BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL, BROWN IS BEAUTIFUL, WHITE IS BEAUTIFUL

Towards a rainbow culture in a united South Africa

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This is the last of a trilogy of papers on culture in a future South Africa by Albie Sachs. Dr Sachs does not need any introduction. The paper was delivered as the annual Daantjie Oosthuizen Academic Freedom Lecture at Rhodes University on Tuesday 6 August 1991.

We publish this special number of Comment in the hope that it will provide a stimulus for debate and we welcome responses for our Summer Number - the deadline of which is 1 November.

In a sense, culture is everything; it is who we are, how we see each other. It is the foundation of our fortune or of our ruin. It does not deny high art, the moments of exquisiteness and sublimity that transcend any form of snobbish distance, but it is far more than that. It includes our languages, our body movements, the way we sit down next to each other, even the differing textures, rustles and fragrances of our clothes. It is the measure of our surprises and astonishments, the emotional confusion when the Baas discovers he is no longer Baas and Klaas finds out he will never be Klaas again. It is the end of the reign of Madam. It is the thousand little leaps we take from the over-familiar to the under-familiar, the assertion and discovery of ourselves. It is, hopefully, the gentle and deep manner in which South Africans will at last begin to South Africanise themselves.

Culture abused, mobilised for the sake of profit or ambition, is like a thousand spearpoints waiting to blood the spirit and tear the body. It is aggressive, vainglorious, false and ugly, the opposite of culture released, which is kind, affirmative, true and beautiful. Is it right that a cultivated South African should know everything about Sparta and nothing about Venda? Is it not possible to know about both?

"Antidisestablishmentarianism", we are told, is the longest word in the English language. It is also the biggest obstacle to cultural development and the artistic freedom in South Africa.

There is nothing worse than an establishment that has lost its nerve. It retains the habit of rule, but lacks the necessary hauteur. The result is a vacuous hegemony that makes everyone jumpy; it is not clear who becomes more agitated, the establishment or the anti-establishment.

All establishments [not excluding any to which I might belong] consider their existence to be natural, meritorious and part-able only by death. The more insecure they become, the more they cling to verities. They assume that whatever their failures, no-one else could have done better; so, with noble self-denial, they decide not to vacate their positions lest society suffer something worse. The anti-establishment figures feel equally uneasy, since they owe their existence more to what they oppose than to what they are. Fall the establishment, fall the anti-establishment.

Disestablishment is something quite different. it does not mean destroying one establishment and replacing it with another, nor does it imply merely infiltrating better people into the existing structures of authority. It requires a new look at what we understand by culture, and, especially, a new resolute attempt to end concepts of officialised taste and institutionalised performance.

It is crucial that we in South Africa now set about disestablishing our culture and breaking away from the conceptual and structural strangulations of the past. Long after our country was declared a republic, we remain mentally colonised. The scrapping of social apartheid has barely touched the apartheid in our minds. We take authoritarianism, secrecy and deceit as part of our way of life. As Robert Birley used to say, we hug our chains, feel naked without them.

We are afraid to be ourselves, and

terrified of discovering one another. The only choice we are used to is between stooping and being stiff necked. The triumph of the one is always the disaster of the other. If white is beautiful, black is ugly. If black is beautiful , white is ugly. We cannot imagine both black and white being beautiful at the same time, or, for that matter, of both being ugly.

Apartheid has strait-jacketed culture in more ways than people seem to realise. It has not only excluded the majority of the population from access to what it considered high art, it has kept us apart, made us ignorant about each other, habituated us to mutual hatred, crimped our imaginations and turned us into timid creatures.

We peep over walls to see others peeping back at us. We lack courage. We fear freedom. We wait for a leader to tell us what to do, even what to feel. Yet if the ending of apartheid signifies anything, it is the chance for the first time really to be ourselves, to take pride in who we are, to luxuriate in the possibilities of self-discovery that we ourselves, through hard struggle, have opened up. At last, at last, we have the opportunity fully and without preconceptions to explore our own country and get to know its full human dimensions and resources.

This is not the moment to paint our chains in skin tones so that they blend with our flesh, nor the time to be thinking of exchanging finest imported steel handcuffs for best-cured local leather thongs. [As Samora used to say:. there are some people who, as long as they are not eaten by a foreign tiger, don't mind being swallowed by a local lion.] It is our opportunity, Houdini-like, to leap with skill, conviction and, yes, bravado, from our self-imposed shackles. The alarm, even panic, of people active in the area of culture is misplaced. If they truly love art, if they become exalted when surrounded by a hundred flowers blossoming, then this is the time of their greatest release, expectation and joy.

This is our chance to discover multiple points of reference, diverse sources of pride. For some of us, who have dishonoured our cultures by associating them with oppression and domination, fall comes before pride; we have to escape what we have made, free ourselves from the unbearable whiteness of being and proudly walk into the universe of non-racialism. Yet for none of us does the recovery of pride require humiliation. Truth might sting a little, but it cleans and heals. It is in the interest of all of us that we all recover our pride; it is not only unjust but dangerous for any group to feel less sense of worth or acceptance than any other.

We change, but we do not cease to be who we are. Now that we begin to meet as equals, there should be delight rather than fear in the discoveries we make. The triumph of one is not the defeat of the other. We glory in the multitude of voices, the variety of encounters.

We have to disestablish not only our institutions, but our imaginations. The word "South Africa" has been appropriated and a flag and an anthem attached to it. We have to free our country and free ourselves so that a truly new South Africa can metamorphose itself from the old. Non-racialism is a political ideal, not a cultural nutcracker. By detaching culture from race, it frees it. It is the right to be the same in terms of basic human entitlements and freedoms, that guarantees the right to be different in respect of personality, culture and tastes.

The choices we have been given in the past were false ones: either forced assimilation [equal rights for all civilised men, that is, a place in the sun for persons who succeeded in adapting their behaviour to the supposed manners of the English middle class male] or else indirect rule [that is, a colonial culture presiding over what were called various native cultures]. Now we have the chance, on the basis of non-racial democracy to develop a national culture in a way that neither forces people together nor forces them apart. The new culture is released, it evolves, it establishes its own directions and acquires its own textures. What is it? We do not know. We discern elements of its profile, we remove obstacles to its emergence, we encourage it to grow. Does it mean the end of standards? No, that which is deeply implanted, that which people will cherish and defend out of conviction and love and not just out of habit, will live on and even improve without artificial protection.

Disestablishment is not the same as destruction. We have institutions that employ thousands of persons as singers and dancers and public relations officers, and also as carpenters and electricians and dressmakers. For many it is merely a good and decent way of earning a living. For others it is a passion, a madness, a life-long quest for beauty and authenticity. Whether or not there is a role for culture in struggle, there is no lack of struggle in culture. Megalomania, gossip and temperament abound. There are fights over money and position. It is the world of art.

Any sensible approach to culture must take into account that many fine things have been achieved over the years; it would be a grievous mistake to re-cycle the baby with the bathwater. The new South Africa would indeed be a

charmless place if we were banned from hearing Bach or told that Swan Like had been replaced by Crocodile Lagoon. One of the warmest greetings I received on my return from exile was in the foyer of the Cape Town City Hall, when someone came up to me and said: "How wonderful to have you back, for twenty years you never missed a concert, except when you were in jail." It would be a strange kind of freedom if I no longer had the choice of going to a symphony concert, or a jazz club, or a disco.

What was sad after twenty four years of exile, was not to see that classical music was alive and well-played at the tip of Africa, that was a joy, but that the ambience was as exclusively white as when I had left. The orchestra was all-white, the audience virtually all-white.

Beethoven belongs to everybody, not because he might have been black, but because his music is beautiful. We have to find a way of opening the doors of learning and culture. It is not suggested that for the sake of representativity we appoint tone deaf black musicians to the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra. What is worrying is that provision for young black people to acquire instruments and musical training is negligible, that somehow it is appropriate for Africans to play in military bands or jazz groups, but quite un-African for them to be in a symphony orchestra. It is alarming that where once there were apartheid signs saying whites only, now there are glass walls that make blacks keep their distance.

Culture should never be beleaguered or be-laagered. Subsidised tickets and transport are useful, but what is needed is something much more far-reaching, that goes hand in hand with the general breaking down of Group Areas, the opening up of education, the re-vitalisation of the media and the overcoming of the multiplicity of complexes, whether of inferiority or superiority, from which we all suffer.

Yet distressing though the de facto racial bars are, and worrying though the problem of heavy subsidies for the Orchestra might be, these are not the greatest causes for concern.

There are profound paradoxes of musicality in South Africa that have to be unravelled. Musically speaking, white society is arid. People cannot sing or make music, unless specially trained. Musical appreciation is passive - others perform, we listen. Black South Africans, on the other hand, belong to what is possibly the most active musical community in the world. People sing to themselves when working, they sing in groups, with invention harmony and wit.

At a meeting of thousands, one voice starts a song in soprano, and the bases join in, and the baritones and the altos, everybody singing his or her part with seemingly perfect pitch, a huge, spontaneous harmonised chorus on the spot. A new song with a new melody and new words is tried, and quickly the thousands of voices choose their moments of entry and the chorus swells out. Music, singing, is a part of life. Everyone joins in, Choirs abound. Paul Simon heard what most white South Africans had closed their ears to, and only when the songs he recorded with Ladysmith Black Mambasa came back over the airwaves, did they say: "how lovely".

Yet how many black artists are to be seen in the opera or as members of orchestras? As in so many other areas of life, there has for decades been massive affirmative action - in favour of the whites. This does far more than perpetrate injustice, it impoverishes the whole of musical culture in our country. We import instrumentalists because we are not training our own. We pay for foreign opera singers, at the beginning or end of their careers, rather than find voices in our own country. Worse still, we sever music in half, cutting off our great concert halls and opera houses from what should be our greatest musical resource, active and creative music-making in the community. If we can find the continuum between the inventiveness and expressivity of popular choral and instrumental music, on the one hand, and high performance art, with its massive sense of occasion and capacity for projection, on the other, who knows what the outcome might be. South Africa is rare in the world in being a modern, industrialised state in which traditionally-based popular music-making has not been annihilated by professionalism and commercialisation. We have the possibility of becoming a singing nation to outmatch Italy, creating our own distinctive forms of presentation, a South African vocal and orchestral idiom of unique character, as Verdi and Puccini did in their country.

Something started years back when Todd Matshikiza and Spike Glasser got together to write the score for *King Kong*. If we were bold enough to develop voices and sounds that explored the space between traditional\church music and opera, taking in the bumpy wit of urban dance-hall bands, we could add South African opera to the world repertoire, and not merely put on world opera in South Africa.

The new South African culture will draw on many roots. We are not saying *one settler, one ballet*. Nor are we arguing for one native, one drum. The ballet is for all, the drumming

for everybody. We want to get out of the world of settlers and natives, of mountain tops with chandeliers hanging over them, and valleys lit by candles.

Ideally, the drumming and the dance find each other, spur each other on, couple angrily and joyously. Each gets lost in the other, emerges the same but different.

Alvin Ailey did it. The Haarlem Dance Theatre was not simply a theatre in which blacks were enabled to dance; it was a place in which black life experience and dreams and body language were able to emerge with dignified and clean presentation on the stage. A new dance style evolved, fluidly emotive, finely muscular, choreographically evocative of street fantasy rather than of imagined lakes and castles. White dancers were made welcome, everyone took pride, the classical ballet looked better with the handsome Haarlem at its side.

Sylvia Glasser, dancer and choreographer in Johannesburg, seeks clarification: should backsides be adapted to dance, or dance to backsides? She recalls the case of a black dancer of extraordinary virtuosity who was kept off the stage because her buttocks were considered too large - apparently, an anorexic Aryan arse was welcome, but not a bulging Bantu bum. Another choreographer created a dance that was not based on lifts and descents and petit-point, but on presence, projection and rhythm. Adapting dance to physique, a piece was created in which the same dancer was the central figure, and, happy to relate, she stole the evening.

In Mozambique, we had civil war, famine and refugees. We also had a National Dance Company and a Children's Dance School. The Dance Company emerged from a national dance festival in which half a million people throughout the country took part. The variety of sounds, steps and body positions amazed us all. We spent weeks discussing and imitating the different movements. South Africans can sing, Mozambicans can dance. We saw Rites of Spring, Autumn and Summer a hundred times over, with infinite inventiveness and variation. The dances were studied and choreographed, attention was paid to costumes and light, the Company travelled abroad and had immense success.

When Samora Machel was killed, a twenty year old graduate of the Children's Dance Theatre choreographed a piece called *Song for Samora*. It was in romantic, modern mode, free-flowing abstract movements danced to the first six minutes of Mozart's *Requiem*. The young performers were mostly but not all black; boys took part as well as girls. The auditorium was filled with parents and neighbours from all parts of Maputo, wearing their best clothes for the occasion. The emotion was strong. We all cried. One of the dancers was Samora's daughter. No-one asked if this was Eurocentred or Afrocentred - it was human-centred, and drew on all the cultural inputs available to Mozambique. No-one said this was elitist, or community-based, or propagandist or bourgeois. We responded with our hearts and felt pride at seeing the children of our martyred country expressing themselves with such verve and artistry, as individuals, as Mozambicans and as children of the world.

Then followed a programme of scenes from the *Polovtsian Dances*, the *Dying Swan*, *Porgy and Bess* and dances from various regions in Mozambique. Everybody did everything. To see young white children shaking their backsides and clapping their hands as they sang in the many languages of the country, you would have said they had been born with rhythm; watching the young black girls in tutus sinking graciously to the ground, you would have felt that swan-ness was innate to their society. Out of the limbs and bodies of the young children, came forth great human wisdom. What applies to dance, applies to poetry. Antjie Krog, widely regarded as the best Afrikaans-language poet since Breyten, made a poetic discovery, or, rather, a discovery of poetry. The surprise was not in the unexpected beauty of the poems, but in the fact that they had been there all the time, in the fields and homesteads only a few kilometres from where she lived, and she had never known of them - Sotho poetry, recited with infinite poise and subtlety by the elders. Out of the mouths of 'the ancients' came forth beauty.

Now Antjie finds she has to ask new questions. How can we record oral tradition where performance and tonality count for so much? How, she wants to know, can we convey the subtle stresses, the intricate alliterative echoes of the spoken Sotho poems, the gliding sideways movement of associated words leaping from one line to the next?

We can add our questions: how do we record and share amongst all South Africans the riddles and proverbs, the wise sayings and stories, the praise poems and epics, the musical incantations and fables, the wedding songs and funeral dirges that have prickled the imaginations and pummelled the emotions of generation after generation of African communities?

There is fear and trembling in the establishment, and counter-fear and counter-

trembling in the anti-establishment. The barbarians are coming. Everything we hold dear is about to be swamped. We will all have to spend the rest of our lives doing the Toyi-Toyi and the gumboots dance [I can recommend it, it is healthier than the bicycle exerciser, and much more enjoyable]. Yet, the truth is that we, the self-anointed priests of good taste, are the barbarians. We destroy and ignore ancient cultures, deny their very existence. Riches abound in our land, and we trample all over them. We violate and demean the culture of the majority, and at the same time we deny or inhibit access to the more universal culture which we appropriate and call our own.

Sipho Sepamle has his queries: how is it that there is not a single theatre in Soweto, where nearly two million people live? And why is it that young readers prefer to make the long journey to the Johannesburg Library rather than frequent such local libraries as exist? He, together with Chris Hani and others who got their schooling before Bantu Education took hold, lament the lack of interest in books and classical literature of the modern generation.

Disestablishment has a constitutional dimension. It means that there are no officially prescribed forms of cultural expression. Just as there is no State religion, so there is no State culture, no official, pre-eminent, ceremonialised and formal mode to which culture must conform.

The government promotes, it does not prescribe. The assumption is that through free association, people come together in a multitude of ways to achieve cultural expression. The government has a crucial function in creating conditions which facilitate such expression, but it does not tell people what they may or may not read, hear, see or think. There should be no Censors or Chamberlains, no government inspectors posing as critics, no police putting on their ties and vetting artistic performance.

If Prince Charles were to visit here and pronounce that the architecture on the Cape Town foreshore constituted an ugly and meaningless jumble, while new building in Johannesburg at least had a vivacious glitz to it, we should regard this not as an official statement, but as just another opinion.

The question must be asked whether the Bill of Rights would prohibit the imposition of cultural boycotts in the future, and the answer must be yes. Conditions are being created whereby we can look forward to the end of the cultural boycott. It has dominated all debate on the question of culture, so that other issues have been left untouched. One can only look forward to the day when neither the existence nor the violation of the cultural boycott can be used as an excuse for our own failures. We still have to get our house in order.

If the ingenuity used to hoard oil in caverns and to confer foreign nationality on sports people had been invested in culture, what a powerful, self-reliant cultural personality could have emerged, even if restricted to only part of the community. Instead, there was extensive investment in films and information to prove to the world that we were really not as bad as they thought we were, and in the creation of State opera, ballet and theatre complexes to prove to ourselves that we were better than we thought ourselves to be.

Such real cultural development as took place, located itself outside of and usually in opposition to the establishment. It was largely unaffected by the boycott, indeed, received active encouragement from the very people who supported the boycott.

South African culture as such was never boycotted. Over the years I saw John Kani entrancing the Royal Court Theatre alone on the stage for an hour at the beginning of *Sizwe Banzi Is Dead*. I heard Miriam Makeba sing to an audience of 70,000 in Lisbon, I saw the audience at the Royal Shakespeare Company Theatre rise to ovate the cast of Umabatha, the so-called Zulu Macbeth. I embraced Abdullah Ibrahim after concerts in London, New York and Maputo. I was part of the audience that was delighted by the film *Mapantsula* at the Camden Town Plaza. I was at the ICA in London when we applauded the first screening of Elaine Proctor's *On the Wire*. I saw and laughed at Pieter Dirk Uys on different occasions, I was lucky enough to be given a ticket to see *Sarafina* in New York, I went five times to performances of the ANC's Amandla group in Maputo, I saw Helen Sibidi and Bill Ainslie's paintings exhibited at the House of Culture in the centre of Stockholm, I heard South African music on radio, viewed Breyten and Andre on TV, congratulated Barney Simon for his production in Paris of *Woza Albert*, listened to lectures by Nadine Gordimer, read about the success of South African plays at the Edinburgh Festival, met Athol Fugard during the darkest years, danced with P.J. Powers in Maputo and even attended a performance of the *Jail Diary of Albie Sachs*.

Nor were South African artists debarred from developing successful careers abroad - there is hardly a hero or villain of note on the stage that has not been played by Anthony Sher or Janet Suzman in recent years, not to talk of a

South African baritone in the memorable *Ring Cycle of Wagner* some years ago at the English National Opera singing no less a role than King of the Gods.

One other point needs making. The international artists who took positions against allowing their works to be shown in South Africa were not, as some would have it here, looking for popularity or cheap publicity, nor were they animated by any hatred of South Africa. They included many of the finest playwrights and film-makers of our generation, sensitive people who longed to see freedom and justice for all in our land, the very people who would be the first to embrace us and help us in whatever way they can as soon as our country becomes truly democratic. All of these artists had taken strong stands generally against censorship and insisted on the importance of the free flow of ideas; nevertheless, they felt that apartheid represented a unique affront to their consciences, and they wished to make a stand in the way they thought best.

The phased ending of the cultural boycott is to be welcomed, but it carries dangers. It is not unbearable to realise that the greatest cultural fear for many people is that they will die before hearing Frank Sinatra sing at Sun City. We can only welcome the fact that when we have embarked seriously on making South Africa liveable for all its people, we will have as much international contact as possible - and if I am in the vicinity, I might even put aside a few rand myself to hear the masterly, rascally crooner - each to his or her own taste.

The real cause for concern is that the cultural establishment will once more indulge in what an Australian called the Cultural Cringe, becoming deferential to anything from abroad, and feeling embarrassed by anything local. Even more serious, attempts to develop a multi-faceted national South African cultural imagination, reflected in and emerging from everything from literature to film-making to dance to music to the visual arts, might be frustrated as we pant after what was fashionable in London or LA or Amsterdam five years before.

The external boycott imposed by the anti-apartheid movement, was visible, acknowledged and circumstantial. The internal boycott of the culture of the majority has been invisible, unacknowledged and deeply structured. There are more forms of banning order than were dreamt of by any Minister of Justice, more works of art suppressed by marginalisation and ignorance than by any censorship board, more modes of political interference than those imposed by any cultural desks.

The hegemony exercised by the English language, the control by whites of printing facilities, the monopolistic ownership of halls, the tendentious way schoolbooks are written and prescribed, and the whole manner in which indigenous community culture has been denigrated as rude and rudimentary, have seriously damaged free cultural expression. It would be poignant in a disastrous way if the lifting of the international boycott resulted in the intensification of the internal boycott.

There is a further problem, that of boycotting our own Continent. There is no reason why we should not look to Europe and North America, but every reason why this should not be to the exclusion of Africa. One wonders how many of those calling for the lifting of the boycott have it in mind to make contact with the sculptors of Zaire and Zimbabwe, the painters and photographers of Mozambique, the film-makers of West Africa and Algeria, the singers of Angola, Zaire and Mali, the dance bands of Cape Verde, the writers of Kenya and Nigeria, the dressmakers of Senegal.

Equally, will we continue to boycott the great cultures of the East, many of which have direct representation in our country through the descendants of slaves and indentured labourers? It was shameful that I had to come across M.K. Ghandi's beautifully written autobiography in London and learn there for the first time that he had developed almost the whole of his philosophy in South Africa. One can only hope that the impresarios and festival directors face east as well as north, and give us a chance to view the artistic acrobatics of China, the films of Japan and India, the dance and dress of Indonesia and Thailand, the singers of Pakistan and other representatives of a great Islamic culture.

How many South Africans eager to end the boycott say: good, now we can end our own self-imposed isolation from cultural development in Latin America: We never sought that contact. The cultural establishment had an umbilical cord that extended in one direction only, to the North Atlantic. Uys Krige tried in vain to tell us that the continent with the greatest analogy to ours, that was creating something new of interest to all humanity but especially to us, was Latin America.

Yet apart from knowing that the tango comes from the Argentine and the samba from Brazil, what do we know about our sister continent, struggling like we are to express itself in its own voice? A few of us have read Garcia Marquez or Neruda, but what about Borges, or the great Brazilian writer Jorge Amado, who

found a way to tell stories about Brazil that could give us ideas about writing about our own country? Brazil produces the best and the worst shows. Will we get to know them so as to make our choice? The elan and sadness of Brazilian culture is similar to our own. How interested are we in the mural and folk art of Mexico, the Andean music of Chile and Peru, the jazz of Cuba?

Or does the ending of the cultural boycott simply mean that we can fill our TV screens with British sit-coms and car-chases as well as American? Or that a few American entertainers can stop over here during their off-season? Or that we can once more feel civilised because we have managed to get a glimpse of 'great performers' of classical music?

We can all look forward to the day when our international isolation is over, and when we no longer have internal censorship. Yet how much attention do we pay to the factors that have silenced more voices than any banning orders, isolated more creative persons than any boycott, done more to favour some forms of expression over others than any cultural desk?

The sediment of colonialism, racism and authoritarianism, lies heavily within us all. It is the greatest obstacle to cultural advance. Outsiders see it. They expect a country with a population as culturally diverse as ours to have a culture with many inputs. They are surprised to find that our art museums are only now beginning to exhibit art produced by Africans, that our dance has taken only a few steps away from simple reproduction of dance in Europe, that little prestige is accorded to what is often outstanding African choral music, that African languages are treated as vernaculars belonging to the backyard, that we know so little about African mythology and world-view.

Disestablishment does not mean neglect. The government will have enormous tasks to fulfil in laying the foundations for cultural development. It will embark upon the literacy campaigns, provide for general education, expand the network of electricity so that people throughout the country can read at night and watch TV [at the moment, virtually 100 per cent of white homes have electricity, less than 10 per cent of black].

Its responsibilities go much further. A national language policy has to be worked out. Cultural development programmes for schools need to be elaborated, with extensive involvement of pupils, teachers, parents and the wider community.

TV and radio have opened up and re-vitalised. A Broadcasting Charter of Press Freedoms which guarantees space for the media and establishes means for promoting honest journalism.

In each case, the success of the policies adopted will depend in large measure on the extent to which the persons most directly affected become the ones most directly involved. A policy imposed is a policy lost. A policy worked out from the bottom up, taking into account the multiplicity of views and interests, is a policy that has every prospect of succeeding. There will have to be funding for the performing arts as well as for the visual arts.

State funds can mean establishment funds. It has certainly meant that until now. Yet it need not continue to do so. It has always been a source of astonishment how the most ardent free marketeers have insisted without qualms that the State give heavy subsidies to the opera and ballet which they happen to like so much. Whether on Covent Garden or the Met or the Pretoria Opera House, huge sums of taxpayers' money are spent without any return other than that of delight. Now, to prove that we are once more part of the civilised world, there will be those who would say we should set aside a million rands to hear Pavarotti clear his throat on South African soil; perhaps, in years to come, when he is dying, we can, as happened with Benjamino Gigli, get him at half the price.

Alternatively, we could spend the money in another way. South Africa needs opera. It needs Italian opera, and German opera and Russian opera; it needs vocal music from Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa; above all, it needs our own South African opera. The balance of spending has to be worked out carefully. Many factors have to be taken into account. What has been built up should not be destroyed but rather complemented, accompanied and enriched.

The voices of those who have dedicated their lives to careers in art have to be listened to with special attention, as well as of the many who have a passion for art that has never been permitted to develop. We have a number of discerning critics whose love for culture and whose understanding of the risks inherent in the creative process will help them overcome their obsession with the familiar and enable them to develop a South African critical style as excellent and as innovative as the culture they will be commenting on. We have accountants, and will train more from all communities, who will assist us in getting economic value for our money, without making money the determinant of artistic

value. Hopefully, we will not try to solve all our problems with one Big Bang, but rather proceed step by step, using pilot schemes where necessary, building up experience and confidence along the way. Above all, the process has to be a democratic one, conducted in a spirit of openness and tolerance. It is in this way that the vexed question of standards can best be handled. If people are greedy and arrogant, and try to appropriate all the good things of life for themselves as though exercising an inalienable and exclusive right to excellence, then they should not be surprised by an equal and opposite reaction.

If the same people speak with their hearts in defence of the culture which has so much meaning for them, if they respect the cultural aspirations of all and acknowledge the wounds and humiliations inflicted in the past, if they accept that hegemony of any kind is the enemy of cultural development, then they can expect an equal and non-opposite reaction.

It is a total falsehood that 'the masses' want lower standards and inferior quality, whether for themselves or their children. 'The masses' want to see serious movement to improve their conditions. They want their voices to be heard. They want access to facilities and qualifications that have been denied them. They do not want second best, but emphatic and irreversible movement towards the best.

In a country where private space has been appropriated by the minority, and redistribution of TV lounges and swimming pools would be highly problematic, the role of public space in nation-building becomes of particular importance. It might be decades before everyone can live in a decent home with decent amenities, but it should take far less time before everybody can have access to good education, reasonable health services, and excellent sporting and cultural facilities.

Taste cannot be forced but it can be encouraged and it will often be mixed - for some unexplained reason, the best film and theatre critics seem to have the worst taste in clothes. My experience has been that although black South Africans on the whole might have less information about international culture than their white counterparts, they have much greater cultural sensibility. Helen Domisse attributes this to undestroyed Jungian-type intuition. I understand it rather as emanating from an active African cultural tradition that pays high attention to all the delicate modes of human interaction, ranging from courtesies of speech, to laughter, to non-neurotic body language, to story telling, song, dance and custom. [I exclude cuisine. As Marcelino dos Santos used to say, for politics he looked to the proletariat, for food to the bourgeoisie].

I am sorry to say it, but after living in Mozambique for eleven years, often in extremely difficult conditions, I find white society, whether in South Africa or elsewhere, surprisingly brutal, unrefined and unsubtle. I refer to culture in the widest sense, of how people relate to each other as human beings. I find that our so-called white culture is not something that we live and feel, but something we accumulate and play with. Hence our obsession with received standards and our defence of elitism as something worthy in itself.

This is not to suggest that there are not deep traumas and uncertainties in African society, or that commercialisation, crookery, thuggery and opportunism have not made their impact. Yet the concept of striving for the best, of respect for each and every person, of the importance of morality in the details of ordinary life, of a holistic continuum from the humblest to the most exalted member of the community, is strong.

Democracy means that each vote counts equally. It also implies that every person counts equally. In white society we honour people for their riches and power and the number of records they sell; we even honour paintings for the amount for which they are insured as they lie in the vault of a Japanese bank. In Mozambique, we honoured people for their warmth, kindness, skill and wisdom, for their wit, courage and human delicacy. These values were under attack. We had to learn to live with greed, consumerism and office-seeking. Yet never once did I hear anyone complain that standards for anyone anywhere were too high. What people got upset about was that standards for too many people in too many places were too low.

Everything times four, to correspond to the way in which the Union of South Africa was created eighty years ago out of four British Colonies, makes little sense in South Africa today. It is both too many and too few - too many for the multiplicity of highly expensive productions, too few for artistic development in the regions.

The idea of vast cultural complexes run by State Departments or Boards seems inappropriate. Far better to have a large number of de-centralised and autonomous Regional Arts Councils deciding on and monitoring the expenditure of funds. Whether or not the Nico and the other ensembles of buildings should have been constructed, they are

there, and the problem is how to open them up rather than how to close them down. The tense relationships which their administrations have with community arts projects require serious attention. They are not inevitable. There is no reason in principle why there should not be a two-way flow where at present there is antagonism. Changes are inevitable. Hopefully, there will be movement from all directions. It is not a question of skin colour or background, but of love for and openness to culture. The new director of the National Gallery has shown that not only the sports people are capable of taking steps to unify, integrate and develop what had formerly been fragmented, dispersed and unequal. A painting is not the same as the long jump, but the barriers to excellence in the one area are not dissimilar to the obstacles in the other.

The essence is a process of working together as equals and compatriots engaged in a common endeavour, motivated by a common enthusiasm. The experience of new encounters has its own relish. The Gallery for the first time begins to achieve its destiny and become what it never was before, the South African National Gallery. We all benefit.

There are a multiplicity of other questions that will have to be dealt with. The role of sponsorship, especially fragmentary and ambiguous in the arts, cannot be denied. Yet one lives in fear that one day the conductor of the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra will appear wearing a T-shirt advertising Cadbury's and conducting with a chocolate bar, or that during a commercial break at the theatre we will be told that Hamlet's dagger was made by Wilkinson's Swords. We will need a tax policy that encourages making bequests and donations for a South African film industry, so that we do not end up as a cheap shooting-ground for international film-makers who make third-rate films here and do not always pay their debts ..... The problems and challenges are endless; we solve some, new ones arise. What matters is our approach. If we talk together, listen to each other, involve as many people as possible in the search for solutions, we not only overcome the immediate problems, be begin the process of developing what our country has never had, a national vision.

Culture in South Africa is dis-established. New forms of expression emerge, old modes transform themselves. A new establishment never comes into being. I never said that. At least we might enjoy an interesting inter-regnum.

Black is beautiful, brown is beautiful, white is beautiful. This lovely statement made to me some years back by a Mozambican poet and soldier gives us the warmest and most inclusive perspective we could hope for in developing an open, democratic and national culture in our country. It is not a sociological observation, but an aspirational one, the cultural dimension of the assertion that South Africa, like the world, belongs to all who live in it. It bases itself on the affirmative assumption that all human beings have an equal and intrinsic capacity for goodness, even if many behave wickedly much of the time. It is the foundation of a human rights approach to culture that insists that every human being has a right not only to food, clothing and shelter, but to beauty. It is the ultimate antithesis of racism and apartheid.

We bring in, share and take pride in what each has to offer. Just as the rainbow is the spectrum of light that comes out after the storm, so we are the spectrum of a humankind that seeks to unify itself when the tempest is over.

TWENTY ONE CULTURAL FANTASIES AS SOUTH AFRICA RENEWS ITSELF AND PREPARES TO COME OF AGE

Some months ago I spoke out loud my first cultural fantasy, and it was realised, so now I mention twenty other in the hope that it is merely necessary to state them for them to come true.

The first fantasy was that the Cape Town Symphony Orchestra, which I love, would play the Beethoven Choral Symphony which I love, with choirs drawn form all the communities of South Africa, and then follow with a version for orchestra and chorus of our anthem, *Nkosi Sikelele iAfrika*. And it came to pass, producing a stirring recording of the anthem ready for use on suitable occasions.

The second is that our ceramists and architects and artists convert ugly cooling towers into pyramids of colour and banal bridges into visionary passageways.

Then, I imagine that I am attending the first revival in South Africa of *King Kong*, with Miriam Makeba back in the lead part, and Jonas Gwangwa leading the orchestra.....

It is the lst of January, and the Cape Town Carnival has become a true people's carnival, like in Rio or Bahia, and everybody dances in the streets and is performer and spectator at the same time, and other cities start their own carnivals.

The fifth is that all the artists and more who took part in the Free Mandela Concert at Wembly, participate in a Mandela is Free Concert in a stadium in Johannesburg.

Next, I see a National Choral Music Festival being organised with the assistance of local authorities, school boards and religious denominations, and songs being sung in all our languages with all our different styles, and the best groups going forward to the district, then to the region, then to the final performances at the national level.

My seventh fantasy is that we plan a National Dance Festival along similar lines, to be held two years later, the country would stagger under two Festivals at the same time.

I imagine, too, a Festival of Traditional or home-made Instruments - people will be amazed at the variety of zithers and gourds and thumb pianos and flutes and rattles and drums and horns and xylophones that will emerge, and at the skill of the performers.

We start a programme of local museums to which children bring from their homes and neighbours artifacts, clothing, household utensils, toys and every kind of object from the old past, and also transcribe accounts of 'the old days' as told to them by elderly people who know the area.

Mobile libraries and cinemas instead of hippos invade the townships and stream into the rural areas.

Local schools of photography and video are set up in a number of localities.

A Festival of Children's Games is held, enabling participants to put on and learn the multiple games of different communities - on Macaneta Beach near Maputo, I was the leader of K-I-N-G spells KING, and Follow-My-Leader, and then watched the children put on traditional Zulu clapping games. Also, in the same fantasy, a national Kite Festival on June lst, International Children's Day.

The new, non-racial, multi-lingual and nationally orientated TV 2 becomes the leading channel, offers all the creative confusion which its new director has promised, launches a soap opera that is so vivid, so South African and so well done that we all rush home to see it, and is re-named TV South Africa [Channel 1].

Educational and religious organisations that have done so much to promote literature in the African languages, start a series of collections of riddles, proverbs, tables and fables in the various languages, with translations so that all may enjoy them.

Fourteen, the holding of a National Craft Competition, starting in the localities and moving towards a central exhibition of the best works: pottery, carvings, weaving, beadwork, baskets and other forms of beautiful and useful handiwork.

Open air poetry and guitar centres in congenial surroundings with cover and microphones, so that people can step up and declaim or sing, well, badly or indifferently, and spectators can lie on the grass or walk away.

A Miriam Makeba/ Mimi Coertse concert in Pretoria opera house and a hall in Mamelodi, in which each sings some of her favourite pieces, and hopefully, place is found for a dignified version, in different languages, of *Sarie Marais* as it originally was, a song of exiles wishing to come back to Africa.

The house and hall in the township near to the centre of Bloemfontein where the ANC was founded in 1912, are recognised as national patrimony, and restored as living national monuments, respecting the rights of present users.

Active performing and visual arts centres are established at the Universities of the Western Cape, Fort Hare and Durban-Westville, so that they can enrich community cultural life in the way that the music, drama and art schools did at my old University, Cape Town.

Twenty. A very personal fantasy, namely, a special edition of the works of the three writers who have most influenced my writing, who tell the tale of their lives cleanly and simply, whose soft voices reach straight to their audience, who tame the turmoil through which they lived with the directness of their humanity, namely, Sol Plaatje, Denys Reitz and M.K. Gandhi.

Finally, twenty one, the beginning of a literacy campaign in which, in a well-organised and sensitive way, millions of South Africans help millions of South Africans.