



**Poems**

*Peter Horn*

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Die rubriek *Litera* word finansiëel gesteun deur/  
The section *Litera* is financially supported by  
Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology  
Departement Kuns, Kultuur, Wetenskap en Tegnologie



## Rubriek vir skeppende werk

Met die afdeling *Litera* tree ons toe tot die mark vir skeppende werk in al die tale waarin normaalweg in *Literator* geskryf word.

Dit is die wens van die Redaksie dat die gedigte en kortverhale wat hierby verskyn, baie gedigte, kortverhale en prosa- en dramafragmente in ander inheemse tale sal roep, sodat hierdie blad één geïntegreerde beeld van die korter skryfwerk van jong Suid-Afrikaanse skrywers kan bied.

Dit is met vreugde dat ons die uitnodiging aan veral digters en kortverhaalskrywers rig om skeppende werk voor te lê vir plasing in hierdie rubriek, met die voorbehoud dat ons nie oor die mannekrag beskik om daarvoor te korrespondeer nie. Bydraes in viervoud moet in dubbelspasiëring getik wees, met die naam en adres van die insender regs bo aan die eerste blad van gekramde tekste en op elke losbladvel wat gestuur word.

Stuur alle bydraes aan die Hoofredakteur, *Literator* (629), Buro vir Wetenskaplike Tydskrifte, Privaatsak X6001, Potchefstroom 2520.

## Section for creative writing

In introducing the section *Litera* we are entering the market for creative work in all the languages that *Literator* normally caters for. It is the wish of the Editorial Board that the poems and short stories printed in this issue will only be the precursor of many poems, short stories, prose and drama fragments in all the indigenous languages, so that the journal will be able to present one integrated image of the short pieces of writing which young South Africans can offer.

It is with great joy that we extend this invitation to especially poets and short fiction writers to submit creative work with a view to publishing them in this section. The only reservation is that we do not have the manpower to enter into correspondence about the works submitted. **Four copies** of contributions have to be submitted. The submissions have to be typed in double spacing, with the name and address of the author at the top right of the first page of stapled text, and on every loose sheet sent in.

Send all contributions to the Editor-in-Chief, *Literator*, (629), Bureau for Scholarly Journals, Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom 2520.

## **From the brink of disaster**

from the brink of disaster  
we have come and we have walked  
hungry with uncertainty and irritation  
because we were on flames  
like the leafless acacia trees  
in the burning desert  
drunk with fire and moonlight  
and the hyenas  
never slept

soon my voice will roam like a dog  
along the tracks in the heat of noon  
past the caves where people were living long ago  
a meaningless sign encrypted in alien languages  
lost in a flat and endless landscape  
where the lonely blade of grass sings in the wind  
and the sand drifts across the peak of the dune  
a sobbing cry in the hollow of a flute

the glare of the sun we see and dry dust  
and the smoke of our fire is a grey flower  
reaching up to the cloudless sky  
signalling for ever: we are lost  
and there is no home and no hearth  
not even the burrow of an anteater  
for those who are on the move  
from nowhere to nowhere

forward or backward we don't see  
so we practised forgetfulness  
because wishes are not reasonable  
when dealing with fate, and the wishful  
are the blindest sons of the Gods  
who don't know where they are drifting  
through whispering canyons

.../some

some day we will arrive at the coast  
where the moons step out violently  
from behind the snow-covered mountains  
and the waters race down to the sea  
falling falling falling  
into the salt-saturated lagoons  
festooned with flamingoes

*Peter Horn*

## **Morning meditation during a revolution**

To get up in the morning and walk into our daily fear  
of AK47's and taxi murder: every day a new rise from the  
bed of our defeat and the decay of our bodies,  
to peek from our caves, soft duvets and electric blankets,  
the hollow of our dark sleep and the softness of feathers  
surrounding us, the gods of every day and every place,  
mitigating the terror with the pleasures of sex and food.

You can track the disturbance on NNTV:  
just turn the picture down  
and when the storm is near  
the snow comes upon the screen and crackles.

No more news today, no more news today:  
The contents of my head are rather chaotic already,  
and my brain needs a spring cleaning.  
Not to wipe out painful memories, though:  
I find that when I don't think about the bad stuff  
the good stuff goes into a white haze, into white noise.

That is how the revolution begins: insights,  
but cut into two, three, fragments of incomprehensible  
shouts, hunger, daydreams and starry eyes,  
the slang of those whose day has not yet come,  
the language fuzz of brain-dead automata,  
senses hidden somewhere in the tangle of slogans.

But why does our face trail across every dawn  
this dissatisfaction like a slimy path  
along the motorway of the golden sun  
coming from the mountains in the east and rushing  
towards the mountains in the west.

.../It

It is difficult to get an overview, a vision  
which would allow you to see it all at once.  
One would need a house on Table Mountain  
and a powerful telescope to understand  
the movement of the masses across the Cape Flats.

I am going to write it all down anyway  
I am going to write it amidst the confusion  
I am going to write and not look at the screen  
and not watch the words unfold until I am done.

Peter Horn

## The song of the Diederik Cuckoo

*Chrysococcyx caprius*

White nuns wander across the sky like waning moons,  
lost among the unemployed and the shack dwellers,  
slow tortoises of God, munching irises,  
lost in prayers and incomprehension.

They shudder when they discover the severed head  
in the doorway of the gang leader's house,  
and perform an ancient rite of atonement,  
while the gangster snores in his double bed.

The sky has a thousand windows  
filled with a dreamlike azure,  
each reflected in the puddles  
between the burnt bodies next to the road.

A luminous song rises in the east:  
filling the silence with laughter,  
the song of the Diederik Cuckoo,  
repeating his name again and again,  
the sweetness of morning: di-di-diiderick.

There is hope in the way he launches his whistle,  
there is hope that we will see another day,  
there is hope that the bullet will not strike  
and that the knife will miss our heart.

There is a bitter root that grows in the Cape Flats  
among the Port Jacksons and the Rooikrans,  
there is a bitter root that grows in the cemeteries,  
a bitter root that grows from the heart  
of murdered children in the sandpits of dawn.

Yet the song of the cuckoo echoes in the dark wells of death,  
pierces the agony of the child curved in the air,  
takes up the rhythm of the rain on the iron roof  
and wanders through our nightmares at will.

.../Dreamgrass

Dreamgrass covers the graves, flowers wither  
in the summer heat. A solitary butterfly wings its crazy way  
through the weeds and the stunted bushes.  
Seeing the blue sheen on the wing of a butterfly  
I start to tremble: my face in the mirror of marble.



*Peter Horn*

## **After the blaze**

In the sunset of my silence lies  
a field  
sown with skulls  
covered by the webs  
of the spider of forgetting  
heads with empty sockets  
ponder the horizon  
and the book with unread pages

words have been erased  
and poems burned to ashes  
in the blaze of thousand shacks

I hear fire-engines  
battling through the gale  
and the half-moon a fermata  
of the wailing sirens howl

A burnt voice  
weeps the salty water of the sea  
in the smoke