

Literature against Stalinism: South Africa's left opposition, 1930-1960

David Johnson, English Department, The Open University

Please do not cite or quote from this paper. It is the first draft of half-a-chapter that will appear in modified and expanded form in David Johnson, *Dreaming of Freedom in Twentieth-Century South Africa* (Edinburgh UP/ UCT Press, 2019).

Literature against Stalinism

Introduction

At the beginning of the 1930s, the ANC, the ICU and CPSA were in disarray, and a small group of activist-intellectuals looked to new sources of inspiration in their struggles to liberate South Africa's oppressed masses. William Thibedi (1880-1960),¹ an expelled member of the CPSA and experienced trade unionist, wrote to Leon Trotsky in August 1932 to ask for help in the search for an alternative socialist vision of freedom. He asked Trotsky for 'more literature of the left opposition because the Stalinist bureaucrats has for some years been hiding such literature to be known by the African Negro workers'.² Thibedi was joined by other South African activist-intellectuals who sought guidance from Trotsky directly and from his writings more broadly in an effort both to develop political strategies for their struggles against the state and capital, and in order to avoid the pitfalls of the ANC's ineffectual petitioning, the ICU's chaotic populism, and the CPSA's Stalinism. The reception, circulation and mutation of Trotsky's thought in South Africa from the 1930s to 1950s is the focus of this paper. Selecting extracts from the writings of South African activist-intellectuals influenced by Trotsky, I focus on two central themes: (1) the critique of liberal freedoms; and (2) the conception of literature as a mode of critique and an expression of utopian possibilities.

(The full chapter includes a summary history of Trotskyism in South Africa, as well as extended discussion of two further aspects: the critique of anti-colonial nationalism; and the elevation of land as pivotal to resistance politics. I have also cut the Conclusion. I welcome opportunities to discuss further any of these aspects).

Beyond liberal freedoms

Trotsky's early writings express dreams of a socialist freedom that would exceed the bourgeois liberties achieved by the Jacobins in the French Revolution. In the Preface to *Our Political Tasks* (1904), he declared, 'We, as communists, as pioneers of the new socialist world, will know how to carry out our revolutionary duty towards the old bourgeois world . . . We will conquer for it the freedom which it is impotent to gain without us'.³ Russia's revolutionaries, Trotsky argued, can gain the freedom denied to France's revolutionaries if the Jacobins' blind spots are apprehended: 'The Jacobins were utopians. . . . They wanted an egalitarian republic based on private property; a republic of reason and virtue in the framework of the exploitation of one class by another. They straddled a gigantic contradiction and called the blade of the guillotine to their aid'.⁴ Close in spirit to Marx's writings of the 1840s and to Rosa Luxemburg's critique of the state, Trotsky spells out the contradictions that entrapped the Jacobins – egalitarian republicanism against private property; the utopian dream of rule by reason against the economic exploitation of the masses; and the securing of freedom by state violence – and argues that Russia's revolutionaries would transcend the Jacobins' limits by embracing collective proletarian agency. He claims that 'what separates us from the Jacobins [is] *our attitude towards the elemental social forces, and therefore towards the future, [which] is one of revolutionary confidence* [italics in original]', and he concludes with the stark choice: 'Either, you end up making your theoretical "bridge" between bourgeois-revolutionary democracy (Jacobinism) and proletarian democracy . . . or you give up the practice which leads you into such a theoretical attack. *Either Jacobinism, or proletarian socialism!*'⁵ In an essay written just before the October revolution, Trotsky once again drew an impenetrable line between the liberal bourgeoisie and the socialist proletariat: 'Whoever thinks about the experiences of 1905 . . . must see how utterly lifeless and pitiful

are the hopes . . . for revolutionary co-operation between the proletariat and the liberal bourgeoisie'.⁶ To hold out any such hopes, Trotsky concludes, is to ignore the lessons of 1905, which demonstrated dreams of 'co-operation between capital and labour [to be] a miserable Utopia'.⁷

In adopting Trotsky's critique of bourgeois freedom, South Africa's left opposition intellectuals directed their criticisms at South African and international targets alike. Attacks upon South African varieties of liberalism were complemented by critiques of Anglo-American human rights internationalism. Their writings in all cases were animated by a drive to expose the tensions between bourgeois liberty (politics) and capitalist exploitation (economics), and to bridge the gulf between liberal/ bourgeois ('Jacobin') freedom and proletarian democracy. Trotsky's analysis of liberalism as the ideology legitimising bourgeois class interest in the Soviet Union was modified in order to explain South African liberalism. In an essay on Olive Schreiner, Dora Taylor (1899-1976)⁸ located the heyday of South African liberalism in the nineteenth century, when it was possible 'to entertain enthusiastic hopes of what the liberal spirit might do'.⁹ Such hopes, Taylor argued, were dashed, as 'time has conclusively, ruthlessly proved the bankruptcy of liberalism to stem the tide of political events'.¹⁰ According to Taylor, the experience of the Anglo-Boer War opened Schreiner's eyes to the limits of English liberalism: '[Schreiner] believed in democracy, in the principle of individual freedom, not fully realising that with its class basis, bourgeois democracy was a travesty of true democracy'.¹¹

Schreiner was far from the only figure to be accused of being duped by the promise of liberal freedoms; for Ben Kies (1917-79), reformist African leaders had made exactly the same mistake. In less temperate terms than Taylor, Kies identified liberal ideology with the interests of South Africa's ruling class, and berated African politicians for failing to see through its deceptions:

Our reformist leaders were always deeply attached to the Liberals. . . . [We] are finding them all out, these liberals, past and present, whom our reformist leaders used to trust so pathetically! We have also seen through the United Party puppet, the 'Liberal' Press . . . which helped to dupe the Africans in 1935-36 These are the agents and lackeys of the ruling class who blindfolded our reformist leadership for fifty years and more.¹²

Such attacks on African leaders seduced by liberalism (and liberals) were repeated frequently in the NEUM's newspaper *The Torch*. For example, after a 1948 report by the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) bemoaning the fall-off in its African membership, a lead article in *The Torch* declared that 'political helotry, economic enslavement, injustice, and inequality cannot be glossed over by the sugar-coating . . . of the liberals'.¹³ Whereas the decline in African membership of the IRR 'fills us with hope that the Non-Europeans . . . have broken with their leader-goats and that we are at the dawn of liberation, the liberals are filled with fear'.¹⁴

Following a meeting with the IRR in Cape Town, I. B. Tabata (1909-1990) reflected bitterly upon what he perceived as the duplicity of its leading members. His reflections begin with an extended metaphor comparing liberalism to a poison contaminating the pristine African landscape:

The liberals are a poison, an insidious poison that soaks through the surface of the earth and poisons the very roots of young plants. Imagine a field of young green mealies growing out of rich black soil in a valley surrounded by mountains whose stones are barely visible through the vegetation that covers the mountain sides; with springs only known because of its music that is made by the water running over the falls, and its crickets singing near it at night. Think of the

young mealies bursting out of this virgin soil, green and beautiful with the freshness of young life; think of this all suddenly strangled with vitriolic poison that scorches its very roots, making it shrivel up even as it is being born. When you have imagined all this, you will have understood the effects of liberalism on the great majority of S. A. society – the Blacks. Liberalism is the most deadly of all poisons on the race that is struggling to be born.¹⁵

Switching from liberalism as an ideology to its proponents, Tabata describes the IRR's members as 'viragos, bandits and savages with a veneer of civilisation', and concludes by singling out J. D. Rheinallt Jones (1884-1953) and Alfred Hoernlé (1880-1943) for particular censure: 'They never say a harsh word against the Non-Europeans. They are like a poison that can enter your body without the slightest pain and make for your heart to stop'.¹⁶ Tabata's metaphor of liberalism as a poison destroying African life indigenises the Marxist critique of liberal ideology, while at the same time suggesting that the serum of socialist critique is essential to inoculate the African race 'struggling to be born'.

Other left opposition intellectuals foregrounded the specific historical circumstances of South African liberalism. Like Taylor, Goolam Gool (1904-62) returned to the nineteenth century to explain the origins of liberalism in South Africa. He goes further back than Schreiner, however, identifying the passing of Ordinance 50 in 1829 as the key event. By extending the protection of British law to "all Hottentots and other free persons of colour residing in the Colony",¹⁷ Ordinance 50 appeared to exemplify a humane instance of liberal freedom in action. But for Gool, 'the important thing is to see the economic reason for this law, and to strip it of all its liberal, humanitarian and hypocritical meanings. We ... must see the basic economic needs of the law and not be misled and deceived by the sanctimonious phraseology'.¹⁸ Gool invokes Marxist method to emphasize the need to look beyond the legal words to the economics determining the law: 'it is not the Herrenvolk human consciousness and ingenuity that determines the economics, but the economics that determines Herrenvolk human consciousness and ingenuity'.¹⁹ Like Tabata, Gool is pre-occupied with the capacity of liberalism and its agents to deceive those opposing oppression and exploitation: 'one of the primary functions of the liberals, most of whom have had a legal training . . . is to hide the *real aims* of the Herrenvolk and to clothe the law in such language for the purpose of deceiving the oppressed leadership'.²⁰ The deception by the law-makers is reinforced by liberal historians, who assiduously occlude the fact that 'the change-over from the chattel slavery practised by the Trek-Boer republics to modern capitalism was a murderous process'.²¹

A more nuanced historical account of South African liberalism was provided by Arthur Davids, who distinguished between the liberalism that justified the primitive accumulation of the Chamber of Mines from the 1870s onwards, and the liberalism that legitimised the profiteering of the manufacturing industries from the early twentieth century. According to Davids, 'the two wings of "Liberalism" are merely the reflection in politics of the dichotomy in the two main spheres of imperialist exploitation – gold mining and industry'.²² Despite apparent divergences, both varieties of liberalism agree that 'the struggle for democracy is something apart from the class struggle – the lie of supra-class politics'; for the labour movement, such convergence of liberalism and capitalism dictated a non-collaborationist strategy of resistance: workers are 'entitled to take advantage of the progressive element in liberalism [but] cannot be permitted to mix the banners or make programmatic concessions'.²³ In a critique of Tabata's conception of liberalism, Davids argued further that it amounted to 'intellectual laziness' to anatomise liberalism as by definition toxic; liberalism – and opposition to liberalism – should always be historicised: 'When the unenlightened old Coloured and African leaders turned to liberalism, they were not utter and complete idiots.

Seeing no possibility of a militant road, after a series of unrelieved defeats, it was not so asinine after all for them to prefer a liberal to a reactionary regime'.²⁴

The left opposition's critique of liberalism extended well beyond its South African manifestations. Kies in particular railed against what he perceived as liberal hypocrisies on the world stage, returning repeatedly in his polemics in *The Bulletin* to attack the Anglo-American Atlantic Charter of 1941.²⁵ Arguing that the strategic liberalism of Smuts during the Second World War paralleled Roosevelt and Churchill's bogus liberalism embodied in the Atlantic Charter, Kies attacked the abuse of the word 'freedom':

No doubt this veteran-son of Imperialism and servant of Finance-Capital [Smuts] has made invaluable contributions to the biggest fraud of our time: the Atlantic Charter. Could there be a bigger travesty of the truth than for Imperialism to promise 'the right of all peoples to choose the form of Govt. under which they will live', for Imperialism to promise 'that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want', for Imperialism to promise peace and 'the abandonment of the use of force'? How nauseating these hollow words are to the man in the street What are these 4 Freedoms [promised by the Atlantic Charter]? The Freedom of Capitalism to exploit Labour. The Freedom to restrict production and create scarcity, wherever it is profitable for Capitalism. The Freedom to create monopolies, trusts, cartels, to corner markets and divide the world into spheres of influence. The Freedom to plunder the Colonies, to oppress and exploit the Colonial peoples in order to obtain raw materials for their industries. These are the Four Freedoms which the Atlantic Charter seeks to preserve.²⁶

Kies reviled those who failed to recognize that the Atlantic Charter was a false dream peddled by the Allied leaders, those who 'still clung pathetically to the illusion that the Churchill-Roosevelt Atlantic Charter . . . would usher in the Four Freedoms for the oppressed'; rather, he observed, they ought to have discovered that 'while they may dream, the ruling class does not dream. The ruling class sells dreams'.²⁷

Once the War ended, however, the capacity of cynically disseminated dreams of freedom like the Atlantic Charter to be turned against their progenitors became apparent to Kies. No longer describing the Charter simply as 'the biggest fraud of our time', he acknowledged that it had in certain contexts become a strategic resource the oppressed could mobilise to support anti-colonial resistance. Kies noted that 'the Chinese people took the Atlantic Charter seriously and started a Civil War', and further, that Smuts never anticipated that 'anyone in his own country would be so disloyal, if not treacherous, as to take his preamble to the Charter seriously', but that he had returned from the War to discover 'talk going on about war-promises and houses and jobs and African trade unions and fundamental human rights for all'.²⁸ The short-term strategic potential of the Atlantic Charter notwithstanding, Kies insisted upon a fundamental distinction between political leaders exploiting the Charter's words in their efforts to extract concessions from their rulers, on the one hand, and the collective struggle of the oppressed, on the other:

Now we have never concealed from the people the fact that both the Atlantic Charter and the preamble to the World Charter are just plain frauds. But we must also make it quite clear that there is a fundamental distinction between those honest, working people who may not know anything about politics but who are turning the ideas contained in those documents into weapons for use in their direct fight for liberation, and on the other hand, those so-called political

leaders who hope to obtain freedom by reminding the rulers of the words of the Charter.²⁹

Kies concludes that the oppressed will never win their freedom ‘by holding up the Atlantic Charter or chanting snatches of the preamble’; they will only prevail if ‘they stand up and fight’.³⁰

That liberal freedoms could function both as ruling class chimera and as anti-colonial resource was a contradiction Gool and other left opposition activist-intellectuals confronted both in developing their critique of racial capitalism and in scripting a political programme envisioning a socialist future. Although consistently critical of the CPSA’s two-stage strategy of pursuing national liberation as a first step towards socialism, the left opposition generated their own foundational document demanding liberal freedoms as interim essentials in the journey to socialism – the NEUM’s Ten-Point Programme of 1943. A version of Trotsky’s ‘theoretical bridge’ between Jacobinism and proletarian democracy, the NEUM’s Ten-Point Programme anticipated the ANC’s Freedom Charter adopted twelve years later. Conceived as a transitional document, the NEUM Programme expressed ten minimum demands for a democratic society: (1) the franchise; (2) *habeas corpus*; (3) equal access to education; (4) freedom of association; (5) freedom of movement; (6) abolition of racist statutes; (7) revision of land legislation; (8) reform of the criminal code; (9) redistribution through tax reform; and (10) reform of labour laws. The rationale for making the franchise the first demand, Gool explained, was because any state’s refusal of political rights and freedoms directly served economic exploitation: ‘the lower the oppressed are forced from the point of view of citizenship rights, the more they are exploited’.³¹ Shifting from this abstract point to the specifics of South Africa, Gool argued, ‘It is precisely because of the lack of the franchise that we are a landless, rightless people, deprived of the main source of our livelihood, cattle and sheep’.³² To campaign effectively for the franchise, the pre-eminent liberal freedom, would therefore ultimately lead to the fundamental economic redistribution promised by proletarian democracy.

Literature as critique

Original poems, short stories, plays and novels, as well as innumerable literary allusions and quotations, percolated the published and unpublished writings of South Africa’s left opposition. Literature is understood dialectically – on the one hand in materialist terms as a form and expression of consciousness ‘determined’ by economic/political/ historical conditions, and on the other hand, as having the capacity to exceed its determinants and to serve a variety of political ends: to express social critique; to inspire the collective struggle against capitalism; and to imagine future societies free from oppression.

These dual assumptions are integral to Trotsky’s reflections on the Russian literary culture of his own epoch. Acknowledging in *Literature and Revolution* (1923) the centrality of military and economic considerations, Trotsky at the same time insists upon a privileged place for literature. He argues that without the military victory of the Red Army, ‘we would not be thinking now about economic problems, much less about intellectual and cultural ones’, but he nonetheless asserts that ‘the development of art is the highest test of the vitality and significance of each epoch’.³³ Consistent in applying historical-materialist method, Trotsky asks rhetorically, ‘what are the social conditions of these thoughts and feelings [expressed in Soviet literature and art of the 1920s]’.³⁴ Declaring that ‘it is silly . . . to pretend that art will remain indifferent to the convulsions of our epoch’, he argues, ‘the art of this epoch will be entirely under the influence of revolution’, and accordingly, it is ‘incompatible with pessimism, with scepticism It is realistic, active, vitally collectivist, and filled with a limitless creative faith in the Future’.³⁵ In turning to the subject-matter of post-revolutionary Soviet art, Trotsky shifts from applying materialist methods to literary

works to contemplating literature's capacity to serve a social/ revolutionary function. With this second question in mind, he rejects the prescriptions of *Proletkult*:

It is not true that we regard only that art as new and revolutionary which speaks of the worker, and it is nonsense to say that we demand that the poets should describe inevitably a factory chimney, or the uprising against capital! Of course the new art cannot but place the proletariat at the centre of attention. But the plough of the new art is not limited to numbered strips. On the contrary, it must plough the entire field in all directions. Personal lyrics of the very smallest scope have an absolute right to exist within the new art.³⁶

To his endorsement of new 'personal lyrics' under socialism, Trotsky adds his optimistic hopes for new varieties of tragedy ('without God, of course'³⁷), new forms of comedy, and a revitalisation of the novel. Trotsky's antipathy towards *Proletkult* orthodoxy hardened in his years of exile. In 1930, looking back at its inception, he recalled that 'the struggle for "proletarian culture" . . . had at the beginning of the October Revolution the character of utopian idealism In recent years it has become simply a system of bureaucratic command over art and a way of impoverishing it'.³⁸ Trotsky's polemic against *Proletkult* art and literature thus paralleled his opposition to the Stalinist bureaucratization of the Communist Party, but it did not extinguish his faith in the capacity of writers and artists to support his socialist vision. In a 1938 manifesto co-signed by Diego Rivera and Andre Breton, for example, he declared: 'The *opposition* of writers and artists is one of the forces which can usefully contribute to the discrediting and overthrow of regimes which are destroying, with the right of the proletariat to aspire to a better world, every sentiment of nobility and even of human dignity'.³⁹

Trotsky's literary-critical legacy – the historical-materialist approach to analysing literary texts, and the conviction that literature has the capacity to exceed its historical determinants and serve revolutionary ends – influenced South Africa's left opposition. In terms of critical method, Taylor reprised Trotsky's commitment to historicising all literary works whilst simultaneously appreciating the specificity of artistic/ literary production. Trotsky's insistence that 'a work of art should, in the first place, be judged by its own law, that is the law of art', and secondly that '[art/ literature] is not a disembodied element feeding on itself, but a function of social man indissolubly tied to his life and environment'⁴⁰ is reproduced by Taylor, who formulates the relationship between literary/artistic text and historical context as follows:

The development of literary (artistic) movements is not a simple thing to be traced mechanically in each country in parallel lines according to the development and decline of capitalist society in each. While the economic base is an invaluable and essential guide in tracing the rise of certain ideological concepts, literature at the same time has its own laws of growth, change, assimilation, imitation and revolt. . . . The laws of uneven development would seem to hold in literature as well as economics.⁴¹

Conceding a degree of autonomy to art and literature did not, however, extend to endorsing the Romantic elevation of the poet as unacknowledged legislator. Rather, in her understanding of revolutionary change, Taylor accepted the Marxist axiom of proletarian agency. Like Trotsky in his insistence on the Red Army's role in the October Revolution, Taylor recognised that 'revolutions cannot be made by literary or cultural movements; the deep social discontent of the masses must supply the urge to action'.⁴² Finally, Taylor shared Trotsky's abhorrence of Stalin's centralised autocracy and its strangling of Soviet economic and cultural life alike: in creating 'weapons of defence not only in iron and steel, but in every

medium of art as well, Art became state-controlled like any other form of labour'; as a consequence, she argued, the *Proletkult* contradicted 'Lenin's whole purpose in liberating the proletariat'.⁴³

Both in her own original literary works and in her many literary reviews, Taylor strove to mobilise literature in the service of critique. Her recollection of her first encounters with the Cape Town left in the 1930s includes prominent reference to her own literary interests:

It was [Frederick] Bodmer who introduced me to the [Spartacus] Club several years later – 1935. I was totally ignorant politically, as Jim was. But there was one big difference between us (i. e. Jim and me), at first totally unconscious and unforeseen. I had already written my poem 'Red', which showed in a groping way that I was aware of the profound oppression in S. A. society – long before the [National Party] came to power. And being always serious-minded, I began to be drawn into the Club, not just an ignorant onlooker.⁴⁴

Composed in an accordingly critical spirit, Taylor's poem 'Red' (1935) does indeed display an awareness of 'the profound oppression in S. A.', as it evokes in five stanzas a work-gang of 'coloured' convicts. The poet-observer yearns for an act of defiance from the gang: 'If only the flag of anger had stood out on their temples,/ . . . /To turn the axe from the living wood/ And feel the joy of the blade/ Deep in the corrupt body of the oppressors!'⁴⁵ But instead of an image of resistance, the poem closes with the poet-observer registering the convicts' submission to power: 'I met only the sullen lip,/ And the burnt embers of dark eyes,/ Unquestioning, vacant, dead'.⁴⁶

As a literary critic, Taylor's aesthetic was orientated by her Marxist political compass. There are many examples, but two of Taylor's reviews of South African writing demonstrate how she wove together literary and political critique. Laurens Van der Post's *In a Province* (1934) is praised for its 'fine descriptive passages', but the chief character Johan van Bredepoel comes in for censure: 'The most damnable thing about him is his pity for the oppressed African, and his vile sentimental solution of the problem of a rotten society – changing the individual heart instead of the system'.⁴⁷ For Taylor, Van der Post's inability to think beyond individual solutions to social problems contrasted with Olive Schreiner's imaginative capacity to make the leap from her own individual experience of oppression to write sympathetically on behalf of oppressed groups like women, black South Africans and workers: 'Her first battles had been personal ones, but in the course of that fight she learned things which she was to fight for to the end of her days on a larger impersonal scale'.⁴⁸ During her nine years in England, Schreiner learned much about 'the evils of capitalism and the oppression of workers', but succumbed – Taylor chides gently – to 'the common bogey that the socialist state means death to individual freedom'.⁴⁹ Taylor praised Schreiner's courage in denouncing 'imperialist aggression . . . the terrible corruption of racial prejudice and passion . . . [and in standing up] for individual freedom, irrespective of race, colour, sex or creed',⁵⁰ but then proceeded to locate Schreiner's protests in their mutating ideological context(s). In the late nineteenth century, Taylor argues, 'it was then possible to entertain enthusiastic hopes of what the liberal spirit might do', and as a consequence, Schreiner 'believed in democracy, in the principle of individual freedom, not realising fully that with its class basis, bourgeois democracy was a travesty of true democracy'.⁵¹ After the South African War and First World War, however, the limitations of liberal ideology had been painfully exposed, as had the modest impact of artists' appeals against injustice. For Taylor, Schreiner responded to the changed context by correcting her misplaced faith in liberalism and her unrealistic belief in the power of art/ literature to influence society. Taylor quotes with approval a letter of Schreiner to Havelock Ellis in which she declared, "A greater

genius than Lenin has not appeared in the last hundred years. . . . Art and fine writing are in this age secondary”⁵²

Taylor-the-critic’s commitment to historical materialism seldom wavered, but Taylor-the-creative-writer’s willingness to subordinate her own literary ambitions – anchored to Trotsky’s principle that literature can serve revolution – did come under pressure. Like Schreiner, who had conceded in 1917 that ‘art and fine writing’ are secondary to politics, Taylor in 1946 turned from literary pursuits to the writing of polemical histories. Aside from her own efforts in fiction, poetry and drama, Taylor had by 1946 written 34 book reviews and opinion pieces on literary topics for *Trek*, as well longer articles for *The Critic* and *Forum*.⁵³ Taking stock in November 1948, Taylor reflected, ‘I had the gift, the eye, I had the time. I had the feeling for words – poured out in many letters. But only 2 or 3 stories; 2 imperfect novels; 2 poor plays; oh, and good literary criticism in *Trek*’.⁵⁴ From the mid-1940s, her labours increasingly were directed to collaborating (without formal acknowledgment) with Tabata on *The Awakening of a People* (1950), and to writing (under a pseudonym) *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest* (1952).⁵⁵ By 1949, however, Taylor regarded her uninterrupted dedication to Tabata’s political and historical writings, and her own enforced withdrawal from literary work, with some regret: ‘By this time, I was not writing literary criticism for *Trek*, a mistake, this deliberate decision to stop contributing . . . I thought I had to be loyal to the “group” – idiot’.⁵⁶ Obedient to the discursive hierarchy that elevated writing about politics and history above the writing of literary works or literary criticism, Taylor thus subordinated her own interests to those of her comrades. Literature might have some social utility, but in dark times, the consensus Taylor observed was that the cause of freedom is more effectively pursued in the discourses of politics and history.⁵⁷

Taylor’s hesitations about abandoning literature entirely for history and politics are also evident in a waspish aside in her diary about Tabata’s reading: ‘It is strange how much he had imbibed our reading of Shakespeare. Yet his reading (when he had time) was first and foremost Lenin, Marx, Trotsky. And he was a slow reader, having had imperfect training at Lovedale’.⁵⁸ While Tabata might indeed have favoured Lenin over Shakespeare, he too was alive to the potential political utility of literature. For example, in a lecture ‘The Future of Industry in South Africa’ (1942), he opened with a quotation by the character of the arch-capitalist Undershaft in George Bernard Shaw’s *Major Barbara* (1905):

I am the government of your country. Do you suppose that you and a half-dozen amateurs like you, sitting in a row in that foolish gabble shop, can govern Undershaft? No, my friend, you will do what pays us. You will make war when it suits us, and keep peace when it doesn’t. . . . When I want anything to keep my dividends up, you will discover that my want is a national need. When other people want something to keep my dividends down, you will call out the police and the military. And in return you shall have the support and applause of my newspapers, and the delight of imagining that you are a great statesman’.⁵⁹

According to Tabata, ‘the fact that [this speech] occurs in a play and is spoken with a cynical frankness, does not invalidate its accuracy as a description of the true state of affairs’.⁶⁰ Nor were Tabata’s uses of literature for politics limited to quoting other writers; he himself produced stories for political ends. During his tours to the Transkei in the 1940s and 1950s, he included animal stories in his speeches to African peasants in order to teach political lessons.⁶¹ For example, ‘The Dog Story’ illustrates the danger of Africans internalising a slave mentality. Dog, once ‘a proud animal roving in the forests’ is captured by Man, who wipes out all Dog’s memory of his past existence, ‘until the poor thing began to think that he could not exist without his master’,⁶² and spends all his days labouring in the service of Man

in return for scraps of offal from Man's table. In the closing paragraphs, Tabata spells out the analogy between Dog and his peasant audience in a succession of rhetorical question, asking first, 'Who has built up the civilisation of this country? It is our black hands'; then, 'And what do we get for all our labour? They throw us only offal to eat and hovels to live in'; and finally, 'What has happened to us? Just as man breeds certain dogs to catch other animals, so has the white ruler turned some of us into his dogs, the chiefs and the quisling intellectuals, to keep the rest of us as chattel slaves'.⁶³

Tabata's animal stories contrast with those of another leading NEUM intellectual of the 1950s, A. C. Jordan (1908-68). An intimate of Tabata, Jordan was also on occasions a source of resentment and frustration.⁶⁴ In a letter to Tsotsi in 1944, Tabata suggested that Jordan was prone to 'chauvinism' and 'conservatism', qualities he regarded as 'dangerous', 'especially since he has the gift of a writer, thus placing him in a position of being able to disseminate his poisonous ideas under the cloak of art'.⁶⁵ Their respective animal stories disclose their political differences. Jordan pioneered the study of Xhosa literature in a series of articles in the magazine *Africa South* from the late 1950s (subsequently re-published in *Towards an African Literature. The Emergence of Literary Form in Xhosa* (1973)), and in a collection of animal stories he selected from African oral sources, *Tales from Southern Africa* (1973). Less interested in Marxist (or Trotskyist) theories of literature than Taylor, Jordan was nonetheless committed to materialist modes of reading African literature. The Introduction to *Towards an African Literature* by Lindi Nelani Jordan insists that the distinctive quality of Jordan's literary method was that 'the writers and their works are placed in their proper historical perspective'.⁶⁶ Such an approach requires that the literary critic 'has to know the historical forces that shaped that society'; in summary, 'the dialectical approach also gives the reader a context in which to analyse both the literature and academic works on the literature'.⁶⁷ Shared literary-critical methodological commitments did not, however, produce the same kinds of literary works. Whereas Tabata's political priorities framed his animal stories, Jordan's intentions were less overtly didactic, as he sought to rescue disappearing African oral storytelling traditions. In introducing African traditional literature, he distinguishes between riddles, 'which present a mental problem' and are associated with younger people, and proverbs, which are a 'criticism of life [with] a more serious and didactic intent',⁶⁸ and are associated with older people and especially men. He provides the following example of a proverb:

'The rock-rabbit has no tail because he trusted to others (to bring him one)'. After the creation, when all the animals were invited to come and receive their tails, the Rock-rabbit, preferring to sit and bask in the sun, requested the Monkey to bring him a tail. But on being supplied with the extra tail, the Monkey decided to add it on to his own. Hence the 'knot' on the Monkey's tail. This proverb exhorts people to do things themselves and not to trust to others to do things for them.⁶⁹

Jordan's animal story and its associated proverb could conceivably be adapted to teach political lessons, but for the most part, his proverbs derive moral lessons with no explicit political message from the animal stories.

Kies was another left opposition intellectual to absorb and re-animate the legacy of Trotsky-the literary-critic. In his weekly column in *The Sun* newspaper, he ranged widely in topic, but Marxist-inflected literary allusions were a staple. In an aside in an article attacking the 'coloured' teaching establishment, Kies provides his own accessible version of the argument for reading literature in its historical context:

[E]very age, every historical epoch, creates its own . . . characteristic atmosphere. This applies as much to the machine, food, clothing of

that epoch, as it does to the philosophy and literature. That is why, if you know your stuff, you could pick out any number of anonymous passages of literature, prose or poetry, of any historical epoch, and you could say, this must have been written during such and such a period and that during such and such a time. The ideas, but also the vocabulary, the lengths of sentences, the balance, prose or poetic rhythms – all these will help you assign the passages to their period. Why? Because, as we said earlier, the style is the man. And the man is the product of his time.⁷⁰

Kies's confidence in applying historical materialist methods to literature is matched by his embrace of Trotsky's second assumption, namely that literature functions in a dialectical relationship with the material world. In an article mocking the dogma of 'art for art's sake', Kies in Orwellian terms argues, 'I believe that all art is propaganda'; that the aspiration to be unbiased can only produce works that are 'colourless and shallow and unworthy of consideration'; and that therefore the writer's 'work must be an interpretation of the world about him, a criticism, i.e. a critical and therefore selective evaluation of the object'.⁷¹ There are many examples in his columns of Kies adopting (biased) literary works in order to bolster his political arguments. An attack on a 'coloured' educational leader guilty (in Kies' view) of opportunistically seeking favour with his masters is likened to the briar in Edmund Spenser's 'The Shepherdes Calendar', who entangled and ultimately killed the oak tree, with fatal results for itself: "'Now stands the Briar like a Lord alone,/ Puffed up with pride and vain pleassaunce:/ But all this glee had no continuance./ .../ Such was th' end of this ambitious briar'".⁷² The political lesson is clear: any 'coloured' leader (the briar) tempted to collaborate with the segregationist state (the oak) is ultimately destined to die when the state itself succumbs. (The extended metaphor does not map precisely on to Kies's broader political ideology: the logic of Spenser's poem suggests that the briar/ collaborator will kill the oak/ white state and thence die itself, whereas for Kies, the oak/ white state will be vanquished by the black proletariat, and the briar/ collaborator will then die along with its doomed master. The agency of the briar/ collaborator is greater in Spenser's poem than in Kies's politics).

Finally, Trotsky's pre-eminence as the guide to literary-critical practice for South Africa's left opposition was challenged in the 1950s by the discovery of Bertolt Brecht. Encountering Brecht in Germany as a student in 1958, Neville Alexander (1936-2012) wrote several letters to Dora Taylor extolling Brecht's qualities. His first letter attacked the attempts by literary critics to de-politicise Brecht, and insisted on the importance of appreciating Brecht's plays in context, as well as his sense of their didactic social function:

The professor could go so far to say, 'Of course ideology is not to be ignored, but it is so secondary as to be negligible. We are interested in Brecht's stage craft, in the iambic pentameter and the obscurantism which is really exposure, as it were', etc. Thus when you [Taylor] say that the formalists would like to forget that Brecht is a revolutionary, you hit the nail resoundingly on the head. Because that is the fundamental thing. . . . I have studied carefully all Brecht says about his art, and he makes no bones about it, his opinions are clear as crystal. Firstly, the theatre has a social function in all societies. The theatre he envisages is one in which moral teaching, i. e. education must be accomplished in an enjoyable manner.⁷³

Trotsky's axioms of the 1920s set out in *Literature and Revolution* are thus given fresh life in Brecht's plays and prescriptions for the theatre. Alexander's parody of the 1950s formalist critic provides the necessary contrast to the historical materialism he and Taylor embrace. For

Alexander, an important element in his encounter with Brecht in Germany is the potential to import his ideas and practice to South Africa:

The good thing about Brecht is that he is fresh, with his soul and heart in the centre of modern life, its problems and its controversies. We must not only find the time to bring some of this to our chaps, but also establish the dynamic link between literary criticism, the theatre, and the social movement, which is precisely what Brecht and his ensemble did (underline in original). Can you imagine the effects of an ‘Arturo Ui’ on an audience which had to swallow Hitler only yesterday? Can you imagine what is possible at home, if only we find the people who are willing to work hard all the time? I am not very pessimistic.⁷⁴

Whereas Taylor looked to Trotsky as her ally in justifying her own historical-materialist literary criticism and her determination to use literature to enhance social critique, Alexander in the 1950s finds in Brecht an equivalent ally.

Literature as utopia

Alexander and Taylor were not the only members of South Africa’s left opposition to be inspired by Brecht. In the same year as their correspondence, there had in fact been a production of a Brecht play in Cape Town – *The Good Woman of Setzuan* at the University of Cape Town’s Little Theatre. A first review of the production in *The Citizen* was broadly approving, noting that ‘it is impossible to sit through a Brecht play and feel detached intellectually: he engages on provocatively with his remarkable characterisation and profound statements’; the only flaw, according to the unnamed reviewer, is that the play’s ending reveals the playwright’s ‘indecision – with what is to be done’.⁷⁵ A month later, Albert Thomas responded to the initial review and the production, rejecting the complaint about Brecht’s ‘indecision’, and arguing *contra* that Brecht’s strength is his capacity to convey life’s complexity through the medium of theatre. For Thomas, Brecht is unique in his ability to fuse ‘his economic interpretation of human existence, his materialism [and] his more finely humane, ironic, salty appreciation of human nature’.⁷⁶ Of the production, Thomas is even more scathing, condemning both its location at UCT’s Little Theatre as a betrayal of Brecht’s aesthetic of theatre for the people, and its extensive cuts to the original. Referencing the recent Suppression of Communism Act, Thomas quotes a passage cut from the play that emphasizes the importance of solidarity and community: “‘Unhappy men!/ Your brother is assaulted and shut his eyes!/ He is hit and cries aloud and you are silent!//When injustice is done there should be a revolt in the city./ And if there is no revolt, it were better that the city should perish in fire before night falls!’”⁷⁷ Thomas therefore shares Alexander’s reading of Brecht as especially relevant to 1950s South Africa, but in addition, finds in Brecht an image of collective resistance able to inspire the South African struggle for freedom.

From the earliest stages of Taylor’s encounters with Marxism, she had attempted in her creative writing to imagine a community of resistance that was in closer conformity to Trotsky’s prescription for literary works to be ‘realistic, active, vitally collectivist’. In contrast to her poem ‘Red’, Taylor’s plays for the Spartacus Club dramatized black South Africans fighting back collectively. In ‘The Spark’ (1937), for example, the young farm workers Lukosi and Anna combine with their cousin the teacher, Ntombela, and the white trade unionist, Bill Martin, to lead a mass strike of dock-workers. After Lukosi’s arrest for his role in the strike, Anna leads a protest march of 3,000, but is shot and killed by the police. The play does not end with Anna’s death, however, as the surviving workers sing first a lament to her and then ‘The Internationale’.⁷⁸ The defiant sentiments closing ‘The Spark’ are echoed in another unpublished poem, ‘For the Future – A Prophecy’ (1940). Evoking in the

opening stanza an erotic embrace between a white woman ('her milk-white loveliness gleamed soft as a flower') and a black man ('the ebony sheen/ of rippling muscles'⁷⁹), the second stanza shifts from the intimate world of the lovers to the hostile South African landscape beyond. Several lines contrasting 'savage white faces' and 'toiling black bodies' are followed by the hopeful conclusion that 'the love' of the white woman and black man will function for the black masses as 'a symbol, a challenge and a prophecy/ Of the day to come'.⁸⁰

In her book reviews, Taylor's ideas of freedom echoed Trotsky's dream of collective struggle leading to a proletarian democracy that exceeds the freedoms delivered by the Jacobins in the French Revolution. In a letter to Tabata, Taylor contrasted the elevation of the (limited) individual freedoms accompanying the bourgeois revolutions from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the (authentic) individual freedoms promised by the socialist revolutions of the twentieth century: 'But [the bourgeois individualism of the past] is nothing compared with that individualism which will blossom when the forces of socialism are planting the deserts with corn and conquering nature to man's needs'.⁸¹ As to whether literature could express socialist dreams of freedom, Taylor found most literary works wanting. Of Silone's fiction, Taylor praised *Fontamara* (1933), picking out the protagonist Berardo Viola's self-sacrificing speech in which he decided not to betray his companions in prison: "If I die, I shall be the first peasant to die not for himself but others For the unity of peasants. That is – strength. That is – solidarity. That is – liberty. That is – land"⁸² But *Bread and Wine* (1936), with its focus on the priest Don Benedetto, is assessed more critically: although it shows the life of an individual man 'who strives to be free, loyal, just, sincere, disinterested more than that is wanted to solve the problems of a people'.⁸³ John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* (1939) – like *Fontamara* – is praised for its evocation of the collective; Taylor argues that 'the people show an indomitable spirit and above all they are able to learn from their destitution that strength lies in their unity'.⁸⁴ The collective voice of the workers in *The Grapes of Wrath* replicates in novel form the community of resistance Taylor attempted to dramatise in the closing scene of her play 'The Spark'. Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road* (1932), in contrast to Steinbeck's novel describes with documentary realism the poverty, isolation and despair of poor white farmers in Georgia, with the only glimmer of hope a retrospective one: instead of toiling as individual farmers, the protagonist Jeeter Lester realises too late, "Co-operative farming would have saved them all"⁸⁵ The same criteria are applied in Taylor's assessment of André Malraux's novels *Storm of Shanghai* (*Man's Fate*, 1933) and *Days of Contempt* (*Days of Wrath*, 1935), as Malraux is charged with being 'more interested in the individual and his ceaseless quest to find a meaning and a significance in life'.⁸⁶ Only one passage in *Days of Contempt* meets Taylor's requirement of capturing 'both elements, emotion and action, the individual and the mass, [and fusing] into a magnificent whole', namely the description of the climactic sacrifice of the Russian Katow and his Chinese comrades, which Malraux characterises as a triumph of collective resistance that will inspire future generations.

Taylor's diaries describe evenings spent with Tabata and Goolam Gool in the late 1940s when they enjoyed listening to Dvorak, and reading anti-colonial testimonies, Cicero's speeches, and poems by writers ranging from Shakespeare to Taylor herself.⁸⁷ As for Tabata, so too for Gool, his appreciation of literature was more than a private affair; literature was a resource to be used to enhance the impact of political arguments. In his presidential address to the AAC on 17 December 1951, for example, Gool declares that ruling-class repression will never deter 'us from pursuing the path which we have pledged ourselves to follow, the path of liberation. And let us leave this place armed with the will to fight with undaunted courage for land and liberty',⁸⁸ and then quotes two stanzas for A. H. Clough's 'Say not the struggle nought availeth'. The final line of the first stanza quoted ends with the bleak line,

“As things have been they remain”, but the second stanza quoted expresses hope: “For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,/ Seem here no painful inch to gain,/ Far back through creeks and inlets making/ Comes, silent, flooding in, the main!”⁸⁹ In his gloss on the meaning of Clough’s poem, Gool exhorts his audience, ‘Yes! If we persist in our course the main will indeed come flooding in’.⁹⁰ In other words, for Gool the struggle ultimately ‘*doeth* avaieth’, and ‘we’ – the collective represented by the AAC – will return like the tide to wash away the enemy. Gool’s technique of concluding his political speeches with a rousing literary quotation was copied by other NEUM leaders, with Leo Sihlali (1915-89), for example, quoting Claude McKay’s poem ‘If We Must Die’ at the end of his presidential address to the Cape African Teachers Association in June 1953. More incendiary than Clough’s muted appeal to maintain the faith, McKay’s final couplet quoted by Sihlali exhorts his audience: “Like men we’ll face the murderous, cowardly pack,/ Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!”⁹¹

Complementing Kies’s use of literature to embellish his radical critique (or, at least as often, to sharpen the edge of his invective) were his efforts to utilise literature to anticipate and imagine brighter futures. In a column on the role of intellectuals in political struggles, Kies argues that the majority ‘never plan, socially or politically, because they are comfortable cowards, who have no confidence in each other or in the masses’.⁹² Turning his focus to his favourite target, the conservative ‘coloured’ teacher, he finds them especially culpable, invoking an unlikely literary authority (for a Marxist to cite) in order to make his point: ‘I think it was Kipling who said, “Where there is no vision, the people perish”. The Coloured teacher is going to prove him correct’.⁹³ In order to provide his readers with a vision for them to cherish, Kies refers them first to Ernest Hemingway’s Spanish Civil War novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and then quotes ten lines from the John Donne poem that gives the novel its title – ‘No man is an island, entire of itself’. The immediate context provoking Kies to quote the poem was the collapse of a conference on black education led by the TLSA. Accusing his readers of indifference – ‘you might assert that it is not your funeral’⁹⁴ – Kies uses the lines from Donne to try and shame his readers into caring about the failed conference, and by extension, about black education, and ultimately about the struggle against segregation. By means of the poem, Kies badgers his readers to think of themselves not as isolated individuals, but as members of a collective, as active participants within a community of resistance.

Conclusion

For three decades, South Africa’s anti-Stalinist communities of resistance pursued the ideals of collective, anti-racist, working-class struggle; permanent revolution; equitable land redistribution; and socialist liberation beyond individual liberal freedoms and nationalist compromises. Why didn’t their dreams of freedom come to fruition?

The most obvious reason for their failure to translate dreams into reality was the power of their adversary: the segregationist-apartheid state backed by South African and international capital. From the 1930s onwards, the state deployed increasingly brutal measures to crush the organisations and individuals associated with the left opposition: police surveillance, banishment and banning orders, and imprisonment. As a consequence, many activists went into exile, withdrew from politics, or (more rarely) joined other political organisations.⁹⁵ For their critics, the efforts of the state were aided by the tactical inflexibility of the NEUM. Alexander, one of most gifted of the anti-Stalinist intellectuals, argued in retrospect that ‘[t]he policy of non-collaboration was often transformed from being one of the most creative ideas of the South African struggle into a pharisaic cliché which was used to assassinate the political characters of any who did not agree with the NEUM leadership’.⁹⁶ To this objection, many more were added: that the NEUM failed to build meaningful

connections with working-class organisations like trade unions; that it never sustained political alliances beyond the Western Cape; that its theoretical sophistication was never matched by effective praxis; and that its organisational culture shifted from a collective ethos to one built upon the authority of individual leaders like Tabata.⁹⁷

Notes

¹ On Thibedi, see Van der Walt, 'Thibedi'.

² Drew, *South Africa's. Vol. 1*, p. 129.

³ Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Dora Taylor was the most prolific literary intellectual within this radical community. Born Dora Jack in Aberdeen in 1899, and orphaned at a young age, she completed an MA in English Literature at Aberdeen University before marrying Jim Taylor in 1924, and then moving with him to Cape Town in 1926 after he had taken up a post in the Psychology department at the university. For the scholarship on Taylor, see Sandwith, *World*, 86-128; Rassool, 'The Individual', 395-435; Nash, 'The double', 63-5.

⁹ Taylor, 'Olive IV', 13.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Kies, *The background*, 10-11.

¹³ 'In the Liberal', 4.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Tabata, 'Liberalism', unpublished note, U/T, Box 3.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Quoted in Gool, 'Land', 7.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Gool, 'Land', 7.

²⁰ Ibid., 7.

²¹ Ibid., 7.

²² Davids, 'The Liberals', 14.

²³ Ibid., 15.

²⁴ Davids, 'A Critical', 30.

²⁵ Copies of Numbers 1 – 177 of *The Bulletin* (with 63 and 69 missing) are held at U/T, Section E: Publications. For a discussion of the internationalism of *The Bulletin*, see Lee, 'The uses', 31-61.

²⁶ *The Bulletin*, 13 October 1943, 2.

²⁷ *The Bulletin*, 20 December 1944, 1.

²⁸ *The Bulletin*, 7 November 1945, 1.

²⁹ Ibid., 1-2.

³⁰ Ibid., 2.

³¹ Gool, 'The Ten', 3.

³² Ibid., 6.

³³ Trotsky, *Literature*, 45-6.

³⁴ Ibid., 198.

³⁵ Ibid., 48, 51.

-
- ³⁶ Ibid., 199.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 273.
- ³⁸ Trotsky, *On Literature*, 176.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 118.
- ⁴⁰ Trotsky, *Literature*, 207-8.
- ⁴¹ Taylor, 'Poets', 13.
- ⁴² Taylor, 'Review: R. M. Fox', 15.
- ⁴³ Taylor, 'Poetry Past', 86.
- ⁴⁴ Taylor, unpublished diary, DT, Folder A. 2. Taylor re-transcribed her personal diary of the 1940s and 1950s in 1976. Taylor's dating of her first encounters in Cape Town with Marxist (and Trotskyist) thought may have been earlier than 1935 because her article 'Poetry past and present' published in the same year already demonstrates a close knowledge of Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution*.
- ⁴⁵ Unpublished poem, DT, Folder E. 3.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Taylor: Review: Laurens', 15.
- ⁴⁸ Taylor, 'Olive, II', 13.
- ⁴⁹ Taylor, 'Olive, III', 13.
- ⁵⁰ Taylor, 'Olive IV', 13.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² Ibid., 14. First and Scott in their biography of Schreiner discuss Schreiner's enthusiasm for Lenin and the Russian Revolution (First and Scott, *Olive*, p. 313).
- ⁵³ For a bibliography of Taylor's output, see Sandwith, 'Dora', 81-4.
- ⁵⁴ Taylor, unpublished diary, DT, Folder A. 2.
- ⁵⁵ Taylor and Tabata's relationship is described by Rassool, 'The Individual', 395-435'. Rassool's account is challenged by Hassim, 'Rebuttal',
- ⁵⁶ Taylor, unpublished diary, DT, Folder A. 2.
- ⁵⁷ On the centrality of history to NEUM politics, see Nasson, 'The Unity', 189-211.
- ⁵⁸ Taylor, unpublished diary, DT, Folder A. 2.
- ⁵⁹ Tabata, 'The Future of Industry in South Africa' (1942), U/T, Box 6.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid.
- ⁶¹ For examples of three such stories, see Tabata, *The Dynamic*, 22-8.
- ⁶² Tabata, *The Dynamic*, 25.
- ⁶³ Ibid., 25.
- ⁶⁴ The political and aesthetic differences between Tabata and Jordan are fictionalised in Deirdre Levinson's novel *Five Years. An Experience of South Africa* (1966). In Chapter 8, the protagonist (a young white woman, the first-person narrator) argues with the Tabata-character (French) about the literary achievements of the Jordan-character (Boris), with Tabata/French denigrating Boris/ Jordan's skills as a novelist: "[His novel, *The Wrath of the Ancestors*] is written by a man on the side of backwardness," said French. As for its artistic merit, he's simply copied Hardy's technique". (Levinson, *Five*, 82).
- ⁶⁵ Letter from Tabata to Jordan, 12 October 1944, U/T, Box 2.
- ⁶⁶ Jordan, *Towards*, ix.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., x.
- ⁶⁸ Jordan, 'Towards', 101.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., 104.
- ⁷⁰ Kies, 'The swan', 3.
- ⁷¹ Kies, 'Art', 3.
- ⁷² Kies, 'First', 3.

⁷³ Letter from Neville Alexander to Dora Taylor, 23 November 1958. U/T, Box 9. Alexander recalls his experiences in Cape Town and Germany in the 1950s in Busch, Busch and Press, *Interviews*, 36-68.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ 'The Good Woman', 9.

⁷⁶ Thomas, 'Review: *The Good*', 9.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁸ The play is re-printed in Drew, *South Africa's. Vol 1*, 174-6. Other plays by Taylor performed for the Spartacus Club included *Bitter Waters*, an adaptation of Ignazio Silone's *Fontamara*, and *The Peasants*, which Taylor describes in her diary as 'a poor effort of mine, praised unduly by Miss Goodlatte, our finest old member . . . who was then giving classes attended by [Tabata] and [Jane] Gool and the other Africans in the group. That is how they learned their Marxism' (Unpublished diary, DT, Folder A. 2).

⁷⁹ Taylor, Unpublished poems, DT, Folder E. 3.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Letter from Dora Taylor to I. B. Tabata, 25 January 1952, U/T, Box 9.

⁸² Taylor, 'Review: Silone's', 19.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Taylor, 'Review: John', 18.

⁸⁵ Taylor, 'Review: Erskine', 20.

⁸⁶ Taylor, 'Review: André', 15.

⁸⁷ See Taylor, unpublished diary, 15 July 1949, DT, Folder A. 2.

⁸⁸ Goolam Gool, 'Presidential address to the AAC on 17 December 1951', GHG, Box 4.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Sihlali, 'Presidential address delivered at the 32nd annual conference of the Cape African Teachers Association in Queenstown, 24th-27th June, 1953', U/T, Box 4.

⁹² Kies, 'Looking', 3.

⁹³ Ibid., 3.

⁹⁴ Kies, "'For'", 3.

⁹⁵ On the state's repression of NEUM and APDUSA activists in the early 1960s, see Kayser, 'Land', 103-4, 140-4.

⁹⁶ Alexander, 'Non-collaboration', 187-8.

⁹⁷ The fiercest criticisms have come from CPSA/ SACP supporters. For a selection from across the decades, see by Mary Simons, 'Organised', 223-8; Jack and Ray Simons, *Class*, 541-6 and 598-601; and Pallo Jordan, 'Waiting', 12-21. For a literary version of the criticism that the NEUM leadership betrayed its collective character, see Frank Anthony's autobiographical novel *The Journey. The Revolutionary Anguish of Comrade B.*, which describes a recently released Robben Island prisoner's journey to meet a Tabata-like political leader in exile in Zimbabwe.