
Book Reviews

Culture in Another South Africa - Willem Campschreur and Joost Divendal (eds.), Published by ZED Books Ltd, 1989.

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For ten days in December 1987, Amsterdam was host to a unique cultural event - Culture in Another South Africa (CASA). CASA was both a conference and a festival of South African artists living inside and outside of that country. Amongst those present were world renown musicians and musical directors Jonas Gwangwa, Abdulla Ibrahim (Dolar Brand); Poets Kerapetse Willi Kgositsile, Cosmo Pieterse, Dennis Brutus, Breyten Breytenbach, Gladys Thomas; novelist Nadine Gordimer and short story writer Njabulo Ndebele, to name just a few. For ten days, these and other artists, journalists and cultural activists read poems, performed musical theatrical pieces, displayed photographic and fine art exhibitions, presented papers and exchanged views.

The events of CASA 1987 Amsterdam have been captured and are reflected in a recently published book, *Culture in Another South Africa*, Published by Zed Books Ltd. The book provides a collage of the events and the experiences of the participants individually and collectively. The book, however, is not only about CASA, the event in Amsterdam. It presents and exposes what South Africa's alternative culture is all about and the visions its activists have for the future. It is a documentation of a culture historically informed by oppression and the apartheid regime as well as an account of the emergence of a non-racial democratic culture hoped for the future.

The major part of the written contributions for the book are articles in forms of reflections by different authors. There are reflections on prose by Njabulo Ndebele, poetry by Cosmos Pieterse, theater by Akerman and others on fine art, journalism, photography, music, ruling class culture and the issue of the cultural boycott movement. Each of the articles gives a historical testimony of the struggles to inform, create, record and affirm human existence against what one of the contributors has called the re-arranged 'political landscape' of the apartheid political structure.

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Apartheid is in its death throes but the arrival at this phase has been a process which started with the colonization of the African peoples in South Africa. The institutionalization of apartheid as not only a racial ideology but also as a medium of economic and political system has dictated every aspect of peoples lives and the manner through which they create and express themselves. The book provides a popular history of the various arts and artists within the apartheid landscape. Invariably the articles pay tribute to those artists whose very work has been statements of defiance and opposition to the debilitating political and legal system they have had to contend with. Most importantly, however, the tribute is extended to the people who have throughout displayed a stubborn hope to survive and carve different directions for a future South Africa.

The three other major parts of the book are the selected poems, the reproduction of photographs and other works of art, the CASA resolution and documents. The poems and photographs, like the articles, speak of both the present and the future. But more than the articles, the poems and photographs express vividly the pain, anger, and contradictions engendered by an inhumane system. "*The storm-troopers are in the Street*" for example, captures the heightened tide against apartheid and its inevitable demise.

the writers die in exile
the preachers call to their gods in vain
the raped prime their barrels with thunder
the storm-troopers are in the streets
the youths carry spears
the strom-troppers are in the streets
the girls carry spears
the storm-stroopers are walled in
the children are in the streets¹.

The triumph of the oppressed over their oppressors is quite obvious in this poem. Quite obvious also are the factors which have necessitated the reversal of positions between the oppressors and the oppressed. Some of these factors are captured and exposed through the photographs. The contradictions which are part of South African life are underscored through such images as Gideon Mendel's photograph of white children in their well kept and properly equipped park mounted above a picture of black children in a community part dominated by an effigy made out of scraps and rags. S. Sack's, Gilbey's Gin advertisement (A taste for life) surrounded by debris portrays a Landmark in SOWETO. Larry Scully shows the appallingly overcrowded compounds of mine workers in several photographs. These are visual images provoking similar responses as Dennis Brutus poems 'stop'.

1 *Culture in Another South Africa*, p. 188.

Stop
I ask you to think for a moment to think of pain
Of hunger
to think of people who are not free
to think of death...

The images, however, are not only of death and pain. Joy, hope, solidarity and the affirmation of existence shine through the faces of the children of SOWETO, the grouping of ANC's Amadla and other performing groups on and off stage. In trying to highlight the directions of alternative culture in South Africa, the book also calls attention to the issue of the role of culture in a revolutionary struggle. In 1968, Joe Slovo of the African National Congress was quoted as saying "The radicalizing role of drama or any other art in society is negligible. Change comes through human action informed by political awareness and exacerbated by intolerable humiliation, suppression and depression". In 1989 Nadine Gordimer concludes her introduction in *Culture in Another South Africa* by saying, "Art is at the heart of liberation". The contributions in this book tend to negate Slovo's sentiments of 20 years ago as time and again the contributors emphasize the combative as well as the reflective role of the arts in revolutionary change.

While such issues as the role of art in the struggle for liberation might have been put to rest in this book, other issues will continue to be debated.

One such issue which will engender further discussion is the notion of ruling-class culture in South Africa. Patrick Fitzgerald tackles the issues taking into consideration major trends of thoughts on the subject within the last decade. He dismisses and opposes approaches which tend to adapt caricatured perspectives in analyzing South African culture. These include what he calls ultra-leftist and extreme nationalist tendencies. As he sees them, both tend to oversimplify cultural processes. While the one puts emphasis on ruling-class culture as the international capitalist culture of the non-racial bourgeoisie, the other views ruling-class culture as an alien imposition on the authentic culture of the people which is romanticized in the process. Instead, Fitzgerald supports an analysis which regards the South African situation as one of internal colonialism with the majority black oppressed on one side and the white minority ruling bloc on the other. Whether one agrees with Fitzgerald's notions or not, his most valuable contribution within the South African context is his bringing attention once more to the complicated interplay of class, race and nationality in any analysis of culture generally and that of the ruling-class specifically. It is because of the peculiar conjunctures and the dynamic, dialectical relationship of these factors of class, race and nationality that Fitzgerald gropes about to untangle the theoretical issue of ruling-class culture. Rather than being definitive, his views should provoke further discussions.

Culture in Another South Africa is undoubtedly an important addition to

cultural studies generally and on South Africa specifically. It is highly readable and should interest the general public, cultural and political activists and academics. As the South African apartheid system moves towards its inevitable demise, the seeds for an alternative culture in a democratic South Africa have already germinated. This book bears witness to the determination of progressive South Africans to make the envisioned vibrant, humane and democratic culture a reality. Towards this end, theater, poetry, film, music, fine art and photography have been given a crucial function and central role.



Djillali Liabes, *Capital Privé et Patrons d'Industries en Algérie 1962-1982: Propositions pour l'Analyse de Couches sociales en Formation* - CREA, Alger.

Mohamed Lamine Gakou*

Djillali aborde un thème important, le rôle du capital privé et ses relations avec le secteur public dans une économie où l'idéologie d'abord populiste sera érodée et débouchera sur l'idéologie et l'hégémonie libérale après de longues luttes souterraines.

Le projet de l'auteur est donc d'essayer de dégager les contradictions que recèlent les orientations et les choix ayant cours dans le processus de développement en Algérie.

L'auteur montre dans l'introduction que le capital privé, qu'il soit commercial ou industriel, se nourrit et se consolide à partir du secteur public. Il insiste sur le jeu des relations parentales dans la réussite de ce phénomène.

"Ne peut donc réussir que celui qui aura été préparé à l'entreprise en gérant au mieux de ses intérêts le capital de relations, en mariant ses enfants à des hauts-fonctionnaires ou à leur enfants, en cherchant des protecteurs, des porte-paroles ou des alliés auprès des appareils de l'Etat".

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