

WHEN THE LIVING HAUNTS THE DEAD: TRAUMA AND HEALING IN BESSIE HEAD'S REMEMBRANCE OF FANTISI GAOTHOBOGWE

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Abstract

This article is a timely reflection of how five young volunteers who died on the 12th of September 1976 while working on behalf of the Botswana University Campus Appeal affected Bessie Head as a writer and as a person. The deceased were four students of Swaneng Hill and the bus driver of the Serowe cooperative, Fantisi Gaothobogwe. This paper unpacks a letter that Head wrote to Betty Fradkin, who was in New York at the time, a month after the car accident. The letter focuses mostly on the young driver, Fantisi Gaothobogwe. It is through Bessie Head's recollections of this soul that we learn the power of humanity that is not clothed in racial or ethnic accoutrements. The letter becomes an echo of Bessie Head's own writings and psychological distress of how society still views individuals on physical attributes rather than aspects of personality. Hopefully, as we celebrate 40-years of teaching and learning at the trendsetting University of Botswana, we may reflect on existentialist lessons of what our purpose on earth is and create some form of immortality for our mortal souls.

Keywords: UB 40-year commemoration, Bessie Head, existentialism, Fantisi Gaothobogwe

1. Introduction

The aim of this essay is to use an existentialist framework to analyse Bessie Head's 30 October 1976 letter to Betty Fradkin, a month following the death of five young Batswana while on volunteer work to raise funds for the construction of the University of Botswana.

This year, as the University of Botswana commemorates 40 years of existence, there is a need to look back at certain events that have shaped the conscience and communal fabric of the institution. On the night of 12 September 1976, five young people on a fund-raising campaign for the Botswana University Campus Appeal died tragically in a car accident in Serowe. Botswana had no university at independence. The only university was the one collectively owned by the three countries of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland which was in Roma, Lesotho (Molutsi, 2009). This was a coalition that would not last long, however, as the Lesotho government decided to nationalise the Roma campus in 1975. This decision meant that students from Botswana and Swaziland were no longer welcome, and they were consequently expelled.

The Government of Botswana managed to find a solution to the crisis that very year. 'The Botswana University Campus Appeal' or 'One Man, One Beast' campaign originated in the Botswana National Assembly in October

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1975 when members were debating the President's speech" (Mokopakgosi, 2008, p. 296). Thus, proposals for the Campus Appeal started in the highest decision-making body in the land. This underpinned Botswana's principle of self-reliance as opposed to relying largely on foreign aid.

It also appears that the decision by Lesotho to withdraw from partnering with Botswana and Swaziland made it necessary for Botswana to double its efforts towards self-reliance. Lesotho's decision to pull out was remarked upon by President Khama, who is quoted as saying, "the traumatic effects (of the actions of Lesotho) threw our plans for gradual and smooth devolution of the university into complete disarray" (Botswana Daily News, 31 March 1976). Despite this unfortunate development, it turned into a blessing in disguise as President Khama used the setback to rally the nation into working as a united front for the betterment of Botswana. The President is quoted as saying, "the crisis created by the Lesotho government will be our test for national unity, and we must stand united to show and convince the world that our firm belief in democracy can make us achieve greater things, not through coercion, but through consultation and persuasion" (Botswana Daily News, 31 March 1976). There was more to the campus appeal strategy than getting government support. There were also issues of "publicity, organising the campaign, deciding what was to be donated, as well as how the donations were to be collected" (Mokopakgosi, 2008, p. 298).

This year, homage was paid to the five victims by the University of Botswana and members of the community on 29 July 2022 at Swaneng Grounds in Serowe. Mokopakgosi (2008) states that these victims were teenagers which is tragic in itself. Unfortunately, Mokopakgosi (2008) provides no information on Fantisi, who also deserves commemoration. Despite this, what is striking about this accident is how these individuals are remembered by those who were fortunate enough to interact with them while they were still alive. Bessie Head, the world-renowned writer, in an epistolary to a friend who lives outside the country, provides a moving glimpse into the personality of one of the five lost souls, Fantisi Gaothobogwe, the driver.

Bessie Head was an accomplished author and she is widely studied abroad as well as at the University of Botswana. Though a lot of research has gone into her fiction writing, more work needs to be done on letters that she wrote to friends during her time as a refugee in Botswana. The letter about Fantisi comes from a collection of letters that she wrote during her time in Botswana. These letters provide a rich study as they equip us with an understanding of the author that the fiction texts cannot. As noted by Jolly & Stanley (2005, p. 94), letters present a tantalising form of writing's engagement with life, where public and private, professional, and personal are so happily confused. In other words, letters blur the line between the writer's interaction with the world at an intimate level and such interaction at a more formal or detached level.

2. Theoretical Framework

Existentialism often straddles the argumentative moat of whether it is a literary or philosophical phenomenon. Though it has prominent scholars such as Kierkegaard (1957) and Heidegger (1962), existentialism is arguably a theoretical tool best espoused in the works of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea* (1938) and Albert Camus' *The Outsider* (1939). Existentialism is "concerned with finding self and meaning of life through free will, choice, and personal responsibility" (Mapako & Mareva, 2013, p. 1558). It can also be defined as "a philosophy that puts the emphasis on existence (in opposition to any number of abstract and impersonal conceptions of meaning and human life)" (Solomon, 2004, p. 276). The approach provides no clear-cut definition for existence. For instance, Nietzsche (1967) and Sartre (1971) view the human being as complete and should be understood within the ambit of what he/she does. On the other hand, Gabriel Marcel (1949) sees existence as playing a role in the life of other human beings, in other words, man as part of a collective. With relation to Bessie Head, the novel that best wears the hat of existentialism in her works would be *A Question of Power* (Head, 1974), with its heavy storyline of abuse, loss, and latent self-discovery. However, away from her well-known publications, a particular letter stands out and speaks directly to questions of purpose and human existence.

Having French roots and gaining global traction from the 1930s to the 1950s, existentialism provides a useful tool with which to undress human character and subject humans to the gaze of purpose beyond the satisfaction of base appetites. Aspects to consider in existentialism is that the individual is continuously on a search for order yet finds disorder. The character as a communal being craves for a sense of community, for a sense of belonging but feels a sense of being alone, of being apart from kin and kind. This estrangement from what his moral fibre screams for creates a most unhappy soul. Sartre states that "Existentialism does not stress on essences, possibilities of abstract concepts at all" (Sahin, 2014, p. 44). For this reason, existentialism has often been referred to as a return to complete truth. In existentialism, a person decides on what they want to be. It is a developmental process, meaning that if you decide to be one thing, you constantly make decisions (through free will) that lead you to that goal. This means that to exist, a person keeps "differentiating and choosing what s/he wants to be/come by checking out the possibilities of the new existent that results from previous choices" (Sahin, 2014, p. 44). Thus, there is a gradual process towards the attainment of what one's true self. In this process, the human condition is under scrutiny with man questioning his place in the world and his role in turn.

3. Analysis

Bessie Head's characters such as Elizabeth in *A Question of Power* (Head, 1974) find themselves confronted by questions surrounding who they are and their place in the world. This existentialist state is restored after a

traumatic fracturing of the psyche. In the letter to Betty Fradkin, Head seems to have found a tangible solution to the existentialist question regarding one's purpose, but it is one that is not asked nor answered by Fantisi. Head uses Fantisi's personality as a litmus test for Batswana's sense of purpose, and the departed driver becomes a conduit between man as a loner and man as a communal spirit. The way this character is a conduit is told in simple narrative, unburdened by poetic language or metaphors of being. What Head does in the letter is to present Fantisi as an unassuming real-life hero who heals the fractured perception that influence is the preserve of a particular racial or ethnic composition.

Through existentialism, nature is presented as unforgiving and unpredictable. It is through the torment of death, through the mourning process, that we see how revelations around resilience and esoteric notions of inter-racial affection find adhesion. Fantisi's death unites the community across the dichotomy of colour. The existentialist premise is that due to the lack of control that people have over their lives, the thread of human life is not fulfilling. Head's own frustrations at society's inability to connect beyond racial and ethnic lines as seen through *When Rain Clouds Gather* (Head, 1968), *Maru* (Head, 1971), and *A Question of Power* (Head, 1974), find some form of outlet in her reflections of Fantisi – both at a communal and personal level. This is not to imply that Head idealises Fantisi. She does mention that his assistance of the pregnant women, for instance, is financially lucrative. However, one gets the idea that Fantisi gave more than he received. His exploits are to Head a rare yet welcome character trait in a multi-racial country that is still in its infancy.

Fantisi's contribution to the community is valued as his life has achieved a purpose in the existentialist sense. "According to existentialist thought, it is the loss of identity that causes mankind's helplessness. This is why existentialists emphasised giving one's life a purpose. They would argue that God has not given your life a purpose, and therefore it can mean nothing unless you give it meaning yourself" (Shomik, 2018, p. 733). Fantisi has given his life meaning as an individual who works for the good of the community, helping those who need his services as a transporter regardless of race or ethnicity. Fantisi's death triggers in Head an awareness of her own incompleteness in terms of crossing the colour line as effortlessly as Fantisi has.

In her letter, Head writes from the heart, unhindered by form, structure, and style. Her letter writing "becomes an intensely personal and impulsive way of confronting tensions between a 'self' dictated by social circumstances and the possibilities for other, more defiant, modes of being" (Lewis, 2007, p. 52). Characters appeal to us in a variety of ways, and most often, what makes them stick out from the mundane is a special quality that they possess. For Fantisi, this quality was his genuine love for the community. In her letter, Bessie Head states that "he offered you, and you meant everyone, a form of instant love that was so simple and uncomplicated that you could do nothing

but accept it” (Head, 1976 p. 36). This is a description of someone who gave himself uncensored to those who sought his presence. Fantisi comes across as an individual who exudes the purest form of love that cannot be diluted or tempered by the negativity of those around him. For someone who did a demanding job driving a bus for a cooperative, it is as if he were immune to its physical toll.

The way Bessie Head describes him is not so much about his physical stature, for we are never told anything about his appearance in the letter, but his inner personality. The young man becomes then a symbol of how one’s relationship with others dominates one’s appearance. In the letter, Head provides another aspect of Fantisi’s love when she describes the driver’s smile.

He turned and smiled at you, and you meant everyone, in exactly the same way. He smiled once with his whole mouth and then twice, with the corners of his mouth, so you were sure it was for you and that was the proper way to greet people (Head, 1976, p. 36).

The writer’s use of repetition, just as in the previous example, is both for poetic appeal as it is for emphasis. The young driver comes off as charming, instructive, and disarming in that all too familiar gesture of greeting. What this small description tells one is that there are people who feed others with positive energy without necessarily doing so from a position of power and privilege. Fantisi provides smiles with the same genuine spirit of affection that the Campus Appeal of the time sought from the community. Fantisi incorporated the African spirit of Ubuntu in his relationships. Ubuntu is an African philosophy “that places emphasis on ‘being self through others.’ It is a form of humanism which can be expressed in the phrase, ‘I am because of we all are’” (Magumbate & Nyanguru, 2013, p. 82).

The letter makes it clear that Fantisi was not only loved but that this love negotiated the colour line with ease. The 70s was still an era where blacks and whites were negotiating aspects of space and identity, especially in the context of neighbouring apartheid South Africa which loomed over a newly independent Botswana. The letter states that “the young man’s method of operating among people, reaching out across barriers was so identical to mine that I actually stood still with a quiet wonder and looked back carefully on all that had happened” (Head, 1976, p. 36). Bessie Head’s own struggles with identity and belonging are well documented, and being a victim of ethnic prejudice, her coloured identity underpins as well as grapples with themes of acceptance, visibility, and marginalisation. Coming from a mixed-race union, she was treated by authorities and the community alike as an enigma, a bad apple, and social misfit all in one.

Her letters “function as transgressive strategies that mediate between her life as a private individual and her public image as a writer...in her struggles, her letters perform multiple functions that helped transcend the desperation caused by factors such as her poverty, her loneliness, and her

being a refugee and its impact on her writing” (Magaqi, 2008, p. 270). They may be short in structure and be devoid of many literary aspects found in prose fiction or poetry, but letters provide readers with so much more than literary pedagogy. “The process of letter writing produces texts that are simultaneously personal and cultural. Head’s penchant for saving letters, both sent and received, preserves historical links to the time in which she lived as well as aspects of dominant culture in Botswana” (Etter-Lewis, 2008, p. 122).

Her novels *A Question of Power* (Head, 1974) and *When Rain Clouds Gather* (Head, 1968) in particular, highlight the internal struggles that Bessie Head had with racism and racial profiling. Her very existence is one that questions our own acceptance of what it means to be a human being devoid of external markers of race. Existentialists talk of ‘situatedness’ – the belief that freedom is situated. In other words, “this absolute freedom of man is always exercised in particular contexts. His freedom is determined or limited by his body and its characteristics, his circumstances in a historical world as well as his past” (Onah, Ojiakor, and Ezebuilo, 2018, p. 708). During her stay in Serowe, Bessie Head makes it clear on several occasions that she feels unwelcome. She is weighed down by the tag of the outsider. In her letters to Randolph Vigne, she expresses ambivalence at the promise Botswana held for her. Yet ultimately, Randolph Vigne asserts “the letters [were] often the transmutation of despair into optimism” (Head, 1991, p. 7). For instance, Fantisi changes her perception of one’s ability to love outside geographical and racial space. This is indicative of Head’s new sense of freedom in which people are freed from the chains of separation and racial profiling. For existentialists, the Self determines man’s culture. “The free man lives within the laws of his culture but he is not bound by them. They do not control him, rather his self transcends them” (Arbuckle, 1965, p. 560). Fantisi is a Motswana, but he does not have that aloof personality that Head has experienced of Batswana. The young man’s giving nature seems out of sorts with the place he is in. Simply put, his location (situation) has not defined his relationship with others.

It is thus important why in her letter, Head focuses on Fantisi’s character traits which cannot be held hostage by race, colour, or creed.

What people were sure of was that they loved that young man, and this took in a wide range of people, both black and white. People got physically ill on his death; the sense of loss was calamitous; one was simply appalled at the number of people who were knocked down (Head, 1976, p.36).

The death of Fantisi is that of a person who had given humanity what it yearned for, unconditional love. His passing is a shock to Bessie Head who experiences a loss of what she hoped the world she knew would be. The narrative states, “It was like a more beautiful and more perfect extension of myself had died and I did not really know what to do about it. It was just gone” (Head, 1976, p. 36). It is somewhat hard to process how the death of

someone like Fantisi could be so heart wrenching for a community in general and Bessie Head, who documented how vile and toxic her relationship with the locals were in her text *A Question of Power* (Head, 1974). Here was an individual who had held promise of what society could become but had tragically run out of time to see this promise become a fully-fledged reality.

There is a particular example in the letter which sums up the discordant view of Bessie's *A Question of Power* (Head, 1974) and that of Fantisi.

Indeed, your question to me about the young man, Fantisi, "Am I right in thinking he was free of the narrowness that has troubled you in many of the village people..." is specifically the very question everyone discussed on his death. A village man summed it up for me as follows. He said: "Here you set a limit on everything you do with people because you know people can injure you. With Fantisi you set no limit. There was nothing inside him that could injure people...." (Head, 1976, p. 36)

This is an illustration of life being stranger than fiction. However, it was not only Fantisi's personality that Bessie Head found enthralling. His duties as a bus driver set him apart. This is a profession that generally attracts a lot of negative comments in the country with remarks on drivers ranging from lawlessness to being uncouth. Fantisi seems to have been cut from a different cloth, exuding upon the public a welcome dose of selflessness, and going beyond the call of duty to satisfy customers. He was the epitome of the new male, disentangled from the albatross of traditional male values of misogyny. In the letter, it is stated that "he noted that Wednesday was the day mothers attended ante-natal clinic. He had all the pregnant mothers waiting for him on his route, deposited them carefully at the clinic and took them carefully home again" (Head, 1976, p. 36). The young man touched all and sundry and the incident with the pregnant women illustrates that he treated the living as well as the unborn with equal reverence.

The helpful nature of Fantisi highlights the contrast in Head's own writing in which male characters are often seen as parasitic, vengeful, and self-serving. Characters like Garesego in *The Collector of Treasures* (Head, 1977) and Dan in *A Question of Power* (Head, 1974) are some of the more obvious that come to mind. In one of her other letters, she states "It's pretty terrible I tell you for a woman to be alone in Africa. Men treat women as the cheapest commodity" (Head, 1991, p. 11). The sense of loss that Head and the community experience is felt beyond the words on the page and makes one understand the value of a well lived human life unclouded by nepotism, ego, or racial sentiments.

Though the loss of the five members of the Campus Appeal is devastating, Head's description of Fantisi makes the death feel intimate and emotionally taxing. Bessie Head's son, Howard, is traumatised by the death, having witnessed the accident first hand. His relationship with Fantisi makes it all the harder for him to accept the tragedy. Through Howard, we vacillate

between anger, loss, and helplessness. “Human beings are immediately aware of their own situation. A part of this is a sense of meaninglessness in the outer world; this meaninglessness produces discomfort, anxiety, loneliness in the face of limitations” (Harman & Holman, 2000, p. 75). Bessie Head’s advice to Howard is essentially advice to us and humanity that finds itself haunted by death in its literal or existentialist form.

You are not alone in this. It involves all the other boys at the school. Go and find out what the other boys are doing. Some of the boys in your group will be very brave and they will show you all what to do... (Head, 1976, p. 36).

There is healing in the collective. The individual is at risk of being overwhelmed. The advice hints at the social nature of man. For us to face our problems, we need to do so from the point of view of the group. We learn though, that the tragedy at times was not easy to deal with when the writer states that one of the boys, overcome by grief, hangs himself.

4. Conclusion

As a writer, Bessie Head could easily have used this incident to narrate a fiction story on loss and renewal. However, perhaps the letter is enough to lend the young man’s life, as well as that of the other four, a sense of dignity and understated importance. Forty years since the concept of the University of Botswana (UB) was born, the ideals of Fantisi still shine through: love, compassion, and the ability to see beyond indicators of race and ethnicity. The UB is an all-inclusive, tolerant, and progressive institution that goes beyond teaching, learning, and research to develop individuals with a sense of the Fantisi spirit.

Writers of fiction sometimes become camouflaged behind their work that it becomes an exercise of patience to identify their true sentiments. Through the letter form, Bessie Head has captured the personality of Fantisi Gaothobogwe and brought his character much closer to us in a way that a work of fiction may not have managed. The young man’s sense of selfless love, devotion, and rich spirit that transcends race and ethnicity is a subtle reminder of how characters in the 21st century need to conduct themselves. It is hoped that this letter may put a human face to the tragic loss of life on that night of the 12th of September 1976, and by extension, make humanity answer the age-old existentialism question of what our purpose on this earth is.

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Appendix

P.O. Box 15
 Serowe
 Botswana, Africa
 30th October 1976

Dear Betty [Betty Fradkin in New York],

Your letter and the cheque arrived yesterday. Thank you very much.

Let me get down at once to the part of your letter which touched me most. The fund for the University is known as the Botswana University Campus Appeal. It had a number of co-ordinating bodies across the country and at present the funds are all being transferred to the Ministry of Education. As yet, I do not know the proper address of the department which is to handle the funds, but it would be quite in order for you to address your contribution direct to The Office of The President of Botswana, Private Bag 1, Gaborone, Botswana.

The appeal was originally launched from that office, so that your contribution would be transferred from there to the appropriate department. You can mention if you so wish that your contribution is specifically in memory of the young people killed in an accident in Serowe on the night of 12th Sept. '76, while they were on a fund-raising campaign for the Botswana University Campus Appeal. The names of the young people are as follows: Fantisi Gaothobogwe (driver of the Serowe Bus Co-operative) and the students – Sarah Matlhwane, Magdalene Khumalo, Maitumelo Kgari, Elizabeth Masake. I think your contribution would be deeply appreciated if it is given in memory of these young people. Indeed, your question to me about the young man, Fantisi, "Am I right in thinking he was free of the narrowness that has troubled you in many of the village people..." is specifically the very question everyone discussed on his death. A village man summed it up for me

as follows. He said: "Here you set a limit on everything you do with people because you know people can injure you. With Fantisi you set no limit. There was nothing inside him that could injure people...."

That young man nearly succeeded in taking a whole lot of people into death with him. No one bothered to explain the large amount of collapses, the extreme states of shock people experienced. A vague question went the rounds: "Why are people crying like this for someone who is not their relative?" There was no answer. I think I have a few of the answers. I liked the young man so much because he had some qualities I have but in a way that was totally astonishing to me. I know how to cut through barriers and get straight at people, but I do this in a careful and intellectual way. But when I see that people are hopeless racialists or hopeless horrors, I very soon tell them impatiently to bugger off. He was doing the same thing, but he got at you directly in the most beautiful way. He offered you, and you meant everyone, a form of instant love that was so simple and uncomplicated that you could do nothing but accept it. He turned and smiled at you, and you meant everyone, in exactly the same way. He smiled once with his whole mouth and then twice, with the corners of his mouth, so you were sure it was for you and that was the proper way to greet people. What people were sure of was that they loved that young man, and this took in a wide range of people, both black and white. People got physically ill on his death; the sense of loss was calamitous; one was simply appalled at the number of people who were knocked down. They never thought that such a love had a high cost attached to it, that they were going to pay in some way. The young man's method of operating among people, reaching out across barriers was so identical to mine that I actually stood still with a quiet wonder and looked back carefully on all that had happened.

I cried with shock at the violence of the accident, but it was like a more beautiful and more perfect extension of myself had died and I did not really know what to do about it. It was just gone. It might sound like I found a defence other people did not have but I did feel this sense of peaceful continuity. I have never felt this way about death before. I can tell you people liked that instant love very much and he was the only one who had it. No one can do an imitation of it. The other quality I shared with the young man was his ability to tightly organise everyday work. He made that bus driving a creative activity. For example, he noted that Wednesday was the day mothers attended ante-natal clinic. He had all the pregnant mothers waiting for him on his route, deposited them carefully at the clinic and took them carefully home again. The huge profits he earned from keeping an eye on people's needs were irrelevant. People liked the bus driver. I have had the same experience with vegetable gardening. People would take anything from me in blind bemusement: people liked the vegetable gardener. I outlined this love and work in "A Question of Power".

The whole experience was a very profound one for Howard. He was right there at the scene of the crash -- he saw the badly mangled bodies being

hauled out from underneath the huge bus. He ran all the way home again. That evening I had a huge pile of ironing to do, so I was standing ironing when he walked in. I expected him at about mid-night. He always attended film shows in the village with Fantisi. They had a pattern going. I'd hear the bus door bang and then the bus move down next door to my yard for parking. So, I simply stared at Howard in surprise. He said quite calmly: "Fantisi is dead." But he'd just passed my house in the minibus, so I said: "What did you say?" He sat down and cried hysterically. He did this all the time, veering from terror to manly calm.

During that week he once said he was afraid to face all those coffins -- there were four at the school and one next door to our house. So, I said to him: "You are not alone in this. It involves all the other boys at the school. Go and find out what the other boys are doing. Some of the boys in your group will be very brave, and they will show you all what to do..." It was the best thing I could have said. He later reported that all the boys got together and sat in silent groups, not talking. But the tragedy took its toll. One of the students, a boy, committed suicide a week later. He hung himself.

We have never seen anything like this in Serowe before, Betty. Since I have been here a little boy was killed on the main road, then a few dogs and one goat. Some adults tumbled off the slippery gravel of the main road, but they seemed to be strangers speeding somewhere. Then a car had a blow-out and killed a brigade student. There were very few cars when I came here. There are a lot more cars on the road now.

The political tempo in Botswana has surely speeded up since April when the first bomb went off on the line. Prior to this, there was a meeting between Machel of Mozambique, Kaunda of Zambia, and Seretse of Botswana. After this meeting Machel closed the borders with Rhodesia. Threatening statements were issued against Botswana by Rhodesia, that it was outside its bounds meeting with Machel and Kaunda. But the meetings and meetings continued week after week, week after week. A lot of bombs have gone off on the Rhodesia/Botswana railway line, the last being on Friday 29th October. For one bomb that goes off, so the news says, the Rhodesian forces manage to kill off a lot of freedom fighters -- nineteen on Friday. If this is true, I don't like it at all because the toll in young lives is too high. The guerrillas have mostly got their courage and support from Mozambique. Machel fought a long battle with the Portuguese, I think beyond ten years and if anything, the Portuguese were as vicious as the Rhodesians -- they simply massacre black people on a large scale. The situation is most unhappy.

Do so many people die for liberation? Botswana is tied to Rhodesia through the railway line, and this has caused the frantic activity on the part of Seretse. The gentleman has foresight. For years Seretse made non-political speeches. They were so boring and empty of content that one stopped reading them. They kept the situation peaceful. The Boers and the other horrors could do nothing with those speeches. Everyone likes the way the country is run because we keep on with everyday affairs when everything is falling to

pieces very hard around us. We don't know what happens at those meetings in Zambia but central to them is the survival of the country. When Rhodesia falls Botswana can come to a standstill. If the rail is not kept open, we can't survive. It may stop and Zambia may be the only outlet. I don't know what is going to happen but something is going to crack up hard. The black people that side are not nice bed fellows. They are a mess.

I heard a horror story about a certain leader named Chepeto [Hubert Chitepo of ZANU]. For years, he was organiser of the guerilla camps in Zambia. He was, on the surface, charming and full of smiles. He ordered the murder of a whole lot of guerrillas. One day, a bomb was put in his car and he was blown to bits. I don't like that sort of thing. I don't like the whole situation.

Lesotho is another horror. First of all, they actually keep those ritual murders of ancient times going, so taking human life there for medicines is quite in order. Secondly, since the University had long been established there way back in time, almost every Mosotho has been to university. They have the highest literacy rate in southern Africa with a B.A. graduate on every corner, but no employment for them. India had a similar situation. The graduate B.A. goes in for hair-splitting arguments and dangerous fancies while the wrong sorts of people take control of the government. The B.A. doesn't want to do anything but argue and dissent and have shoot-ups. We always hear about the big shoot-ups in Lesotho. Result. Paranoid government. There's a whole lot of people there who know too much, and they are being ruled by an apparently illiterate man, Jonathan Lebua (not sure of surname) [Leabua Jonathan]. Ordinary people don't feel safe with those wild-eyed B.A.'s. There's not been much political contact between Botswana and Lesotho and the University was the only issue.

I am sending this by registered post because I have enclosed something which I call "Risk Capital".

Much love,

Bessie