolutions look like? No one knows, but the only choice we have left now is the manner in which we want to (and can) take part in the opening up (1994:178).

Like La Guma, Brutus and Lewin, Breytenbach supported the use of armed struggle as part of 'the opening up' and, in End Papers, he defines the ways in which resistance could propel the revolution:

Armed struggle must be linked to other forms of struggle; armed struggle must be seen as a support for mass struggle, as the arm of a long people's war, as the expression of legitimate revolutionary violence against the violence of oppressors and racists. Armed struggle by itself and alone is self-defeating. The people must recognize themselves in the armed struggle, which is one of the forms our struggle will take on (1987:69-70).

'A View From Outside' justifies Breytenbach's political convictions by declaring the Afrikaans people directly responsible for conditions in South Africa. The essay describes them as 'a bastard people with a bastard language' and as the enforcers of apartheid, '*the law of the bastard*' (A Season in Paradise 1994:156). It maintains that the Afrikaners separated themselves from all other South Africans in an effort to protect their 'tribal identity'. In addition, Afrikaners attempted to make their 'otherness the norm, the standard - and the ideal', a division 'maintained at the expense of...fellow South Africans' (1994:156). In this work, Breytenbach links the concept of 'otherness' to the strategies of exclusion and oppression, a relationship already discussed at some length in Chapter One.

Rather than referring to the inferiority of the black 'other', to which I alluded earlier, however, the Afrikaners portray themselves as 'other' in order to highlight their exclusivity.

In Breytenbach's opinion, the Afrikaans language is one feature of the 'otherness' imposed on the South African population. In The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist, he calls Afrikaans the language 'of oppression and of humiliation, of the boer' (321) and to explain his convictions fully he includes, in the same work, an essay entitled 'A Position on the Struggle for the Taal (Being) Afrikaans' and a poem, 'The Struggle for the Taal'. One of the stanzas of the poem speaks of the enforcement of Afrikaans and of the Afrikaner culture:

But you have not really understood.
You have yet to master the Taal.
We will make you repeat the ABC after us,
we will teach you the ropes
and rigours of our Christian National Education...[sic] (324).

Apart from teaching Afrikaans at school, the language would also be employed as a means to achieve the following result:

You will learn to obey,
to obey and be humble.
And you will learn to use the Taal,
with humility you will use it
for it is we who have the sunken mouths
poisoned with the throbbing and flowing of the heart... (324).

The use of the words 'you' and 'we' draw attention to the divisions in South African society and to the way in which notions of white superiority are sustained by racial separation. 'We' refers directly to the government and its servants, while 'you' is associated with other South Africans, the blacks in particular. To show that, to the Afrikaner, Afrikaans is a

language of importance, Breytenbach capitalizes the initial letter of the word 'Taal'. The language is also 'the tool of the racist' (321), used in the pursuit of power to discipline and to suppress, as the words 'you will learn/ to obey and be humble' suggest. The enforcement of Afrikaans coupled with the actions of Afrikaners presents a clear message:

For we are Christ's executioners.
We are on the walls around the locations
gun in one hand
and machine-gun in the other:
we, the missionaries of Civilization.

We bring you the grammar of violence
and the syntax of destruction -
from the tradition of our firearms
you will hear the verbs of retribution
stuttering...(324).

Instead of being shown as learning their ABC, South Africans are depicted as being educated in 'the grammar of violence' and 'the syntax of destruction'. While professing to be Christians who convert and civilize black heathens, the Afrikaners, in 'The Struggle for the Taal', are 'Christ's executioners', who do not preach love and forgiveness but are traitors conspiring against the South African people. Ironically, while believing themselves 'missionaries of Civilization', these Afrikaners are violent and ruthless, abusing their authority and using military force to subdue their opponents. The conclusion of the poem warns that because of their self-deception and the unrecognized complacency, a revolution - 'the death rattle' (325) - is inevitable and Breytenbach foresees 'our suicide, our self-destruction, our death. We are going to the dogs, and it seems that in the

process we are prepared to drag the whole of Southern Africa with all its people down with us' (A Season in Paradise 1994:156).

An important feature of Breytenbach's criticism of the Afrikaans people is his struggle to come to terms with his own identity as an Afrikaner, which is my next point for consideration. Even during his exile in Europe, Breytenbach had questioned his identity. In Judas Eye and Self-Portrait/Deathwatch, he indicates that Europe made him aware of his 'Africanness' and, while he 'could not picture [himself] as a white man', he could see himself as 'an African bastard - from a continent where *métissage* is continually absorbed; Africa, the continent where the reality of metamorphosis is paramount' (1988:128). Breytenbach could not personally identify himself with the actions of the Afrikaans people and, more particularly, the South African government; yet he could not cease to be an Afrikaner:

I could not agree to being an Afrikaner in any accepted definition of that term, because obviously if you're going to say it's only a matter of language, then it cannot be white only. If you say it's a matter of certain political beliefs, including religious beliefs, then I disagree with those so violently that I couldn't consider myself an Afrikaner.

But I couldn't stop being an Afrikaner myself. Not that there's a deep urge in me to be one - it is a condition, it is that (Frederikse 1990:147).

He notes, however, that, while the Afrikaners are responsible for many heinous crimes, they are nevertheless 'human beings'. By recognizing that Afrikaners are 'human beings, even though they are monsters', Breytenbach asserts that it is possible to understand the relationship between all people:

The man with the short back and sides and the tie who tortures his fellow man to squeeze the necessary information out of him - who tortures in vain! - that fellow who speaks Afrikaans and who has children and who has a hard time sometimes because there are so many things he feels like doing (and because his mentors and teachers have made his understanding so narrow) which communal morality won't allow him, who sometimes does it anyway and then feels guilty toward man and God, and for that very reason strikes harder still perhaps, because he does it in the interests of the people and for law and order and survival, that man who violates himself and his victim and all of us, he is related to us (1994:218).

(It is worth noting that Breytenbach makes similar remarks about his jailers, an observation I intend to consider when discussing the psychological effects of his imprisonment). After his release from prison Breytenbach declared, in the interview with Van Dis, that he was not rebelling against his heritage, nor ashamed of it; but was no longer concerned with the concept of his Afrikanerdom and regarded himself simply as a South African (1983:6).

The third issue for investigation, as proposed, is his view of the function and purpose of the writer in society. In End Papers, Breytenbach asserts that '*writing is politics*' (1987:193). He justifies his claim by suggesting that, because of the dynamics of the apartheid society, South African 'art emanate[s] from particular classes and convey[s] specific political ideas' (1987:45). Breytenbach takes this a step further in 'A View From Outside', when he remarks that even his talk will be regarded as politics: 'All talk in this sad bitter motley-funeral-land is politics - whether it is whispering talk,

talking shit, spitting into the wind or speaking in his master's voice' (A Season in Paradise 1994:152).

While Breytenbach concedes that there is a difference between the approaches of black and of white writers in South Africa, he nevertheless points out in an essay entitled 'Black on White', that writers, regardless of their colour, often share the opinion that 'we all need to purge, break down, come to clarity, cultivate responsibility, rebuild' (1987:205). In order to 'come to clarity' and to 'cultivate responsibility', it is essential for the writer to be aware of social, economic and political conditions, and to analyze 'the functioning of the systems that impose these conditions' (1987:64). Breytenbach outlines the responsibility that must be cultivated:

...to resist by all means the foisting on society of clichés and lies; to struggle for the refinement of the means of expression, to preserve the preciseness and the integrity of the word; to be technician of the conscience - not in a moralist way, but to the extent that the only 'sin' is that of ignorance (1987:144-145).

In this quotation, Breytenbach emphasizes three points. Two of them are significant for my argument: first, the necessity for writers to pay attention to their craft and, second, for them to raise awareness as 'technician[s] of the conscience'. The first point was anticipated by Brink who, in Writing in a State of Siege, claims that there is only 'one basic response a writer driven by his conscience can offer, which is both the simplest and the most difficult of all: and that is the response expressed in the *quality of his work*' (1983:194). Writers, then, use the tools of their craft to express their political

commitment. According to Breytenbach, however, commitment includes the desire to 'assist the taking of power by the people' (1987:64). Society, therefore, must demand that writers 'articulate and shape resistance to the collaborators' (1987:64) because writing, ultimately, is the 'expression of revolt, not the sublimation of it' (1987:194). Breytenbach's perceptions, here, echo Ngugi wa Thiong'o's in Writers in Politics, who also links a writer's resolve with the struggle for control:

He must write with the vibrations and tremors of the struggles of all the working people in Africa, America, Asia and Europe behind him. Yes, he must actively support and in his writing reflect the struggle of the African working class and its peasant class allies for the total liberation of their labour power. Yes, his work must show commitment, not to abstract notions of justice and peace, but the actual struggle of the African peoples to seize power and hence be in a position to control all the forces of production and hence lay the only correct basis for peace and justice (1982:80).

Breytenbach cautions, however, that if writers accept this kind of responsibility, they are bound to come into conflict with the ruling regime. In 'The Writer and Responsibility', he explains why a confrontation is inevitable:

...faced with acute social and economic iniquities he is called upon to articulate the dreams and the demands of his people. From these contradictory responsibilities come the dichotomies of the writer's existence giving rise to so much tension and ambiguity. And from this flows the impossibility of the writer ever fitting in completely with any orthodoxy. Sooner or later he is going to be in disaccord with the politicians (1987:99).

To place his observations in a South African context, Breytenbach suggests that Afrikaans writers were tolerated and applauded only when they concerned themselves with the freedom of the Afrikaner. As soon as they addressed the concept of freedom for all, they were regarded as 'subversive', since 'to meddle with the freedom of man, of the individual, which would necessitate an about-face within the framework of society - that's a horse of a different color, so to speak' (1994:155). Brink expresses his agreement with Breytenbach when speaking about official response to his own writing:

When the early novels of my Sestiger phase caused the reaction they did - violent condemnation from the Establishment; enthusiasm from the younger generation - there was both exhilaration and agony in the experience. Exhilaration because writing had become such an adventurous form of communicating with a society in a state of agitation; agony because I had to come to terms with the realities of harassment and ostracism in relation to people and institutions to which I had previously been close (1983:33).

It is important, here, to clarify what Brink refers to as his 'Sestiger phase', since Breytenbach was part of the group of Afrikaans writers who came to be known as the Sestigers. In Dieter Welz's collection of interviews, Writing Against Apartheid, Brink explains that these authors, who began writing in the sixties, were addressing specific issues not previously dealt with in Afrikaans literature:

...we realised that one of the greatest taboos still had to be broken, and that was politics. But that brought a clash within the group of these young writers. Some of us felt that we had to become completely committed to the socio-political cause, especially Breytenbach, Rabie and myself. Others like

Etienne Leroux, notably, and a few of the other writers, Bartho Smit, Chris Barnard, felt that writing was something different. Writing had to live in a sort of ivory tower (1989:55-56).

Breytenbach is critical of the Sestigers. He contends that too much attention was focused on the group, often at the expense of more pressing political matters, such as the 'suppression of Black parties, impoverishment of the majority, militarisation and "securisation" of the country, the start of aggressive military foreign policy' and the eradication of ten years of writing by black authors (322-323). In addition, Breytenbach asserts that the Sestigers had little impact on the political future of South Africa and hindered, rather than assisted, the liberation movement:

...the *enfants terribles* were endowing the Afrikaner establishment with a greater suppleness to resist real transformation, and simultaneously serving as lightning conductors to close the eyes and the minds of people to the true death (and hope) moving deep down through the land (323).

While it is clear that he was disillusioned by the inability of the Sestigers to 'influence the political future' (323), he nevertheless felt that it was important for writers to 'continue pushing for the limits. Or keep testing and extending them' (1987:205). These sentiments are perhaps best expressed in a poem written by Breytenbach which is entitled 'I Write'. In the poem Breytenbach mentions that he writes to resist, in an effort to move the struggle forward, and again he refers to the significance of 'conscience'. A section of the poem reads as follows:

I write in order to invent an I which can be the means
of survival
and multiplication of the word; to fashion a truth, to
erect
sandcastles against the onrushing silence of the sea;
to find the
spiralling sea-shell of amnesia;

ink-pregnant (like the sea) I write because mind-hand-
heartmoving
is a primitive and futile game,

but also because it is the conduit of awareness
structuring
conscience, a metamorphosis, a communion of the endless
struggle
for justice...(1987:195).

In the opening line of this extract, Breytenbach reveals that he writes also as a 'means of survival'. This is a significant claim; indeed, writing in prison enabled him to survive and to maintain his sanity.⁹ To understand the full import of this declaration, it is necessary to focus, now, on Breytenbach's imprisonment and the literature he produced in prison.

Like many political prisoners, Breytenbach had a strong desire to write in prison. He was extremely fortunate to be granted official permission to write even during detention, a concession that was in sharp contrast to the lesser privileges granted to other political prisoners, as already mentioned. To understand Breytenbach's unique position, it is pertinent to compare, for example, the situation encountered by el Sa'adawi, imprisoned in Egypt. In her book Memoirs From the Women's Prison, el Sa'adawi remarks that writing in prison was considered 'a more serious matter than having a pistol. Writing [was] more

dangerous than killing' (1991:73). Similarly, Wole Soyinka, the Nigerian writer, was not permitted to write during his imprisonment. Determined to do so, he managed to write covertly, as he explains in The Man Died, a work that documents his prison experience. In a section entitled 'the unacknowledged', he says:

Between the lines of Paul Radin's Primitive Religion and my own Idanre are scribbled fragments of plays, poems, a novel and portions of the prison notes which make up this book. Six other volumes have been similarly defaced with my writing. For fear of providing a clue which would lead to a reconstruction of the circumstances and the certain persecution of probably innocent officers, I cannot even provide the titles of these books much less indicate at which periods of my imprisonment they were smuggled in to me one by one. After the indescribably exquisite pleasure of reading, I proceeded to cover the spaces between the lines with my own writing (1988:np).

Breytenbach recognized his 'exceptional position' (Van Dis: 1983:5) and during two months in detention, prior to sentence, he wrote several poems that were later published under the title of Voetskrif [Footwriting] but without his supervision.¹⁰ Unfortunately, a poem, 'Help', and the dedication of the volume to his wife were omitted. Breytenbach agreed to the publication of Voetskrif because his wife was in need of financial assistance. The poems also affirmed that his voice had not been 'cut off entirely' (139). As he explains in The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist, 'I felt, as every prisoner does very strongly...the urge to communicate, to shout, to get onto the roof...and say..."I'm here; I'm dead but I'm here - be sure not to forget it!"' (139).

Pitika Ntuli, a detainee and member of the Pan African Congress (PAC), similarly claims that writing in prison is 'an attempt to maintain contact with your people....As you write, you aren't just writing for yourself....you are communicating with the people who are not there with you, those people you so strongly believe in' (Bould ed. 1991:13). Ntuli refers, as well, to the link between writing and preserving one's sanity and remarks that, 'when you write a piece of poetry' in prison, 'you try to find some order and some sanity' (Bould ed. 1991:13). As noted, Breytenbach also recognized that, to maintain his mental stability and to sustain a degree of control, it was essential to continue writing. He was aware that, while he was allowed to write in detention, there were no guarantees that he would be permitted to do so once he was sentenced. Breytenbach immediately sent a letter to the prison authorities asking for permission to paint and to write. His request to paint was rejected because the authorities feared that Breytenbach might trade his drawings for fruit or tobacco. He was, however, authorized to write, with certain restrictions:

...that I would not show [the work] to any other prisoner or warder (that went without saying since I had no contact with anyone); that I would not attempt to smuggle it out of prison; that I would hand it in directly upon completing anything or any part of any work; that I would not hoard or keep notes for the work and would destroy these immediately after finishing the work. In return I was assured that the work would be held in safekeeping for me (141).

The decision to allow Breytenbach to write after he was sentenced troubled other political prisoners who were less fortunate. Dingake, for example, suggests that Breytenbach was

favoured because he was a 'son of the soil', an Afrikaner (1987:182), and that, despite agitation by political prisoners on Robben Island, the same privileges were not forthcoming (1987:182-183). In accepting the terms imposed by the prison authorities and, by implication the addition of a more prohibitive form of power, Breytenbach was agreeing to many restrictions; yet, he was willing to accept these in exchange for being able to write. Some political prisoners who faced this choice did not feel as compliant. Cronin, in an interview with Stephen Gray, points out that he could not write under these conditions:

The regulations stated that one is not allowed to write poetry except if one is prepared to submit it on a fortnightly basis to the prison authorities for safe keeping: which effectively means for prison censorship, and that was obviously something I was not prepared to comply with. So it did mean that writing poetry was complicated inside prison (1984:35).

Here, Cronin raises the important issue of prison censorship. During detention, Breytenbach had already been affected by censorship when one of his poems was omitted from the publication, Voetskrif. During Breytenbach's imprisonment, he recognized that 'you write knowing that the enemy is reading over your shoulder...knowing also that you are laying bare the most intimate and the most personal nerves and pulse-beats in yourself to the barbarians', which created what he called a 'bizarre situation' (141). To comprehend fully why Breytenbach chose to accept this 'bizarre situation', however, it is vital, at this point in the discussion, to analyze his thoughts on censorship.

For Breytenbach, censorship is not only a mechanism of control but also 'an act of shame. Censorship is a motion of no confidence in your fellow and in yourself. It has to do with manipulation, with power, with the repression of freedom seekers out there and the phantasmagoria or even the bare bones of enjoyment within' (1987:111). Breytenbach also speaks of the situation in South Africa where, through censorship, 'a mediocre work [could] be made important by proscribing it'. He maintains, too, that a writer, in order to exist in a totalitarian state, had to become 'corrupted...because to survive you must compose with the powers that be. You live the lie'. He argues that it is naïve to believe that 'structures of oppression can be made more flexible from within, that totalitarianism [can] possibly be liberalized through evolutionary progress'. He claims, however, that, in a society that enforces censorship, it is crucial for writers to speak out about the 'dismantling of these structures' (1987:144).

In Breytenbach's opinion, the most relevant response to censorship and to the power that enforces it, is to continue writing, which is one of the reasons why he wrote, even with the authorities perusing his work:

...in a repressive State inimical to the writer you will never find the perfect conditions for freedom of expression - but it is essential to continue, even if only with the minimal demands of integrity that you impose on yourself and on your umbilical cord with the outside world. It is possible to falsify for some time the thrust of one's words by inserting them in an environment controlled by the enemy, but eventually - if what you write is 'true' to yourself at that moment - it will become evident and be rectified (139).

Breytenbach, then, was not intimidated by the oppressive effects of censorship but he did, however, also devise a way of writing in secret, where there was 'nobody to look over [his] shoulder' (136):

In the dark I can just perceive the faintly pale outline of a sheet of paper. And I would start writing. Like launching a black ship on a dark sea. I write: I am the writer. I am doing my black writing with my no-colour gloves and my dark glasses on, stopping every once in a while, passing my sheathed hand over the page to feel the outlines and the exprints of letters which have no profile (136).

Initially, Breytenbach was held in Central Prison, Pretoria, where the lights went out at eight o'clock in the evening. Being able to write for several hours in the dark had its benefits but the absence of light and the limitations of space obviously created problems. Nkrumah, detained at James Fort Prison in Ghana, experienced similar difficulties and he notes that

As soon as it was dark and we were thought to be asleep, like the many cockroaches that roamed freely about the cell I, too, started to work. Writing in that cell was no easy matter for the only light was from an electric street lamp that penetrated through the bars at the top of the wall of the cell and cast its reflection on a part of the floor and a section of the opposite wall. I used to lie in this patch of light and write for as long as I could until cramp made it unendurable, then I would change to a standing position and use the spot of light on the wall. On one occasion I remember covering fifty sheets of...toilet paper with my scribble (1989:128).

Breytenbach describes another difficulty, which again highlights the necessity for prisoners to communicate with the outside world: 'Writing took on its pure shape, since it had no

echo, no feedback, no evaluation, and perhaps ultimately no existence'. The need is for 'some recognition from someone, somewhere, admitting that these things did in fact exist' (142). Sachs records a similar problem concerning the writing of his first story in prison. 'There is no one to read it, no magazine to publish it', he laments. 'It will lie in my folder, nearly finished but not quite, a relic of an enthusiasm that could not be sustained, the spirit of which has blown away' (1990:248).

Breytenbach explains how, to complicate the issue, he was initially not allowed to read or to edit any completed texts. During his second trial, however, he was granted permission to read A Season in Paradise, which was published during his imprisonment. His lawyers used the trial as an excuse 'to oblige the authorities to allow me to read my own book' (225-226) because his counsel claimed that it would be used as evidence. On another occasion, Breytenbach was allowed to view a few of his works, in consequence of a petition on his behalf. The petty imposition of power is evident in his description of the incident:

...with a warder sitting facing me I could take in my hands and leaf through a copy of A Season in Paradise, a copy of the French verse, and my collected poems united in two volumes printed in Holland - on condition that I did not attempt to read these (140).

During his prison term, Breytenbach completed an essay, 'Driftpoint', as well as a number of poems (a few smuggled out of prison) and the novel called Mouroir. As mentioned, his manuscripts were handed in to and scrutinized by the authorities until his release but to his astonishment he discovered that he could produce written material that, in contrast, was uncensored,

giving him a sense of his 'usefulness to the inmate community' (144) and, as a result, some measure of personal power. I shall digress briefly. Breytenbach, for example, wrote love letters for other prisoners, applications for promotion for his jailers and a rather unusual Latin translation for Bames, the head of a prison gang, who wanted his gang members 'to have tattooed on their backs the Praying Hands of Dürer - an evergreen favourite with the pious time-pushers - and the Latin version of: *live and let live*'. The 'best' Breytenbach could manage was 'an approximation in corrupt Italian...*vivere e lascare vivere*' (146).

One letter written by Breytenbach in prison affected him deeply. He was asked by the head of the prison in Pretoria to respond, in English, to a communication that had arrived from the Clerk of the Transkei Supreme Court. The document requested the head of the prison 'to produce, before a certain date, two accused and convicted persons before the said bench' (151). Unfortunately, when the condemned men arrived in Pretoria, they were sent to the hanging jail by a warrant-officer who did not check whether an appeal had been lodged. As a result, the men were hanged and, since they were illiterate and unable to provide the authorities with the names of their next-of-kin, nobody was informed of their demise. Breytenbach's task was to advise the Transkei Supreme Court that the two men had been hanged in error, an undertaking he poignantly contemplates:

...I often lay there thinking that these two men who had jerked their heels could still have been alive. I dared not show the depth of my revulsion to the head of the prison and the warders. I don't remember that they themselves were particularly affected. When you

process humans by paper, a wee slip twixt last breath and noose is, alas, always possible. To err is human. And I think that the multiple hangings would have blunted them already. I could not then make any notes of the event, but for a long time I remembered the two names (152).

To consider the full extent of Breytenbach's response to his imprisonment, I shall now concentrate on the psychological impact of both his interrogation and his internment. Even before he was imprisoned, Breytenbach was traumatized by the actions of the Bureau of State Security (BOSS). BOSS agents had followed Breytenbach during his trip to South Africa in 1972 and 1973 so that, when he secretly entered the country in 1975, he was 'in a constant state of jitters, suspicious of any- and everyone, expecting [his] good luck to come to a disastrous end at any moment' (85). Breytenbach was particularly unnerved because he recognized that BOSS was deeply involved in 'internal mind-control' (9). He outlines the function and the pervasive powers of the secret police:

What fastidious workers they are, how obsessed they must be! Look how they dig into one's past, how they project one's future, how they alter one's present. I have no private lives: it's all in their hands; they know me better than I do, they are far more interested in it than I am. They have the files, they have the computer. Or they know all about my ways, my preferences, my accretions, my little secrets - my gardens - be they political or sexual. And they are fascinated by it. They smell it like freshly mixed tobacco. They knead it. They manipulate it, they slobber over it. It justifies their lives...(15).

Breytenbach's description of the deceptive strategies employed by BOSS are similar to Foucault's depiction of a

carceral society in which 'the productive increase of power can be assured' if 'exercised continuously [and] in the very foundations of society, in the subtlest possible way' (1995:208). Shortly after his arrival in South Africa in 1975, Breytenbach was again subjected to these elusive tactics and knew that he was being trailed but 'hoped against hope that [he would] be able to slip through the net which had been closing around [him] for some time' (5). When he was due to return and he booked in at the departure counter at Jan Smuts Airport, he noticed several men watching him; they immediately made him feel threatened:

...I became so paranoid that I went downstairs to the gents' toilets with one of them dogging my footsteps, and there, unzipping my pants, hunching my shoulders, I managed to swallow a few lines of paper with names on it. Not everything, unfortunately, could be disposed of in that way. If only I had been more rational I might have been able to get rid of more incriminating evidence (5-6).

It is clear from this excerpt that Breytenbach was mentally intimidated by the actions of the secret police. His description of the events following his arrest and subsequent journey to Pretoria points to his discovery that psychological torture was to be an important and constant part of the interrogation process, a procedure that I shall now focus on.

Initially, when in detention, Breytenbach was instructed to 'write'. When he asked what he should write about, he was told "'You know; just write'" (18). The authorities tore up every page that he produced and simply ordered him to start again. The endless and futile process of rewriting had an adverse effect on him, as this reference from The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist illustrates:

...they exploit the fact of their knowing. They stroke this beast through the bars of your ego. They pretend to feed it with promises of letting it go. So why not write? And so you write again. What's your alternative? They will only keep you until you start writing. You yourself become the master of your time; it is you who will decide the length of your incarceration. There's nothing, there's nobody, no power anywhere in the world that has any say over them (19).

Breytenbach emphasizes the manipulation and the all-encompassing powers of the authorities. Foucault explains how the mechanisms of power operate in the extraction of a confession. If a man 'can be induced to speak...then he has been caused to behave in a certain way. His freedom has been subjected to power' (Kritzman ed. 1990:83-84). First claims that, once she had confessed, she also 'had to convince' her interrogator, who 'had the power to effect [her] release', that she 'really had told the truth, the whole truth' (1982:141).

During Breytenbach's interrogation, he eventually lost track of time, struggling to distinguish between one day and another: 'It was the second day or perhaps it was the third, no, it was the first day. Then it was the fourth day, I mean it was the second day, it must have been the morning of the second day' (23). Time dislocation is an aspect of the interrogation process that many political prison-writers stress. Niehaus speaks about 'days and nights' running 'into each other' (1994:109) and Saida Botan Elmi, jailed in Somalia, asserts that she could not 'remember those early days and weeks and months very well. The first day, yes. All the rest is blurred' (Bould ed. 1991:254).

The prisoner's sense of confusion is compounded by the interrogator's ambiguity, which Breytenbach describes as 'planting the doubt in a detainee's mind' (24). He was unsure about who had been arrested, who had spoken and who had betrayed him, and he recognized that he was 'holding on to a very slender thread of sanity' (25).¹¹ To encourage him to talk and hoping to disorientate him further, the authorities brought in two black policemen, inviting their opinions of 'Oliver Tambo and Johnny Makathini':¹²

First one and then the other started laughing and said: "What a monkey, what a monkey he must be to have believed that they would support him now that he's in trouble, to ever have thought that he could collaborate with them. They were only using you, white boy, they couldn't care a damn for you. We know them, they...are...our...own people!" (25).

Farisani describes how, during his interrogation, he, too, was confronted by a black policeman, whom he thought was a supporter of the Black Consciousness Movement:

I have been one of you....I am now several years with the security police....During my many years of service all the political die-hards that we detained ultimately cracked like nuts under pressure. Some, within minutes of detention....Others crack after an hour, a day or two, a week or a month, even more, but one principle is clear: they all crack sooner or later (1988a:45).

It is apparent from this extract that the purpose of the policeman's speech was also to bewilder and to scare Farisani into a confession, a deliberate technique used to debilitate the prisoner. The policeman's words, 'they all crack sooner or later', echo those of Swanepoel, First's interrogator, whose 'job' it was to 'find the cracking point' (1982:54). Likewise,

in an effort to get Breytenbach to co-operate and finally to break down, the authorities continued to behave in a disturbingly, unpredictable way, as when a Colonel Huntingdon introduced Breytenbach to the former's niece, who professed to be an admirer of his poetry and very distressed by his plight. On a further occasion, he was driven to the Voortrekker Monument:

It was a normal visiting day; there were other people moving around. Van Byleveld and Hakkebak allowed me to stroll through this horribly depressing edifice to the warped history of the Afrikaner. Of course I was never out of their sight, but they weren't next to me either. Imagine passing by normal human beings in the marble hall, or as normal as anybody who visits the Voortrekker Monument could be (41).

Another of Breytenbach's significant points of discussion relates to his relationship with his interrogators, whom he describes as capable of creating 'lepers out of their victims' (40). He writes, nevertheless, of the mutual reliance between prisoner and interrogator; and that dependency defines not only the interrogation process but the prison term as well. Jacobs, in 'Breyten Breytenbach and the South African Prison Book', interprets the prisoner's dependency as his 'curious identification and bonding with his captor on whom he has paradoxically to rely for kinship and fellowship in his solitude' (1986:103). Breytenbach acknowledges that the prisoner begins to regard 'his tormentor...as a friend' but calls this association a 'morbid relationship' (312), one which is characterized by 'jerking or being jerked according to the specification of preordained roles' - a 'macabre dance' (310).

Elsewhere, Breytenbach, like La Guma and Lewin in their consideration of warders, describes the relationship between

prisoner and interrogator as 'a cat playing with a mouse which is entirely in its power' (34). He also calls his interrogator 'the controller', the 'handler', 'the practitioner', and, ironically, the 'companion' and the 'father confessor' (44-45), which clearly illustrates the complex association between the two. These labels suggest, as well, the ways in which the interrogator attempts to gain control:

I [the interrogator] despatch you. I drive you on. I manipulate you....Relate your deepest fears to me, your best hidden desires....I walk in your tracks. I am your tracks. I know of the eye before the keyhole, of the lens by the window, of the ear in the telephone or the ceiling or the floor or the tree, of the dagger in the back, of the explosive in the manuscript....I love you so. I need you so....You permit me relevance, you give me my outline. You give me status. You make me accept myself....I'm your father confessor (44-45).

This excerpt enlarges on the way in which the prisoner is psychologically manipulated, as the interrogator works to establish and to maintain power. The extract also shows the converse: the interrogator's 'need' and its fulfilment by the prisoner, a point reiterated by Rosemary Jolly in Colonization, Violence, and Narration in White South African Writing: André Brink, Breyten Breytenbach, and J.M. Coetzee, when she writes that 'in view of their overwhelming power, the interrogators are dependent upon the prisoner to justify their existence. More specifically, they are dependent upon the success of their efforts to force the prisoner to conform to their image of who he is' (1996:63).

Breytenbach is curious about the humanity of these people and recognizes that his 'tormentors' are capable of expressing

some compassion. The following passage from The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist corresponds to Breytenbach's views about Afrikaners, articulated in 'A View From Outside' (A Season in Paradise 1994:154-156):

...despite the fact that [the interrogators] are conditioned to their work and believe blindly that they are justified in doing their thing, and questioning authority or the validity of an order has never been part of the Calvinist tradition, they are nevertheless very human with the same brittleness and the same doubts that you or I may have (37).

Breytenbach is of the opinion, however, that his interrogators must struggle with 'the dichotomy' between 'doing what they have been conditioned to do unquestioningly and the leftover feelings of humane compassion'. The prisoner, Breytenbach realizes, is placed in a dangerous situation because his interrogators are ill equipped 'to resolve these contradictions or even to recognise them' and 'tend to become very violent in an unconscious effort to blot out and perhaps to surpass the uneasiness' (37). Yet, Breytenbach comes to see that prisoner and interrogator, alike, are 'part of the same terrifying situation' (Van Dis: 1983:4) and capable of similar transgressions because both are human: 'violinator and victim (collaborator! violin!)', are linked, forever perhaps, by the obscenity of what has been revealed to you, by the sad knowledge of what people are capable of. We are all guilty' (312). Ultimately, however, Breytenbach concludes that 'the interrogator's power is absolute' (311).

I shall now discuss Breytenbach's internment at Central Prison in Pretoria in order to demonstrate the full extent of the psychological trauma that he suffered there. By the time he

entered Central Prison, he was at the point of a nervous breakdown. He felt as if he had been buried alive; cut off from the 'rhythms' and 'seasons' of the outside world (108). He conveys the impression of entering a 'death-world' filled with 'sounds you never imagined, steel on steel, fear and rage; with the pervasive smells of not very clean men' (108). Breytenbach's writing, like that of most political prisoners, shows his awareness not only of the sounds and the smells of prison, but also of his changed status to 'the fucking dog, the bandiet, the mugu, the mother's cunt' (111). Breytenbach writes of his struggles to maintain his identity, in view of the fact that the 'personality is broken down' by the authorities, in order 'to be reassembled in the right way' (112). As a result, 'parts of you are destroyed' and will 'never again be revived' (113); and he reports that he 'had to digest and transform that period of alienation before [he] could turn [his] back and go on to what [was] unfolding' (307).

During his imprisonment, Breytenbach's vulnerability and his mental distress were compounded by a sense of fear which, as discussed in Chapter One, was used by the South African authorities as a way to maintain control. Breytenbach admits that his 'nerves were shot to bits' (261) and, when he recalls an incident during which he was chased from his cell and roughly body-searched, he acknowledges that 'the violent reaction - the loss of control' - took him 'by the throat' (261). Many political prison-writers concern themselves with this kind of fear. While Pheto suggests that detainees 'live and survive on...tension' (1985:18), Zwelonke says that political prisoners 'could not only feel fear, we seemed to see it, pegged out in

space, swinging like a pendulum' (1989:63). Indeed, Naidoo claims that prisoners on Robben Island were constantly harassed and threatened, the goal being to instil fear into them. They were made to run to the lime quarry with Alsatian dogs at their heels and were viciously beaten during cell raids. As a result, many prisoners were permanently terrified. Naidoo elaborates:

One of my comrades - we called him 'Dip' - once said that the only time his heart was at rest was when he was locked up at five in the afternoon, knowing that while he was in his cell he would not be touched. But at 8 p.m. when the bell rang for us to sleep - the lights never went out - his heart started pumping as he thought about the next day. Would he survive it?

We all felt like that; during the first three years of our stay on the Island, each day had its quota of brutalities and torture and the warders seemed to enjoy seeing us suffer, for to them we were not human (1982:112).

Apart from overt and violent intimidation, political prisoners were also subjected to more subtle but equally harmful, abuse. At this point, it is necessary to examine an indirect but sinister form of mental intimidation which, like the interrogation process, had a significant impact on Breytenbach. Breytenbach is of the opinion that prison psychologists were responsible for this mistreatment, a point reinforced by Foucault who explains that these individuals not only possessed 'the trust of the prisoners' and knew 'their characters better' but were able to 'influence [the prisoners'] mental attitudes more effectively' (1995:270). Moreover, according to Foucault, psychologists, like doctors and warders, functioned as 'subsidiary authorities' (1995:21), their purpose being to 'sing the praises that the law needs' (1995:11). Breytenbach is more

concerned that psychologists were employed by prison officials to hamper rather than to assist prisoners. He refers to such psychologists as 'parasites living off our twisted souls' (168) and stresses that he was treated like a guinea-pig:¹³

These perverted practitioners of the spurious science of psychology do not have as a first priority to help the prisoner who may be in need of it. They are the lackeys of the system. Their task, very clearly, is to be the psychological component to the general strategy of unbalancing and disorientating the political prisoner (170).

To reinforce his claim, Breytenbach narrates an episode in which a prison psychologist, Master Basie, arrived at Breytenbach's cell at ten o'clock one night. The purpose of the visit was to give Breytenbach 'a spine-chilling but quite coherent exposition of [Master Basie's] political beliefs' (169), an experience Breytenbach found unnerving:

He was curiously needing to justify and defend his position, although I hadn't said a word. It came down to the old line of: we are living in a dramatic period of exceptional importance, having to face and combat extraordinary challenges; we cannot afford to be manacled by concepts such as 'democracy' or even 'decency'; we - meaning *them* - need to be strong to go all out in a total answer to the total onslaught concept; our fate is fatal; rather suicide in the desert than...anarchy; and Apocalypse of course....At that time Master Basie's conduct was inexplicable to me (169-170).

The role of prison psychologists is alluded to by other prisoners. Niehaus, who spent three weeks in solitary confinement, was required by the attending psychologist to complete a series of tests. Niehaus felt insulted and refused to participate in the exercise. The psychologist accepted Niehaus's

stand but cautioned that he might have his period in solitary confinement extended. Eventually, Niehaus broke down:

I was not prepared to throw in the towel, but for the sake of survival I had to compromise. So I sent a message to the psychologist that I was prepared to interpret her pictures - on condition that I would be permitted to submit a report setting out my political motivation. Her reply was that she had to consult with the prison authorities first. Eventually she agreed, and two days after I had taken the tests, on 23 December 1983, I was united with my comrades (1994:121).

As a result of the psychological games played by prison authorities and psychologists, Breytenbach concludes that the 'interrogation never ceased and the first trial with its conviction was just one step in the ongoing process of dissecting and undoing the psyche and washing the brain'' (161). Prisoners were subjected to perpetual 'testing, prying and prodding' (161) because the 'notion of the acquiescent victim is an important one' (161). While Breytenbach confirms that he was aware of the way in which the prison authorities operated, he concedes, finally, that the interrogators, warders and psychologists managed to 'destabilize' him. As noted, he believes that parts of his psyche were destroyed forever, and that he was 'altered in [his] most intimate ways'. The psychological 'damage', he deduces, was 'permanent even though you learn to live with it, however well camouflaged' (113).

It is of interest to examine one further incident that compounded Breytenbach's mental strain - the death of his mother. He learnt of his mother's demise from a prison official and, like Fischer and Cronin, was not allowed to attend the funeral,

although his family were permitted to visit him. Breytenbach writes that he was unable to come to terms with her death: 'It was all abstract. In my mind my mother had been dead for years. I would never experience her death. I knew that she had died but I would never know that she was dead' (271). In response to her death, Breytenbach wrote a poem entitled, 'When my Mother was', which highlights his sense of loss and loneliness. The first two stanzas read as follows:

when my mother was dying
I had to wade and flay through the seething current
to reach her where they had layed her out
on her bedstead in the yard: shimmering yellow
the sun stroked the arcadian scene
playing on the halfcircle of faces of old
deceased uncles and forefathers who sat
sucking peacefully at pipes to blow out carols of smoke,

strong and healthy she was under the white sheet
her eyes full of light and rounder without glasses
her plump arms moving with clarity
to bless and deliver the last messages
(only some tired grey hairs had already come loose):
visions of how everything would turn out fine and that she
was at rest now with inter alia Matthew and Mark left and
right the two old-times indeed stood...(353).

It is significant that to Breytenbach his mother is not dead, but dying, as the title and these stanzas suggest, and he has to negotiate a treacherous path, a 'seething current', in order to reach her. Although his life in prison is characterized by darkness and isolation, his mother, in her last moments, basks in the contrastingly 'shimmering yellow' of the sun's rays; and she is surprisingly healthy in mind and body, as 'eyes full of

light' and 'plump arms' imply. Her purpose is to comfort him in his imminent bereavement and to reassure him that everything will be 'fine'; sadly the two are unable to connect:

and she also kept on calling me by...name
and did not recognize me...(353).

While his mother reaches out to him, calling him 'by...name', he never gets close enough for her to identify him. The next lines explain why:

but I had to get back before the authorities
suspected my escape in the current's
whirling rush I began to sink
and further down teeth chattering washed between banks
(finally engulfed?)
somewhere beyond farmlands where mudspattered
grain elevators slash heavenwards where haystacks
rot and turnips are swallowed up by the earth,

as they strained at their leashes I heard the stinking
dogs with throats clogged by cries of excitement
(353).¹⁴

Breytenbach's flight of fancy has returned to the nightmare. The currents that he fought against now engulf him and, in comparison to the conditions depicted in the first two stanzas, the scene is suddenly presented as dismal. Breytenbach's daydream is shattered by the harsh sounds of dogs in the same way that, in Letters to Martha, Brutus's fantasy is destroyed by the thud of boots.¹⁵ The quoted lines reinforce his assertion that he would never experience his mother's death, not only because he could not attend her burial but also because he was not given an opportunity to mourn. Elsewhere he confirms this position when he says 'I don't know whether she died happy or unhappy' (272).

Perhaps the most devastating aspect of Breytenbach's prison experience, however, was his exposure to the hanging jail. He spent nearly two years in the maximum security section of Central Prison. Like Lewin and many other political prisoners, Breytenbach was struck, in particular, by the singing of the condemned prisoners:¹⁶

...my nights were populated and punctuated by the terrible out-pouring in song of the so-called 'condemns' or 'ropes'. I wrote one day a desperate plea...going in my words down on my knees, asking to be removed elsewhere because I couldn't stand this stench of death. But it was probably as effective as praying to a god (26).

When a prisoner is told he is to be hanged, the singing gains in intensity, as this excerpt from Mouroir demonstrates:

...(when the countdown starts), they directly open up in song....There is a pulsating urgency about the singing, as if one can hear how scorchingly alive their voices are. All the other prisoners - in any event only awaiting their turn - help them from that instant on....Every flight of the prospective voyagers' voices is supported and sustained by those of the others....The sound of the voices is like that of cattle at the abattoir, the lowing of beasts smelling the blood and knowing that nothing can save them now (1984a:52).

A section from Mouroir entitled 'The Double Dying of an Ordinary Criminal' describes the hanging procedure and those responsible for carrying out the act. Breytenbach notes with irony the minister who 'spends much time on his knees' - 'it is not good for the pants' - and the executioner who is 'remunerated by the head' (1984a:53 and 54). The prison officials who attend the hanging are referred to as the 'gibbets', and the condemned

prisoner as the 'pilgrim', or 'candidate'. Breytenbach observes that up to seven people could be hanged simultaneously and that the clothes of the deceased are 'brought back into circulation in the gaol. After all, it's state property' (1984a:55). In order to stress the cruelty of the procedure, Breytenbach goes to great lengths to describe a hanging:

The nauseating sweet smell of death is already all-pervasive. Here he is handcuffed and a white hood is placed over his head. The flap above the eyes remains open until he has taken up his position below the gallows. Exceptionally it may happen that the spine and neck break completely at the instant when the earth falls away below his feet and that the head becomes separated from the body, that the head alone remains suspended there. But that just happens in the case of candidates who are rotten with syphilis, and then mostly with female Unwhites (1984a:56).

The 'Note on South African Prisons', in The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist, reveals Breytenbach's abhorrence of the practice of state executions, not only because it is an act of 'barbaric revenge' but because it is also 'a destruction of freedom; it is a negation of the dignity of man, any man; it is also an admission of its own incapacity to improve the social environment' (314). In addition, in Mouroir he contends that he was so appalled by life in a hanging jail that it was almost impossible to write about the experience:

You let the days pass you by although you're aware of the fact that you'll have to open the thing sooner or later. You allow the days to go hard in your throat. For it is like a contusion around the neck: first too tender to the touch, swollen with blood compressed in the capillaries; later the swelling goes down and the injured region becomes bluish purple; still later a yellowish blue and then a lighter yellow when it starts

itching. Afterwards it is for a while still a scratchy place in the memory. And yet the matter must be disembowelled because we are the mirrors and mirrors have their own lives (1984a:61-62).

From his writing it is evident that, despite the significant impact imprisonment had on Breytenbach's psychological well-being, he managed to endure (he served seven-and-a-half years in prison) and to write about his experiences during and after his release. Many prisoners, however, did not survive the mental stress of internment. In A Window on Soweto, Joyce Sikakane, charged under the Suppression of Communism Act, relates the fate of a co-accused, Paulos Mashaba. During 'the first trial', Sikakane notes, Mashaba behaved 'like someone whose mind had gone wrong' and during 'the second period of detention, his condition must have worsened because he was sent to Weskoppies Mental Hospital'. Eventually released and 'now mentally deranged', Mashaba, 'a man of "lost memory" in Soweto...gets picked up now and again by the pass law officers, for being a "vagabond" or vagrant' (1980:70). Similarly, Mashinini describes an episode that highlights the fate of a trade unionist, Rita Ndzanga, who also lost her memory:

Rita Ndzanga could not find her way home. We drove round and round but Rita could not find where she lived. She knew it was in Senaone, and Tom said if he took her to the station next to there we could trace how she usually came from work. He was asking her, 'You get off from this station, and which route do you take out? How do you go?' But Rita still could not find her home (1991:89).

At this point it is necessary to pause and to contemplate the reasons why Breytenbach managed to survive his seven-and-a-

half years of frequent psychological torture. In the interview with Van Dis, Breytenbach offers the following explanation:

You can only survive in such a situation if you manage to abolish the physical and spiritual limitations of life in a cell. I did my best not to cling to my previous identity. I tried to forget everything that had been idyllic in the past, to become part of the new rhythm. The most important was...to eliminate the notion of waiting. That's possible if you experience each event as intensely as possible, even the stupidest prison chores (1983:6).

In The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist, Breytenbach also stresses the importance of experiencing each episode 'as intensely as possible' and notes, like Brutus and Lewin, that the prisoner, ultimately, finds solace in 'humble things' such as 'the ants and the flies you always tried like a madman to kill from some hang-up about sanity, the blotched tattoo on a back which someone has erased by redesigning along the same lines with Steradent, that fluff of wool in the corner, a cloud, a tin' (280-281). In learning to appreciate an ant, a piece of fluff and a cloud, Breytenbach 'discover[s] paradoxically openings to the outside in yourself which you have not been aware of before' (113-114).¹⁷

In prison, Breytenbach also learnt the importance of self-discipline but notes that there are different kinds of discipline - physical, intellectual and moral: 'There must be the...commitment of trying to remain fit, of listening to your body', he claims. It is essential, as well, to strive 'in all possible ways to feed the mind' and to recognize, but avoid, 'the crude simplifications and dichotomies the authorities try to have you conform to' (255-256). Many political prison-writers comment

on the positive effects of discipline. Mandela, in particular, stresses that on Robben Island, the discipline of physical training was imperative, finding that he 'worked better and thought more clearly when...in good physical condition'. 'In prison', says Mandela 'having an outlet for one's frustrations was absolutely essential' (1994:426).

Mandela and Breytenbach shared another experience, a term in Pollsmoor Prison in Cape Town.¹⁸ It is relevant to explore, briefly, Breytenbach's response to Pollsmoor as, after two years in isolation at Pretoria Central Prison, he 'was now for the first time inserted in a prison community' (238). The experience as the only political prisoner in a group of two hundred non-political prisoners significantly deepened his commitment to the struggle in South Africa, and the social interaction contributed to his survival. Breytenbach writes that Pollsmoor Prison was completely different from Central Prison. His new cell was much larger; he was given work in the General Stores and the physical location of the prison led him to conclude that

Pollsmoor is situated in one of the most beautiful areas of No Man's Land....It lies nestled in the shadows of the same mountain chain which at one extremity is known as Table Mountain....Wind there is enough of - the so-called 'Cape Doctor'.¹⁹ It became a constant companion during certain months of the year....But that which particularly marked me and made me, was the mountain: my companion, my guide, my reference point, my deity...and finally - like a prehistoric receptacle - the mould of my mind, my eye, my very self (237).

Breytenbach's living conditions improved at Pollsmoor and, yet, being able to see Table Mountain from his window did not blind him to the fact that 'Pollsmoor had (has) [sic] a normal

prison population of 4000-4500 people of which maybe [sic] 200 at any given time would be White' (238). Clearly, Breytenbach came into contact with prisoners of different races, which allowed him to understand what it was like to be a non-political prisoner in South Africa. In the interview with Van Dis, he comments on the overcrowding in South African jails and their degrading conditions. It is his opinion that the majority of the criminals are 'direct victims of the damage that Apartheid has done by ripping families asunder' (1983:268). Political prisoners 'have it relatively better', he asserts, because they are 'an élite'. He tells Van Dis that interaction with non-political prisoners helped him to clarify his political views, as 'you can't have political pretensions without consulting the people in whose name you want to change things' (1983:5). He makes an interesting observation in noting that politicians are often cut off from an entire 'layer' of the population, which perhaps explains why because of involvement with the people, political prisoners like Mandela, in South Africa, and Havel, in the Czech Republic, became national leaders.

What did Breytenbach learn from prison? Seven-and-a-half years at Central Prison and Pollsmoor Prison taught him to be 'a prisoner' and no more than that, he claims. 'To pretend that it is possible to rehabilitate somebody while he is locked up is absolute crap', he asserts. Because almost 'all the gaolbirds you'll ever meet are economically weak and marginalized in society', their imprisonment 'can only accentuate the rifts between them and the world' (1987:16-17).²⁰ Breytenbach confirms Foucault's view that 'prisons do not diminish the crime rate' because 'prison cannot fail to produce delinquents' (1995:265-

266). What is of particular significance for this study is Breytenbach's declaration that prisons serve only to make prisoners - particularly political prisoners - more steadfast:

...repression does not even work. It only makes your opponents more determined, cleverer; and it creates more grounds for uprising. Repression of your opponents, so it seems to me, is in fact more with the intention of mobilizing your own supporters. Trying to scare them with a big darkness. And even that can have only a temporary effect - ultimately it will brutalize and depoliticize your own people utterly. You allow your own power base to crumble irrevocably (1987:128).

Some of these sentiments, expressed in End Papers, are echoed in The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist, when Breytenbach states that it is impossible to 'educate or rehabilitate a person by punishing him'. All that is achieved, Breytenbach argues, is that 'you strengthen the reasons that brought him to the predicament he is in' (314) and, as Foucault notes in Discipline and Punish, 'the feeling of injustice that a prisoner has is one of the causes that may make his character untamable' (1995:266). Indeed, many political prisoners confirm these statements. Zuma, on Robben Island for sabotage, speaks about the collective determination to continue the fight against apartheid: 'our resolve was strengthened to fight harder for the removal of this unjust system' (Schadeberg 1994:57).

To illustrate Breytenbach's conviction that imprisonment could not destroy a political prisoner's will to survive and the commitment to the struggle for change, I quote from a letter he wrote to Winnie Mandela. In the letter, which is included in End Papers, Breytenbach calls Nelson Mandela's life one 'that could now be neither broken nor humiliated' (1987:214) and claims that

'his example throbs in millions of memories, his voice is amplified by a multitude of tongues'. Mandela's leadership, Breytenbach continues,

...like that of Biko and all the others tortured to death, like that of Albertina Sisulu languishing in detention, like that of Tambo and all the others dead or alive in exile, like yours and that of other people like you hounded by the authorities, restricted and banned - patriots all - serve[s] to enhance the dignity of mankind (1987:215).

At one point in The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist, Breytenbach maintains that he did not survive (280); yet in the final analysis he confesses that 'as a matter of principle' he does not regret 'having been through any experience'. He explains that what one endures

...becomes a new corridor outlining the innards of the labyrinth; it is a continuation of the looking for the minotaur, that dark centre which is the I (eye), that mister I: which is a myth of course. The thing is to kill the devourer of virgins and not to forget to take down the black sails of the soul when rounding the cape of home port (73).

Like Niehaus, he was proud to have been a political prisoner and a 'statutory, convicted terrorist'. He felt, 'after...lying in prison like a pulse beat in the heart of No Man's Land, that [his] umbilical cord was cut' (1988:130) and offers the following explanation of his release after serving seven-and-a-half years of his nine-year prison term:

The actual decision to let me go must have been the result of an accumulation of approaches made to the authorities and of careful opinions expressed either publicly or in private by influential groups or individuals. The French government, by way of monsieur [sic] Plaisant, their envoy to Pretoria, continued

asking their South African homologues to release me; PEN International as also PEN groups in various European countries and America asked for the same thing; writers both abroad and in South Africa would at various occasions signal their concern (284).

After his release from prison, Breytenbach returned to Paris to resume his writing, painting and political activities. While removed from South Africa, he did not, however, lose sight of the reasons for his imprisonment. He remained convinced of the need, through his political actions and his writing, to continue the fight for freedom in South Africa, as there are 'certain transgressions that can never be condoned' (309). In The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist, he describes the apartheid system in South Africa as 'against the grain of everything that is beautiful and hopeful and dignified in human history', as 'a denial of [the] humanity', of all its people, oppressors and oppressed. 'Profoundly unjust' and 'totally corrupted and corrupting...it is a system with which nobody ought to be allowed to live' (59). Yet, in the same work, Breytenbach maintained that South Africa would inevitably experience social, economic and political change:

I remain as convinced as ever that majority rule will eventually come about and that South Africa has the potential - human first of all - of becoming a great country in accordance with its natural beauty and its richness in history and strategic resources (326).

The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist is a book that Jacobs regards as 'the most remarkable prison memoir to have come out of South Africa' (1986:98). Indeed, this work, together with Mouiroir, not only provides an insight into the relationship between prisoner and jailer and the endless struggle between them

for control but also poignantly depicts other aspects of Breytenbach's life in Central and Pollsmoor Prisons.²¹ Both of these writings detail the psychological torture to which Breytenbach and other political prisoners were subjected and describe the significant effect the inhumane practice of hanging had on Breytenbach. Finally, these works and Breytenbach's numerous essays and volumes of poetry reaffirm his belief in the social and political responsibility of the writer to empower the oppressed by imparting knowledge and arousing conscience on their behalf. Notwithstanding the trauma of his prison experience and aided, ironically, by the special privilege granted to him to write in prison, he himself was strengthened and empowered in some measure by his determination to continue acting as a voice of conscience. He remained committed to the establishment of a fair and just society in South Africa.

Notes

1. All references to The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist will be from the 1984 edition. Henceforth only page numbers will be given.
2. Jan Breytenbach was the founder of the 32nd Battalion, a secret reconnaissance unit of the South African Defence Force.
3. Breytenbach believes that painting and writing are connected in numerous ways, and explains that 'there are things like rhythms, there are things like patterns, there are things like associations...which are as true for poetry as they are for painting'. He considers his 'writing to be a continuation of

[his] painting, [his] painting to be a continuation of [his] writing' (Goddard and Wessels eds 1992:58).

4. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, 1949, and the Immorality Amendment Act, 1950, prohibited sexual intercourse between whites and non-whites.

5. A Saracen is an armoured car.

6. In In Africa Even the Flies are Happy, Denis Hirson provides the English translation of the title (Breytenbach 1978:vi). It should be noted as well that Skryt was awarded the Dutch Van der Hoogt prize in the year of its publication.

7. In the True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist, Breytenbach reflects on his attitude to the return to South Africa. His opinion, here, is somewhat different from that expressed in the interview with Goddard and Wessels:

How much of it was an attempt to force a break in the contradictions in which I was caught up: the dreamer ensnared by political work - and neglecting his art - and suffering from it; the exile who had never accepted the finality of his exile, whose roots were still in South Africa; the man, becoming a European, writing in an African language, with the world evoked by it, which no-one around him understood? How much of it was suicidal? Or repentant home-coming? (79).

8. The Terrorism Act, no. 83 of 1967, defined terrorism in broad terms as an action likely to jeopardize the preservation of law and order.

9. Breytenbach reiterates this assertion in the interview with Van Dis: 'If I hadn't been able to write in prison, I would have gone insane. It was the only way in which I could assimilate my experiences' (1983:5).

10. P.P. Van der Merwe regards this volume of poems as 'remarkable for its total lack of sentimentality or self-pity', despite Breytenbach's situation at the time of writing (1981:65).
11. In The Jail Diary of Albie Sachs, Sachs recalls his interrogator's words: 'I don't understand you. All the others are talking, and yet you keep quiet. We've got plenty of statements from others, we can show them to you if you like' (1990:119).
12. Oliver Tambo was the president-general of the ANC from 1977-1991 and Johnny Makathini was a prominent, exiled leader of the ANC.
13. Dingake also suggests that prisoners on Robben Island were treated like guinea pigs and that the prison 'was a laboratory of a major political experiment' (1987:203).
14. Breytenbach asserts that the sound of barking dogs will always remind him of Pollsmoor Prison: 'the Cape will always be marked for me by the insistent growling and yapping and barking of dogs at night. Whenever the siren sounded the dogs would take up the echo in a chorus of howling' (238).
15. See poem 18 in Letters to Martha: 'But through my delight/thudded the anxious boots' (1978a:19).
16. Two poems in The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist highlight the singing of the condemned prisoners: 'In the Middle of the Night' (351) and 'Your letter is Delightful...' (347).
17. While Breytenbach implies the existence of a self, Cronin's experience was completely different. In an interview with Gray, Cronin explores the idea that 'one of the myths of going inside...is that somehow you are going to discover some authentic

self....My own discovery of being inside prison...was...just the opposite: there was no inner self' (Gray 1984:35).

18. Mandela was transferred to Pollsmoor Prison while Breytenbach was serving his term there. Working in the General Stores, Breytenbach was 'involved in equipping Mandela and his comrades with clothes and furniture'. This Breytenbach did 'with tremendous glee': 'The boere so obviously hated having to find proper clothes and yet they had no choice because everybody was scared of the repercussions if Mandela complained to the Red Cross' (275).

19. While in prison, the wind had an effect on La Guma as well and, as noted, the wind features throughout The Stone Country.

20. Nkrumah makes a similar point:

...I wondered whether prison punishments really did achieve their purpose in reforming the criminal and whether capital punishment was a solution to murder cases....No man is born a criminal; society makes him so, and the only way to change things is to change the social conditions (1989:131-132).

21. It is interesting to note that Breytenbach acknowledges both prisoner and jailer in the dedication of The True Confessions of an Albino Terrorist:

I want to dedicate this book not to Mr. Investigator, but to the multitude of detainees and tortured ones and prisoners in the land of my birth; and not only to the 'politicals' but also to the 'common criminals'; and with a kind thought to some of the poor bastards who lead their twisted lives defiling mankind by extorting and oppressing and punishing and ruling in the name of 'security'. Because we are all brothers (309).

CONCLUSION

During the course of this study I have demonstrated that La Guma, Brutus, Lewin and Breytenbach were not destroyed by their prison experiences. They remained committed to the struggle against apartheid and convinced that freedom and change would come about. In order, *inter alia*, to understand their situation in relation to the Foucaultian concepts of knowledge and power, I intend, in this conclusion, to examine why the system of apartheid failed and the reasons why political imprisonment did not succeed in suppressing their opposition to the South African government. It is appropriate at this point to undertake a consideration of the events that led up to Mandela's discharge from prison in 1990, since the release of one of the world's most important political prisoners signalled the end of an era in South African history, a period characterized by the use of authoritarian power to maintain the political, economic, social and cultural privileges of a minority at the expense of a majority.

By the time La Guma and Brutus left South Africa in 1966, conditions in the country were extreme. After the massacre at Sharpeville in 1960, the ANC, the PAC and the SACP were officially banned and, as mentioned, by 1964 Mandela, Sisulu and Govan Mbeki were among those who were sentenced to life-imprisonment. The years following Lewin's release in 1971 were momentous. In 1975, Mozambique and Angola were granted independence from Portugal, a concession that had considerable

impact on the South African population,¹ as Allister Sparks explains in The Mind of South Africa:

By precipitating the sudden dissolution of the Portuguese empire and the independence of Mozambique and Angola, it gave black South Africans a huge adrenalin shot, changed the geo-political map of the subcontinent, transformed Pretoria's strategic thinking, and led to a reformulation of apartheid policy. It marked, in fact, a simultaneous turning point, at which the Afrikaner revolution crested and entered a phase of crisis and decline, and at which the black revolution began its rise (1991:300).

South African troops invaded Angola in 1975, hoping to destabilize the fragile independence of that country, an act of aggression that proved to be extremely costly to the South African government.² By June 1976, the 'black revolution' to which Sparks alludes was gaining ground. School children in Soweto, protesting the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, were fired on by the police during a march to the Orlando Soccer Stadium. Riots ensued and, within days, demonstrations and violence had spread across the country. Hundreds of people were killed, imprisoned or had fled into exile. The uprising lasted for over a year before it was finally quelled. By the end of 1977, Biko, to whom I referred in Chapters One and Two, was dead and numerous anti-apartheid organizations were banned.

External and internal crises forced the South African government onto the defensive. The independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, the build-up of Cuban troops in Angola and continued black discontent in South Africa resulted in massive militarization. Leonard explains in South Africa at War that this was partly

'aimed at supplementing the country's domestic police resources, which were under strain from the student protests and guerilla attacks'. The mobilization, however, was 'for the most part...directed at external targets (1983:11). By the time Breytenbach was released in 1982, the South African government was facing numerous problems that oppressive measures could not successfully solve. The introduction of a tricameral parliament in which coloureds and Indians would 'share' power proved to be unpopular and in 1983 more than five-hundred organizations formed the United Democratic Front (UDF), which campaigned against the new constitution. A powerful ally of the banned ANC, the UDF organized rallies, trade boycotts and strikes. By 1984, however, peaceful demonstrations again erupted into violence.

The government responded by declaring two states of emergency and the black townships were placed under military control. Sparks asserts that this uprising produced

...the most severe repercussions in South Africa's history, plunging the country into a financial crisis deeper and longer than after either Sharpeville or Soweto. Sanctions and disinvestment campaigns...put its economy under permanent pressure, and the currency crisis exposed a weakness that [would] surely be attacked again (1991:361).

The economic crisis, the escalating cost of the war in Angola and the South African government's inability effectively to crush opposition to the system of apartheid led to the unbanning of the ANC, the PAC and the SACP, and to the release of Mandela in 1990.³ In the perpetual struggle for control, both the ANC and the South African government realized that a negotiated settlement was essential, as Mandela implies in the following

words:

We had been fighting against white minority rule for three-quarters of a century. We had been engaged in the armed struggle for more than two decades. Many people on both sides had already died. The enemy was strong and resolute. Yet even with all their bombers and tanks, they must have sensed they were on the wrong side of history. We had right on our side, but not yet might. It was clear to me that a military victory was a distant if not impossible dream. It simply did not make sense for both sides to lose thousands if not millions of lives in a conflict that was unnecessary (1994:457).

In the same way that the South African government had failed to suppress domestic and international resistance, so, as I have demonstrated in my examinations of La Guma, Brutus, Lewin and Breytenbach, were they unable to destroy the resolve of those they had imprisoned for political crimes. Political prisoners, like the vast majority of the South African population, were not destroyed but for the most part strengthened by their plight. To discuss this observation, it will be beneficial to digress briefly and to examine the writing of Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist assigned to a hospital in Algeria during the French-Algerian war of 1954-1962. In his work, Fanon, like Memmi, analyzes the psychological implications of colonialism, as well as the process of decolonization. His findings may be applied to the mental trauma I have shown to be experienced by political prisoners under the system of apartheid. Fanon's conclusions may also be used to explain why these prisoners remained committed to the struggle for change.

While Fanon is well known for his belief in the use of violence to overthrow the oppressor,⁴ it is to his more general

observations on the way in which colonialism functions that I intend to draw attention. In The Wretched of the Earth, he asserts that 'the settler paints the native' not only as an inferior - as highlighted in my earlier exposition of the Afrikaners' attitude to black people - but 'as a sort of quintessence of evil' (1968:41), a description which in apartheid South Africa belonged, more especially, to the Afrikaner's portrayal of the subversive native. The settler, Fanon writes - and his comment applies also to the Afrikaner - always regards the native as 'guilty'. This study has also demonstrated the truth of Fanon's further claim that 'the native admits no accusation' and of the assertion that 'he is overpowered but not tamed; he is treated as an inferior but he is not convinced of his inferiority'.⁵ In addition, 'the symbols of social order' that Fanon refers to, including 'the police, the bugle calls in the barracks, military parades and the waving flags' are, as I have established, 'at one and the same time inhibitory and stimulating: for they do not convey the message "Don't dare to budge"; rather, they cry out "Get ready to attack"' (1968:53).

Fanon maintains that the desire for change and freedom from oppression 'exists in its crude state, impetuous and compelling, in the consciousness and in the lives of the men and women who are colonized' (1968:35-36); and, in A Dying Colonialism, he suggests that, when 'the colonized man braces himself to reject oppression, a radical transformation takes place within him which makes any attempt to maintain the colonial system impossible and shocking' (1967:179). Thus, as Memmi concludes in The Colonizer and the Colonized, 'regardless of how soon or how violently the colonized rejects his situation, he will one day begin to

overthrow his unlivable existence with the whole force of his oppressed personality' (1991:120). Fanon adds that decolonization 'never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally' (1968:36).

How do the perceptions of Fanon and, more specifically, Foucault relate to the political prisoners on whom I have focused in this study? Fanon's depiction of the colonial world and Foucault's portrayal of the carceral society applies to South Africa, where, as stressed, the police and the army were employed to suppress and 'delimit' the majority of the population. The same goals were pursued within the prison system and vigorously applied to those people imprisoned for opposition to official policy. As emphasized in Chapter One, the South African government created and enforced legislation in an effort to maintain power and to suppress almost all opposition to the system of apartheid. Moreover, their actions were also directed to the creation of a climate of fear. Foucault comments on this strategy: 'What makes the presence and control of the police tolerable for the population, if not fear of the criminal? This institution of the police...is only justified by that fear' (Gordon ed. 1980:47). Collaboration, secrecy and denial also allowed the government to imprison numerous individuals, whom, as seen, they labelled as evil and subversive. The chapters on Lewin and Breytenbach show that political prisoners never accepted this depiction, nor their guilt, because as Jenkin explains:

...for imprisonment to serve as a punishment it has to be perceived as such by the prisoner. The prisoner must show some remorse, feel guilty and at the bottom of it recognise that what he or she has been committed

to prison for is considered by society to be 'wrong', a crime, anti-social and deserving of punishment (1987:117).

In confirmation of Fanon's statement, too, that the native was 'not convinced of his inferiority', indigenous political prisoners, who were excluded and discriminated against because of their colour and nature of their anti-government actions, refused to accept their low status, which is another reason why these prisoners, in particular, remained steadfast. I intend, here, to analyze the concepts of 'otherness' and 'inferiority' in further detail as their relation to personal power is addressed by La Guma, Brutus, Lewin and Breytenbach. In La Guma's The Stone Country, Adams objects to the way in which rules are enforced in prison and to the way in which prisoners are treated in general. He remains convinced of his worth as a human being and determined to maintain his self-esteem. Lewin, on the other hand, learned increased self-respect from his interactions with Fischer and Goldberg who, despite their sentences, were dignified and composed. While Breytenbach describes prison as 'a world of humiliation' (1984b:315), he nevertheless managed, despite his fragile mental state, to maintain a view of his integrity as a person and as a writer, and Brutus, who refused to teach his students to accept their subordinate status, maintained that political prisoners must counteract inferiority by asserting their dignity. In a poem from Still the Sirens, Brutus writes:

The "Abyss" is their word for time,
time in prison - any kind of prison
they can see time as a devouring maw,
a vortex that sucks away their lives;
but in that vision they assert themselves
seeing the abyss and themselves as separate:

so they take on, once more, human dignity (1993:29).

Many political prisoner-writers express similar sentiments. Mashinini says that it 'was vital that we should be recognised for who we were, and that we should fight for our identity and respect as human beings' (1991:40) and Mandela affirms that by retaining his self-esteem he was assured of victory:

Prison and the authorities conspire to rob each man of his dignity. In and of itself, that assured that I would survive, for any man or institution that tries to rob me of my dignity will lose because I will not part with it at any price or under any pressure (1994:341).

It is noteworthy that even Hendrik Coetsee, Minister of Justice, Police and Prisons, was struck by Mandela's demeanour.⁶ Coetsee first met Mandela in 1985. The meeting took place in a hospital ward, where Mandela, under heavy security, was undergoing surgery. Coetsee

...was fascinated at what kind of man [Mandela] must be to have attracted all this international attention and have all these honorary degrees and awards given to him. When I met him I immediately understood why. He came across as a man of Old World values. I have studied Latin and Roman culture, and I remember thinking that this is a man to whom I could apply it, an old Roman citizen with *dignitas*, *gravitas*, *honestas*, *simplicitas* (Sparks 1995:24).

Warders on Robben Island, contrary to expectation, were similarly impressed by the way in which political prisoners generally behaved. While Brutus does not mention this in Letters to Martha, one of the warders, Mike Green, confirms that these prisoners 'were very disciplined and when you requested that they go to the cells to be locked up you didn't have to request a second time. They'd move into their cells and close the doors

for you, you just had to turn the key' (Schadeberg 1994:61). Here, the relationship between discipline and personal power, as opposed to the connection between discipline and official power observed by Foucault, is evident.

It will have been gathered from my discussion here that, contrary to the situation described by Foucault, political prisoners were aware of the importance of maintaining their dignity and that prison did not transform them into delinquents. Furthermore, imprisonment did not signal a readiness to obey the instruction commented on by Fanon, namely 'Don't dare to budge', but reaffirmed the cry 'Get ready to attack'. Here it is necessary to consider two points. First, the way in which prison prepared political prisoners 'to attack' and, second, the way in which they were able 'to attack' the South African government. For many of these prisoners, education played an important role in preparing them for the future and, as indicated in Chapter One, the prisoners' goal on Robben Island, in particular, was to equip themselves with the knowledge, the skills and, thus, the power to lead others into a new South Africa. Ironically, Foucault notes that one of the basic principles of the prison is that 'the treatment meted out to the prisoner...must be directed principally to his general and professional instruction and to his improvement' (1995:270). While South African prison officials were concerned with punishment rather than with training, many political prisoners, as demonstrated, benefited from their prison experience. Mzamane, for example, calls Robben Island 'a university for leaders of the liberation movements' (1989:95),⁷ and Zuma confirms that political prisoners aspired to come out of prison 'better politician[s]...better fighter[s]'

(Schadeberg 1994:57).

According to Govan Mbeki, one of the ways in which political prisoners acquired knowledge on Robben Island was through political studies, which had to be undertaken in secret:⁸ books were copied, lecture notes hidden and classes took place clandestinely during work in the quarries (1991:xxiii). Mandela points out that political prisoners established their 'own faculty, with [their] own professors, [their] own curriculum, [their] own courses'. He confirms that, in time, both political and non-political prisoners were educated on the Island, which 'was beneficial for us as well as for them. These men had little formal education, but a great knowledge of the hardships of the world' (1994:406-407). La Guma, Brutus, Lewin and Breytenbach make similar claims about their interactions with especially non-political prisoners, from whom they learned valuable lessons, lessons that prompted them 'to attack' with their pens. The relationship between knowledge and power is clear because, in Foucault's words, 'the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power' (Gordon ed. 1980:52).

All four political prison-writers learned other lessons in prison. As underlined throughout the study, La Guma, Brutus, Lewin and Breytenbach discovered that prison is a place of sterility, a 'stone country'. They gained an understanding of the way in which power operates in the relationship between prisoners and warders, a frequently sadistic exercise of the latter's authority which is often appropriately described in cat-and-mouse terms and using other animal imagery. They became aware of the way in which prison gangs were used by officials to

impose discipline and to intimidate non-political and political prisoners, an aspect of the prison experience to which Foucault, as noted, draws particular attention. Brutus and Lewin were also made aware that enforced homosexuality is one of the penalties of life in prison. Meeting people like The Casbah Kid led La Guma to conclude that criminal acts, contrary to official claims, were committed by those who were politically, socially and economically disadvantaged, a finding which is reinforced by Foucault's observation that the 'origin of delinquency' may be 'assigned...to society....It is society [and] bad social organization that is responsible' (1995:287). Lewin and Breytenbach, through their exposure to hangings, developed their views on the practice of capital punishment, which they portrayed as inhumane. On a more positive note, through Brutus's interactions with Mandela and Lewin's with Fischer and Goldberg, the two writers were led to an appreciation of the meaning of endurance and courage, reinforcing their determination not to be undermined by the prison authorities and to seek whatever personal form of empowerment they could for the liberation quest. Lewin claims that being in prison taught him what it was like to be black in South African society and all four writers learned, too, about the way in which apartheid operated behind bars, leading them to conclude that prison was a microcosm of the outside world to whose transformation their commitment as writers never faltered.

In order to comment on how these political prison-writers drew attention to the existence of apartheid in prison and to conditions in South Africa, I shall now focus on the manner in which they personally were able 'to attack' the South African

government. La Guma, Brutus, Lewin and Breytenbach, as shown, were able, through their writing, to educate the international community about South Africa and so to foster the struggle. Unfortunately, as political prisoners, these and other such writers, were unable to reach the South African population, because their works were banned by a government which did not want the South African population to learn that the struggle against apartheid continued in prison.⁹ Some managed to have information disseminated overseas by having works smuggled out and published there, however; this also occurred when writers went into exile, as shown. Those political prisoners who remained in South Africa after their release from prison were able to inform people about what was going on inside, although not through literature. Zuma, for example, 'immediately made contact with the other comrades and said, "*A luta continua*" [The struggle continues]' (Frederikse 1990:124), and Makhoere, in defiance of the South African government, told people to 'start reorganizing [themselves]. That the seeds of revolution [had] bloomed' (1988:18).¹⁰

Perhaps the most vital link between those struggling in prison and those protesting outside, was the fervent belief in the inevitability of change. I wish to turn to Fanon again, in order to discuss this phenomenon. As I have mentioned, he perceived that the desire for change exists in the lives and in the minds of all men and women who are colonized and, by implication, imprisoned. I have revealed not only that La Guma, Brutus, Lewin and Breytenbach were firm in their commitment to change even before they entered prison but also that imprisonment deepened this as well as their conviction that change was certain

It is interesting to observe that, for some political prisoners, the commitment to change, to freedom, was intensified when they learned, in prison, that the struggle continued. Naidoo claims that, when new recruits disseminated information about national and international anti-apartheid activities, the prisoners were 'particularly encouraged' (1982:188) and Niehaus writes that 'every time I heard what was happening in the country, it reaffirmed my convictions and I knew that my prison sentence was not in vain' (1994:132).

It is my opinion that being incarcerated strengthened resolve and belief in change because, based on their experiences, political prisoners realized that prison could not reform their political convictions and that the policy of apartheid could not suppress the majority of the South African population forever. In this final point for discussion, I shall comment on the thoughts of La Guma, Lewin and Breytenbach concerning the purpose and function of civil and political imprisonment. In the same way that Foucault observes that 'prison fails to eliminate crime' (1995:277) so, in an article entitled, 'What Goes on in Roeland Street Jail', La Guma asserts that prison is 'a place where criminals are always punished, but seldom reformed' (1956b:6). This opinion is shared by Lewin, who claims that despite his experience, he remained 'unchanged' (1976:225), while Breytenbach concludes that to 'pretend that it is possible to rehabilitate somebody while he is locked up is absolute crap' (1987:17). Breytenbach's perceptions are echoed by many political prison-writers.

The South African government hanged, imprisoned and detained hundreds of opponents to the system of apartheid. In addition,

they banned people, works of literature and newspapers in an effort to silence those who spoke out about change, about a better future for all South Africans. When Mandela was sworn in as the first black president of South Africa on 10 May 1994, it was the end of an era and the beginning of a new period in South African history.¹¹ Events over the course of almost fifty years had weakened the system of apartheid, politically, socially, culturally and economically, and the time had arrived for a change, a change anticipated by so many political prisoners and by the people of South Africa themselves.

The purpose of this study was, among other things, to examine the way in which La Guma, Brutus, Lewin and Breytenbach reacted against a repressive regime. I have shown that, while dedicated to different political ideologies, these political prison writers, through their writing and their commitment to the struggle against apartheid, nevertheless shared a common goal - to attempt to educate people about conditions in South African prisons and in South African society, and to reinforce, constantly, the idea that change was inevitable. In addition, despite Foucault's assertion that prison suppresses offenders and notwithstanding the South African government's stringent measures designed to subdue opposition to the policy of apartheid, I have demonstrated that, ultimately, these tactics of repression strengthened the resolve of political prisoners and the majority of the South African population as well. Throughout the study I have also drawn frequent attention to the concepts of exclusion, delinquency, surveillance, discipline, power and knowledge not only as described by Foucault but sometimes in opposition to his claims. I have done this in order to prove my primary thesis

that the works of these writers, which document the extreme physical and psychological abuses that took place in prison, are in the end as much about freedom and the power of the prisoners as they are about oppression and the power of the prison system and the South African government. These writings contribute to the history of South Africa and to the history of South African literature and are a confirmation of the fact that people, whether imprisoned, colonized or both, cannot be suppressed forever.

Notes

1. Events in Mozambique and Angola had an effect on political prisoners as well and Mandela writes that 'we learned of the successful liberation struggles in Mozambique and Angola in 1975 and their emergence as independent states with revolutionary governments. The tide was turning our way' (1994:435).
2. Basil Davidson notes in The Search for Africa that, by 1983, the 'year's military spending' in South Africa 'had risen to R3.093 million' (1994:296).
3. The end of communist rule in the USSR and Eastern Europe contributed to the changes taking place in South Africa. The South African government could no longer use the threat of communism to defend its policies and, at the same time, the ANC was deprived of moral and financial support from the Eastern bloc.
4. See Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth (1968:35-106).
5. Sparks in Tomorrow is Another Country expresses a different

view, suggesting that

Slavery debases master as well as slave....So, too, in apartheid South Africa where white and black had been bound together in a web of mutual destructiveness. Apartheid, brutalizing the whites as it destroyed the self-esteem of the blacks, robbed both of their humanity (1995:227).

6. In her autobiography, In No Uncertain Terms, Suzman, who visited Mandela on Robben Island, was also

...much impressed by Mandela's dignity....Despite all those years in prison, he retained a sense of humor, was not at all bitter, and obviously had outstanding qualities of leadership....I was convinced that this was the one man who would have the will and the authority to persuade the ANC and the government to suspend violence, and who could create the climate for negotiation (1993:155).

7. In Goodbye Bafana, Gregory, Mandela's jailer for over twenty years, reveals that warders on Robben Island were aware of the benefits of political education:

These younger ANC men were often less educated, some had no education and under the tutelage of Mandela and the leaders, received the first formal education of their lives. More than being alongside the very men who were the God-like figures at the heart of the black freedom movement, they were also being schooled in the fundamentals of freedom (1995:195).

8. It is interesting that even Gregory learned about the history of the ANC from Mandela, prompting the former to study and research the subject. His political view was fundamentally altered when he was exposed to Mandela's 'version' of South African history: 'My conversion had begun slowly...but it was hastened now by my own research. These people I was guarding', and whom 'I'd regarded as terrorists and enemy, were actually

telling me the truth' (1995:125).

9. In the same way that the government separated political prison-writers from the South African public, so they ultimately removed Mandela and many long-term prisoners from Robben Island. Breytenbach asserts that the intention behind Mandela's move was 'to cut [him] off from his own - to stop the Island being, as it had become, the "Mandela University"' (1984b:276). Coetsee, Minister of Justice, Police and Prisons, denies this claim. Instead, Coetsee suggests that the moving of Mandela and others to Pollsmoor Prison in 1982 was 'to make discreet contact with the imprisoned leaders, which could not be done on the island without raising a storm of gossip' (Sparks 1995:23).

10. Johns and Davis, in Mandela, Tambo, and the African National Congress, explain the significance of the interaction between released prisoners and the South African population. At the beginning of the 1970s, released prisoners from Robben Island returned to the townships and brought with them 'direct accounts of the still-imprisoned leadership [,] highlight[ing] their appeal and legitimacy among the broad black public' (1991:144). For a good number of these ex-prisoners,

...the new form of struggle that they had developed on Robben Island had strengthened their determination to return actively to antiapartheid politics, despite the hazards of operating either clandestinely or legally in South Africa or the uncertainties of exile politics.
(1991:144)

11. Gregory, Mandela's jailer, was invited to the inauguration, an event that he describes in Goodbye Bafana:

When I closed my eyes I could see Robben Island, that Devil's Island prison where we had kept [Mandela]. I could see the times when he had wanted to be free. I

could see the man standing there so tall, so ram-rod straight that he towered above everyone else....The echoes of countless appalling acts perpetrated by the white man under the guise of apartheid were never far from any of our minds this day: Sharpeville...Soweto ...Steve Biko...Chris Hani...but today we were seeing the death of the old evil ways of apartheid and the birth of a new nation (1995:3).

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