

Regardless of what the artist or critic feels should be the relationship between art and politics, the pass laws, the Bantustans, and the censor's ink impose a relationship in the South African context. As the Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe has repeatedly pointed out, it is not a question of commitment, but of commitment to what. It is unfortunate that Opland's commitment to the peoples of South Africa appears limited only to a naïvely romantic view of the "tribal poet" as an endangered species, that it does not extend to a holistic view of the essential problems of a racially stratified society—problems that have helped to shape the poetry no less than they have impinged upon the lives of the people. Mabunu's eloquent *izibongo* puts questions before Opland that we never see answered:

What do you want me to say, fair-skinned one . . .
 Why do you want this information.
 Information about the people?
 When did you begin, men.
 To concern yourselves
 About the things of the people?
 Because the day that the missionaries arrived
 They carried a Bible in front,
 But they had a breechloader slung behind. (p. 199)

There is more abuse than praise in this poem, and until Opland takes full cognizance of this fact he will have done little to show the West the significance of *izibongo* in "man's intellectual history."

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Mr. Opland replies:

Objections to my article are raised under two headings: "the tone and what was left unsaid." Under "tone" Richard Priebe finds offensive my use of the term "tribe" as well as my "patronizing" style. "Tribe" is a term sanctioned by scholarly usage, employed by the ethnographers I have consulted, and, in my experience, free of any derogatory connotations. It is certainly meaningful to the people themselves: for example, considerable animosity still exists today among certain circles in the Ciskei between the Mfengus and the Rharhabses. Following established practice, I have in my article called such units "tribes" (other Xhosa-speaking tribes are mentioned in n. 6); even if no self-respecting anthropologist would use the word today, scholars in other disciplines might still find it useful and generally meaningful. Or are we all now to talk of the twelve clans or family bands of Israel?

In presenting my informants to my readers I consciously chose to adopt an anecdotal style designed to suggest something of the human relationship that exists between folklorist and performer. If my attitude to my

informants were patronizing, they would hardly tolerate my frequent visits or entertain my questions with patience. No description of any informant could be a stereotype, since each is an individual: my description of Nelson Mabunu, for example, as "a mild, soft-spoken man who wears glasses and seems to be developing a paunch" is accurate, and was intended to convey the contrast with the "agile and athletic" performer he suddenly and dramatically became during that interview (p. 199).

Priebe asserts that "the essential problems of a racially stratified society" have "influenced" and "helped to shape" the poetry I describe. This is an interesting hypothesis, one that I would wish Priebe or any other qualified person to develop in a scholarly article: unfortunately, I am not equipped to do it. My interest is in the comparative study of oral literatures, as I thought I made clear in my article. There is much more that can and must be said about the material I present, but I did not feel that this general article was the place for exploring in detail all these interesting and important bypaths. As I said, "In this article many questions have been left unanswered, and many topics have perhaps been treated too summarily. The intention, however, was merely to show the interaction of the different kinds of poets in the Xhosa community, their influence on and relation to one another" (p. 205).

I confess to being somewhat taken aback by the readiness of American Africanists to criticize adversely anything South African that is not black or banned; their zeal often outpaces their discretion. To cling to the belief that all white South Africans support their government (or that all black South Africans oppose it) is indeed naïvely romantic, however fashionable or necessary it may be for one's existence as a teacher of African Studies in an American university. I wish to extend a public invitation to Priebe to travel to South Africa and join me in my field work. Perhaps then his view of my article would be more balanced, and perhaps then his scholarly criticism of the material I present would be better informed.

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Holden and Psychoanalysis

To the Editor:

I would like to comment on James Bryan's psychoanalytic reading of *The Catcher in the Rye* (*PMLA*, 89, 1065–74). I pass by Bryan's silence about psychoanalysis as an object of satire in the novel and his dubious assumption that Holden is in a mental hospital, to remark on what seems to me his misreading of Holden's relationship with Phoebe.

During the bedroom scene, Holden shows no uneasiness about his and Phoebe's being there together in their parents' absence, about dancing with her, or even about pinching her behind; and the fact seems hardly consistent with the intense and barely submerged sexual desires that Bryan attributes to him at this juncture. The point is that such contact need *not* be corrupt (and Holden's previous contact with Jane Gallagher demonstrates the same truth). If anything, Salinger is setting a trap and Bryan has taken the bait. Salinger's technique here constitutes a test (one of many) of the values and responses of the highly personal "you" to whom the novel is addressed. Holden's being "out of breath" after dancing with Phoebe is simply another indication of his lack of "wind," which suggests figuratively, throughout the novel, a lack of the psychological staying power that he will have to have to survive in the adult world.

Holden's taking the money from Phoebe is important. The corrupt Sunny (her name is partly ironic, but she does manifest the life principle of the corrupt adult world) has chiseled Holden out of more than the agreed upon amount, for which he gets no return anyway; the innocent and loving Phoebe insists that he take all she has. Holden is probably not conscious of the parallel, but we need not search for feelings of remorse over incestuous desires to explain his temporary emotional breakdown. It is quite enough that he has reached the pass of appropriating his little sister's "Christmas dough." Holden is being exploitive, all right, but not sexually so.

On one level the money and the hat constitute an unconscious mutual pledge of fidelity. But on another, though related, level the hat is the badge of Holden's calling and responsibility. Phoebe has the hat only while Holden is planning to run away, and only when she puts it back on his head are things finally right. For Holden's responsibility is precisely for Phoebe and and for succoring the value that she represents. Holden must still wear the hat "for a while" (New York: Bantam, 1970, p. 212), for Phoebe is not ready to assume the responsibility herself, and her parents are manifestly incapable of doing so. Her presence in D. B.'s bedroom foreshadows the corruption that may well be her destiny if Holden reneges on this obligation.

Throughout the bedroom scene Phoebe keeps repeating, "Daddy's going to kill you." Daddy—the authority principle—has been trying to do that all along, and Holden is in considerable danger of his succeeding. When he responds, "I don't give a damn if he does" (p. 173), he shows the dangerous predilection that Mr. Antolini later puts his finger on. Holden may well die "nobly . . . for some highly unworthy cause" (p. 188), as James Castle does. It is this unacceptable kamikaze impulse that Phoebe forces Holden to face in himself

when she says, "You don't like *anything* that's happening," and the fact fully explains his discomfiture at trying to meet her challenge, "Name one thing."

Something very similar happens at the novel's climax. Phoebe does betray Holden's plans and thereby becomes the agent of his salvation (we recall Holden's assertion that Jesus wouldn't send Judas to hell). She forces him to face and to reject the escapist course to which he is now so intensely committed; hence his momentary rage and hatred for her. Only after this, by replacing an imaginary field full of anonymous children with the real live Phoebe as the object of his solicitude, does Holden establish the possibility of a genuinely effective life.

The gold ring is most directly a symbol of ideal perfection and truth, the imaginable state toward which all striving tends; and striving involves risks. Holden has been "trying to grab for the gold ring" throughout the novel, though in a self-destructive way. Mr. Antolini is afraid that Holden is "riding for some kind of a terrible, terrible fall" (p. 186), just as Holden is afraid that Phoebe will fall from the carousel horse. Both falls (as well as the children's threatened fall from the cliff in Holden's "catcher" fantasy and James Castle's fall from the window) are the fall from life and innocence into death or corruption. Transcending the dilemma between physical death or insanity (escape) and spiritual death or corruption (capitulation) is Holden's essential problem. And the fact that he alone in the novel exhibits the problem (D. B. has accepted one of the alternatives) is emphatically to his credit.

The association of sex with death is not merely Holden's but the novel's. Holden says, "Sex is something I just don't understand. I swear to God I don't" (p. 63). Even Mr. Antolini, who has tried to save D. B. and who tries to save Holden, exhibits the shoddy motive. "It's really too bad," but the sad fact is that in this fallen world "so much crumbly stuff is a lot of fun sometimes" (p. 62); and it is essential to the novel's effect that Holden remains a virgin throughout. The eros-agape opposition cannot be resolved through Luce's claptrap about psychoanalysis and Eastern philosophy. Maintaining one's essential innocence in full knowledge of and contact with an essentially corrupt world (that synthesis of innocence and experience represented by the "Little Shirley Beans" record and the nun who loves *Romeo and Juliet*) constitutes the only maturity worth having. It is this that promises to flower in Phoebe and that Holden himself finally shows promise of being able to achieve. It is rare; it is so painfully difficult as to be almost impossible. But nothing less is acceptable, for nothing less can lead to happiness. Everything else is death.

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