# THEORIA



A JOURNAL OF STUDIES

in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences

**Vol. XLVII**

**October 1976**

47

**R1,00**

# THEORIA

## CONTENTS




Published twice yearly by
UNIVERSITY OF NATAL PRESS
PIETERMARITZBURG

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Authors should send contributions to:

The Editors,
*Theoria,*
P.O. Box 375,
Pietermaritzburg 3200,
South Africa.

Articles intended for the May issue should reach the editors not later than 15th March and articles for the October issue not later than 15th August.

Authors are asked to send typescripts which are double-spaced. Single inverted commas should be used for quotations, and double inverted commas only for a quotation within a quotation. When the title of a book is given it should be underlined. Notes should be consolidated at the end of the articles, not inserted as footnotes. An abstract not more than 200 words in length should accompany an article. A stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupons must be enclosed.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

These should be sent to:

The Secretary,
University of Natal Press,
P.O. Box 375,
Pietermaritzburg 3200,
South Africa.

The annual subscription for *Theoria* is R2,50 and the subscription for three years is R6,00, postage included.

Editors: ELIZABETH H. PATERSON, ROBERT H. WYLLIE.

We go to press rather late and hope that our readers and contributors will accept our apologies for this.

In recompense we feel that this issue offers a more than usually wide variety of articles in the true tradition of *Theoria* which usually manages to achieve a blend of competent research and thoughtful assessment.

We are sure that the discussions presented here make important contributions to understanding some of the present tensions and tendencies in our society.

THE EDITORS

# THE 'DELICATE MURDER' OF THE GRAND DUKE SERGEI OF RUSSIA (1905)

*by* I. C. WAKERLEY

In the course of research work concerning *Les Justes,* a play by Albert Camus (1949), I had approached colleagues, specialists in history, to try and elucidate the purely historical facts which had inspired the dramatist. To my surprise, it appeared that the incident of the Grand Duke Sergei's assassination in 1905 evoked only uncertain reactions, because there occurred at that very time of Russia's turbulent history a plethora of such incidents which made up the complex fabric of the Russian Revolution, so that only the more obvious, more important outlines emerge at the expense of smaller details. The myriads of revolutionary personalities, more or less ephemeral, the many and often apparently disconnected assassinations which followed one another in that troubled period which eventually ended with the great tide of 1917, become blurred and recede into nothingness. On that score, it is interesting to note that one of the foremost historians of the Russian workers' movement, Solomon M. Schwartz, (bolshevik agitator in 1905, but then living in Switzerland, and who returned to St Petersburg only in September 1915), does not even mention the assassination of the Grand Duke Sergei in his book, *The Russian Revolution of 1905*;[1] probably he considered that the activities of amateur anarchists were of little significance, even that they were harmful to the Cause, by comparison with those of the communists who were organized in a more or less homogeneous party, under Lenin.

My curiosity was therefore all the more aroused, and, while not being a history specialist, I determined to try and resuscitate the event from oblivion, with as many authentic documents as were available (very few).

Among the many exegeses (more or less outdated nowadays) which are put forward by Professor Nicolai Berdiaev in his study of the Russian Revolution, *Un Nouveau Moyen Age,* written between 1919 and 1923, therefore practically contemporary with the events,[2] I was struck by a sentence which could explain the particular attitude and fate of the terrorists of 1905: 'In a revolution, those very people who have initiated it, or who had dreamed of it, usually perish. Such is the law of the Revolution'.[3] From the dream of liberation of the people to murder and redeeming death, such is the evolution of Ivan Kaliayev, the assassin of the Grand Duke Sergei.

The political movement to which Kaliayev belonged was that of the Socialist Revolutionaries who, towards 1901, had renewed the ideological trend which they had inherited from the defunct Populists of 1870. The movement had been originally peasant-orientated although, even early on, one of its promoters who eventually became the first President of the revolutionary Duma, wrote: 'Russian liberalism was not bourgeois, but intellectual'.[4] The founder and chief instigator of the Socialist Revolutionaries was a certain Victor Chernov, himself an intellectual, who described the rural masses whom he was supposed to awaken to political consciousness as 'a mere herd'. His creed, such as it is defined in Kravtchinski's pamphlet *Mort pour Mort* (A death for a death) 1878, was the use and exploitation of terror at the initial stage of the class struggle. To that end, the programme of political assassinations was entrusted to a 'combat group', or specially trained action group, which enjoyed a large measure of autonomy in the execution of projects which had been decided upon at the level of the Central Committee. The combat group was made up solely of volunteers who insisted on remaining anonymous and were, more often than not, unknown to the party leaders and mere cogs in the terror machine. (Hence the uncertainty which remains about them to this day.) The leaders merely listed the victims to be liquidated, the combat group then decided all the details, who was to carry out the deed, and by what means.

In that dim underworld of conspirators was to be found an odd gamut of 'volunteers', some frankly corrupt mercenaries and 'arrivistes' like Evno Azev, double agent, or Lvovitch Bourtzev who cautiously operated from Paris 'whence he directed calmly the bloody exploits of his comrades in Russia, and where he enjoyed the protection of Jean Jaurès', says the French diplomat, Maurice Paléologue, in his book of memories of the Russian court.[5] Others, on the other hand, were motivated entirely by a fanatical idealism, such as Gregori Guernouchy, Maria Spiridonova Kolougaia, Vera Figner,[6] Dora Brilliant, Tatiana Leontiev,[7] and, of course, Kaliayev, the hero of *Les Justes*. The most lucid guide we possess concerning the attitude of mind of this second type of Socialist Revolutionary is the short text, written by Kaliayev a few days before his execution, and which appeared in the Journal of the Socialist Revolutionaries, *Byloïe* (this was found later in Camus' papers; it had been translated for him, as were other documents in Russia, by M. Lazarevitch): 'Life has given me strong convictions and a rebellious disposition: the tears and the blood of Russia humiliated by her own government have

filled my heart with the resolution to protest in the name of the people against the unprecedented shame inflicted on its name. The autocrats themselves have shown the way one should protest. I have given my life to fulfil my duty towards freedom and the happiness of the Russian people'.[8]

But to return to the events which interest us at the moment, or rather slightly further back, to November 1904, an important re-grouping of all the revolutionaries or scattered opponents of the Czarist régime had been attempted and under the cover of a banquet a meeting had — temporarily — united them under the leadership of Father Georgei Gapone. This priest for a short period (he was himself murdered by co-terrorists in Finland in 1906), was considered as a lay prophet by the Revolutionaries and as a moderate by the Government, because he preached non-violence. It was he who was allowed to form the union of factory workers in St Petersburg, it was he who led, on the 9th of January 1905, the march of some 140 000 peaceful workers who were going to present a petition to their 'Little Father' the Czar, the workers whose massacre by the armed forces is commemorated under the name of 'Bloody Sunday'. The duplicity of the affair and of this repression were directly imputable to the reactionary Governor-General of Moscow, one of the Czar's uncles, one of his *éminences grises,* the Grand Duke Sergei. Czar Nicolas himself, horrified by the massacre about which he knew nothing, which he certainly had not ordered, and which he sincerely and openly deplored, called Sergei 'the people's executioner'. Sergei was a despotic man, harsh even towards his gentle wife, Elizabeth, Princess of Hesse, sister to Czarina Alexandra; he prided himself on being hated by the revolutionaries, thus he was immediately marked as the victim of the next attack by the Socialist Revolutionaries. He was the perfect target, since he was both an eminent representative of governmental authority and a personality well-known to the masses who, though politically ignorant, at least knew all the members of the imperial family. Thus the blow would be doubly symbolic.

From the moment the decision to kill Sergei was taken by the Central Committee, all that remained was for the combat group to nominate the assassin, decide upon the weapon and name the day. The Socialist Revolutionaries had a well-known penchant for bomb assassinations, so much so that a current joke among the members of the Russian Duma consisted in greeting one another with: 'Have you got a nice little bomb in your pocket, today?' Macabre joke, since Czar Alexander II had been killed by a bomb

in March 1881, so had Bogolepov, Minister of Education, in 1901, Sipyogin, Minister of Internal Affairs in 1902, von Plehve, another Minister of Internal Affairs in 1904, and so the list goes on.

Because of this very real danger, the precautions taken by the Okhrana (secret police) to protect important personages were very strict. Like all those who lived inside the Kremlin walls, the Grand Duke Sergei had to submit to a rigid routine for his own safety. When he was due to go out, the order to harness the horses was transmitted to the Prefect of Police as well as to the stables and to the guard at the Palace gates. The carriage was accompanied by policemen on horseback and in droshkys (sledges) and the passengers were further shielded by nickel-plated steel curtains, as a protection against bullets.[9]

Under such conditions did Sergei go to the theatre, on the 2nd of February 1905.[10] Savinkov who was the organiser for this particular assassination, had nominated Kaliayev to throw the bombs which a confederate, Schweitzer, had made (he had paid by his life in the process and Dora Brilliant had made another bomb); the watch was also kept by Dora Brilliant. Every one was at his post, the Grand Duke's carriage came out of the Kremlin gates at the expected hour, yet the bomb was not thrown. Indeed that very day Sergei, himself childless, was accompanied not only by his wife, but his niece, Maria (15) and his nephew, Dmitri (14), who were the children of his brother Paul, at that time exiled in France because of his morganatic marriage to the Countess Olga Valerianovna de Hohenfelsen. It so happened that the combat group ('delicate murderers',[11] as Camus labels them), had forewarned the Grand Duchess Elizabeth that they would kill her husband, therefore that she should no longer accompany him (she was well-loved of the people who referred to her affectionately as Ella). Of course, Elizabeth had insisted upon going out with Sergei and taking the two children, well aware of the protection this would be for her husband. For only the previous year Admiral Doubassov had been killed with a bomb, and the assassin, Boris Alexis Voiranoski had declared to friends before the deed (in which he died himself), that if Doubassov's wife was with him, he would not throw the bomb.[12] So, on the 2nd of February, the Grand Duchess's calculations proved correct, and the 'delicate murderer' Kaliayev turned back without having accomplished the gesture for which he had steeled himself. The group approved Kaliayev's decision, but it only meant that everything had to be started all over again, when a better opportunity occurred. It did, two days afterwards (one cannot help surmising that one of the

guards at the Palace gates must have acted as an informer for the combat group). This time, the revolutionaries were successful; and it was the same Kaliayev who threw the bomb. We might be surprised by that, since one needs to have nerves of steel, however fanatical one may be, to get ready a second time for cold-blooded murder especially if one is, obviously, sufficiently lucid and humane to abandon the plan the first time, to save the lives of innocent children. We might suggest an explanation — either Kaliayev, once nominated, had no choice in the eyes of his fellows but to carry out his mission, sooner or later; or, Kaliayev himself felt honour-bound to complete what he had left unfinished. However it was, on the 4th February 1905, at 15h10, as soon as Sergei's carriage came out of the gates, three sleds immediately started off behind him; one of them moved ahead, overtook the carriage, drew back level with it, and the sled-driver, none other than Kaliayev, now sure that Sergei was alone, threw two bombs. Sergei, by bravado, had not pulled down the steel blinds and he paid for this imprudence with his life. The noise of the explosion was deafening and could be heard inside the Kremlin; the fragments of the carriage were scattered far and wide and of Sergei there only remained red shreds dotted about on the snow. The Grand Duchess, whom her husband had not told he was going out, heard the explosion and knew immediately: 'It is Sergei', she said.[13] She rushed outside, and was present when her husband's remains were gathered into a box. Yet she was courageous enough to hold the injured coachman's head, to comfort him as best she could by assuring him that his master was safe, for the poor man was to die a few moments later. Ella's grief was profound for she loved her husband despite his brusque attitude, but her religious piety helped her to overcome her tragedy and she retired, a few years later, as Abbess of the Convent of Mary and Martha, which she had founded. However, before withdrawing from the world, she was still to accomplish a sublime and memorable gesture, incredible but true, of which I shall say more later on.

The Czar, learning of the incident, was heart-broken: 'Holy God, will there be no end to these senseless slaughters?', he is reported as having exclaimed. Of course, he could only acquiesce to the punishment of Kaliayev, who had been arrested on the spot and imprisoned in the Boutirki Prison. But Kaliayev was an unbending prisoner, and vain were the efforts of the Police to make him denounce his accomplices. (A favourite method had been initiated by a Chief of Police called Zoubatov; it consisted in an elementary form of machiavellism, i.e. to pretend to be on the prisoner's side to make him confess. Although Zoubatov had

been relieved of his functions in 1903, the same form of blackmail continued to be used.)

Kaliayev was sustained in his refusal to co-operate by a mystical belief; not, I hasten to say, a belief in God, (although he could not have been altogether an atheist, since, a few minutes before the unsuccessful assassination of the 2nd of February, Savinkov, keeping watch, had seen him holding the bomb in one hand, and making the sign of the cross with the other in front of a street ikon!).[14] But Kaliayev refused the help of religion and founded his own personal morality upon the principle that a life is worth another life, therefore that one gives a life for a life, or a death for a death. Having killed by socialist idealism, he recognised nevertheless that it had to be paid by a death and that he alone, the perpetrator, could pay the debt to humanity. Curiously strengthened by this conviction, Kaliayev whom his confederates nicknamed, somewhat derisively, 'the Poet', had the taste and the desire for sacrifice. He sincerely shared the paradoxical point of view that political murder was at once *necessary and inexcusable* and that it must be identified with suicide, since death alone obliterates the culpability and the crime itself. The Police soon realised that they had no means to break him down by their normal methods, but they also found out that he was a mystic; therefore they readily accepted the unexpected help which another mystic, Grand Duchess Ella, offered — she *wanted* to visit the prisoner, to try and save his soul. Anna Viroubova, one of Empress Alexandra's ladies-in-waiting, tells in her *Mémoires de la Cour de Russie*[15] how the Grand Duchess pleaded with Kaliayev, assuring him of her forgiveness in the name of Christ, how she knelt on the icy stones of the prison cell to pray for him. Kaliayev was no doubt touched by this spectacle but was sustained by his own convictions, and even refused her offer to ask the Czar's pardon, if he repented. At his trial, he refused to make any concession and declared simply: 'I consider my death as a supreme protestation against a world of tears and blood'.[16] On the 10th of May 1905, at the age of 28, Kaliayev marched to the scaffold dressed in black without an overcoat, wearing a felt hat, and refused the cross which the prison chaplain, Father Florinski, was holding out to him. His last recorded words to the priest were uttered with some impatience: 'I have already told you that I have done with life and that I am quite prepared for death'.[17]

Thus ended a terrorist's short career, but not the impetus, which was almost puritanical in its atrocious concept and which was to culminate in the monumental explosion of 1917.

It might be of interest to tell what we know of the fate of Kaliayev's confederates who were temporarily saved by his refusal to talk. Dora Brilliant seems to be the most intriguing character, and she must have made an impression on her friends since Savinkov devotes a long passage to her in his *Mémoires d'un Terroriste*. He said of her that she was 'silent and sad', 'walking towards death silently, as fear weighed upon her daily life like a cross. Death, eventually, became a liberation for her'.[18] (We note the similarity of feelings with Kaliayev.) Indeed, from 1905 she carried on making bombs for the organisation until her arrest in 1910; she died in prison. Sasonov, a confederate and confirmed murderer, committed suicide when he was arrested and Schweitzer had already died making the bombs. Savinkov alone out of those we know by name survived and took refuge in France. No doubt, many other members of the group will remain forever anonymous and shrouded in the dark night of organised murder.

But the disappearance of individuals did not mean the death of the movement, only the end of a phase in its evolution. Without exaggerating unduly the importance of one incident among so many similar ones, it seems to me that because of the individual concerned, this still enigmatic Kaliayev, the event illustrates both a peculiar period in history and, even more, the mentality of the Russian people in its own cultural and historical context. Maurice Paléologue tries to analyse the Russian tendency to terrorism which he calls 'a peculiar case of collective psychosis and of mental contagion',[19] where he deciphers, side by side, the signs of a disinterested generosity and of daring crimes within a melodramatic framework and atmosphere of mystery and horror. As such, therefore, Kaliayev's case and Sergei's assassination remain a valuable testimony which, interpreted against the background of the better-known events of the Russian Revolution, may give some dialectical explanation of one of the most remarkable phenomena of our times. Camus chose to single out this incident to illustrate, on the stage, his personal interpretation of the negative aspect of rebellion through crime, which he postulated in his essay, *L'Homme Révolté:* 'If one examines with sympathetic feeling the history of that period [1903-1905], Kaliayev offers the most significant figure of terrorist . . .; he and his friends have shot out of the history of Russia and of the world as swift and unforgettable witnesses of a rebellion increasingly conscious of its motivation . . . But the rebellious young men of 1905 teach us, in the midst of the bomb-blasts, that rebellion (and political murder) cannot bring consolation nor dogmatic comfort. Their only obvious victory is the triumph over solitude'.[20]

## APPENDIX

Among the scant documents which are kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, altogether approximately ten pamphlets in Russian printed abroad, mainly in Geneva between 1902 and 1911, are to be found instruction manuals for the revolutionary activities, propaganda leaflets, such as *La Liberté et comment on l'acquiert* (Freedom and how to acquire it), by D. Khilkov, *Appel à tous les paysans* (Appeal to all the peasants), by Father Gapone, a few edifying, simplistic little tales such as *Le Mobilisé* (The Conscript), and also some short biographies and panegyrics of heroes of the Cause, to serve as models for future martyrs of the Revolution as was Kaliayev. It is to be noted that he alone has the honour of being represented as an individual 'in the flesh' by four revealing photographs.

The photographs reveal that in 1895, at the age of 18, he still looks like a seminarist or a military cadet; in 1899, his face has matured considerably, with his eyes burning of an intense fire, his goatee beard, and his slight moustache. The elegant white bow of 1899 is replaced in 1904 by a stiff collar, and the whole physiognomy has strangely hardened, the beard has disappeared, the face is thinner, the hair more sparse. Finally, we witness a great change on the 1905 photograph, with the moujik shirt, the unkempt hair, the shaggy beard. What strikes one particularly is the melancholy half-smile, and the faraway look, as if the eyes were already looking away from this world into the Great Beyond. There is no indication whether that last photograph was taken before or after the Grand Duke's assassination, but it is indubitable that the contrast between the 1905 photograph and the three previous ones measures the evolution and the inner maturing of Kaliayev, in the course of ten years.

It also seems certain that Camus must have consulted this thin dossier, as he left no available document unturned, and this, in itself, adds a dimension of poignant truth to his play, *Les Justes*.

*University of Natal,*
*Pietermaritzburg.*

## NOTES

[1] Schwartz, S. S. *The Russian Revolution of 1905,* (Transl. by G. Vakar). University of Chicago Press, 1967.
[2] Berdiaeff, N. A. *Un Nouveau Moyen Age,* Coll. Le Roseau d'or, Plon, Paris 1927, N. B. Camus delighted in reading this book.
[3] Ibid, p. 173.
[4] Kochan, L. *Russia in Revolution 1890-1918, Weidenfeld & Nicholson,* London 1966, p. 59.
[5] Paléologue, M. *Un Grand Tournant de la Politique Mondiale* (1904-1906), Plon, Paris 1934, p. 115.
[6] Camus, A. *Carnets II,* Gallimard, Paris 1964, p. 230.
[7] Paléologue calls them ' deux énergumènes, deux Erinnyes ' (two mad-caps, two Avenging Furies) op. cit. p. 230.
[8] Camus, A. *Théâtre, Récits, Nouvelles,* Edition Pléiade, Paris 1962, p. 1851.
[9] Viroubova, Anna. *Memoirs of the Russian Court,* Macmillan & Co. Ltd. London 1923, p. 159, cf. Kochan, op. cit. p. 69.
[10] The dates mentioned correspond to the old Julian Calendar, as Russia had not yet adopted the Gregorian calendar before the 1914-1918 War. There are 13 days' difference between the two, thus the 2nd of February (old style) corresponds to the 15th of February (new style).
[11] See Camus, *Théâtre etc . . .,* op. cit. p. 1827.
*Les Meurtriers Délicats,* article published in the review *La Table Ronde* in January 1948, foreshadows the chapter of *L'Homme Révolté* which bears the same title in the 3rd part of the essay, the general title of which is: *Individual terrorism.*
[12] Ibid, p. 1831.
[13] Viroubova, op. cit. p. 13.
[14] Camus, *Théâtre etc . . .,* op. cit. p. 1828.
[15] Viroubova, op. cit. p. 14.
[16] Camus, *Théâtre etc . . .,* op. cit. p. 1833.
[17] Ibid, p. 1833.
[18] Ibid, p. 1847.
[19] Paléologue, op. cit. p. 278.
[20] Camus, *Théâtre etc . . .,* op. cit. passim, pp. 1827-1833.

# THE ORIGINS OF 'INDIRECT RULE' IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY NATAL

*by* NORMAN ETHERINGTON

The search for the origins of indirect rule has become a staple of African history. Now and again thoughtful historians have observed that the maintenance of existing authorities, laws, and customs is the easiest way to inaugurate dominion over a numerous and alien population. This policy was anticipated by Alexander and the Caesars.[1] Nevertheless, the immense impact of Lugard's work in Nigeria has continued to inspire researches into the particular origins of Lugard's methods. Notwithstanding Crocker's belief that Lugard's system was 'the obvious, indeed the inevitable thing', and Margery Perham's admission that Lugard invented neither the theory nor the practice of indirect rule, historians have continued to treat Lugard as a plagiarist who did not acknowledge his sources.[2] Gailey has traced indirect rule to Llewellyn of the Gambia, Flint, to Goldie of the Royal Niger Company, and Legge, to Gordon of Fiji.[3]

Southern Africa's leading candidate for whatever may be owing to the inventor of indirect rule is Theophilus Shepstone, who as Diplomatic Agent and Secretary for Native Affairs virtually ruled the African population of Natal from 1846 to 1875. Shepstone has reaped more than his share of both extravagant praise and vituperation, but amidst their controversies his admirers and critics have agreed that he was an innovator in the field of African administration whose policies and methods deserve special study.[4] As late as 1973, a reviewer wrote in the *Journal of African History* that 'in seeking the origins of indirect rule . . . paternity should be traced not to Lugard but to Shepstone',[5] The truth is, however, that Shepstone did not invent Natal's version of indirect rule and strongly objected to its implementation. The policy was born at Whitehall and was the offspring of parsimony and expediency.

When her annexation of Natal became effective in 1845, Britain's objectives in the Colony were all essentially negative.[6] She did not want an independent white republic on the South African Coast. She did not want a large Nguni population forcibly removed by Afrikaner settlers to the south of Natal where they might further unsettle the Cape Colony's perennially explosive frontier. She did not want nominal British subjects to kindle fires of righteous indignation at Exeter Hall by appearing to practise slavery, land grabbing, or genocide. Once these negative requirements had been

satisfied by the assumption of sovereignty and by Lord Stanley's proclamation outlawing commando raiding parties, slavery, and racial discrimination, British policy reduced itself to penny pinching,[7] James Stephen regarded Natal as 'too worthless to justify throwing the burden on our national resources even for a time'.[8] The initial burden of devising positive policies for the governance of Africans in Natal was therefore shifted to officials on the spot who struggled to devise financially palatable proposals.

Henry Cloete who travelled to Natal as a special commissioner in 1843 recommended that Africans without hereditary claims to land should be grouped together on large reservations and 'civilized' by government superintendents and missionaries.[9] The reservation policy won an immediate assent at Whitehall but Cloete's educational and governmental accoutrements were rejected with equal haste because of their probable expense.[10]

Martin West, Natal's first Lieutenant-Governor, thought the locations would be an excellent venue for a large scale test of the principles of black peasant proprietorship embodied in the Kat River Settlement in the Cape Colony.[11] But he did not push for official adoption of his plan, preferring instead to await the recommendations of a three man Commission for locating Natives established in 1846. The three original commissioners brought to their task a fair cross-section of colonial opinion on the subject. William Stanger, Natal's Surveyor-General, took up the white settlers' point of view and argued that many of the proposed reservations were 'too good for natives'.[12] He favoured a policy which would force able-bodied Africans to enter the labour market. Newton Adams, an American missionary, wanted reservations which were small enough to concentrate Africans for evangelical purposes yet large enough to 'enable the people to subsist upon them, without being under the necessity of resorting to service among the [white] farmers'.[13] But it was Theophilus Shepstone, Natal's twenty-eight year old Diplomatic Agent, who dominated the commission. As the son of a missionary among the southern Nguni and a former Diplomtic Agent on the Cape frontier, he could claim an expertise in African affairs which outweighed his youth.

Shepstone's opinions are particularly interesting in light of his later reputation as an indirect ruler, for they show no sympathy at all for the indirect approach. In a memorandum addressed to Lt.-Governor West on 26 April 1846, he painted a Hobbesean picture of African life without European rulers.[14] Beyond the boundaries of Natal, he said, African despots rendered their subjects miserable through cruel and capricious government. Those

Africans who had been fortunate enough to find the road to Natal, he continued, hoped to be free from cruelty, unceasing warfare, and a round of quarrels 'which no mere native authority can quell'. To satisfy their aspirations locations should be established under the direct supervision of European magistrates.

These magistrates were to be much more than mere residents or advisors. They would concentrate in their own persons full legislative, judicial, and executive power. Should rules be wanted to maintain order and to gradually inculate 'the maxims of European jurisprudence . . . in disputes respecting property questions', the magistrates would make them. In all civil cases and in all but the most serious criminal cases the magistrate would act as sole judge. In order to avoid mistakes and misunderstandings, however, in cases involving customary usages, the magistrates might ask the advice of 'a sort of jury' comprising 'the chiefs and councillors within the settlement'. Finally the magistrate would, in his excutive capacity, keep the peace, enforce 'good behaviour', control the entrance and exit of African residents, and promote the production of cash crops for export. In all cases the only possible appeal from the magistrate's decision would be to whatever 'higher authority his Honour [the Lieutenant-Governor] might please to nominate'.

Not only did Shepstone believe that this system of autocratic direct rule would best serve Britain's purposes in Natal, he also contended that it was tailor-made for Nguni subjects:

> The whole of the native population has been born and brought up with the notions of the most implicit obedience to their rulers; unlike the Kafirs on the frontier of the eastern districts of the old colony, they pretend to no individual opinion of their own, and are guided in every respect by the will of their legally-constituted superiors; and it is this feeling I so anxiously recommend the Government to take advantage of, before it gives way (as I already see indications of its doing) to more dangerous views, from continued relaxation from control. [15]

In short, Shepstone asked for a benevolent despotism which would give Africans a hard push in the direction of British civilization.

After a third official and a second missionary had been added to the Commission for Locating Natives, Shepstone's arguments triumphed easily. [16] The Commissioners bemoaned the utter collapse of chiefly power and customary law and requested immediate measures to institute direct European government

through magistrates at each of several reservations.[17] In addition they urged the rapid abrogation of polygyny, bride price, and prosecutions for witchcraft, along with the establishment of trade schools and an African police under European officers.

Such potentially expensive suggestions were bound to raise eyebrows at the Colonial Office. Not even the Commission's insistence that Natal's security would be gravely menaced by half measures in the field of African administration, could deter James Stephen and Earl Grey from drawing hasty blue pencils across the report. Stephen persisted in his opinions about the worthlessness of Natal, and Grey bluntly instructed West that he must 'discountenance the expectation that any plans for the improvement of the Natal district, which would involve large expense to be provided for by Parliament, can be adopted'.[18] It was at this point that the Colonial Office, having rejected all the suggestions emanating from South Africa, devised a scheme of indirect rule to answer the need for cheap government in black Natal.

Stephen laid the groundwork for the scheme in a Minute of May, 1874.[19] Lieutenant-Governor West had asked for guidelines to aid in the punishment of Africans convicted of killing accused witches. From an English point of view the offenders were murderers, but from an Nguni perspective they were public benefactors.[20] Hanging them would most certainly unsettle African opinion without necessarily deterring others from committing the same foul deed. Struggling mightily with this conundrum, Stephen first gave it as his opinion that 'offences opposed to the universal opinions and feelings of mankind' must be punished without reference to the convictions of the offender and that offences against Europeans must be tried by European laws. On the other hand, 'in case of offences of lower degree, or even in the case of murder when perpetrated in deference to their prevailing superstitions, opinions or habits, they should be amenable only to their own native laws and tribunals . . .'

With this single leap of the imagination, Stephen moved well beyond Shepstone's projects. The Diplomatic Agent had been prepared to recognize some elements of customary law but had never contemplated the use of African 'tribunals'. When Grey endorsed Stephen's strictures in a despatch of 15 May 1847 the first important element in the implementation of indirect rule — the establishment of a dual legal system — had been planted in Natal.[21] All that remained to be done was to provide African chiefs with recognized executive powers.

Later in 1847 Grey took the logical second step in an undated memorandum suggesting that a law be passed in Natal giving

chiefs the power 'to exercise authority over their Tribes, according to their existing customs, and to enforce obedience by the means usually employed among them to such of the Native Laws and customs as shall not, from time to time, be specially abrogated by British authority'. The government would, however, reserve the right to depose and replace any chief who misused his power.

James Stephen entirely approved of the use of chiefs as cut-rate local administrators but hesitated to give a legislative stamp of approval to 'obscene' practices or barbarous punishments.[22] Such was the mental distance separating the evangelical conscience of 1847 from the generation of Mary Kingsley and Frederick Lugard.[23] Nevertheless, in the end Stephen managed to save both conscience and money by a characteristic bit of logic chopping. Royal Instructions should be issued, he advised, noting that neither traditional laws and customs nor the powers of chiefs had been destroyed by the British annexation of Natal. The Crown could at its pleasure alter customary usages, but would not, for the moment, undertake to ascertain exactly what those usages might be.

With Lord Grey's incorporation of Stephen's suggestions in a despatch of December 1847, and the issuance of appropriate Royal Instructions during the following year, the blueprint for what came to be known as the 'Shepstone policy' was complete.[24] Not surprisingly, the man whose name was later identified with the new policy objected strenuously to its introduction.[25] Shepstone particularly disliked the freedom of action accorded to chiefs, whom, he thought, ought to be directly accountable to the government for each and every one of their actions. Besides, he asked, who would rule the chiefless Africans of Natal, a group comprising at least half the population? As far as Shepstone was concerned, Nguni law was useful only in so far as it contained 'one or two characteristic principles which are necessary to their management, whilst they are foreign to the principles of our jurisprudence'.[26] Though he managed the blacks in his charge by methods 'in remarkable accordance' with the Royal Instructions, he felt he could not go on much longer without European administrators to assist him.

Nevertheless, Shepstone did go on and even grew to like the scheme — modified of course to suit his authoritarian proclivities. By 1851 he was proposing to troop off into the wilderness with most of Natal's African population as monarch of a black kingdom under British protection. As 'the paternal head and guardian of . . . a mass of grown-up children' he would rule by leaving 'the internal management very much to the chiefs themselves'.[27] When Natal's Bishop Colenso hailed Shepstone as an innovator whose

accomplishments and plans could only be compared to Rajah Brooke's rule in Sarawak, an ideal became attached to the policy. Colenso, inspired by F. D. Maurice's notion that there was 'a conscience and a light among the heathen' which missionaries should build on, was opposed to the sudden disruption of Nguni social structures.[28] In Shepstone, Colenso thought he had found just the man to help bring Christianity and civilization to the Nguni people without breaking the continuity of their historical development.[29]

When it suited him Shepstone graciously accepted Colenso's praise, but in darker moments he told the truth. After the Langalibalele crisis of 1873-74 which resulted in charges of brutality and arbitrary rule being levelled against him, Shepstone reminded his critics that he had not invented the administrative structure which he headed. The Colonial Office, he complained, had given him 'the Egyptian task of being called upon to make bricks without straw'.[30]

Strangely enough, the Colonial Office itself eventually forgot the origins of the Shepstone system. Most probably amnesia was bred by a fuller realization of the difficulties entailed by the maintenance of two distinct systems of justice and administration within a single small territory. Had Natal remained a black colony governed by white officials, the problems would have been minor. It is common enough for different standards to apply to governors and to the governed. But when white settlers of all stations and occupations spread throughout Natal intermingling with the African population in a search for wealth and comfort the problems grew geometrically. If individuals were allowed freely to elect the system which would govern them, Natal would fall into judicial anarchy. If Africans were to be forever subject to Nguni laws and chiefs, the colony would move inexorably towards a pattern of segregation in fundamental conflict with the intentions of the men who first annexed Natal to the empire.

Henry Cloete, who returned to Natal to serve as Recorder (chief judge) in the late eighteen-forties made the first formal attack on the dual system of justice.[31] Arguing that the continual interaction of white and black would lead to anomalies and permanent racial antagonisms, Cloete demanded that all the inhabitants of Natal be subject to Roman-Dutch law. If Shepstone had the authority to punish murderers without reference to that code, he would 'subvert the entire fabric of the law', Only in isolated areas far removed from white settlers did Cloete feel that tribal laws might safely be upheld.

Initially, Cloete's objection fell on deaf ears. Lieutenant-

Governor West reprimanded the Recorder in 1849 for a speech denouncing the exclusion of Africans from the pale of Roman-Dutch law.[32] Earl Grey added his own censure later that year, contending that Cloete's policy would 'render the native population practically lawless, by breaking the control of their own customs before any more civilized code could possibly become effective as a substitute'.[33] Grey plainly stated the limited goals of his brand of indirect rule. Economical peace-keeping was the alpha and omega. He did not envisage a separate course of development for Natal's Africans. Had it been possible to sweep away the whole of Nguni culture without expense, he would cheerfully have done so. And the moment he suspected that the support of traditional chiefs and laws might endanger the peace — and, by implication, the exchequer — he dropped the whole project.

Grey's recantation was prompted by Benjamin Pine who took up his duties as Natal's second lieutenant-governor in 1850. Pine immediately sided with the white settler community which resented the large African reserves as hindrances to land development, the recruitment of cheap black labour and effective control of potentially restive African chiefs. According to Pine, the locations 'encompassed the strongest natural fastnesses' in Natal.[34] In these fortresses chiefs could use their now officially recognized powers to gather hordes of armed subjects who might at any time unleash 'all the horrors of civil war'. Even if those nightmares could be avoided, Pine went on, public opinion must surely censure the continued enforcement of barbarous laws which blocked the African's upward progress.

Reacting as Pine hoped he would, Grey climbed down very quickly from the high ground he had occupied in the controversy over Cloete's denunciations. If African chiefs were plotting civil war, the time had come to assimilate the blacks to British law. 'It was absolutely necessary', he explained, 'that in the first instance, they should be governed by their own laws, and through their own chiefs; but . . . this is a system which ought as soon as possible to be replaced by a better'.[35] Poor Shepstone, who had come out against Pine's plan to diminish the locations and introduce the Africans to individual freehold tenure, drew a reprimand for clinging to a policy which had outlived its usefulness.

Had Pine not sought to bolster his position by convening a settler-dominated commission to investigate the merits of chiefly power and big African reserves, it is possible that the fabric of indirect rule in Natal might have been quickly torn apart.[36] As it was, by the time the commission generated its predictable report, Earl Grey had left the Colonial Office and the opportunity for

reversing the policy had passed. Sir George Grey who become High Commissioner for South Africa in 1855 and John Scott who succeeded Pine as lieutenant-governor in 1856 both participated in the consolidation of the status quo. High Commissioner Grey added several thousand acres of Mission Reserves to the land already set aside for Africans and Scott helped Shepstone to vest control of the reserves in the Natal Native Trust. Over the nearly unanimous objections of the settler community who wanted Africans to be given freehold titles to individual plots of land, the Trust preserved the principle of collective ownership and provided a permanent arena for the operation of indirect administration. And so it came to pass that despite its faltering start and all its critics, the temporary expedient devised by James Stephen and Earl Grey survived and developed under Shepstone's direction. As Secretary for Native Affairs, Shepstone made the system his own and moved a long way towards the kind of cultural relativism which marked later indirect rulers. But he hadn't planned it that way in 1846.

The purpose of this essay is not, however, to push back the date for the 'invention' of direct rule yet another few years by according to James Stephen and Lord Grey the credit previously bestowed upon Shepstone.[37] The minutes of James Stephen cited above contain references to practices already said to have been established in India, New Zealand and British Guiana. One of Shepstone's first Resident Magistrates thought Natal was conforming to Canadian precedents where salaried chiefs had been used for decades.[38] Philip Curtin has found ideological and practical elements of indirect rule in Britain and West Africa before 1845.[39] Thus, Lugard's methods were anticipated in many corners of the nineteenth-century British empire. After all, the first step in establishing indirect rule was to do nothing. That was easy. It did not require much subsequent imagination to argue that the continuance of traditional law and custom was in the best interest of Britain's subject peoples.

*University of Adelaide,*
*South Australia.*

## NOTES

[1] See Henry A. Gailey, Jr., *A History of the Gambia* (London, 1964), 112-13 and M. Perham, *Lugard, The Years of Authority 1898-1945* (London, 1960), 141-42.

[2] W. R. Crocker, *Nigeria, A Critique of British Colonial Administration* (London, 1936), 213; M. Perham, *Native Administration in Nigeria,* (London, 1937), 35-36, 43-44. Bernard Porter's recent *Critics of Empire* (London, 1968) supports the notion that a new climate of opinion naturally favoured the notion of indirect rule.

[3] Gailey, 112-13; John E. Flint, *Sir George Goldie and the Making of Nigeria* (London, 1960), 94; J. D. Legge, *Britain in Fiji, 1858-1880* (London, 1958).

[4] Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, eds., *The Oxford History of South Africa,* Vol. I (Oxford, 1969), 376-77; H. Rider Haggard, *Cetywayo and His White Neighbours* (London, 1890), 64-65; E. H. Brookes, *The History of Native Policy in South Africa, 1830 to the Present Day,* 2d rev. ed. (Pretoria, 1927), 29-30; J. R. Sullivan, *The Native Policy of Sir Theophilus Shepstone* (Johannesburg, 1928); R. Gordon, *Shepstone: The Role of the Family in the History of South Africa* (Cape Town, 1968); D. Morris, *The Washing of the Spears* (London, 1966), 146, 171-77, 223-24; F. Wolfson, 'Some Aspects of Native Administration Under Theophilus Shepstone, Secretary for Native Affairs 1857-1875', Unpublished M.A. Thesis (University of Witwatersrand, 1946); *Cambridge History of the British Empire,* Vol. VIII, pp. 358-59. David Welsh's recent detailed study of Shepstone, *The Roots of Segregation, Native Policy in Colonial Natal, 1845-1910* (Cape Town, 1971) does not delve into the Colonial Office origins of the 'Shepstone policy'. C. W. De Kiewet is exceptional in his doubt as to whether Shepstone really gave new directions to African administration. (*The Imperial Factor in South Africa* [Cambridge, England, 1937]; 32-3.)

[5] M. D. D. Newitt, 'Native Policy in Natal', *Journal of African History* XIV, 151-53. Newitt's comments are made in a review of David Welsh, *The Roots of Segregation: Native Policy in Colonial Natal, 1845-1910, Cape Town, 1971.* Welsh certainly sees similarities between Shepstone's methods and those later advocated by Lugard in Nigeria (see Welsh, pp. 211, 216). Welsh, however, stops short of crediting Shepstone with the invention of indirect rule; he merely notes that Shepstone responded pragmatically to 'administrative necessity'.

[6] For conflicting interpretations of the reasons behind the British annexation of Natal, see: C. J. Uys, *In the Era of Shepstone* (Lovedale, 1933), 8-10; J. S. Galbraith, *Reluctant Empire* (Berkeley, 1963), 194-97; Wilson and Thompson, 368-71; E. H. Brookes and C. Webb, *A History of Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, 1965), 42-8.

[7] J. Bird, ed., *The Annals of Natal: 1495-1845* (2 vols.; Pietermaritzburg, 1888), II, 146.

[8] James Stephen, Minute on despatch from the Governor of the Cape dated 4 June 1846. C.O. 179/1.

[9] H. Cloete to J. Montagu, 10 Nov. 1843, pp. 1847-8, XL 11, 980.

[10] Lord Stanley to Sir Peregrine Maitland, 13 July 1844, C.O. 179/1.

[11] Newton Adams to Rufus Anderson, 15 Dec. 1845, Archives of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Houghton Library, Harvard University, ABC 15.4, III.
For details of the Kat River Scheme see W. M. Macmillan, *Bantu, Boer and Briton,* 2d ed. (Oxford, 1963), 83-4, and T. Kirk, 'Progress and Decline in the Kat River Settlement, 1829-1854', *Journal of African History,* XIV (1973), 411-428.

[12] Aldin Grout to Anderson, 1 March 1847, Archives of the American Board, ABC 15.4, IV.

[13] Adams to Anderson, 15 Dec. 1845, Archives of the American Board, ABC 15.4, III.

[14] T. Shepstone to the Secretary to Government, 26 April 1846, pp. 1850, XXXVIII, 1292.
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] Charles Gibb, the official, allied himself with Shepstone (A. Grout to Anderson, 1 March 1847, Archives of the American Board, ABC 15.4 IV). Daniel Lindley, the missionary, while partial to the old Voortrekker plan for a block settlement of Africans in Natal, accepted the idea of locations provided that they be large and fertile (A. Grout to Anderson, 13 July 1843, Archives of the American Board, ABC 15.4, II).
[17] Report of the Commissioners for Locating Natives, pp. 1847-8, XLII, 980.
[18] Earl Grey to Sir Henry Smith, 10 Dec. 1847, pp. 1847-8, XLII, 980.
[19] Minute on despatch from the Governor of the Cape dated 4 June 1846, C.O. 179/1.
[20] West to Maitland, 6 Jan. 1847, C.O. 179/2.
[21] Grey to Sir Henry Pottinger, 15 May 1847, C.O. 179/2.
[22] Stephen, Minute on a Draft of a Despatch to Sir Henry Smith, 17 Sept. 1847, C.O. 179/2.
[23] See Porter, 240-66, 313-24.
[24] Grey to Smith, 10 Dec. 1847, pp. 1847-8, XLII, 980; see also Earl Grey, *The Colonial Policy of Lord John Russell's Administration* (2 vols.; London, 1853), II, 203.
[25] Shepstone to West, 14 Aug. 1848, pp. 1850, XXXVIII, 1292.
[26] The 'characteristic principles' in reality were only one principle: the notion of tribal responsibility whereby a chief was responsible for the actions of each member of his tribe and *vice versa.* Tribal responsibility was the 'distinctive controlling feature' of Shepstone's administration, supplying 'the place of a large military force at Imperial expense, and an enormous police establishment at the cost of the Colony' (Minute by the Secretary for Native Affairs on the late operations against Langalibalele and Tribe, 12 June 1874, pp. 1875, LIII, C. 1121).
[27] Shepstone to Pine, 9 Dec. 1851, pp. 1852-3, LXII, 1697; Shepstone, Testimony before the Native Commission of 1852, Secretary for Native Affairs Papers, Pietermaritzburg Depot of the South African Archives, SNA 2/1/2.
[28] For Colenso's early views on Shepstone, theology and missionary policy see J. W. Colenso: *Ten Weeks in Natal* (Cambridge, 1855); *Remarks on the Proper Treatment of Cases of Polygamy, as Found Already Existing in Converts from Heathenism* (Pietermaritzburg, 1955); and *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans: Newly Translated and Explained from a Missionary Point of View,* (Ekukanyeni, Natal, 1861).
[29] In 1874, however, Colenso split with Shepstone over the question of Langalibalele's punishment. Letters recording the development of the split appear in Gordon, *Shepstone,* 213-20.
[30] Shepstone, Memorandum on Native Policy, 14 June 1875, Secretary for Native Affairs Papers, SNA 1/7/7.
[31] Cloete to West, 10 Aug. 1848, pp. 1850, XXXVIII, 1292; Cloete to West, 7 July 1849, C.O. 179/8.
[32] Gordon, 148.
[33] Grey to Smith, 20 Dec. 1849, pp. 1850, XXXVIII, 1292.
[34] Pine to Smith, 1 Nov. 1851, pp. 1852-3, LXII, 1697.
[35] Grey to Pine, 14 Feb. 1852, pp. 1852-3, LXII, 1697.
[36] *Proceedings and Report of the Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Past and Present State of the Kafirs in the District of Natal* (Pietermaritzburg, 1853).
[37] Indeed, recent literature emphasizing the undesirable aspects of indirect rule suggests that in many cases opprobrium rather than glory should be cast upon the inventors of the policy. (See P. Gifford, 'Indirect Rule: Touchstone or Tombstone for Colonial Policy', in *Britain and Germany in Africa,* ed. by Gifford and Louis (New Haven, 1967), 351-91 and P. Austin, 'The Official Mind of Indirect Rule', in the same collection, 577-606.

[38] Peppercorne to Shepstone, 31 May 1851, Secretary for Native Affairs Papers, SNA 1/3/1.
[39] P. Curtin, *Image of Africa* (Madison, 1964), 283, 306-07, 426-27, 474-75.

# THE WAGES OF SIN IS LIFE—FOR A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY BEST SELLER OR THE ANATOMY OF A CLASSIC*

*by* KATHLEEN KISH

Unlike some of Spain's other contributions to world literature, the subject of this talk is not apt to be familiar to the educated speaker of English. And yet the *Tragicomedy of Calisto and Melibea,* more commonly known as *La Celestina,* is a masterpiece, ranked second only to *Don Quijote* by connoisseurs of the Spanish literary scene, and its central character, the old go-between Celestina, has achieved mythical status, on a par with Cervantes' immortal hero and with the notorious Don Juan. First published in embryo stage with sixteen acts in 1499, and reissued three years later in its mature twenty-one act form, *La Celestina* antedates considerably the milestones of the Spanish Golden Age — the national theatre, founded by Shakespeare's contemporary Lope de Vega, the picaresque novel vogue, the exquisite mystical poetry of St. John of the Cross, and, of course, Cervantes' chef d'oeuvre, to mention only some of the most famous examples.

The *Tragicomedy* enjoyed outstanding success at home, receiving multiple printings and serving as inspiration for numerous imitations and adaptations. Moreover, the work took Europe by storm. The Italian *Celestina* of 1506 was the first in the chain of non-Spanish versions of the text, which eventually included translations in all the principal European tongues. If the name Celestina does not elicit immediate recognition in the literate English-speaker, perhaps it is due in part to the old bawd's comparatively late arrival in full regalia on British soil (James Mabbe's 1931 rendition).

With the general revival of interest in the Spanish work during the current century — marked particularly by important critical studies and by stage adaptations in many countries — Celestina can again expect a warm reception wherever the European tradition has found a home, once the language barrier is down. Indeed, her future looks long and bright, because *La Celestina* was not only a best seller in its own time; it is also a literary classic.

Why did this book become first a best seller and then a classic? Its international acclaim was certainly *not* a function of its author's

*A public lecture, delivered at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, on 8th June, 1976, and at the University of Natal, Durban, on 24th June, 1976.

reputation; in fact, the work circulated anonymously at first. The man to whom it is attributed, Fernando de Rojas, was a Salamancan lawyer of Jewish background, and *La Celestina* is his only known literary effort. Rojas must have been a genius. I think he could also be called a magician of sorts, or at least an inventor. What he creates is a prose form which holds the seeds of both modern drama and modern novel, at a time when neither genre had yet been conceived of. In twenty-one acts of dialogue, presumably meant to be read aloud with suitable nuances of feeling, but not on stage — there were no theatres in Europe at the time — Rojas produced a richness of texture that was totally new. This novelty of form offered a fresh perspective on time, space, and characterization; and an eager public, whose reading appetite had been whetted by that new invention, the printing press, responded with excitement to the experiment.

In content *La Celestina* was less than revolutionary, though its attention to representatives of the lower class was innovative. These figures are designed for more than comic relief; they are meant to be more than foils for their upper-class counterparts. Prostitute or aristocratic heroine, stable boy or noble gentleman: all are drawn with care, and none is a flat character. What is surprising is not only the equality of treatment accorded these two extremes of the social scale, but also the extent to which they are made to interact. It is not a question of upward mobility; the classes retain their distinct identities, but their fates are not separate. At the centre of this scheme of interdependence of rich and poor is Celestina, who, as go-between in matters of the heart, brings her aristocratic customers into contact with the low-class world from which she hails.

The young nobleman Calisto, upon declaring his love to the fair Melibea in the opening scene of the work, has been angrily rejected by her. He then hires Celestina, at the suggestion of his steward Sempronio. Celestina must first silence the opposition she finds under Calisto's roof, his adolescent servant Pármeno, who tries to warn his master of Celestina's dangerous and wicked ways. Pármeno considers himself somewhat of an expert on Celestina's character, since, as a youth, he had lived in her house and served as her errand boy. Let us listen to part of his description of her as he tries to explain to Calisto why he has dared to call her a 'painted old whore':[1]

> She has had six trades: seamstress, perfumer, cosmetic maker, repairer of maidenheads, go-between, and a bit of a witch. The first of these has always been a cover-up for all the rest.

> Thus protected, she has brought many girls of the working classes to her house . . . None of them ever came without . . . provisions they could steal from their mistresses, and even thefts of greater magnitude were covered up there. She was a good friend of students and stewards and clergymen's servants; and to these she sold the innocent blood of the poor girls . . . But she went even further, for by means of these girls she communicated with others who were more closely guarded, and then she executed her plans. . . .
> . . . she never missed a mass or vesper service, nor lost contact with monasteries or nunneries, where she made her arrangements and executed her tricks. . . . In the matter of maidenheads — some she made of bladder, some she sewed. . . . She worked wonders . . . and when the French ambassador was here she sold him as a virgin three times over the same one of her servants. . . . And in another place she had some things to cure love and others to make people fall in love. She had gristles from the heart of a stag, vipers' tongues, heads of quail, donkeys' brains, . . . rope from a hanged man, . . . and a thousand other things. . . . She painted figures and said spells. Who could ever tell you all the old creature was able to do? And it was all falsehood and trickery (pp. 34-36).

Despite his apparent clear-sightedness, Pármeno is in due time corrupted. Celestina senses his weak point, sexual desire, and pairs him with the beautiful (but not virtuous) Areusa. Areusa is the cousin of Elicia, who lives with Celestina, and whose favours are bestowed on many men, including Calisto's majordomo Sempronio. The lusty antics of Calisto's servants are thus presided over by the bawd Celestina, who also manages (through cunning psychology and with — possibly bogus — assistance from her underworld partner Pluto) to orchestrate Melibea's downfall. Once Melibea has been seduced by Calisto in her garden, she becomes Love's willing handmaiden. The happiness of all concerned, however, turns quickly sour, for now all who have erred must be punished, and those who have sinned most gravely die. Celestina succumbs at the hands of her erstwhile allies Pármeno and Sempronio, whose attempts to extract from her their share of the reward paid by Calisto have been in vain. They, in turn, expire as a result of their efforts to flee the scene of the crime by jumping out of an upstairs window, and are later beheaded in the public square. Calisto falls to his death from the ladder to Melibea's garden when he seeks to investigate a disturbance below which has been arranged by the bereaved and vengeful former sweethearts of his

unfortunate servants. Then Melibea, overcome with grief, delivers an impassioned explanation to her unwitting father and a plea for his understanding, before throwing herself down from a tower.

The story, in addition to its inherent, timeless charm, must have held other attractions for the contemporary audience. For one thing, it recreated artistically a situation not unlike one which prevailed in European society at the time. For another, it was edifying: it supported, by means of negative example, the conventional moral standards of the day. Thus, the avant-garde form of *La Celestina* and the ability of its content to strike a responsive chord in its first readers joined to assure the work's initial success. But why does it continue to be popular? Of course, part of the reason is its artistic excellence, but that is not the whole answer. Otherwise it would survive only as a quaint relic from a remote and colourful past, a morsel to be savoured by an elite minority. Instead, *La Celestina* is alive and well and approaching its five-hundredth birthday, because it is at once static and dynamic. I mean by this that it contains a universal truth which remains always the same, and it is capable of being adapted to meet changing circumstances. This is not quite a case of Darwin's survival of the fittest, since the *Tragicomedy* itself endures as an organism, while at the same time spawning generation after generation of biological descendants. Let us look first at this genetic evolution and then consider the work as Rojas wrote it.

'Traduttore, traditor', 'translator, traitor', it has been said. True, no doubt, but only half true. Translation can have *positive* side effects, and (like much literary criticism) it can be creative. Even the minimally inventive author of the Italian translation of *La Celestina,* Alfonso Hordognez, can provide an example of this creative process. Among the several modifications he introduces to adapt the text for local consumption is the conversion of a list of Spanish wines into Italian ones. Two of the other early translators follow suit. Christoph Wirsung, whose Early New High German version appeared in 1520, replaces some of the items on Hordognez' list of wines with other Italian specialties (perhaps his own favourites), while the anonymous author of the 1527 French translation reduces the number of varieties to two, both of them French: Beaune and Orléans. About a century later, James Mabbe effects much more startling changes. In an apparent attempt to revitalize the text and assure its appeal to readers in a milieu far removed from that of Europe on the threshold of the sixteenth century, Mabbe 'paganized' *La Celestina.* 'God' often becomes 'Jove', for example, and St. Mary Magdalen's Church is here and there transformed into Cupid's myrtle-grove.

With Mabbe's translation, the initial wave of international enthusiasm for *La Celestina* came to an end. Spanish writers kept the work alive through direct imitations and by recasting the celestinesque figure in an assortment of new moulds, but the foreign scene remained quiet until a second round of translations began in the nineteenth century. The truly modern *Tragicomedy,* however, appears in totally different guise, transformed into a stage creature.

Prior to this century, efforts to modify the text for the stage had been conspicuous for their almost total absence. The sixteenth century offers three partial adaptations: a Spanish verse eclogue, which was probably never performed; a possible dramatic reading of a one-act version in a Portuguese church; and the English *Interlude of Calisto and Melibea,* which may have been presented at a wedding celebration in 1529. The seventeenth century's contribution is a single item, intriguing because of its reputed author, Calderón de la Barca, and for the fact that it has apparently been irretrievably lost. The first decade of the eighteenth century saw the publication in London of the five-act *Celestina or The Spanish Bawd.* The nineteenth century, true to form, produced an operetta in three acts and verse. All told, not a very distinguished list for four hundred years, but then it was only the quiet before the storm, for the real interest in *La Celestina* as theatre did not blossom in all its glory until the twentieth century.

Since 1900 at least thirty-five distinct versions have been staged, in France, England, Italy, Belgium, Holland, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Hungary, the United States, and even Algeria, not to mention Spain and several Latin American countries. They share, for obvious, practical reasons, a tendency to condense the material of the *Tragicomedy.* The result is usually a simplification of the complex fabric of the source. An adapter might, for instance, fashion a sort of Romeo and Juliet tragedy out of the amorous portion of the plot, treating Celestina's role as incidental. Or he might do the reverse: place Celestina stage centre and play down the love affair. And, while some authors strive to capture the essence of their model, others prefer to impress their personal stamp on the work. Albert Camus, for example, not only wrote and directed the 1937 Algiers production; he also played the part of Calisto. Hugo Claus, the Belgian writer whose Dutch adaptation premiered in 1970, designed a special rotating stage to accommodate the twenty-two scene changes required by his script. Joan Littlewood, in her London 1958 rendition, converted the *Tragicomedy* into a slapstick melodrama, imbued with Marxist philosophy, which seeks to ridicule the high-ranking characters

and brand them as materialistic and bourgeois. And Paul Achard's 1942 French version — one of the most successful ever at the box office — was a veritable 'espagnolade', with distortions which would certainly make Rojas chuckle, if he were to learn of them. One of the many touches of local colour which Achard introduced should suffice to indicate the tone: at intervals the action is interrupted by the arrival on the scene of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, much to the discomfiture of the principals, who cringe and rush to hide themselves. As final examples of the licence some adapters have taken with the original text, let me mention the two operas based on it: the one by Felipe Pedrell (never performed, although Pablo Casals did play selections from it in 1921), and the one by Flavio Testi (presented at the Maggio Fiorentino, Florence's annual musical festival, in 1963).

As a group, the stage adaptations, together with the translations and imitations, illustrate graphically the open-endedness of *La Celestina*. This dynamic quality, which has allowed successive generations to interpret the work ever anew, explains to some extent its consecration as a classic, but it would be wrong to leave the impression that *La Celestina* survives only by virtue of its adaptability. Equally significant is the static essence of the work, its universal 'message'.

What human truth is contained in this drama, which has stirred the imagination of so many different ages? *La Celestina* has meaning for all periods because it portrays a human problem which never changes. It is a vivid demonstration of man's struggle with forces beyond his control, an inevitable aspect of life, regardless of temporal framework.

This idea of the confrontation of opposing elements emerges first as theory, in the Prologue, which opens, 'The great and wise Heraclitus tells us that all things are produced as if in contest or battle: "Omnia secundum litem fiunt" ' (p. 8). It is immediately underlined by a long citation from Petrarch, which begins, 'Mother Nature creates nothing without contention and struggle' (p. 8), and ends, 'everything singly contends with every other thing — and all oppose us' (p. 9).

The theory of struggle is then played out in the drama proper in a variety of ways. The constellations are familiar ones in which the traditionally weak are often pitted against the traditionally strong. Thus, we see examples of the war between the sexes, the generation gap, and the enmity between social classes. Of more central importance than these interpersonal conflicts (woman-man, child-parent, servant-master) is the opposition of abstract entities, such as erotic instincts versus societal restrictions or — and this is

the key to the work's enduring impact — good versus evil.

In *La Celestina,* as in everyday life, virtue is no match for vice, but in contrast with the real world, where there is seldom proof that crime does not pay, in the literary world of *La Celestina* poetic justice reigns supreme, and evil is punished. Yet if that were the whole story, the *Tragicomedy* would be nothing more than a conventional morality 'play'. What makes it unique and assures its lasting resonance is its very special presentation of evil.

The pivotal figure in this regard is Celestina. As high-priestess of evil, who both embodies and traffics in vice, she holds a strange appeal for the observer. In the first place, he is inclined to make allowances for her conduct. From an impartial standpoint, he can see that it is essential for the development of the plot: without it, there would be no *Tragicomedy.* Then, too, within the framework of the drama he can identify certain extenuating circumstances which might justify in part her wickedness. At one point when Sempronio is harping on her hypocrisy and wondering 'what devils taught her all her meanness', for example, Pármeno remarks, 'I'll tell you: poverty and need. And hunger, too — the greatest teacher in the world' (p. 141). Later in the same act Celestina herself adds other reasons why she might be pitied, when she reminisces on the happiness and prosperity she enjoyed in times past and dwells on her advanced age and impending demise.

Sympathy for her plight is only one of the positive reactions the observer can have upon confronting the character Celestina. A second is admiration. On the basis of her skill as an independent entrepreneuse, without considering the nature of her trade, she commands respect. She even has a set of ethics, as she makes clear in the following statement to Sempronio shortly before her death: 'I live by practising my profession, as other professional persons do — and respectably too. I seek no one out. Those who require me come to my house to request my aid; and if I leave my house, I do so at their bidding. God's my judge whether I live well or ill' (p.189).

Despite the listener's probable readiness to presume that God must certainly condemn Celestina's way of life, regardless of her poverty and her admirable expertise, he is led to side with her for still a third reason: the principles on which she operates, and to which she seeks to recruit followers, obey a kind of natural morality which is difficult to reject. Consider, for example, some of the reasoning she employs to soften Melibea's resistance to Calisto:

> And since we are all human creatures born to die, then never

> can it be said that any one of us was born merely to live for himself alone, because that would be a life like unto that of beasts — among which, to be sure, there are even merciful creatures, as is said of the unicorn, which humbles itself before any virgin (p. 79).

Once Melibea has guessed the real reason for Celestina's visit, she explodes in a rage of righteous indignation and is only appeased when Celestina declares, falsely, that her single intention has been to request of Melibea a prayer to Saint Apollonia and a cord of hers 'which is famed for having touched all the relics in Rome and Jerusalem' (p. 82), since, she adds, Calisto is suffering from a dreadful toothache. At the end of the interview, after Melibea has relented, Celestina leaves her with some food for thought, ideas which will work on Melibea's subconscious and cause her eventual surrender to Celestina's will and Calisto's desire:

> Yet even if my words had implied what you for a time suspected, there was nothing really wrong about that, for it happens over and over, day after day, that men suffer because of women, and women suffer because of men. This, in the final analysis, is the work of Nature; and so God ordered her to act. And God never did an evil thing. Thus, my request, however you interpreted it, is in itself not to be condemned, for it is in harmony with the requirements of Nature, and I would have been blameless (p. 88).

This is certainly a seductive line of reasoning, one to which the reader could easily, almost gratefully, subscribe, if only he could forget that the source of these words of wisdom is nothing but a 'painted old whore', to recall Pármeno's description of her. Indeed, no amount of sympathy and admiration for Celestina or agreement with her philosophy can erase the fact that she is *not* blameless. Basically she is egotistical; all of her actions are motivated by the promise of personal gain, and she is not above deceiving and manipulating others in her efforts to achieve her selfish goals. Her sixty-odd years of self-indulgence have made it impossible for her to deny her sensual appetites, and at her advanced age (and also to some degree because of it), she has developed depraved habits to satisfy them. Thus, she drinks to excess, using wine as a surrogate mate, and she takes great pleasure in witnessing the erotic activities of others. When, for example, Calisto's servants and their girlfriends turn her dinner table into the scene of an orgy, she cries excitedly: 'Oh, kiss and hug, you frisky young things! I'll delight in watching you — for that's all

there's left that I can do: just look on. While you are at table, feel perfectly free to do whatever you wish — from the waist up. When you're alone, I'll fix no limit, for there's none fixed by the King' (p. 147).

If Celestina's lust is inordinate, her thirst for money is just as great. Avarice, in fact, is the direct cause of her sudden, unexpected death. Greed clouds her judgement so that she fails to realise the earnestness of Pármeno and Sempronio when they press her for their part of the reward, and her less than clever handling of the situation leads to their murderous attack on her.

At this point, the spectator of the drama must pause and attempt to make sense out of the mélange of impressions he has regarding the character Celestina. His feelings are likely to be ambivalent, if not plurivalent. On the one hand, he likes and sympathizes with her, wanting to interpret her vices as self-defence mechanisms. On the other, he cannot help but recognize that her ignominious death has been richly deserved. But perhaps the over-riding sensation he experiences in response to Celestina is awe. He cannot easily forget her majestic tones as she invokes the aid of the evil spirits of the underworld:

> I conjure thee, gloomy Pluto, Lord of the Infernal Regions Subterraneous, Emperor of the Court of the Damned, Prince of Fallen Angels, Master of Fires Sulphureous poured forth by boiling Etnas, Governor and Overseer of the torments and the tormentors of human souls, ... I, Celestina, thy best-known servitor, ... I conjure thee: Come without delay to obey my will ...
>
> When this is done, command me, Pluto, as thou wilt. But if thou dost it not quickly, then mayest thou hold me to be thy chiefest enemy. And I will strike with dazzling light the black recesses of thy gloomy dungeons. I will savagely accuse thee of thy continual deceptions; and I will with harshest words squeeze out thy name for all the world to hear. And now again, and once again, I conjure thee! (p. 67).

Celestina is splendid in her evil, and sublime evil attracts; it fascinates. I am reminded here of an offhand remark, in a totally different context, of one of *La Celestina's* twentieth-century translators, Mack Hendricks Singleton, whose English version of Rojas' work (published by the University of Wisconsin Press) has been much in demand. 'No matter how he tried', observed Singleton, 'Milton could not render Satan repulsive: quite the contrary'. I do not mean to imply that Rojas intended to hold up the anything

but celestial Celestina as a model for emulation, any more than 'Milton could not render Satan repulsive: quite the contrary'. In the Incipit of the Spanish work, in fact, it is expressly stated that the *Tragicomedy* was composed partly 'as a warning against the wiles of go-betweens' (p. 13), and we have already seen how in the end punishment is meted out to all wrongdoers. Thus, the spectator can have his cake and eat it, too. All the while the fictional universe of *La Celestina* is unfolding before him, he can surrender to the thrill of the forbidden fruit, without having to suffer the pangs of moral outrage. This is, in the most serious sense possible, art as play.

This blend of opposites — truancy and conformity — produces an equilibrium which is at once psychologically soothing and aesthetically pleasing. Artistically this sense of balance holds sway to the end, even in the emotional lament which Melibea's father Pleberio pronounces over the shattered body of his beloved daughter, where passionate grief is coupled with the formal rhetoric of the 'planctus'. As a statement, however, the final speech of the *Tragicomedy* serves, paradoxically, to destroy the fragile harmony which the observer's fantasy has been able to construct within the litreary universe of 'let's pretend', by reminding him of the futility of man's struggle to triumph against evil (of whatever sort) in a less than perfect world. As Pleberio rails against the ravages of Fortune, World, and Love, we recall the author's admonition in the Prologue: 'Man's life, if we correctly judge it, is but a battle from the cradle to the grave' (p. 11), and we realize its ultimate chilling import. Man is destined not only to fight invincible foes, but also to suffer isolation. Pleberio speaks for all humanity when he ends his pathetic lament with the unanswered — and unanswerable — question, which will never grow old, of why man is alone 'in hac lachrymarum valle', 'in this vale of tears'.

Let the critics discuss whether the work was meant to be didactic in an orthodox sense or secretly subversive. Generations of readers have recognized — and will continue to recognize — that it is artistically superb and profoundly human. That is why *La Celestina* was a smash hit and why it has become a classic. 'The wages of sin is death' for the figures who people its world, but evil and sin are as inevitable as death itself. And so, for this literary portrayal of man's solitary, never-ending struggle against evil, 'the wages of sin is life'.

*University of North Carolina,*
*Greensboro.*

## NOTES

[1] Mack Hendricks Singleton, trans., *Celestina; A play in twenty-one acts attributed to Fernando de Rojas,* Madison: The Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1968, p. 33. Further page references to this work will be noted within parentheses in the text.

# HALLOWED GROUND: GROUP AREAS IN THE STRUCTURE AND THEME OF *ABSALOM, ABSALOM!*

*by* P. S. WALTERS

'Unlike the narrative pattern in some of the other novels, the form of *Absalom, Absalom!* cannot be perceived externally through an abstract formula', writes A. C. Hoffmann,[1] clearly identifying the major problem in approaching this novel. Unlike *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury, Absalom, Absalom!* is not structured around the stream-of-consciousness of various characters, although it contains at least one lengthy passage which would appear to be an interior monologue, and although much of the narrative would appear — in its sheer amplitude and elliptical grammar — to be close to stream-of-consciousness writing. However, the presence of inverted commas in large sections of the narrative, and the apparently unmotivated shifts from narrator to narrator do not contribute to such a classification. On the other hand, *Absalom, Absalom!* is unlike *Light in August* in that, although there is an omniscient narrator present at various points in the narrative, the most important parts of the book are left to the largely conjectural work of individual character-narrators. Moreover, although A. C. Hoffmann is probably accurate in seeing a movement in each of the nine chapters towards 'a climactic surprise or revelation',[1] such revelations (the full significance of which is withheld) seem slight indeed to the reader who is immersed for a first or second time in the flux of the narrative. One's first impression is rather of the arbitrariness of the chapter divisions.

Another possibility suggests itself: does the use of multiple narration perhaps mean that *Absalom, Absalom!* is a study in point of view in the manner of Henry James? Yet such a use of technique often seems to be most effectively combined with an indisputable body of 'fact' within the work against which the variation in point of view can be measured. There is, to be sure, a certain body of fact in *Absalom, Absalom!* and there are certain noticeable differences in point of view between Miss Rosa, Mr. Compson, Quentin, and Shreve. But the body of fact is a slender one — scarcely even an articulated skeleton — and, in the last analysis, the method of the book would seem designed to prove that no such indisputable body of fact is obtainable, for, although one does acquire an accumulation of scraps of information about

Sutpen, the overwhelming impression is that the book is one vast web of multiple conjecture.

There are two even stronger reasons for not considering point of view — in the usual sense of the term — the unlocking structural principle. The first is that all the narrators, irrespective of age, sex, or place of origin, use the same 'ponderous, involute, unearthly Faulknerese'[2] in their narration, which Scott elsewhere calls 'a narrative style unlike that ever seen or heard anywhere at any time.'[3] Not only do they all sound alike, but at times — and this is the second reason — they would appear to merge:

> It was Shreve speaking, though save for the slight difference which the intervening degrees of latitude had inculcated in them (differences not in tone or pitch but of turns of phrase and usage of words), it might have been either of them and was in a sense both: both thinking as one, the voice which happened to be speaking the thought only the thinking become audible, vocal . . . (p. 303).[4]

Faced with the difficulty of beginning an adequate descriptive evaluation of *Absalom, Absalom!*, the reader might feel justified in resorting to Clifton Fadiman's hyperbolical description of the book's method, that 'it is as if a mad child had gone to work on the chronicle with a pair of shears, and then each jagged division were narrated by a different personage'.[5] Conrad Aiken, more mildly and possibly more accurately, believes that 'the form is really circular — there is no beginning and no ending properly speaking, and therefore no *logical* point of entrance. . . .'[6] If there is no logical point of entrance, then there is no logical point of exit either. Indeed, the circularity of the narrative can be seen in microcosm when Quentin (through whose mind all the other narratives and conjectures are filtered) is confronted (for the first and only time) with the only living Sutpen and has the following circular dialogue with him:

> *And you are —— ?*
> *Henry Sutpen.*
> *And you have been here —— ?*
> *Four years.*
> *And you came home —— ?*

*To die. Yes.*
*To die?*
*Yes. To die.*
*And you have been here —— ?*
*Four years.*
*And you are —— ?*
*Henry Sutpen.* (p. 373)

It is significant that this conversation is not reported until five pages from the end of the book — that is, in that part of the novel where the reader, led on through the maze of hints and half-guesses, might reasonably expect some clarification, some resolution, some incontestably reliable scrap of information. Instead, the reader is faced with what Guetti calls 'a moment of hypnotic and futile circularity',[7] and one is tempted to agree with Mr. Compson that 'It's just incredible. It just does not explain. Or perhaps that's it: they don't explain and we are not supposed to know.' (p. 100). The ultimately hypothetical nature of the book Guetti dubs an 'extended simile', and maintains that

> . . . this quality is shown to be a constant property of the entire narrative in that Quentin is the sum of all the narrators and in that the anonymous narrator . . . refuses to sanction the entire narrative as anything more than hypothesis. The story thus becomes one great 'as though' based upon a supposed body of literal details like those of the 'Chronology' and 'Genealogy' and the attempt to make these details meaningful. All of the narrators attempt to compose these details into a story by which they will become significant both to narrator and listener, and the result is always a suspect relation between literal and metaphorical represented in the approximated story — an extended simile whose assertion of potential meaning insists that such meaning must only be potential.[8]

Mr. Guetti's argument is a powerful one and deserves studying in its entirety. Yet one cannot help feeling that he has possibly over-emphasized the ultimate 'suspect relation between literal and metaphorical' because this particular aspect of the novel supports the tenor of his book's argument so impressively. Time may prove Mr. Guetti to have seen more clearly than other critics the true nature, of the book; *Absalom, Absalom!* may prove to be not 'one kind of novel or another but . . . no novel at all'[9] — a structural *reductio ad absurdum* more colossal than Mr. Compson's wildest dreams. The possibility must remain, because it is in the nature

of this particular novel that out of its vast store of potential meanings it can support a number of quite contradictory interpretations. For a structural analysis of the novel, however, it is perhaps necessary to proceed 'as though' there were a valid relation between the literal and the metaphorical, even if it means becoming an Ahab and 'foisting' an interpretation on this white whale of a novel.

But perhaps 'foist' is too strong a word, because much excellent work has been done on what *does* constitute Faulkner's chosen perspective in this novel. Perhaps the culmination of this work to date is to be found in an article by Lynn Gartrell Levins,[10] in which she observes most shrewdly that the distinctions between the narratives in *Absalom, Absalom!* are not to be drawn on the grounds of style, but of literary form.[10] Each genre, Miss Levins argues — the Gothic novel, the Greek tragedy, the chivalric romance, and the tall tale — expresses structurally a particular degree of emotional involvement on the part of the fictional storyteller. Depending on who is narrating, then, the handling of spatial details will also differ in accordance with the genre in terms of which he (or she) shapes his (or her) version. Consequently, there is not *one* 'space' for the world of this novel, but — in keeping with the exceptionally high degree of conjecture of which the book is composed — *four* 'spaces' conjured up by the four I-narrators' genre-perspectives, *plus* the present settings and other spatial items contributed by the omniscient narrator.

Miss Levins has dealt in detail with the four generic spaces; it is perhaps sufficient to recapitulate briefly some of her main points. In Miss Rosa's tale, Sutpen's Hundred becomes a demonic edifice, the doomed castle of the Gothic novel, with an oppressive atmosphere and suitably inexplicable sights and sounds. In Mr. Compson's version — 'The Fall of the House of Sutpen' — the Sutpen domain is reduced to scenery and props for the tragic performance — 'cleaned and polished and arranged by scene shifters who with the passing of twilight would return and strike them and carry them, hollow, fragile and without weight, back to the warehouse until they should be needed again,' (p. 193). Quentin — in characteristic defiance of the facts — prefers to imagine the conventional 'flower-filled May morning' of chivalric romance, despite the fact that it is (historically speaking) winter when Judith and Bon meet. In Shreve's tall tale spatial details are employed to deflate and denigrate the larger-than-life Sutpen of Miss Rosa's and Mr. Compson's versions: Sutpen becomes an outsize ruffian and rogue. Having said this, however, one has by no means exhausted the functions of space in *Absalom, Absalom!*.

Such an examination is perhaps better begun with a few general points about other aspects of the novel's macro-structure.

Several studies of the novel concur in finding that one of the principal structural components of the work is a time-continuum.[11] Zoellner claims that the novel is saturated by Faulkner's conception of time as a cumulative continuum, of the present moment, its quality and tone, as the sum of all past moments. Scott has indicated the striking parallel between the effects of this time-continuum on the reader and the effects which the Futurists set out to achieve in their painting:

> The simultaneousness of states of mind in the work of art: that is the intoxicating aim of our art . . . In order to make the spectator live in the center of the picture . . . the picture must be the synthesis of *what one remembers* and of *what one sees*.[12]

Part of Faulkner's method in *Absalom, Absalom!* might be seen as aimed at making the novel — for the reader as well as the character-narrators — a synthesis of what one remembers and of what one sees. One is expected to bring the memory of one's earliest encounters with Sutpen to bear on each subsequent meeting.

A most important part of the internal justification for such an interpretation is the passage in which Quentin speculates on the nature of 'happen':

> 'Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished. Maybe happen is never once but like ripples maybe on water after the pebble sinks, the ripples moving on, spreading, the pool attached by a narrow umbilical water-cord to the next pool which the first pool feeds . . .' (p. 261).

In fairness to Guetti, the persistent presence of the 'as though' element — here 'maybe' — must be noted: but if one wishes to cite this passage as an internal comment on the theme and method of the book, it is possible to treat 'maybe' as a rather conventional distancing device which the author uses to keep *himself* from direct comment, while nevertheless intending that the forcefulness of the spatial image should carry its full metaphorical weight. Further internal evidence is cited by Zoellner,[13] who traces in a single 'sentence' the technique of 'time-alternation' which results in ' the atrophy of those habitual time distinctions which the reader brings to the novel . . .' and he concludes that 'Faulkner obviously wishes different points in time to coalesce'.

A logical corollary of the time-continuum towards which

Faulkner's very syntax may be seen to tend is the creation of a space-continuum. Zoellner naturally perceives this, and points out that such spatially 'distant' settings as the West Indies, or the octoroon mistress's New Orleans dwelling 'have as much immediate impact and relevancy as if they were physically present in the hulking mansion at Sutpen's Hundred or Quentin's room at Harvard'.[14] However, he prefaces this remark with the comment that 'spatial relationships are relatively meaningless', which he later develops in examining a further paragraph by saying that the Jamesian ' "solidity of specification" ' is 'peculiarly lacking', and speaks of 'Faulkner's habit of reducing even the most solid objects to a ghostly, undimensional evanescence . . .'[15] The element of ghostly unreality is undoubtedly there; Quentin himself is characterized as a ghost in conflict with itself and other ghosts in the early pages of the novel (p. 9), and it may be that this pervasive sense of unreality is the price Faulkner has to pay for attempting to create a novel which partakes of 'that logic- and reason-flouting quality of a dream which the sleeper knows must have occurred, stillborn and complete, in a second . . .' (p. 22).[16] But it should be noted that this unreality is shared by all the elements of the particular world which Faulkner has created in this novel, and is not something peculiar to the spatial dimension alone. The importance of this should not be underestimated, because, once one acknowledges that one is dealing with the book in terms of its particular kind of reality (or unreality), one is free to examine closely the various ways in which Faulkner uses space and spatial details to further the presentation of the novel's theme.

At first glance, it might seem that space[17] was a singularly arbitrarily chosen aspect of *Absalom, Absalom!* on which to rest a defence of the meaningfulness of the book's organisation. Yet the very fact that so much of the book is 'spoken aloud' means that the spatial element is very largely *indirectly* presented, and therefore only appears in fragments which the reader must piece together as best he may. Thus Faulkner's treatment of space in *Absalom, Absalom!* clearly fits into a more general pattern of 'deliberately withheld meaning',[18] while — as will be seen — performing (in this novel) a uniquely important thematic task.

Amid the varied physical features of the South between 1830 and 1910, Faulkner sets his narrators' reconstructions of the rise and fall of the House of Sutpen. Both meanings of 'house' are relevant in this context, for, as one reads the novel, it becomes clear that Sutpen regarded his grandiose mansion and hundred square miles of land as an essential part of the dynasty he wished to establish. Not only are house and land an integral part of his

'design', but in both prosperity and ruin they stand as an objective correlative for the condition of the whole. This central spatial symbol might be considered the source of the prolific number of spatial details which ramify throughout the book. It would appear that, in a work which is preoccupied with the fortunes of a character who habitually thinks in spatial terms, Faulkner has taken care that all the related themes are similarly realised in terms of this particular aspect of novelistic technique.

It is extremely difficult, even for the sake of this discussion, to separate the functions of spatial details in *Absalom, Absalom!*. Seldom does one find a passage in which they do not perform the triple task of contributing to the verisimilitude, heightening the atmosphere, and carrying symbolic significance. Nevertheless, it is perhaps instructive to isolate each function briefly, in order to demonstrate the range of effects of which Faulkner proves capable.

Occasionally, Faulkner establishes by almost exclusively realistic means the spatial background which he needs for developing his drama, as may be seen in the third-person narrator's description of early Jefferson, the community which Sutpen consistently ignores:

> (Jefferson was a village then: the Holston House, the courthouse, six stores, a blacksmith and livery stable, a saloon frequented by drovers and peddlers, three churches and perhaps thirty residences) . . . (p. 32)

Sutpen's house and plantation loom the larger in relation to the tiny village, and, moreover, its isolation from that community (it was twelve miles from Jefferson to the house) is made the more remarkable.

In the opening paragraph of the book (p 7), however, realistic and atmospheric details are combined to create an illusion of a 'real place' and the pervading feeling which that place exudes. Faulkner mentions a particular room, some details of its furnishings, the nearness of a wistaria vine, and the heaviness with which its scent hangs in air which is so hot and still. These details give the reader a sense of a 'real' Southern September afternoon while at the same time suggesting a sense of claustrophobia, a sense that the room is cut off from the life going on outside. Other details contribute more especially to atmosphere alone: the colour of Miss Rosa's dress, her posture in the chair, the contradictory suggestion of coldness amidst the heat in the adjective 'iron'. At the same time, as will be discussed later, these details function symbolically as means of indirect characterization:

> From a little after two oclock until almost sundown of the long still hot weary dead September afternoon they sat in what Miss Coldfield still called the office because her father had called it that — a dim hot airless room with the blinds all closed and fastened for forty-three summers because when she was a girl someone had believed that light and moving air carried heat and that dark was always cooler, and which (as the sun shone fuller and fuller on that side of the house) became latticed with yellow slashes full of dust motes which Quentin thought of as being flecks of the dead old dried paint itself blown inward from the scaling blinds as wind might have blown them. There was a wistaria vine blooming for the second time that summer on a wooden trellis before one window, into which sparrows came now and then in random gusts, making a dry vivid dusty sound before going away: and opposite Quentin, Miss Coldfield in the eternal black which she had worn for forty-three years now, whether for sister, father, or nothusband none knew, sitting so bolt upright in the straight hard chair that was so tall for her that her legs hung straight and rigid as if she had iron shinbones and ankles, clear of the floor with that air of impotent and static rage like children's feet. (p. 7)

Miss Rosa's house, however, is only one of three 'present tense' settings where the narrators reconstruct Sutpen's story. In each case, the third-person narrator suggests something of the character of the place, thereby providing the reader with an indirect hint as to the relative reliability of the reconstruction which takes place there. Three chapters are located on the front gallery of the Compsons' house: the light is the gentler light of evening, the air is filled with wistaria and the smoke of Mr. Compson's cigar, and Quentin can see fireflies drifting 'in soft random' in 'the deep shaggy lawn' (p. 31). The atmosphere is far more relaxed and much less claustrophobic than at Miss Rosa's, and Mr. Compson's narration is more whimsical, less obsessive. Miss Levins has pointed out the distance he achieves through irony.

A few lines after he has suggested the atmosphere at Compsons', the narrator anticipates the setting of the last four chapters of the book — Quentin's rooms at Harvard, with 'the long iron New England snow' outside — which he connects by means of the odours of this September evening and the letter which Mr. Compson will write. The purpose of this leap in time and space is probably to create a greater unity between the present settings of the novel, and, although in the abstract it appears a rather

obvious device, it is the only hint of the present setting for nearly four chapters, and is of considerable help to the reader in a book where one tends to lose one's bearings rather easily. The coldness of the Harvard room suggests a certain detachment which is not possible in the heart of the sultry South. At the same time, this detachment may not be what is required. The narrator suggests the limits of this setting several chapters later:

> . . . in the cold room . . . dedicated to that best of ratiocination which after all was a good deal like Sutpen's morality and Miss Coldfield's demonizing — this room not only dedicated to it but set aside for it and suitably so since it would be here above any other place that it (the logic and the morality) could do the least amount of harm — . . . (p. 280)

Present settings in *Absalom, Absalom!*, however, are not primarily important in their own right, but exist as part of the general subject-object relationship on which the book is built. They interact with, and soon dissolve into historical and generic settings, and also help the reader establish certain (limited) perspectives of the past. As the book develops, present settings yield in prominence to reconstructed or imagined past scenes (in a word, they 'dissolve') in which, once again, realistic and atmospheric details mingle to create the sense of a living, almost contemporaneous past, which, at the moment of telling, becomes part of the narrated present of a tale within a tale. Depending on who the narrator is, of course, this 'tale' is by turns Gothic novel, Greek tragedy, chivalric romance, or 'tall' tale. For instance, in the description below of Oxford (Miss) on the eve of the Civil War, Mr. Compson combines sounds and contrasts of light and shade with details of clothing, cosmetics, and drink to create a scene full of nostalgia and foreboding — a Southern version of Thackeray's ball on the eve of Waterloo:

> And there would be music at night — fiddle and triangle among the blazing candles, the blowing of curtains in tall windows on the April darkness, the swing of crinoline indiscriminate within the circle of plain gray cuff of the soldier or the banded gold of rank, of an army even if not a war of gentlemen, where private and colonel called each other by their given names not as one farmer to another across a halted plow in a field or across a counter in a store laden with calico and cheese and strap oil, but as one man to another above the suave powdered shoulders of women, above the two raised glasses of scuppernong claret or bought champagne

> — music, the nightly repetitive last waltz as the days passed and the company waited to move . . . (pp. 122-123)

The past settings, however, no matter how vivid their veisimilitude or powerful their atmosphere, perform in their turn a subordinate function: the provision of a physical and spiritual circumambience for Thomas Sutpen and his colossal plantation — which, however, one never sees whole as one would had Faulkner used a conventional static presentation. To the reader, it seems as if the house is *simultaneously* being built, decaying, and being mentally reconstructed throughout the book as each narrator applies the conventions of his chosen genre. Having said this, though, one must concede that details of the *construction* of Sutpen's Hundred do tend to predominate in the earlier part of the book, but never to the extent of creating a completely coherent picture. The presentation of Sutpen's Hundred — as, indeed, the fragmented, indirect presentation of all spatial details in this book — is governed by the technique of 'memory-narrative':

> A 'memory-narrative' is an outflow of incidents from the memory which group themselves as the context around a particular person or event but which, since the mind at first recovers only an *essence* of that person or event, do not come forth in regular narrative sequence. A moment of importance from the past that is called to mind appears with certain visual-emotional qualities in an almost spatial context, and not immediately as the series of successive events leading up to and including that moment.[19]

Before one learns any details about Sutpen's creation of his plantation, one sees the tableau of Sutpen, his architect and slaves held in just such a 'spatial context'. Only after this intial image has been imprinted on the reader's mind, is one provided, by the third person narrator and Miss Rosa, with some hints as to the fundamental lay-out of the plantation. The reasons for its coming into being and for its decay — often purely conjectural — form the substance of the rest of the novel. To abstract for a moment and piece together details into a somewhat coherent picture: Sutpen acquires from Ikemotubbe 'a hundred square miles of some of the best virgin bottom land in the country' (p. 34), on which he builds, with the aid of a French architect and twenty 'wild niggers', a plantation house '"the size of a courthouse"' (p. 16), which he fits out with imported silver, crystal, carpets and furniture, and which has appropriate slave quarters, formal

gardens, a scuppernong arbour with barrelstave hammock, and, on the river, a fishing camp. This princely estate is unmistakenly Southern, and, on a realistic level, is clearly relatable to the socio-economic realities of the South in the ninety-seven years which the novel spans. The obviously realistic details, however, are not there simply to create a period piece: they have a symbolic function, which, although discussed in detail later, may be briefly stated here. By means of the various spatial details relating to the swift creation and gradual crumbling into ruin of Sutpen's Hundred, the reader may infer not only the collapse of Sutpen's 'design', but also the economic ruin of a sizeable part of one continent, and the passing of an entire way of life.

No less significant than the purely realistic details of the estate is the atmosphere of the house itself, for this atmosphere is not simply, in the usual sense of the term, the emotional effect of the sum total of its physical aspects, but, in Mr. Compson's view, seems to be an active and vital independent force of its own:

> '... as though his [Sutpen's] presence alone compelled that house to accept and retain human life; as though houses actually possess a sentience, a personality and character acquired, not so much from the people who breathe or have breathed in them inherent in the wood and brick or begotten upon the wood and brick by the man or men who conceived and built them — in this house an incontrovertible affirmation for emptiness, desertion; an insurmountable resistance to occupancy save when sanctioned and protected by the ruthless and the strong.' (p. 85)

One can also see at work in this paragraph what Zoellner[20] calls the peculiar metaphysic of the novel. It is not the wood or the brick that is 'real' for Faulkner; they are not *there* in the same way as 'the abstract and dimensionless spiritual condition of the protagonist and those surrounding him'.[21] Nevertheless, although something as solid and important as the plantation house itself seems, through the narrators' talk, to be translated to an abstract and dimensionless level of fictional existence, there are occasions when the spatial details are 'real' enough to the reader to provide him with direct clues to the universal themes with which the book is attempting to deal. In so far, then, as spatial details point to a resonance beyond the levels of verisimilitude and atmosphere, they may be said to perform a symbolic function.

The most general symbolic use to which Faulkner puts spatial details is that of indirect characterization. In his characterization of a minor character such as Ellen Coldfield Sutpen, Faulkner

combines a description of her hands with details of the table furnishings to produce an impression of a woman of placid character who complacently accepts and is part of her opulent environment. The reader can readily visualize 'the small plump ringed unscarified hands folded in tranquil anticipation of the food, on the damask before the Haviland beneath the candelabra. . .' (p. 65). Ellen is a comparatively minor character, and consequently Faulkner needs little more than one or two images such as this (and the 'butterfly' images) to denote what is essential about her character.

When one turns to Faulkner's treatment of the more important characters, one finds a similar reliance on symbolic spatial details, but here the implications are more complex. In a passage dealing with Henry Sutpen's first impressions of New Orleans, one finds his attitude to the city's architecture revealing the narrowness of his upbringing and the rigidity of his moral code, while at the same time suggesting something of the atmosphere of the city. Contrasts in kinds of movement suggest contrasting economies; details of movement, clothing, attitude suggest a greater liveliness and wealth—the tangible signs of a way of life foreign to the planter's son from Jefferson, Mississippi:

> . . . the architecture a little curious, a little femininely flamboyant and therefore to Henry opulent, sinful; the inference of great and easy wealth measured by steamboat loads in place of a tedious inching of sweating human figures across cotton fields; the flash and glitter of a myriad carriage wheels, in which women, enthroned and immobile and passing rapidly across the vision, appeared like painted portraits beside men in linen a little finer and diamonds a little brighter and in broadcloth a little trimmer and with hats raked a little more above faces a little more darkly swaggering than any Henry had ever seen before . . . (p. 110).

However, it is one of the unusual features of this novel that characters do not seem to exist in their own right as do characters in other novels, but both characters and character-narrators alike seem subordinate to the embodying of Sutpen and all the appurtenances of his family and plantation. It is appropriate that the first character-narrator should be the one who, of all the narrators alive in 1910, has had the most direct dealings with Sutpen. Yet closer examination suggests that Miss Rosa is far from being an ideal narrator. Her name — 'Coldfield' — and the atmosphere of her house hint that she lacks the human warmth necessary for a

sympathetic portrayal of the central figure. The third-person narrator observes that her handwriting reveals 'a character cold, implacable, and even ruthless' (p. 10), and the neat picket fence of her small 'grimly middleclass yard or lawn' (p. 21) hardly seems the best vantage-point from which to survey — let alone appraise — the soaring magnificence of Sutpen's Hundred. In fact, Miss Rosa is only *apparently* the most reliable person; from the symbolic spatial details which surround her, the reader is able to infer that her whole character and attitude is scarcely likely to provide reliable evidence. As Miss Levins has shown, the formal perspective of a Gothic narrative is one prone to heightening for emotional effect. The 'iron' shinbones, suggesting both coldness and inflexibility, her rigid posture in the chair, the black material of her dress, all contribute to the reader's impression of a narrow moral rectitude which will allow subjective preconceptions to distort her narration of events. This is further emphasized by her use of the word 'demon' — part of the somewhat hysterical language of a Gothic novel — when she refers to Sutpen. Nevertheless, it is her 'outraged recapitulation' (p. 8) that initially conjures up Sutpen's presence and creates the moment of origin for the memory-narrative which comprises the whole book. His presence, her vision of him, and the setting are all three characterized in spatial metaphors:

> 'Out of quiet thunderclap he would abrupt (man-horse-demon) upon a scene peaceful and decorous as a schoolprize water colour, faint sulphur-reek still in hair clothes and beard . . .' (p. 8).

The thunder-clap and sulphur-reek are not essential to Sutpen himself, but are the result of Miss Rosa's 'demonizing'; while the comparison of her house to a 'schoolprize water colour' powerfully conveys the sense of spinsterish seclusion which characterizes both house and inhabitant.

In this way, in the presence of two character-narrators, the central character is brought before the reader, and it is largely the nature of *his* preoccupation which the wealth of spatial details is designed to convey. Some pages into Chapter Seven, Sutpen uses the word 'design' in a conversation with General Compson which is reported by Quentin (p. 240). The word is highly signficant in conjunction with Sutpen, not only for its connotations of will (which is highly developed in him), but also because it denotes a *pattern or plan for the arrangement of objects in space.* Arranging objects in space is precisely what the reader watches

Sutpen doing throughout the book. In the first instance, Quentin and the reader share the vision which Miss Rosa conjures up:

> ... Quentin seemed to watch them overrun suddenly the hundred square miles of tranquil and astonished earth and drag house and formal gardens violently out of the soundless Nothing and clap them down like cards upon a table beneath the up-palm immobile and pontific, creating the Sutpen's Hundred, the *Be Sutpen's Hundred* like the oldentime *Be Light* (pp. 8-9).

The Biblical allusion is no accident: Faulkner uses it to create a parody of the *Fiat*, the divine creative word of Genesis I — a parody which reflects ironically on the grandiose scale of Sutpen's design. Miss Rosa, as opposed to Faulkner, uses it as part of her Gothic demonizing. Significantly, there is also an impression of transience which heightens the irony at Sutpen's expense: the implication is that, if house and gardens can appear as rapidly as that, they can also vanish as swiftly.

The second version of the creation of Sutpen's Hundred is seen more through the eyes of the community of Jefferson and is narrated largely by the third-person narrator. The sense of back-breaking toil which this second account creates counterbalances the original impression of semi-divine effortlessness. Spatial details proliferate. With the men of Jefferson, one watches the mansion rise, 'carried plank by plank and brick by brick out of the swamp where the clay and timber waited' (p. 37); one sees it standing finished, but 'unpainted and unfurnished, without a pane of glass or a doorknob or hinge in it ... surrounded by its formal gardens and promenades, its slave quarters and stables and smokehouses' (p.39), and one senses the accuracy of Mr. Compson's characterization of it as 'the half-acre gunroom of a baronial splendor'. Sutpen then lives in the unfinished house for three years until he makes enough money with his cotton crops to furnish it in fitting style. It takes four large wagons to carry all the furnishings, and a now completely outraged Jefferson hears how Sutpen and his 'somewhat tamed' negroes had 'installed the windows and doors and the spits and pots in the kitchen and the crystal chandeliers in the parlours and the furniture and the curtains and the rugs . . .' (p. 44). This listing of items on the part of the narrators approaches the scope of the epic catalogue, and, in this way, heightens one's sense of Sutpen's almost heroic power over material things.

As the novel unfolds, occasional spatial details remind the reader of the pristine wealth and grandeur of Sutpen's Hundred,

but, because of the synchronous time-patterns of the novel, the brief years of Sutpen's triumph are either omitted or hastily dealt with, as the different narrators begin or leave off at seemingly arbitrary points. Sutpen's attempt to play out the role of 'the biggest single landowner in the county' is ironically commented on by Mr. Compson, who, in his projection of Sutpen's story as a Greek tragedy, uses a spatial metaphor derived from the theatre to suggest the rapid invisible transition of the historical processes at work:

> . . . he was unaware that his flowering was a forced blooming too and that while he was still playing the scene to the audience, behind him Fate, destiny, retribution, irony — the stage manager, call him what you will — was already striking the set and dragging on the synthetic and spurious shadows and shapes of the next one (pp. 72-73).

The words 'synthetic and spurious shadows' suggest another level of evaluation of spatial details: although his house and land are 'real' enough to Sutpen, they are but shadows to one of the narrators probing for the clue to the mystery of this man. Perhaps the alert reader should accept this as a hint not to demand too much from the spatial symbolism in the book; certainly one should also take it as evidence of the differences of narrative perspective which are brought to bear in the novel.

The next 'scene', portraying the decline and fall of Sutpen's Hundred, is an extended one in which the reader is deluged with details of the physical decay of the house and plantation — the outward and visible signs of the disintegration of Sutpen's design. In Chapter Five, Miss Rosa speaks of the house's 'rotting portico and scaling walls', the 'ruined and weed-choked flower-beds', (p. 136), and she describes Sutpen, returned from the War, 'a part of him encompassing each ruined field and fallen fence and crumbling wall of cabin or cotton house or crib' (p. 160), not even pausing for breath before undertaking to restore his house and plantation. Sutpen eventually finds that he cannot reclaim enough of his plantation (which Miss Rosa maintains would be more accurately called 'Sutpen's One' at this point) to maintain Judith, Miss Rosa, Clytie, and himself, and so takes to running his little crossroads store, where the man who had walked beneath crystal chandeliers and fanlights imported pane by pane from France is now placed among 'a stock of ploughshares and hame strings and calico and kerosene and cheap beads and ribbons. . . .' (p. 181). Appropriately enough, his degradation and defeat are

symbolized, just as his triumph had been, by a catalogue of items. The fact that these details have been drawn from the tales of the diametrically opposed narrators, Miss Rosa and Shreve, demonstrates in miniature the kind of coherent synthesis which it is possible to absract from the fragments scattered throughout the separate tales.

The fall of Sutpen's Hundred, taking into consideration its geographical and historical location, would seem, at first, to be caused simply by the historical forces at work in the real world which *Absalom, Absalom!* to some extent attempts to reflect. But such an interpretation would render the involved structure of the book superfluous. The decline of the South — and of Sutpen's Hundred as its representative — is something which the reader takes more or less for granted. The book seems far more concerned with the reasons why Sutpen's individual 'design' failed, and it is in terms of this that the narrators attempt to find their answers.

By the time Sutpen came to tell his story to General Compson, Quentin maintains, Sutpen himself had long since given up any hope of ever understanding it (p. 263). Nevertheless, he undertakes 'that patient amazed recapitulation'[2] as if he is trying to explain 'to circumstances, to fate itself':

> 'You see, I had a design in my mind. Whether it was a good or a bad design is beside the point; the question is, *Where did I make the mistake in it,* what did I do or misdo in it, whom or what injure by it to the extent which this would indicate. I had a design. To accomplish it I should require money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family — incidentally of course, a wife.' (p. 263, italics mine.)

It is the italicised question which the narrator-characters are engaged in attempting to answer, and which the reader in turn must try to solve by piecing together the information which the various narrator-characters provide.

In the first instance, it is clear that the word 'design' means something more to Sutpen that a pattern or plan for the arrangement of objects in space, although in this direction alone Sutpen proves himself something of a prodigy. In twenty-five years Sutpen accomplishes by ruthless strength what it had taken other men generations to achieve, and, even in the general ruin of the South, Sutpen preserves sufficient genius with material things to get two Italian marble tombstones weighing one thousand pounds each ' "past a sea coast so closely blockaded that the

incoming runners refused any cargo except ammunition . . .'". But the design includes *people* as well as things: a family, and ('incidentally, of course') a wife, and, clearly, people are regarded as subordinate to the design.

In putting his design before people, Sutpen makes his fundamental error. Returning from the War to find his plantation beyond repair and his son a murderer in voluntary exile, Sutpen turns his attention to procuring another wife on whom he may beget another heir. This drives him to the desperate ruse of proposing to Miss Rosa that they 'breed together for test and sample and if it was a boy they would marry . . .' (p. 177). This proposal so outrages Miss Rosa (and it is not only her strict moral rectitude which is affronted, but also her basic humanity) that she withdraws totally from Sutpen's world for forty-three years, just as her father had retreated to his attic and starved himself to death at the outbreak of the Civil War. Having failed with Miss Rosa, Sutpen then proceeds to get Wash Jones's granddaughter with child. When this child turns out to be a girl, Sutpen spurns mother and daughter with less concern than he evinced for his foaling mare. This treatment so infuriates Wash Jones — who (largely owing to the perspective of Shreve's narration) has been consistently represented as the lowest form of human life — that, forgetting his previous hero-worship of the 'Cunnel', he kills Sutpen with a rusty scythe as he leaves the girl's bedside. In both instances, it is made clear that Sutpen's obsession with his design renders him incapable of treating human beings on human terms, and, in this way, he brings about his own death.

In the course of the book, it is made clear that, in his relationships with Miss Rosa and Jones's granddaughter, Sutpen is simply compounding the error which he had initially made in 'putting aside' (the term is his own) his Haitian bride when he discovered that she was part negro, and therefore could never be 'adjunctive or incremental' (p. 240) to the design he had in mind. The child of this first marriage is, of course, Charles Bon, who is later responsible for the ruin of what was, in fact, Sutpen's *second* attempt to implement his design — the near success he achieves in Mississippi. The fact that Sutpen meets his death at the hands of a man who possesses merely the vestiges of humanity suggests how fundamentally *inhuman* Sutpen was in his dealings with his fellow men and women. The clue to his mistake is in the words 'adjunctive or incremental' as well as the word 'design' itself. All three have overtones of impersonality, as if they are best used when applied to objects which occupy a certain space, rather than to human beings. And it is precisely in having a design

which includes other human beings, in applying spatially derived terms to human situations, that Sutpen makes his mistake. His lack of awareness of what is amiss is what General Compson calls his 'innocence' —

> ' "... that innocence which believed that the ingredients of morality were like the ingredients of pie or cake and once you had measured them and balanced them and mixed them and put them into the oven it was all finished and nothing but pie or cake could come out ..." ' (p. 263).

In a sense, Sutpen is representative of all mankind in his setting up a neat scheme which omits the element of incalculability in human affairs. In another sense, he is Faulknerian Man defeated by the forces represented by Faulknerian Woman,[22] forces of which he, in his 'innocence', is largely ignorant. He is also tragic man, pitting himself against fate, against a scheme of things ordered differently from his conception of them. Historically speaking, he is Southern man defeated by the particular cataclysm of the Civil War. But there is another sense in which Sutpen is at once more individual and more representative of Southern man, and this is a sense which is directly concerned with mythic space.

Sutpen first finds out what he 'had to do' when, as a poor-white boy on a Tidewater plantation, he was sent on an errand to the plantation house, knocked on the front door, and was told by the negro butler to go round to the back. It is clear he has broken a social norm; on a mythic level, he has violated hallowed ground. For hallowing, as Cassirer describes it,

> ... begins when a specific zone is detached from space as a whole, when it is distinguished from other zones and one might say religiously hedged around. This concept of a religious hallowing manifested concurrently as a spatial delimitation has found its linguistic deposit in the word *templum*.[23]

Furthermore, Cassirer describes the 'primordial mythical-religious feeling' linked with the fact of the spatial 'threshold'. From the veneration of the temple threshold, which spatially separates the house of the god from the profane world, Cassirer maintains, the fundamental juridical religious concept of property seems to have developed. Sutpen in his 'innocence' transgresses a religiously sanctioned 'threshold', and receives a shock so profound that his

determination to repay the affront dominates him throughout the rest of his life, to the exclusion of all feeling for the people who may be 'adjunctive or incremental' to his design. And because the design is copied from the Southern society of which he is a part, it naturally excludes negroes from its hallowed space (except in a subordinate capacity), and, in being faithful to his design, Sutpen is forced to exclude his own son from his house, and, it is suggested, forbids Bon's marriage to Judith *not* because it would be bigamous (though that idea is present), *nor* because it would be incestuous (though that would be true too), but because of his fear of miscegenation. Sutpen refuses to utter the words of acceptance and love, 'My son, my son,' because his design excludes men of mixed blood. Ironically, the only Sutpen descendant who survives the final holocaust is a part-negro idiot, a living symbol of the folly of the original design.

There are further ironies surrounding the concept of threshold in *Absalom, Absalom!*. As Frank Baldanza has pointed out, the book:

> . . . is organised around a series of confrontations at doorways or gates: Sutpen being turned away by a liveried Negro at the door of the Virginia plantation, Sutpen and his bride being pelted by garbage at the church door, Wash Jones shouting outside Miss Rosa's door, Rosa being restrained at the foot of the stairs at Sutpen's Hundred by Clytie on two occasions, Bon being halted and shot at the gate to Sutpen's Hundred by Henry, and finally Thomas Sutpen being killed at Wash Jones's front door.[24]

It is on the first occasion that Clytie restrains Miss Rosa at the foot of the stairs, in the touch of flesh with flesh, that Miss Rosa watches *'the fall of all the eggshell shibboleth of caste and color too'* — the very shibboleth which Sutpen had erected his threshold to create and maintain. Moreover, Quentin's inability to comprehend more of Miss Rosa's tale is described as 'something which he too could not pass (p. 172). Quentin, as the character-narrator in whom all the tales converge, is, ultimately, unable to pass the threshold of simply and desperately denying that he hates the South. Like Marlow in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* and like Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby*, Quentin's discovery of himself is intimately linked with what he is able to reconstruct about Sutpen and the South. But unlike Marlow or Nick, Quentin remains unable to make a choice on which he can act. And it is because Quentin is unable to translate what he has learnt about

the past into any decisive action in the present in which he finds himself, that the book remains so much of an open structure; Quentin is left with heart and mind hopelessly divided, and the reader, too, is left suspended between compassion and condemnation.

By treating Sutpen's design as he does, Faulkner would seem to be suggesting that, in the Southern design, the 'sacred places' are in reality profane, because they destroy human community, and are, moreover, the symbol of an individual's setting himself up against the community. The big house is used as a weapon by its possessor to exclude others. Sutpen's biological involvement with Bon seems to symbolize the inextricable relationship of White and Black, a relationship which the Whites would deny by setting up their individual *templa*, excluding the Blacks from them, and moving the Blacks to a no-man's-land where they cannot pose a threat because they cannot acquire the ownership of land. In his ironic use of spatial detail in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner appears to invert the entire notion of hallowing, and seems to suggest that it is the *whole* which is sacred because it is inclusive, and that the individual *templum* is an affront to humanity, foredoomed by its 'design' to decay and ruin. Sutpen's design included everything but love — that is, that which is fundamentally human, that which cannot be measured or calculated in spatial terms; that which causes man to sacrifice for its sake his space-occupying objects, his possessions; which causes him to break down artificial thresholds, or which, being lacked, renders those possessions and those sacred precincts so much dust and ashes.

Sutpen himself was responsible for the collapse of his design. His story is, to some extent, historically representative; in so far as he represents the man who will not acknowledge a common bond with a man of another race, preferring an abstraction — symbolized in *Absalom, Absalom!* in the spatial term 'design' — to a human relationship, Sutpen's fall is a moral fable of the South and so, by extension, a parable for all racist societies. But, in so far as Sutpen evinces a universal human tendency to prefer the tangible to the intangible, he may be seen as a universally representative figure, preferring what can be measured to what is most strong in its immeasurability, the spatial to the spiritual.

*University of Natal,*
*Pietermaritzburg.*

## NOTES

All page references in the text are to the Modern Library edition of *Absalom, Absalom!* (New York: Random House, 1951). Other references are listed below.

[1] 'Point of View in *Absalom, Absalom!*', UKCR, XIX (Summer, 1953), 233-4.
[2] Arthur L. Scott, 'The Myriad Perspectives of *Absalom, Absalom!*', *AQ* VI (Spring, 1954), 214.
[3] Arthur L. Scott, 'The Faulknerian Sentence', *Prairie Schooner,* XXVII (Spring, 1953), 92.
[4] See also pp. 261-262: 'Yes, we are both Father . . .'
[5] 'Faulkner, Extra-Special, Double-Distilled', *New Yorker,* XII (October 31, 1936), 62-64. Condensed and repr. in R. P. Warren, *Faulkner: A Collection of Critical Essays,* pp. 289-290.
[6] 'William Faulkner: The Novel as Form', *Atlantic Monthly,* CLXIV (Nov. 1939), p. 651.
[7] James Guetti, *The Limits of Metaphor* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1967), p. 79.
[8] Op. cit., p. 103.
[9] Op. cit., p. 108.
[10] 'The Four Narrative Perspectives in *Absalom, Absalom!*', *PMLA,* LXXXV (January, 1970), 35-47.
[11] See, e.g., Arthur L. Scott, 'The Myriad Perspectives of *Absalom, Absalom!*', *loc. cit.;* Robert H. Zoellner, 'Faulkner's Prose Style in *Absalom, Absalom!*', *Am. Lit.,* XXX (January, 1969), 486-502.
[12] Arthur L. Scott, 'The Myriad Perspectives of *Absalom, Absalom!*', *AQ,* VI (Spring, 1954), 217. Scott is quoting from Sheldon Cheney, *The Story of Modern Art* (New York: Viking Press, 1945), pp. 468-469.
[13] Robert H. Zoellner, op. cit., p. 488.
[14] Op. cit., p. 493.
[15] Op. cit., pp. 498-499.
[16] Unlike Miss Levins, the present writer thinks this description has wider applicability to the novel as a whole, and not just to Miss Rosa's narrative.
[17] I use this term in preference to 'setting', because it cannot then be confused with 'setting in time', and because it includes anything and everything (smells, sounds, etc.) which may in any way be thought of as occupying space, and hence furthering the presentation of theme through physical detail, rather than simply functioning as a backdrop — as 'setting' too often implies.
[18] The phrase is Conrad Aiken's (op. cit.), but Aiken — perhaps wisely — does not pursue it beyond the level of style.
[19] Douglas M. Thomas, 'Memory-Narrative in *Absalom, Absalom!*', *Faulkner Studies,* II (Summer, 1953), 20.
[20] Robert H. Zoellner, op. cit.
[21] Op. cit., p. 499.
[22] Compare Quentin in *The Sound and the Fury* and Joe Christmas in *Light in August,* and *Absalom, Absalom!,* p. 265: '"... didn't the dread and fear of females which you must have drawn in with the primary mammalian milk teach you better? What kind of abysmal and purblind innocence could that have been which someone told you to call virginity? what conscience to trade with which would have warranted you in the belief that you could have bought immunity from her for no other coin but justice?"'
[23] Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms,* Vol. II: *Mythical Thought,* transl. by Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), pp. 99-100.
[24] 'The Structure of *Light in August*', *MFS,* XIII (Spring, 1967), 68.

# DIE NASIONALE ELEMENT IN DIE SKEPPINGSWERK VAN N. P. VAN WYK LOUW

deur H. P. VAN COLLER

'n Mens bevind jou onmiddellik in diep vaarwater as jy 'nasionaal' of 'nasionalisme' wil defineer.[1] As aanvaarde uitgangspunt sou 'n mens kon sê dat die nasionalisme 'n gedagtesisteem is waarin die nasie sentraal is. Die onderskeid tussen nasie en volk is soms baie moeilik om te bepaal. Die afgeleide selfstandige naamwoord van volk is nie volkisme nie, maar nasionalisme. Nasionalisme het dus as sentrale element die nasie, maar kan ook as sentrale element hê, die volk. Daardeur word die twee begrippe egter nie gelyk gestel nie.

'n Volk is gewoonlik meer homogeen as 'n nasie. 'n Nasie hoef byvoorbeeld nie noodwendig slegs een taal te praat nie. 'n Volk daarenteen is 'n kultuurgemeenskap wat sonder uitsondering, dieselfde taal besig. Die vernaamste verskil tussen volk en nasie is egter seker dit nl. dat daar by 'n nasie die besit van staatkundige onafhanklikheid is of volgens D. J. Kotzé reeds die strewe bestaan by 'n klomp mense wat hulself as eenheid beskou om staatkundige onafhanklikheid te besit.[2] In die nasionalisme is die nasie dus sentraal. As die nasie altyd sentraal geplaas word en altyd individuele of ander belange oorheers, kan met reg gepraat word van totalitêre nasionalisme.

Soms word daar onderskei tussen die lewensterreine en word die nasie nie op alle terreine sentraal gestel nie. Op die godsdienstige terrein moet God byvoorbeeld sentraal geplaas word, op die estetiese terrein die beginsel van skoonheid, ens. Hierdie meer tolerante nasionalisme word liberale nasionalisme genoem. Ons keer later hierna terug. Voorts tref ons 'n volgende onderskeiding tussen die imperialistiese nasionalisme wat glo dat die nasie hom alleen kan handhaaf ten koste van ander nasies, en die nie-imperialistiese nasionalisme wat vir homself dieselfde regte opeis as wat dit aan ander nasies gun. Die nasionalisme kan maklik oorhel na die imperialisme, veral as die eenheidsgedagte oorbleklemtoon word.

Die agtervoegsel '-isme' van die woord 'nasionalisme' dui reeds daarop dat dit 'n verabsolutering van 'n sekere waardemoment is. Maar in die grond is die nasionalisme nie eng of bloot parogiaal nie. Daar word juis deur Van Wyk Louw beweer dat die nasionalisme die persoonlike liberalisme op groot skaal is. Die groot

waarde van die nasionalisme is dat dit aan die individu 'n sekere geborgenheid in 'n groep gee. Die bewussyn van 'n gemeenskaplike geskiedenis en die roem daarop gee aan die nasie ook een toekomsstrewe. Die nasionalisme gee die individu ook die geleentheid tot interaksie met ander mense wat sy eie verlede deel en dikwels dieselfde eienskappe het. Dit besorg aan hom 'n klankbodem, of soos Hendrik Marsman dit stel — sy weerklank. Die moderne standpunt jeens die nasionalisme is nie altyd só positief nie. Tans word gevra wat die nasionalisme kan bydra tot die (harmoniese) voortbestaan van die mens. Daar word dus oor die nasionalisme geredeneer; dit word nie bloot aanvaar of verdoem nie.

Juis die nasionalisme is soos 'n goue draad verweef in N. P. van Wyk Louw se skeppende arbeid, soveel so dat 'n mens dit een van dié temas in sy werk kan noem. 'n Tematiese studie loop altyd gevaar om bloot opsommend te raak. In hierdie artikel sal egter getrag word om én die omvang én die beduidenheid van die nasionalisme in Van Wyk Louw se werk te toon.

In *Berigte te velde* sê hy reeds in 1939 dat die menslike hom alleen in nasionale vorm uit — 'nêrens op aarde bestaan daar 'n "algemene mens" nie, net altyd konkrete mense wat tot 'n besondere volk behoort en 'n besondere taal praat'.[3] En meer as dertig jaar later bly hierdie geloof nog onverswak — hy vind juis die regverdiging vir 'n volksbestaan daarin dat 'n volk iets moet hê ' 'n eie nuanse van lewe' — en dit is vir Van Wyk Louw in ons besondere geval in die *taal* van die wêreld waarin hy sy jeug deurgebring het.[4]

Maar die nasionalisme het ook nie bloot onveranderd bly voortlewe in sy werk nie. Waar hy eers gesê het dat die nasionalisme dieselfde eise stel as 'n godsdiens, is hy later veel minder apodiktries in sy standpunt. Tog het die nasionalisme steeds dié dryfveer vir hom gebly, want vir hom is dit lewensvoorwaarde en nie alleen lewensbasis nie. Dit volg dan logies dat hy die nasionalisme op elke gebied sentraal sal plaas.

Vir Van Wyk Louw het die literatuur 'n sentrale posisie ingeneem binne die geesteslewe van 'n volk. Daarom moes dit beeld wees van die volkslewe, maar mag nooit in die bloot lokale bly vassteek nie. 'n Nasionale letterkunde moet alle moontlike teenstellings kan herberg. 'Nasionaal' word dus nie gelykgestel met 'populêr' nie. ' 'n Nasionale kultuur vertoon dieselfde piramidevorm soos die maatskappy: 'n breë basis van die massa se kultuurbesit, en daarbo 'n gedurige styging en verinniging tot by die skerp toppunt van die hoë skoonheid wat bo uit glans',[5] aldus Van Wyk Louw. Hy het hom gevolglik steeds verset teen pogings om voor-

skrifte neer te lê vir 'n nasionale literatuur — dit moes slegs beeld wees van die volledige mens.

Van Wyk Louw beklemtoon al in die voorwoord van *Berigte te velde* die primaat van die estetiese en dat hierdie 'suiwer estetiese' kuns 'n groot, selfs 'n beslissende faktor in die lewe van 'n volk kan wees. Dit was sy ideaal dat daar eenmaal 'n groot skoonheid uit hierdie land sal kom, wat ander volke sal laat sê: 'Daarom dan moet die volkie só swaar hê en bly lewe . . . dat hy so 'n skoonheid kan voortbring'. Deur diens aan die skoonheid kon die nasionale digte alleen ons voortbestaan verseker.

Daarom het hy nooit die verdeling in 'klein' en 'groot' tale erken nie. Selfs die kleinste taal kan werke van die grootste skoonheid voortbring. Juis Afrikaans was vir hierdie groot taak uiters geskik want dit verbind twee vastelande en put krag uit sowel Wes-Europa as Afrika. Afrikaans is hier gevorm en het ontwikkel saam met die mense van hierdie land, 'sodat die nuwe taal soos 'n goeie handskoen begin pas het, oor elke riffel en vou van die nuwe wêreldbeeld kon sluit'.[6] Afrikaans het dan in staat geword om hierdie land uit te sê soos geen Europese taal nie.

Van Wyk Louw het dan ook voortdurend daarop gewys dat die literatuur en veral die prosa wat in 'n volk geskryf en gelees word, die algemene kultuurpeil van 'n moderne volk weerspieël. Die ware kultuurmens het twee take, die taak van bouer en die taak van kritikus van die volk. Daarom het hy swak kritici herhaaldelik gestriem. Sy opmerking is nog net so aktueel, naamlik dat die Afrikaner se gevoelligheid vir kritiek daaruit spruit dat ons elke brokkie kritiek as 'n aanval op ons hele bestaan voel 'want ons kritiseerders het hul buite ons gestel, maar 'n boetgesant is een met die volk wat hy gésel'.[7] Binne 'n klein volkie wat hom bedreigd voel moet die nasionalis 'n fyn ewewig behou tussen aanmoedig en kritiseer. Kritici moet hulle dus één voel met die volk en sy gebreke, ten einde die foute te probeer verbeter, maar as dit nie anders kan nie, moet hulle bereid wees om saam met die volk onder te gaan.

Die nasionalis staan in 'n uiters komplekse verhouding ten opsigte van sy volk. Patriotisme is 'n uitsluitende liefde vir die eie en alles wat daarmee in verband staan. Dit is optrede in belang van die volk. Waar dit dus in die patriotisme gaan om aktivistiese handeling, daar kry ons in die geval van die nasionalisme ook besinning op jou deelhê aan jou gemeenskap. Waar die patriotisme net op die eie gerig is, betrek die nasionalisme ook ander nasionale strewes in sy blik. Van Wyk Louw wys voortdurend op die ruimheid wat inherent aan die nasionalisme is.

Dit is 'n ideologie wat die individualisme sowel as die gemeenskapsgevoel bevredig.

By Van Wyk Louw neem die voortdurende rekenskap-gee met betrekking tot die volk 'n besondere skakering aan. Blote verheerliking kom nooit voor nie, maar waarsku, vermaan, herinner baie meer dikwels. Vir hom was daar voorts 'n gedurige wisselwerking tussen die enkeling en sy volksgemeenskap. Die groot kunstenaar beïnvloed (dikwels slegs indirek) die massa, maar sy denke het op sy beurt uit die 'blinde massa' gekom. Die groot enkelinge van die kuns staan volgens Van Wyk Louw in hul denk nie afsydig van die massa nie. Hulle sublimeer juis die vae begeertes en die smart wat uit die massa opstyg.

As teenvoeter vir die massafikasie op alle gebiede propageer Van Wyk Louw die aristokratiese lewenshouding. Dit is 'n trotse en weerbare houding wat in die kuns slegs skoonheid en waarheid gehoorsaam. Die aristokrasie staan nie vreemd teenoor die volk nie. Ook is dit nie 'individualisme wat die volk afgekeer is' nie. In sy wese is dit die hoogste diens aan die gemeenskap: 'Dit is lewe binne die gemeenskap, maar gerig op ewige geestelike waardes daarbuite.' [8] Blote individualisme is 'n verskraling van die spektrum van menslikheid. 'n Mens moet afgeskei, dog tewens diep verbind aan jou gemeenskap wees. Die enkeling moet verbonde aan die volk wees, maar nie *van* die volk nie. Om gewete te wees van die volk, beteken nie om 'n 'besinger van sy eie tyd en volk se helde' te wees nie; ' 'n gewete het eintlik 'n ander taak: om ons van eie skuld bewus te maak'.[9]

Voorlopig kan ons slegs verwys na verskuiwings wat in die loop van die tyd ingetree het. Hy weerspreek in *Liberale Nasionalisme* selfs sy vroeëre stelling dat die nasionalisme dieselfde eise as 'n godsdiens stel. As ouer en wyser man spreek hy in die later stuk sy oortuiging uit dat 'geen enkele politieke geloof 'n volledige wêreldbeskouing kan wees nie'. Die besef het dus gegroei dat die 'politiek' ondergeskik is aan waardes soos menslikheid en geregtigheid. In latere geskrifte word al hoe meer ruimte bestee aan die nasionale strewes van ander bevolkingsgroepe, byvoorbeeld dié van die Bantoe. 'Wanneer 'n mens die waarde van nasionale regte insien, nie alleen as regte wat jou eie groep toekom nie, maar as universele menslike regte, dan is jy reeds uit die beperktheid van 'n eie groep uit; en jy sal hulle dan nie alleen vir jou eie groep opeis nie.' [10]

By 'n oorsigtelike kyk na literatore se sienings van die nasionale element in Van Wyk Louw se werk, val dit op dat weinig daarin slaag om enige gangbare definisie te gee. G. Dekker sê in *Oordeel*

*en besinning:* 'Nasionaal is elke kunswerk waarin die enkeling die beste wat in hom leef verwesenlik'.[11] Hierdie gelykstelling van 'nasionaal' met 'individueel" vind ons reeds vroeër by H. A. Mulder.[12] Ook P. du P. Grobler "Van Wyk Louw 50 Jaar"[13] en Ernst van Heerden *Nasionalisme en literatuur*[14] gee geen gangbare definisies van die begrip nie. Uitgaande van hul standpunt sou 'nasionaal' gelykgestel kon word aan 'universeel'. As elke uiting in Afrikaans 'nasionaal' sou wees dan mis die begrip nasionalisme 'n onderskeidende definisie.

Verskeie literatore het in Van Wyk Louw se nasionale poësie dadelik iets nuuts bemerk: ' 'n gebrek aan valse patos en bekrompe selfverheerliking' (Mulder); nie meer die verheerliking van die tipiese en die verheerliking van elke blom of struik nie, maar 'as ewige agtergrond van die mens wat nou in sy volle menslikheid op die voorgrond tree' (W. E. G. Louw).[15] Ook Dekker en veel later Van Rensburg[16] wys op nuwe elemente in 'Gedagtes, liedere en gebede van 'n soldaat': geen sentimentaliteit of vaderlandse frases nie (Dekker) en ' 'n weiering om in die pyn te berus; 'n wil om weerbaarder waardes as berusting uit die lyding te heel; 'n gebed om die wil wat helder en buigsaam soos die meslem is; mededoë selfs met die verdrukker, om sy vasgevangenheid in kleinmenslikheid'. . .[16]

Veel literatore het die essensiële elemente in Van Wyk Louw se nasionalisme negeer of bloot misgekyk. 'n Algemene misvatting was dat die nasionalisme slegs 'n tydelike toevlugsoord vir Van Wyk Louw sou wees. En hoewel H. A. Mulder wys op die belangrikheid van die skoonheid in Van Wyk Louw se werk, is P. du P. Grobler feitlik die enigste wat daarop wys dat die skoonheid dit is wat vir Van Wyk Louw die volksbestaan kan beveilig.

Dit is veral die *profeetskap* wat deur literatore uitgesonder is, om sodoende Van Wyk Louw se digterskap te tipeer as heroïes, strydvaardig en roepingsbewus. Volgens Opperman in *Digters van dertig* sou dit Carlyle wees wat Van Wyk Louw onder die indruk gebring het van die menslike ongelykheid; van die hoë taak van die koning, die leier, die digter en die geestelike held. Grové weer meen dat Van Wyk Louw nie die opgelegde profeetmantel wil aanvaar nie en nou dwing God hom. Hierdie angs vir die profeetskap, die twyfel aan sy roeping en taak, sê Grové, het nêrens 'tot 'n skoner verklanking gekom, as in die magistrale gedig "Die hond van God" nie, waar die digter hom projekteer in die gestalte van die Inkwisiteur'.[22] Hoewel hierdie stelling bedenklik is, vanweë die aanname dat 'n digter homself altyd in 'n gestalte projekteer, moet 'n mens saamstem met Grové se stelling

dat Van Wyk Louw as kritiseerder een is met die volk wat hy kritiseer.

Maar dit is veral die taal wat 'n individu aan 'n volk bind. Juis die taal vervul die onderskeidende rol wanneer daar sprake is van volk en nasie. As 'profeet', 'siener' of 'voorloper' het Van Wyk Louw opgetree teenoor 'n spesifieke volksgroep — die Afrikaanse volk. Dit was 'n bewuste strewe gerig op 'n spesifieke volk. As leier van 'n geslag en selfs geslagte, kan Van Wyk Louw vergelyk word met ander leiersfigure soos Marsman en selfs Yeats, die vurige Ierse nasionalis. Maar weer eens het Van Wyk Louw wat hy gedoen het, gedoen deur en met die Afrikaanse taal, terwyl byvoorbeeld Yeats Engels en nie Iers gebruik het nie.

Miskien sou dit ons loon om eers 'n opname te maak van die voorkoms van die nasionale tema in Van Wyk Louw se werk alvorens ons uitsprake maak oor die vergestalting daarvan. As nasionaal beskou ons al die werke waarin 'n skrywer sy lewensruimte as land sien; en nie byvoorbeeld bloot as natuur nie; waarin hy op sy volk en nie bloot op sy gemeenskap nie, gerig is, waarin 'n verhouding gebeeld word tussen 'n mens en sy gemeenskap wat veral 'n taalgemeenskap is. Hierdie verhouding is kompleks en kan, soos te begryp is, verskillende vorme aanneem. Die individu kan hom byvoorbeeld uitsê oor 'n bepaalde onderdeel van die volk: oor iets van sy ekonomiese of sy godsdiens byvoorbeeld. Heel die verhouding kan een van botsende standpunte, van konflik wees, maar dit kan ook een wees van verbondenheid, dus een van vrugbare wisselwerking.

Ons gaan kyk eerstens na werke met die Afrikaanse nasionalisme as tema en vervolgens na werke met die nié-Afrikaanse nasionalisme as tema d.w.s. van die meer spesifieke na die algemene. In *Alleenspraak* oorheers die persoonlike liriek nog in hoë mate. Die nasionalisme maak eintlik heers 'n sterk intrede in *Die halwe kring* (1937) en wel in 'Gedagtes, liedere en gebede van 'n soldaat', 'die geuseliedere van 'n moderne Afrikaner'. In hierdie reeks is daar blyke van 'n nasionalisme wat vitaal, heroïes, strydbaar is, maar tewens vol deernis met die verdrukker vanweë sy menslike swakhede.

In 'Van die gekwestes wat op die slagveld lê' met sy dramatiese beginreëls en vinnig voortstuwende vers kry ons reeds blyke van 'n stille vasberadenheid, maar veral in 'Klein gebed: van die hande wat verag word' sien ons 'n strydbare houding wat ver verwyderd is van byvoorbeeld 'n Totius se aanvaarding in sy *By die monument*. Uit die hele reeks blyk die vitalisme en veral die invloed van die nasionaal-sosialisme, maar deernis met die oorheerser soos

blyk uit 'Julle is die oorheersers' is veral een van die *nuwe* kenmerke van Van Wyk Louw se nasionalisme.

Waar die profeetskap elders in Van Wyk Louw se werk 'n konflik tussen menslikheid en geroepenheid tot gevolg het, kry ons in die gedig 'Ons moet die bitter taal' nog totale aanvaarding van die profetiese taak, maar dit *is* 'n 'bitter taak'. Die siening van die profeetskap in hierdie gedig toon merkwaardige ooreenkomste met Van Wyk Louw se siening van die taak van die digter. In *Lojale verset* lui dit byvoorbeeld só wanneer hy praat oor die 'aristokratiese ideaal': 'Dit is 'n lewe *binne* die gemeenskap, maar gedurig op ewige, geestelike waardes *daarbuite* gerig.' [18]

Die hoogtepunt van hierdie reeks word bereik in 'Miskien ook sal ons sterwe'. Ons kry hier 'n persoon wat in twyfel verkeer of hy sal ondergaan, maar nie twyfel aan die reg om te bestaan nie. Hoewel hy geen sekerheid het dat hierdie volk onthou sal word nie, bly hy met dié wete:

> dat ons nie kon gebuig word
> soos hul geweld dit wou,
> en dat ons hoog kan lewe
> net aan ons bloed getrou.

Uit hierdie reeks blyk 'n duidelike omlynde roepingsbesef, 'n onafhanklikheid en suiwerheid van strewe, maar ook is teenwoordig besinning oor die bestaan van 'n volk. Totius se besembos sê nog personifiërend: 'ek leef en sal lewe; my doodkry is min!' By Van Wyk Louw is daar besinning oor die land en die wete dat 'n volk se bestaan nie maar 'n vanselfsprekendheid is nie. Hierdie reeks is voorwaar integrasie van 'die patriotiese en die estetiese'!

Ná die gestalteliriek in *Gestaltes en diere* vind ons in *Nuwe verse* 'n gans ander instelling en tematiek. Dié bundel is in die grond besinning op die menslike bestaan, veral dit wat ons bestaan konstitueer. Dit behels op dié manier, 'n terugkeer na die wêreld van die digter se jeug, na die vroeë geskiedenis, na die oerbronne van ons godsdiens, van ons wêreldbeskouing(s) — kortom *Nuwe verse* is 'n in-reliëf-plaas van die moderne mens én maatskappy. Vroeër in *Standpunte*, Oktober 1947, het die gedig 'Moet ek vir iemand nog iets sê', 'Kassandra' geheet. Waar hierdie gedig in dié bundel sonder titel staan, kan aangeneem word dat dit die digter se doel was om die toepassingsmoontlikhede daarvan te vergroot — soos Rob Antonissen dan ook aan die hand doen.[19]

Dit word dan 'n beklemmend aktuele gedig. Die ondergang is op hande, maar die profetestem is stil omdat daar nie ag geslaan is op sy (haar?) waarskuwings nie. Die vraag wat homself opdring, is: is hierdie gedig nie in die *eerste* instansie op die eie land van toepassing nie? Indien daar bevestigend geantwoord sou kon word, wat my wel die geval skyn te wees, veral vanweë die titelverandering, dan blyk talle dinge belangrik te wees, veral: dat die nasionale 'kyk' van die digter baie verander het sedert *Die halwe kring*. Praat skyn nou nutteloos te wees, want niemand gaan in elk geval luister nie. Waar daar in *Die halwe kring* slegs bespiegelings was oor die moontlikheid van ondergang, is dit volgens dié gedig voorhande.

Van Wyk Louw sê in *Rondom eie werk*:

> 'Die vraag is wat is julle Afrikaners . . . een volkie tussen honderde of duisende volke, jy het jou één kort lewe aan dié volkie onherroeplik verbind, ja verknog — en wat is hý? (. . .) As julle verdwyn, waarmee sal die wêreld dan anders of armer wees?
>
> Vir my is dit duidelik: 'n volk moet iets in hom hê — en ek bedoel nie 'n "volksaard" nie, waarmee volks "kundiges" kwansel, want ek glo nie so iets bestaan nie.
>
> Maar 'n volk moet iets in hom hê, al is dit die fynste nuanse van 'n openbaring van die lewe se rykdom . . .' [20]

In die reeks 'Klipwerk' wil hy dan ook gestalte gee aan daardie ondefinieerbare 'iets' wat 'n volk het. In hoofsaak is dit 'n ontginning van die taal. Die onbevange speelsheid en lughartigheid van vroeëre liedjies, soos 'Ryliedjie' uit *Die halwe kring*, maak hier by tye vir 'n sekere wrangheid en ontnugtering plek.

In die digter se laaste bundel *Tristia* (1962) kom die nasionale tema nog onverwak voor. Deur sy verblyf in Nederland kry hy afstand ten opsigte van sy land en sien hy die land onder ander, nuwe perspektiewe. 'Tristia is bowenal droefnis . . . om 'n lewensleemte en -somer wat verby is, om 'n al-hoe-eensaamerword te midde van die knoeiboel van 'n bestaan . . . om liefdes wat in haat verander, om bedrog en selfbedrog met woorde', aldus Antonissen.[21] Hierdie ontgogeling, hierdie byna 'vyandigheid teenoor die wêreld' (dus nie nét nie, maar óók teenoor die Afrikaanse wêreld) het 'n groot invloed op sy nasionalisme uitgeoefen.

Ek verwys vlugtig na 'Puine', wat nie net speels is nie, maar skerp krities ingestel is, veral in 'Imperialisme', teenoor die Britse imperialisme. Die gedig 'Die wind in die baai het gaan lê' vertel

van 'n seun se gevaarlike waagspel in 'n blikskuitjie. Die digter sê self dat hierdie gedig beeld is van ons persoonlike lewe én van ons volksbestaan wat beide waagstukke is. Om hierdie stelling aanvaarbaar te maak, moet 'n mens dit in verband sien met Van Wyk Louw se opvatting van gewaagdheid, en meer in besonder die gewaagdheid van die Afrikanervolk. Hy sê in *Lojale verset*: 'Die hele wording van 'n klein volk is 'n waagspel. Tussen die grootmagte moet hy opkom soos 'n plantjie tussen die pote van die grootvee opkom. Elke oomblik kan hy vertrap word'.[22]

Volgens Van Wyk Louw móét die enkeling in 'n volk 'n keuse maak: 'Hy kan nie net passief en intellektueel die proses van die volkswording aanskou nie — dan sou hy bloot objek van 'n geskiedenis word wat bokant en *met* hom gebeur. Al sien hy hóe helder die reg en die gevaar van albei kante in, moet hy na een kant toe kies en handel'.[23] Hierdie gedig kan dan gesien word juis as voorbeeld van dié soort geval waarin die enkeling niks kan doen, nié kant kan kies nie, want die 'waagstuk' is te vinnig aangepak. En dan bly bid die enigste wat oorbly.

Ons kyk nou aan twee van die belangrikste 'nasionale' verse in *Tristia*. In die kwatryn 'Ek haat en ek het lief . . .' kry ons die volstrekte identifisering van die digter met sy land. Hierdie kwatryn, wat 'n verwerking van een van Catullus se Odi et amo-gedigte aan sy geliefde Lesbia is, is eintlik die kulminasie van 'n hele ontwikkeling. Dit is 'n gedig van dubbelkantigheid: haat teenoor liefde. Hierdie ambivalente houding teenoor die land het baie raakpunte met die standpunt wat 'n mens teenoor jouself kan inneem. In *Tristia* toon Van Wyk Louw se nasionalisme al grootliks 'n verandering, maar in hierdie gediggie sien ons dat die digter se verbondenheid met sy land onverswak gebly het, in werklikheid: so intens soos nooit tevore nie. Hierdie dubbelkantige houding van haat (eintlik kommer) naas liefde kenmerk feitlik Van Wyk Louw se hele nasionalisme. Dit is nie haat om die haat self nie, maar haat vanweë die liefde.

Die felste kritiek kry ons seker in 'Nuusberigte: 1956'. Dit is die kyk van 'n persoon wat vanweë afstandverskil sy land kritiseer, nugterder sien. Ons kry 'n in-perspektief-stel van 'n gehele situasie: só het ek my land geken en nou betrag ek hom weer in sy verworde staat. Ek stip 'n paar belangrikhede aan. Die Boer kom eerste aan die orde, want dit is die figuur wat tradisioneel die Afrikaner beliggaam. Deurgaans is die ironie skerp en wrang — hy vier inderdaad die oorwinning oor én van Dingaan se impi's. Waar in *Die halwe kring* God aangeroep is om die bloed, die spier en die 'Greep se krag' te wees in die spreker se stryd teenoor die

verdrukker, is daar tans 'n stryd teen elemente in die eie volk. Voorts is belangrik dat ons rentmeesters genoem word en nie besitters nie. Niemand besef wat hulle werklik besit nie en wat besit werklik is nie.

Die digter se siening van die nasionalisme verskil in hierdie gedig wesenlik van uitsprake en vroeëre werk. Toe hy jonk was, sê hy, het hy gedink Afrikanerskap is heilig. Die voorlaaste strofe begin met 'n dubbelsinnigheid in betekenis: 'Mense deur swart opskrifte in die koerante bedien'. Hierdie mense word in die omgang ook deur 'swartes' bedien. En dit is juis ironies dat hulle wat 'boos is met terugwerkende krag / oor ons vaders se kneg-wees in eie land' juis die veroweraar navolg in sy lewenshouding. Uit die slotstrofe met sy snydende ironie blyk weer eens nie net 'n afmakende spot nie, maar skerp kritiek op hierdie persone wie se bestaan so tydelik is, maar wat terselfdertyd hulle medevolksgenote se bestaan kan verkort. En die verwyt wat feitlik aan eie lyf gevoel kan word: wat dóén julle (ons) om 'n inkeer te bring?

Die drama sal later nader bekyk word. Laat ons nou oorgaan tot 'n beskouing van poësie met die nie-Afrikaanse nasionalisasie as tema. *Raka* is 'n 'klassieke' voorbeeld van die verhouding enkeling/gemeenskap, hier 'n enkeling se verhouding tot 'n stam. Teenoor Raka, die primitiewe, dierlike, sensuele dier, 'wat nie kan dink', word Koki gestel. Hy voel dat daar veel kwaad in aantog deur die bloed van sy besete mense was. Hy kry daardeur profetiese kwaliteite, wat later bevestig word in die beskrywing van sy swem in die 'heilige poel' waarvoor sy stam terugdeins. Hy is een van die enkelinge

> wat skoonheid en hoogheid dra as las
> en ver verlange . . .

Dit herinner sterk aan diegene wat 'die Edele en Kosbare veilig deur die skare dra'. Dierlikheid en menslikheid is botsing van twee bykans onversoenbare dinge, en hierdie kontras sal noodwendig tot 'n konfrontasie moet lei, want Koki het van meet af reeds vir Raka beledig. Hy sê dan ook: 'Raka die groot dier; moet dood.'

Hierdie besef probeer hy oordra aan sy stamgenote, wat egter passief daarop reageer. As sy woorde geen uitwerking op hulle het nie, begryp hy 'dat hy altyd eensaam met sy vrees om kosbare dinge' tussen hulle sal wees. Hier is dus 'n spanning tussen enkeling en groep, maar tewens ook 'n onbreekbare verwantskap, wat Koki beklemtoon deur die dans van 'n *tradisionele* dans — hy

het ook deel aan sy volk se tradisies. In hierdie krygsdans is daar 'n samevloei van dramatiese spanninge, want Koki se dans word simbool van sy eensaamheid: hy verkeer nou in botsing met Raka én met sy volk, maar die dans is ook simbool van die twyfel *in* hom, want dit is die dans van 'n man wat weet dat sterwe onvermydelik is. Dit is in werklikheid 'n derde spanningslyn in die drama. Die dans is dus versterking vir hom, en veral dit is treffend: deur die tradisionele dans berei by hom voor vir die uiteindelike konfrontasie. Veral belangrik is ook die wyse van voorbereiding. Hy slyp sy assegaai 'soos sy vaders geleer het', volgens die stam se tradisie en hy klee hom ook volgens die gewoonte van die stam. Koki vertrek uit op sy 'veldtog' as verteenwoordiger van sy stam; verteenwoordiger van die stam se tradisie, van alles wat edel en kosbaar in daardie stam is. Koki is beeld van die ware nasionalis.

Ná die geveg word Koki gevind waar hy dood lê; hy word teruggedra na die kraal, maar daar word hy alleen gelaat. Slegs 'n ou vrou het deur die nag by hom gewaak, sy 'wat veel bewaar van die stam se herinneringe en van sy swaar'. Die ou vrou sou Koki se moeder kon wees. So 'n interpretasiemoontlikheid word gesteun deur die treffende naelstringbeeld: soos Koki aan haar verbind was deur 'n naelstring, so was sy eintlik die naelstring wat hom verbind het aan sy volk se kultuur en tradisies. Die verhouding van 'n individu tot sy gemeenskap word in 'n belangrike mate in *Raka* ondersoek. Koki is die siener, die aristokraat in wie die mooie en edele wat in 'n volk aanwesig is, versinnebeeld is. Veral treffend is die uitbeeld van die individu se een wees met die volk in tradisie en kultuur, maar ook: die volk (massa) se ontrouword-aan-sy tradisie.

Vervolgens kan ek net verwys na die afsluitingsiklus in *Gestaltes en diere* (1942). 'Drie diere' beeld die dilemma van die moderne mens — 'dilemma', want die drie diere wat uit die spieël opdoen, gee die aanskouer 'n beeld van magte in *sy* beskawing wat die vryheid inperk. Hierdie gedigte kan by ons tema betrek word, omdat hulle beeld is van staatsvorme wat individue en volke imperialiseer. Dit gaan dus hier om totalitêre state. Die nasionalis beeld hier 'n ander staatsordening as dié waaraan hy waarde heg.

Maar ook vir 'Die hond van God' is die verhouding enkeling/gemeenskap merkbaar. Hierdie Inkwisiteur staan, nes die groot nasionale figure in Van Wyk Louw se werk, as enkeling krities teenoor sy gemeenskap. Die 'koue koningin' word gekritiseer omdat sy met nuwe tydsgees 'koketteer'. Die nuwe oplewing van

kuns, kultuur en die belangstelling in die klassieke, het by haar 'n wellus laat ontwaak, asof die Griekse en Romeinse sondes saam met hul kuns ontwaak het. By hom is daar 'n vaste voorneme om aan God getrou te bly, selfs in hierdie tyd, terwyl 'sy geslag' reeds afvallig is. Die biskoppe en abte word ook nie kritiek gespaar nie, want verveeldheid, verwatenheid en gemaksug het hulle reeds beetgeneem. Hoewel die Inkwisiteur oordeel nie maklik vind nie, noop sy profetiese taak hom egter om ook sy eie groep te gésel. Die Pous, wat God se fakkel moet dra deur die eeue, is self sondaar in die oë van die Inkwisiteur. Die Pous se sondes is 'n liefde vir die heidense poësie en vir die klassieke beeldhoukuns.

Die gedig word dus eintlik beeld van 'n man wat homself heimlik skuldig voel aan baie van die dinge wat hy kritiseer. Dit herinner aan Van Wyk Louw se eie woorde: 'Die groot kritiek ontstaan wanneer die kritikus hom nie buite nie, maar in die midde van die groep stel wat hy kritiseer, wanneer hy weet dat hy onverbreekbaar verbind is in liefde en noodlot en skuld aan die volk wat hy waag om te bestraf; wanneer hy nie praat van "hulle" nie, maar van "ons" '.[24] Die 'nuwe tyd' het die Inkwisiteur ook al beetgepak. Hy vereenselwig hom dus met die lyding van die gefolterde, want dit is inderwaarheid hyself wat op die pynbank oop lê vir die pyn. Dit word dus vir hom 'n proses van self-reiniging. Ook in 'Die doper in die woestyn' in *Nuwe Verse* gaan dit om die verhouding van 'n Joodse profeet tot sy volk as geloofsgemeenskap. Telkens duik hierdie soort verhouding op, maar deur telkens 'n nuwe dimensie daaraan te gee, slaag hy daarin om eentonigheid te vermy.

In *Tristia* is die gedigte 'Die Narwal' met sy toespeling op andersheid as gevolg van keur, 'My hart gaan uit . . .', 'Heer Brunetto Latini' en veral 'Hongarye: November 1956' almal tuis te bring onder die nasionale tema. Die laaste gedig is in die kleine beeld van die ontwikkelingsgang van Van Wyk Louw se nasionalisme: dit groei uit tot meer as 'n stellinginname van 'n individu teenoor 'n volk of volke; dit word 'n universele aanklag teen alle onderdrukking en geweld.

Tot dusver het ons 'n opname gemaak van die voorkoms van die nasionale tema in Van Wyk Louw se poësie, met veral toespitsing op van die langere gedigte soos 'Raka'. Daar is twee redes voor: die nasionalisme, met sy idee-verskeidenheid en kompleksiteit vra skynbaar by voorkeur om die langer werk. Tweedens is dit opmerklik dat hierdie langere werke 'n sterk dramatiese inslag het — ons tweede hipotese is dat die nasionalisme in hom

'n sterk dramatiese potensie het.

In die nasionalisme is dit die verhouding individu/gemeenskap wat die tema konstitueer. Hierdie basiese patroon maak op 'n natuurlike wyse voorsiening vir dramatiese aksie. Dit veronderstel naamlik die wisselwerking tussen minstens twee faktore; die verhouding kan bowendien een wees van òf botsing òf samewerking. Die verhouding tussen 'n individu en gemeenskap behels ook nog hiérdie kompleksiteit: 'n individu en gemeenskap bestaan uit baie individue en groepe waarteen die individu moet stelling inneem of waarmee hy gekonfronteer word. 'n Werk waaruit hierdie kompleksiteit van verhoudings blyk, is *Die pluimsaad waai ver*. Deur die benutting van hierdie verhoudings skep die skrywer 'n besondere dramatiese struktuur. Verhouding beteken nie noodwendig die stel van botsende standpunte soos beliggaam in afsonderlike individue of groepe, teenoor mekaar nie.

Dit beteken wel 'n 'afrekening' van die een teenoor die ander. Daarom is 'n dramatiese verhouding ook binne 'n individu moontlik. Uit laasgenoemde kom die bestendige verskeidenheid in die held-individue in Van Wyk Louw se werk voort: 'n deel van die wese sê ja, 'n ander nee, maar natuurlik in wisselende verhoudings in die verskillende werke en media. Die 'geding' staan op een of ander manier sentraal in die geval van hierdie tema. Bv. *Die dieper reg* wat in 'n sekere sin die vroeë teoretiese verantwoording van dié tema is. Die verskeurende dilemma van Germanicus (as liberale nasionalis) kry reliëf deur die botsende standpunte soos beliggaam in verskeie karakters rondom hom. Dit is opvallend dat dramas waarin daar nie 'n sterk nasionale inslag aanwesig is nie, waarin die verhouding individu/gemeenskap nie oorheersend aanwesig is nie, waarin botsende standpunte nie opgeroep of teenoor mekaar gestel word nie, dramas van mindere allooi is.

Miskien illustreer *Dias* en *Germanicus* iets hiervan: omdat Dias hoogstens teenoor 'n skeepsbemanning maar nie teenoor 'n volk gestel word (Germanicus word in werklikheid teenoor 'n volksgemeenskap gestel), is hy 'gedoem' tot enkelvoudigheid, moet hy dus 'n veelsydige, dramatiese botsing ontbeer. Daar moet natuurlik onthou word dat *Dias* 'n hoorspel en *Germanicus* 'n verhoogspel is. En die medium van 'n werk gryp op die hele organisasie van 'n werk in. 'n Mens kan slegs verwys na Van Wyk Louw se eie woorde na aanleiding van *Asterion*. *Dias* is wesenlik die drama van 'n individu teenoor individue, *Germanicus* dié van 'n individu teenoor ' 'n tyd'. Dias gaan verder aan die elemente ten gronde — by twee geleenthede — Germanicus aan 'die tyd'. En die tyd is gelyk te stel aan mense, mensegroepe of dan individue

as verteenwoordigers van groepe met botsende standpunte.

Germanicus verkeer in botsing met homself, met verskeie ander karakters wat verskillende sienings verteenwoordig, en oplaas ook in botsing met die tydsomstandighede. Die saad van sy uiteindelike wanhoop is reeds opgesluit in die vierde toneel. Hier word hy gekonfronteer met verskeie standpunte ten opsigte van die Romeinse Ryk wat deur uiteenlopende karakters uitgespreek word. 'n Mens sou kon sê: in kort is Germanicus se probleem dié van elke nasionalis — hoe om nasionalisme en menslikheid te versoen. As nasionalis is hy verbonde met sy land in dié land se oorwinnings, maar het ook deel aan die land se wreedheid en onregverdige dade.

J. C. Kanneweyer sê dat Germanicus 'volkome onskuldig en sonder enige blaam is'.[25] Nee — júís omdat hy hom skuldig voel aan die wandade van sy volk moet hy sterf. Vir die enkeling wat niks kan doen om 'n bestel te verander nie, bly alleen die sterwe self oor. Dit word dus 'n sterwe vir 'iets', 'n ideaal, 'n geloof, wat óók al 'n parallel in Christus se dood het.[26] Germanicus se sogenaamde 'daadloosheid' het 'n verdere parallel in Van Wyk Louw se teoretiese geskrifte, naamlik dat dit beter is om onder te gaan as om in onregverdigheid voort te bestaan. Só verwoord die 'Humanis' Germanicus se 'oplossing'. 'Maar om te wil sterwe . . . om te weet dat jy behoort te sterwe . . . en daardie "behoort" te wil . . .'.[27] Dan word 'blote sterwe' 'n daad. Dit wat in 'Heerser en Humanis' *beredeneer* word, word in *Germanicus* dramaties *gebeeld.*

In *Kruger breek die pad oop en ander hoorspele* kry ons die verhouding individu/gemeenskap baie eksplisiet in die titelstuk. Hoewel dit verreweg nie die enigste rede vir die dramatiese kwaliteit van die stuk is nie, dra dit tog onteenseglik by om hierdie stuk die geslaagdste van die drie te maak. *Dagboek van 'n soldaat* is myns insiens een van Van Wyk Louw se swakste hoorspele; die besware is legio. Tog is dit opmerklik dat in hierdie drama die tema enkeling/gemeenskap swak aanwesig is.

Die nasionalisme het 'n natuurlike meerledigheid, dis 'n tema wat 'n inherente 'diversity of material' bevat. Daar is soveel fasette daarvan dat Van Wyk Louw dit telkens uit 'n ander hoek kan belig. Daarom dat hy so lank daarmee kon aanhou. Dit was 'n ryk, ontginbare gegewe. Dit lê dus in die aard van die nasionalisme om 'n verskeidenheid motiewe te huisves. Die komplekse verhouding individu/gemeenskap maak 'n verskeidenheid standpunte nie alleen nodig nie, maar ook noodsaaklik. Omdat botsende standpunte dramatiese konfrontasie impliseer, is hierdie

tema besonder geskik vir die drama. Feitlik al Van Wyk Louw se dramas bevat die tema in een of ander vorm.

Die optrede van die nasionale tema in die poësie vra in 'n sekere sin 'n ander toets as in die geval van die drama. Om vir 'n mate van sentrering van die twee velde te sorg is uitvoeriger gekyk na 'n lang en dramatiese werk — *Raka*. 'n Uitvoerige vergelyking is hier nie moontlik tussen 'nasionale' en 'nie-nasionale' verse nie. Op grond van die verse waarna wel verwys is, is dit duidelik dat Van Wyk Louw se nasionale vers geensins verskil, wat vergestalting betref, van die nie-nasionale vers nie. Intussen is daar egter wel deeglik kenmerkende aspekte.

D. J. Opperman sê in sy sintetiserende artikel oor Van Wyk Louw se poësie, 'Een van die grondbeginsels van Louw se kuns is 'n *slopingsproses* van die beskutting in en om die mens'.[28] Opperman gee verskeie voorbeelde van gedigte waarin daar sprake is van 'n slopingsproses. Dit is juis treffend dat dié gedigte, hetsy direk, hetsy indirek, onder die nasionale tema tuisgebring kan word. In beide die nasionale tema en in hierdie sogenaamde 'slopingsproses' kry ons tese en antitese, 'n dualisme: haat en liefhê, verdedig en kritiseer. Hierdie 'dualisme' kry ons verder in die nasionalistiese gedigte in die vorm van ' 'n gespreksituasie' terug. Grové sê dat in sekere gesprekke 'menslike verhoudinge van sekondêre belang is' — dit is gewoonlik gesprekke met God. In die lig van wat ons voorheen gesê het oor die inherente rykdom van die nasionale tema, is dit treffend dat baie gedigte wat direk of indirek by ons tema betrek kan word, as 'gesprekke' getipeer kan word, bv. etlike gedigte uit 'Gedagtes, liedere en gebede van 'n soldaat'; soos bv. 'Klein gebed: van die hande wat verag word', ens.

Hierdie gesprekke is dan ook beeld van Van Wyk Louw se taakaanvaarding as profeet, as verkondiger van 'n boodskap, as eensame gesant, as spreker op soek na 'n gespreeksgenoot. Van Wyk Louw se literatêre nasionalisme neem eintlik 'n sentrale plek in binne die Afrikaanse nasionale literatuur. Tydens die Eerste Taalbeweging was die skeppende werk hoofsaaklik nasionalisties geïnspireer — selfs propagandisties so. Letterkundige voorbrengsels wat op versoek tot stand kom, is natuurlik 'n vreemde verskynsel, en dit is dan ook nie eienaardig dat die estetiese waarde van dié werk maar gering was nie.

Van die ná-oorlogse digters lewer Leipoldt op hierdie gebied die beste werk. Sy poësie bly nie vassteek in die eng lokale nie, maar groei uit tot universele klag teen geweld. 'Oom Gert vertel', sy groot dramatiese monoloog, is beeld van 'n groeiende insig in die

begrip nasionaal, tewens ook beeld van digterlike groei. Hoewel daar al by digters soos Toon van den Heever tekens van 'n veranderde kyk na byvoorbeeld volksgeskiedenis is, breek die vernuwing opeens deur met die verskyning van Die Dertigers. Die spektrum van die tematiek is veel wyer; die digters is veel meer 'vakbewus' en die maak van gedigte word 'n noodwendigheid en nie meer 'n organiseerbare táák nie. Nieteenstaande die etiket van individualisme kan die sterk nasionale inslag in veral die werk van N. P. van Wyk Louw en (later) dié van W. E. G. Louw nie misgekyk word nie. Naas Van Wyk Louw se strydvaardige nasionale verse en drama vertoon baie van W. E. G. Louw se verse onvolwasse.

Die volgende geslag, die sogenaamde Veertigers, keer as reaksie teen Dertig se 'hoë paaie', weer terug na die spesifieke Suid-Afrikaanse werklikheid wat in al sy konkreetheid neerslag vind in veral D. J. Opperman se verse. Maar om te sê Opperman 'het die Afrikaanse werklikheid — die stad, die land met sy mense, sy geskiedenis, sy probleme, sy landskap — so volledig gaan sien soos niemand voor hom nie', aldus Grové,[29] is 'n oordrewe aanspraak. Opperman se *Blom en baaierd* (1956) bring nuwe belangstelling in die rassesituasie; die Kleurling kry stem in die Afrikaanse poësie, Peter Blum hekel ons monumente... Tog is dit weer eens Van Wyk Louw wat, ook wat die nasionalisme betref, van die belangrikste bydraes lewer. Elisabeth Eybers wat in dié jare ook belangrike werk lewer, laat haar byvoorbeeld nooit oor die nasionalisme uit nie. Selfs in *Tristia*, Louw se laaste bundel, kom die nasionale nog onverswak voor.

Die Sestigers bring 'n vernuwing in die Afrikaanse letterkunde wat met dié van die Dertigers vergelykbaar is. Sy kyk op onder andere die nasionale verskil wesenlik van dié van vroeëre geslagte. Desillusie en ontluistering is twee sentrale begrippe van Sestig. Tradisie en tradisionele waardes word weer geweeg en dikwels te lig bevind. In hierdie sfeer van lewensangs, van 'n absurde wêreld, word veel meer krities na die begrip nasionalisme gekyk. Vir die meerderheid is dit soos baie ander begrippe uitgedien.

Land, volk en taal (onder andere) is geensins meer sinonieme begrippe nie. By Breytenbach byvoorbeeld is daar nog hegting met die eie land:

> my hart is in die boland en niks
> kan dit ontwy nie dis gebêre in
> kissie in wit wellington

maar sy verset staan ver van 'Lojale verset'. Hy wil vernietig, tot niet maak, omdat uit die vernietigde weer lewe te haal is. Henry Gifford haal Lionel Trilling aan: ' "It is not possible to conceive of a person standing beyond his culture. His culture has brought him into being in every respect except the physical, has given him his categories and habits of thought, his range of feeling, his idiom and tones of speech." and this culture . . . cannot be separated from its environment. The writer achieves his balance, comes into full possession of his identity, when he has explored that culture to the depths and found there the sources to sustain him'.[30] Moontlik is *dit* juis die rede waarom Breytenbach hom nie volkome kan losmaak van sy land nie. In die werk van Adam Small, byvoorbeeld *Kitaar my kruis* — hulle is al genoem 'Geuseliedere van die Bruinman' — skroei die stem dikwels deur en word baie van die gedigte nie poësie nie, maar bly blote aanklag. Tog het Small 'n onmiskenbare skakering van waarde bygevoeg tot die 'Afrikaanse nasionale poësie'. Die 'debunking' waarvan A. P. Grové praat, het in baie opsigte 'n modewoord geword, soos ook 'engagé'. Vergelyk byvoorbeeld

> Dit gorrels borrels
> woorde, volksdit, volksdat,
> volksvinger-in-die-hol, volkspêredrol

uit 'Politikus' van Wilma Stockenström.

'Sewentig' is egter wat prosa en poësie betref, 'n terugkeer na Suid-Afrika, en dan veral Afrika. Waar ons alreeds tekens gesien het, kan ons stellig 'n nuwe opbloei van die nasionale vers by veral van die jongeres verwag.

Uit hierdie 'voëlvlug' (!) blyk dit dat geen Afrikaanse digter hom so klemmend met die gegewe van die nasionale besiggehou het as Van Wyk Louw nie. Die belangrike is egter dat die omvang en geskakeerdheid van sy belangstelling deur die kwaliteit van die neerslag daarvan in sy skeppingswerk geëwenaar word. In 'Aantekeninge by Tydsgebeure' sê van Wyk Louw:

> 'Daar is 'n romantiserende siening waarin die digter beskou word as "leier", as "voorloper" of "voorligter", "profeet" van sy volk (meestal digters wat hulself so beskou). Hierdie mantel pas my sleg. Selfs van die grootstes, Hooft en Homerus, het nie hulle volke gelei nie. Maar ook nie gevolg nie . . . Want daar is 'n ander, 'n tweede, baie bekende en foutiewe beskouing: dat die digter die volgeling, selfs die

> spieël, of erger: die werktuig, is van 'n sogenaamde volkswil of gemeenskapswil.'[31]

Van Wyk Louw sê dat die digter weet dat hy in belang van die volk nooit eensydig mag wees nie; nie mag glo dat een onderdeel van die volk die hele is nie. Die digter, vervolg Louw, mag hom nie volledig aan die ideologieë van een bepaalde tyd oorlewer nie, omdat alle idees en twispunte tydelik is. Maar die digter het die reg om, soos elke burger, hom in die sake van sy volk in te meng. Miskien, sê hy, werk die digter se invloed soos 'n suurdeeg. Hierdie preokkupasie met sy volk en met sy land — en juis in dié vorm — het Van Wyk Louw se hele skrywende lewe gevul. Geen periode uit sy ontwikkeling was daarsonder nie. As daar ooit 'n Afrikaanse skrywer was wat die naam van nasionalis verdien het, dan was dit hy. Die nasionalisme in sy skeppende werk (poësie en drama) het parallel met dié in sy teoretiese werk ontwikkel. Wat in die loop van die tyd gebeur het, is dat die nasionalisme breër ontplooi het, onder meer deur toespitsing op aparte fasette van volksbestaan. Die gegewe het as 't ware sistematies uitgebeeld geraak.

In *Die dieper reg* kry ons nog besinning oor die blote bestaansmoontlikheid van 'n volk. In die loop van die tyd word die besinning egter al hoe meer toegespits op konkrete fasette van 'n volk se bestaan. Die Afrikanervolk word bv. gesien tussen die ander volke van die land, maar: Van Wyk Louw heg deurentyd 'n geweldige waarde aan juis die Afrikanervolk se bestaan: 'Omdat die Afrikaner so die sentrale plek in hierdie land het, is vir *hom* die ewewig en die billikheid, die straf van sy lewe. Laat almal maar teen *Hom* woed; net hy self moet kophou . . . ter wille van homself en ook van almal'.[32] Die Afrikaner is die dyk wat die chaos keer; hy het 'n taak as leier in hierdie land.

Opvallend in die werk van Van Wyk Louw is dat kritiek teen die eie volk altyd aanwesig is. Die vroeë *Die halwe kring* bevat byvoorbeeld alreeds sulke verse. Maar in die loop van die tyd het dit toegeneem. Die kritiek het soms selfs tot géseling oorgegaan. Dit behels egter geen frontverandering nie, maar verteenwoordig slegs 'n klemverskuiwing, want die siening van die Afrikaner as waarde, veral as waardemoontlikheid, bly steeds onverswak. 'n Uiting van hierdie ontwikkeling van sy nasionalisme is die groei van die ironiese faktor in sy werk, wat in *Tristia* kulmineer.

'n Kenmerkende tendens in sy latere werk is dat die Afrikanervolk diens doen as uitgangspunt, maar dat die beskouing dan 'n breër volkereverband betrek of op 'n universele vlak oorskuif.

Die deureenspeel van Afrikaanse milieu en Bybelse agtergrond in *Berei in die woestyn* met sy boeiende jukstaposisie van tydelik en tydeloos, is 'n kenmerkende voorbeeld hiervan. Hierdie neiging hang miskien saam met bogenoemde toespitsing op bepaalde fasette van volkswees, bv. die religieuse en die ekonomiese. Van Wyk Louw het by geleentheid gesê dat die verhouding digter teenoor sy gemeenskap nie noodwendig beteken die digter teenoor sy vólk nie: 'Ons is 'n veelvolkige multi-nasionale gemeenskap soos Europa: baie nasies binne een gemeenskap . . .'[33]

Dit het by Van Wyk Louw 'n dringende besef geword dat die Afrikaner 'n taak het om die vreedsame naasbestaan van die volkere van hierdie land te verseker. Dit het selfs 'n konkrete politieke beeld aangeneem: 'Wanneer gaan 'n nasionale party wat die nasionalisme as grondslag aanvaar, begin met die stigting van Bruin en Donkerbruin takke van dieselfde party-takke waarin voorstanders van presies dieselfde *bindende beginsel*, elkeen vir sy eie volksgroep, mekaar kan ontmoet?'[34]

Hierdie opvatting was verknoop met dié dat 'die Bruines deel van ons mense is': 'Die bruinmense is óns mense, hóórt by ons . . . Wél het ek 'n innige begeerte — nie 'n hartstogtelike *wil* — dat my volk, blank en bruin; en die taal wat ons praat, in hierdie land bly voortbestaan'.[35] Die belang van die taal word dus beklemtoon omdat dit 'n saambindende faktor tussen volksgroepe is: mense maak 'n volk uit as hulle kultureel een is. Hier het 'n mens 'n herstel van 'n vroeë posisie: heel vroeg is daar sterk klem gelê op die belangrikheid van die taal in die lewe van 'n volk; later het dit nie so sterk gefigureer nie (sonder egter dat dit volkome afwesig was).

Van Wyk Louw se nasionalisme het dus duidelik 'n klemverskuiwing ondergaan, maar geen frontverandering nie. Die taak wat hy heel vroeg vir homself verwoord het, het hy verwerklik met een verskil: hy was nie net suurdeeg nie, maar ook wel deeglik profeet, siener én voorloper.

*Universiteit van Natal,*
*Pietermaritzburg.*

## VERWYSINGS

[1]Shafer, Boyd C.: *Nationalism — Myth and Reality,* Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., New York, 1969, op p. 52 e.v.
[2] Kotzé, D. J.: *Nasionalisme ('n vergelykende studie),* Deel I van *Nasionalisme as historiese faktor,* Tafelberg-Uitgewers, Kaapstad en Johannesburg, 1969, p. 17.
[3] Louw, N. P. van Wyk: *Berigte te velde,* J. L. van Schaik, Pretoria, 1939, p. 62.
[4] Louw, N. P. van Wyk: *Rondom eie werk,* Human en Rousseau, Kaapstad en Pretoria, 1971, p. 40.
[5] Louw, N. P. van Wyk, *Lojale verset,* Nas. Boekhandel, 1970, 4e druk, p. 21.
[6] Louw, N. P. van Wyk: *Vernuwing in die prosa,* Human en Rousseau, Kaapstad en Pretoria, 1961, p. 157.
[7] *Liberale nasionalisme,* Tafelberg-uitgewers, Kaapstad en Jhb., 1971, p. 22.
[8] *Lojale verset,* p. 15 e.v.
[9] *Rondom eie werk,* p. 34.
[10] *Liberale Nasionalisme,* p. 29.
[11] Dekker, G.: *Oordeel en besinning,* Human en Rousseau, Kaapstad, Pretoria, 1964, p. 98.
[12] Sien: Mulder, H. A., *Twee wêrelde,* J. L. van Schaik, Pretoria, 1942, p. 10.
[13] In: *Beeld van 'n digter,* versamel deur P. J. Nienaber, Nasionale Boekhandel, Kaapstad, ens. 1966, p. 54 e.v.
[14] Witwatersrand University Press, Johannesburg, 1969, p. 1.
[15] *De nieuwere Afrikaanse poësie,* 's Gravenhage, D. A. Daamen's Uitgeverij, 1938.
[16] *Die smal baan,* Tweede om en bygewerkte uitgawe, Tafelberg-uitgewers, Kaapstad en Johannesburg, 1971, p. 143.
[17] Grové, A. P.: *Die duister digter,* Natalse Universiteitspers, ens., p. 46 e.v. op. cit. p. 140.
[18] p. 17.
[19] In: *Kern en tooi,* Nasou, Kaapstad ens., 1963, p. 66.
[20] p. 40.
[21] *Spitsberaad,* Nasou, Kaapstad ens., 1966, p. 45.
[22] p. 31.
[23] op. cit. p. 38.
[24] *Lojale verset,* p. 108.
[25] Kannemeyer, J. C.: *Opstelle oor die Afrikaanse drama,* Academica, Kaapstad en Pretoria, 1970, p. 104.
[26] Sien: P. du P. Grobler, ' 'n Ander interpretasie van *Germanicus, Smal swaard en blink',* red. Ernst van Heerden, p. 67 e.v. Academica, 1966.
[27] *Liberale nasionalisme,* p. 114.
[28] ' 'n Poging tot sintese: N. P. van Wyk Louw ', pp. 22-23 in *Beeld van 'n digter.*
[29] 'D. J. Opperman' in *Perspektief en profiel,* versamel deur P. J. Nienaber, Afrikaanse Pers, Johannesburg, 3e hersiene uitgawe, 1969, p. 540.
[30] Gifford, Henry, *Comparative literature* (Concepts of literature), Routledge and Kegan Paul, Londen, 1969, p. 26.
[31] *Standpunte,* Nuwe reeks, 17(3), Februarie 1964.
[32] 'Die gevaar sal altyd by ons wees', 'Diepte-Beeld' in *Die Beeld* 26 April 1970.
[33] *Standpunte,* N. R. 17(2), Desember 1963.
[34] *Standpunte,* 16(6), Augustus 1963.
[35] Voorwoord tot: Botha, D. P., *Die opkoms van ons derde stand,* Human en Rousseau, 1960, p. 5.

# *THE SICK ROSE:* A SECOND OPINION

*by* J. F. BERWICK

O Rose thou art sick.
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night
In the howling storm:

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy:
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.[1]

Commentators on William Blake's 'The Sick Rose' have commonly failed to explain the ironies of the Song. They have assumed that the poet intends his readers to share the perspective of the speaker and generally implied that the speaker is the poet himself. The attraction of this assumption is that the interpretation which automatically follows seems to tally with Blake's indictment of Bromion in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion:* the Song is thought to lament the destruction of an Oothoon-like creature by the 'dark secret love' of a Bromion-like worm. But difficulties with this interpretation arise when the poem is studied in the context of its original accompanying design.

There are three blossoms in the design and two — sometimes three — worms. Although the large crimson rose at the bottom is clearly the focal point of the picture — the 'Rose' of the title, she is not made to appear sick, particularly when contrasted with the other two flowers. The phallic worm has penetrated her petals but the artist seems to have deliberately de-emphasized the aspect of destruction: the shape and colour of the worm, in at least one manuscript,[2] harmonize with the flowing lines of the dark curved edges of the petals; in two others, Blake has omitted the worm altogether so that there is no hint in the design that the beautiful rose is being 'destroyed'.

The beauty of the flower — not its destruction — is the strongest impression of the design and the golden-haired spirit of the rose who springs from the blossom — generally thought to be doing so in terror[3] — flies towards the worm with outstretched arms as though welcoming him. The rose has not 'fallen to the ground', as Erdman suggests;[4] she has bent down to the earth as though

to invite the worm. She is still attached to the branch, which is the source of her life, but she has moved away from the bed of thorns on which her two sisters writhe.

On the other hand, the two roses on the upper branches are clearly victims of experience. It is significant, however, that neither of them is visually associated with 'the worm', even in copies of the manuscript in which as many as three worms are depicted. The sister on the lower branch is turned in upon herself, holding her head in her hands and weeping; the sister on the upper branch is impaled on thorns, her head buried in her arms, in an attitude reminiscent of Theotormon's in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. The greatest irony of the design is that the one rose explicitly associated with the worm is the healthiest-looking of the three.

Another paradoxical element of the design is Blake's treatment of the sky. It is generally acknowledged that he is a master of skyscape and his skill in painting storms is magnificently displayed in his frontispiece to *Europe: A Prophesy*, executed in the same period as *Songs of Experience*. It is instructive to compare that 'moment in the storm of eternity' with the sky he gave to 'The Sick Rose'. In doing so, we may conclude that there is no indication in the design for the Song of that 'howling storm' suggested by the speaker of the lyric. On the contrary, the sky is a clear brilliant blue, illuminated by a golden sun. It is yet another detail which throws doubt on the credibility of the speaker. We may deduce that the 'howling storm' is nowhere but in the heart and eye of the speaker herself; she is in the state of eperience, commenting with a jaundiced eye upon the experience of sexual love.

'The Sick Rose' is most frequently contrasted with 'The Blossom' in *Songs of Innocence*. If 'The Blossom' celebrates the physical consummation of love, as is generally agreed, then we should not be surprised to discover that its counterpart in *Songs of Experience* indicates a thwarting of natural love before it reaches its physical consummation. This is the interpretation which follows if one sees the real subject of the poem to be the speaker rather than the allegedly 'sick Rose'.

Commentators who would draw a comparison between Bromion in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, and 'the worm' in 'The Sick Rose' may point out that rape is also a thwarting of natural, physical consummation. But it is less so — in Blake's view — than arid moralism. Even confining our discussion to the *Visions*, we can argue that Oothoon's dramatic counterpart is

really Theotormon, not Bromion. Bromion is enslaved by his lust, which prevents both him and Oothoon from experiencing natural love. And their fate — being tied back-to-back — is dreadful, but it is not absolute like Theotormon's. Theotormon is locked in a solipsistic world view and, being able to converse only with 'shadows dire', he has no hope of escape. It seems to me that this is also the fate of the speakers of 'The Sick Rose'. They may be seen as the direct counterparts to 'The Blossom' in the same way as Theotormon's moral vision is diametrically opposed to Oothoon's.

Readers may be reluctant to accept this interpretation because of the particular force of Blake's image: 'the invisible worm'. It may be argued that the worm is an intrinsically abhorrent image — a symbol of the despoiler — and that the word 'invisible' carries connotations of furtiveness. I find neither of these objections persuasive. Blake himself did not find the image of the worm devouring the flower intrinsically abhorrent; in *The Book of Thel* he uses precisely that image to describe the experience which Thel must undergo in order to fulfil herself:

> 'Then if thou art the food of worms, O virgin of the skies,
> How great thy use, how great thy blessing!'[5]

Thel's timidity in giving herself to the worms is criticized as a personal limitation since she cannot see that it would mean anything but personal loss; she lacks the larger perspective of the inter-relationships of Nature which sees such 'loss' as the generosity on which generation and growth are dependent.

This concept of ambiguous loss is a recurrent theme in Blake's *Songs of Experience*. Ona, in 'A Little Girl Lost', may be compared in this respect to Rose. Having given herself to the youth in an act of love which is her fulfilment, Ona is thought by her father to be 'lost'. His repressive moral attitudes are the same as those underlying the lyric 'The Sick Rose'. Admittedly, in *The Book of Thel*, the worms are not furtive, but it may be argued that the worm in the Song is not objectively furtive either: perhaps it is only to the two sisters, who have buried their faces, that the worm seems to be furtive. Their action, which obscures the light of the day and gives them the impression of stormy dark, may well be the only sense in which the worm can be described as 'invisible'.

The conclusion enjoined by these observations is that the speakers of 'The Sick Rose' are those two withered figures — her

sisters — writhing in their jealousy on the branches above her. They may be seen as thwarted heliotrope-figures: basking in the sun while languishing on their bed of thorns and burying their faces. As such they invite comparison with the frustrated Youth and pale Virgin of 'Ah! Sun-Flower'. Their sister has freed herself from the limbo of airy disengagement and the environment of thorny moralism; she has bent low to the earth and found the fulfilment of her desires. Her rapture is hinted at even through the jealousy of the speakers:

> . . . thy bed
> Of crimson joy:

It is a joy which is shared by both worm and flower; a joy from which the two sisters are excluded by their sterile self-love.

This interpretation not only explains the apparent conflict between poem and design — a necessary element of Blakean criticism when one considers that Blake himself saw his poetry and design as two expressions of one imaginative impulse — but accords well with the other *Songs of Experience*. Reading through the Songs, we come to expect the 'state of experience' to be revealed through a speaker who is himself in the state of experience[6] and we discover that the poet's chief concern in these Songs is to protest against the restrictive effects of authority — moral and social — on natural impulses. If we identify the speaker of this Song with the poet, we imply that 'The Sick Rose' is something of an exception: certainly on the first count; arguably on the second. It seems to me more plausible that the poem presents a jaundiced view of natural, sexual fulfilment; that its speakers are in fact victims of an atrophying moralism; and that Blake intends his readers to formulate this very different diagnosis of Rose's 'sickness' from that which has been commonly accepted.

*University of Natal,*
*Durban.*

## NOTES

[1] William Blake's 'The Sick Rose'. Since the argument which follows is based on a study of the Song in the context of its original accompanying design, I quote the original punctuation (reproduced in *Blake: Songs of Innocence and Experience,* with an introduction and commentary by Geoffrey Keynes, Oxford University Press in assoc. with Trianon Press, London and Paris, 1967) rather than that of the better-known editions of Plowman and Keynes:
*Blake's Poems and Prophesies,* edited with an introduction by Max Plowman, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., (Everyman Library) London, 1927.
*The Complete Writings of William Blake,* edited by Geoffrey Keynes, Nonesuch Press, London, 1957.

[2] Rosenwald Collection, on which Blake: *Songs of Innocence and Experience,* with an introduction and commentary by Geoffrey Keynes, is based.

[3] David V. Erdman, in his *The Illuminated Blake,* London: 1975, admits the possibility that she may be doing so 'in joy' but adds 'probably in terror' (p. 81). His commentary seems to me to be confused. He begins by inviting the reader to sympathize with the speaker of the Song ('"O Rose thou art sick", we agree . . .'); proceeds to interpret Rose's reaction to the worm as 'terror'; then acknowledges that 'it might only be the secrecy (of the act) or the jealousy (of her sisters) that caused the flower to fall to the ground'. He invites the comparison with Thel, which I elaborate below, but concludes his commentary (p. 82) with the assertion that 'we are all victims of pessimism' which seems to negate his earlier tentative suggestion (p. 81) that 'only the pessimistic need read its ironies pessimistically'.

[4] Ibid.

[5] *The Book of Thel,* 11, 25-6.

[6] This is so frequently seen to be the case that it may well be a common element of all the *Songs of Innocence and Experience.* Clearly to be seen in lyrics like 'Nurses Song' and 'The Human Abstract', it is arguably present even in a poem like 'A Little Girl Lost', where we may be most ready to identify the speaker with the poet. A phrase like 'this indignant page', however, should make us hesitant to do so.

## CORRESPONDENCE:

### *'Timon of Athens'*

Dear Sirs,

I have returned a number of times to Mr Bizley's 'Language and Currency in "Timon of Athens" ' (*Theoria* 44) because, while aspects of it are impressive, there is a paradox in his subtle argument about 'languages' which leaves me dissatisfied.

Mr Bizley suggests that 'fundamental to the drama of *Timon* . . . is the way the language of money is played off against a more primary language, the language that is in fact its source'. In his careful and frequently sensitive analysis of the text he demonstrates that Timon's is the source language and, as the play develops, that of the abdicated artists, the fallen-off friends, the Athenian senators, is the secondary language, the language of 'exchange'. What is primary about Timon's language is that he 'speaks his own standing'. What is secondary about the others' language is that it is a fence behind which they seek to hide from their original human involvement in Timon's world. It is, as Mr Bizley points out, 'a purchased concealment, an abstract system delaying "presentment"...'. But no matter how much it is true that in Timon's mouth language is *speech*, the openly spoken word that carries human meaning to the hearer, it must also be emphasised that however much the shifting friends attempt to hide behind the secondary language, and for all that by talking in league with each other the illusion that they *do* hide is reinforced, they do *not* hide from us in the audience, nor ultimately from Timon. And this is Shakespeare's intent. This is the spring to the tragedy, the moral impulse to the play. No matter how subtle is their language of detachment, to us they also 'speak their own standing' — as hypocrites, cowards, shirkers, those in fact without the dynamic complexity that makes for an understanding of Timon's vital presence and generosity.

I conclude from this that none of the 'language' in the play can ever, in the first place, be removed from the characters who use it, that somewhere whatever they speak is primary. Surely without this understanding we will never grasp how Shakespeare's imaginative representation has the power to take us outwards into the real world of dynamic human relationships. In Mr Bizley's concern for a 'conflict of languages', however, I always come up against the *idea* that for him the 'languages' can be detached, and, even, that it is Shakespeare's 'fundamental' intent

to figure detachable languages because his concern is with 'culture's broad course' as a more significant process than is the relationship of the individual characters he creates. The idea I mean is in this formulation:

> That there was once available to the common psyche of Europe an 'act' or sense of the self 'presented' that scorned the dualism of 'exchange', a time when a man might 'back' his appropriate standing in words that were the immediate seal of intention — that is the sort of phenomenon that Shakespreare's language can remind us of. ... We must propose such a phase ... if we are going to vindicate our sense that the language of *Timon* has certain presuppositions to it, certain underlying components that must be observed if the play isn't going to be seen in a cultural vacuum.

To me this is an inversion of priorities and confusion of aims. Shakespeare does not simply remind us of what is lost to culture. Rather he makes clear what is active now. It is the open fluency of individual speech which makes reality communicable and which gives a meaning to culture itself; and which disallows the self-conscious displacement implied in 'certain presuppositions, certain underlying components'.

Yours faithfully,

J. M. PHELPS

*P.O. Box 10051,*
*Scottsville,*
*Pietermaritzburg.*

# UNE ETUDE DE LITTERATURE COMPAREE: BORIS VIAN, *L'ECUME DES JOURS* ET LES INFLUENCES ANGLO-SAXONNES

*par* P. G. PESTUREAU

Boris Vian (1920-1959), ingénieur de l'Ecole Centrale des Arts et Métiers, traducteur, romancier, poète, auteur dramatique, trompette de jazz, chanteur, est actuellement un des auteurs les plus célèbres en France, surtout dans la jeunesse étudiante, depuis la réédition posthume de ses œuvres dont la plus connue est le roman *L'écume des jours* (plus d'un million d'exemplaires vendus depuis 1964). Cet ami de Simone de Beauvoir, Jacques Prévert, Raymond Queneau, Duke Ellington, Miles Davis est en passe de devenir, par la modernité de son talent et de ses goûts, ainsi que par l'originalité de son œuvre, l'un des écrivains majeurs de la deuxième moitié du XXème siècle.

Les mondes, les langues et les littératures anglo-saxonnes ont joué un rôle privilégié dans l'inspiration, l'imagination et la création de Boris Vian. On décèle très vite chez lui une véritable 'mythologie' britannique et américaine, partagée d'ailleurs à l'époque où il écrit l'essentiel de son œuvre (1942-1951) par une grande partie de l' 'intelligentsia' parisienne. Fanatique de jazz, il se consacre à l'apprentissage de l'Américain et du 'slang', aussi bien que de l'anglaise classique. Des auteurs aussi divers que Lewis Carroll, H. G. Wells, William Faulkner le passionnent, cependant que tous les 'media' modernes venus des USA enrichissent son bagage culturel: 'thriller', science-fiction, 'comics', films . . . Retenons enfin le rôle prépondérant joué dans son inspiration par la musique de jazz, son oxygène.

La présence des 'Amerlauds' — hypercoristique d'affection et de mépris à la fois! — et de leur 'doux pays de la liberté', est généralement traitée avec humour, ton qui convient bien à un mélange de fascination et de répulsion très caractéristique.

Dès 1940, la vogue anglo-saxonne est favorisée en France par l'occupation allemande, la censure, et le goût contestataire propre à la jeunesse. Cette mode se développe particulièrement chez les jeunes 'Zazous' et ceux qui recevront ensuite le surnom d'"Existentialistes'. Dans Paris occupé, ils écoutent clandestinement des disques de jazz et font la chasse aux rares exemplaires de Faulkner

ou de Hemingway. Par la suite Sartre et ses amis prendront leurs distances avec cette américainophilie, mais l'imprégnation sera plus forte chez Boris Vian — toujours le jazz!

Dès la Libération de Paris, il a fréquenté des GIs, découvert avec ravissement ce qu'on hésite à appeler leur civilisation mais qui apparaît tout de même une merveilleuse caverne oux trésors, en France, en 1944 . . . L'orchestre de jazz où joue Boris Vian est engagé par le Special Service Show, et ses nouvelles ou ses chroniques de jazz de cette époque utilisent le pittoresque 'exotique' qu'il découvre alors. Mais ce qu'il retient surtout de cette période guerrière, du débarquement en Normandie à la capitulation de l'Allemagne, c'est le déferlement de matériel militaire sur les routes de France qui suscite en lui une admiration, très compréhensible chez un ingénieur passionné de technologie, en même temps qu'un dégoût humaniste pour le but et les résultats de cette perfection technique; double réaction intellectuelle et sentimentale; amère et nécessaire connaissance de l'homme plongé dans une guerre moderne, entraîné et broyé sans recours.

Boris Vian jette ainsi un regard lucide et passionné, critique et fasciné à la fois, sur ce pays, les USA, qu'il n'a jamais visité, pays attirant et repoussant qu'il préfère recréer par l'imagination. Contre l'Amérique réelle, il choisit l'Amerique rêvée, et son œuvre abonde en clichés pittoresques, en détails vraiment 'mythologiques' sur les USA, terre de découverte et d'argent, de confort et de violence: perfection des automobiles; flots de whisky, gin, rye, bourbon mêlés aux grapefruit, tomate, seven-up, coca; esquisse malicieuse de la société américaine telle que la voient les Français de l'époque; allusions au 'melting-pot' en aux multiples contrastes de la mentalité américaine: caprices des femmes et fascination de la pin-up, liberté sexuelle et vieux puritanisme bostonien, religion de la psychanalyse, peur devant l'amour, délire de la publicité et culte du Veau d'or.

Mais ce qui frappe durablement Boris Vian et se reflète dans toute son œuvre, c'est le grand drame racial qui déchire les USA et auquel est évidemment très sensible l'admirateur passionné de Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Dizzy Gillespie.

Ceux que Vian appelle les 'Godons' — 'my God!' — tiennent beaucoup moins de place dans son œuvre. Passons sur des allusions variées et plus ou moins fantaisistes — Vian est rarement sérieux! — à l'Afrique du Sud, au Canada, á l'Australie, à l'Ile Maurice, aux Indes.

La Grand-Bretagne immortelle est présente, elle, par des allusions humoristico-admiratives à quelques célébrités présentes — Elisabeth II, Margaret que pleure Townsend — passées: Marie-Stuart, Newton en surtout Shakespeare, dont la richesse de vocabulaire semble un idéal inaccessible à Boris Vian. Aussi se retourne-t-il vers des réalités peut-être aussi inabordables pour un Français de 1945 mais plus tangibles cependant: la Jaguar et surtout la Rolls-Royce, symbole de la perfection et de la dignité britanniques.

N'ayant pas appris l'anglais au Lycée, Boris Vian l'acquiert en parlant avec sa femme, excellente angliciste, et en lisant assiduement Agatha Christie. Il apprend aussi l'américain, ne négligeant ni le 'jive' ou 'double-talk' des musiciens de jazz, ni le 'slang'.

Il montre constamment son goût des vocabulaires anglo-saxons, des interférences linguistiques, des jeux de mots que l'on peut tirer de la comparaison entre langues, par exemple en transcrivant une expression au pied de la lettre ou en calquant une expression française sur l'anglaise correspondante. Il fait une large utilisation de l'anglo-américain soit pour enrichir sa langue en un 'franglais' sans complexe, soit pour introduire des approximations verbales génératrices de comique ou de poésie. Comique surtout cette tendance qu'il partage avec Raymond Queneau à franciser l'orthographe des mots anglais: 'blouze', 'souingue', 'pineute-beutteur', 'Britiche Muséomme', 'ouisqui', 'nioulouque', 'brozeure', 'baille ze oué' et 'goude baille'!

Il s'essaie à composer des 'limericks' en anglais ou 'franglais', mais surtout un procédé particulier de sa création poétique, qui ne peut surprendre chez un amoureux de la contrepèterie, entre dans la catégorie des 'mots-valises' — ou 'portmanteau' — chers à Lewis Carroll. Vian, grand lecteur d'*Alice* et du *Snark*, a trouvé chez ce poète anglais une inspiration linguistique supplémentaire. On connaît la théorie des mots-valises dont l'analyse est faite par Humpty-Dumpty dans *Through the Looking-Glass*. Boris Vian adore ce procédé de création verbale et atteint parfois à des réussites indéniables, particulièrement dans son roman *L'arrache-cœur*.

Dans le domaine sémantique, c'est un Américain qui l'aida à rejeter la logique aristotélicienne. La lecture de *Science and Sanity* d'Alfred Korzybski, dans les années 50, philosophe du langage que Vian découvrit par le biais des romans de science-fiction de Van Vogt, l'a fortement frappé. Désormais, il citera volontiers des axiomes célèbres comme 'La carte n'est pas le

territoire' ou 'A language is like a map; it *is not* the territory represented, but it may be a good map or a bad map.' *(Science and Sanity,* p. 498).

Profitant de son bilinguisme, s'inspirant des langues anglo-saxonnes, pillant les lexiques et faisant appel tantôt à la poétique de Carroll, tantôt à la sémantique de Korzybski, surtout fidèle à son propre génie linguistique, Vian nous propose une œuvre très moderne où le langage et la réflexion sur le langage tiennent une place primordiale. Chez lui, avant même le Nouveau Théâtre, le langage nous trahit, nous échappe, nous détruit, devient autonome en s'échappant vers des vocables inouïs ou en se déchaînant en absurdes et délirantes litanies.

J'ai déjà indiqué le goût de Vian pour les auteurs anglo-saxons. Ceux qu'il préfère sont les Anglais H. G. Wells, Lewis Carroll, Kipling, J. K. Jerome, et les Américains Faulkner, Caldwell, Hemingway, Miller, James Cain, MacCoy. . . Il a traduit en outre des nouvelles de Richard Wright en un roman de Nelson Algren, ami de Simone de Beauvoir: *The Man with the Golden Arm.*

Il faut être prudent dans toute étude comparatiste, mais il est possible d'établir dans l'œuvre de Vian des parentés de thèmes et de tons intéressantes et fécondes. Certaines images poétiques de William Faulkner, chargées de cette sombre et fatidique poésie propre à l'écrivain du 'Deep South', lancent un écho vers telle ou telle page de notre auteur, particulièrement dans *L'écume des jours* que j'étudierai plus bas. Images lyriques qui ne vont pas sans humour, 'humour anglais' ou 'humour noir' qui caractérise aussi bien Faulkner et Vian que de grands ancêtres comme Swift ou Poe, 'dandysme de l'épouvante' selon la définition de Jean Cocteau.

L'humour, forme de litote, aide à décrire la sinistre réalité tout en y échappant par le rêve et la spiritualité. Au cours de cette fusion de réel et du rêve, on peut suivre Boris Vian allant du 'Pays' des Merveilles' au 'Pays des Horreurs' comme son maître Carroll du terrier magique — 'Down the rabbit-hole' — à la chasse tragique — 'For the Snark *was* a Boojum, you see'.

Pays des Merveilles, c'est celui des enfants et des animaux. A coup sûr le créateur des trois jumeaux Joël, Noël et . . . Citroën (*L'arrache-cœur*) a fait sienne la défiinition de Richard Hughes: 'Les bébés, naturellement, ne sont pas des hommes — ce sont des animaux qui ont une culture très ancienne, très ramifiée . . .' (*Un Cyclone à la Jamaïque*). Dans ce même roman de *L'arrache-coeur,* Vian n'hésite pas à introduire le magique dans le quotidien,

le fantastique dans le normal: les animaux qui parlent et les bébés qui volent, les situations de rêve ou de cauchemar, l'absurde et le loufoque, le jeu comme substitut de la révolte contre le monde adulte et rationnel.

Mais vite s'annoncent cette cruauté et cette amertume qui nous entraînent de la tendresse et l'innocence poétique au Pays des Horreurs: la torture et le crime dont les multiples manifestations parsément l'œuvre de Boris Vian. Il semble alors suivre une 'Alice in Horrorland', une Alice du temps des camps de concentration et des exécutions sommaires du Ku-Klux-Klan . . . La violence me semble chez Vian à la fois le reflet de son expérience vécue — la guerre, le Nazisme — et l'héritage de la littérature américaine où l'usage de la force, sinon de la brutalité, est constant: que l'on pense seulement au monde de Caldwell, de Steinbeck, de Faulkner. Et il est bien certain que Boris Vian se souvient souvent de *Sanctuary* et *Light in August*; Faulkner n'est-il pas 'le père du roman noir en France'?[1]

On voit donc que les rêves de Vian finissent mal, que, dans son œuvre, la violence et la cruauté règlent les rapports des êtres, que l'amour et l'amitié échouent à réconcilier les hommes entre eux aussi bien qu'avec eux-mêmes, malgré le retour à l'enfance et le recours, parfois, à une sensualité tendre. Je pense que la littérature anglo-saxonne, comme la paralittérature, a aidé Boris Vian à exorciser ses démons familiers.

'Thriller', science-fiction, 'comics', Boris Vian ne néglige aucune épice pour personnaliser sa 'salade' (*J'irai cracher sur vos tombes,* p. 11).

La vogue des 'thrillers' venus des USA a fleuri dans la France des années d'après-guerre autant que celle des grands écrivains d'outremer. Venus des USA? Rappelons-nous cependant que deux des plus célèbres fabricants de romans noirs à suspense sont des Anglais qui se font passer pour Américains: James Hadley Chase et Peter Cheyney. D'où la tentation pour Boris Vian de se masquer d'un pseudonyme américain pour se lancer dans la littérature commerciale: ainsi naît 'Vernon Sullivan' à l'époque où la 'Série Noire' dirigée par Marcel Duhamel va faire la fortune de Gallimard, avec Chase en Cheyney justement, Chandler — traduit par Vian —, Hammett, Himes, MacCoy, etc. La lecture de *No Orchids for Miss Blandish* se mêle aux souvenirs de Faulkner dans l'inspiration de Vian-Sullivan; son premier pastiche, *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes*, est si réussi que même des Américains s'y trompent.[2] Dans ce roman, comme dans les trois autres

'Sullivan', le suspense et le mystère sont soigneusement ménagés, et on y retrouve tous les traits caractéristiques du 'thriller', tous les ingrédients qui ont fait son succès: violence, bagarres et crimes atroces, sadisme, chasse à l'homme, érotisme, pièges, angoisse, le tout dans un style 'hard boiled school'... Plus caractéristique encore d'une influence certain, le fait que dans les oeuvres signées Boris Vian, qui échappent donc aux 'romans-pastiches', l'auteur utilise fréquemment les mêmes procédés et les mêmes ingrédients violents ou érotiques.

Oui, Vernon Sullivan, auteur maudit de faux 'thrillers', 'rejoint secrétement Boris Vian dans cette fascination pour des univers baroques, cruels et chaotique,'[3] dans ce ton aussi d'impassibilité qui cache mal, souvent, une vibration tragique, dans l'agressivité comme recours à trop d'émotion. Du terreau sinistre du roman 'noir' ou 'blême', Boris Vian arrache de sombres et vénéneuses fleurs qu'il transplante dans son jardin de poète maudit, qu'il enferme dans les serres chaudes de ses angoisses et de ses cauchemars, qu'il nourrit de sa vision douce-amère, âpre, tendre et cruellement lucide.

Un autre genre paralittéraire prend très tôt le relais de la 'Série Noire' dans la culture de Vian, genre venu lui aussi d'Amérique bien qu'inventé par les Européens Jules Verne ou Herbert George Wells: la science-fiction. Boris Vian s'y est fortement intéressé dès 1948, et, avec ses amis, se délecte à la lecture de revues comme *Astounding SF*, se passione pour Asimov, Van Vogt, Bradbury, et fonde avec Raymond Queneau et quelques complices le 'Club des Savanturiers' bientôt transformé en 'Société Hyperthétique'. Il publie des articles et des traductions, dans *Les Temps modernes* aussi bien que dans *France-Dimanche* Dès 1948, *Et on tuera tous les affreux* (signé Sullivan) avait mêle inspiration policière, érotisme et science-fiction, et des nouvelles postérieures révèlent aussi une influence des romans d'anticipation. Mais il est surtout capital de noter que Boris Vian ne cherche pas à devenir un écrivain de pure science-fiction; comme tous les autres éléments hétérogènes qu'il absorbe et intègre à son inspiration créatrice, les composants science-fiction se mêlent à un ensemble romanesque original. Nous le verrons dans *L'écume des jours* créer son matériau romanesque par une alchimie complexe où tous les ingrédients qu'il aime se fondent, s'enrichissent mutuellement et garantissent la nature insolite en incomparable de son œuvre.

Pour être complet, j'ajouterai que Vian a toujours trouvé beaucoup de plaisir à la lecture des 'comics', et ne s'en est jamais

caché. Michel Rybalka, excellent spécialiste de Vian, compte parmi les ancêtres du 'Schmürz', dans *Les Bâtisseurs d'empire*, le 'Schmoo' et le 'Kig-me', auxquels j'adjoindrai le 'Schtoonk', tous bizarres animaux de la bande dessinée *Li'l Abner* d'Al Capp.

Mais l'influence la plus évidente des 'comics' chez Boris Vian est celle du 'langage des bulles', ces exclamations variées et originales jaillies de la bouche des personnages; Vian utilise abondamment cette ressource pittoresque des onomatopées que la bande dessinée n'a pas inventée, certes, mais qu'elle a considérablement enriché et perfectionée. Ainsi déferlent chez Vian les 'Oooh!', 'Aââh!', 'Bouh!', 'Beuh!', 'Brrrou!', 'Rrrououâh!', 'Ouilleouilleouille!', 'Couic!', les joyeux 'Youpi!', 'Tchin tchin!', 'Et hop!', les violents 'Bing!', 'Bang bang bang!', les incertains 'Heûps!', 'Vlouf!', 'Plof!', 'Baeuh!', et toutes ces onomatopées qui multiplient les lettres et barrent de leur giclée énergique les images de 'comics': 'Vzzou . . .', 'Bzzzzz . . .', 'Rrrran . . .', 'Bjjjjuii . . .', 'Fuuiiouou . . .', 'Ouâouâouâouâ . . .'.

Ce qui est frappant, c'est la place de pionnier qu'occupe Vian en France dans ces domaines paralittéraires: l'un des tout premiers à traduire des 'thrillers' et de la science-fiction, l'un des premiers intellectuels fanatiques de 'comics'. Il est bien en avance d'une génération, et révèle en même temps sa faculté innée à tout assimiler, qui fait de lui un disciple de grands auteurs aussi variés dans leurs goûts; Rabelais n'a-t-il pas transformé le gnome Pantagruel en héros de la pensée? Hugo craignit-il de donner au mélodrame du Boulevard ses lettres de noblesse? Faulkner ne se mit-il pas à l'école du roman policier 'noir' pour écrire *Sanctuary*?

Le cinéma, particulièrement certains genres américains, est une autre passion de Boris Vian. Non seulement il aime les films de science-fiction et les 'thrillers', ce qui ne surprend pas, mais il apprécie beaucoup le cinéma burlesque, les comédies américaines et 'les grandes machines de Hollywood', bref tout ce qui nous permet d'échapper à la laideur et à la médiocrité quotidiennes.

Souvent des 'séquences' écrites prennent sous sa plume une allure de dessin animé ou de film burlesque à la manière de Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin ou surtout les Marx Brothers dont Vian raffole. Ne prend-il pas comme l'un de ses pseudonymes le nom de 'Hugo Hachebuisson', directement traduit du 'Dr Hugo Hackenbush', l'un des rôles de Groucho Marx dans *A Day at the Races*? Comme les Marx Brothers, Boris Vian aime mêler dans son œuvre des gags burlesques et des séquences de comédie musicale, chansons, danses, épisodes sentimentaux ou spectaculaires: 'That's Entertainment!'.

Burlesque, comédie musicale, western, film de gangsters, comme d'habitude, Vian mêle toutes les inspirations dans son œuvre, sans souci de classement ni de définition cartésienne. Ses goûts de cinéphile enrichissent notre connaissance de l'auteur et de sa création. Les genres qu'il aime définissent sa personnalité et reflètent son œuvre — ou s'y reflètent. Contemporain passionné des arts du XXème siècle, il projette son imagination dans toutes les directions ouvertes par la caméra, la littérature populairs, la musique née à La Nouvelle-Orléans.

Boris Vian joue de la 'trompinette' toute sa vie, malgré la défense des médecins; il écrit toute sa vie sur le jazz; il accueille en France les grands musiciens de jazz, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Erroll Garner . . . L'affirmation que le jazz est la seule contribution américaine à la musique revient souvent sous sa plume. 'Les trois grand moments de mon existence, dit-il, furent les concerts d'Ellington en 1938, les concerts de Dizzie Gillespie en 1948 et Ella Fitzgerald en 1952.'[4] Mais il placera toujours au premier rang 'notre génial père Ellington, le vrai Roi du Jazz', 'notre sire Ellington'.

Il a certainement rêvé un temps d'être un de ces musiciens blancs capables de rivaliser avec les Noirs, comme le trompette Bix Beiderbecke, dont Vian a traduit la biographie romancée, *The Young Man with a Horn*, en 1948. La vie éphémère de ce jeune musicien très doué, la propre fragilité de la santé de Boris, le jazz surtout, musique éphémère par excellence, puisque faite d'improvisations, tout cela n'a pu que confirmer Boris Vian dans sa 'philosophie' de la gratuité angoissante et tragique, de la fatalité qui veut que rien des entreprises humaines n'a d'importance, sinon le bonheur qu'on en retire immédiatement: la chaleur de l'improvisation collective, la résonance en voûtante de quelques notes qui se prolongent pour conjurer le malheur, l'esclavage, la mort imminente.

Je vais en outre montrer à propos de *L'écume des jours* comment l'inspiration du jazz, oxygène de Boris Vian, est profondément présente dans son œuvre, passion qui mêle son goût de l'harmonie à l'humour et au rêve, sa sensualité et sa révolte à son sens de la tragique solitude de l'homme cherchant à communiquer avec ses frères par les notes et les mots.

On retrouve bien des traits de l'analyse générale précédente dans l'œuvre la plus célèbre de Boris Vian, *L'écume des jours*. It serait fastidieux de les reprendre en détail, mais je me propose maintenant de faire ressortir dans ce roman l'influence anglo-

saxonne à propos des éléments suivants: les personnages et les décors; certains traits du langage et de la technique romanesque de Boris Vian; la rencontre et le mariage des héros, Colin et Chloé; enfin le thème des fleurs et particulièrement du 'nénuphar' (water-lily) qui se développe dans les poumons de Chloé et la fait mourir.

Certains personnages de *L'écume des jours* ont assurément quelque détail anglo-saxon dans leur origine ou leur comportement. Ainsi le héros, Colin, qui porte un prénom désuet en France, mais commun dans les pays anglophones, ressemble-t-il à un personnage du cinéma américain: le blond qui joue le rôle de Slim dan *Hollywood Canteen*'.[5] Plus typiquement, son ami s'appelle d'abord dans le manuscrit de Vian 'Jacques Chickago', nom abrégé ensuite en 'Chick'. Mais la référence est évidente aux USA, et d'ailleurs ce personnage a une vocation de 'Série Noire' qui aboutit à une mort violente dans la meilleure tradition de la capitale du crime à l'époque de la prohibition; en effet Chick, n'ayant pas payé ses impôts, est abattu par des policiers — tous nommés 'Douglas'! — :

> 'Il se souleva sur les mains et parvint à s'agenouiller. It tenait son ventre et sa figure grimaçait (. . .) On entendait le sang gargouiller dans sa gorge (. . .) Il lâcha son ventre, ses mains étaient rouges, elles frappèrent l'air sans but, et il retomba, le visage contre le plancher.' (p. 161).

Un autre meurtre ensanglante d'ailleurs le roman, celui de Jean-Sol Partre — contrepèterie comique pour Jean-Paul Sartre — ; mais le personnage le plus anglo-saxon de *L'écume* est certainement Nicolas, le cuisinier de Colin: 'bâti comme Johnny Weismüller' (p. 37), il porte une vêture à l'originalité anglo-saxonne — 'comme tu es smart!' lui dit-on, devant son feutre 'amerlaud' et le reste de son vêtement (p. 47), il ne se sert que de dentifrice américain, il est pour Colin le meilleur professeur de danses nouvelles venues du pays du Jazz, et son irrésistible charme auprès des dames est digne de Lemmy Caution!

L'influence anglo-saxonne se manifeste également dans bien des détails du décor et des objets qui peuplent *L'écume des jours;* en effet combien d'objets animés et vivants autant que chez Walt Disney, dans l'œuvre de Vian! C'est la cravate de Colin qui refuse de se laisser nouer, c'est une voiture 'à pieds vibratiles' (p. 153) pour remplacer les roues trop peu vivantes, c'est le mélange de poésie à la Lewis Carroll et de science-fiction moderne

qui baigne tant de descriptions, nature féerique et merveilleuse, cuisine pleine de 'gadgets' inouïs, pharmacie où un lapin mi-vivant mi-mécanique fabrique des pilules, gâteau-disque et lettre-bande magnétique grâce à quoi correspondent Colin et Chloé, 'pianocktail' surtout, invention géniale de Colin qui permet de composer des cocktails ayant exactement le goût des 'blues' que l'on y interprète:

> 'Chick se mit au piano. A la fin de l'air, une partie du panneau de devant se rabattit d'un coup sec et une rangée de verres apparut. Deux d'entre eux étaient pleins à ras bord d'une mixture appétissante.' (p. 13).

Ce 'pianocktail' est d'ailleurs un bon exemple du goût de Boris Vian à la fois pour les vocables d'origine anglo-saxonne (cocktail) et pour les 'mots-valises' — ou 'portmanteau' de Carroll. Tantôt l'auteur de *L'écume* orthographie à la française tel mot anglo-saxon: 'baise-bol', non sans malice gauloise, tantôt il traduit comiquement 'la maison de disques *Le cri du Patron*' à partir de *His Master's Voice*, ou tendrement '— Va t'habiller, bébé. . .' ('baby' comme hypocoristique). Ailleurs il crée des mots sur une racine anglaise: 'pulser' sur 'to pulse', 'girer' sur 'to gyre' de Carroll, ou bien il emploie carrément un mot anglais, pour le plaisir de changer de vocabulaire: 'Chloé est partie avec des relatifs dans le Midi.' (p. 44), 'l'Engagement' (p. 60), la 'radiance extraordinaire' de Jean-Sol Partre (p. 74) — 'relatifs' pour 'parents', 'Engagement' pour 'mariage', 'radiance' pour 'éclat' ou 'rayonnement'. Quant aux mots-valises, beaucoup plus fréquents dans *L'arrache-cœur* par exemple, on en rencontre cependant dans *L'écume;* ainsi, outre 'pianocktail', 'doublezon' formé de 'double' ou 'doublon' et 'pèze' ou "peson', 'panouille' formé de 'pain' ou 'panade' et 'nouille'.

La technique romanesque de Boris Vian, d'autre part, emprunte parfois au cinéma, particulièrement américain. On pense aux dessins animés ou aux films burlesques devant des manifestations sentimentales paroxystiques: 'Il dépassa la femme et se mit à pleurer. Elle comptait au moins cinquante-neuf ans.' (p. 30); 'Son cœur s'enfla démesurément, s'allégea, le souleva de terre.' p. 31) . . .

Mais surtout les recherches cinématographiques américaines de l'époque inspirent certains procédés techniques de présentation. Les réalisateurs Edward Dmytryck dans *Murder my Sweet* (1944) et Robert Montgomery dans *Lady in the Lake* (1946) avaient

provoqué une petite révolution en montrant l'action vue par une 'caméra subjective' se confondant aver l'œil du héros. Hitchcock reprit d'ailleurs le procédé dans *Strangers on a Train* (1951). Notons que ces trois films sont tirés de romans de Raymond Chandler, dont le traducteur français fut, on le sait, Boris Vian. De même celui-ci remplace-t-il l'œil de l'auteur par celui du héros, avec 'gros plans' (close-up), 'fondu-enchaîné' (fading-in), 'travellings':

> 'Colin montait, le nez sur les talons des deux filles. De jolis talons renforcés, en nylon clair, des souliers hauts de cuir fin et des chevilles délicates. Puis les coutures des bas et les creux articulés de l'attache des genoux. (. . .) Maintenant il voyait le haut des bas de celle de gauche et la blancheur ombrée de la cuisse. (. . .) Colin se mit à regarder ses pieds par décence et vit ceux-ci s'arrêter au second étage.' (p. 31);
>
> ou: 'Colin courait de toutes ses forces, et les gens, devant ses yeux, s'inclinaient lentement, pour tomber, comme des quilles, allongés sur le pavé. Et Colin courait, courait, l'angle aigu de l'horizon, serré entre les maisons, se précipitait vers lui. (p. 85).

Le jazz enfin me semble, lui aussi, laisser sa marque dans le style de Boris Vian. Deux chapitres de *L'écume des jours* en particulier sont écrits dans une rythmée qui, se fondant sur le rythme de sept syllabes, donne une bonne image littéraire de la syncope du jazz; en effet, l'heptasyllabe français rappelle toujours au lecteur les rythmes plus fréquents de l'octosyllabe ou de l'hexasyllabe, et introduit ainsi un subtile décallage rythmique rompant avec le style classique. Dans le chapitre XVI, c'est la danse de l'amour nouveau:

> 'Il faudra des mois, des mois pour que je me rassasie des baisers à vous donner. Il faudra des ans de mois pour épuiser les baisers que je veux poser sur vous, sur vos mains, sur vos cheveux, sur vos yeux, sur votre cou . . .' (p. 48),
> et dans le chapitre XXII c'est l'angoisse folle de Colin courant vers Chloé frappée des premières atteintes du mal mystérieux: 'Et Colin courait, courait, l'angle aigu de l'horizon, serré entre les maisons, se précipitait vers lui. Sous ses pas il faisait nuit.' (p. 85).

Le cinéma et le jazz, qui se mêlent dans l'inspiration 'technique' de Boris Vian, vont aussi unir leurs sortilèges en faveur des deux

protagonistes. La rencontre, l'amour fou, le bonheur fragile de Colin et Chloé sont tout entiers sous le signe des musiciens de jazz et de leurs créations, du rythme, par exemple celui du boogie-woogie — 'leurs coeurs battaient, tous deux, sur un rythme de boogie' (p. 70) —, du 'biglemoi' ou du blues, de la musique du 'pianocktail' dont les notes et les liqueurs composent des mélanges très 'jazz'. De 'l'avenue Louis-Armstrong' à 'la rue Sydney-Bechet', de la 'maison Gerschwin' à la librairie de 'la rue Jimmy-Noone', le Paris de Boris Vian se met à l'heure du jazz et prend un air américain, sur les harmonies de *Loveless Love, Black and Tan Fantasy, Concerto pour Johnny Hodges, The Mood to be Wooed, Blues of the Vagabond, Misty Morning, Blues Bubbles* . . .

Mais c'est en fait une interprétation d'Ellington sur le thème *Chloé* qui donne naissance et vie à la jeune fille que rencontre Colin et qu'il aimera à en mourier. En effet, après avoir écouté ce disque — enregistré par Ellington en octobre 1940, à New York —, Colin se rend à une surprise-party où on lui présente une très jolie brune:

> '— C'est Colin, dit Isis. Colin, je vous présente Chloé. Colin avala sa salive. Sa bouche lui faisait comme du gratouillis de beignets brûlés.
>
> — Bonjour! dit Chloé . . .
>
> — Bonj . . . Etes-vous arrangée par Duke Ellington? demanda Colin . . . Et puis il s'enfuit, parce qu'il avait la conviction d'avoir dit une stupidité.' (p. 33).

It trouve cependant le courage ensuite de danser avec elle et de lui faire la cour:

> 'Elle avait bien choisi le disque. C'était *Chloé*, arrangé par Duke Ellington. Colin mordillait les cheveux de Chloé près de l'oreille. Il murmura: —C'est exactement vous.' (p. 36).

La cérémonie de 'l'Engagement', où Colin épouse Chloé peu de temps après, est une fête musicale et merveilleuse, joliment sensuelle et gentiment parodique. Le thème de la beauté et du bonheur, thème majeur, celui de l'adorable Chloé, s'annonce avec un doux déferlement de fleurs blanches et de filles roses: le charme et la jeunesse . . . Puis c'est 'l'arrangement' sur un thème voisin mais plus éclatant, la parade de la noce par tout un personnel bariolé et dynamique, digne à la fois des Marx Brothers et de la grande comédie musicale: soixante-treize musiciens, le 'Religieux', le 'Bedon' et le "Chuiche' manoeuvrant à la tête de quatorze 'enfants de foi' habillés comme des 'drummies' pour un ballet bien régle, avec basse, grosse caisse, fifre, maracas, numéro de claquettes . . . Les deux thèmes se mêlent ensuite lorsque

retentit le chant du cérémonial 'soutenu par un fond de onze trompettes bouchées jouant à l'unisson' (p. 60), avant le triomphe de l'orchestre pour saluer le 'Chevêche' et entraîner toute la noce à danser dans l'église.

Après ce morceau de bravoure, si *L'écume des jours* devient, selon l'éloge de Raymond Queneau, 'le plus poignant des romans d'amour contemporain', c'est qu'il se nourrit constamment de la musique la plus poignante et la plus contemporaine: le 'blues' des Noirs américains.

Mais c'est aussi un roman qui se nourrit des fleurs vénéneuses de la littérature américaine. Souvent l'auteur glisse des 'orchidées' dans le décor ou les bouquets de Chloé, et comment ne pas penser à ces succès énormes d'après-guerre, en France et ailleurs: *Pas d'orchidées pour Miss Blandish* et *La chair de l'orchidée* de Chase?

Cependant je pense surtout à un passage de *Mosquitoes* de William Faulkner pour parler d'influence anglo-saxonne dans *L'écume*. Ce roman se déroule, on le sait, dans l'embouchure marécageuse du Mississipi — ce qui rejoint le sous-titre de *Chloé* de Duke Ellington: *Song of the Swamp*. Or la jeune épouse de Colin meurt d'un nénuphar dans la poitrine cependant que le sol de son appartement se transforme en marécage.

Mais ce nénuphar, justement, qui tue lentement Chloé, qui l'étouffe peu à peu, n'a-t-il pas une parenté troublante avec la langeur qui saisit Mrs Maurier dans *Mosquitoes*? Rappelons d'abord l'évolution de la maladie de Chloé:

> ' — Elle a un nénuphar? demanda Nicolas incrédule.
> — Dans le poumon droit, dit Colin. Le professeur croyait au début que c'était seulement quelquechose d'animal. Mais c'est ça....
> — Vous ne pouvez pas savoir ce que c'est, sanglota Chloé, ça fait tellement mal quand il bouge!' (p. 108).

On opère la jeune femme pour enlever ce parasite:

> 'Elle avait, sous le sein droit, une petite cicatrice, parfaitement ronde.
> — Ils l'ont retiré par là quand il est mort? dit le professeur. Etait-il grand?
> — Un mètre, je crois, dit Chloé. Avec une grosse fleur de vingt centimètres.

— Sale truc! . . . marmotta le professeur. Vous n'avez pas eu de chance. De cette taille-là, ce n'est pas courant!' (p. 130).

Mais le nénuphar repousse dans le poumon gauche et c'est la longue agonie:

> 'Chloé dormait. Dans la journée, le nénuphar lui prêtait la belle couleur crème de sa peau, mais, pendant son sommeil, ce n'était pas la peine et les taches rouges de ses joues revenaient. Ses yeux faisaient deux marques bleutées sous son front.' (p. 146)

et 'Chloé était toujours entrourée de fleurs. Ses mains, allongées sur les couvertures, tenaient à peine une grosse orchidée blanche qui paraissait beige à côté de sa peau diaphane.' (p. 164).

Comment ne pas évoquer ce thème essentiel de *L'écume des jours* quand on lit cette fin de chapitre de Faulkner consacrée à l'angoisse de Mrs Maurier:

> 'A l'intérieur d'elle-même, une chose terrible grossissait, une chose terrible et empoisonnée débordait comme une eau trop longtemps endiguée; on eût dit que s'éveillait, au sein de son corps si familier, une chose qu'elle avait abritée à son insu. Cette chose se déployait comme une fleur vénéneuse, un assemblage compliqué de pétales qui poussaient, se fanaient et mouraient, et que remplaçaient aussitôt d'autres pétales plus grands encore et implacables. Ses membres tremblaient, et cette fleur secrète, cette fleur sombre, hideuse, grandissait, grandissait, l'étouffant . . .' [6]

Certes, ce n'est qu'une métaphore accessoire chez Faulkner, et la différence de tonalité entre ce passage de *Moustique* et *L'écume des jours* vient de ce que la fleur de Faulkner s'attaque à une femme seule et vieillissante — c'est une forme de sa solitude et de sa mort —, alors que la plante parasite de Chloé, qui a une existence 'réelle' et dont la croissance rythme la deuxième partie du roman, la prend en plein bonheur, en pleine jeunesse, en pleine beauté rayonnante . . . Mais ce nénuphar ne serait-il pas justement, parmi d'autres valeurs symboliques, la vieillesse et la mort qui nous saissent dès que nous quittons — mariage ou métier — le temps béni de l'adolescence, le temps de l'insouciance, du rêve naïf, de la gratuité et de la beauté? On voit comment Boris

Vian a pu cueillir une image lyrique chez Faulkner, puis la faire fleurir dans son roman.

Une rencontre féconde et privilégiée eut lieu entre un auteur et un monde d'outremer. Les civilisations anglo-saxonnes ont attiré Boris Vian; les livres anglo-saxons, dont la diffusion fut massive en France après la guerre, par un engouement qui confine à l'envoûtement, furent une nourriture privilégiée, ainsi que le cinéma américain.

L'esprit de Vian accueillit aisément cette culture, grâce à sa curiosité du neuf, grâce à son bilinguisme, grâce à son goût de toute découverte. Il refusait de s'enfermer dans la culture française et les frontières du Vieux Monde; il s'ouvrit à l'Amérique, terre d'une renaissance de l'homme, discutable certes, mais fascinante.

Culture anglo-saxonne, langages, souvenirs de Lewis Carroll et de William Faulkner, attrait pour les 'thrillers' ou les 'astounding stories', magie des 'movies' et envoûtement du Jazz, tout se retrouve dans une œuvre majeure de la littérature française moderne, œuvre brève d'un auteur-météore: l'écume des jours...

*University of Natal,*
*Durban.*

## *REFERENCES*

[1] Stanley Woodworth. *Faulkner en France.* Minard. Paris 1959. (p. 114).
[2] Cf. Geoffrey Gorer. *The Erotic Myth of America,* in *Partisan Review* July-August 1950.
[4] *Chroniques de Jazz.* UGE. 10/18. Paris 1971. (p. 300). No. 17.
[5] *Hollywood Canteen* est une comédie musicale américaine de D. Daves, tournée en 1945 avec en particulier Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, Barbara Stanwyck, John Garfield, etc.
[6] William Faulkner. *Moustiques.* Editions de Minuit. Paris 1948. (p. 327).

## A CONCISE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BORIS VIAN

NOVEL:

*Trouble dans les andains.* UGE. Paris. 1970.
*Vercoquin et le plancton.* Gallimard. Paris. 1967.
*L'écume des jours.* UGE. Paris. 1963.
*L'automne à Pékin.* UGE. Paris. 1972.
*L'herbe rouge.* Livre de poche. Paris. 1969.
*L'arrache-cœur.* Livre de poche. Paris. 1972.

SHORT STORIES:

*Les fourmis.* UGE. Paris. 1970.
*Les lurettes fourrées.* Livre de poche. Paris. 1969.
*Le loup-garou.* UGE. Paris. 1972.

POEMS:

*Cantilènes en gelée.* UGE. Paris. 1970.
*Textes et chansons.* UGE. Paris. 1972.

THEATRE:

*Théâtre* (*Les bâtisseurs d'empire*; *Le goûter des Généraux*; *L'équarrissage pour tous.*) J. J. Pauvert. Paris. 1967.
*Théâtre I* et *II.* UGE. Paris. 1971.
*Chroniques de Jazz.* UGE. Paris. 1971.

TRANSLATIONS INTO ENGLISH AND GERMAN:

*Froth on the Daydream* (L'écume des jours). Rapp & Caroll. London.
*Mood Indigo* (L'écume des jours). Grove Press. New York.
*Chloe* (L'écume des jours). (German Edition).
*Die Ameisen* (Les fourmis). Verlag Klaus Wagenbach. Berlin. 1967.
*The Empire Builders* (Les bâtisseurs d'empire). Methuen. London. 1971.
*The General's Tea Party* (Le goûter des Généraux) Grove Press. New York. 1967.
Some Poems in *French Poetry Today.* Deutsh. London. Stocken. New York.

# GEOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSKEIAN ELECTIONS, 1963-1973

*by* R. F. Haswell and Andre van Schalkwyk

The Transkei is South Africa's first, and politically most evolved, 'Bantustan'. The territory received a measure of self-government in 1963, three general elections have taken place in the interim, and it obtained independence in October, 1976. Like many African countries the Transkei contains numerous tribal groups, and a basic question is thus, has the development, and support, of the Transkei's two main political parties mirrored tribal allegiance?

More specifically, it is the purpose of this paper to add a geographic perspective to the interpretation of the voting trends which are apparent from the 1963, 1968 and 1973 Transkeian general elections. With respect to the period from 1926 to 1956 when the United Transkeian Territories General Council (the Bunga) operated, Hammond-Tooke has claimed that 'tribalism, as such, was irrelevant and, although a majority of chiefs and headmen were in fact elected, the General Council contained a fair number of the more progressive and educated commoners'.[1]

The Transkei Constitution Act of 1963 provided for a Legislative Assembly consisting of 64 chiefs, as ex-officio members, and 45 members to be elected by the registered voters of the Transkei every five years. Since the ex-officio members are all chiefs or paramount chiefs, tribal elements were a built-in part of the Legislative Assembly, and it could perhaps be expected that tribal loyalties would be strongly reflected in the popular vote.

Although the two political parties — the Transkei National Independence Party (T.N.I.P.) led by Chief Kaiser Matanzima and the Democratic Party (D.P.) led by Paramount Chief Victor Poto — were not formed until shortly after the 1963 election, the election was a test of support for the two leaders and the candidates who supported them.

Table 1 details the three election results as well as the ensuing motions of no-confidence in the Government.[2]

Despite the fact that in the 1963 elections 30 candidates who supported Chief Poto were elected, as opposed to 15 supporters of Chief Matanzima, the latter was elected Chief Minister of the Transkei by 54 votes to 49, as a result of the greater support he enjoyed amongst the ex-officio members of the Assembly. The

Table 1

SUMMARY OF THE TRANSKEIAN ELECTIONS

| | Seats won by the T.N.I.P. | Seats won by the D.P. | Seats won by Independents | T.N.I.P. Victories in No-Confidence Debates |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1953: | 15 | 30 | — | 1964: 61-39 |
| 1968: | 28 | 14 | 3 | 1969: 68-24 |
| 1973: | 30 | 13 | 2 | 1974: 69-21 |

Source: Transkei Legislative Assembly Hansards, 1964, 1969 and 1974.

1968 returns revealed a complete turnabout, in that the T.N.I.P. won twice as many seats as the D.P. The 1973 elections resulted in the T.N.I.P. winning three-quarters of the 45 elected seats.

While the classified nature of the election results precludes detailed analysis of the votes cast in the three elections, it is possible to interpret the no-confidence debate returns as a reliable guide to party affiliation. Furthermore, although it is only possible to compare the three elections at the Electoral Region scale — in the 1968 and 1973 elections the Magisterial Districts replaced the Electoral Regions as constituencies — there is considerable correspondence between the Electoral Regions and tribal areas as shown in Figs. 1 and 2. The Emigrant Tembuland and Fingo Regions obviously reflect the regional predominance of those groups while the population of the Qaukeni and Nyanda Regions is predominantly Mpondo. A comparison, at the Electoral Region scale, of the three Transkeian elections should, therefore, be one yardstick of the occurrence of tribal or block voting.

Fig. 3 is a summary, in map form, of the voting trends in the Transkei, and it records that both of the parties have received far more than localized tribal support. Only two regions, Emigrant Tembuland (the area in which Matanzima is senior tribal chief) and Umzimkulu, have elected only T.N.I.P. candidates in all three elections. The D.P. has not exercised unanimous control of the seats of any Electoral Region, since although it won all but one of the seats in the Dalindyebo, Nyanda and Qaukeni Regions in 1963, it lost several of these seats to the T.N.I.P. in 1968 and 1973. This trend is most marked in the Qaukeni Region, which in 1973 returned one independent and

eight T.N.I.P. candidates — virtually a complete reversal of the 1963 seat tally. A similar marked swing characterizes the Fingo Region, which was a unanimous D.P. area, again in terms of the number of seats captured, in 1963, but in 1968 the T.N.I.P. gained one of the three seats in the region, and in 1973 the Fingo Region sent three T.N.I.P. candidates to the Assembly. The Maluti Region is the third area in which the T.N.I.P. have gained ascendancy. The Emboland Region has consistently elected both T.N.I.P. and D.P. candidates in all three elections.

While the geographic patterns of the seats won by the two parties in the three elections indicate an apparent lack of tribal block voting, they cannot, because of the regional scale involved as well as the lack of detailed corroboratory data, be regarded as conclusive evidence that party, rather than tribal, politics is a *fait accompli* in the Transkei. The upcoming general election will provide further pointers.

*University of Natal,*
*Pietermaritzburg.*

## NOTES

[1] W. D. Hammond-Tooke, 'Tribal Cohesion and the Incorporative Process in the Transkei, South Africa', in J. Middleton and R. Cohen (Eds). *From Tribe to Nation: the Process of Political Incorporation in Africa,* (Scranton: Chandler Publ. Co., 1970).

[2] Gwendolen M. Carter, Thomas Karis and Newell M. Stultz, *South Africa's Transkei,* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press), 1967, p. 132.

**FIG. 1 THE 1963 ELECTORAL REGIONS OF THE TRANSKEI**

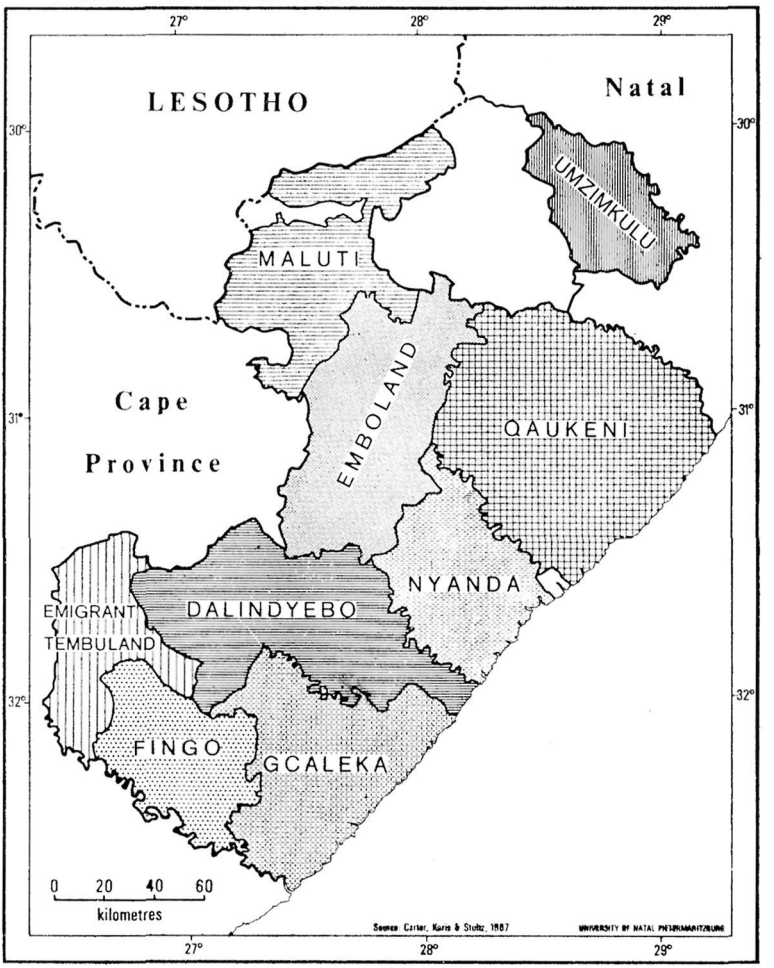

FIG. 2 DISTRIBUTION OF TRIBES IN THE TRANSKEI

FIG. 3 VOTING TRENDS, BY ELECTORAL REGION SEATS, IN THE THREE TRANSKEIAN ELECTIONS, 1963, 1968 AND 1973.