

Moving tribute to revered uncle, struggle hero and murder victim

**TIMOL
QUEST FOR JUSTICE**

Imtiaz Cajee
STE Publishers
REVIEW: GERALD SHAW

AHMED TIMOL died in the hands of the security police in October, 1971, the 22nd activist to die in detention during the apartheid era.

An unconvincing inquest verdict held that he had committed suicide, jumping to his death from the 10th floor of John Vorster Square.

The author of this book, who writes a moving tribute to a revered uncle, believes that Timol died under

torture and was then thrown out of the 10th floor window.

In his preface, President Thabo Mbeki endorses Imtiaz Cajee's characterisation of Timol as "one of the most celebrated official murder victims of apartheid South Africa".

Timol's death at the age of 29 was not the first of its kind under NP rule between 1964 and 1990. There were usually thought to be three possible explanations in such cases: that the victim was murdered by being thrown out of a high window, that the victim was driven to jump by intolerable torture, or the victim just committed suicide.

Cajee has added a fourth category,

arguing that Timol was already dead when he was thrown out of the window.

As none of the security policemen involved in Timol's interrogation applied for amnesty, or were required to appear before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, no further light has been thrown on Timol's death from that quarter.

Timol, a devout Muslim who was also a convinced communist, is honoured as a hero of the freedom struggle. At the time of his arrest he was setting up underground structures of the ANC and the SACP to write and distribute anti-apartheid pamphlets and propaganda.

Cajee has conducted his own investigation and collected a body of circumstantial evidence to support his conclusion, which is underpinned by the testimony of a number of others who were detained at the same time and have given detailed accounts of their own torture.

The undertaker who fetched Timol's body from the police mortuary told Cajee that fingernails were missing and there were bruises and burn marks on his body. Pathologists told the inquest that the bruises had been caused some time before death.

There are horrifying passages in this book in which detainees describe in graphic terms the classic KGB and

Gestapo-style methods employed by the security police.

Also in 1971, the Imam Haron of Claremont died in mysterious circumstances while in detention.

As the Cape Times argued in a series of angry leading articles at the time, the 24 bruises on his body reported by a pathologist could hardly have been caused by falling down stairs, as the security police had claimed.

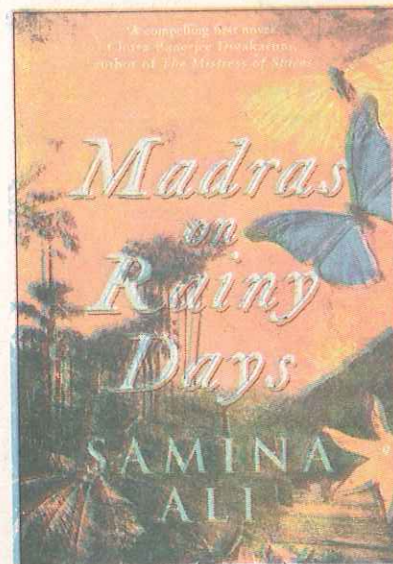
After Haron and Timol, another 50 anti-apartheid activists were to die in detention before 1990, including Steve Biko, whose death caused an international outcry.

Timol, a gifted and much-loved

teacher, was a member of a close-knit community of descendants of immigrants from Kholvad, a village in Gujarat, India. The founders of the community arrived in the Transvaal in 1883 and established a tradition of self-help and community service.

This small community produced some notable political leaders, including Dr Yusuf Dadoo and, in the younger generation, the Pahad brothers, Essop and Aziz. Had Timol lived, he might well have been one of their number.

While too detailed and hagiographical to be effortlessly readable, this book is an important document in social history.



Vital look at US-Indian cultural divide

MADRAS ON RAINY DAYS

Samina Ali
Piatkus
REVIEW: FIONA MOOLLA

MADRAS on Rainy Days relates the complexities of the arranged marriage of heroine Layla whose life and identity is divided between the US to where her parents, for political and economic reasons, have relocated and the India which they still regard as their cultural and religious home.

Wordiness dilutes language plot

THE ROCK ALPHABET

HENRIETTA ROSE-INNES
KWELA BOOKS
REVIEW: GUY WILLOUGHBY

SECOND novels in South Africa, with its weeny, insecure literary turf, are alarming entities for writers, especially when their first has been received with enthusiasm; the pressure of expectation is huge. (Olive Schreiner never recovered from the hosannas that greeted *The Story of an African Farm*, William Plomer took years to dare another book after *Turbott Wolf*.)

Thus, all power to Henrietta Rose-Innes who, like the local authors referred to above, published an acclaimed first novel in her mid-twenties. A reviewer of *Shark's Egg* (2000) concluded ominously: "One hopes Rose-Innes is hard at work on her next." Fortunately, the writer was not put off by her admirers and has rendered a second accomplished fiction within a most respectable length of time.

Shark's Egg pursued, through artfully fishy metaphors, a young girl's coming-of-age, coming-to-consciousness - what has been called, since Goethe invented the genre, a *bildungsroman*.

Wistful, gentle, and dreamy, it indeed resembled a day spent meandering around the salt-blown, time-forgotten beaches of Muizenberg,

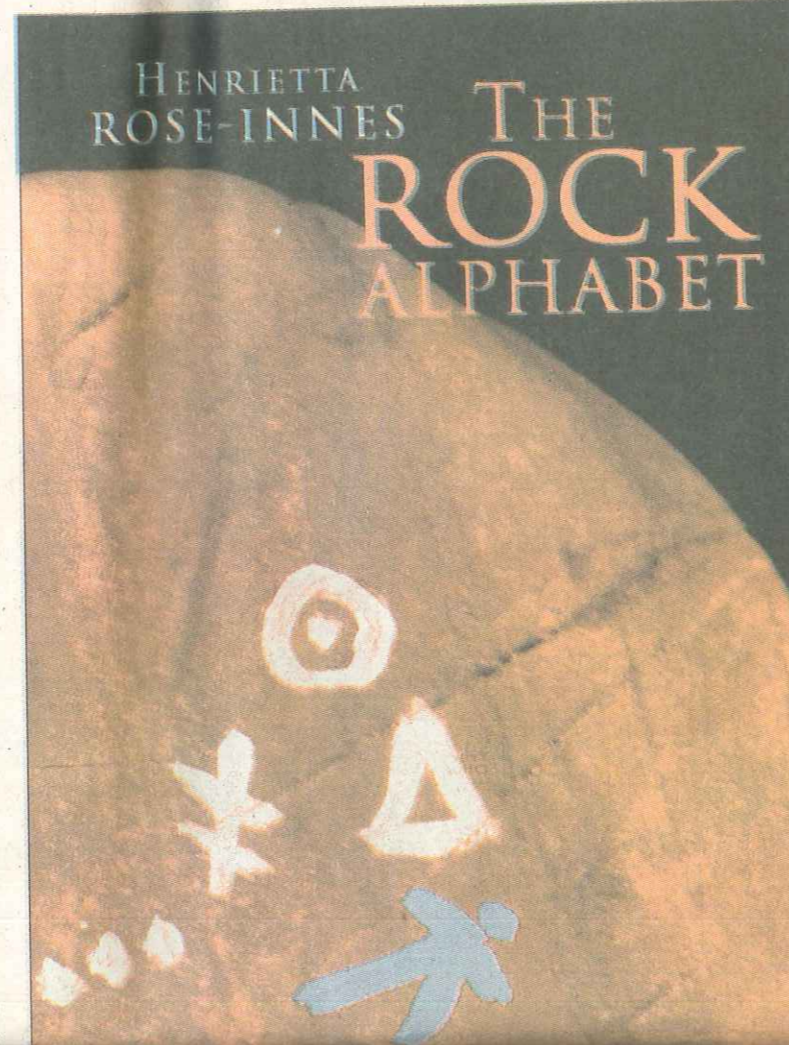


AUTHOR: Henrietta Rose-Innes

brought up in the wild perhaps by wolves or, in the local version, such as Herman Charles Bosman's, by baboons. Two boys are discovered in a cave by an amateur archaeologist, both apparently without language.

As its title suggests, *The Rock Alphabet* traces the secret code whereby these two communicate, drawing simultaneously on the current buzz of speculation around the languages of the Khoisan and the meaning too of their curious rock art.

Rose-Innes structures the book as a mystery, moving fragmentarily between the past and the present, not always with felicity. The mystery to be unpacked - what really happened to these boys in the mountains, why did one thereafter take to society, the other not? - should sustain the even-paced narrative, told as the



crack, and shouldered past all those crowded (metaphoric) objects, we've lost track of where we are. And when the next paragraph begins "A tear crept from the corner of her left eye down her temple on to the pillow; but just one", one may cry out with DH Lawrence - exasperated beyond endurance by James Joyce's pernickety prose - "self-consciousness is picked into such fine bits, till you feel you are sewed inside a wool mattress that is being slowly shaken up, and you are turning to wool along with the wooliness".

Besides, Rose-Innes's characters struggle to grip the reader amidst these effusions. Like *Shark's Egg*, there's a fraught, ambiguous partnership between two young women; the burgeoning connection between Ivy and the silent young man Jean, one of the two "lost boys", apparently propels the action.

Rose-Innes's women, especially the quaintly dotty Mattie Canasta, Ivy's great-aunt, are her most engaged and engaging characters. Men are more shadowy, vaguely menacing figures on the periphery; even the painstakingly drawn Jean seldom resolves into a living, breathing presence.

What is lacking, I think, is the breath of Eros, just a quickening whiff of desire among these people.

There may be a covert hierarchy of gendering in Rose-Innes's fiction, which I have not space to explore here.



Top-drawer underworld - a brief history

PANTIES: A BRIEF HISTORY

Sarah Tomczak and Rachel Pask
Penguin Books
REVIEW: DENNIS CAVERNELIS

IF IT wasn't hard enough to resist a glossy little hardback titled *Panties*, the invitation on the dust jacket (a translucent number with a rather generous pair on it, easily removed to reveal a racy little thong) made it irresistible: "Have a rummage through the panty drawer of history from noble beginnings to catwalk domination ... reminiscent over the sexiest slips on celluloid."

Our story begins in Egypt, circa 3000BC, when a Sumerian girl knotted