

RESEARCH AND INTERVIEWS  
IN SOUTH AFRICA  
JULY AND AUGUST 1998

FOR THE DEVELOPEMENT OF  
**The Bird Can't Fly**  
FEATURE FILM BY  
THREES ANNA

The trip to South Africa. Made by Threes Anna Schreurs writer director, the South African designer Cathy Henegan and the Italian cinematographer Paolo Rapalino accompanied her.

24 July

The hunt has started. Manhunt!!

It's so nice to be here again. It almost feels like coming home. Roam through the city for the umpteenth time. Meeting people. Making appointments. Fortunately there are people who enjoy that, making appointments. Calling up people. Sweet-talking et cetera. Cathy and her friends are an enormous help.

Last night I had dinner with an incredible yuppie. He wants to leave the country. He wants to go to New York. We drove in his 5-hours-old silver-coloured Saab. A house loaded with art, and of course a pool. A sort of a Tati `Mon Oncle' house. But he was unhappy. He had just returned from Spain. And was jealous about their way lifestyle (live to eat).

Besides, I talked to a shopkeeper. He only has one desire. He wants to know if black people hate each other.

Now, we are looking for an inbreeding family. We have tracked down a family like this close to Bloemfontein, a 7-hours-drive from Johannesburg. In any case there are a lot of poor white farmers in this area.

I also want to meet a writer who has just published a book called "After Mandela". It is set ten years from now. My questions are all about "how will the situation be in 12 years". In 2010. His book is mainly about the economy. But I would like to talk to him. While he was writing this book he must have been dreaming about how he would live in that age.

We are staying in Cathy's house; it's great, large and rich in colour. An old gardener lives in a little house in the garden and a friend of his squatted Cathy's garage, I think. When we came home last night, we saw candlelight in the garage. And Cathy said: "So, everybody is at home." I want to interview them too.

I overslept, so Cathy went to the airport to pick up Paolo. So, I think I am going to prepare some breakfast for them now.

25 July

When you stay a little longer in Johannesburg you notice that a lot has changed here. The whites are moving away and are creating white townships. No luxurious residential areas with guards, but small middle class terraced houses with high walls with electricity on them. And in the centre I have only seen one white man.

The large, empty building (500 metres – 100 metres - really high - one space) near the Market theatre is built over with cardboard houses. You don't believe your eyes. I want to go in, but I have to find someone who wants to take me there. It's a bit dangerous to just go in there.

I have talked to a box collector on the street. Male, ±43, unemployed, 7 children, wife and mother. He collects empty cardboard boxes from the shops (rubbish) and sells those boxes back to the cardboard factory to feed his family. He earns around 30 guilders a day. But if I ask him about the future he doesn't know what I am talking about. There is no future. Even

when I talk to him about the past. There have been so many changes in the last 10 years. But he still can't imagine that there will ever be any changes in his life. He thinks he will never find a job. He is so nervous that a white just talks to him that he lights the cigarette that I give to him at least 3 times while it is already burning, again and again, and he just doesn't notice it.

Conversation with Prince, 30-years-old, reggae, no home, no wife, no children, unemployed, black. But when you talk to him he appears to be one big sun. He does not know fear. Is never afraid?! He always helps people everywhere and in this way people are giving him food and clothes. He paints here, does the laundry there, and always hangs around the theatre. He makes music. He sings a song that he has made for me. All positivism. And slowly the conversation turns to the future. When I ask him how he think he will die, he says he does not want to be murdered. That he will fight until his arms are broken. Then he suddenly says: "Once I saw a movie. License to kill. James Bond. That is impossible. There is no license to kill. Who can grant such a license? Some people believe that having a gun is the license. But what if you think that you will be shot first." Then he starts laughing very loudly about this ridiculous idea. He is a very endearing man. He has only one dream. The Market theatre will be his palace. Everyone who wants may live there and there will always be food. When I ask him who will be the boss in his palace, he says, "a Muslim woman". He blushes. He must be in love. But on second thought it would be his brother. And I think he would like it best to be God. Who gives everything to everyone from the balcony of his palace. After our conversation we take him to a restaurant. Because it's like this. You really love to give him food, and so do we. A real prince.

Over here there is also a sexual revolution. An explosion of 'coming outs'. Mainly by white and coloured males. And so suddenly there are places in car parks were gays are sniffing at each other at night. E.g. diagonally opposite from Cathy's house in the park. The most beautiful young boys (coloured ones), mainly transvestites, hang around. It may be an idea to interview them.

Paolo arrived safely. Only without his luggage, which got lost. Let's hope it will arrive. Close to the house is a very big cemetery. When I was walking there this morning, a funeral just started. Imagine, a gigantic field of at least one square kilometre, but probably even much larger. Full with graves. And all with the front to one side. And halfway walks a line of people with a coffin. It's very cinematic. The way they follow goes along small sandhills of red earth. They stop at one spot and stand around the coffin. There are not many people. Around 35. And all with different emotions. The closer they are standing to the coffin, the more defeated they look. The further away they stand from the coffin, the more relaxed they look. It's beautiful to see this. There are two persons standing a bit in the back who are smoking a cigarette in a relaxed manner. While 5 metres before them someone can hardly cope with his grief. Some children are running around between them. When the minister has left (after ten minutes) the men are starting to fill up the grave. In an almost hysterical way. Indifferently, the others walk away. After 20 minutes or a bit longer there are only two men with their wives and one child left. Everyone has left already, his or her cars included. The grave has been filled up. They cry and walk away still crying. After they have all left I walk to the place itself. It is a whole row of holes of 2.5 metres deep, future graves. This explains the way with sandhills, with in between a few filled up graves covered with fresh flowers. It's unbelievable that nobody has fallen into such a hole. Crying and all (maybe a nice idea).

Well, enough for today. It's the last day of the week. Tuesday morning we will fly to Oudtshoorn. The next step.

26 July

I walk in the streets and I see another cortege. Of course this happens more often if you stay in the neighbourhood of such a big cemetery. But this time it is a black funeral and a very big one. I follow it. I jump over the fence, take a short cut. Then I run for around a kilometre across the cemetery. I find them.

There is a big tent next to the hole. There are hundreds of people. A choir is singing German church songs. And again those beautiful circles of emotions. The minister is in a hurry, but he speaks seriously to the crowd that they must stay to honour Mr so-and-so after he has left. The women have to stay while the men are filling up the grave. There are as many as ten people who are working with spades at the same time. There are large clouds of red dust above the crowd. I am sitting a bit further down, on the grave of Anna Van Der Reis, who died in 1993. It is beautiful to see. And in the meantime the choir just keeps on singing. When the grave is finally closed, people are slowly leaving.

We are trying to find Prince, the boy we met a few days ago. He will bring us to his father, who works in an old people's home. And who is a famous black musician. But first we look round his shop. He isn't that homeless. He has squatted a great garage. It's very light and very clean. Extremely clean and organised. His bed and a cooker are placed in a corner of 1.5 by 1.5 metre, just as in a normal shack (a 'house' of corrugated iron or cardboard). The rest of the space is filled with sorted mess. Very tidy.

I want to see the factory where all those people live and he has to bring me there. At first he doesn't want to do this. Not just looking. But if I tell him that I also want to talk with people, it's ok.

Imagine, a gigantic factory, in the middle of the centre. Everything is broke. Full of dirt. Rats are walking around. The smell of death and decay, and all cardboard shacks among that. In very tidy rows. You can put a ruler along them. Fires everywhere. And clotheslines. Everything is so full of contrasts. In fact it is just an ordinary bourgeois picture, but than on a rubbish dump in a factory. It's almost impossible to describe the contrasts. You can only see and smell them. We talk to no one. We just walk and look around. Prince is very afraid too, so it's time to move on. No video.

We drive to Alex. The only township in the city. It's also the oldest township. Nowadays everybody says ghetto in stead of township. The word ghetto is often used in conversations with blacks and coloured. It's Sunday. Everybody is at home. It's busy. We drive to the old people's home. His father isn't there, but his uncle is. An old people's home in an African township seems impossible. All families still take care of each other and are very close. But here you find the dumped people. Mainly staff of whites, they became to old and had to leave. Most of the time they had already lived with such a family for more than 40 years. And they lost touch with their own relatives. Where did they have to go? Here. It's an oasis of peace in the rubbish and filthiness of Alex. Suddenly there is grass and there are trees. There are small houses and old people everywhere, sitting on chairs and chatting. There is a hospital and death-rooms. Eric, the uncle who leads us around, is worried about the changing norms and the westernising in Africa. Who isn't? Suddenly he proposes to go to a hostel.

My heart misses a beat. Wow, a hostel. One of the most dangerous, and impossible places in the townships.

For many years these were the places where there was so many aggression. Inkata against ANC. And the other way around. No one came close to them, many people died daily. But now 'the rest' has returned a little bit. Eric is looking for a guide. You can't just go in there. That is even now still too dangerous. Especially for whites. Ephreim comes, a man in his fifties who really wants to show us the building. I always thought it was only one block of flats, but it appears to be a real fortress, built in the shape of a sort of pointed egg. You don't believe your eyes when you are in the inner courtyard. All kinds of levels with on the strangest places broken cars with people in it. Talking, smoking, et cetera. Clotheslines with laundry and in between hundreds of goats and sheep are scratching about. And everything is covered with dirt. Lots of dirt. Dirt of years. And nobody cleans it up. Now, everything is squatted in. There are fires are everywhere.

The hostels were places where only men lived. As a matter of fact it were a sort of hotels for immigrants who worked in the homelands. Only men. Around 2,500 to 3,000 men lived in this hostel. Now a little less. And now there are women too. It's squatted in now. We are absolutely not allowed to film in here. I can imagine why. It is too much, too heavy, too dirty. It is the perfect example of what a ghetto really is. Jesus, what a misery. We enter the fortress. It is possible to lower electrical gratings everywhere so that different parts can be closed off (in the old days!).

We go upstairs. A bad smell of piss. The floor upstairs is covered with mud and it is completely dark. Vaguely you see some doors. There is no daylight anywhere. We walk into a corridor. There is someone who wants to show us his room. His name is Ernest and he has lived here for 20 years now. He has lived through almost everything. When he was a child he came here with his father. He slept with 4 others in the room where he now still lives. Nowadays with his girlfriend. In a room of 4 by 4. A double bed and a wardrobe. The wardrobe is open. There is some food and some clothes in there. That's all he has. It is very tidy and clean.

We walk further and arrive at Ephreim's domain. He runs a little shop in one of the rooms. You can only open the door (inwards). There is a fencing. Behind it everything is filled with cans, et cetera. His daughter stands behind the counter. He has another room that is used as a beer storage room. There are clearly several locks. And at the same time it is someone's bedroom. Then we see his own room. Blue-white lino on the floor (remnants), a double bed and a single bed, a wardrobe (overfull) and a TV. And well, than it is quite full.

Back in the corridor. There is a small light at his shop. The rest is dark. Dirty, piss, mud, filthy. He shows us the toilets. You immediately feel like throwing up. We skip the showers. They are smashed and full of shit and rubbish. There are doorsteps everywhere (in connection with the gratings that were used to close parts off). You don't see them. You must know they are there. But if you have lived here for 20 years than you don't stumble over them.

We arrive at the communal kitchen. Four tables full of gas burners. A few of these burn constantly. There are paint cans, with handles fastened to them, cooking on the fire. The paint still on the outside. Someone is making doughnut balls. The African doughnut. We buy some. They are 30 cents a piece. I ask them where the gas comes from. "From the ground, through a pipe". Yes, I can figure that out. But who is paying for it. Nobody knows. And the fire burns the whole day. You would think that someone has to pay for it. They don't, that's for sure. We make a new appointment to return here and than we will be allowed to film. They want to show us some dances. I am curious. Outside there's a boy selling tomatoes and some cassettes. The music is loud. The tomato seller is dancing. It seems as if he doesn't touch the ground. I never saw something like that before. "If you will come again, they will dance, not one person but a lot of people, and just like him". Well, that sounds promising.

We are outside again. Among the thousands and thousands of shacks. It looks like a complete chaos, but there is a whole network of streets going through it. It is so full, so full, so incredibly full. I had forgotten how it was. The townships in Oudtshoorn are residential areas compared to this.

Tuesday morning very early we will fly back to Oudtshoorn. We will stay there until Friday morning. Then we will drive to Cape Town. If everything goes as planned I will talk with people in a factory tomorrow. Very slowly it becomes clear to me what the story will be like.

27 July

What makes my plan so difficult is the fact that blacks and coloureds don't think about time in the same way as we do. This means that when I ask them questions that deal with the past or the present, they have a completely different perception of time. Most of the time their age is very unclear. Time is related to events. Things like Mandela gets free in '90, elections in '94, '87 big fights in Alex, et cetera.

So all the questions cause confusion for them as well as for me. So, I have to do this in a different way. So many bad things have happened that questions concerning fear are being avoided. Whites on the contrary are very specific in their answers. This has happened, this hasn't, et cetera. I must develop different tactics.

I start to understand more and more what the film should be like. I think, the same as applies to most of the other things I do, that my sources of inspiration are the place, or the moment, the energy somewhere or the people. Here it is the people. The People in South Africa: their future, et cetera. But it's about much more universal feelings and images. All the events could also take place in North America. It is only necessary for me as a maker to do it here. Here, where everything is so extreme. Where nature and cities are a large, visual extreme paradise. Where power and force are constantly very clear at the surface.

Many of the things I write down in my report will find a place in the film, but the why and the how will originate from my imagination. I want to make it even more extreme. More absurd. I don't think I want to hear many words in the film. In the meantime the day has gone by. What a day it was. What extreme situations.

A small photocopier's annex printer's. I talk to the black guy who belongs to the shop and is being sold together with it again and again. He just belongs to one of the machines. He really has such a bourgeois mentality. He wants his children to become doctor and nurse (son and daughter). He doesn't want to lose his job, and he wants to have a car.

The boss is worldly-wise. He wants to know how we deal with the problem of unoccupied houses in the Netherlands. Squatting in! His wife is a silly cow. She only nags about aeroplanes she missed and wants to be treated as if she were the queen. She is absolutely the prototype of white South African middle class. Enough money to live, but not enough to do what she wants.

Then we go to a transshipment company in catering articles. The director of the company, a progressive type, allows me to talk to everyone. I talk to 4 employees, 3 black guys and an Indian woman. One of the boys is great. The new South Africa. Dynamic, brimming with ambition. But he is so western. Far away from his parents. I don't know if I like it, or not. That terrible American system spreads unchecked. He will cope. The others are not so special.

They have the usual problems. One has a son who drinks himself to death. The other one cannot raise her daughter. And dumped her with an aunt.

During all these conversations I realise that this are not the people I must talk to. They don't stimulate my imagination. They're not extreme enough. I've heard all this before. After that I talk to the other director. Very scared and very rich. We were not allowed to tape it, so we did it secretly.

And then again to a completely opposite situation. A squatted house where only artists live. Sort of a Tetterode (famous squat in Amsterdam) in the first year. But than in '78. In feel flashbacks everywhere and in everything. The struggle between people about whom can stay and who cannot. Who is too much of a junky and who isn't. But they are all very drugged. I meet Dirty (is a boy) after 4 years. He's a great artist, but he's on hard drugs. He lives in the cellar in a kind of safe with a 5-year-old child and a girlfriend (totally bummed). But he makes really beautiful things. I don't tell him why I am here. I only listen. And I hear beautiful stories. Full of pain. Full of frustration. Pain about being white. Pain about parents who don't understand them. But besides this there is also so many energy for their art. I hope they will manage. It is really beautiful here. And together they are very strong, despite everything that they don't have. They want to start an art centre. The rooms are beautiful. I think that in ten years time, if drugs haven't destroyed them by then, they will become very ambitious people who will own centres like Oibibio (New Age Centre in Amsterdam). No, more art orientated centres. They only think about the usual ideals like 'save the planet'.

Tomorrow morning we will fly to George at 6 o'clock. We will be picked up there. Cathy rings round half of South Africa for appointments. She now has a mobile phone, which doesn't completely work yet, but I suppose it will tomorrow.

28 July

I am working on a new tactic for the interviews. I want to get more extreme answers. More dreams. More fears. I really needed a couple of days to get into it a bit. And a couple of interviews to find out which way I want to go with it. Last night I lay thinking in my bed for a long time, trying to figure this out. And I believe I have found the solution. I am going to make a questionnaire. Or, actually a sort of brainstorming. With all kinds of questions like e.g.:

If you would have the possibility to demolish a city or a village, which village/city would you choose? And where would you rebuild it?

Do you believe in a heaven and what does it look like?

Where do you want to be remembered by the most after your death?

If you could choose a new profession what would this be?

Do you have children? Why?

If you would dig a very deep hole in the ground where would you end up?

I have 30 questions that I will ask, depending on the person. I hope I will get a bit further with those questions. Because now everybody stays very close to the current political situation. And many of them don't have any idea of the future or say they don't have any dreams. Or that they are just dreaming about a new car. And that's nothing new.

I am in Oudtshoorn now. It is so funny being here with Cathy and Paolo. And for me it's also so normal here. The only funny thing is that at the moment it's raining in this desert town. Jean is of course very happy. It's good for the land. But I hate it. Yesterday it was still very

hot and now it's 16 degrees or something, brrrr. For a change it's this time Cathy's bag that hasn't arrived. Paolo got his one back only after 3 days, well, we'll see what happens.

We are preparing a programme for the coming days here. Mainly farmers are living here. I am going to interview one who is 90 years old, seems like fun and he speaks Dutch. I think it will be awfully difficult to understand him.

29 July

I am really exhausted after today. 4 interviews of an hour. And I needed all my concentration for each interview. The questionnaire is a big step in the right direction. I only have to adapt it a little bit.

I first talked to a white, pensioned farmer in the morning. He has lived with his family and staff on top of a mountain for years. And who has been completely self-supporting. His fantasies are very religious and also very childish. His heaven is on top of a cloud. A good conversation.

The conversation after that was with a coloured guy who was born at his farm. And always has moved together with the family. Now he works for the daughter's husband. We talk in his small house, where he has electricity since half a year. And so he immediately bought a TV, fridge and a gigantic stereo. His most beautiful answer was to the question "What will we find if we would dig a very deep hole in your room?" Sand. And if we dig deeper? Sand. And if we dig deeper? Water. And if we dig even deeper? The sea.

Then came the most promising conversation of the day. With an incredible racist. Jean, who brought us to him, was a bit afraid of him. He is very rich and has an enormous brickyard. Yes, he was a very big racist. But it was that bad and that clear that it didn't really got to me. To me it was more a bit the stupid façade of a man who is only afraid to get cancer. And well, he will get it.

The day's last conversation was with a ninety-year-old man. He really likes to talk, and a lot. He couldn't be stopped and dragged in everything. He was also very conservative and white but he had a philosophy and he had thought a lot. He made poems about his country and there was so much love that I, despite how tired I was and how many words he needed, I still was very impressed by him. He was a good observer with his ninety years.

Now I want a glass of wine. The fire is burning. The stars are uncountable. The cold desert air makes that I have to wear all my jumpers. Tonight we will eat fresh shot 'kudu'. And tomorrow we will listen further. One more day in Oudtshoorn and then we will drive to Cape Town on Friday morning.

30 July

What a day today. Here I am, thinking I will get a complete picture of the society and I forget my own sex. I have only interviewed one woman until now. After all those conservative pricks of yesterday, today only women and what women! This morning I started with a woman who lives with her 13 years younger husband somewhere far away in the mountains. They don't want to have contact with other people. She paints, he makes tools. It was an incredible place. I would have wanted to live like that. It looks a bit like our dream. And it was really nice to hear something else than politics and frustration. Then we talked to a striking woman at a supermarket. They have been on strike for a week now. Too low wages.



They only earn 53 guilders a week there. And everything is only a bit cheaper than in Holland. You could really do something to an owner like that. What a jerk.

The nicest interview was with the deputy mayor of Oudtshoorn. A real tigress. Coloured. A double handicap in this white, male bastion. What fire, what power, what an old-fashioned feeling too. In Holland there already has happened so much with regard to women's lib. Right now I can't give this a place in my head in relation to the story for the film. It doesn't give me enough visual images.

Do you manage to get through my stories a bit? Or is it too abstract. Is it only my imagination that has gone overboard? Today Cathy and I have said that it feels like a mission. It is so real, so under the skin, so deep in this incredible country. I know that it will change me again. And it changes my vision on people again. I want to do the same thing as I wanted at the Dogtroep, I want to understand them. I want to know what they mean. I want to know why they want the things they want.

31 July

Today we drove for around 450 km to get here. We will sleep in Cathy's brother's apartment. It's small, but near the sea. And filled with expensive art and designer stuff. And there seems to be a great shower. So, after a shower we eat sushi. Just testing!! This morning I had another special conversation, with Jean. I didn't want to write about it before, because I was using their e-mail. But there was too much tension in the house. Liz and I had already been out on the town one night and so I already heard most of it. But now Jean also told me what was the matter. Around ten years ago they got married and they wanted to buy a farm, but they didn't have enough money ( $\pm$  300,000 guilders). All those years they have worked and have put everything in that farm. And now two months ago the whole ostrich industry collapsed. They are in big problems. And in addition to that the rand has plummeted. Well, you'll get it, problems.

This is the story. The house is not theirs and every time that Jean's father (every day) or his mother (every week) or his brothers and sisters (twice a year) come into the house they walk around as if the house is theirs. They talk about everything as if it is theirs. It's driving Liz and Jean up the wall. And all this has two reasons.

1. His brothers and sisters want money. They want the ground and the house. Well, that I can understand. Just the usual, gore greediness. It's about, what will be left for me when you are dead. Examples enough around us, aren't there!

2. They have three daughters. So there is no son at the farm. 7 generations OLIVIERS on that piece of land seem to be in danger. Jean's father said to Liz after Marco's death, "when Jean dies, you must immediately leave. You haven't given birth to a son" (What consequences the death of those boys have...).

Well, you understand, for me as a story collector it's a beautiful story. But as their friend it is so sad.

Tomorrow we will drive to Velddrift, a fishing village with coloureds (Koi, Bosman, Dutch, combi).

1 August

Velddrift. A fishing village. We have left Cape Town early. 160 km northwards. Very hot. The whole world thinks it's spring and that's why the desert starts to blossom. There are flowers everywhere. It's incredible, thousands of colours orange, yellow, purple, blue, whatever. Flowers everywhere. Normally this happens only in September. Wonderful.

The first conversation is with a poor, white woman. Nellie. A fisherman's wife. She has already lived here for 50 years. Her husband still fishes. She gave birth to 7 children. 2 died in a car accident, together with 3 grand children. I talk to her in her small house. There is a strong smell of piss and sweat. She acts as a very sweet person who helps everything and everyone. But after 27 conversations it's beautiful to see how everybody knows how to sell themselves.

After that a conversation in the harbour with a very sexy, young female tourist (coloured). Her big breasts are standing out in her bra. The spring flowers in her hair. As a baby she was dumped with her single grandfather. He has raised her. She still lives there. Wants to travel. Wants men. But I think that she only will succeed in the last...

Then we walk to our next conversation. A woman living together with a very aggressive son. He killed her other son. But it is too dark now. So, we will do this tomorrow. But we still go on the river with a fisherman. Pelicans, flamingos, spoonbills, diving birds, Jesus Christ what a paradise.

2 August

Next morning. To the woman. After a lot of shouting we enter through the completely tied up fence. She must be there, because she never leaves. She walks in the garden. No, no, she says, I am too busy. I don't have time. Come back later.

We hang around a bit. Talk about the garden. And slowly she starts to tell us more and more. But she tells everything with a very strange sense of time. There are no years or references. Something is a long time ago or a very long time ago. She talks about her dead children. But she doesn't tell that one of them was murdered. Of course not, because the murderer is standing next to her. 15 years ago he killed his twin brother. She doesn't talk about her husband either. I don't know what he did to her.

Later on she shows us the house. It's so dirty, but the strange thing was that it didn't smell bad. Only a bit mouldy perhaps. On the hatrack were 2 coats and 2 hats. Covered with the dirt of many years. Everything was dark brown.

She sleeps together with her son in one bed in a room filled with porn photographs. And sometimes, she says, I'm possessed by the devil. When my son has drunk. My legs are starting to tremble. And I'm possessed by him, by the devil, for a couple of hours. If I understand it all correctly, her son rapes her then. Or they make love. She's 68 and he's 36. What an inbreeding. She never has been further away from home than a kilometre.

We go to the township. Here live a lot of koi or Bushman people. Small, light of colour. The original population.

Talking with Racheal, a woman of 35. 4 illegitimate children. She is covered with bumps and bruises, just as the woman of this morning. She is afraid. I wish that there wouldn't be all those people walking in and out the whole time. The conversation is constantly interrupted. When she is angry the blood runs out of her nose and her ears. I don't think she will live much longer. But, o, o. How she believes, just like the woman of this morning, in God, in Jesus. As if nothing is the matter. As if he decides everything. Apparently it softens their pain.

Then an interview with Elliot. A black boy from Transkei (former homeland). He's looking for a job. The Christian laws don't apply to him. His faith is based on his ancestors. They are always there. Always seeing and helping him (also heavy).

When I look at all the conversations, it almost seems to be a scientific, small research into a traumatic nation. That hides everything and tries to forget. But has to face the future, although it is heavily bruised. There's no faith in each other. And a lot of fear.

Today I am going to look for gangs of youths in Cape Town.

4 August

I am finally sitting at a normal table with a view on the Tafelberg. But while the sun starts to shine with you, we have a day of rain. The mountain is hidden behind the clouds. And it's cold.

Cape Town is very non-African, just as I always thought. But also very relaxed. A bit like the South of France and very luxurious. Not many blacks live there. Many coloured and I think they can live better together with the whites. They are all Christians. It's really a town to live off one's investments.

Yesterday I spoke to one of the few black people. A newsreader. A very special conversation. I want to learn more about how it works with those ancestors. (Generally, whites and coloureds are Christians, and blacks have traditional beliefs). His clan (=tribe) believes that when you die, you will become a tiny spider. So you must never kill such a spider, because otherwise you will murder an ancestor. Every clan has its own animal (plants, I don't know). So it can happen that one clan eats the ancestors of another clan. That would be amusing, anyway. For example, your clan believes that you will become a chicken after you die. Than in one village they would eat the ancestors of another village. (They eat a lot of chicken). The newsreader is comes from a rich family (I think) from Transkei (former homeland). He has just got married. The lobole (=dowry) was 10 cows. He tells me the following. The first cow is for the mother, for the shock of the departure and the deflowering of the daughter. The second cow will never be slaughtered. It stays with the family. When the daughter gets ill, she goes back and takes some hairs from the cow's tail and ties it around her waist or her wrist (depending on the size of the girl). She also goes back if she can't have children and she will drink the cow's milk so that she will become fertile. Helped by the older people of the tribe who will talk to the ancestors. So, this cow is there to look after the daughter's health. The third cow goes to the father. He can eat it or whatever he wants to do with it. The fourth is slaughtered straight away for the wedding reception. The fifth up to the tenth cow will join the cattle of the daughter's family. As object of value, as money, in meals. For any reason whatsoever. The number of cows depends on what kind of girl it is. Has she studied or not. Does she have a job or not. Is she beautiful or not. Et cetera. And of course it also depends on the wealth of both the families.

At this moment there are many wars going on between the gangs of youths in Cape Town. I would like to interview two of those boys, but it's difficult. Besides, it's very dangerous. It appears to be difficult to find them. I will meet someone who can maybe help me with this later on.

I also want to speak to a property developer, but he has just left for a party in Rome.

If everything goes well, we will even go to a madhouse. A madhouse as you can only see in the movies.

The ideas for the movie slowly become clear in my head. The idea on the future of South Africa is not easy. Because everyone you ask about that has a white frustrated story (afraid). And the blacks live day by day and don't even think about tomorrow (afraid).

It will be about loosing, because there are no winners here. There is no hope either, but fear. And in between that I want to show a complete absurd story in which all those weaknesses become clear.

Now, I want to concentrate on African traditions during the last two weeks of my stay here. Thursday I will speak, if possible, to a sangoma (=traditional doctor). And my other appointments are also oriented to the black side of the country.

4 August

A beautiful conversation today. With a young film-maker. He's from the gang scene. He smoked pills. Did a lot of burglaries. Had to appear before the judge. Because of luck or faith he didn't get in prison. Just not. And now (he's 25-years-old) he's the first black in a large white company.

Publicity. He makes documentaries and has got carte blanche and an office. 2 days ago. It is wonderful to see this. So happy. So strong. So naive and idealistic. It's a real treat to talk to him. A winner.

He got a girl pregnant 3 years ago. The father came after him with a gun, but missed him. He fled from the town to Durban ( $\pm 1000$  km further away) and picked up his uncle. A gang leader. The uncle went to talk with the father and together they came to an agreement. The boy got 5 minutes to decide. Or marry the girl, or never see the child again. He goes to the kitchen to think about it. And decides to get married. 2 days later he marries. It seems to be a good decision because he looks happy.

But he can't bring me to the gangs. It is too dangerous. There is a big drug war going on. The market is changing of product. And it's a hard battle.

5 August

Beautiful conversation. Early in the morning. At 9 o'clock we are in the office of Cullis, a 35-year-old black film producer. An idealist, a communist, a fighter, a bull. A beautiful person. But also very ordinary person. He is bursting with energy. He has just started a local television channel. Which broadcasts a few hours per night. The power is sometimes overwhelming. He wants to, will and must do this.

After that a 21-year-old female student. A bit plain. In her student flat. What a difference in experience and life. She wants to do a lot, but doesn't really do anything. It's a bit a dull conversation.

Lunch with the boy of yesterday. That was really special. One of my questions is, "do you have any regrets about your life?" And then he said that once he didn't want to/wasn't able to see his best, his dearest friend by all sorts of circumstances (his fault).

Anyhow, we have lunch together. It appears to be in the restaurant of that friend's parents. He hasn't been there for years. The last time he was here was when he broke in to smash everything up, I think. And then suddenly we are sitting there in a reality live TV show emotion. Two friends who see each other again after many years. Because of my question, or my question was only just a drop.

Achmat Davids. One of the most illustrious professors of the country. In linguistics. A coloured Muslim. I don't understand anything of this conversation. He mumbles inarticulately

about 300 years of history. And he really looks stupid. A bearskin hat with a tail. Around 60. And he has a serious heart condition. He constantly says that he is almost dead. And I think he also smells bad.

6 August

A great day today. I have an appointment at 10 with the newsreader of a few days ago. His sister-in-law has an agency that brings tourists to the townships. She knows a sangoma (traditional doctor) and I want to interview him. At the stroke of 10 we are at the office of Cathy's friend. There are a lot of faxes. Great.

It turns out that we go on such a tourist tour. We get a bit scared and we completely have to readjust. Luckily there's only one other tourist. An American.

The beginning of the trip. I can't get into it. I am not interested in dates and facts. My attention lies with people and feelings. We also have to enter some museum. Just like Cathy, I want to hear people. She goes outside and gets talking to some old tattooed gangster. He has a lot to tell, so we make an appointment with him for tomorrow, to interview him. The tour continues in the direction of the townships. Slowly I get into it. And suddenly we are in a very poor, black ghetto. I have often been in townships, but I rarely have seen something like this. Fires and people everywhere. Everything is broke and laundry is hanging out everywhere. Clotheslines. Clotheslines between the fires. The sun is shining. The air is sharp. All the contours are clear. Everywhere there are kind of two-storeyed apartments like in the Eastern bloc. Totally run-down. These are former hostels (for immigrants). Now families live here. In between there are self built shacks (slums made of corrugated iron). We are not allowed to film here, except when we are inside the house. We get out, a lot of children, sand and smoke. We go upstairs to the upper storey. 5 x 12 metre apartments. But it appears that there are 6 rooms with a communal shower and kitchen. I think 6 families?? No, they let out per bed. In a room of 2.5 metre by 4 metre there are 3 beds. In/on every bed lives one family. Chamber 4 e.g. has on one bed (and it is really a single bed, all built on a concrete block) a father, mother and 4 children. Other bed, father, mother, 3 children. Last bed, father, mother and 2 children. They didn't know each other before they came here. The only privacy exists of a too short curtain. The children sleep together on the concrete floor. The clothes are hanging above the bed. But there is not much. The only table in the house is in the communal room, entry or hall. People also sleep here at night. All in all there live around 50 people here. (Just as big as my living room, damn it). It is so shocking to rent a bed for 2.5 rand (f0.90) a month. The whole day I keep thinking of these images. We move on. We drive along the township's residential neighbourhood and arrive at another house. A 4 chamber shack. The whole house is papered with Lux soap paper; you know those bad prints. A room filled with white Lux soap, the bedroom with pink Lux soap paper. I am really happy with this tourist trip. We drive and drive and drive and drive. Shacks everywhere, there's no end to it. Sometimes brick houses, but mostly corroded and perforated corrugated iron.

First interview after a delicious lunch in the house of the newsreader's sister-in-law. I talk to Gladstone, a 21-year-old boy who does the administrative work in her office. What a conversation. A young Jehovah's Witness. A gorgeous boy. Very tidy and nice, but when he answers to the questions it turns out that he has a very fascistic fantasy. Just as that racist in Oudtshoorn. Everybody has to die and preferably slowly. And of course only the whites. It seems for a moment as if he doesn't notice that I am white. No, I am a tourist. I don't live here.

Then to the sangoma. I am nervous. They are mostly very strong healers and seers. She is 36, a beautiful woman. In sangoma costume, white clothes and beaded pieces everywhere. We go

to her 'surgery'. A shack filled with boards in all sorts of colours. She consecrates the room. Normally I try to do interviews with as few people as possible around, but now everyone is there. The sister-in-law, an assistant, the American tourist, we and of course the sangoma. She kneels down next to me. The others are sitting on chairs. Everyone is in one's socks. It's a beautiful conversation. With a translation from English into Xhosa. In the beginning we are both nervous, but very soon it feels as if we are just with the two of us. Even the American keeps his mouth shut. Outside there is the rainbow. Inside some herb is burning. We are laughing and crying together. A beautiful conversation.

Back in town I have another appointment with 2 girls who work at an alternative radio station. Young, black, lesbian and alternative. New, young South Africa. The nice thing of always asking the same question is that people become very clear. There are no questions that I have forgotten. Very quickly I can move on to the soul. If I want to I can continue to ask questions, but most of the time I don't. I don't want to know everything. I know there is a lot of misery and pain. Young people can be so wonderfully over-simplified. And extreme and right wing and horrible. Without even knowing or wanting it.

7 August

I would like to make a film in which an hour is a day, but also a year, and also a whole lifetime. At least that's what I thought just now. I don't know how to do this.

This morning first the people who live in the streets, actually the homeless. People who failed in life. Left their villages, searching for jobs in Cape Town. Didn't find anything. Covered with cuts and bruises. One lost his left eye. His wife had just died of TB and he now has a child of 3 and one of 0. These are sad stories. We go with them to the soup kitchen. Every day they sell here around 500 meals for 0.05 rand, that is 1.5 cents. A plate of food, with an apple and a cup of tea. We talk to the manager. A nice fellow. The room is almost completely filled with young black guys.

We pay the vagabonds for the talks. As we pay for everything the whole day. The boy who finds us a parking space, the boy who guards the car, beggars, et cetera. Today I really feel I am in Africa. I've almost run out of videotapes (21 hours of video already!) and I want to buy new tapes. But it is not that easy. Only at places where there are many tourists, and then you still have to be lucky. Funny, I didn't expect that. Finally I find some Hi8 tapes at an edit company on the second storey of an office building.

In the afternoon to the 'flats' (= the plains). To the townships of the coloureds, lower middle class. A sort of plastic residential neighbourhoods with very small villas, close to each other, in sugary colours. Talking to a 15-year-old boy. Still in school. Has been part of a gang for years, as a follower. But he doesn't want to have anything to do with crime anymore. He is sensible for his age.

The conversation after this one is cancelled. They are not at home. Suddenly I am so tired. We did 40 interviews in 2 weeks. And now, a moment of peace. I am overwhelmed by emotions. Tomorrow we'll have to drive the whole day, back to Oudtshoorn and then we have one day off. Doing nothing or clay pigeon shooting or whatever. And then back to Johannesburg. But I think you will only get this fax when I am already there.

9 August in Oudtshoorn

Yesterday evening there was a power failure. We've tried everything, but couldn't find anything. Finally an electrician came. To replace the earth leakage circuit breaker. His story

was a very usual story for this country. He moved to Cape Town from Johannesburg a half year ago. After he was assaulted for the third time. But the last time was very traumatic. He sits in his trailer (the same car as I have) and is taken hostage together with his 1.5-year-old son. His whole company is in his trailer. 3 attackers with guns and automatic firearms. He gives them everything, his mobile phone, money, watch, car keys, all his tools et cetera. They allow him to leave the car together with his son. But the car doesn't start. They get angry. They almost want to shoot his boy. But he says very `cool`, "I will start it for you". Child on his lap or under his arm. He starts the car. He gets out again. The attackers have left. Miraculously he stays alive.

Yesterday we drove the whole time. A beautiful route through the desert. The desert is still one of the most beautiful places on earth. Nothing much comes of a relaxed day off here. A drama took place. One of the sons at Jean's farm was murdered. Not on the farm, but in the township. He was completely cut into pieces with a large African knife/sword. Nothing is left of him. Now the housekeeper's son of this farm has been accused of murder. But the boy has witnesses that he was somewhere else. The boy is detention on remand. The murder happened the day after we had left and today is the funeral. A part of it is here on the farm and the committing to the earth, or how do you call it, is somewhere else. I want to attend the part on the farm. It is such a sad family. The father (one of Jean's workers who is now retired) is always drunk. That's why he lives as a punishment in the oldest shack on the premises. The last time they had a funeral here was a year ago. Liz told me that the minister made an incredible speech for the survivors. A great hell and blazes sermon. That they would all go to hell because they were drinking, et cetera. Nothing about the deceased. I asked if I may be present and it's allowed.

So the free day is a `view` day again. We are so overwhelmed by all the impressions. It's a good thing that I write everything down and record it on video or on tape. Everything is so extreme, so much. And all so close by.

If you sit down for a day or half an hour on a parking place in Cape Town, the large one near the station, you can see the whole South African world in a nutshell. The rich with their, the poor without them. There are hundreds of boys and men who guard the cars. And abandoned lunatics and completely handicapped nutcases are walking around among them. It's magnificent to see the reactions of the whites. Some of them are very afraid, others feel completely threatened. Others are very cool. These are complete plays. Once you have started to look at the world with a certain distance it's sometimes difficult not to do this. Yesterday evening during dinner, Jean with a companion from the war (Angola war). Talking about that time. I know that Jean still has nightmares about that period. Very regularly. But when they are together they tell big stories. I leave my detached position and ask them if they didn't think it was a horrible time and if they weren't afraid. But just as with every trauma, everything is suppressed. Understandably. Trying to forget everything as soon as possible. Wives tell much more about the pain of their husbands. They live it. Every day.

9 August, after the funeral

At 12 o'clock we are at parents' the little house. It would start at twelve o'clock, but there are still people arriving. And the coffin is not there yet either. Somewhere in the middle of the farm's land, between the fields with ostriches, lies the little house. The shack is by the way Marco's. Jean gave it to him last year. There is no electricity. 3 small rooms. Everything around it is sand and dust. The sand has been swept very precisely. And all the clothes from the house have been washed and are hanging out to dry behind the house (part of the funeral). One part is hanging over the barbed wire fence, behind which the pigs are walking around.

Slowly more and more people arrive. Everyone is dressed in his or her best clothes. A lot of bright colours and beautiful ugly combinations of everything. There is someone changing the tire of the car.

The family of the suspect arrives. There are many of them. You feel a tension, but it slowly fades away again. They are just standing together. A woman walks around with a green plastic water jug. People are drinking from it. We are the only whites here. And like everyone else we are dressed in our best clothes. I wear a long dress with a borrowed black jacket. It is hot. It is and remains the desert. Cold at night, and now blazing hot. I feel a bit dizzy. I think there are around 250 people.

Finally the hearse arrives. An old hearse from the fifties. People lift the coffin out of it. And bring it into the house, people are following, so do we. The coffin stands on the table in the tiny house. Open. And around it sits, where there are chairs, the family. Everyone walks along the coffin and puts his hand on the boy's head. He was 19 when he was murdered. You can only see the head. They have covered the rest of the injured body with paper (head and body are separated). The face looks very injured. But he has been dead for more than a week now. I touch him; he is cold and feels just like Wieger. Marco felt different, but that will have got something to do with me.

Outside again, in the sun. The help of the minister asks if we all come and stand around him. It's a very large semicircle. Again a circle with all kinds of layers. I don't see the family. They must be inside. And the last ring of the circle is ostriches. It's so absurd. Dozens of those terrible conceited birds are looking over the shoulders of the people.

The minister starts, reads parts from the bible, there is singing in between. The man is still busy changing his tire and makes a lot of noise, and then the sermon starts. Bheki was nothing compared to this, at our show in Amsterdam. The man paces back and forth like an idiot. He shrieks and screams. There are chickens with peepers walking around him. Children are playing with an empty bottle of coke.

Adam, Eve and the apple, that what it's about. The shivers run down my spine. Every time when I think he is going to have a fit. People are answering from the group around him. They confirm what he says. But very softly and in very dark voices. Very beautiful to hear. Suddenly I see the mother through the kitchen window. What is she doing in the kitchen in God's name? She drinks some drink from a jam jar. Must be alcohol. I suddenly see the father too. He potters about a bit behind the circle, he looks at his pigs and then he suddenly walks back to the house and goes inside. The minister has finished his long sermon.

There comes another man who starts thanking people. For the use of the phone, the car and suchlike. Then suddenly he becomes the Lord himself. And he starts screaming, horribly. "The devil has come for him. Has devoured him. He was a bad person. And if he had not been that bad he would still be alive. Yes, the devil has grabbed him. Beware, all of you because the devil can grab you too." The mother, standing behind the kitchen window in the background, is drinking again.

No, I don't understand much of it, but it is horrible to see. It is over. There are five groups of bearers. So everyone gets a change to carry him. The first group gets him out of the house, after 10 metres the coffin is handed over to the next group, et cetera.

The cortege with trailers chockfull of people goes to the cemetery. This is somewhere on the premises of another farmer, where the rest of the family lies.

I am overwhelmed by emotions. And I don't want to see anything else for a while. Tomorrow I will have another appointment again in Johannesburg (1250 km further down) at 11 o'clock, with Bheki, in his township.



Later on I will hear many absurd stories about today. The coffin was missing. That's why it came so late.

10 August

Every day is a new adventure here, but I must say I go really looking for it. I will probably return completely exhausted. I get carried away and consumed by it or something like that.

Next time I think I should not talk to more people. But I have to look for places and write the story. I also notice more and more limitations. It is about very human things. Only everything is more extreme here, but apart from that very normal. It could also be North America or a suburb in Paris. It is certain that it is about death. And about funerals, and about what's left of you after your death. At least, that's what I think now.

Today was hectic again. Get up at 5 o'clock to go to the airport. And around 12 we are at Clara's (I did two projects with her) in Timbisa, 1250 km further down. I want to interview her sister. She is a sangoma (traditional doctor).

Her father (72). He thanked me because his daughter came back from 'overseas'. He said that he doesn't trust whites and that he was very worried when she was with us in Amsterdam. But she came back. And now that white was even coming to visit her. You see, whites tell lies, he said. He experienced this in his life.

The sister. We are sitting in her bedroom/study of 3 by 4 m with a curtain as 'partition wall'. She talks first with her ancestors (later on she tells me that she does this to let them know that we come as friends, not as enemies). She is sitting on goatskin on the ground. She takes snuff. She has put her pots with herbs and animal extracts around her. She doesn't trust me at all. Every question confuses her. It is as if she has to pass an exam. I try to comfort her, but it doesn't go very well. A lot has happened here, a lot of damage has been done in the past. Actually, only after the interview when the camera is off, she begins to tell. She shows me a very strong snake poison, which smells bad, and if she rubs it on the floor it starts to smoke. She rubs it in her hair. It protects her against attackers. I rub it in my hair too. Outside, boys are singing.

We go to Bheki's house to make a 'braai'. Bheki is also very nervous when he sees me. He's already a bit tipsy. And still in love with Hannah Fox. His family and his house remind me of 'family flodder' (Dutch film about a sloppy family), but than in the dusty township. It's a small house with behind it another 3 rooms. From one of the rooms comes very loud music. We bought meat and 'mieli flour'. There's enough to eat for a lot of people. Mother is also already drunk, a very funny woman. Bheki is the youngest of the family. Father was shot dead in front of the door once in the eighties. Many of the 10 children are still living here. With their wives and children. Everything is full with people. A fire is made. We have to be quick because we have to be back in town before dark. It is still very dangerous after sunset. But it goes as it goes. And the meat can only be put on the fire when it is already getting dark. And of course as most important guest you can't leave before dinner. So I trust on the snake poison in my hair.

The party is wild. The music is so loud that you can't hear a word of what's being said. 8 women are dancing in the tiny kitchen while they are cooking. Paolo follows the beautiful, young girls that are dancing in large numbers with his camera, almost as if he is in love with them. I watch and watch and try to memorise everything I see. Bheki has dogs. And he loves

them!!! Really. Everyone gets more and more drunk, but for some reason I don't get any beer. I don't mind. Bheki still sees me as his boss and he introduces me to everyone like that. And so I get cups of milk tea.

There are more people than we had expected. So, I hope there is enough food. Suddenly Bheki comes looking for me, a bit in a panic, and he takes me to his room where his mother is. She asks "how big should the table be". They are worried about having to find a table for me. But there is no table in the house. I tell them that I don't need a table. Relief on all sides. We have to go inside. Dinner is ready. There are standing three plates for us in front of the TV. We wash our hands in a bowl, and dry our hands on a very dirty cloth. And eat, like everyone else, with our hands.

Halfway through the meal I am having a look to see if everybody has something to eat. There are people sitting everywhere. At least 35. People are eating in all rooms. You can do a lot of shopping with 30 guilders in a township.

After dinner we have to leave. It is unsafe and dangerous. Cathy and I are very tense. Paolo doesn't really realise it, I think. The most dangerous part is the road between the township and Johannesburg, it's around 15 km with a lot of traffic lights. The trick is never to stop. And when you stop, you have to make sure there's enough space before you so you can get away. We are all very quiet. And drive very fast. And you are reading this, so everything went well. Thanks to the snake poison!!

11 August

This will be a day with Gift and Karabo (also from the 2 room 2 project). We have an appointment in the park where Saskia and Francois were robbed (in '94). And there are the boys with Karabo's new car. A big, very big old American. So proud. It's wonderful to see this. Karabo bursts into tears because of Marco and Wieger.

We drive to Daveyton, their township or 'location' as they also call it. I sit with them in the big American. I feel very safe in between them. We talk about the boys. On our way we have to deliver a package somewhere. The guards at the gate look in the car and see a white woman sitting in between two black men, crying. I notice the man's hesitation. He doesn't know what to do. Very funny. But since I don't call for help, he doesn't do anything.

We are near Davetyon and Gift is so proud. It's his town. His home town. He wants to show us everything. When we drive here I feel as if I'm in another world. There are only very old big American cars driving here. It is a middle class black township. With trees. It's far away from Johannesburg. There is a lot less crime than in the other hectic and violent places. There is no public transport as in the other townships, and so all those old cars are taxis.

We go to their band's practice room in an old factory that should become a cultural centre. When we arrive there, it appears that the whole band is there to play for us. I am stupefied, because tomorrow we will go to their concert. And there they are, playing with their 15 men and 1 woman brass band. A funky/jazzy big band. It is clear that Gift is the source of inspiration behind all this. There is no leader. Everyone is responsible for his part. They all share 1 mobile phone. Cathy bursts out into tears if they begin to play. All the work she has put into this has fallen into its place. She is so proud of them. And I also feel, just as yesterday with Clara and Bheki, that they also have come back stronger and better from the Amsterdam project. What a power.

Besides the band they also want to start an educational project. They have had a bad music education themselves or none whatsoever and they want to give others this possibility.

We visit Gift's house, his father, mother, sister, girlfriend and child, saw his baby, a jolly little dumpling. He sleeps together with his girlfriend in the garage. Gift's mother looks after their baby when they are not there. It's a big house. In a quiet street. But no pavement or trees. It

remains a place of exile. The ghetto. I interview Gift (as only friend) and it's a beautiful conversation. Very wise, very extreme in images and very original.

We pass by the cemetery. We stop for a while at Karabo's father's grave. Sand, dry, some small hills. Dust. Cinematographic

We constantly drive around by car and Karabo looks like a totally relaxed Mexican taxi driver.

At night, back in Johannesburg.

We go to an opening night. From one of the most brilliant writers and directors here of the moment. Aubrey Sekhabi. The audience is incredibly mixed. It is mainly the whole theatre scene. I am dead-beat. It's a very traditional play. I think it's a bit boring, but the audience is very enthusiastic.

"A rich black man with his friends. A white (thief) enters. Gets caught. Man gets totally beaten up. Everything gets out of hand. There's a gun, he shoots and kills the only good black".

Applause, the public is very enthusiastic. Later we are having dinner with a rapper, two young writers and a director. And again I am starting to understand more. For me, but also for you, violence is a concept. We don't really feel it. And when I see a play with a lot of violence, it doesn't get to me. But for them, who are surrounded by violence the whole day, it's reality. The play is politically totally not correct. And that's what makes everyone go overboard for it. When I would make a film with violence it would be fake. In fact that's how I felt about Boris' film. But if we would make a play about sadness, like Hotazel, it is real and it touches something profound. I think you have to stay close to something and not try to imitate something.

We drive back. All doors are locked. The streets are empty. Cathy drives fast, through all the red lights. She's afraid, I am not. It's a crazy world. A crazy world.

13 August

Yesterday we finally took a day off. The three of us were really exhausted. Paolo still wanted to buy some presents before he will fly back tomorrow evening. I will miss my cameraman. He can really be present without a sound during all those conversations.

Today three interviews. One with a journalist and rapper, very well known. This wasn't a real nice interview, because it was too professional. He does so many interviews. It wasn't pure enough. Too smooth. Then his sister comes home from school. She tells that someone just was murdered in her classroom. One girl kills another girl with a knife, because she has stolen her boyfriend or something like that. Violence is everywhere and lives almost seem worthless.

Then to Pretoria for an interview with a woman who is in charge of a very large company. She employs ±1000 women. A lot of homework. They make those South African bead trifles. But in very large consignments. Such as 14,000 necklaces for some conference. She is a beautiful person. Very passionate. She searches the villages for women who still have a thorough command of the old craft. She is completely dressed in traditional clothing with beautiful hairs in strange patterns. She is married to a white person. This makes her even more extreme for her acquaintances.

The highlight of the day is the concert of Gift and Karabo. First I interview one of the members of the band. The only woman. The rest chooses her? She is just as driven as Gift and the others.

After the most famous female jazz singer of South Africa it's the boys' turn. There is a jazz festival of four days in a big theatre. They are doing one of the performances.... The announcement.... and there they are.... all dressed smartly.... they look marvellous ... almost as such an American big band from the 50-60. They play magnificently. The public goes wild. Also because it's still very pure. Not so slick professional. A lot of things go wrong, but it is radiant.

After that the usual tense trip home. It's late. The streets are empty. As soon as we arrive in Johannesburg, Cathy starts driving like an idiot. This tension can't be explained. It is as if you are being chased the whole time by some assaulter, who might be or might not be there. And you are running, running, running very fast.

Tomorrow we will go back to the township. The whole day. To interview Bheki's mother, a doctor (if this is possible) and a dancer. Apart from that, we are trying to arrange an interview with someone who belongs to the group that makes the new constitution. But this isn't working out yet.

I only have 5 days left. It's not enough by far. There is so much. And it is such a great country. I don't feel like going home. Except if the sun is shining there too.

14 August

What a day again. The whole day to Timbisa, the township where Bheki and Clara live. I want to interview Bheki's mother. She is a beautiful woman. Old, no teeth and a strange locomotion. We are sitting in her bedroom. That is completely filled with wardrobes and all sorts of chains hanging on the wall. She sits on her bed, surrounded by broken mirrors. It is a real strange place. For me this is one of the most beautiful interviews I've had until now. This woman really lives up to my imagination. She is so extreme. She is lying for hours on end. She is screaming and laughing. When she could be born again, she wants to become a nun. No men and no children. She has given birth to 10. Two of them are dead now. Her husband was shot before her eyes years ago. But she doesn't have any bad memories!!!! That toothless laugh is beautiful. But where can you find an actress without teeth. She has been a sangoma (traditional doctor) her whole life, but Bheki does not like us to know this. I don't know why. The rest of the family gets drunk in the background. I mean his sister and a cousin. It is 11 o'clock. It is hot and dusty. Bheki is sober.

Looking for the doctor. We drive to the clinic. But as we arrive there it appears that no one who works there is allowed to talk to us. They don't trust it. A while ago there has been a committee to inspect everything. And some things were wrong with the money. And now they are afraid that this is another inspection. It doesn't matter what I say or try. I am not allowed to speak to a doctor. I really want this because a lot of people have told me that their ideal profession is 'doctor'. So I do want to meet a doctor in a problematic township. Outside I meet Pitso (participant project Johannesburg 1994). He has become very old. I hardly recognise him.

Later on Bheki shows where Pitso lives, in a shack (a dwelling, a hut he built himself) on the outskirts of the slums. He lives there on his own, which is very dangerous. Also for him. You

can only live in such an area if your neighbours protect you. He is strange. He has no protection!!!

We eat the township hamburger. A quarter white bread filled with flabby chips and a coloured, pink sausage and a coke. Very unsavoury.

A gap in our planning, no interview with a doctor, it gives me the opportunity to go to another cemetery. I ask Bheki if I may see his father's grave. He blushes. He wants to, but he doesn't no if he can find it. We drive through Timbisa, past incredibly shacks. Red of the dust. As if it hasn't rained in a hundred years. We drive on bumpy sandroads. There are people everywhere. To the cemetery. The grass is of a man's height. And in between you can see gravestones, but most of the graves are sandhills with some memorials on it. We search, speak with a man who tells us that we have to pay attention because there are many robberies here (because of the high grass). But 4 people together they won't rob. We find the grave. It's a shrivelled heap where no one has been in years.

There appears to be another cemetery. The new one. Half white, half black. With a lot of differences. I want to see that. We drive there. Darn it, its 'first-rate' apartheid.

1. The black part consists of a hill covered with small sandhills. Each sandhill is a grave. There are some mugs, coke bottles or small vases on the graves. According to the preferences of the deceased.

2. The white part has tidy gravestones with a lot of flowers and green grass.

The black and white graves don't look out on each other; they are both on another part of the hill. Just next to the white graves is a small row of rich black graves. They want to belong to the elite. But no flowers there!

Back for the next 2 interviews with children. A girl of 16 and one of 11. These are very touching conversations. Especially with the 11-year-old girl. She is very afraid of violence. Afraid of guns and shooting. But she does see this all the time. She sits rocking on her chair the whole time while we are talking. Very touching.

Later at Bheki's. His gangster cousin is walking around. Here it's the dream of a township boy to become gangsters; such as Dutch boys want to become pilots. Money, recognition, women, living on a fast lane, dead soon. Being a gangster is the ultimate happiness. We talk about getting children. He has four. Two of them he loves a lot and the other two he even doesn't call his children anymore. He wants to have 10. I ask him, why 10? A few always die, or go to jail. And if you have daughters, it is useful for the lobola (dowry). They are your pension scheme. All the conversations I have with him are now so understandable for me. Things which I didn't understand at all when I was in Amsterdam, but now I do. It's so different, so close, so clear. Money, poverty, life and death. We also call in at an uncle of Bheki to pick up something (because we are by car).

The uncle is doing the laundry. I am shocked. In this macho world. When he is inside, Bheki points to a car that is standing in his garden, totally in pieces that are nicely piled up. It turns out that his uncle worked in a morgue. He once found car keys in the pocket of a corpse. He stole the car, but got too afraid to drive in it. This car has been in his garden for years now. Kicked (cut) completely into small pieces, covered under a piece of plastic. You can hear loud music in the house. Bheki's family is a 'family flodder' in every way.

I only have four days left. And there are still so many things I want to do. I think I have to slow down a little. Our pace is so high here. Energy is vibration. Paolo got on the plane totally exhausted.

Now, I only still want to interview some big shot. The rest isn't possible anymore, anyway.

15 August

A day of thought and politics. Because even if I have seen all kinds of things. And have plunged into all kinds of feelings. And have experienced a lot of love and sorrow (in words). You must never forget that South Africa is nothing but politics.

A new phenomenon has started. White racism. I mean blacks that openly speak racist about whites. Something that has always been hidden. For many people this feels as liberation, for blacks as well as whites.

There are so many things going on. All conversations are about politics, although I haven't written about it at all. In fact, I only have talked today about politics. All these questions come together on this day. Together with Cathy's friends, here, in this house.

I feel like an outsider. I cannot share their fears. The fear of being white. The fear of being black. The fear of being rich. I don't know these fears.

It's just like in the Eastern bloc. All the young opponents of apartheid are now leading figures. And they are mainly (just like in Eastern Europe) artists. They are active in every area. It's a young country. So many things have to be built up here again.

I look and look, and I listen. I can't share with them, because I only steal what I see. I will use their extreme situation to tell my story.

Everybody has gone out now. To a big dancing party. It's nice and quiet in the house. I think about my next steps.

A few more interviews.

1. With one of the leading figures in town. A sort of a deputy mayor of Johannesburg (4 hours before I will fly back on Tuesday).

2. With a black racist. Someone who hates whites (if this is possible at least).

3. One with an actor, who seems also to be a very extreme type.

And early tomorrow morning to the church. To such a hysterical Christian African service, with a lot of rituals. I hope we dare to go inside, because whites don't go there. If it feels good, we will go.

16 August

What time do the services start here on Sunday? We only set off at 12 o'clock. It's not far. Next to the large cemetery there is a 'wildlife area', a few hills, rocks, bushes and dry grass. Here church is a combination of Christian and African rituals. Small concrete circles with a diameter of 5 metres lie scattered over the hills. We find many of these. Some are already taken. People in a kind of uniform are approaching over the hills. Green, blue, white combinations. Some of them are carrying drums. A fire is made. The men are separated from the women. Left and right. We are clearly not welcome. But it's a public place. Everyone can walk here. Services start in many of the circles. There is singing, dancing, preaching and prayers.

Last night's dancing party was quite heavy. Finally, Cathy didn't go there either, just like me. Only Ouida and Sibosiwo went there with another friend. There were 10,000 people at the party and Ouida was the only white. It was a very rough party. When everything seemed to get out of hand, tear gas was used to keep the situation under control. The sound was so bad; they could only hear the bass. It was rough. What a city.

Today we drive on, looking for more church meetings. But on our way we are faced with something incredible. We are driving through the centre. Of course there are no whites. Suddenly we hear drums. Cathy tells: we must see this, it's a drum band with majorettes, in the African way. We must drive around a block and then we see a sort of children's army. Children of 3 to 5/6 years I guess. In ANC uniforms, carrying wooden rifles. They march in line. The drums give the rhythm. It's so shocking to see this, and also so threatening and at the same time also so funny and idiot. Some older ones walk with them and push them back in line when they wander off. They salute constantly. We don't know what it means or what it is. But it feels absolutely very wrong.

We keep on driving, looking for an outside church. We find one in the street next to the silos where we played in '94. It is quiet in the street. There is a service in an open space amongst some buildings. On cardboard boxes. Candles, small fires and a preaching man. Everyone is in costume. We park a bit further down. We watch and listen to the singing and the preaching.

17 August

I am at the airport. On my way to Holland.

After an interview with the alderman for housing I suddenly realise that the hostel in Alex, the township we visited the first few days, isn't really that bad. Alex appears to be 3 times fuller than possible. Instead of 250,000 people, there live 700,000 people. This is a shocking figure.

It was another day of so many visible consequences of violence.

We drove past the neighbourhood's Spar (shop), a stone's throw away from our accommodation. Yesterday a security guard was shot there. Outside there are some flowers. This morning we drove to the petrol station and just as we had driven away there was a bank robbery just behind us.

We get excited. Want to see it. Or, maybe better not. And we drive off. On our way to our interview we see some people fighting on the street, and one man pulling a gun. We still are enjoying us. It's just too much. We leave the windows open so the bullets at least won't break the car windows. Just in case. No, it's really extreme here. They also complain about violence and crime in the rest of Africa. But it's nothing compared to Johannesburg.

The interview with the alderman is a beautiful final conversation. I spoke to 52 people. Most of these interviews are registered on video, a part on tape and a few in writing. The alderman is a 33-year-old black man. Wise, mature and driven. A considerable difference from the many failures we spoke with.

After the interview I want to look for a homeless man who lives in a hole he dug for himself in a park near Yeoville (part of Johannesburg). When we get out Cathy says, "Well Trees, nothing has happened to us until now, but if we want to, this is the place to be". I hide my credit card in my knickers in case I will be mugged. But in one way or another I know nothing will happen to me. I just feel it.

The place is a deserted, totally filthy park on a hill (a koppi). And in between there are those places for praying. We search the whole place. But we can't find the man.

We drive around a bit. We see totally neglected, old residential neighbourhoods, full of junkies.

The old house, where we lived in '94. The environment is dangerous to life. Or not. I don't know. I constantly imagine (in my mind) that I am walking under a stopper. A superstition

against robberies. Cathy said, “let’s make it into a bullet-proof stopper”. And this is the way I lived here.

My flight is announced. I have to go on board. A final night in a lousy chair and then back in Amsterdam.