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CONTENTS

In recent years, our articles on subjects other than literary have increased as far as a ratio of two to every three that have been accepted. Many of them have dealt with matters which are currently debated or of topical urgency; and we are glad to find that contributors are maintaining this kind of interest. For instance, we welcome articles on religion and the problems of censorship for this volume of *Theoria*. Although a different publication of the University — one which gives information and reports on developments internally, by authority of the Registrar — featured censorship a few months ago, the debate was not carried further. We hope readers will be encouraged to proceed with it, perhaps in the form of letters which we can include. To turn elsewhere, an answer to literary theorists of today who are sceptical of the Romantic poets' concern for society, offers material of equal topicality among the articles which follow.

Literary criticism has always been strongly represented in our pages: it is part of the character and reputation of *Theoria*. In keeping with that, several writers and their works enter the present meeting in the forum. We have discussion of more than one well-known figure from the past; of a voice from the indigenous culture of southern Africa (a voice only partly influenced by the West); and of poems which largely influence the work of a painter or in turn have been inspired by his work (a linking of verbal and visual arts which is all too rare).

It is of some importance that the way of appointing of referees for this journal has been formalised. Going beyond an informal though steady arrangement, we can announce a recognized panel of advisers — from a number of fields and from other universities as well as our own — whose names are listed on the next page.

<div align="right">THE EDITORS</div>

CENSORSHIP:
THE CHALLENGE TO SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

by CHRISTOPHER MERRETT

It is inevitable that the imperatives of the authoritarian state should present a severe challenge to any university which professes allegiance to that tradition of free enquiry and diverse thought known as academic freedom.[1] In the South African context, for the past three and a half decades universities have frequently been coupled with the judiciary and some churches and newspapers as occasional institutional defenders of a non-authoritarian ethos in South African society. Particular confrontations have occurred over the Extension of University Education Act (1959) and the Universities Amendment Act (1983) commonly known as the 'Quota Act'. The majority of conflicts with the State have centred upon university student admissions criteria, while considerable protest has also been evoked from time to time by the banning or detention of staff and students. On the issue of the restriction of printed material for teaching and research purposes considerably less has been heard. Yet censorship is a major apartheid institution which undermines the contribution South African universities might make to the attainment of a just society.

The role played by censorship in the perpetuation of apartheid is perhaps more subtle but no less effective than more visible manifestations such as the Group Areas Act, bantustans, migrant labour and martial law in the townships. It is a natural accompaniment to the South African style of government. Censorship serves the new managerially-orientated, cost-efficient apartheid ideology seeking 'total involvement' as effectively as it served the old, more overtly paternalistic and centralized authoritarianism. Significantly between 1976 and 1982 80 per cent of the submissions made to the Publications Control Board were referred by police or customs officals, only 20 per cent by the public or by publishers.[2] Traditionally censorship has been used by states requiring a high level of information manipulation and thought control. All the electronically based media lend themselves readily to control but the printed word possesses innate liberatory characteristics which prove problematic even for the most repressive of regimes: the embarrassment caused to totalitarian and authoritarian states of right and left wing persuasions by 'samizdat' or underground literature is well known; and international boundaries have proved highly porous where printed literature is concerned. As Kunene has succinctly stated, the words of the censored outlive the censors.[3] The aims of apartheid's system of

censorship of printed material are varied, but a strategic objective which is of particular importance to university communities is the denial to the intelligentsia of factual and theoretical tools which might help to formulate visions of future South African society radically different from those held by the architects of apartheid.

Censorship of documents is one of numerous ways of erecting barriers between the oppressed and those intellectuals with a commitment to a society based on a higher degree of social, economic and political equity. Literature which bridges the artificial gaps between the people of South Africa created by its rulers is a prime target of the censors, particularly that writing from a variety of academic and non-academic sources which suggests the necessity for and possibility of the liberation of South Africa's people. In this sense the work of the universities represents a threat to the political status quo based on an insecure foundation of race classification and both race and class exploitation. Apartheid requires intellectual repression in order to survive. Its proponents have tried to establish its intellectual and academic respectability while denying its critics basic literary resources. Through time the censorship system is applied with varying degrees of severity and with changing targets. Regardless of the characteristics of the moment the existence of censorship legislation on the statute book is a fundamental threat to academic freedom and therefore to the social relevance of the university.

Censorship appears in many forms. The State of Emergency declared in July 1985 restricted the free flow of information in vast areas of South Africa. Legislation touching on wide areas of national life — prisons, police, defence, atomic energy, petroleum supplies and national 'keypoints', for example — contained clauses permitting only official sources to supply information authorized for publication. While these manifestations of the garrison state mentality have significance for the universities, this article will concentrate on access to material which has already been published. The two salient laws are the Publications Act (1974) and the Internal Security Act (1982). Details of the mechanics of these two statutes as they apply to libraries are available elsewhere.[4] In general terms the Publications Act dictates restrictions upon storage conditions, type of borrower and condition of loan. In the case of some material categorized as 'possession prohibited' these bureaucratic controls are extended to the need to acquire permits from the Directorate of Publications both to possess and to use a given title. A similar dichotomy is visible in the material banned under the Internal Security Act. The effect of the latter is, however, more sweeping since *all* the work of banned and 'listed' persons and proscribed organizations theoretically vanishes from the library shelves. In a literary sense the aim is to render individuals and

corporate bodies non-existent. The publications of banned organizations are restricted in a fashion similar to the titles listed as 'possession prohibited' under the Publications Act except that permits are issued by the Director of Security Legislation.

Thirty percent of the material in the banned book collection at the University of Natal Library, Pietermaritzburg, is inaccessible except under permit. The remainder may be borrowed by members of the university subject to form filling and certain restrictions. The requirement that certain personal details be provided before a book may be consulted illustrates the intimidatory facet of the system in which a register of borrowers is maintained and made available for inspection on demand by the authorities. One category of material is summarily removed from academic usage; the other is made available conditionally in such a way that the librarian becomes a bureaucrat acting on behalf of the State. The system as a whole gives individuals the ability to hinder and potentially to control the academic process under the protective umbrella of a statute book which reflects a particular ideology. It is typical of apartheid's need to classify and compartmentalize. Individuals are assigned to pre-determined social, political and economic boxes and in this case the operative box is labelled 'bona fide study purposes'. To those who belong to this category, which presumably excludes that pillar of a healthy society the concerned and informed person, controlled and restricted rights are extended. The most important characteristic of that box is that in a free and democratic society no one would attempt to define it. In contrast part of the Freedom Charter, a document grounded in the democratic tradition, reads: 'All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, *by free exchange of books*, ideas and contact with other lands'; and: 'The law shall guarantee to all their right to speak, to organise, to meet together, to *publish*, to preach, to worship and to educate their children' (author's italics). The Freedom Charter echoes the sentiments of article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which reads: 'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and *to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media* and regardless of frontiers . . .'[5] (author's italics).

With such hindrance of the communication of information and ideas and independence of thought and expression, academic freedom ceases to exist. If such freedom were simply an ivory tower self-indulgence this would perhaps be a matter of concern limited to universities, but '. . . the pursuit of knowledge always arises from purposes which express existing social relations'.[6] Its restriction has a particularly punitive effect on those academics who are able to make a relevant contribution to the political, social and economic development of South Africa. In its broadest sense academic

freedom cannot be divorced from the existence or suppression of general freedoms beyond the gates of the university[7] and censorship is indeed an excellent example of this condition: one of its aims is to frustrate the exchange of ideas, facts and experience between the intelligentsia and the oppressed.

The collection of fact accompanied by rational discourse is fundamental to a university[8] and where this activity is frustrated in any way scholarship loses its essential relevance to society, especially one in which '. . . deference to constituted political authority has in turn displaced critical awareness as the context for the making of public policy . . .'.[9] In South Africa — a country in which there is disagreement about the geographical extent of the state, who should belong to it and the granting of political, civil and economic rights[10] — this is a liability of considerable magnitude for the universities. There is no doubt that censorship has been highly successful in circumscribing the contribution that academics might make to a future democratic South Africa. It has encouraged the well-known ivory tower concept which embodies consorship's purpose of separating the intelligentsia from crucial national issues. Research becomes characterized by privatism such as the selection of non-contentious topics or the disguising of work in abstruse theoretical detail intelligible only to fellow academics.[11] This has devalued the work of the universities. In a purely intellectual context the true university is inherently subversive and given the socio-political condition of the country it could be argued that such an institution cannot exist in South Africa.

Both André Brink and Pierre van den Berghe have argued that a repressive environment which stops short of total control, as in the case of South Africa, is one which stimulates creative writing. South Africa's radical literary output is indeed characterized by great vitality, perhaps stimulated by pervasive social and economic exploitation and inequity. Van den Berghe points out[12] that South Africa is far removed from Nazi Germany where a first pamphlet could lead its writer to the concentration camp. On the other hand a young black South African, Johannes Rantete, who recorded his experiences during the Vaal Uprising in September 1984 in *The third day of September: an eye-witness account of the Sebokeng Rebellion of 1984* found himself detained and his book banned although both he and his book were later released.[13] Whether the influence of repression stimulates academic research is a debatable point. The South African condition certainly encourages socially relevant research and teaching but the censorship system undermines them seriously. Among the problems is the fact that when academics are separated from crucial literature they are often unable even to ask the vital questions which ignite the important

research;[14] and abdicate in advance through imagining, rightly or wrongly, that particular lines of enquiry will result in bibliographic dead ends.

Thus '... through this lack of awareness [academics] are even ignorant of the extent of their ignorance'.[15] Inevitably the main impact of censorship has fallen upon the humanities and social sciences, especially that research which has concerned itself with the state of the South African nation since 1950. By contrast, the work of pure and applied scientists has remained unaffected. Logically the State welcomes, and funds lavishly, radical scientific research. Both parastatals and the private sector are major supporters of university finances. Such funding represents power and some of the resultant research contributes significantly to the military/industrial complex, reinforcing the close relationship between the technological establishment, industry and apartheid: '... in virtually all of South Africa's universities there are political and strategic experts who are absorbed as sources of information and intellect into the military establishment through their research, their appearance before government commissions or, in some cases, in a contracted capacity for teaching or research purposes'.[16] Chomsky argues that 'The university should be a centre for radical social inquiry, as it is already a centre for what might be called "radical inquiry" in the pure sciences'.[17] Such inquiry is of course more consistent with the pursuit of social justice in South Africa than research which serves the political, military and commercial establishments. However, this link between the universities and the socio-political status quo is not surprising, since 'Universities reflect the political structure and dominant ideology of the society in which they are situated'.[18]

In mid-1985 205 academics working in the humanities and social sciences on the Durban and Pietermaritzburg campuses of the University of Natal were questioned on the effects of censorship on their teaching and research. Half of the respondents claimed that their personal academic activity had been hindered. In terms of research 43 per cent mentioned limitations on access to factual information, 30 per cent to theoretical concepts and, perhaps most important of all, 27 per cent reported obstacles to the framing of research questions. Half of the respondents reported interference with the recommended reading for undergraduate and honours courses.[19] It is customary to assume that the main impetus for the academic boycott of South Africa lies in the general educational impact of apartheid and more specifically government control of university admissions. Nevertheless the effect of censorship has also been noted with distaste as shown by the composite resolution adopted by the Association of University Teachers (AUT) in

Britain in 1980. This reads in part:

> Council reaffirms its total opposition to the policies of apartheid and
> *of censorship of academic work, books, literature*, etc., and believes
> that the most effective action is the maintenance of a total boycott on
> any form of contact with South African universities and with South
> African academics (author's italics).

It is clear that even if all admissions criteria based on race were to be
abolished in practice and from the statute book, censorship of
academic material would be one of the criteria used to justify a
continued boycott.

On numerous occasions there has been vigorous debate within
universities about specific titles in the context of conflicting
interpretations of the censorship laws. Yet universities have been
slow to confront censorship as a threatening phenomenon,
preferring in many cases to delegate the problem to the library
under the guise of departmental autonomy. The law requires of
course that every librarian shall be an agent of the State and thus an
intellectual policeman. Two-thirds of those in the University of
Natal survey whose teaching and research were hampered by
censorship attributed their problems, rightly or wrongly, to over-
zealous enforcement of the law by librarians. Ironically the very
processes which allow restricted access to some proscribed
material — application forms and a register of usage, for example —
highlight the collaboratory role and invest the system with implied
recognition and legitimacy. Certainly any librarian who participates
in the administration of the system except under conditions of
extreme protest is assuming a power no member of an academic
community should expect, seek, accept or condone.

Unfortunately many librarians working in academic libraries
display those characteristic symptoms of South Africa's socio-
political condition: apoliticism, caution, inertia and circum-
spection. Too many individuals, and the profession as a
whole, have failed to ask if the censorship laws carry the moral force
to ensure their legitimacy, question the academic consequences of
the system, or regard it as anything more than an occupational
hazard. There is a general reluctance to address the relatively
diffuse needs of scholarship in a repressive society rather than the
obviously more definite demands of the law. It is important to
consider the perhaps trite fact that books are confined to the banned
book cupboard by librarians. The provisions of the Internal
Security Act in particular can only be enforced by the voluntary
assistance of librarians since there is no definitive list of the works
affected; and the total body of the proscribed literature is virtually
unidentifiable by the State.

Some librarians of course — the willing proxies — have relished a more active role in the censorship system. They have used such devices as literal interpretation of the law, complicated and obstructive bureaucratic procedures and even gratuitous shelf searches to heighten the barrier between users and the material they require. There is evidence to suggest that in some South African university libraries there is greater enthusiasm for confining academic material to locked cupboards and adopting a passive attitude to the problem rather than assisting staff and students to circumvent the system and increase the availability of printed material. Labanyi, in an analysis of Spanish libraries after the fall of Franco, shows how the passivity of librarians allowed the development of vast lacunae representing the work of exiled and opposition thinkers.[20] In general the reaction of librarians lends substance to the argument that it is only too easy for the authorities through legislative action and propaganda to invest the published work of political opponents with an aura of contagion. At a collective level in South Africa, through their professional body, librarians have failed to make a significant statement against censorship for thirty years. Published articles and conference papers concern themselves with apolitical and uncontroversial issues such as the status of librarians, computer networks and management theory. Debate, written and verbal, on information provision concentrates on hardware and the supply of bibliographic information, not on the purpose, process and effect of political censorship which cripples the flow of data and ideas. It would be erroneous, however, to overemphasize the liberal/illiberal dichotomy apparent in the behaviour of librarians. Any degree or level of censorship is subversive in an academic community.

The effects of the censorship system raise a complex set of dilemmas for South African universities. In so far as the system devalues the potential contribution of universities to the attainment of a just society, they are judged increasingly harshly by the international academic community and their role is not likely to look edifying in historical perspective. Universities need to ask, and to answer convincingly, some fundamental questions. Can they continue to accept that one part of the academic community, the library, is placed by law in a position to police the intellectual activity of another, represented by students and staff? Can they extend, in these specific circumstances, the principle of departmental autonomy such that it can become a weapon of potential academic repression under the protection of the law? Can they any longer accept constraints that prevent them contributing fully to the current process of national social, political and economic change?

A significant body of respondents in the University of Natal

survey recommended the maximum possible circumvention of the law; and a sizeable but smaller fraction suggested that it be ignored altogether. All the evidence surrounding the issue of censorship and the universities suggests that there is a collective academic responsibility and duty to define practical responses to the censorship menace. So far the characteristic university response to censorship has been symptomatic of '. . . the ritualised nature of liberal political opposition to apartheid . . .'.[21] Until the universities respond in a combative way, individually or in concert, and create more space for intellectual freedom by making crucial literature freely available, an academic contribution to national liberation is severely curtailed. This process requires considerable imagination from university administrations and librarians. It would clearly be unreasonable to expect librarians in isolation to resolve a problem which has wide academic and educational implications. Nevertheless the academic community has a right to expect from its colleagues in the library a commitment to intellectual freedom characterized by imagination and initiative in interpreting repressive law which has no legitimacy in the eyes of the South African people at large. The academic community should demand a libertarian rather than a legalistic interpretation of the law on the part of librarians. Such an approach has been adopted by the American Library Association which calls upon its members to '. . . challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment' and encourages '. . . resistance to such abuse of governmental power and supports those against whom such governmental power has been employed'.[22]

From both moral and practical standpoints it is incumbent upon universities as institutions to confront the censorship system and so liberate themselves from constraints which give universities the appearance of greater identity with the oppressor rather than the oppressed. Librarians act as agents of the system, and without their daily collaboration it is hard to imagine how it would work. The presence of official government agents in the university libraries of the country would have the effect of highlighting the stark realities of the situation and emphasizing its severity to the international community. Some aspects of censorship legislation have greater potential for evasion than others. While bannings under the Publications Act are hard to ignore, since the titles of newly proscribed works appear weekly in the *Government Gazette* and *Jacobsen's*,[23] the workings of the Internal Security Act are inevitably less precise since the Act lists only the names of banned persons and organizations. The shelves of South African libraries are laden with material which is banned under the Internal Security

Act simply because the task of tracing it, especially in journal articles, is so immense.

Such published work which reaches the banned book cupboard does so through the energetic intervention of the librarian which goes beyond a weekly perusal of the latest *Government Gazette*. Similarly many of the petty regulations surrounding the administration of banned books and the more stringent rules governing 'possession prohibited' titles are enforced because the librarian acts as a surrogate government agent. There seems here to be scope for passive resistance to create a modicum of freedom which the authorities would find hard to repress. Nor is the legislation as monolithic in character as might appear. It may more accurately be described as ad hoc in application,[24] suggesting that those who suffer from it should respond likewise. University administrations could also make greater efforts to protest at the infringement of intellectual freedom and make clear publicly the limitations imposed upon research of social, political and economic importance. Librarians could aid this climate of protest by educating library users, especially those requesting banned material, about the need to combat a system which is incompatible with the purpose and relevance of a community of intellectuals. At a more superficial level the printing of unambiguous declarations of opposition to censorship on all stationery relating to banned books would have the virtue of a continuous reminder of intellectual repression.

It seems reasonable to conclude that South African universities have failed signally to combat the suppression of information and ideas contained in books and periodicals. At best the library profession and university authorities have practised or urged a liberal interpretation of the law, failing to address the need for fundamental structural change, an attitude symptomatic of the South African condition in the 1980s. This may be viewed from two complementary angles. On the one hand the universities have accepted limited and conditional access to a certain body of literature as an academic privilege: that literature is denied to the mass of the South African population. Acceptance of such an arrangement implies a belief that academic freedoms *can* be divorced from general civil rights. On the other hand their acquiescence to a situation in which another fraction of the literature is totally inaccessible to anyone hampers teachers, students and researchers in providing radical critiques of and possible solutions to South Africa's socio-economic conditions.

A number of authorities have maintained that the universities, locked into their historical origins, have a high propensity often under the guise of disinterested objectivity to contribute

significantly to economic, social, industrial, political and military structures which perpetuate the national status quo.[25] Dissident academics have countered this tendency by contributing the fruits of their work to the creation of alternative structures in the fields of education, housing, health, labour relations and to non-racial political organizations, amongst others. One of the many obstacles they face is the censorship of published material. Universities as institutions have numerous and so far under-utilized opportunities to show that they identify with a future South Africa released from State-engineered exploitation and repression. One of these involves the choice of a combative and purposeful challenge to our existing system of political censorship.

University of Natal,
Pietermaritzburg.

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25. See for example G. Budlender, *op. cit.*: pp. 264–265.

'STRIVING WITH SYSTEMS':
ROMANTICISM AND THE CURRENT
CRITICAL SCENE

by DONALD A. BEALE

Since the topic 'Romanticism and the Current Critical Scene' may seem vast and unwieldy, let me be more precise. As someone with specialist research interests in Romantic literature in general, and in Romantic mythmaking and Romantic politics in particular, the impetus for this paper springs from increasing dissatisfaction with the ways in which some contemporary Marxist critical theory addresses itself to Romantic poetry, and this is compounded by Nick Visser's recent claim that of all the various critical perspectives, the one coming to particular prominence and influence in South Africa at the moment seems to be 'sociology of literature generally and Marxist literary criticism in particular'.[1]

Given that the practical criticism method tended often to dehistoricize and depoliticize works of literature, one might have expected a critical method that abjures practical criticism for these reasons (amongst many others, of course) to be especially alert to the political imperatives of Romantic poetry. Yet it is a curious fact that much Marxist criticism of Romantic poetry, while it acknowledges the political energies of the individual poets, tries to empty their politics of any real seriousness, to see in the poetry real inadequacies and deficiencies in terms of political, economic, social, and historical analysis, while claiming a special credence for its own adequacies in just these areas. Twenty-five years ago, Jacques Barzun could argue that because of Romanticism's rejection of authority for liberty, its valuing of the individual life, it was 'not hard to understand why the systematic assaults against Romanticism most often come from the extreme right'.[2] In our time, the left if not exactly 'assaulting' Romanticism, seems, nevertheless, to be concerned to undermine whatever claims Romantic poetry might make for an adequate political seriousness.

Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory — An Introduction* is a case in point. Increasingly influential as a Marxist critic, Eagleton sees in the Romantics and their privileging of the 'creative imagination' 'considerably more than idle escapism': poetry is not only a critical challenge to 'those rationalist or empiricist ideologies enslaved to "fact"', but has 'deep social, political and philosophical implications ... Literature has become a whole alternative

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ideology, and the "imagination" itself, as with Blake and Shelley, becomes a political force. Its task is to transform society in the name of those energies and values which art embodies. Most of the major Romantic poets were themselves political activists, perceiving continuity rather than conflict between their literary and social commitments'.[3] To me, this is generous and unexceptionable, yet Eagleton's next sentence suggests that he feels as though he's conceded too much. In a manoeuvre not unlike Milton's technique of amplification and meiosis in the presentation of Satan, Eagleton moves from this to a more reductive vision. For him, this very literary radicalism betrays 'another, and to us more familiar, emphasis: a stress upon the sovereignty and autonomy of the imagination, its splendid remoteness from the merely prosaic matters of feeding one's children or struggling for political justice'.[4] Perhaps this has a certain appeal for the in-house cognoscenti, as well as implying some self-consoling affirmation that, unlike the poets, he, Eagleton, cares profoundly about feeding children and political justice. I do not doubt that he does, but I'm concerned to know why he denies this to the poets he discusses. Indeed, it's surely in contradiction with his own earlier claims for the Romantics in general, and for Blake and Shelley in particular. But the implications here are disturbing: when Leavis repudiated Shelley's politics and his 'weak grasp of the actual', he removed Shelley from the serious consideration of readers who chose to trust the critic rather than engage with the poet. Eagleton seems to me to open up the same dangerous possibility: it's Eagleton who drives a wedge between imaginative power and feeding children, not the Blake and Shelley whom he cites by name.

Consider this, for example, from Shelley's *The Mask of Anarchy*, in answer to the question 'What art thou Freedom?' (l. 209):

> For the labourer thou art bread,
> And a comely table spread
> From his daily labour come
> In a neat and happy home.
>
> Thou art clothes, and fire, and food
> For the trampled multitude —
> No — in countries that are free
> Such starvation cannot be
> As in England now we see.

(ll. 217–225)[5]

Or consider Blake's appalled and appalling vision of how an exploitative alliance of church, state, and greed disguises its interests behind the specious claims of morality and charity:

> Listen to the Words of Wisdom,
> So shall (you) govern over all; let Moral Duty tune your tongue.
> But be your hearts harder than the nether millstone . . .

Compell the poor to live upon a Crust of bread, by soft mild arts.
Smile when they frown, frown when they smile; & when a man looks pale
With labour & abstinence, say he looks healthy & happy;
And when his children sicken, let them die; there are enough
Born, even too many, & our Earth will be overrun
Without these arts. If you would make the poor live with temper,
With pomp give every crust of bread you give; with gracious cunning
Magnify small gifts; reduce the man to want a gift, & then give with pomp.
Say he smiles if you hear him sigh. If pale, say he is ruddy.
Preach temperance: say he is overgorg'd & drowns his wit
In strong drink, tho' you know that bread & water are all
He can afford. Flatter his wife, pity his children, till we can
Reduce all to our will . . .

(*The Four Zoas,* Night the Seventh (a), ll. 110–129)[6]

In this sustained articulation of the calculating processes of domination, hegemony, and ideological conditioning is a profound intimation of the extent to which poetic imaginings are not sealed off from what Eagleton presents as 'merely prosaic matters'. We wonder whose interests Eagleton is really serving here, for his claim suggests either an inability to see this, or a reluctance to admit it, or, more sinister, a deliberate attempt to conceal just that compulsion in Blake and Shelley to unite in a single and comprehensive imagining the aspirations of vision and the irreducible and unremitting claims of a brutally implacable reality.

In Romantic poetry, political action and reform are not only fit subjects for poetry but compelling imperatives, if poetry is to be a humanly responsible and justifiable pursuit at all. Indeed, hostility to inherited eighteenth-century habits of thought is not only philosophical and epistemological, but an outraged revulsion at the lived human realities men, women, and children were forced to endure in a world shaped by structures of thought and power— interests disguising themselves always as natural and inevitable, and attempting insistently to ensure their legitimacy in the minds of those they brutalized and oppressed. As early as *Queen Mab*, Shelley knew that it was not 'Nature' but 'Kings, priests, and statesmen' who 'blast the human flower/Even in its tender bud' (IV. ll. 103–105), using the doctrine of original sin to justify the world they control (ll. 117–118). Shelley argues here that the reality men experience is not a neutral *given*, an inevitability of nature, but something expressive of, and embedded in, prevailing habits of 'pitiless power' (l. 127). The child

                                                is bound
Ere it has life: yea, all the chains are forged
Long ere its being.

(ll. 133–135)

Implicit and explicit in Romantic writing is the extent to which philosophical, epistemological issues express themselves in

material terms, political, social, economic, the living experience of individuals in material circumstances. This is more than an assertion of imagination against rationalism. The shape of things lived derives from human imaginings, most often of a warped and deformative kind, and if this is so, our problem is to evolve modes of imagining, responsive and responsible to the irreducibly precious uniqueness of each 'minute particular'. Nor is this fanciful escapism: it derives from the poets' lived sense that experience is a crippling taking — we pay for it:

> What is the price of Experience? do men buy it for a song?
> Or wisdom for a dance in the street? No, it is bought with the price
> Of all that a man hath, his house, his wife, his children.
>   (*The Four Zoas*, Night the Second, ll. 397–399)

But it's bought also with the price of all that a man is, for it makes him and remakes him to fit and accept the interests of its demands.

To know that experience is shaped by men involves the further recognition that all ways of articulating, all modes of discourse — whether celebratory, defensive or oppositional — are themselves intimately bound up with the shaping/controlling of human experience. Poetic forms, language itself, are saturated with ideological specificity and appropriation. Amongst many others, this is surely one reason for the profusion of different forms explored by the Romantics: not simply seeking modes commensurate with their own vision, but doing so while recognising the corrupting power of language itself and the possible appropriation of both literary forms and even imaginative compulsions by the very forces they seek to oppose. In this Romantic endeavour is surely a striving for utterance which acknowledges that it's operating inevitably with and within habitual usages and assumptions, but seeking to press beyond those verbal and formal articulations which are seen to authorise as natural, inevitable, civilised, and Christian, a reality which is centrally inhuman — in an effort to explore and make possible an imagining of a more humanely nourishing reality.

If Eagleton is aware of this, he chooses not to discuss it. Indeed, having suggested a contradiction between the poets' claims for human representativeness as prophetic seers, and their actual marginalisation within their contemporary social formation, he asserts this:

> Deprived of any proper place within the social movements which might actually have transformed industrial capitalism into a just society, the writer was increasingly driven back into the solitariness of his own creative mind.[7]

To which social movements does Eagleton refer here? Did such movements actually exist then, and what would a 'proper' place within them mean? Is Eagleton claiming there really were such movements but that the Romantic commitment to imaginative vision pre-empted support for them and for the just society they promised? Indeed, where does Eagleton derive his unquestioned (and unquestioning!) assurance that these social movements (whatever they were, for he does not say!) might actually have achieved a just society? It's all very well to place the Romantics in a context of revolutionary energy and harsh reality, but it ignores or silently suppresses the crucial pressure of living in a revolutionary time, embracing revolutionary causes and sympathies, and coming to profound disillusion over a revolution that had failed. A commanding social political moment promising a just society of liberty, equality, and fraternity had not only failed to realise its promise, but it had, it seemed, merely repeated much of the tyrannic and oppressive practice of the order it had overthrown, from the Terror and the September massacres, to wars of conquest, and Napoleonic imperialism.

The racking anguish and self-questioning of Wordsworth's *The Prelude* (indeed, the very incremental process of vision and revision, of version after version — 1799, 1805, 1850) reveals the predicament of an individual living out and grappling with the contradictions of that historical moment and reality — not with the benefit of hindsight and detachment, and the tenured security of university employment such as we enjoy, but in the situation itself. The complexities of Blake's mythopoeic energy reveal a mind seeking some way through the Urizen/Orc diagramme of tyrant-rebel-new tyrant-new rebel in a seemingly endless repetition. For the later Romantics, Shelley's 'Preface' to *The Revolt of Islam* alone indicates something of the kind of world in which Shelley and Byron worked. And a central element energizing the younger Romantics' fusion of engagement with outer events and confrontation with private inwardness is their sense of Wordsworth. To them, the youthful radical Wordsworth had betrayed his earlier commitments, and this apostasy provokes an intensity of self-questioning, not only as regards the fact that revolutionary spirits can move over to the other side, but that that fact itself suggests a capacity within the imagination itself, especially in the revolutionary imagination, for betraying its very revolutionary imperatives. Which raises the question of the responsibilities of the imagination, of the poet, and of poetry.

If revolutionary aspirations on the one hand and Rousseau's idealism on the other can lead to renewed inhumanity; if revolutionary spirits such as Wordsworth can seem to come to support the very legitimacies they'd seemed to question and

oppose, then what to Eagleton is a smooth alliance with social movements that 'might actually have transformed industrial capitalism into a just society' becomes for them, not as theory but as a lived problematic, the question of how it was possible for ideals to be corrupted and for revolutionary minds to capitulate. The turn to the solitariness of the mind is not facile escapism but a self-exploration and self-questioning contingent on the recognition that the real problem in achieving a just society is deep in the individual mind itself — it must be, if reality is humanly made. And if the mind creates the reality in which it exists, and if it can persuade others to share in its view of what is real as *the* real, then reality embodies a particular mind structure. As Blake says, 'As a man is, So he Sees'.[8]

These creations can be paradisal or hellish, humane or 'a shape of error'.[9] Having experienced the failure of revolutionary idealism in the Terror; indeed, having sensed that maybe the Terror itself was implicit in those very ideals themselves, implicit in ways of thinking about man and society which subordinated human particularity to grand design or theoretical idea; having watched Wordsworth become reactionary; having recognised the extent to which preconceived forms come to tyrannize over consciousness as final and incontrovertible accounts of reality; having recognised that what finally imprisons us are not kings, priests, governments, or political structures out there, but inner compulsions in our own minds that make kings and governments necessary/inevitable, that 'mind-forg'd manacles' are not simply the sounds of the oppressed protesting their suffering but perhaps also the sounds of opposed points of view trapped in the same errors of thinking however supposedly liberating — then the sceptical resistance to dogma and fixity characteristic of much Romantic poetry is no escapist retreat from the cause of a just society, but a ceaseless testing of values to preserve an enabling freedom from those plausible external forms which become what Keats calls 'resting places'[10] for thought and so inhibit the mind's growth and advance.

But the nub of Eagleton's argument is quite precise. Is it that the Romantics do not engage politically in any adequate way or is it that they remain at variance with Eagleton's own ideological convictions, held by him as unchallengeable? Eagleton is explicit:

> It was not until the time of William Morris, who in the late nineteenth century harnessed this Romantic humanism to the cause of the working-class movement, that the gap between poetic vision and political practice was significantly narrowed.[11]

The emphasis here is exact: there must be a gap between poetic vision and political practice unless Romantic humanism is harnessed to the cause of working-class movements, which,

presumably, will lead to a just society. Eagleton may very well be right, but the case surely needs to be argued. In any case, his total argument seems to imply that, notwithstanding their political convictions, the Romantics were remote, ineffectual, and counterproductive in ways that Morris was not. But on what grounds? Without getting involved in arguments about Morris, an obvious counter to Eagleton's argument is the extent to which both Byron and Shelley were read by working-class readers, were often quoted and discussed in the Chartist press,[12] that Engels once planned to translate *Queen Mab*,[13] and that Byron came increasingly to inspirit the restless and rebellious peoples of Europe throughout the nineteenth century. Nor is all this simply a question of liberal ideals: Blake, Shelley, and Byron are not unaware of political and economic practicalities, recognising that commitment to the poor and oppressed demands more than self-gratifying moral outrage alone, that it involves food and clothing as well as the creation of a society which will enable the dispossessed to achieve social, political, and human dignity.

Now, Eagleton has every right to criticise the Romantics if he wishes: my disquiet springs from a sense that he consciously misrepresents them. It may well be that their political attitudes are inadequate but that isn't quite what Eagleton seems to be about. Rather, he seems to be devaluing their claims in order to promote his own: where they are deficient, his position is all-encompassing, committed, rigorous in critique, and error-free. Yet Romantic poetry is always vulnerable to claims that its political commitments are inadequate because it not only renounces the rigidities of dogma in the interests of a creatively self-critical scepticism, but it sees in the very fixed adherence to dogma a fatal congealing of energy, a shift from an inspiriting idealising to a crippling idolising, a submission of mind to its own creations. And this is most tempting with just those doctrines that seek and seem to offer liberty, especially when coupled with seemingly irrefutable analyses of the corruptions of the status quo and the manifold tricks and disguises by which, say, emergent industrial capitalism in the Romantic period presented itself as acceptable. If Romantic scepticism is suspicious of revolutionary ideologies, it is not sceptical of the humane ends revolutionary energies sought to serve. Rather, there is the recognition that doctrines offered as final accounts of reality will be imposed on others: not only is one man's liberty another man's prison, but one man's liberty can become a prison for the man himself if he remains content with it.

Possibly it's just this sceptical questioning that Eagleton perceives as a threat to his own apparently unquestioned convictions. I say 'unquestioned' because in the discussion in hand there is no trace of doubt but rather an unshakeable confidence, and

because in this later book *The Function of Criticism*, while he argues in the Preface that once the critical institution is 'thrown into radical question, then one would expect individual acts of criticism to become troubled and self-doubting', this injunction seems to be an expectation Eagleton expects of others rather than of himself.[14] For example, he valorises Romantic 'disinterestedness' as a revolutionary force, producing 'a powerful yet decentred human subject which cannot be formalised within the protocols of rational exchange', and he sees the main social critique passing from 'criticism in its traditional sense' to poetry itself. But then he goes on like this:

> No critique which does not establish such an implacable distance between itself and the social order, which does not launch its utterances from some altogether different place, is likely to escape incorporation; but that powerfully enabling distance is also Romanticism's tragedy, as the imagination joyfully transcends the actual only to consume itself and the world in its own guilt-stricken self-isolation.[15]

We're almost back to Leavis and Shelley's 'weak grasp of the actual', and it is perhaps worth recognising here just how close Eagleton and Leavis really are. As Leavis devalues Shelley because of alleged aesthetic lapses, and as Eagleton devalues the Romantics because of their alleged ideological inadequacies, both critics share an apparently unshakeable conviction of incontrovertible rightness; if Leavis's sensibility stands beyond question, so too does Eagleton's ideological conviction.

In contradistinction to Eagleton, I have been trying to suggest that Romantic subjectivity is not the joyfully transcendent refuge of the solitary mind, but is, rather, a crucible of forensic self-examination. Marxist criticism is not simply a highly impressive method for the investigation and analysis of culture, and the social, economic conditions of a corrupt and heartless capitalism and its ideological strategies; it seems to have another target, and that is one that makes inevitable an irreconcilable clash between Marxist criticism and Romantic poetry — that is, the sense of the individual. For Catherine Belsey, for example, Romantic subjectivity would seem to be essentially escapist, 'the project of the Romantic ode' being 'one of *revealing* the mystery at the heart of things, the intense and visionary core of subjective experience which makes possible escape from the drab routine of everyday externality'.[16] For her, 'the Romantic rejection of the "real conditions" is based on a belief in the autonomy of the subject',[17] and this, for her, has sinister implications because 'the transcendent subject of liberal humanism ... is the ideological ally of industrial capitalism'.[18] Put this with

Eagleton's already-quoted view that the Romantics were deprived of any proper place in progressive social movements and hence retreated to their solitary minds, and we have a self-defeating escapism in collaboration with industrial capitalism, poetry as a vatic Trojan Horse for bourgeois hegemony:

> ... it is the function of ideology to constitute concrete individuals as subjects, so that they are 'spontaneously' and 'naturally' integrated into the existing social formation, living an imaginary relation to the real conditions of their existence, 'working by themselves' in subjection to the constraints imposed (in the last instance) by the mode of production.[19]

My problem is not with Belsey's view of ideology here, but with her placing of the Romantics as escapist, committed to a sense of the subject which makes them culpable in these terms. From her account, one might think that the Romantics were serenely unaware of the process of ideological conditioning, especially their perception of how the victims of oppression internalised an oppressive ideology.

Having insisted on an impulse to escapism as primary, and having revealed its thwarted bafflement as the escapist poet is forced to 'double back', she argues this:

> In the absence of an adequate theory of the subject as the individual in society, a meeting-place of the network of linguistic relationships which articulate experience, the Romantics were unable to account for this doubling back, experiencing it only as loss or betrayal of the vision.[20]

But 'an adequate theory of the subject' clearly has to do with the theories Belsey has herself been expounding: by implication, if the Romantics could only have had the benefit of these insights, things would have been more convincing. Indeed, she goes on:

> Unable to theorize the inadequacy of its concept of subjectivity (and committed, indeed, to experience as against theory), the poetry can ultimately only present the subject as trapped between intolerable alternatives...[21]

Both 'adequacy' and 'inadequacy' are tactics of self-confirmation for the critic, especially in the absence of any attempt to explore what the Romantics themselves might have said about subjectivity: Belsey offers her view of their notion and then denounces it. Furthermore, that parenthetic dismissal of the Romantic commitment 'to experience as against theory' implies a culpable misdirection. Yet it refuses to recognise the extent to which the

Romantic distrust of theory is not a vapid retreat from rigorous thinking or analytic effort but a recognition that all theories, whether Burkean defences of the status quo or revolutionary, Godwinian, Jacobin theories, whatever their theoretical claims — politically, socially, economically, theologically, whatever — have lived consequences in individual terms, and that a theoretical concern for the general can lead to a denial of the inalienable preciousness of each individuality that constitutes it:

> He who would do good to another must do it in Minute Particulars:
> General Good is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite & flatterer.
> *(Jerusalem,* 55, ll. 60–61)

The Romantics' affirmation of the individual life involves resistance to the theoretical generalisation that ignores unique individual complexity in the interests of an illusory coherence: they know that theory can reduce individualities to a deadening sameness. Indeed, Blake's famous plea for an independent vision of things,

> I must Create a System or be enslav'd by another Man's.
> I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create,
> *(Jerusalem,* 10, ll. 20–21)

involves, too, the larger impulse to liberate men from the need to enclose reality in any totalising theoretical frame at all:

> Striving with Systems to deliver Individuals from those Systems.
> *(Jerusalem,* 11, l. 5)

It is an imaginative imperative to evolve a vision of reality that repudiates closure, and the inevitable process whereby ideas/images come to possess the mind which created them in the first place. Amongst other things, part of the reason why 'The deep truth is imageless' in *Prometheus Unbound* (II, iv, 116) is because only the absence of a final image can prevent the mind hypostatising a momentary insight as a permanent reality and thus resisting the need for ongoing effort.

These recognitions and convictions are won in that very subjectivity Eagleton and Belsey question, so it's worth asking just whose interests are served by this apparent repudiation of the individual subject. And this is all the more urgent since it becomes a commanding issue towards the end of Nick Visser's article with which I began. For him, the 'faltering of practical criticism must be seen as part of the general crisis of confidence in liberal thinking', one facet of which is 'its characteristic translation of economic, social, and political matters into moral and individualistic terms'.[22]

Though Visser does not cite the Romantics, it's worth noting that it is a function of their insight into the appalling human reality of their time that they do translate such matters into individualistic terms: against Burke's claims that 'our political system is placed in a just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world',[23] Blake offers the living human reality he sees and hears in 'each charter'd street' of *London*. If the doctrine of original sin could be deployed tactically by apologists of the status quo to convince the oppressed that the real cause of their misery lay in their fallen souls, and if such apologists argued in terms which implied human suffering was something intrinsic to a divinely ordained structure of things beyond the specificities of class, economics, politics, and material reality, the Romantics recognised this kind of argument for the mendacity it was, and strove to expose both the human truth it concealed and the processes of its concealing activity. As Shelley wrote to Hunt on May Day 1820, 'the system of society as it exists at present must be overthrown from the foundations with all its superstructure of maxims & of forms'.[24]

Visser sees practical criticism as inevitably bound up with the failure of the liberal programme:

> In a country in which problems and issues increasingly present themselves in broad social and economic terms, practical criticism is unable to posit conceptions of a higher order than the individual in either the production or reception of literature: the individual author, the individual text, the individual reader.[25]

Just what such 'conceptions of a higher order than the individual' in this context might be, remain undefined, but Visser's point is precisely evaluative: 'of a higher order than'. It is not, we note, of a different order, but of a 'higher' order, as if, by implication, conceptions of the individual are self-evidently of a lower order than these other orders which Visser does not specify. Since the notion of the subject is a matter of heated polemic in current theories, literary and otherwise, moving beyond the individual in relation to the production and reception of literature to the delusions and mendacities of capitalist formations, it's perhaps worth insisting that the subjectivity of Romantic poetry is expressive of a problematic crisis with regard to identity which is historically specific towards the end of the eighteenth century and which is compounded by the Romantic sense of just how easily individual value and complexity could be subsumed beneath the specious claims of something other, something larger, more imperious than the individual. Indeed, writing at a later revolutionary time in the late 1840s, Alexander Herzen, with

proleptic insight into man's fatal capacity to sacrifice individuals to ideas, and the lives of the present to the putative glories of the future, argued this:

> The submission of the individual to society, to the people, to humanity, to the Idea, is merely a continuation of human sacrifice, of the immolation of the lamb to pacify God, of the crucifixion of the innocent for the sake of the guilty . . . The individual, who is the true, real monad of society, has always been sacrificed to some social concept, some collective noun, some banner or other . . .[26]

Granted South Africa is a country in which problems and issues present themselves in social and economic terms, but there is more to it than that. While we theorise about 'conceptions of a higher order than the individual' (even if it is in literary critical terms), we need to remember that we live, teach, and theorise in a country which is a terrifying example of what happens to individuals in social, political, racial, economic, human terms as a result of submitting the individual life to conceptions of a supposed 'higher order' than the individual.

Just because Romanticism affirms the individual life against what it sees as the dehumanising conformity of grand design or prevailing idea, it is likely to be always vulnerable to the kinds of critical approaches I've been discussing here. And it is likely to become even more so as the attractions of endlessly refining theoretical presuppositions increase: compulsive explorations of theoretical principles may be complex and rewarding,[27] but they're often in danger of reading like unself-critical graphomania, as narcissistic in their convolutions as the displays of sensibility denounced in practical criticism.

But there is another problem here. Two comments from Marx seem to have been accepted as incontrovertible, indeed canonical, to judge by the frequency with which they are cited:

> Consciousness does not determine life: life determines consciousness

and

> It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.[28]

On the one hand, the Romantics are profoundly aware of the extent to which the individual consciousness is implicated in and saturated by its social conditioning, and of the extent to which individuals internalise the ideological imperatives of the immediate power structure. But, on the other hand, while acknowledging the malign consequences of determining material conditions, the Romantics

equally insist on a capacity for a creative freedom to imagine and shape a world more commensurate with human and humane desire. Yet this very impulse to an enlarging vision of human possibility is discounted by both Eagleton and Belsey as escapist and marginal. Again, they've every right to be critical of writers if they wish, but the manner of that criticism seeks, it seems, to assert the superiority of the critic over the writers discussed.

As the sense of the text as *essence* yields to a conviction that the text is a terrain or site of contestation, that no text means intrinsically or essentially by and for itself but that meanings derive from readers who make texts mean what they mean in accordance with whatever political, philosophical, economic, social positions readers hold (positions which are themselves fundamental shaping elements in the meanings readers produce); as it becomes increasingly recognised that all criticism is ideological (whether it admits it or not); and as some ideological criticism is more aggressively mobile in its conviction of the rightness of its claims, then the possibility increases as David Morse has argued (questioning the critical strategies of Cleanth Brooks and Paul de Man on Wordsworth and Shelley), that 'the main purpose that the invocation "Wordsworth" and "Shelley" serves is to designate a site of error that can be displaced by the critic as a site of wisdom'.[29]

It's all very well arguing, analysing, revealing, making visible the brutal alliance of capitalism and racism that poisons our world here in South Africa, but to what extent does the putatively superior political, economic, social reality explicit in Marxist literary theory necessarily and inevitably offer a more enriching solution? Just as the Romantics were aware of the extent to which, say, the Bible on the one hand and Rousseau on the other could be appropriated to inhuman ends, so we, too, cannot choose not to be aware that however convincing as theory, the historical practice of Marxist theory may be less humane than we would wish; and that Marxism is, like all theories, susceptible of appropriation by raw, self-interested power. Again, this is not to discredit Marxist theory as such, but to question the ends to which it — like other theories — can be, and often is, put.

In their discussion of Romantic poetry, both Eagleton and Belsey assert their own values as superior to the poets they consider. In a very limited way, I've tried to suggest that the Romantics are other than Eagleton and Belsey claim. But the real problem is more critical still. Whose interests are really served by devaluing as inadequate, escapist, and marginal, a body of writing which asserts the inviolable claims of the individual life against those of the grand design or idea, which prefers the claims of lived experience to the plausible attractions of theory just because it recognises the extent to which the impulse to idealise often, perhaps inevitably, leads

men to idolise their own creations and submit to them? A criticism
that asserts its ideological and political imperatives, that insistently
foregrounds its theoretical premises in ever more self-sustaining
and self-confirming ways, clearly has a vested interest in devaluing a
poetry concerned to reveal (amongst other things) the corruption of
revolutionary idealism into tyrannical idolatry and dogmatism.

The claims of the individual become crucial here. Having
discussed the Romantics early on in *Literary Theory*, Eagleton
comes to this towards the end of the book:

> ... liberal humanism is at once largely ineffectual, and the best
> ideology of the 'human' that present bourgeois society can muster.
> The 'unique individual' is indeed important when it comes to
> defending the business entrepreneur's right to make profit while
> throwing men and women out of work; the individual must at all costs
> have the 'right to choose', provided this means the right to buy one's
> child an expensive private education while other children are
> deprived of their school meals, rather than the rights of women to
> decide whether to have children in the first place.[30]

Certainly, claims for 'human' and 'individual' can be used in these
ways, but if one is going to place the Romantic commitment to
individualism in these terms (as Eagleton did earlier with his remark
about 'feeding one's children') then one is not only calling other
dimensions of the 'human' and the 'individual' into question, but,
more dangerously, potentially emptying any claims that 'human'
and 'individual' might have of any importance or significance in the
face of whatever one puts in their place, whatever it might be that is
regarded as 'higher' than the individual. In the face of opinions such
as these, the Romantics represent an enduring and problematic
challenge.

More than this, they offer a warning. Outraged by the inhumanity
of their world, the Romantics shared both the revolutionary spirit of
their time and the collapse of revolutionary aspiration into
disillusion and the counterthrust of draconian reaction. Equally,
they experienced the corrupting consequences of commitment to
belief, cause, and theory. In the deep inwardness of Romantic
subjectivity is not the escapism which Eagleton and Belsey allege,
but an internalising of conflict in the conviction that any external
liberation must be contingent on inner self-liberation from the
tempting claims of the self-hood — a quest for possession of self
rather than possession by the self.

If human beings could be reduced to things by the prevailing
ideologies of dominant power interests, internalising the very forces
which oppressed them, they could, equally, become abject before
their own deepest convictions, even (perhaps especially) before

those which, paradoxically, promised freedom and liberty. 'By our own spirits are we deified' says Wordsworth at a crucial moment. But the line offers a darker possibility which is not at all a pun: 'By our own spirits are we *reified*'. We are reified, not only in our conditioning by ideological constraints, but in our self-submission to the very ideals which promise to liberate us. As Blake put it:

But go merciless man! enter into the infinite laybrinth of another's brain
Ere thou measure the circle that he shall run. Go, thou cold recluse, into the
    fires
Of another's high flaming rich bosom, and return unconsum'd, and write
    laws.
If thou canst not do this, doubt thy theories . . .

<div align="right">(The French Revolution, ll. 190–193)</div>

University of Natal,
Pietermaritzburg.

NOTES

1. Nick Visser, "The Critical Situation and the Situation of Criticism", *Critical Arts*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1984, p. 8.
2. Jacques Barzun, "Preface to the Second Edition", *Classic, Romantic and Modern* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. xv.
3. Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Basil Blackwell, 1983), pp. 19–20.
4. Ibid., p. 20.
5. All quotations from Shelley's poetry are taken from *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).
6. All quotations from Blake are taken from *Blake's Complete Writings*, ed. Sir Geoffrey Keynes (Oxford University Press, 1969).
7. Eagleton, op. cit., p. 20.
8. Letter to Dr. Trusler, 23 August, 1799, Keynes ed. cit., p. 793.
9. *Prometheus Unbound*, IV, l. 383.
10. To J.H. Reynolds, 3 May 1818, *Letters of John Keats*, ed. Robert Gittings (Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 96.
11. Eagleton, op. cit., p. 20.
12. See, for example, Bouthaina Shaaban's article, "Shelley in the Chartist Press", *The Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin*, No. XXXIV, 1983.
13. Richard Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), p. 209.
14. *The Function of Criticism: From 'The Spectator' to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso Edition, 1984), 'Preface' pages not numbered.
15. Ibid., p. 41.
16. Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 118.
17. Ibid., p. 122.
18. Ibid., p. 123.
19. Ibid., p. 134.
20. Ibid., p. 122.
21. Ibid., p. 123.
22. Visser, op. cit., p. 7.
23. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Dent: Everyman, repr. 1971), p. 31.
24. *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Frederick L. Jones (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), Vol. II, p. 191.
25. Visser, op. cit., p. 7.

26. Alexander Herzen, *From the Other Shore*, translated by Moura Budberg, in *From the Other Shore and The Russian People and Socialism* (Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 134–135.
27. As Michael Green insists in "The Manifesto and the Fifth Column", *Critical Arts*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1984, p. 11.
28. Respectively, these comments come from Marx and Engels's *The German Ideology* (1845–6), and from Marx's 'Preface' to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859). For convenience, I quote them here from Terry Eagleton's *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1976), p. 4.
29. David Morse, "Author-Reader-Language", in *The Theory of Reading*, ed. Frank Cloversmith (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1984), p. 72.
30. *Literary Theory*, p. 200.

PHILOSOPHICAL COSMOLOGY
AND ANTHROPOLOGY IN
THE EXPLANATION OF RELIGION*

by MARTIN PROZESKY

Philosophy is just as relevant to the work of analysing the meaning of religion in a secular, culturally pluralist age as it was to the constructing of classical theology in previous periods of history in the west, but in a much changed way. My purpose in this paper is to describe three such areas of contemporary philosophical relevance. These three areas are the theory of explanation, and what I have taken to calling philosophical cosmology and philosophical anthropology, respectively, terms whose meaning I shall elucidate later. They impinge on the work of the philosopher of religion as resources for constructing rigorous explanations of religious phenomena modelled on explanatory procedures developed in the natural and human sciences and extensively analysed by philosophers of science and of history (cf Hempel 1970, Hesse 1980, Popper 1968; Dray 1957). Thus my contentions in this paper presuppose the feasibility of giving explanations of religion, though I do not here defend my belief in that feasibility. It must suffice in the present context for me to say that there is nothing self-evidently inappropriate for a thinker who examines religious beliefs and practices to ask why they are held or undertaken, why they take their particular forms, or why religion appeared in human cultures and has remained there with such apparent tenacity. These are essentially explanation-seeking questions, and in looking for an answer to them it is natural to consider using methods of explaining that have worked well in other fields. Since these constitute an important modern section of epistemology, the theory or philosophy of explanation is an important new resource for the philosopher of religion. My examination of it has yielded the explanatory strategy that is summarized in section II of this paper, but before it can be presented meaningfully, it is necessary to deal first with the domain of the explicandum — the religious data that need explaining.

I
THE EXPLICANDUM: ESSENTIALS OF RELIGION

It is perfectly possible to confine one's interest to restricted aspects of religion on earth, for example hymn-singing or belief in the existence of the human soul, and seek explanations for them. My

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own interest, however, is very much broader, and concerns certain widely recurring patterns that scholars have documented wherever people practise a religion; in fact the detection of these recurrent patterns of belief and custom is our main reason for speaking generally about religion at all. And among those recurrent patterns I am particularly interested in a set which has some right to be regarded as definitive in view of its prevalance and fundamental importance. There are five elements in the set, and I shall briefly identify them. (A detailed and somewhat longer set including these five is given in Prozesky 1984, 15ff.)

Religious believers everywhere show a strong and even dominant concern with what might, for want of a better term, be called benefit: for divine help with their problems, for a comforting sense of meaning and purpose in their lives, for certainty in the face of insecurity, for healing, enlightenment, salvation and many other forms of relief from whatever distresses them and for which no other remedy is thought to be available. Data from all the main forms of religion leave no doubt at all on this score. At its most ambitious, this concern issues in the promise that a given faith will provide believers with total well-being in the form of an ultimate overcoming of all that menaces their existence, such as salvation from eternal damnation in the doctrines of Christianity, or from a meaningless infinity of rebirths in Hindu teaching. The exact nature of the benefit varies considerably, but in some form or other it is always present. Two aspects of it call for emphasis: often the problem for which relief is sought is one for which little or no other recourse is thought to be available by the believers in question, so that their religion functions as an avenue of assistance when all else has failed or lost credibility, while secondly there is in the so-called world religions a desire for a perfect and final solution to one's difficulties. Religions can thus be seen as instruments for coping with the acutest of human afflictions, whatever these may be from person to person or group to group.

Believers speak of their sense of the presence of invisible, highly effective powers at work in human experience and in nature. Nearly always they conceive of these powers as spiritual beings of varying degrees of importance, from lowly spirits to the towering majesties of the great monotheistic gods. The investigator may have personal doubts whether these spiritual beings exist objectively, but there can be no doubt that believers in all ages and regions find them utterly real, to the point of reporting detailed conversations with them which purportedly channel special religious knowledge or revelations into human consciousness. This last point is conspicuously the case with the founders of the main monotheistic traditions.

Religious consciousness is further characterized for many people by a fundamental sense that we humans and our world are far surpassed by another order of reality, more powerful, worthy and durable than mundane existence, a reality of which glimpses are possible but which otherwise remains mysterious. Typically, this sense of a reality greater than anything else, and thus transcending all else — perhaps to the point of being of a radically different kind, as in the dualistic religions — fuses with the believer's conviction that there are around us invisible beings, so that those beings are thought of as occupying an inherently higher rung on the ladder of existence than we do. But a sense of transcendence can also take the form of belief in an undifferentiated order of reality entirely free of any individuation, and hence of all the distressing complexities that are possible or even inevitable in a relational universe.

In response to the felt presence of what is taken to be this higher world of invisible spiritual realities, the people in question manifest a powerful re-organization of their lives and a striking dedication of them, for which the word faith is commonly used. The articulated content of that faith varies greatly, but it is always something deeply held, exhibiting prime importance for the believer and evoking a willingness to restructure ideas and lifestyles to conform to its perceived character. In this sense, faith is indeed a planetary reality (Smith 1979) and becomes religious in the popular sense of the word when related to the conviction that we humans are subject to the will and visitations of invisible, transcendent, spiritual beings, or are capable of reaching an undifferentiated, spiritual order of reality.

The global picture of religion shows us that the characteristics just listed, while recurringly evident, are embodied always in the idiom and other expressive media of whatever culture a given believer lives in, and that these always differ in point of detail. Nearly all religions evince a belief in spirits, but no two are identical in their conceptions of those spirits. The term 'cumulative traditions' has been helpfully coined as a label for this fifth basic fact about religion (Smith 1978).

There is more to religion, of course, than this, but my intentions in the present discussion can be met by confining matters to the five characteristics just identified. With them in mind we can now return to the question of explaining religion. In doing so the investigator steps back, as it were, from a study of religious data and the descriptive generalizations to which they give rise, and asks why people all over the earth and in every known period of history should exhibit this kind of belief and behaviour. It is here that philosophy offers significant resources, starting with the problem of explanatory method.

II
ON EXPLANATION

Philosophers of the physical and human sciences have performed an invaluable service by helping us to establish what would constitute an adequate explanation of a problem and by clarifying the logical structure of the most successful methods of explanation that have been developed in those sciences. My purposes here do not require that these matters be stated in detail, so I shall give no more than a summary of them. This can be done by means of three points. Firstly, to explain something or identify its explicans is, in this context, to identify what causes it. Secondly, a proposed cause, or set of causes, must have the nature, power, and duration that would produce the effect whose explanation is being sought. In the physical sciences this second stipulation is generally held to be most effective in the form of an appeal to one or more laws of nature, like explaining why Humpty Dumpty fell by citing the law of gravity, and by specifying the exact circumstances or initial conditions in which the laws concerned come into effect, for example that Humpty Dumpty leaned over too far backwards. In the human sciences, where laws of nature have not been identified in the same way, the analogous move is an appeal to pervasive, fundamental human dispositions, such as the need to satisfy material needs according to some forms of Marxian social science. Either way, one explains particular problems by subsuming them under whatever causal factors will most plausibly account for them in the specific circumstances of their occurrence. This is also true in many of the day-to-day explanations we give or accept in the course of our ordinary activities, as I shall show later by means of an illustration. Thirdly, the resultant complex of causal factors must cohere with the larger corpus of accepted knowledge and exhibit its own internal coherence. Logical consistency is thereby ensured. This usually means the development of a systematic explanatory theory combining all the elements of the explanation, particularly in connection with complicated problems.

In relation to human behaviour, an illustration might be helpful. Suppose that Jones, while strolling down Main Street in conversation with us, suddenly darts off into a florist and returns with a carnation in his lapel. Surprised by his behaviour, we ask him why he acted thus. He replies by saying he can never resist carnations, and we are satisfied, knowing him to be a lover of fine things.

What has happened here is the identification of a fact of his character; something that is true of him always and everywhere, and powerful enough to make him do certain things in appropriate circumstances. It therefore eliminates our sense of surprise, so

gaining acceptance as an adequate explanation. And if Jones always and everywhere responds to the allure of carnations unless prevented by a more powerful obstacle, we could logically, though not conventionally, think of this as a law of the Jonesian nature, because laws of nature are precisely such invariant regularities as this.

It is also illuminating to reflect on the kind of reply by Jones that would not satisfy us; for example, had he said that he bought the carnation because there are precisely twelve moons in the Jovian system (as there evidently are), or because he at that precise moment felt hungry (as he did), or because he mildly dislikes having spare cash on him (as indeed he does). All of these replies are true but none of them works as an explanation, either through lacking causal affinity with the explicandum, or through lacking causal efficacy sufficient to produce the behaviour in question, as in the third reply. For an explanation to work it must identify appropriate, verified causes, the appropriateness being ensured basically by the possession of sufficient power or efficacy to produce the effects in question, by an affinity of natures between explicans and explicandum, and by superiority in these respects over rival explanatory hypotheses. In short, it must be such that in the absence of the alleged causes of the phenomenon in question, the phenomenon itself would not exist or behave as it does.

These requirements encourage an analogous approach to the explanation of religious belief and behaviour as identified in the five-part descriptive generalization given earlier. It alerts the investigator to the possibility that there are in human beings and in the cosmos at large (understood as the enveloping external world of all that is the case, whatever its nature might be), factors of such pervasiveness, power and nature as to induce in people, in given conditions, the typical characteristics of religion. Are there any powerful, fundamental, widespread and enduring human properties and environmental forces (in the broadest, least theory-laden sense) such that in the appropriate circumstances, which would of course also have to be identified and verified, people would evince the characteristics of religious belief and behaviour mentioned above, as well as variations and evolutions of them? If so, the explanation of religion would consist in a modified form of what I shall call soft covering law explanation. The attraction of such a possibility is that it is a rigorous and maximally comprehensive form of explanation, because its logical form corresponds to the strictest kind of inference available in connection with statements about human behaviour, namely the most highly probable inductive inferences. No other strategy provides as much explanatory potential. Until it has been shown to be unworkable, as it most certainly has not, the search for the best

possible understanding of religion must therefore make use of it.

The next step in this exercise is to seek the necessary causal factors, and these, as indicated previously, must be sought in human nature on the one hand and in the external world or cosmos on the other. And this leads me to the two remaining areas where philosophy is relevant to the analysis of religion, which I shall discuss in the next section.

III
PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND
PHILOSOPHICAL COSMOLOGY

These terms signify a philosophical analysis of the fundamental conditions and structures of human existence in the cosmos, of a kind broadly like the analyses given by thinkers such as Heidegger, Jaspers and other existentialists, though not tied to their ideas. In fact it strikes me as essential to develop fresh ideas in this field to overcome important limitations and negativities in the existentialists' understanding of human existence, especially in relation to religion. It is also clear to me that axiology or the theory of values is highly relevant to the philosophy of religion in this anthropological context. The question here is as follows: mindful of the basic characteristics of religion as stated above, and of the quest for its possible causes in our make-up as persons and in the workings of the cosmos, are there any generic human qualities and environmental or cosmic forces (in an open sense of those words), which might be those causes? My answer is that there are indeed, and that there are four of them: our finitude, sentience, creativity and contextuality or *Umweltlichkeit*, the property of being involved in an environing cosmos. Let me enlarge on each of these four qualities.

The fact of our finitude needs no justification since it is evident to and accepted by all, but its implications bear comment. To be finite means always to be in some measure ignorant about ourselves and the wider world of other selves and non-human entities, no matter how much we enlarge our knowledge. In particular it means that the full picture of things, the ultimate truth about reality as a whole, is not and may never be known to us, in the strict sense of knowledge as intersubjectively justified true belief. This in turn implies that there is for us a permanent element of mystery about things, for although much that was mysterious to earlier generations or to ourselves in the past is now well understood, there are still other matters which remain entirely obscure. And concerning the nature of reality as a whole, our cognitive limitations indicate that the obscurity will remain, as western philosophy since Kant appears to confirm. Finitude also means that there are limitations to what we

can do, partly because of our restricted knowledge but also because our human capacity to act has its own obvious limits. Yet despite this we experience a never-ending desire for more than we have at any given time. Human curiosity does not cease because we know we do not know everything but goads us to discover more, just as the shortcomings of our physical achievements themselves act as a spur to further efforts at obtaining what we want. It appears that we are constituted to strive endlessly against our own finitude, a fact of the utmost importance for the genesis of religion.

At least since Aristotle, our capacity to feel pain and pleasure has been recognized as a most important fact in the determination of our behaviour and in the formation of our values, for we clearly prize or value that which satisfies us or gives us happiness, and assign a negative value to whatever does the opposite, taking endless pains to organize our lives accordingly. I have argued elsewhere that this fact of human life is the mainspring not only of the emergence of religion but of all culture, defined as the totality of human contrivance and transmitted by non-biological means, so I shall not repeat that argument here. (Prozesky 1984: 99ff). Instead, I wish to draw attention to the massive motivational power of our sentience, as shown, for example, by the enormous energy we devote to the treatment of disease and the alleviation of pain, or to the satisfaction of sexual desire. Adding the present point about sentience to the previous one about finitude yields a picture of human existence as involving a powerful but ever fallible drive to shape our lives for as much satisfaction and as little discomfort as possible. And this in turn means that a centrally important concern for all humans at all times is to identify the sources of satisfaction and discomfort as accurately as possible, so that we can relate fruitfully to them. But our very finitude means that this pressing imperative can never be perfectly enacted within our cognitive and behavioural means, so conferring on us a permanent vulnerability. But vulnerability is not something we welcome, so its permanence engenders an equivalent uneasiness or anxiety to which modern homo sapiens is notably prone. It may be that we shall just have to live with this reality, but in ages past the typical human response to it has evidently been to search for ways of overcoming it too — for ways of overcoming the root problem of finite sentience.

Thus the converse reality is a creative capacity to struggle against and partially reduce the conditions that promote experiences of dissatisfaction and misery. It happens in every sector of our lives: the detection of life-enhancing values, the discovery of knowledge, the invention of concepts or their deconstruction and replacement, and all the myriad products which have sprung from our efforts at betterment and the reduction of suffering in ourselves and those whom we value.

Let me enlarge on one aspect of this creativity, namely the discovery of knowledge. The issue here is how we acquire the concepts in terms of which to articulate our discoveries and thus constitute them as items of knowledge, particularly in view of the general movement of human cognition from ignorance to knowledge, which clearly makes it impossible to point solely to the use of existing concepts. In such a movement, those concepts must be found afresh; they must be invented, but how? The answer appears to lie in part at least in a ubiquitous feature of the learning process, namely the use of the known as a model for the unknown. Coupled with the projective tendency of the mind, this means that an inevitable device in the process of learning to understand whatever is strange to us is anthropomorphism. People will picture the unknown by means of human and social or other *familiar* models, until the inherent limitations of this device set in motion a desire for superior cognitive structures. The old are then modified, enlarged or replaced. At this point new initiatives in the philosophy of culture seem especially relevant, for instance the ideas of Derrida and Foucault (Novitz 1985, Sheridan 1981). In combination with the two previous facts of human existence, the present one yields a further picture of humanity as constituted by its creative struggle to promote conditions in which misery is reduced and satisfaction enhanced, but always within the limitations of available knowledge, productive effort, ability to endure suffering, and realism in the assignment of values to things.

I would argue that this is a basic fact about the way we are as persons and not merely a contingency of this or that society, class or historical period, and I name it a drive to maximise well-being, a drive whose expressions are permanently restricted by our human finitude, but also permanently fuelled by the discontent it engenders. The search for an explanation of religion is largely a search for an adequate explicans, and I know of none more suitable on factual and logical grounds than this drive, though other factors are also involved, to which I now turn.

Human life is inherently involved in an environment constituted firstly by other humans but also by the wider context of nature, and perhaps in some degree by everything that exists. It is important that I state quite clearly that I use the phrase 'everything that exists' in an open way, without smuggling into it the pre-suppositions of either the idealists and supernaturalists or the materialists. In fact I am not particularly interested in ontological categories at all, but in the dynamics or functions of reality at large, and in the fact that our lives are inherently involved with them. To be human is thus to belong to a power-filled but always imperfectly grasped *Umwelt* or context and to be affected by it at the very depths of our being. According to Strawson, one would not even form a self-conception

as a person without other persons around one (Strawson 1959), and we obviously cannot exist without the physical resources of the world around us. Thus human existence emerges and unfolds as part of a wider, anterior reality or cosmos with its myriad interacting forces, from the force of gravity to the power of an ambition, phobia or ideal, part of which is invisible to us and may forever elude our desire to comprehend it, especially its ultimate character; but which nonetheless ceaselessly affects us though our sentience and dependence on it, producing in us now discomfort and now happiness in an uncertain, unpredictable and uncontrollable succession of events and experiences. The growth of human knowledge and technology from near total ignorance and incompetence to their present level has been spectacular, but in no way changes this fundamental fact about our existence. What is ultimately the case, what could be the case and what affects us most are always matters which surpass our knowledge and competence at any given time. In philosophical terms, the class of possible propositions and the class of true propositions are always larger than the class of known propositions. We are not even in a position to establish by how much the former exceed the latter. But vulnerable, sentient beings will necessarily experience this state of affairs, once an awareness of it has formed, with profound disquiet because it means that our fear of pain and our desire for well-being are in the end not matters we control, and neither can we with our own resources establish what does control them. Yet given our creative resources, it follows that at least some people will seek ways of reducing this difficulty by means of a creative engagement with it at that frontier of vulnerability and ignorance.

Thus the point of interaction between a mysterious cosmos which both menaces and benefits us, and our own attempt to stretch ourselves beyond existing limits of mind and skill constitutes a distinct arena of human creativity and experience. And since the *Umwelt* is never identical from person to person and especially from locality to locality and at different historical periods, the ensuing creativity will necessarily exhibit a resultant differentiation, just as hunger in Iceland is met by a different diet to that which obtains in the tropics or the desert.

The result, I contend, is religion.

IV

EXPLAINING RELIGION

A general explanatory theory of religion must be very complex indeed. In the present context I shall attempt no more than the barest outlines but it will be enough to indicate something of its essentials. I shall confine myself to an elucidation of the five

characteristics of religion set forth earlier in this paper, but without detailed treatment.

It should be clear that nothing is more natural than that cognitively finite beings should encounter the *Umwelt* as a *mysterium transcendens* or surpassing mystery; as having about it a dimension of irreducible and surpassing mystery, in being endlessly greater, more durable and powerful than they themselves. By the same token, the cosmos itself inevitably presses upon human consciousness a vivid sense of its dynamic nature, of the many forces at work in it and profoundly affecting us. Our sentient, vulnerable, dependent nature will oblige us to pay special attention to the powers of life itself, of birth, food supply, enemies and death. Nor is it at all strange, in view of the epistemological principles set forth earlier, that our distant forebears should have visualized those powers *sub specie humanitatis*, in the form and likeness of human beings, but much more imposing and powerful, or that they should have sought relationships with them that would encourage their favour and turn aside their wrath or ill will. Nothing could be more normal and natural than the advent, through an engagement of human creativity with the powers of an environing, largely mysterious cosmos, of a fundamentally personal world-view, of a cosmos in which invisible, conscious beings are believed to control the levers of power or well-being. In fact the use of anthropomorphism is especially likely in any attempt to comprehend the mysterious cosmos, precisely because direct identification is impossible and conjecture inevitable. And given the different faces of the *Umwelt* from place to place and time to time, it is just as inevitable that the resultant complex of mythology and ritual should be diverse rather than uniform, that Egyptians but not Eskimos should believe in and worship sun-gods, or the Southern San be persuaded that their deity loves the eland, a fondness not reported of the Zulu high god or of any other whose existence was not bound up with the antelope species of southern Africa. Finally, in view of the immense importance of the issues at stake here, namely our well-being and sense of meaning in life, it is scarcely surprising that people should exhibit the dedication and seriousness of purpose that characterize religious faith, with accompanying re-organizations of their lives to conform to the perceived will of the gods.

*   *   *

The full theory that I have evolved is very much more elaborate than this. But even the above selection of ideas from it should be quite enough to show why I feel constrained by the evidence and arguments at my disposal to formulate the following concluding hypothesis concerning religion on earth: that what we already know

about ourselves and our cosmos is sufficient to provide us with the explanation of religion in all its basic characteristics and forms. In human nature and the natural cosmos we can find enough in the way of causal factors with the necessary affinity, efficacy, scope and duration to engender the typical phenomena of religion in specified circumstances, though I have not here attempted to identify the latter. In short: the religious phenomena summarized in my five-part characterization will have evolved on this planet even if there are no supernatural entities of the kinds in which religionists believe. Such a hypothesis is not, of course, the same as an endorsement of materialism. In fact my approach shows that sophisticated, non-dogmatic forms of supernaturalism can claim as much (or as little) rational justification as their contraries. The ultimate mystery of being removes from the sphere of rational thought any final or certain verdict either way.

This hypothesis has, of course, some extremely important implications of its own. The main ones, so far as I can see, are as follows. Religion, it would follow, is our creation, therefore it is freely criticizable. If defective, as all our other creations to some extent are, it can be changed or relinquished. Thus explanation creates scope for transformation, and a serious problem of much western thought hitherto would, it seems, at least be lessened: namely the separation of matters of fact from matters of values, of theory from praxis. We might even find in the explanation of religion the real presupposition of the criticism and transformation of society.

University of Natal,
Pietermaritzburg.

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TWO NUDES AND
A HEAVENLY BODY

by HELIZE VAN VUUREN

I

The genesis and influence of Marcel Duchamp's *Nu descendant un escalier* (1912, 2nd version), illustrates the intertwinedness of the arts. This painting germinated from a verbal impulse, a poem of the nineteenth-century symbolist poet, Jules Laforgue: 'Encore à cet astre' (written about 1880). Duchamp later recounted the sequence of events leading up to the *Nu* . . .:

> L'idée du *Nu* me vint d'un dessin que j'avais fait en 1911 pour illustrer le poème de Jules Laforgue 'Encore à cet astre' . . . peut-être étais-je moins attiré par la poésie de Laforgue que par ses titres. . . . Dans le dessin 'Encore à cet astre' le personnage *monte* l'escalier. Mais pendant que j'y travaillais, l'idée du *Nu*, ou le titre — je ne sais plus trés bien — me vint à l'esprit . . . [1]

Thus a verbal impulse was translated by Duchamp into the pictorial medium. Interestingly enough, the 'Wirkungsgeschichte' of the poem shows this pictorial medium serving as impulse for a poem once again: X.J. Kennedy's 'Nude descending a staircase' (1961). A full circle has been described in this manner: starting from a poem, Duchamp translated his inspiration into the visual medium, and Kennedy carries the visual impulse back into the verbal medium of poetry.[2]

Duchamp's visual art centres around *the idea*, to a certain extent. Duchamp accentuated this trait of his oeuvre, especially in connection with the *Nu* . . . :

> Je m'attachai à mettre la peinture au service de mes objectifs, et à m'éloigner de la 'physicalité' de la peinture . . . Je m'interessais aux idées — et pas simplement aux produits visuels. Je voulais remettre la peinture au service de l'esprit. Et ma peinture fut, bien entendu, immédiatement considerée comme 'intellectuelle', 'littéraire'.[3]

Poetry, with language as its medium, therefore has a close affinity with this type of 'idea-painting'.[4]

II

Laforgue's poem comes from his *Premiers poèmes*, and although it dates back to about 1880, it was first published in his *Oeuvres*

complètes, 1925. The *Larousse du XXe siècle* says, *inter alia*, of Laforgue:

> Ses poésies, qui font date dans l'histoire du symbolisme, sont un mélange singulier de tristesse déséspree ... d'ironie gouailleuse, de bizarre fantaisie ... nombreuses licences ... du vers libre ...
>
> (p. 295.)

His poem, 'Encore à cet astre', reads as follows:

> Espèce de soleil! tu songes: -Voyez-les,
> Ces pantins morphinés, buveurs de lait d'ânesse
> Et de café; sans trêve, en vain, je leur caresse
> L'échine de mes feux, ils vont étoilés!
>
> -Eh! c'est toi, qui n'as plus que des rayons gelés!
> Nous, nous, mais nous crevons de santé, de jeunesse!
> C'est vrai, la Terre n'est qu'une vaste kermesse,
> Nos hourrahs de gaîté courbent au loin les blés.
>
> Toi seul claques des dents, car tes taches accrues,
> Te mangent, ô Soleil, ainsi que des verrues
> Un vaste citron d'or, et bientôt, blond moquer,
>
> Après tant de couchants dans la pourpre et la gloire,
> Tu seras en risée aux étoiles sans coeur,
> Astre jaune et grêlé, flamboyante écumoire!

Marcel Duchamp's *Nu descendant un escalier* (1912) is sufficiently well-known for the average reader to call to mind immediately the strangely contorted, almost-human shapes in hues of ochre, yellow and white, contrasted with reddish chestnut and darker brown. Octavio Paz gave an excellent interpretive description of this painting in his *L'apparence mise à nu*, which I quote:

> Serré dans un corset ou dans une cotte de mailles, il est invisible. Ce costume de fer évoque moins une armure médiévale qu'un carrosserie ou un fuselage ... le fuselage n'est pas surpris en plein vol mais en chute lente. Pessimisme et humour: un mythe féminin, la femme nue, devient un appareil menacant et funèbre ... mythe de la femme nue et destruction de ce mythe; machine et ironie ... [5]

The third text is Kennedy's 'Nude descending a staircase' (1961):

> Toe upon toe, a snowing flesh,
> A gold of lemon, root and rind,
> She sifts in sunlight down the stairs
> With nothing on. Nor on her mind.

> We spy beneath the banister
> A constant thresh of thigh on thigh —
> Her lips imprint the swinging air
> That parts to let her parts go by.
>
> One woman-waterfall, she wears
> Her slow descent like a long cape
> And pausing, on the final stair
> Collects her motions into shape.

The juxtaposition of these three texts poses a question about the extent to which translation from one medium into another is possible. When comparing the different works, certain parallel or common elements come to light. On the verbal level, the first striking similarity is the image of the lemon in both poems. In 'Encore à cet astre' the sun is described as a huge golden lemon ('un vaste citron d'or') and Kennedy sees his nude in 'A gold of lemon, root and rind'. This similarity of image is somewhat enigmatic. Duchamp *did* paint his nude in hues of yellow: is there a chance similarity between these verbal images? Or did Kennedy read Laforgue's poem? If (as most likely) not, it is remarkable that both verbal texts should show such similar choice of image. More traditional is the linking of 'sun' or 'sunlight' with the colour yellow: in the first poem — 'Espèce de soleil', 'ô Soleil', 'blond moquer', 'Astre jaune'; and in the second — 'She sifts in sunlight down the stairs'. The colours of the *Nu . . .* visually confront the viewer with the pictorial equivalent of 'sunlight' and the yellow of a lemon.

To the pristine eyes of someone who sees *Nu descendant un escalier* for the first time, the picture seems to present various almost-human forms, and not only one, as the title would suggest. Herein lies the key to its innovative aspect. It is only after careful contemplation of both the title and the form from left to right, that one realises that these 'different forms' are actually a static representation of the movement of the descending nude. (In this interpretation one is aided by the arrows and lines, and the similarity of forms, which suggest a repetition-with-variation of the same form, in slightly different positions). According to Octavio Paz, Duchamp was particularly preoccupied with the notion of slowed-down movement:

> Il ne prétend pas donner l'illusion du mouvement — héritage baroque et maniériste du futurisme —; il veut le décomposer et offrir la représentation statique d'un objet changeant.[6]

Duchamp confirmed this in an interview:

Mon but était la représentation statique du mouvement — une composition statique d'indications statiques des positions diverses prises par une forme en mouvement — sans essayer de créer pas la peinture des effets cinématiques.[7]

Without going into the intricacies of Duchamp's concept of movement at this stage, one can state that there is a definite suggestion of change and mutability in the ironic undercurrent of Laforgue's poem: 'Toi seul claques des dents, car tes taches accrues,/Te mangent . . . Après tant de couchants . . . Tu seras en risée aux étoiles . . . '. The human voice addressing the sun is projecting his own consciousness of mutability onto this cold, aloof, astral body, by giving it a pitiable and ridiculous image (being mocked, with chattering teeth . . . being eaten . . .). Kennedy's poem verbalises a constant movement through time and space, every adjective and verb adding to this impression: 'snowing flesh', 'sifts . . . down', 'constant thresh', 'swinging air', her parts go by', 'One woman-waterfall', 'slow descent', 'Collects'. But here one has to take into account the limitation of language. Would it be possible to portray in a poem the 'représentation statique d'un object changeant', such as Duchamp did in his *Nu* . . . through the visual medium? How would one do this? By means of which devices? At this point the critic could be tempted to state that Kennedy misinterpreted the intention and effect of Duchamp's *Nu* . . .: the poet presents us with a moving nude, while Duchamp painted arrested movement. But it cannot be judged so superficially, and I will return to this later. What seems clear is that movement, albeit of different orders, is one of the leitmotifs in each of these three texts.

A third linking element is the device of contrasting the central figure with the 'others'. In Laforgue's poem the juxtaposition between the inanimate astral body and the human beings is voiced mainly by a human speaker who addresses the sun as 'tu' and talks of the other human beings as 'nous'. Duchamp's painting focusses solely on the nude but with spectators implied, albeit only through the convention of the pictorial medium (i.e. which implies viewers of the painted canvas). Kennedy's poem introduces lookers-on underneath the stairs, so that 'she sifts . . . down . . . ', while 'We spy . . . '.

However, the most striking common characteristic is the presence of irony in all three texts. None of these works can be taken solely at face value. In Laforgue's poem, irony results from the contrast between the 'monologue intérieur' of the astral body in regarding the human beings on earth ('ces pantins morphinés, buveurs de lait d'ânesse . . . ils vont étoilés!'), and that of the human voice addressing the planet ('Toi seul claques des dents . . . '). The

incongruity of the animate traits projected onto the sun by this human voice, to revenge his own mutability, only serves to underline by ironic effect the finiteness of living creatures.

Somewhat in the same manner, Duchamp's *Nu descendant un escalier* does not present us with a cinematic illusion of movement, but rather with 'stalled' movement: 'la représentation statique du mouvement — une composition statique d'indications statiques des positions diverses prises par une forme en mouvement . . . '. There is ironic contrast between the title, suggesting a descending, moving female form, and the decomposed, superimposed forms the actual painting confronts us with. Still more intense irony, the title (which is an integral part of the painting as it is inscribed on the canvas itself) raises expectations about the 'nu' which are not fulfilled by the executed work. Instead of a female nude, one finds only a sharp-angled, almost robot-like figure, with the sensuality of the traditional nude severely under cover. No huge breasts or buttocks, no liquid eyes staring languorously into vacant space as the pictorial tradition may have led the spectator to expect . . .

In 'Nude descending a staircase' the poet uses word-play to obtain a related ironic effect ('with nothing on. Nor on her mind', 'the swinging air/That parts to let her parts go by . . . '). But he also uses a similar device to that of Duchamp, although now in the verbal and not the visual medium, to reduce the human qualities of this nude as far as possible to inanimate, machine-like qualities: 'a constant thresh of thigh on thigh' also suggests a robot-like de-animation, as does the painting through visual devices.

Thus one can state that all three works have various elements in common: the golden colour (in the poems expressed by the image of the lemon), the use of contrast, the expression of movement or non-movement, and strong reliance for artistic effect upon the technique of irony.

III

Leaving the older poem's heavenly body aside now, I want to concentrate on the two nudes. This comparison is called forth by the strong link between poem and painting through Kennedy's use of the English equivalent of the French title. These two texts prove interesting material to study the interactiveness of the visual and the verbal medium, and the limits to such a translation from the one medium to the other. Several questions come to the fore. *How* are the visual effects/devices translated into language? Is it really possible to translate from the pictorial medium into the verbal? To what extent?

Marcel Duchamp's *Nu descendant un escalier* (no. 2. 1912, oil on canvas, $57\frac{1}{2} \times 35$", Philadelphia Museum of Art) ruptures a

tradition of nude paintings. In spite of the expectations raised by the title, the canvas presents the looker-on with a number of parallel forms (lines, triangles, a few half-curves) arranged in a vaguely human shape. In contrast with the sensual beauty of the painted nudes of previous centuries, this painting confronts one with the idea of mechanised man. Duchamp himself stressed the fleshlessness of his nude: 'Il n'y a pas de chair, juste une anatomie simplifiée . . . '.[8] This tension between the expectations raised by the title and the canvas itself is part of the irony of the work and points towards the strong intellectual aspects of Duchamp's oeuvre. Not only the visual effect is important, but the idea suggested by this tension between title and work forms a significant part of the whole.

Almost sixty years after Duchamp's execution of the *Nu . . .*, X.J. Kennedy wrote *his* 'Nude descending a staircase' (1960).[9] His use of such a well-known title acts as allusion to the earlier work, and invites comparison. In comparing two such texts one inevitably looks for similarities and differences. What elements have been 'transplanted' and where did the later artist put a corrective on the previous work by his own creative input? Or did he succumb to the impression of the earlier work's effect, and is his attempt just a weak epigonist echo of the earlier one? Or again, is the allusion just a false lead, and did work A only serve as a creative impulse for the creation of a completely different work B?

The poem also presents the reader with a de-animated nude. She is qualified and described first of all in terms of natural elements, with the 'normal' reference by way of personal pronoun only introduced belatedly:

> Toe upon toe, a snowing flesh,
> A gold of lemon, root and rind,
> *She* . . .

Her exterior is likened to snow and lemon, and there is also a suggestion of physical decomposition: 'Toe upon toe . . . ', as if each part is seen separately. The second and third stanzas repeat this technique of firstly the de-animated description and *then* the introduction of a personal element: 'We spy . . . A constant thresh of thigh on thigh . . . ', 'One woman-waterfall . . . '. This de-animation or de-composition of the human form is a translation from the pictorial into the verbal. But the difference is that Duchamp's painting suggests a machine-like, robot-like quality which although here also present in the phrase 'A constant thresh of thigh on thigh', is supplanted on the whole by metaphorical likeness to natural things: snow, lemon, sifting sunlight, swinging air, a waterfall . . .

The golden-to-dazzling white colour of the original nude is likewise transcribed into the language of the poem:

> 'a snowing flesh . . . ' = white
> 'a gold of lemon, root and rind . . . ' = golden yellow
> 'sifts in sunlight . . . ' = golden to white

It is remarkable that the colour description is only introduced in the first verse, and then not again. In the canvas of Duchamp, the central 'forms' vary from the background figure's darker yellows to the almost dazzling white of the foremost figure. But as long as the spectator's eyes are fixed on the nude(s), it is impossible not to be conscious of this overpowering yellow hue. Here the poem and painting differ, in spite of the colour parallel. One could explain it through the difference in media: the instantaneous impact of the visual effect versus the linear quality of the verbal medium. One is confronted with the intrinsic handicaps of language — time-bound linearity. Whereas the spectator of the *Nu* . . . is forced by the visual presence of the yellow-coloured forms to perceive the nude as such, in Kennedy's poem the reader must keep this trait in his consciousness after having read the first stanza. The poet then moves on to describe other characteristics. The whole of the nude's appearance can only be grasped *after* having assembled the parts through reading the totality of the poem. It can be argued that the spectator of the canvas must also, in a parallel action to that of the reader, 'interpret' the painting by a movement of his eyes over the totality of the canvas, but there remains a marked difference between these two procedures: between time-bound linearity and immediate visual impact.

This linearity has implications for the description of the form of the nude's body. The innovatory presentation of the human form is one of the major elements in the painting: and it is immediately perceivable. The poem presents mainly the colour scheme in the first verse (although the adjective 'snowing' also suggests a 'flowing' form), the movement of this almost machine-like body in the second ('a constant thresh'), and carrying on the description of the movement in the third stanza ('woman-waterfall') it suggests by way of paradox the end of this flowing moving form:

> 'pausing' = end of movement
> 'collects her motions into shape' = still some movement,
> although a preparation for immobility . . .

The choice of metaphor, 'one woman-waterfall' seems a very successful transposition, from the visual to the verbal medium, of Duchamp's superimposed and decomposed forms. But Kennedy's

'Nude . . . ', because it is limited by its medium to the use of the personal and possessive pronouns 'she' and 'her', does not manage to achieve the ambiguity between one and many forms which the canvas does. The use of 'she' and 'her' leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that the poem is dealing with only one form. The painting, in spite of its explicit title, underlines the idea of decomposition through its visual suggestion of various forms. Once more one reaches an impasse: through his choice of medium there are certain things the poet just cannot 'translate' into words . . .

Perhaps the most marked difference between the two texts is the strongly implied sensuality in Kennedy's nude. Whilst in Duchamp's painting 'il n'y a pas de chair, juste une anatomie simplifiée', the later nude is embellished with 'Toe upon toe, a snowing flesh', 'lips', 'parts' and 'thigh on thigh'. This is much closer to the traditional concept of a nude, with each delicious limb given separate attention. The poet introduces another new element which is related to this overt sexuality: the hidden spies 'beneath the banister'. The presence of these voyeurs increases the impression of the erotic attraction of the nude. The mythical attraction of the nude female form is implicit in this action of 'spying' from a hidden spot. Here poem and painting seem to stand directly contrasted. It was precisely this myth of the female nude that Duchamp was 'debunking' through presenting her as some sort of machine, decomposed into lines and static movement (see the almost cartoon-like arrows suggesting movement of the legs and torso). But as a complicating footnote, one must draw attention to the fact that within the perspective of Duchamp's oeuvre, movement acquired sexual connotation.[10] So the sexuality can be seen as embedded in the texture of the painting, in the 'static movement' as well as in the roundish, irregular forms suggesting the hips and head. But this will probably be decodable only by the well-informed spectator who has managed to interpret Duchamp's iconoclasm. In the poem, on the other hand, the sexuality of the nude is one of the most obvious and striking elements.

IV

We return to the initial questions about the possibility and extent of translation from one medium into another. Relating these questions to Duchamp's *Nu. . .* and Kennedy's 'Nude . . .' where a conscious link was laid via the title of the later text, it should be clear that only a partial translation has been achieved. We remain with two different nudes on our hands: and a heavenly body hovering somewhere in the background . . .

University of Natal,
Durban.

NOTES

1. *Duchamp du signe*, ed. Michel Sanouillet, (Paris, 1975), pp. 170–171.
2. Since writing this article, I have discovered another poem inspired by this painting. It is the Afrikaans poem 'Naakte vrou wat die trappe afkom' by Barend Toerien, from his *39 gedigte* (Cape Town 1963):

   Met haar hand op die reling gerus val
      haar hare oor haar, haar skouers, oor
         haar heupe, sprinkel sy af na onder.
   Vlakke en ligskywe op haar vel
      laat haar vloei in kristal van ontel-
         bare fasette, triomfantelik,
   elke voet drywend voor op die stroom
      wat gulsig afstroom in vloeibare relings
         van die Villa d'Este.

   Kennedy's idea of the nude as a 'one woman-waterfall' seems to be repeated with variation in this poem, which originated about the same time.
3. *Duchamp du signe*, p. 72.
4. Cf. Octavio Paz's remark: 'tout ce qu'il a fait à partir de 1913 relève de sa tentative de remplacer la "peinture-peinture" par la "peinture-idée" ', *Marcel Duchamp: L'apparence mise à nu* (translated from Spanish by Monique Fong, Paris, 1977), p. 15. (Original Spanish first published 1966.)
5. *Marcel Duchamp: L'apparence mise à nu*, p. 20.
6. Ibid., p. 15.
7. *Duchamp du signe*, p. 171.
8. *Marcel Duchamp — Ingénieur du temps perdu*, entretiens avec Pierre Cabanne (Paris, 2nd imprint, 1977), p. 58.
9. *Nude descending a staircase: Poems, songs, a ballad* (New York, 1960), p. 69.
10. 'L'érotisme chez M.D. et Georges Batailles', from: *Marcel Duchamp: tradition de la rupture ou rupture de la tradition?* ed. Jean Clair (Paris, 1979), p. 196.

THE ROLE OF IMAGINATION
IN 'A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM'

by DAVID SCHALKWYK

It is difficult to read criticism of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (indeed of the whole Shakespeare canon) without encountering again and again the epistemological dichotomies 'appearance and reality', 'truth and illusion', 'emotion and reason'. These are almost invariably moral divisions. The plays, we are told, come down on the side of 'reality', 'truth', 'reason': characters who live by appearances or illusion are those who trust the evidence of the senses, or give precedence to passion, or are led into error by the capricious vagaries of the imagination. If such characters are not irredeemably bad, morally speaking, they are supposed to evoke our pity or disapproval, at least until reason redeems them from the illusions of fantasy or the mists of error.

The projection of this quasi-Platonic epistemology onto the plays was particularly fashionable in the second quarter of this century, when it was given a historical basis and constructed into a framework in terms of which the ethical dimensions of Shakespeare's canon were to be incontrovertibly located.[1] The historical foundation was provided by the body of received psychological theory expressed in the Renaissance by works ranging from the encyclopaedic *De Proprietatibus Rerum* by Bartholomeus Anglicus (the British Library's copy of which has, forged on the inside cover, 'William Shakespeare, his booke'), to the better known English theorists, Thomas Bright, Robert Burton, and Francis Bacon. Two long poems, Sir John Davies' 'Nosce Teipsum' and Fulke Greville's 'A Treatise of Humane Learning', are also receptacles of such received ideas.[2]

Despite the validity of Louise Turner-Forest's warnings in her article 'A Caveat for Critics against Invoking Elizabethan Psychology'[3] that the coherence of Elizabethan psychology is a creation of critics rather than a historical fact, both the role of the imagination and attitudes to it are fairly clear and uncontroversial in the treatises, English and foreign, of the period.

Elizabethan psychology originated in a Greek epistemological framework devised to provide an *ethics* of perception. How human beings see the world is subsumed by a quest for the way in which they *ought* to perceive it, and, consequently, behave. Perception and action are as closely related as knowledge and virtue are in Plato. The problems of knowledge and truth are cast in terms of the Platonic struggle between the senses and the understanding, imagination and reason. Perception is described, in the mixed metaphors of architecture, politics, and law, as a hierarchical

activity, the impressions of reality having to pass through a number of ascending faculties before being processed, moving the body to action, and being stored in memory.

The senses are portals through which all impressions enter the inner chamber of the sensible soul — the initial reporters of reality and ethically the lowest means to knowledge. Supposed to reflect the outer world without a blemish, they are in fact volatile and prone to error. Ideally conceived to retain the 'species of sensible things . . . as wax doth the print of a seal',[4] they have in fallen man become brutish and ignoble, unable to reflect 'the condition of sensible things . . . perfectly and sincerely'[5] — 'from the weaknesse and incertitude of our senses comes ignorance, error and mistakings.'[6]

Next in the hierarchy is imagination, a crucial though disreputable faculty which is both a collecting agency and a kind of lower judge, uniting the various reports from the senses and passing them on to be processed more completely in the higher courts of reason. Its role in the processing of knowledge is crucial and unavoidable: 'whatsoever we understand,' says Wright 'passeth by the gates of our imagination.'[7] Imagination is, however, not merely a vassal of reason, mechanically obliged to obey its every command. Rather, in Bacon's words, 'it usurps no small authority in itself, beside the simple duty of the message. For "reason has over imagination that commandment which a Lord has over a free citizen," who may come also to rule in his turn.'[8]

Couple the fact that all impressions *must* be processed by the imagination before being worked upon by reason, with the alarming tendency of the faculty towards rebellion and insurrection, and one can understand the suspicion with which it is treated. Add to that a universal belief that imagination seeks to depose stable reason and elevate passion to the position of ruler, and suspicion turns to opprobrium. In a system which required the mind to reflect the single proper nature of the world 'no greater nor lesse than it is in deed' (Bright, p. 86), imagination could only be branded as a volatile and dangerous force, inclining people to 'appearance' rather than 'reality', 'emotion' rather than 'reason', and 'counterfeit' rather than true epistemological mimesis. Charron's is a typical account of the confusion, disorder, and immorality to which the imagination is dangerously prone:

> In this part of the soule doth opinion lodge, which is vain, light, crude and imperfect judgement of things drawn from the outward senses, and common report, setting and holding it selfe to be good in the imagination, and neither arriving to the understanding, there to be examined, sifted and laboured: which is a true, perfect and solide judgement of things: and therefore it is uncertaine, inconstant, fleeting, deceitful, a very ill and dangerous guide, which makes head

against reason, whereof it is a shadow and an image, though vaine
and untrue. It is the mother of all mischiefs, confusions, disorders:
from it spring all passions, all troubles. It is the guide of fools, sots,
the vulgar sort, as reason of the wise and dextrous.[9]

When they treat the agility and range of imagination, the
psychologists cover their grudging admiration for the quickness of
its powers with a redoubled fear of the increased mischief these
powers imply. Du Laurens may rank the faculty 'amongst the
excellentest and noblest powers of the mind'[10] and Charron may
admire its 'prompt and speedy running in a moment from one end of
world to another, without stay or rest, stirring it selfe and
penetrating everything', but these very qualities make it all the
more dangerous within a scheme which regards all change as evil
and rest divine:

> This great speed and quicknesse, this agility, this twinkling of the eie,
> as it is admirable, and one of the greatest wonders that are in the
> spirit, so it is a thing very dangerous, a great disposition and
> propensity to folly and madnesse.   (Charron p. 57)

Imagination as a creative rather than an epistemological process
suffers the same fate. It is censured as much for the 'vague, false,
voide of ground' nature of its 'monstrous fictions' (Bright, pp.
102–3) as it is for its wayward operation in the mind's perception of
the world. Even Burton imputes to the poetic imagination 'devil's
illusions', exclaiming 'how many chimeras, antics, golden
mountains and castles in the air do they not build unto themselves!'
(Vol. I, p. 254).

Nowhere is the unholy alliance between senses, imagination, and
emotion more apparent than in the theory that love, the disease of
imagination, enters the lover through the eye. Emotions cannot be
experienced 'but that by imagination' (Wright, p. 31), and one of
the most volatile and error-prone of all the emotions apt to be
enlarged by imagination is love: 'when like a wild and untamed
beast it exceeds the bounds of reason, there is no misery which it
brings not into the world, nor any disorder which it causeth not in
our lives.'[11] Except for the neo-Platonic variation in Plotinus, Ficino
and Castiglione, the eyes are regarded as traitors — traps which lure
men into the dark clutches of emotion, imagination and, hence,
error. They are 'love's Fowlers' and the 'hooks of love . . . that in a
moment cure madness and make sound folks mad' (Burton, Vol.
III, p. 85), and once love has gained entrance through the eye, 'the
man is quite undone and cast away, the senses are wandering . . .
reason confounded, the imagination corrupted, and the talk fond
and senseless' (Du Laurens, p. 118). Love is 'a fever and a furious
passion' (Charron, p. 83), 'a fatal source, from whence flow all

kinds of horror' (Coeffeteau, p. 154), and 'little better than meere Madnesse'.[12]

These then, briefly, are the theories concerning imagination as a general way of seeing, as poetic creativity, and as the mainspring of passion, especially love, in the writings of the Renaissance psychologists.

Before moving to an analysis of Shakespeare's treatment of imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, however, it is necessary to add one more Renaissance view of this faculty — Francis Bacon's. For Bacon reminds us that if we inscribe imagination as an essential ingredient in our epistemological system, it must have some possibility for good if the system is to hold at all. He retains the essential role of imagination — 'For voluntary motion is ever preceded and incited by imagination' — but he allows the imagination to have two faces or roles, both acceptable within the Platonic scheme: 'this Janus of imagination has two different faces; for the face toward reason has the print of truth and the face towards action has the print of goodness.' (Vol. IV, pp. 405–6.)

The things to remember here are that imagination is always the mainspring of action, that it has two different faces, and that its operations must, in some way, if any moral action is to be preserved at all, approximate to what is at least called 'truth' and 'goodness'. Whether Shakespeare indicates that reason is the cure for all ills, as Bacon does here, is uncertain, but he does work in some way with these three notions in his treatment of imagination, perception, and human behaviour.

*   *

The central role of imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is by now a critical commonplace. Taking their cue from Theseus' celebrated dismissal of 'the lunatic, the lover and the poet', critics have tended to conclude that the play calls for 'cool reason' as an antidote to the imagination's wild vicissitudes. Ernst Schanzer echoes both modern criticism and the Renaissance theorists when he claims that love in the comedy

> is purely a creature of the imagination, of 'seething brains', a kind of madness . . . it is a love which has no basis in reality, which creates a phantom, a mere shadow of the beloved person; it is a dream.[13]

Stanley Wells states similarly that the play is concerned with the 'antithesis between love and reason', the confusion of the lovers being 'caused by the failure of their reason to keep pace with their emotions . . . Under the spell of an illusion, . . . they mistake it for reality'.[14] C.L. Barber concurs that 'the imaginary and the real are commonly represented as separate realms' but dismisses the

imagination even further, claiming that it 'tends to be merely expressive, an evidence of passion rather than a mode of perception'.[15] This article takes issue with all of these statements, despite the fact that they are upheld both by Renaissance epistemologists and by Theseus as spokesman for their theory.

Theseus (and the tradition he represents) is at odds with Barber in one respect: Theseus grants throughout that imagination is deeply involved in the ways in which we see the world. His trio is simply singled out for being particularly susceptible to such perception. By the 'seething' operation of their imaginations they are committed to seeing a world which is 'more strange than true' (V.i.2); to projecting or inventing things unreal rather than coming to a rational understanding of things 'as they really are'. So the madman is subject to a pure invention in the form of nightmarish hallucination. The lover may be 'all as frantic' but his is a way of seeing, a projection rather than a hallucination. Perceiving a woman with 'a brow of Egypt', the lover sees her as someone endowed with 'Helen's beauty' and is attracted to her. Here the perceptual object is not distorted or invented; it is evaluated, aesthetically and emotionally, in accordance with the disposition of the imagination.[16] Lovers are, however, unaware of their projection, and persist in believing that the features of the loved object naturally cause their attraction.

The poet's imagination is as frenzied as that of lover and lunatic, but unlike them his pure invention is controlled and directed:

> . . .as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name.
>
> (V.i. 14–17)

Despite the Platonic idea of 'divine madness', Theseus here maintains the rational man's conviction that 'real' and 'imaginary' are distinct worlds, and that the real is infinitely preferable. He includes other 'tricks' of 'strong imagination': its common projective tendency to make the frightened mind see bushes as bears, and our common assumption of necessary cause, thereby acknowledging the usual, albeit unwelcome, role of imagination in ordinary perception. The general thrust of his criticism is that imagination posits entities which to the innocent, empirical eye simply do not exist.

We need to ask, however, following E.H. Gombrich's account of perception in *Art and Illusion*, whether the 'innocent eye' which has direct, unmediated access to reality is at all viable, and whether Shakespeare sees it as an ideal form of perception. Or does he, too,

recognize that the world is to a large extent mediated by imagination, emotion, and expectation?[17] It is a commonplace of post-Kantian epistemology that the mind discovers a world which it has to some extent made itself, and that the imagination plays an essential and not a contingent part in this process. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* anticipates this idea. It is concerned not merely with the aberrations of the imagination, but with the role that it plays in perception as a whole, and the play demonstrates that even those who consciously eschew the imagination as a matter of ethical principle are unconscious victims of its ubiquitous power.

The conflicts that surround the lovers at the very beginning of the play arise from disparate imaginative evaluations which not only make any form of love possible but are also impervious to rational argument. The disagreement that Theseus is asked to resolve is initially presented as a conflict between rights guaranteed by rational law and the imaginative power which governs love. In the face of what is to him a perversely disobedient choice, Egeus demands total legal power over Hermia, claiming

> . . . what is mine my love shall render him;
> And she is mine, and all my right of her
> I do estate unto Demetrius.

<div align="right">(I.i. 96–98)</div>

The argument is about ways of judging people, but as Theseus concedes, the inherent worthiness of the contenders plays no part in the decision. Hermia simply has to see things as her father sees them:

> *The*. Demetrius is a worthy gentleman.
> *Her*. So is Lysander.
> *The*.   In himself he is;
> But in this kind, wanting your father's voice,
> The other must be held the worthier.

<div align="right">(I.i. 52–55)</div>

But just as Egeus refuses to see Lysander with her eyes, Hermia cannot bring herself to look 'with his judgement'. The force which determines her perception is inscrutable and incorrigible. It is not the practice of 'bewitchment' of which Egeus accuses Lysander, but there is some 'charm' which is unmoved by supposedly objective qualities open to rational debate, and which is therefore inaccessible to the contrary vision of fathers. Rather than being vulnerable to the 'stealing' of its 'impression' (as Egeus suggests) this disposition can both 'compose' or 'disfigure' the beauty of what it looks upon (I.i. 48–51). The various applications of the flower 'love-in-idleness' show that it is as capricious as a love-potion, and

in contrast to received ideas, causally as unconnected with the properties or nature of the loved object.

It is tempting to side with Theseus' 'cool reason' and Egeus' 'judgement' here, but closer analysis shows that Egeus' vision is not necessarily that of 'judgement' as opposed to Hermia's idle 'fantasy'. His preference for Demetrius is founded no better on the man's rationally considered 'worthiness' than Hermia's choice of Lysander. Egeus wants to give Hermia to Demetrius because he *loves* him (see I.i. 95) and so his 'judgement' is no more rationally founded than Hermia's vision of Lysander as the 'worthier'. The word 'judgement' is a false signal in this context, just as Lysander's claims to be moved by 'reason' in loving Helena are palpably absurd. Both Egeus and Hermia are moved by an imaginative appraisal of the respective men, despite the rhetoric of 'reason' and 'judgement'; neither can look with the eyes of the other.

The eye is all-important in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, especially in its role in the awakening or the dissolution of love. For love is continuously presented as a kind of vision. The quarrel between Egeus and Hermia is about ways of seeing, and the pansy-juice

> ... on sleeping eyelids laid,
> Will make or man or woman madly dote
> Upon the next live creature that it sees.
>
> (II.i. 170–2)

Both Renaissance psychology and Theseus draw close links between love and imagination. Love is a way of seeing informed by imagination and governing the passions — it has little to do with the objective reality outside its own projective vision. In Nemesius' words. 'imagination putteth greene spectacles before the eyes of our witte, to make it see nothing but greene, that is, serving for the consideration of the Passion' (p. 51). It is clear from Helena's account of love's vision that the lover does not perceive the beauty of the beloved as a direct, objective quality:

> Through Athens I am thought as fair as she.
> But what of that? Demetrius thinks not so;
> He will not know what all but he will know ...
>
> (I.i. 227–9)

Helena bewails the perversity which makes Demetrius dote on Hermia and which forces herself to admire him with as little cause:

> And as he errs, doting on Hermia's eyes,
> So I, admiring of his qualities.
>
> (230–1)

Yet the word 'err' is strange here. It carries the full weight of received opprobrium, suggesting that love's vision is perverse, blind, immature and impulsive, and this is certainly our perception of the lovers in the forest. But there are two ways of reading the lines that immediately follow:

> Things base and vile, holding no quantity,
> Love can transpose to form and dignity.
>
> (232–3)

Either such transposition is perverse, distorting the true nature of the perceived objects, with, in Thomas Wright's words, 'more show and appearance than they are indeede' and so should be avoided entirely, or it is a quality of the mind that is to be welcomed, for it is what makes love, and by that token society, possible at all. 'Love looks not with the eyes but with the mind' (I.i. 234) — with the imagination, and if we wish to expel imagination from our republic, love must go as well. It has nothing to do with the rational part of the soul, and never can have: it takes Bottom to see that.

The imagination is a paradoxical operation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: in Bacon's words, 'Janus-faced'. Titania's transposition of Bottom into a thing of 'form and dignity' may indeed be an aberration, but imagination also constitutes the visions of mutual love which end the play. The so-called 'error' of which Helena accuses Demetrius and herself is finally *turned to truth* by an imaginative change in Demetrius, who transforms what he had previously seen as 'base and vile' to 'form and dignity'. The same power which originally 'dissolved' his love for Helena finally 'melts' his infatuation for Hermia and restores what he believes to be his 'natural taste'.

> But my good lord, I wot not by what power —
> But by some power it is — my love to Hermia,
> Melted as the snow, seems to me now
> As the remembrance of an idle gaud
> Which in my childhood I did dote upon.
>
> (IV.i. 163–7)

Love's is therefore no 'innocent eye'. The qualities which it responds to are projected onto the world by its own ineffable imaginative power, and because its perception is so individual — impervious to inspection or argument — lovers find it 'hell to choose love by another's eyes'. Lovers do not, however, recognize this element of projection in themselves. When Titania declares to Bottom 'thy fair virtue's force perforce doth move me/On the first view to say, to swear, I love thee' (III.i. 135–6), she is trapped

within the paradigm of love as a *direct* vision of beauty which objectively causes feelings of love. Similarly Lysander's invocation of 'reason' shows that he cannot possibly regard beauty which he might see 'in the brow of Egypt' as a mere product of his own disposition — it must seem to be an intrinsic quality revealed as the truer product of 'judgement'.

It should be clear now that my view of the play links the operations of Puck and Oberon closely with those of the imagination — in its influence not only on love's vision (via the love-potion), but also on ordinary perception, through Puck's changes of shape. His 'beguiling likenesses', translated into real experience, can be seen as instances of the mistaken perceptions to which all people are prone, especially the trick spoken of by Theseus when 'in the night, imagining some fear/How easy is a bush supposed a bear' (V.i. 21–22); see also II.i. 43–54). The *mis-taking* of events as a result of projection and expectation is common to most characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, not only the hapless lovers. Puck is himself its victim when he anoints Lysander's instead of Demetrius' eyes, thinking 'such separation as may well be said/Becomes a virtuous bachelor and a maid' (II.ii. 57–8) between Lysander and Hermia to be the sign of a 'lack-love, [a] kill-courtesy' (76). So, too, Bottom translates his companion's fright into an image of his own condition in Act III. 'What do you see?' he replies to Snout 'You see an ass-head of your own, do you?' (III.i. 111).

Perhaps the most significant example is Theseus himself, the lover at the very opening of the play, before he has taken the stance of clear-sighted rationalist and stern opponent of imagination. The opening conversation between Theseus and Hippolyta relates their experience to that of other characters rather than placing them above those characters and events. Most telling are implications of a recent change of vision in the royal lovers who shortly before had been mortal enemies, and references to the moon, under whose government Theseus chafes with impatience. He is for once the example of youth suffering under the discipline of an older ruler. That the moon has not always forced him to 'question' [his] desires' is clear from a later reference that both he and his wife-to-be have been 'led . . . through the glimmering night' into inconstancy by the king and queen of 'shadows'. But at the moment, the waning of the old moon *seems* painfully slow to Theseus because his disposition makes him perceive the passage of time that way.[18] Objectively the span of time measured by the moon cannot be retarded or accelerated, yet Hippolyta successfully overcomes her lover's impatience by suggesting that time will pass more quickly if only he will beguile himself into *perceiving* it differently. And so he does, his spirit quickening immediately by a 'trick' of 'strong imagination'.

The play's most sustained and comic treatment of projection occurs with the climactic meeting of the two 'transposed' couples in Act III. The confusion is largely caused by disappointed or unfulfilled expectation, and the comedy arises from our awareness, as audience, of the operation of each set of expectations. So we can see the gap between what Lysander feels and what Helena expects from him, and therefore what his avowal of passion must seem to her. We should remember that his feelings are genuine (he is not a hypocrite), but he cannot convince Helena of them. The context will not give his utterances the meaning he thinks they must have because he believes that signs inevitably bear the stamps of meaning and emotion if the intention is genuine. So he cries out in perplexed exasperation:

> Why should you think that I should woo in scorn?
> Scorn and derision never came in tears.
> Look when I vow I weep; and vows so born,
> In their nativity all truth appears.
> How can these things seem scorn to you,
> Bearing the badge of faith to prove them true?
>
>   (III.ii. 122–7)

The situation is aggravated by the addition of two more people who project their own expectations onto the evidence. With the intrusion of Demetrius' unbelievable (but no less genuine) declaration of love, even Hermia has to conclude with Helena that both are 'bent/To set against [her] for [their] merriment' (III.ii. 145–6). It does not take long for Helena to project Hermia's collusion with them, and the heightened tension which results intensifies the process of projection. Single words, taken out of context, become the tokens upon which all a character's insecurity and anger are intensely projected. The mere mention of words like 'low' and 'little' convinces Hermia that they are meant to be insults, conscious as she now is that Lysander is suddenly more attracted to Helena's greater size. The scene ends in violent misunderstanding, an object lesson for Romantic critics who believe that sincerity of emotion constitutes meaning.

Love in collusion with imagination affects perception not only of the external world, but also, crucially, of the self and personal identity. Much of the emotion in III.ii. is generated by the women's awareness that they are what their lovers see them as, hence their acute sensitivity about features that might disqualify them from their lovers' favour, and the disenchanted (enchanted?) lovers' attempts to deny them complete characterization. (See Lysander's insults in III.ii. 328–30: 'dwarf ... minimus ... bead ... acorn'.) Lysander's rejection of Hermia prompts her to ask whether identities have not dissolved together with ways of seeing: 'Am I not

Hermia? Are you not Lysander?/I am as fair now as I was erstwhile'
(III.ii. 273–4). Similarly Helena comes to regard herself after
constant, demoralizing rejection, as being 'as ugly as a bear' (II.ii. 93)
despite her earlier confidence that Athens thinks she is just as fair as
Hermia. Fixated upon Demetrius as her 'wicked and dissembling
glass' (II.ii. 97), she comes to see herself as he sees her.

The subject of the mirror brings us to the third form of
imaginative seeing — aesthetic perception and dramatic illusion.
Shakespeare carefully distinguishes this form of perception from
that of the lover and the lunatic on the crucial question of belief.
The other forms of perception, whether they involve the
mechanicals taking bushes for bears in their panic or Lysander
pursuing Helena because he believes her to be a 'dove' to Hermia's
'raven' (II.ii. 113), posit very powerfully a belief about the reality of
their perceptions: a belief, furthermore, which is beyond the
control of the will, and impervious to reason. Watching a play,
however, as Coleridge has pointed out, calls for a voluntary
participation in the illusion while consciously excluding the
possibility of believing it to be true: his famous 'willing suspension
of disbelief.'[19]

The mechanicals' play fails because they misunderstand the
relationship that should exist between imagination and belief in the
theatre. Partly because they believe that words and things are
indissolubly and naturally linked — guarantors of identity and
'things as they really are' — their prologues are designed not to
invite willing participation in illusion but to *prevent* any such
exercise of the imagination. So they go out of their way to prevent
the possibility of Snug being seen as a lion, because they predict that
the ladies will then, disastrously, be terrified. Seeing a bush as a
bear has the same epistemological status and consequences for
them as seeing Snug as a lion. So terrified is Bottom that illusion will
be taken for reality that he suggests that the prologue should only
'*seem* to say' that they intend nothing of what they mean (III.i.
15–20). This dogged persistence in *intention* as the crux of all
meaning turns their attempts at signification into 'disfigurement'
(III.i. 56).

Within the context of the play we are watching, however,
Shakespeare shows us how easily, given the most simple but
controlled direction, the mind participates in imaginative illusion,
and he uses the mechanicals to do it. At the beginning of Act III the
mechanicals enter and discover that they are 'well-met'. With a
confidence completely lacking in his production, Quince declares
'This green plot shall be our stage, this hawthorn-brake our tiring-
house . . .' (lines 3–4) and they *become* 'stage' and 'tiring-house'.
The trick is however more complex because the areas to which
Quince points *are* in fact the stage and tiring-house and not a

hawthorn-brake or green plot. Yet both his audiences go along with Quince's invitation. We do not hesitate for a moment, and few of us would notice the double illusion called for: to see the actual stage as a section of a wood which is being seen as a stage (of a quite different kind) by six actors who are pretending to be characters in a Shakespeare play who are pretending to be mythical characters and are all the while drawing attention to the process of creating and participation in dramatic illusion. One thing we cannot do, as Gombrich's account of Kenneth Clark trying to 'stalk' an illusion shows, is hold the two illusions in our minds simultaneously.[20] Wittgenstein's analysis of the 'duck-rabbit' drawing demonstrates just this about aspect-seeing; we can see the drawing as a duck or a rabbit but not the two simultaneously.[21] The failure of the mechanicals' play rests on the fact that they ask precisely this of the audience: to see Bottom as Bottom *and* Pyramus, Snug as Snug *and* Lion, Snout as Snout *and* Wall. They would have done better to follow one of the first suggested solutions — to leave the performance out 'when all is done' (III.i. 16).

Our perception of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* involves our seeing 'these things with parted eye,/When everything seems double' (IV.i. 188–9). Our double vision involves our ability to 'bracket' our normal perceptions and their accompanying, inevitable beliefs about the world, and to participate in an imaginative vision which involves unasserted thought and entertained emotion, and which reflects back on our normal ways of seeing and believing, with the possibility of changing them. A play like *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a public answer to the phenomenologist's solipsistic introspection. The mind which allows itself to participate in the illusion is watching an intricate, public representation of its own operations. What is essentially subjective and inaccessible can gain a certain comprehensibility, constancy, and objectivity by the shared process of story-telling. Private dreams, 'small and indistinguishable', recounted, can be turned into a social, mutually-illuminating medium:

> But all the story of the night told over,
> And all their minds transfigured so together,
> More witnesseth than fancy's images,
> And grows to something of great constancy;
> But howsoever, strange and admirable.
>
> (V.i. 23–7)

This is Hippolyta's answer to Theseus' condemnation of the imagination that its products are 'more strange than true.' 'All their minds transfigured so together': these words 'nail' the operation of imagination in Shakespeare, dissolving the duality of appearance and reality in terms of which it is always denigrated. For in love

there is no 'real' object against which the lover's perception can be tested and found to be a 'phantom'. What counts is a mutual vision, shared by two lovers who create love between themselves. The imagination is able to 'transpose . . . things [once held to be] base and vile . . . to form and dignity': 'minds transfigured so together . . . [grow] to something of great constancy.' It can *also* transpose things once held to have 'form and dignity' into something 'base and vile', with painful and disastrous effects. Not only the confusion in the woods of this play but also the tragedy of *Othello* testifies to that. It is important to remember that the imagination is Janus-like, with the power to both 'leave' and 'disfigure' the 'form' of its object. People fall out of love as often as they fall in love. The *same* power operates, whether it dissolves Demetrius' love for Helena or reconstitutes that perception by 'melting' his dotage on Hermia, in all of love's choices. The same flower turns Lysander and Titania away from their former lovers *and* restores their 'wonted sight'. It also restores to Demetrius a way of seeing Helena which he had lost without its imposed effect. We must remember that the tragic end predicated at the beginning of the play is only averted by the love-potion. Demetrius remains under its influence when the play ends, and this will disturb us only if we refuse to see that the potion serves as a dramatic symbol for the operation of imagination throughout the play.

The most important attribute of the imagination is its susceptibility to change; and here the imagination which constitutes love and that which characterizes the appreciation of fiction, meet. For it is the role of the imagination to break through the intractable categories and beliefs posited by reason into a new way of seeing and appreciating the world. The further paradox is that it is through *fiction* that such a breakthrough can be achieved. Fiction, operating on and through the imagination, can be turned to *truth*, but only if we stop seeing truth in referential terms and start seeing it as a sharing of mutual horizons — a quality that does not transcend human beings but rather something that arises from the combination of people in society. It is a social phenomenon, not a metaphysical one.

Having discarded the rational dichotomy whereby an adherence to *reason* was seen to be the only way of overcoming the inconsistencies and delusions of the imagination, Shakespeare finally sees the imagination as a paradoxical force in human perception and behaviour — involved in both 'truth' and 'error' and informing both 'appearance' and 'reality'. What is more, it is the *same* imagination which is involved in both forms of perception. He does not resort to distinctions between sound and diseased imagination which are to be found in the contemporary psychology.

Shakespeare's recognition of the role of the imagination in all

forms of perception is ultimately a recognition of its role in human relationships. It is a force which is able to free people from the tyranny of reason and from a single-minded vision of the world and themselves, and so enables them to entertain truths other than the ones they habitually cling to. Its traditional alignment with emotion and illusion is recognised and accepted, but as an alliance which can, paradoxically, lead to stability, harmony and a greater grasp of reality through the liberating power of illusion and fiction. It does not deliver a 'golden' world as opposed to a 'brazen' one, but frees us to see ourselves and our relation to the brazen world more perfectly.

Rand Afrikaans University,
Johannesburg.

NOTES

1. See Lily B. Campbell, *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes: Slaves of Passion* (London, 1930);
   O.J. Campbell, 'What Is the Matter with Hamlet?' *Yale Review*, 32 (1942); Patrick Cruttwell, 'Physiology and Psychology in Shakespeare's Age', *JHI*, 12 (1951), Lawrence Bab, 'The Physiological Conception of Love in Elizabethan and Stuart Drama', *PMLA*, 56 (1941), and the criticism of this stance in Louise C. Turner Forest, 'A Caveat For Critics Against Invoking Elizabethan Psychology', *PMLA*, 61 (1946). Also Ruth Anderson, *Elizabethan Psychology and Shakespeare's Plays*, University of Iowa Humanistic Studies, First Series, III, No. 4 (1927), rpt. New York, 1966; and Murray Bundy, 'Shakespeare and Elizabethan Psychology', *JEGP*, 23 (1924).
2. I have used the following selection of Renaissance and Elizabethan psychologists and philosophers: Bartholomeus Anglicus, *Batman upon Bartholome, his Booke De Proprietatibus Rerum* (London, 1582); Francis Bacon, 'Of the Dignity and Advancement of Learning' and 'Essays'., *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spalding *et al.* (London, 1870). IV and VI; Thomas Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholy*, intr. Holbrook Jackson (London, 1932), 3 vols; Pierre Charron, *Of Wisdom*, tr. Samson Lennard (London, 1608); Nicolas Coeffeteau, *A Table of Human Passions*, tr. Edward Grimeston (London, 1621); André du Laurens, *A Discourse on the Preservation of Sight*, tr. Richard Surphlet (London, 1599); Jacques Ferrand, *Erotomania or a Treatise . . . Of Love, or Erotique Melancholy*, tr. Edmund Chilmead (Oxford, 1640); Pierre de la Primaudaye, *The French Acadamie* (London, 1618); Nemesius, *The Nature of Man* (London, 1636); Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General* (London, 1604); and two long poems on the subject: Sir John Davies, 'Nosce Teipsum' *The Poems*, ed. Robert Krueger (Oxford, 1975); and Fulke Greville, 'A Treatise of Humane Learning', *Poems and Dramas of Fulke Greville*, ed. G. Bullough (London, 1939).
3. See note 1 above.
4. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* intr. Holbrook Jackson (London, 1932), 3 vols. Vol. 1, p. 157.
5. Thomas Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie* (London, 1586), p. 122.
6. Pierre Charron, *Of Wisdom*, tr. Samson Lennard (London, 1608), p. 40.
7. Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General* (London, 1604), p. 51.
8. Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. J. Spalding (London, 1870), p. 406.
9. Charron, pp. 67–8.
10. André du Laurens, *A Discourse on the Preservation of Sight*, tr. Richard Surphlet (London, 1599), p. 76.

11. Nicolas Coeffeteau, *A Table of Humane Passions*, tr. Edward Grimeston (London, 1621), p. 154.
12. Jacques Ferrand, *Erotomania or a Treatise ... of Love*, or *Erotique Melancholy*, tr. Edmund Chilmead (Oxford, 1640), p. 230.
13. Ernst Schanzer, *'A Midsummer Night's Dream'*, in *Shakespeare: The Comedies*, ed. Kenneth Muir (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965), p. 28.
14. Stanley Wells (ed.), in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare (Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 27.
15. C.L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Custom* (Princeton, N.J., 1959), p. 160.
16. Lysander does not perceive Hermia's unorthodox, 'Egyptian' features as if she were actually tall and blonde before he falls out with her, nor does he suddenly see her change back to being dark and short under the influence of the potion.
17. See E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (London, 1960), p. 251: 'Roger Fry and the Impressionists talked of the difficulty of finding out what things looked like to an unbiased eye because of what they called the "conceptual habits" necessary to life. But if these habits are necessary to life the postulate of an unbiased eye demands the impossible. It is the business of the living organism to organize, for where there is life there is not only hope, as the proverb says, but also fears, guesses, expectations which sort and model the incoming messages, testing and transforming and testing again. The innocent eye is a myth.'
18. For a similar statement of how dispositions affect the experience of time, see *As You Like It*, III.ii. 302–333.
19. S.T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* ed. G. Watson (London and New York, 1975), p. 169.
20. Gombrich, pp. 188–91.
21. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford, 1953), sects 205–315.
(The text used for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is the Arden Shakespeare, ed. H.F. Brooks (London: Methuen, 1979).

LAMENTS FOR HIS FATHER:
ZULU POEMS OF B.W. VILAKAZI

by CHERIE MACLEAN

SENGIYOKHOLWA-KE
(Ngikhumbul'ubaba. Wafela ezandleni zami ngoJune 10, 1933, eMvoti.)

Sengiyokholwa ukuthi sewafa
Um' ukukhala kwezinyoni zaphezulu
Nobusuku obuqhakaz' izinkanyezi zezulu;
Um' inkwenzane yokusa nezinkanyezi
Ezikhanyis' umnyama njengonyezi —
Sezanyamalal' ungunaphakade.

Sengiyokholwa ukuthi sewafa
Um' izintaba nemiful' egobhozaya,
Inyakatho neningizim' evunguzaya;
Um' ungqoqwane wobusika namazolo
Abemboz' utshani namuhla nayizolo —
Sekwanyamalal' ungunaphakade.

Njengenkanyez' edilika phezulu kude,
Nomzimba wawa njengemithi yezigude
Ehenqe ugu nezihlabathi zolwandle,
Ngawubona kuhle kwephupho bewumboza,
Ngawulindela uya ngokuya uphoza.

Ngenkathi kufiphal' izinkanyezi, nawe
Ngabon' unyinyiphala kwaphel' ubuqhawe.
Phezu kwaloko angiyukholwa neze,
Konke ukubona kwami kulize leze.

Sengiyokholwa ukuthi sewafa
Uma ilanga nenyanga sekwafa,
Kwawel' enhlabathini yamagade,
Kwashabalala ungunaphakade.

NOW I WILL ONLY BELIEVE
(I remember father. He died in my hands on June 10, 1933, at umVoti.)

I will now only believe that he has died
If the crying of the birds above
And the night which bursts into stars above;
If the star of dawn and the other stars
Which light up the blackness like moonlight itself —
If all these things disappear for ever and ever.

I will now only believe that he has died
If the mountains and the flowing rivers,
North and South (winds) which blow;
If frost of Winter and dew (of Summer)
Which cover the grass today and yesterday —
If they too are to disappear for ever and ever.

Just like a star which falls from high and far,
So did his body fall like the trees of the wild banana
Which surround the coast and the sands of the sea,
I saw it as if in a dream, it was covered up,
I waited with it until eventually it cooled.

At the time that the stars became obscure,
I saw that your bravery was coming to an end.
On top of this I cannot believe anything,
All of my vision is now a nothing of nothing.

I will now only believe that he has died
If the sun and moon die,
Fall down to the very earth of sods
Annihilated for ever and ever.

SENGIYAKHOLWA
(Isikhalo sikababa)

Sengiyakholwa ukuthi sewafa,
Ngoba noma ilanga liwukhanyis' umhlaba
Ngibon' ekusen' izilwane ziklaba,
Ziziphunga ngamasho' anenhlali,
Emhloph' okwezinkomazi zakith' eMhlali,
Nokho sengike ngabona kuhlw' emini.

Sengiyakholwa ukuthi sewafa,
Kwangihlwel' emini ngo Mandlakayise.
Ngabe ngiyathe ngincenga bangiyise,
Bangithela ngamanz' ezinyembezi,
Ngambon' elele bengakamembesi.
Ngalibon' iphupho liz' emini.

Nango Nomasomi kwabanjalo.
Izinkanyezi zamehlo zacimeza,
Wabanda wehlulw' ukuzifudumeza.
Mina, ngema, ngaqhaqhazela izingalo
Ngilunguz' ubuso bakhe buhwelela,
Nobuhle benqaba bangifiphalela.

Ngingekholwe kanjan' ukuthi sewafa
Um' umgwaqo wakho uvulekile,
Ngibon' iminyaka yonk' ubhudulekile.
Wena kungathi wahamba umnyang' uvuliwe
Khon' abanye beyophuma sengathi badiniwe
Kanti sebelandela wena bangabuyi.

Ababuyi wena weqhawe laseMzwangedwa.
Bavalelisa ngime bangishiye ngedwa.
Abanye ngibabeke kwaGulukudela,
Lapho umnyama uthule ubagubudela;
Abanye ngibatshala eMhlatuzane,
Lapho befukanyelw' izikhukukazana,
Ngoba ngizw' insimbi yengelos' incencetha,
Ibavus' ekuseni beyokhuleka baqenqetha.
Ngibabon' ilanga enzanzi libomvu,
Ngababona lisemaqgumen' ezibomvu.

NOW I DO BELIEVE
(Lament for my father)

Now I do believe that he has died,
Because when the sun lights up the earth
I see animals grazing in the morning,
Whisking their hairy tails,
Which are white like the cows at umHlali,
Still however I sometimes see dusk at midday.

Now I do believe that he has died,
Because it also became dusk for me at midday with Mandlakayise.
When I asked them to take me to him,
They sorrowed with me,
I saw him lying down not yet covered up.
I saw a dream coming in the middle of the day.

And so it was also with Nomasomi.
The stars of her eyes were closed,
She became cold and failed to warm up again.
As for me, I could not stand and my arms shook
I took a quick look, her face became dusk,
And her astonishing beauty became obscured for me.

How can I not believe that you are dead
When your road is open in front of me?
I see all the years you have worn away.
It seems as if your own going opened the door
For others to go out when they were tired,
Indeed they are following you and not returning.

They don't return or you, hero of umZwangedwa.
They bade farewell and left me standing here alone.
Others I have buried at Groutville,
Where the darkness covers them up;
Others I have planted at Mariannhill,
There they are sheltered by the hens,
Because I hear the bell of angelus ringing,
It wakens them early to pray as it rings.
I see the red sunset,
I saw it turn the hills themselves red.

SENGIYAKHOLWA qhutshekwa

Izibomvu enzanzi noMhlatuzane
Ngizibonile zikhanya ziphikisana.
Ngalalela phansi komthom' omkhulu
Lapho kulel' uFrans' ubabamkhulu,
Ngezw' izwi lithi: 'Shayan' ingelosi
Ebusika nasehlobo ikhal' ingalingozi!'

Kanjalo sengidelil' ukuthi sewafa,
Ngoba ngibona kimi kuqothuk' ekhanda
Izinwele zobusha, izimvu zingikhanda,
Zinginik' ukuzotha nophawu lobudala
Engalubona kuwe uyimpung' usukhathala.
Emva kwalokho waya ngokuya ushabalala,
Nami ngaya ngikubona kancan' unyamalala.

Namuhla sengiyakholw' ukuthi sewafa,
Ngoba kwaButhongo ngiyakubona
Uza nenhliz' enokuphola,
Ungiweza ngamasango namazibuko.
Obuhlakani nezindlela zenkalipho;
Nodondolo lwakho ngiluzwa lugqula
Phambi kwamehl' ami ngingakuboni.
Nginjengempumputhe ngamehl' omzimba.
Yebo, manje ngiyakholwa sewafa,
Wanyamalal' ungunaphakade.

Both of the poems by Vilakazi, 'Sengiyokholwa-ke' and 'Sengiyakholwa' are sad, sincere, and beautiful. The poet loves his father so much that it takes him ten years (the interval between the writing of the two poems) after the old man's death to believe that he has gone forever.

The title of the first poem, 'Sengiyokholwa-ke', containing the remote future infix '-yo-' and the enclitic '-ke-', meaning 'then', sets the tone of the poet's disbelief that his father is dead and the conditions he lays down for the remote possibility of his believing it in the future. The title of the second poem, 'Sengiyakholwa', containing the auxiliary infix '-ya-', which indicates the final or long form of the present tense, positive, tells us that at last the poet believes his father is dead.

Grief is the overriding theme in both poems but there is a difference in tone. In 'Sengiyokholwa-ke' the tone is angry. The poet throws down a challenge — the sun and moon must die, must

NOW I DO BELIEVE continued

The red soils down at Mariannhill
I saw shining and competing.
I lay on the ground near a big fig tree
There where grandfather Frans lies,
I heard his words: 'Let us ring the angelus
Winter and summer it rings without grief!'

And so I am now satisfied that he is dead,
Because I see even in myself the falling
Out of the hair of youth, I am grey,
It gives me dignity, the mark of age
Which I saw with you when you were tiring.
After that you kept going until you came to nought,
I myself saw that you were slowly disappearing.

Today I do believe that he is dead,
Because in the place of Sleep I see you
You come with a cool heart,
You make me to cross over through gateways and fords
Of wisdom and awareness;
I can hear your guiding staff tapping
In front of me although I cannot see you.
I am like a blind person with my bodily eyes.
Yes, now I do believe that he is dead,
And that he has gone away for ever and ever.

be annihilated, before he will believe his father is dead. It is an unreasonable defiance, especially since his father died in his very hands. But clearly, the only way he can live with his tremendous grief is to reject the belief that the tragedy ever occurred.

In 'Sengiyakholwa' the tone is calmer. Further experiences of death of people very close to him — Mandlakayise, his elder brother, and Nomasomi, his sister, to name but two — gradually have brought him to the realization of the finality of death. Signs of his own aging, such as greying hair, remind him that this happened to his father, too. He actually watched his father slowly fading away from then on. These are things he forgot in the anguish he felt immediately after his father's death, but now that he has accepted the inevitability of death, he has become aware of the guiding presence of his father in his dreams, which is a consolation to him.

The term of address in 'Sengiyokholwa-ke' could be direct (*to* his father) or indirect (*about* his father) since the 'wa' grammatical

morpheme relating to the remote past tense can refer to the second person singular (you) as well as to the third person singular (he/she/it). Either way, directly or indirectly, the term of address does not alter much the sense of the poem.

In 'Sengiyakholwa', though, there are parts of the poem in which the poet is clearly addressing his father (or someone else?) directly, as well as other parts, again in the remote past tense, in which it is not clear to this reader whether the address is direct or indirect. For instance, in stanza four:

2nd or 3rd person:	Ngingekholwa kanjan' sewafa
definitely 2nd,	Um' umgwaqo wakho uvulekile,
then 2nd or 3rd:	Ngibon' iminyaka yonk' ubhudulekile
definitely 2nd,	Wena kungathi wahamba umnyang' uvuliwe
then 2nd or 3rd:	Khon' abanye beyophuma sengathi badiniwe
definitely 2nd:	Kanti sebelandela wena bangabuyi.

This whole stanza could be addressed to Vilakazi's father, indeed, the whole poem. I would like to suggest, however, that the recurrent phrase 'sewafa' means '*he* is now dead' rather than '*you* are now dead' and that the term of address changes from indirect (he) to direct (you) in stanzas four and eight in this poem. I suggest further that in this sense the 'you' refers not to Vilakazi's father but to Jesus. I have three reasons for this.

Firstly, we know that Vilakazi taught at the Mariannhill Roman Catholic Mission and so religious belief surrounding the parting words of Jesus . . . 'I go to prepare a place for you . . .' may have influenced the poet's phrasing in the fourth stanza and therefore his address in the second person singular:

Ngingekholwe kanjan' ukuthi sewafa
Um' umgwaqo wakho uvulekile,
Ngibon' iminyaka yonk' ubhudulekile
Wena kungathi wahamba umnyang' uvuliwe
Khon' abanye beyophuma sengathi badiniwe
Kanti sebelandela wena *bangabuyi.*

How can I not believe that he is dead
When *your* road is open in front of me?
I see all the years you have worn away
It seems as if your own going opened the door
For others to go out when they were tired,
Indeed they are following you and not returning.

Secondly, in the eighth and last stanza the words:

> *Ungiweza ngamasango namazibuko*
> *Obuhlakani nezindlela zenkalipho;*
> *Nodondolo lwakho ngiluzwa lugqula*
> *Phambi kwamehl' ami ngingakuboni.*

> You make me to cross over through gateways and fords
> Of wisdom and awareness;
> I can hear your guiding staff tapping
> In front of me although I cannot see you.

are reminiscent of the 23rd Psalm from the Old Testament of the Bible:

> ... He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me ... (with 'He' and 'thy' referring to 'The Lord').

Thirdly, the locativization and capitalization of sleep ('kwaButhongo') earlier on in this last stanza give sleep such significance that we might associate the condition with Death — since the poem is about death — and, again, with the 23rd Psalm quoted above:

> Yea, though I walk through the valley of *the shadow of death* ... thy rod and thy staff they comfort me ...

Sustaining my suggestion of a religious reference in 'Sengiyakholwa, I note another possible one in the last stanza of 'Sengiyokholwa-ke':

> *Uma ilanga nenyanga sekwafa,*
> *Kwawel' enhlabathini yamagade,*
> *Kwashabalala ungunaphakade.*

> If the sun and moon die,
> Fall down to the very earth of sods,
> Annihilated for ever and ever.

'Falling down to the very earth of sods' is reminiscent of the burial service from the Book of Common Prayer or any Christian burial service:

> We therefore commit his body to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life.

In a sense, the last stanza of 'Sengiyokholwa-ke' is linked to the last stanza of 'Sengiyakholwa': in order that a soul be resurrected, the body must first die. By the end of the first poem Vilakazi has not yet accepted the fact that his father will not return to him in his bodily form. By the end of the second poem, however, his awareness of his father (Father?) in his sleep can be seen as his father's 'resurrection' to eternal life, following the necessary acceptance by his son that he has in fact died.

The refrain 'ungunaphakade' (for ever and ever) at the end of the first, second, and last stanzas of 'Sengiyokholwa-ke', as well as at the end of the last stanza of 'Sengiyakholwa', is suggestive of the traditional conclusion to Christian prayer: 'For ever and ever, Amen'. The refrain is a link between the two poems, as is the recurrent beginning to several of the stanzas in each: 'Sengiyokholwa ukuthi sewafa' in the first poem, and 'Sengiyakholwa ukuthi sewafa' in the second.

An interesting changeover in contrast between distance and immediacy occurs within and between the poems. In the first, the effect on the poet of his father's recent death is immediate and close: his father died in his very hands. Yet the cosmic imagery incorporated in the surviving son's challenge creates a sense of vast distance in time and space:

> 'Sengiyokholwa ukuthi sewafa ...' (I will only believe that he is dead) if the crying of the birds above, the night, the stars, the mountains and flowing rivers, the winds, the seasons, and the sun and the moon disappear for ever and ever.

Death has been very close at hand in the first poem and, by contrast, the imagery is distant. In the later poem, though, ten years have passed since the poet's father's death so the death itself is distant in time. Correspondingly, the landscapes are close, tangible for the most part. For instance, the red soils, the big fig tree, Frans's grave, the bell above the cemetery, and the grey hairs on his head.

Another contrast is in the solitariness of the poet relative to the rest of the world. In the first poem the impression we get is that after his father's death there is no one but him in the world of natural phenomena. In the second poem he says:

Wena kungathi wahamba umnyang' uvuliwe
Khon' abanye beyophuma sengathi badiniwe
Kanti sebelandela wena bangabuyi.

Ababuyi wena weqhawe laseMzwangedwa.
Bavalelisa ngime bangishiye ngedwa.

It seems as if your own going opened the door
For others to go out when they were tired,
Indeed they are following you and not returning.

They don't return or you, hero of umZwangedwa.
They bade farewell and left me standing here alone.

'Ilanga nenyanga' (the sun and the moon) are powerful in contrast
to the lamenter's powerlessness; *they* are able to turn the blackness
of night into light while 'Konke ukubona kwami kulize leze' — all of
his vision is now a nothing of nothing. That is, he is unable to
brighten the darkness of his despair because his father's light — the
light of his own life — has been extinguished in death. In the third
stanza of 'Sengiyokholwa-ke' the imagery of the infinite height of
the sky ('phezulu kude' — far and wide), the width of the coast, and
the vast quantity of grains implicit in "izihlabathi zolwandle" (the
sands of the sea), again, contrast vividly with the relative height,
width, and singularity of the dying man.

The climax in imagery appears in stanza three of 'Sengiyokholwa-
ke' with the falling of his father's body likened to the falling of the
wild banana trees which surround the coast. These trees grow
closely together in their natural habitat so when one of them falls it
does not do so in a direct way, but slowly, because the trunk's
progress is checked and supported by the trunks of the other trees in
the direction of its fall. Vilakazi's father died in his arms so, too, the
body like the tree fell slowly and irregularly, supported in its
progress by the son. The bereaved's shock at this event is described
as 'Ngawubona kuhle kwephupho' (I saw it as if in a dream); it does
not seem real; he cannot believe it. Similarly, in 'Sengiyakholwa' he
has the same reaction to the deaths of his brother and sister. In
stanza two:

> *Ngambon' elele bengakamembesi.*
> *Ngalibon' iphupho liz' emini.*

> I saw him lying down not yet covered up.
> I saw a dream coming in the middle of the day.

And in stanza three:

> *Nango Nomasomi kwabanjalo.*

> And so it was also with Nomasomi.

Vilakazi's father's place of burial is not mentioned in the first
poem but in 'Sengiyakholwa' the poet spends some time in

describing the places where his other relatives have been buried in
the meantime. Indeed, the only touch of humour in the two poems
appears in stanza five of the latter one, in 'the graveyard scene'.
Vilakazi calls the nuns of Mariannhill 'hens' and this does conjure
up in the imagination a rather sweet picture of motherly creatures
looking after others who cannot fend for themselves:

> *Abanye ngibatshala eMhlatuzane,*
> *Lapho befukanyelw' izikhukuzana . . .*
>
> Others I have planted at Mariannhill,
> There they are sheltered by the hens . . .

'Sengiyakholwa' is a longer poem than 'Sengiyokholwa-ke',
having eight stanzas to the latter's five. It begins slowly with the
poet observing animals grazing in the early part of the day, and
moves on slowly through his memories of his other relatives' deaths.
The imagery of the graves at Mariannhill being sheltered by hens
begins to speed up the movement of the poem. The imagery of the
soils competing for redness in the sunset leads us on to the climax of
movement in this poem, which is the remembered words of
grandfather Frans:

> *Shayan' ingelosi*
> *Ebusika nasehlobo ikhal' ingalingozi!*
>
> Let us ring the angelus
> Winter and summer it rings without grief!

This heightened movement correlates with the poet's own progress
on the path to self-recovery; he realizes that the bell above the
burial ground rings only to waken the nuns to pray, not to wail in
grief for the dead. It seems he is able to distance himself somewhat
from his grief now. (Ten years earlier he would have believed the
bells rang only for the dead.) After this, the movement of the poem
slows down again, as indicated by Vilakazi's vision of his father
coming towards him with a 'cool' heart, 'tapping' his guiding staff in
front of Vilakazi, who is 'like a blind person . . .'.
    Although the longer poem moves more slowly than the shorter
one, there is much more movement in its actual happenings — of
dawn, animals grazing, sorrowing relatives, burying of the dead, the
bell ringing, sunset, and the poet lying down on the ground next to
Frans's grave — than in the actual happenings in 'Sengiyokholwa-
ke'. In the latter poem, the only actual happening is that of the
gradual fall of the old man as he died, and the gradual cooling of his
body. As mentioned earlier, this is also the climax of the poem.
    However, in the imagery employed in the first poem, the

movement is spectacular! For instance, in the first stanza one of the conditions laid down by the poet for his belief that his father is dead is the disappearance for ever and ever of the night which *bursts* into stars above:

Nobusuku *obuqhakaz'* izinkanyezi zezulu . . .

Movement in the second stanza, as felt in the flowing rivers and blowing winds, is slower and more controlled. In stanza three occurs the climax of the imagery:

Njengenkanyez' edilika phezulu kude,
Nomzimba wawa . . .

Just like a star which falls from high and far,
So did his body fall . . .

This is an ultimate contrast in movement within the poem because, as we know, a falling star is a magnificent sight which lasts for only a few seconds, and the falling of a dying man's body — slowly and heavily — is a tragic sight. The poet might even have been thinking of the symbolic gradual fall of man from 'the state of grace' in his graphic description of the death itself. Stanza four moves very slowly, in the final stages of the old man's death; the son feels the life fading out of his father's body and his being coming to an end. He waits with the corpse as it gradually cools.

The poem ends in a climax of figurative illustration with the very strong demand that the sun and moon fall out of the sky — down to the very sods of the earth — and be annihilated for ever and ever. Can there be any more energetic a movement than that? Indeed, Vilakazi has succeeded in creating in this poem an overwhelming sense of grief, a great deal of movement, vast space, and eternity in time, all within a tight structure of only five stanzas, which is to my mind a mark of his genius as a poet.

Secondary to the theme of grief is the 'blindness' associated with that grief. As mentioned before, because his father was the light of his life, his father's death was an extinction of that light. Afterwards, Vilakazi could see nothing ('Konke ukubona kwami kulize leze'). Ten years later, he is still terribly sad but at least he has regained his sight, figuratively speaking, because now, when the sun lights up the earth in the morning, he can see animals grazing, whisking their tails — which are white, just like those of the cows at home. Still, however, it is sometimes dusk for him at midday — giving the impression of grief clouding his vision; he cannot 'see' for grief. Death itself and blindness are synonymous in his description of Nomasomi's death:

> *Izinkanyezi zamehlo zacimeza*
> *Wabanda wehlulw' ukuzifudumeza . . .*
> *Ngilunguz' ubuso bakhe buhwelela,*
> *Nobuhle bengaba banqifiphalela.*

> The stars of her eyes were closed,
> She became cold and failed to warm up again . . .
> I took a quick look, her face became dusk,
> And her astonishing beauty became obscured for me.

Again, in the last stanza of 'Sengiyakholwa' he says to the guide he becomes aware of in his sleep:

> *. . . ngingakuboni.*
> *Nginjengempumputhe ngamehl' omzimba.*

> . . . I cannot see you.
> I am like a blind person with my bodily eyes.

I would like now to mention the form of the two poems. 'Sengiyokholwa-ke' contains six lines in each of the first two stanzas; the third stanza has five lines, and the fourth and fifth stanzas have four lines each. In 'Sengiyakholwa' the first, second, third, fourth and sixth stanzas have six lines each; the fifth and eighth stanzas have ten lines each, and the seventh has seven. We can see from this structure that neither of the two poems has a regular pattern.

There is a rhyme stress in both the penultimate and ultimate syllables of the last word of most lines but, because of the varying number of lines in the stanzas, the pattern is slightly irregular overall although it is the same in stanzas composed of the same number of lines. Using the traditional structure of poetry in English literature as the basis of his own Zulu poetry, Vilakazi has a problem in rhyming the last words of lines because, Zulu word stress falling on the penultimate syllable, he has to rhyme the final *two* syllables instead of only the ultimate one, as in English. He has employed other poetic devices to make his poetry flow. For instance, as previously mentioned, the title of each poem is repeated at the beginning of each of several stanzas within the poem. The use of the refrain 'for ever and ever' at the end of some lines has also been noted, indicating continuity in the poet's imagination both in actual time and in the structure of the poems. Another instance of this continuity is to be found in the use of the word 'emini' (at midday) at the end of two consecutive stanzas in 'Sengiyakholwa'. A variation on this use is that the last word of its fourth stanza, 'bangabuyi' (they are not returning), is used again in a slightly different construction at the beginning of the next stanza:

'Ababuyi' ...' (They don't return ...). One can read the heaving
sobs implicit in the words ...

But it is in the actual reading out loud of Vilakazi's poetry that his
skill in phrasing can best be appreciated. This is readily
understandable when one recalls that it is only very recently — in
the last fifty years — that Zulu literature has found a written
expression. Until now it has had only an oral tradition, and even
today, far more stories are still told at the hearth than are ever read
by the Zulu people. So it is only in the *saying* (from 'Sengiyokholwa-
ke') of:

> *Phezu kwalokho angiyukolwa neze,*
> *Konke ukubona kwami kulize leze.*

> On top of this I cannot believe *anything*,
> All of my vision is now a *nothing* of nothing.

that one can feel the yearning inherent in ... 'kulize leze' and hear
the richness in the words' rise and fall. Indeed, the spoken words of
these two poems of Vilakazi must surely be even more
heartbreaking than those which are read; but either way they are,
for me, unforgettable.

University of Natal,
Pietermaritzburg.