

**WELGEVONDEN REVISITED: A NEW  
TRANSLATION OF *SEWE DAE BY DIE  
SILBERSTEINS*, AND ITS LITERARY-CRITICAL  
RATIONALE**

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degree of Master of Arts (MA) at Stellenbosch University

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## Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis consists of my own original work, and that I have not previously in its entirety, or in part, submitted it at any university for a degree.

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Signature: G.Q. Penfold

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis re-evaluates the writing of seminal Afrikaans modernist Etienne Leroux from a South African English perspective. The present author's new translation of Leroux's prize-winning novel *Sewe Dae by die Silbersteins* (1962) is the focal point of an enquiry into how "rewriting", in translation theorist André Lefevere's coinage, has shaped the reception of Leroux's work outside the Afrikaans literary system. It is shown from a literary-historical viewpoint that translation played a crucial role in Leroux's rise to international prominence and subsequent eclipse. It is demonstrated that Leroux's standing within the English literary system rests predominantly on extant translations of his novels, without taking into account the cyclical quality of his fiction, especially the overarching nine-novel cycle – the basis of Leroux's renown in Afrikaans. The distortions produced by this fact are critiqued. In particular, the received idea of Leroux as an apolitical obscurantist is challenged, the work of J.C. Kannemeyer especially showing that Leroux's politics and art were much more integral and radical than previously (mis)understood. A case is made for Leroux's re-evaluation as a seminal contributor to modern South African fiction comparable to J.M. Coetzee, and for the production of fresh translations of his work to facilitate this re-evaluation. A detailed account of the translation process behind the present author's new translation of *Sewe Dae by die Silbersteins* follows. A series of close readings compares this new translation to the first translation by Charles Eglington (1964), shows how Eglington's translation obscured certain textual strategies vital to a full comprehension of Leroux's text, examines the difficulties inherent in restoring them, and argues for the new translation's success therein. A *mise au point* in which insights yielded by this process feed back into an assessment of Leroux's relevance today concludes the thesis. Leroux's technique is shown to have immunised his texts against the desuetude into which time-bound "committed" literature often falls. In particular, *Sewe Dae by die Silbersteins*, or its new translation, emerges as a satirical anatomisation of subjectivity under late modern capitalism entirely in tune with contemporary cultural representations of apartheid as metaphor for global capitalism.

## OPSOMMING

In hierdie tesis word die skryfwerk van die hoog-aangeskrewe Afrikaanse modernis Etienne Leroux vanuit 'n Suid-Afrikaans-Engelse oogpunt in heraanskouing geneem. Die kandidaat se nuwe vertaling van Leroux se beroemde roman, *Sewe dae by die Silbersteins* (1962), word as uitgangpunt gebruik vir die vraag hoe Leroux se werk "herskryf" is deur kritici en vertalers. In hierdie verband word die vertaal-teoris André Lefevere se werk gebruik om die ontvangs van Leroux se werk buite die Afrikaanse literêre stelsel in oënskou te neem. Uit 'n literêr-historiografiese standpunt word bewys dat vertaling 'n sleutelrol in Leroux se internasionale beroemdheid en sy daaropvolgende verdwyning gespeel het. Leroux se status binne die Engelse literêre stelsel berus hoofsaaklik op bestaande vertalings van sy romans, wat beperk in omvang en gehalte is. Leroux se "Engelse" reputasie neem dan glad nie die sikliese eienskappe van sy fiksie in ag nie, veral sy oorkoepelende siklus van nege romans, wat die grondslag van Leroux se roem in Afrikaans vorm. Verskeie misvattinge wat uit hierdie toestand voortspruit – veral die gedagte dat Leroux se skryfwerk apolities en ook "duister" is – word bevraagteken. Veral die werk van J. C. Kannemeyer wys daarop dat Leroux se kuns baie meer integraal en radikaal is as wat die wanvoorstelling daarvan binne Suid-Afrikaanse kritiek in Engels 'n mens sou laat dink. 'n Pleidooi word gemaak vir 'n herwaardering van Leroux as sentraal tot moderne Suid-Afrikaanse fiksie, vergelykbaar selfs met J.M. Coetzee. Verder word gepleit vir die behoefte aan nuwe vertalings van Leroux se werk, om sodoende 'n deeglike herwaardering moontlik te maak. Daarna volg 'n bespreking van die vertalingsproses agter die kandidaat se nuwe vertaling van *Sewe dae by die Silbersteins*. 'n Reeks noukeurige beskouings wat die nuwe vertaling met die bestaande vertaling (deur Charles Eglington, 1964) vergelyk, wys daarop dat Eglington se vertaling kern-eienskappe van Leroux se teks verdoesel. Hierdie eienskappe, word aangevoer, is noodsaaklik vir 'n deeglike begrip van Leroux se teks. Die kandidaat bied 'n wye analise aan oor hierdie eienskappe en voer ook aan dat sy nuwe vertaling die wese van Leroux se roman in ere herstel. Die tesis sluit af met 'n *mise au point* waarin die insigte wat bereik is in die vertalingsproses aangevoer word as stof tot nadenke oor Leroux se belangrikheid in vandag se leefwêreld. Daar word vervolgens aangevoer dat Leroux se werk bestand is teen die onbruik waarin tydgebonde *littérature engagée* dikwels verval. Veral *Sewe dae by die Silbersteins*, en die nuwe vertaling wat hier aangebied word, bied 'n satiriese beskouing van subjektiwiteit onder apartheid-kapitalisme wat strook met huidige voorstellings van apartheid as metafoer vir die globale kapitalisme.

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# PART ONE

## A NOTE ON THE TEXT

This thesis comprises two components: a dissertation and a literary translation. As the project constitutes a conversation between two languages and two literary traditions, namely English and Afrikaans, its reader is presumed to possess sufficient literary resources to follow the conversation. Consequently numerous instances of citations from Afrikaans and, to a lesser extent, Dutch writers have not been translated. The translation component, for its part, contains many italicised words from languages other than Afrikaans; common Afrikaans words such as “voorkamer”, “stoep” and “braai” have been deemed sufficiently naturalised not to require italicisation (a glossary has been added for the convenience of non-bilingual readers).



## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the first part of this dissertation – which is followed in Part Two by my new translation of Etienne Leroux's *Sewe Dae by die Silbersteins* (henceforth *SD*) – is to analyse the role played by translation and other forms of rewriting in the reception in English of the work of the Afrikaans novelist Etienne Leroux. Based on the current researcher's new translation of Leroux's seminal work, the dissertation provides a case study in how the mutually enlightening practices of translation and criticism can be put to work to yield fresh insight into what a neglected classic of South African literature has yet to offer a contemporary South African readership.

Kannemeyer classes Leroux (1922-1989) and J.M. Coetzee together as two of South Africa's most prominent novelists (*J.M. Coetzee* 23). Brink considers *Magersfontein, O Magersfontein!* to be not only the pinnacle of Leroux's work, but also a brilliant novel in its own right that would be esteemed as a milestone in any literature (5). Leroux's standing in the Afrikaans literary canon is assured, both as an influential member of the *Sestigters*, the loose affiliation of writers who collectively constituted Afrikaans literature's "great leap forward" into (post-)modernity, and as a two-times recipient of the Herzog Prize, the highest honour bestowed upon Afrikaans writers. Further afield, Leroux was the first Afrikaans author to be published to national and international acclaim in English translation, his work having been championed by Graham Greene, Paul Theroux and Stephen Gray, among others. Yet although at the time of writing Leroux's collected works remain available in Afrikaans, the English translations of his work have long been out of print. Discussion of Leroux in English literary historiography centres largely on the political controversy around *Sewe Dae by die Silbersteins* and *Magersfontein, O Magersfontein!* Their literary merit, whether in Afrikaans or in English translation, has rarely been dealt with seriously in English critical literature, and certainly not within the last two decades. That this constitutes a serious omission amounting to severe critical neglect is what the present

study sets out to demonstrate and, it is hoped, remedy in a small way.

The first chapter assesses Leroux's reputation in English literary discourse as produced by various acts of rewriting, especially translation and criticism, over the course of his literary career. Lefevere's theory of rewriting provides a critical framework for an account of Leroux's fortunes within the English literary and literary patronage systems. In particular, the ideological concerns underpinning the literary manipulation of Leroux by prominent English critics are brought to light and critiqued. A re-evaluation of Leroux's status as literary innovator is yielded as a by-product of this process.

The second chapter consists of a case study with regard to my own retranslation of *Sewe Dae by die Silbersteins*, unquestionably Leroux's most famous novel (so much so that it is where much English criticism of Leroux begins and ends) and consequently the logical point of departure for a re-evaluation of his work. Key textual strategies employed by Leroux are identified; select passages from *Seven Days at the Silbersteins* (1964), the English translation by Charles Eglington, are read against these strategies; and the ensuing conclusions are brought to bear on justifying the technique of the new translation, entitled *Seven Days with the Silbersteins*, informed by the fruits of Leroux scholarship.

The dissertation concludes with a glance at the possibilities for interpretation that this text offers in the context of a post-apartheid, post-modern South Africa embedded in the emergence of what Sardar has called "post-normal times ... characterised by uncertainty, rapid change, realignment of power, upheaval and chaotic behaviour ... an in-between period where old orthodoxies are dying, new ones have yet to be born, and very few things seem to make sense" (435).

## CHAPTER ONE

### Rewriting Leroux

In an essay on the crisis of subjectivity in the novels of Etienne Leroux, Malan draws a parallel between the reception and the publication history of Byron's *Don Juan*. In Byron's case, the publisher's efforts to avoid controversy by publishing the first part of the work anonymously and without publication details endowed the poem with a life of its own: other publishers and the press appropriated, abridged and repurposed the text to represent *Don Juan* as part of the current of anti-clerical literature, the yellow press and the sensational weekly press. Similarly, the reception of Leroux's novels in South Africa yielded "die vreemdste nuwe tekste" ("Die krisis van die subjek" 56).

According to Malan, Leroux unquestionably laid bare the ideology underpinning Afrikanerdom, unmasking "die ideologie agter en in die Afrikaner se sosiopolitieke, religieuse en moreel-filosofiese diskoerse tot in sy wese". In reaction, ecclesiastical, political and cultural power structures were deployed to expel the most dangerous novels (*SD* and *Magersfontein*, *O Magersfontein!*) from the system as foreign bodies. Consequently, *SD* and *Magersfontein* suffered a similar fate to *Don Juan*: they were rewritten, "voorgestel of 'her-skryf' as volksvreemde, godslasterlike, pornografiese en soortgelyke 'aanstootlike' geskrifte". Leroux reportedly could scarcely recognise his own texts as they were rewritten in the form of articles, reports, letters to the press, censorship findings, and so on ("Die krisis van die subjek " 56-7).

As Leroux commented: "The writer tried to create his own environment; it is transformed by the reading public and the Press; and in that mutilated world his image as a writer resides. One senses a very real danger here: to what extent is a writer susceptible to those mundane influences?" (*Tussengebied* 54).

Malan further likens these rewritings and the responses to them by Leroux's (chiefly academic) supporters to a "teologiese tenniswedstryd", a dialectical struggle in response to "die ernstige aanstoot op godsdienstige en sedelike gebied", and represents Leroux as an apologist of subjectivity, "die kerk se grootste vyand in ons tyd", one who threatened to un-

dermine any logocentric authority over the experiencing subject (57).

Thus in describing certain rewritings of Leroux, Malan not only rewrites the re-writers, then, by inserting Leroux into the poststructuralist discourse prevalent in the 1980s, but also rewrites Leroux – providing a fine application of Lefevere's theory of rewriting:

All rewritings, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and in its positive aspect can help in the evolution of a literature and a society. Rewritings can introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices and the history of translation is the history also of literary innovation, of the shaping power of one culture upon another. But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain, and in an age of ever increasing manipulation of all kinds, the study of the manipulation processes of literature as exemplified by translation can help us towards a greater awareness of the world in which we live. (vii)

Thus for Lefevere “the acceptance or rejection, canonization or non-canonization of literary works” results from a process “dominated not by vague, but by very concrete factors ... such as power, ideology, institution and manipulation” among which “rewriting in all its forms occupies a dominant position” as “the motor force behind literary evolution” (2).

Translators, who “do not write literature, but rewrite it,” are “responsible for the general reception and survival of works of literature among ... the great majority of readers in our global culture ... to at least the same, if not to a greater extent than the writers themselves” (1).

Within the general system of culture, Lefevere continues, “literature itself can be viewed ... as a complex social *system* of actions because it has a certain structure, an in-out differentiation, is accepted by society and fulfils functions which no other system in this society can fulfil” (11-12). Within the literary system, writers and rewriters “can choose to adapt ... or ... oppose the system, to try to operate outside its constraints; for instance by reading ... in ways other than the received ways, by writing ... in ways that differ from those prescribed or deemed acceptable at a particular time in a particular place, or by rewriting works of literature [such] that they do not fit in with the dominant poetics or ideology of a given time and place” (13).

Cultural logic is subject to “a double control factor” intended to align the literary sys-

tem “with the other subsystems society consists of”. The first control factor falls “squarely within the literary system” and is exercised by “professionals such as critics, reviewers, teachers, translators ... possessing a monopoly of competence”, who “occasionally repress certain works of literature ... opposed to the dominant concept of what literature should (be allowed to) be” (the dominant poetics) “and of what society should (be allowed to) be” (the dominant ideology) (14).

The second control factor is “patronage,” namely the power to “further or hinder the reading, writing and rewriting of literature,” as exercised by “persons, groups of persons, a religious body, a political party, a social class, a royal court, publishers, and ... the media”. The systems that patrons have at their disposal to regulate “the distribution of literature” include “academies, censorship bureaus, critical journals, and ... the educational establishment” (15).

Lefevere lists three elements of patronage: ideology, which constrains “the choice and development of both form and subject matter” (here the patronage and literary systems overlap); economics, which determines whether “writers and rewriters are able to make a living”; and status, in the sense that “acceptance of patronage implies integration into a certain support group and its lifestyle” (16). (To accept a literary prize, for example, is to accept the status bestowed by a particular patronage system.)

Literary patronage can also be “either differentiated or undifferentiated in nature.” Under undifferentiated patronage, ideological, economic and status components “are all dispensed by one and the same patron” (absolute monarch, totalitarian state), while under differentiated patronage, “economic success is relatively independent of ideological factors, and does not necessarily bring status with it, at least not in the eyes of the self-styled literary elite”. However, “present-day developments in the literary system as it exists in Europe and the Americas show that undifferentiated patronage need not be based mainly on ideology ... The economic motive, the profit motive, may well lead to the re-establishment of a system with a relatively undifferentiated patronage, as attested by ... the business model of the publishing industry” (17).

As an Afrikaans writer, Leroux was always subject in the first instance to the logic of

Afrikaans culture, and in turn to the double control factor of the Afrikaans literary system and literary patronage system. Writing material which was deemed to be poetically and ideologically unacceptable, Leroux struggled to publish against the grain of the Afrikaans literary patronage system, which was defined at the time by the interests of state, church and *volk*. It was a system to which commercial publishers and academics long remained subservient and can justifiably be described as undifferentiated. Objections to his divergence from official ideology and poetics kept Leroux marginalised for years; publishers recognised his talent but rejected his work as contrary to public taste and morals. As one publisher told him, “Jy het talent, skryf liewerster wat die mense wil hê. Dan kan jy vir jou 'n Chev-motor koop” (qtd. in Kannemeyer, *Leroux* 216). When, after abandoning two unpublished novels, he did at last see *Die Eerste Lewe van Colet* (1955) to print, Leroux had to stand surety for sales of 1 000 copies in a three-month period, at a cost of 260 pounds sterling (*Leroux* 219). From an economic standpoint, Leroux was effectively his own patron, subsidising his literary pursuits through farming on Koffiefontein, the Le Roux family farm. Eventually, the status and controversy that came with the award of the 1964 Herzog Prize for *SD* spread Leroux's name throughout South Africa and beyond, to the extent that he became the first Afrikaans novelist to acquire an international reputation. This success was entirely dependent on his fiction appearing in translation.

### *Ascent and Decline: Leroux's Literary Fortunes in English Translation*

As Kannemeyer relates, in 1964 the Johannesburg bookshop proprietor Philip Stein, seeking to boost the reputation of the Central News Agency (CNA) and aware that the *Sestigers* were becoming household names, decided to publish some of their titles in English translation. As part of this project, the South African English poet, journalist, translator and critic Charles Eglington was commissioned to render *SD* and its sequel, *Een vir Azazel*, into English (*Leroux* 426). Leroux's work thus became subject to a different cultural logic controlled by a different literary and literary patronage system. These differences influenced the reception of his work in ways entirely different from its reception in Afrikaans.

Leroux fully appreciated the benefits that translation could confer. When the CNA

launched Eglington's translation, *Seven Days at the Silbersteins* (henceforward *SDA*), Leroux commented:

To be self-sufficient and outside the main stream of writing can only be to the detriment of the particular language concerned. Although deeply conscious of and influenced by one's literary heritage, one should keep closely in touch with other writing the way they do in a closely integrated continent like Europe. The vision of a writer, if it is really true and universal, is too important to be limited only to those who have access to the original language. But, more than that, it is important to see his work in a larger perspective. (qtd. in Kannemeyer, *Leroux* 428)

Cornwell underscores the point: "English is the only world language spoken extensively in South Africa – and also the only South African language spoken extensively outside of the country ... it is only through translation into English that works in ... isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sesotho, Setswana, and even Afrikaans become accessible to a general readership" (4).

To this may be added Grossman's insight that "one of the double-edged canards about the Nobel Prize is that no writer who has not been translated into English can hope even to be considered for the prize in literature, because English is the one language all the judges can read" (15).

The initial reception of *SDA* in the English press reflected the different interests of the new patronage system. One Peter Blandish accused Leroux of anti-Semitism; Israel Pinshaw found it a novel of "vague and banal" ideas; Mary Webster found that it "eludes the usual definitions applied to fiction"; academic Peter Titlestad found that its satire was directed equally at right-wingers, liberals, the wealthy English, intellectuals, artists and farmers, so constituting "an attack ... on 'our modern way of life'", which was not limited to "'our South African way of life', whatever that may mean," and hailed Leroux as "master of a particular grimly, grotesquely comic satiric medium" (qtd. in Kannemeyer, *Leroux* 428-429).

Despite relatively favourable publicity, *SDA* did not sell well; the CNA decided not to proceed with *Azazel*. Since Eglington had already begun the task of translation, Leroux thought it best to market his translated works overseas. In 1966 Leroux's South African publisher Koos Human asked the New York literary agent Jeanette Zimmermann to find an

American publisher for *SDA*; she sold the rights to Houghton Mifflin in Boston, and Leroux's international career was well and truly under way. *SDA* appeared in November 1967, attracting enthusiastic praise from the publisher's New York editor, who extolled "the novel's boldness and virtuosity, its many-faceted brilliance"; the publisher's press release quoted numerous enthusiastic reviews ("fabulously interesting"; "beautifully written – like a jewel with many facets"; "puzzling and intriguing ... brilliant tour de force"; "on every page there are such felicities that reading becomes a treasure hunt"); on the cover Stuart Cloete declared it "a masterpiece". The highest praise, though, came from Graham Greene, who in August 1967 sent Leroux a note expressing his "excited admiration" and provided the publisher with the following quote: "A work of art which bridges the gap between *Le Grand Meaulnes* and *Last Year at Marienbad* with a humour all its own" (qtd. in Kannemeyer, *Leroux* 436). *Azazel* was subsequently translated as *One for the Devil* (1968), with *Die Derde Oog* subsequently appearing as *The Third Eye* (1969). *SDA*, *Devil* and *Third Eye* were also published in the UK by W.H. Allen in 1968, 1969 and 1969 respectively. *18/44*, the first title of Leroux's *Isis* trilogy, was published by Houghton Mifflin in 1972; in the same year came what is generally considered Leroux's supreme achievement as regards international exposure: the single-volume publication of the Welgevonden trilogy as *To a Dubious Salvation*, in Penguin Modern Classics – "die enigste Afrikaanse skrywer wat so vereer is" (Kannemeyer, *Leroux* 471).

Thus in 1973 Gray could confidently state of Etienne Leroux that "his controversial work has reached a wider audience than that of any other Afrikaans author" (197). From then on, however, things took a sharp turn for the worse; now the undifferentiated patronage system of English literary commerce to which Leroux was subject repudiated him. As Kannemeyer relates, the Houghton Mifflin edition of *18/44* sold only 800 copies of an initial print run of 3500. Zimmermann proved to be feckless, destroying through greed and arrogance the real possibility of *SDA* being filmed by the likes of Peter Brooke or Alan Resnais. More damagingly, Zimmermann neglected to pursue enquiries from Finnish, Swedish, French and Norwegian publishers. Then Houghton Mifflin decided not to publish any further instalments of the *Isis* trilogy. Editor Joyce Hartman had already found the imagery of



18/44 “repetitive and laboured”;<sup>1</sup> Greene's keen endorsement of *Isis* in translation, which he read in manuscript, came to nothing. Consequently, Gray's translation of *Na'va*, the final title of the *Isis* trilogy, was not even considered for publication (*Leroux* 629).

Kannemeyer notes that Koos Human's defence against Hartman's charge, in connexion with *Na'va*, that “Leroux's references, in each succeeding work, grow more arcane and more impenetrable”, was that a South African reading the book in Afrikaans would probably grasp many references and innuendoes that would elude a foreign reader. He added that *Na'va* contained many references to earlier works unavailable in English and consequently inaccessible to American readers (*Leroux* 543).

Kannemeyer further claims that the manuscript of Gray's *Na'va* translation was irretrievably lost by a literary agent (*Leroux* 629) – a tragedy for scholarship if true<sup>2</sup>. In that novel *Leroux*, as Brink wrote, had set himself the tremendously difficult task of not only completing the *Isis* trilogy, but also writing “'n oorkoepelende roman ... wat 'n sluitsteen sou vorm vir al drie sy trilogiëe tot dusver”; as Elize Botha remarked: “Daarom dwing dit die leser terug na die agt boeke wat hieraan voorafgegaan het, dring dit aan op herontdekking, maar wys dit ook op die eindelose moontlike herformuleringe van stellinge wat in die reeks boeke ingeneem is” (qtd. in Kannemeyer, *Leroux* 517-518). The corresponding demands on the translator would have been immense; a successful translation, invaluable. Unfortunately, *Leroux's* achievement in completing his nine-novel cycle remains virtually unknown outside the Afrikaans academy: whereas Van Coller, for example, considers this work unique in South African literature, exhibiting both great complexity and surprising unity, to be read as a poly-interpretable whole (13), English-speaking scholars (as well as editors) without Afrikaans cannot but form a truncated impression limited by an undifferentiated patronage system to four titles out of nine, translated, moreover, by three different translators. In practice, *SD* is the only novel in the cycle that is referred to in English critical literature (it is referred to, for example, in chapters by Olivier, Willemse, Viljoen and Green in *The*

<sup>1</sup> Clearly *Leroux's* celebrated “musical” form, with its circulating images, refrains, and motifs drawn from Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Van Coller 10), was not sufficiently evident in translation.

<sup>2</sup> Gray himself casts doubt on Kannemeyer's version of events: “To the best of my knowledge, it is still in the archives of Human & Rousseau” (Letter to the author). Gray also credits his student Louis van Rooyen as co-translator.

*Cambridge History of South African Literature*).

Matters worsened from then on. Even as his stock peaked in Afrikaans literary circles with the publication of *Magersfontein* (banned in 1977 under the Publications Act of 1974; awarded the Herzog Prize in 1979), his international reputation began to erode. Whereas for Tim Huysamen *Magersfontein* was “Leroux se volledigste verwerking en toepassing van mitiese stof tot op datum”, and whereas, according to Brink, Leroux had created “dalk sy heel sinrykste Suid-Afrikaanse 'mite' tot dusver: deur naamlik die stuk Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis self te mitifiseer en dan paradigmas daarop te baseer” (qtd. in Kannemeyer, *Leroux* 579), it attracted zero interest from publishers outside of South Africa: Heinemann, Penguin, and Sidgwick and Jackson all rejected it, deeming the historical matter too foreign to British readers' tastes. Then the South African publisher AD Donker expressed interest in publishing a translation, but although both Human and Leroux were very satisfied with the standard of the translation, the publisher, Donker, for reasons unknown, was not and declined to publish. The manuscript was then handed over to the British firm Hutchinson, which commissioned a new translation from one Ninon Roets (mother tongue: Afrikaans), ultimately publishing *Magersfontein* in 1983.

The English translation of *Magersfontein* proved disastrous. Greene wrote to Leroux on 24 May 1983 that his “amusement and appreciation were damaged by your execrable publisher who must have broken the Guinness Record for misprints”, adding that he found the translation “unsatisfactory”, the translator seemingly unable to distinguish between “its” and “it's” and also using “some very ugly words I can't even find in the thirteen volumes of the *Oxford English Dictionary*”, including oddities such as “logisticions” and “fetishistacely” (qtd. in Kannemeyer, *Leroux* 628-631).

No further translations of Leroux's works appeared in his lifetime. The last to appear to date was the Dutch version of *Magersfontein* (1999).

By the 1980s Leroux's international reputation was in eclipse. Ester remarks that he was no longer “de onomstreden literaire grootmeester, as welke hij ... in 1970 ... werd gepresenteerd.” Ester attributes this to the changing expectations of European readers:

In het beeld, dat Europeanen van de Zuidafrikaanse literatuur hebben, staat de

Europese preoccupatie met raciale conflicten in Zuid-Afrika in het middelpunt. Een Zuidafrikaanse roman, die de Apartheid ignoreert, wordt naar de prullenbak verwezen of ten hoogste als historisch signifikant document erkend. Sinds de jaren zeventig is de informatie over het wel en wee van Zuid-Afrika in de Europese media in zo sterk gedetailleerde vorm geboden, dat daarmee ook *de verwachtingen van het Europese lezerspubliek ten aanzien van fictionsel proza uit Zuid-Afrika grondig zijn veranderd.* (my italics; 103)

The effect of this shift can be gauged by the reviews of the belated Norwegian translation of *SD* in the Norwegian press, as cited by Leroux in “Vervreemding tussen leser en skrywer”:

Leroux gee geen goeie hoop op verbetering nie ... Die enigste hoop is die broeiing van ontevredenheid onder die inboorlinge (*Faedrelandsvennen* – Sept. 1980).

Ek verkies die inboorlinge se eie mites uit dieselfde geografiese streke. Of Nadine Gordimer se wit oproer ... Beeld die boek eintlik die ineenstorting van Suid-Afrika uit? Die verdwyning van die Europese beskawing? Ja seker. Maar so gewikkel in sulke ingewikkelde sluiers dat die kontak met die menslike wegbly. En dan is dit nie maklik om die leser se belangstelling te hou nie' (*Bergens Tidende* – Okt. 1980.)

Kare Stoveland beskou *Sewe Dae* as “'n swerwing in rassistiese heerlikheid.” (150)

Clearly the perception that the novel lacked an unequivocal message of hope, was too technically sophisticated, and failed to express South Africa's collapse and the disappearance of European civilisation, to say nothing of the charge of “rassistiese heerlikheid,” did little to advance Leroux's cause in Norway or Europe as a whole.

By 2000 Leroux had been ousted from his position as top-ranking Afrikaans novelist. Although the *Oxford Guide to Literature in English Translation* does list Leroux among those Afrikaans writers who “in a relatively short time ... joined the ranks of the world's best in all literary genres” and “have won international acclaim through translation” (France 136), it cites Toerien as saying that “of all the Afrikaans authors, André P. Brink is clearly the most renowned” (136) and consequently “the man who put Afrikaans literature on the international literary map” (137).

Although Toerien states, in the 1998 edition of the study cited in the *Oxford Guide*,

that he merely “attempts to list all translated Afrikaans works in the field of literature published through 1997” (vii) without evaluating their quality, he does reveal that Brink has had more texts translated, and into more languages, than any other Afrikaans writer: appearing in Albanian, Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Ndonga, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Vietnamese, and Xhosa. By contrast, Leroux appears only in Dutch, English, French and Norwegian. Quantitatively, it must be conceded that Brink is the “most renowned”.<sup>3</sup>

The *Oxford Guide* gives two reasons for Brink's success. The first is ideological:

[Brink] was one of the most influential Afrikaans writers to emerge during the cultural renewal of the 1960s, an Afrikaans movement not confined to Afrikaans literature but which influenced the whole social fabric of South Africa, challenging many social taboos and prejudices and assailing the literary, moral, religious and political conventions of the Afrikaner. Brink admits<sup>4</sup> that he chose to write in Afrikaans because he believed that by means of his writing he could join the struggle to liberate blacks from oppression by whites, as well as fellow Afrikaners from the constricting ideology of apartheid. (137)

The second has to do with the benefits of translation. As the *Oxford Guide* states:

“[A]lthough the banning in 1975 of his novel *Kennis van die Aand* (*Looking on darkness*, 1973) meant that his voice was silenced in his own country and in his own language, a disaster for any minority writer ... it secured his career as a politically committed novelist and [self-] translator” (137).

In Berner's words, “Brink has been able to proceed as a novelist because he has been his own translator ... Obviously the Afrikaans writer who must depend on foreign publishers to discover his work and finance its translation and publication is less fortunate” (134).

An index of Brink's success in rewriting himself for international consumption is his perennial appearance in both academic and popular literary reference works. *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* (1993) describes him as a “South African novelist” and

<sup>3</sup> Toerien himself judged Leroux's early novel *Hilaria* to be “kop en skouers bo die res van die Afrikaanse prosa van die voorafgaande tien tot twintig jaar” (qtd. in Kannemeyer, *Leroux* 269).

<sup>4</sup> This uncritical acceptance of Brink's “admission” underscores the degree to which he controls his own literary image.

“Afrikaans writer” who “has also written in English” (as opposed to translated himself into English) (Ousby 116); he appears in the *Oxford Good Fiction Guide* (2001) as a representative South African author cross-referenced with – and consequently deemed to have the same standing as – J.M. Coetzee, Alan Paton and Nadine Gordimer.

Why did the banning of *Magersfontein* not have a similarly salutary effect on Leroux's career? Unlike Brink, Leroux lacked control over his literary image and was unable to re-write himself to suit the expectations of his (European) readership. As Lefevere says, “Whether they produce translations, literary histories or their more compact spin-offs, reference works, anthologies, criticism or editions, rewriters adapt, manipulate the originals they work with to some extent, usually to make them fit in with the dominant, or one of the dominant ideological and poetological currents of their time” (8).

Brink even rewrote Leroux to his own advantage. The foreword to the South African prose anthology *A Land Apart* (1985) contains a nimble feat of rewriting, praising Leroux's talent while excluding him from the anthology (denying prospective readers any sample of his work, even though the editors included extracts from the work of other novelists), and paying him the back-handed compliment of citing with approval his apparent turn towards a more “committed” form of writing ideologically closer to Brink's own:

Possibly the most brilliant ironist in Afrikaans fiction is Etienne Leroux (not represented in this collection as no excerpt from a novel can do justice to the flair of his phantasmagoric imagination), and in his recent work he has turned more and more towards the specific ironies of the South African political situation – as opposed to the more universal myths of humanity explored in his earlier work – for inspiration. (Brink and Coetzee 15)<sup>5</sup>

The “recent work” referred to would be *Onse Hymie* (1982), which disappointed the most supportive critics. For Kannemeyer it was an “insinking in Leroux se werk” (qtd. in Ester 112); Rabie dismissed it as “merely parody of Leroux by Leroux” (qtd. in Ester 114). Even Brink's apparent approval, written for English-speaking readers, is tempered by what he

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<sup>5</sup> Brink and Coetzee are cited as joint authors of this text, but since the text itself acknowledges Brink as writing the section on Afrikaans authors, the present quote is attributed to Brink.

wrote for a Dutch publication, calling the novel facile (to the point of childishness!) and predictable: “[H]elaas is na *Magersfontein* de textuur van *Onse Hymie* zo mager, de satire zo gladjies (en vaak zo kinderachtig), de loop der gebeurtenissen zo voorspelbaar ... dat het moet worden geschaard onder Leroux's mislukkingen, niet onder zijn successen” (qtd. in Ester 109).

### *Leroux in the English Academy: the Legend of the Sestigers*

If Leroux's brief spell in the limelight and subsequent obscurity is attributable in large part to the fortunes of the appearance of his work in translation, the image of him that is preserved in the academy is predominantly the work of English-speaking academics.

The English academic image of Leroux suffers from a tendency to conflate his achievement with what may be termed the legend of the *Sestigers*. For instance, although Green recognises Leroux's historical importance for Afrikaans writing, saying that “Etienne Leroux's highly patterned, fantastical *Sewe Dae by die Silbersteins* ... could be considered seminal” for “a broader 'experimental line' in Afrikaans fiction” (792), his focus shifts from the individual writer to the group rather than engaging with any particular work in anything more than general terms:

Leroux would, like the young Brink, associate himself with the *Sestigers* (literally Sixtiesers), the literary movement generally considered to have introduced a spirit of 'renewal' into writing in Afrikaans. The majority of its most productive writers—who also included Breyten Breytenbach, Jan Rabie and Bartho Smit—brought their formative experiences as students and sojourners in France back to a South Africa in which they became increasingly politicised and opposed to the Nationalist establishment. (790)

Brink describes a similarly politicised legend of *Sestig*. After the Second World War:

[A] group of young writers, most of whom had spent shorter or longer periods in Europe, and more specifically in Paris, consciously introduced the then current vogues of experimentalism, existentialism and post-modernism into a literary scene still largely determined by nineteenth-century techniques and by the severely localised expression of themes like drought, locusts and poor-whites. The enthusiasm with which this new wave of writing was received by younger Afrikaans readers soon

added unexpected dimensions to the work of these so-called 'Sestigers' ('Writers of the Sixties'): as a result of the conventions and taboos broken in their work, mainly in the fields of religion, morality, sex and narrative tradition, political implications were attached to what had started as a purely cultural, literary movement. The Afrikaner establishment, threatened by the new sophistication in indigenous writing, branded as traitors writers like Chris Barnard, Breyten Breytenbach, Andre Brink, Abraham de Vries, Etienne Leroux, Jan Rabie, Adam Small and Bartho Smit, and tried to ostracize them from their community: books were burned publicly, authors were denounced from the pulpit and in parliament, cultural organizations tried to boycott productions of plays, pressure was exerted on printers and publishers not to publish certain books. (Brink and Coetzee, *A Land Apart* 9-10)

Olivier, in turn, emphasises the exotic element of the legend: "The arrival of the Sestigers initially marked a new phase of cosmopolitanism and inspiration derived from Europe and elsewhere: Surrealist and Zen influences in Breyten Breytenbach (1939-); explorations of existentialist philosophy and the Theatre of the Absurd in Andre P. Brink, parables of Jungian individuation in Etienne Leroux" (317).

Thus the Sestigers are type-cast as a group of literary Young Turks who return from Paris and set about turning the house of Afrikaans literature upside-down with their fashionable but second-hand literary ideas: "uitbegroei in Frankryk met Sartre as vader en 'n straatvrou as moeder", in the words of one Afrikaans critic (qtd. in Kannemeyer, *Leroux* 294). As Chapman summarises this: "In Afrikaans literature, the parochial naturalism and realism of the *plaasroman* gave way, spectacularly, to an imitative Euro-modernism among a new generation of writers many of whom had been influenced by sojourns in France" (248-249).

As for Leroux, the received idea persists that it was a meeting with Jan Rabie in Paris in 1954 that effectively galvanised his writing career. Cope says that Rabie "was able to distance himself from the hazy image of Afrikaner blood and soil, to preserve his identity and enter the struggle for creative individualism" and consequently "had a distinct influence on the younger fiction writers who were beginning to publish in the late 'fifties and early 'sixties" (*The Adversary Within* 109). Cope then constructs the image of Leroux as callow would-be writer galvanised into productivity by exposure to Afrikaans expatriates:

His initial efforts at writing were unsuccessful and he could not find a publisher for his work. The next step was a prolonged trip abroad in the early 1950s during which he met Jan Rabie and Bartho Smit in Paris. The naïve young would-be writer from the Free State veld was impressed by the life-style and outlook of his fellow Afrikaners in 'Bohemia'. On his return he wrote and published three novels in quick succession. [...] Back from Paris he was caught up in the Sestiger moment 'and that was the beginning', as he says, condensing nearly a decade into a single sentence. (111)

This account, apparently based on a letter Cope had from Leroux, seems in good faith but jars with the fact that Leroux's meeting with Rabie occurred after *Colet* had been accepted for publication. It is therefore to the genesis of *Colet* that we must turn to discover the truth of the matter.

Kannemeyer relates that as early as 1950 Leroux met someone who was to influence most profoundly his development as a writer. Jan Greshoff was a Dutch expatriate writer with an established reputation in the Netherlands and Flanders. As editor of literary journals such as *Den Gulden Winckel* and *Groot Nederland*, Greshoff encouraged young writers and gave them the opportunity to publish their work, his friendship with numerous publishers enabling him to recommend manuscripts for publication. Characterised by a contemporary as "de spitste geest en de meest scherpe pen uit die tijd," Greshoff was also a highly individual critic, satirist, polemicist and poet firmly opposed to "alle regimenterings van die gees," especially the stupidity and pretentiousness of the bourgeoisie (*Leroux* 162-164).

It was Greshoff who persuaded the conservative editorial board of *Standpunte* to take on Leroux's short story "Kaartjie vir oortreding." For a writer hitherto unpublished except in school and university magazines, this constituted an important breakthrough; Leroux promptly asked Greshoff to be his literary mentor: "Ek is bevrees dat ek in die verlede nog altyd in verset gekom het teen ander leermeesters omdat iets binne-in myself my oortuig het dat hulle my té veel na 'n patroon wou vorm" (qtd. in Kannemeyer, *Leroux* 165-166).

As Kannemeyer describes in some detail, Greshoff duly mentored Leroux through numerous unpublished short stories and two unpublished novels, *Mosaik* (rejected for publication on moral grounds) and *Die Marionettedans*. Leroux had therefore invested considerable time and energy on technical development by the time *Colet* appeared in 1955, as reflec-



ted in the appreciative comments of the few critics who reviewed it. In the Netherlands Dubois called it the first Afrikaans novel that was both “helemaal Afrikaans, [en] van intellectuele inzet en niveau helemaal 'europees'”; Greshoff praised Leroux's ability to free himself from the taboos and prejudices that had hindered the psychological novel hitherto; for Rob Antonissen, the “orakel van Grahamstad”, *Colet* was no masterpiece but constituted a breakthrough for the Afrikaans novel, demonstrating unprecedented competence in the handling of sexual content as well as “iets meesterliks” in the ending, with its accelerated tempo and stream-of-consciousness technique (“Die bewussynstroom in *Colet* word 'n draaikolk, wat alle beelde opslurp in 'n vormlose leegte.”) For Antonissen, it was the only novel of 1955 that gave reason for “'n sekere hoop” for the future of the form in Afrikaans (qtd. in Kannemeyer, *Leroux* 167-170).

In many respects, then, in terms of technique and taboo, the iconoclasm attributed to the *Sestigers* had already been accomplished by Leroux during the 1950s, in his unpublished novels, in *Colet*, and in its sequels: *Hilaria* (1957), with its adoption of the “mythic method”, and *Die Mugu* (1959), described by Antonissen as “die eerste deugtig treffende beeld van 'n Westerse, ook Suid-Afrikaanse, maatskappy wat deur verlies van sy sin vir 'n 'lewende mite' tot mensdomsmassa ontmenslik is” (qtd. in Kannemeyer, *Leroux* 281).

Unfortunately, these novels made little impact (untranslated, they scarcely registered with English critics at all). As Elize Botha points out, it took the polemics around *SD* and the Herzog Prize in the next decade for Afrikaans critics to start paying serious attention to Leroux (“Etienne Leroux” 587).

Cope's rewriting of Leroux's career served as a basis for Chapman, described as a “foremost English academic” (Kruger 2012), to pillory the *Sestigers* and Leroux in particular. Picking up on the legend of the *Sestigers*, Chapman states:

In the work of Jan Rabie, Andre P. Brink, Breyten Breytenbach, Etienne Leroux, Chris Barnard and Bartho Smit, to name the most prominent *Sestigers*, the existentialism of Camus and Beckett, in fictionalised labyrinthine forms, either loses itself in its own cleverness or jerks its concerns about good, evil, sex, anxiety and despair into mocking rebellions by renegade sons against the dour fathers of Afrikanerdom. Leroux's *Setwe Dae by die Silbersteins*, translated into English as *Seven Days at the*

*Silbersteins* (1962), for example, transforms the Afrikaans farm of blood and soil<sup>6</sup> into a modern wine estate where nouveau riche materialism has run rampant in orgies of partying and in pseudo—or is it meant to be serious?—patter about sin, conversion and destiny. (249)

The description does not specify whether *SD* “loses itself in its own cleverness”, “jerks about its concerns” or both, but it is clearly not being read in relation to *Colet*, *Hilaria* and *Die Mugu*, all three of which were decidedly urban fictions.

Chapman then singles Leroux out for special attention:

Like the plays of Bartho Smit, Leroux’s novels throw out provocative but largely unanalysable hints of religious—and even more elusively—political rebellion, not revolution. This is the stuff on which lecture-room interpretation thrives and students are expected, earnestly, to pick away at allusions and guesses, and to find ultimate sanction in comments by the authors such as: life is not political, it is absurd; my theme is theological terror, fear in its abstract manifestation. (249)

In this passage statements made by Leroux on a particular occasion are paraphrased, out of context, and represented as his overall intent. In fact, the reference to theological terror and abstract fear stems from “Tegnieke, temas en toekomsplanne”, a speech Leroux gave at the Sestiger Symposium at the University of Cape Town in February 1973. Subsequently collected in Jim Polley’s *Die Sestigters* (1973), the speech is something of an *ars poetica*, dealing at length with Leroux’s views on the writer’s task. Chapman’s reduction evidently relies on Cope’s translation of the same speech. A comparison of Cope’s translation with Leroux’s full published statement, in turn, shows that Cope’s rendering is somewhat misleading to begin with. Perhaps that it is because it is invoked at a particular point in Cope’s interpretation of *SDA* to account for what Cope sees as the “paranoid fear” expressed in the passage dealing with Jock’s reaction to the uprising in the township (*The Adversary Within* 117).

Cope’s translation reads as follows (note the absence of reference to “theological terror”: Chapman conflates Cope’s critical judgement – “*Seven Days* could also be regarded in the category of ‘theological terror’, to use James Baldwin’s expression” – with Cope’s render-

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<sup>6</sup> Note how Chapman adapts Cope’s previously cited “blood and soil” to his own discourse.

ing of Leroux):

I try to see humanity outside this restrictive context; I try to keep my novels free of politics in a narrow as well as a broad sense; even, if possible, free of literary politics ... The characters in my books are maybe the horsemen of the apocalypse on the merry-go-round gyrating with anonymous deathmasks through my thoughts. So far as theme goes, I only ask to be left alone. I know it sounds blatant and provocative, but as a writer I am not interested in the weal and woe of the individual or of a particular group. I have a collective fear for human life with the consequence that all the characters in my books have become two-dimensional. So in terms of theme I am confined to my own special vision ... Most novelists have only one book and one theme. My theme is fear and the exorcism of fear, and fear in its abstract manifestation is the most dire that there is. (117)

Cope ascribes the “failure to resolve (exorcise)” the “fear or persecutory anxiety” he sees in this passage to “repressed guilt”, resulting in the work taking “the form of a withdrawal into fantasy, a personal world from which he can send out his volleys of irony, rebellion, terror and mockery”. Cope then proceeds to interpret Welgevonden in terms of “the great family estate founded by the writer's father”. In point of fact, many elements of Welgevonden are modelled, in exaggerated form, on Leroux's farm Ja-Nee, from the twin pillars at the entrance gate to the chamber of isolation itself (modelled on the cheese factory: see Wium van Zyl's photograph in Kannemeyer, *Leroux*, between pages 384 and 385). It is also worth mentioning in this connection Cope's nostalgia (expressed at the Sestiger Symposium) for the “whole artist” of the Renaissance: “When I emphasize the shortcomings in theoretical work among our writers I guess I am calling for a kind of Renaissance ideal of the universal man” (“How the Sestigers came unstuck” 151). This attitude is diametrically opposed to Leroux's vision of the individual “wat stuksgewys met ons nuwe insig verdwyn” (SD 8). A.J. Coetzee provides a gloss:

One of Leroux's fundamental theses is that modern man has lost his myths: this is why his characters are always reminded – often by a *meturgeman* or “guide of dreams” – of the importance of recognising these myths. In ... *Sewe dae by die Silbersteins* ... he makes use of Jung's concept of the individuation process to depict man's initiation into society (and, ironically, his loss of individuality). By implication, this stands for the South African's initiation into his country. (229)

Cope's use of Leroux's speech to comment on the passage referred to does not analyse the function of the imagery it contains, but it rather suggests that he did not interrogate the significance of the juxtaposition of the post-uprising imagery with Jock's confession ("bieg") in the isolation chamber ("kamer van afsondering"), even though it furnishes precisely a striking example of isolated individual anguish in the face of depersonalising mass events.

Leroux's full statement on his own textual politics is as follows (italics indicate sentences cut by Cope):

*My tema word nie beperk in terme van politiek-sosiale probleme nie. Ek probeer die mens sien buite hierdie bepalende verband; in 'n sekere sin probeer ek die roman vry maak van die politiek – politiek in 'n eng sowel as in 'n breë sin; selfs, indien moontlik, ook vry van die politiek van die letterkunde. Die politieke neiging is altyd links (op watter gebied ook al), met die remskoen van konserwatiewe reaksie sodat die mallemeule nie te vinnig draai nie. Ek probeer hierdie mallemeule op my eie manier hanteer. Die karakters in my boeke is miskien die apokaliptiese ruiters op die mallemeule wat met anonieme doodsgesigte rondomtalie deur my gedagtes jaag. Al wat ek vra, is om in terme van tema met rus gelaat te word. Ek weet dit klink blatant en uitdagend, maar ek as skrywer is nie geïnteresseerd in die wel en wee van die enkeling, of die besondere groep nie. Daar is in my 'n kollektiewe vrees vir menswees met die gevolg dat al my karakters in my boeke tweedimensioneel geword het. Tematies gesproke is ek dus beperk tot my besondere visie. Ek kan dit nie bekostig om anders te skryf nie. Meeste romanskrywers het net een boek en een tema. My tema is vrees, en die beswering van vrees, en vrees in sy abstrakte gedaante is die grootste vrees wat daar is. ("Tegnieke, temas en toekomsplanne" 133)*

Rendering "probeer ek *die roman* vry maak van die politiek" as "I try to keep *my novels* free of politics" instead of "I am trying to liberate *the novel* from politics" defuses the political charge of Leroux's speech, turning his vindication of the writer's creative sovereignty into a *noli me tangere* detachment. By entirely omitting the sentences from "Die politieke neiging ... hanteer," Cope violates Leroux's image of politics as a carousel propelled toward the left but slowed by conservative reaction – a carousel that he wishes to handle in his own way; the image of the riders of the apocalypse is uncoupled from the preceding, political image, fos-

tering the perception of Leroux as an ivory-tower escapist rather than a writer committed to exorcising his collective fear for humanity in the only way he can, both in terms of subject matter and technique (the two-dimensionality of his characters refers obliquely to the emblematic structure of his novels). Crucially, Cope omits the final italicised sentence, which could be rendered: "I cannot afford to write in any other way."

Further examination of Leroux's practice as writer makes it abundantly clear that he was simply incapable of writing the kind of committed, overtly anti-apartheid literature that Chapman demands of South African writers. The next few paragraphs paraphrase Leroux's personal account of his methodology, as distilled by Kannemeyer.

First, over a period of usually a year, Leroux would do research and make copious notes. Before commencing the writing process, the novelist must wrestle with his medium so that his unformed thoughts could crystallise. Then he must determine whether anything new was being written; as Leroux said, "die geskrewe woord duld geen herhaling nie".

Realism in fiction held no interest for Leroux. Instead of traditional character formation and a microscopically detailed image of society and nature, he preferred to represent human beings with all their emotions in a chaotic process of thinking and feeling. Often he made his characters into caricatures used only to express a play of ideas: through their grotesque or absurd appearance and actions, the demonic aspect of life was exorcised; the task of interpretation was left up to the reader. His characters were like actors on a stage, his dialogue not intended to be true to life. He endeavoured to convey his perceptions and beliefs intuitively rather than rationally: had he wished to convey a straightforward or unambiguous message, he would have written essays or articles.

What he did endeavour to convey was the myth of the twentieth century: in a world devoid of gods, in which opinion was biased against the irrational, people had suddenly and abruptly been severed from their primeval roots and were now in the grip of a sort of demonic power existing in the collective unconscious, from which new myths and symbols were being created. Citing a letter in which his novels were likened to Rorschach tests where readers could read as they pleased, Leroux said that he liked to leave the reader a cer-

tain amount of leeway and expressly did not wish to convey a particular philosophy.

Once his research had been completed, the writing proper began. In what is described as being almost an alchemical process, Leroux began by writing freely, without paying much attention to language usage, allowing himself to be guided by the rhythm of the language and not hesitating to write “incorrectly” if the “correct” word would have upset the rhythm. The novel crystallised autonomously and dynamically, often sending the writer in a completely unsuspected direction. Then came the process of rewriting and cutting, still under the guidance of the rhythm, until the novel took on its final shape (Kannemeyer, *Leroux* 300-303).

Cornwell's claim that “the label “South African has for long not only designated a national identity, but has also implicitly privileged writing which is in some important sense *about* South Africa, about “the South African experience” (7), is borne out by Chapman's evaluation of *Sestiger* writing:

Both Leroux and Smit ... remained members of the Nationalist establishment: solid citizens, but naughty boys, and one is reminded that prime minister Vorster's rebuke to Andre Brink's flaunting of religion and sex was to tell the author to have his hair cut! Hailed as prophets, Leroux and Smit are also apes of God. Individual compassions are sublimated to the metaphysical Idea; black people, if they appear at all, are emblems of chaos and, as with earlier Afrikaans writers, the question of the Afrikaner's relation to any wider South African community is never posed. (249)

The statement about the fictional treatment of black people echoes that of an English reviewer who said that while Leroux's technique was outstanding among African novelists at the time, his subject matter left much to be desired because “there is never a nigger in sight” (qtd. in Leroux, “Tegnieke, temas en toekomsplanne” 133). To this, two objections may be raised. First, at the time Chapman was writing, the accusation that black people were merely tokens of chaos can be rebutted with reference to the character Gert Garries (who subsequently reappeared in *Onse Hymie*). Here is A.J. Coetzee's critical summation of *Magersfontein*:

Leroux reached the peak of his creative power in *Magersfontein*, *O Magersfontein!*

(1976). In this near-historical, near-realistic novel, mythological and archetypal symbolism is united with the topically and typically South African in a weird and funny, satiric and frightening re-interpretation of the historic battle of Magersfontein (11<sup>th</sup> December, 1899) when the Boers defeated the highly organised British army; this outcome is symbolic of the victory of the unorthodox over the well-ordered, of the irrational over the rational, of the unconscious over the conscious. But the record of the battle is in fact a play within the play, for the story is actually about a film team making a movie about Magersfontein. Heavy rains eventually wreck the climactic battle scene—yet another symbol of the forces of the unconscious making havoc of conscious design. The recreation of the Afrikaner's history thus turns into disaster, implying that his true history has been apocalyptic and meaningless. The only indestructible symbol in the novel is the Coloured man Gert Garries whose personality fuses African and European elements so that he may appear as a prophetic type of future South African identity. (“Afrikaans” 228-229)

Second, it may be inferred from the description of black people in Leroux as mere “emblems of chaos” that the imputation of chaos is necessarily and simply pejorative. In this respect Chapman is equally uncomprehending of chaos as the censorship apparatus of the state. As Leroux describes it, the state and its legislators do not understand the deeper nature of chaos: they prescribe the rules for order, treat chaos symptomatically (“smeer die simptome van chaos toe”), and allow chaos to develop beneath the surface until it eventually erupts. The state does not acknowledge the value of writers: *chaos has already erupted within them*;<sup>7</sup> their internal discipline allows them to give significant form to the nature of chaos in their creative work—a form that can be named and consequently exorcised (“Vervreemding” 75-76).

Leroux then expands the concept of Jungian individuation to “die hele avontuur van die Derde Wêreld (veral Afrika),” describing a scene of world-wide transformation in which “Swart Afrika is die agtergrond waarteen [dit] hom afspeel” (77). For that reason the writer must eschew “die blote weergawe van oppervlakkige gegewe en die simptome van geweld en ongeregtheid”. Leroux argues further that “Moeder Afrika sal haar swartheid moet ver-

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<sup>7</sup> It seems Leroux shared a similar outlook to that of Paul Klee during the First World War: “He seemed little affected by the war. In 1915 he wrote in his diary, ‘I have long had this war in me. That is why, inwardly, it is none of my concern.’ Many writers on Klee have assumed that this meant that Klee was little moved by world events ... yet ... Klee had written ... that he was ‘generally revolutionary’” (Partsch 31).

werk en 'n betekenis aan haar argetipes gee. [...] Militante skrywers sal ook besef dat vurige sosio-politieke protes op die gebied van die letterkunde slegs 'n bepaalde en tydelike doel dien" (78). It is necessary to find "n lewende mite vir Afrika" – but true myth is "universeel, hibried, en dus allesinsluitend"; the urgency of this task is not confined to Africa but applies to the whole world: "Ons sal moet bewys dat 'never the twain shall meet' vals is" (78).

The success of Leroux's mythopoeic endeavour to bridge the local and the universal was successful is a matter for debate, but Chapman's imputation of apolitical aloofness clearly fails to consider Leroux's published views on the relation between politics and writing.

Dismissive of the *Sestigers* from a political standpoint, Chapman is equally scathing about their achievements in terms of literary technique:

In looking back at the *Sestigers*, Jack Cope concluded that there was no coherent theory to the practice. With an over-emphasis on technique that was usually conspicuous in its derivativeness and little engagement with the issues of race and politics, a sense of South African reality did not arise from the experience of the writing. This is a fair assessment, and the shots aimed at Calvinist authority tend to be haphazard. In retrospect, it is the less experimental Jan Rabie who retains our interest as someone whose life commitments pushed the problem of conscience into the craft of the form. (149)

Although the referent of "our" is not specified, Chapman's insistence on a "sense of South African reality" is similar in kind to Nadine Gordimer's rejection of Leroux's work. Even though in 1976 Gordimer considered Leroux the "outstanding prose writer" among the *Sestigers* "and indeed the most sweeping imaginative power in South African literature as a whole", she opined as follows:

If a writer is a part of the creative consciousness of the society in which he lives, is it not a form of betrayal ... to choose to turn away from the messy confrontation of man with man, and address himself to God? In fact, reading [the trilogy], you sometimes have the feeling that Etienne Leroux is God ... amusing himself by recording all those absurd and dirtily flamboyant little battles and copulations way down on earth. (qtd. in Berner 136)

For Berner, Gordimer clearly does not value Leroux's fantastic mode and assumes that



“pending the coming of the peaceable kingdom, literary realism is the only appropriate approach to South African material” (136). However, it is precisely Leroux's technical accomplishments that repay our devoting attention to his work today.

Leroux's status as innovator in Afrikaans literature is undiminished, with *SD* considered “een van die duidelikste manifestasies van die vernuwing van Sestig” (Botha 587). In South African literary history as a whole, however, the credit for renewal goes to a much more internationally famous South African writer: J.M. Coetzee. As Green states, it is “a truism of southern African literary history that no sustained modernist tradition was produced here in chronological relation with the metropolitan modernist period,” with Plomer's *Turbott Wolfe* “the nearest thing to a precursor for the narrative modernist forms *Coetzee is usually credited with introducing to South African fiction*” (my italics; 787-788).

Yet Leroux and Coetzee share a formal resemblance with regard to at least one aspect of these “narrative modernist forms”. In a discussion on the influence of the French *nouveau roman* on *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), the novel which “confirmed the writer's considerable ability and demonstrated the importance of Afrikaner readiness to experiment for the development of the South African English novel” (Wade 249), Coetzee acknowledged that there were similarities. However:

behind both there is, I think, a more fundamental influence: film and/or photography. There was a moment in the course of high modernism when first poets, then novelists, realized how rapidly narration could be carried out: films that used montage effectively were connecting short narrative sequences into longer narratives much more swiftly and deftly than the nineteenth-century novelist had thought possible, and they were educating their younger audience too into following rapid transitions, an audience that then carried this skill back into the reading of printed texts (*Doubling the Point* 59).

Coetzee then mentions as influences Chris Marker, Andrzej Munk and Jean Luc Godard.

The influence of film in Leroux was noted by Graham Greene, in 1968:

Mr. Leroux writes his books in static scenes; between them he allows his camera to track rapidly and wildly around his location. The influence of the cinema is clear – not the conventional cinema but the cinema of Robbe-Grillet or Godard. Dr. Johns serves the narrative much as the coloured subtitles of Godard serve his films, not explanatory, but ironic, decorative, absurd (qtd. in Malan, *Die Oog van die Son* 118).

In addition to film, Leroux's technique demonstrably bears other traces of a distinctly Modernist provenance: the meta-irony of Duchamp, for example, is manifest in Leroux's playful self-reflexiveness and widespread use of *détournement*, while the use of the conjunction of opposites as a structuring device draws equally from the syzygies of both ur-Modernist Alfred Jarry and Carl Jung (see Chapter 2 of this dissertation).

In view of these considerations, it is high time to consider Leroux's contribution to South African literature as a whole, rather than the subset represented by the Afrikaans canon. As a preliminary to this endeavour, substantial translation work would be required, from the stand-alone classic *Magersfontein, O Magersfontein!* to the nine-novel cycle in its entirety. Fortunately, the practice of translation itself provides an invaluable hermeneutic tool, as the following chapter seeks to demonstrate.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Translating *Sewe Dae by die Silbersteins*

The purpose of this chapter is to justify my work in creating *Seven Days With the Silbersteins* (henceforth *SDW*), a retranslation of Etienne Leroux's *Sewe Dae by die Silbersteins* (*SD*), first translated into English by Charles Eglington as *Seven Days at the Silbersteins* (*SDA*).

As seen in the previous chapter, the reception of Leroux in English – confined in the main to *SD* – has tended to foreground its politics (described by Chapman as “largely unanalysable”) at the expense of its poetics (“usually conspicuous in its derivativeness”). What remains unacknowledged is that this reception is in fact widely based on readings of *SDA*. In the light of contemporary thinking on translation, *SDA* cannot be considered a mirror image of *SD*, but constitutes rather a creative interpretation adding to the sum of novels published in (South African) English. This divergence was, in fact, pointed out long ago by Leroux: “I have seen in the very competent translations of my own work how the subtleties of my transcendentalism are either lost or transformed to something quite different” (*Tussen-gebied* 53).

The project of a new translation opens the possibility of reducing the gap opened by this divergence.

My initial motivation, however, was naïve: after being in turn dazzled and bemused by what I read in Eglington's translation, I consulted the original Afrikaans text out of curiosity and was struck by depths and surface effects not present in the translation – a certain style, a rhythm and an inventiveness that had not been entirely lacking in the English version but now came into its own. An obscure impulse grew to perform my own translation – one that would *do justice* to the original. I gleefully pounced on mistranslations, questionable choices, clumsy turns of phrase. As the work progressed, hubris set in – not only would mine be the superior translation, I was even going to produce a text *better than the original*. Eventually, after prolonged exposure to a brilliant, maddening source text, I saw my hubris for what it was, developed enormous respect for Eglington's prowess, and began question-

ing my whole project. Eglington's translation had received high praise: how should I presume to outdo him? Unwittingly, I had run headlong into an obstacle described by Bassnett:

There is, of course, one final great stumbling block waiting for the person with an interest in Translation Studies: the question of *evaluation*. For if a translator perceives his or her role as partly that of 'improving' either the SL text or existing translations, and that is indeed often the reason why we undertake translations, an implicit value judgment underlies this position. All too often, in discussing their work, translators avoid analysis of their own methods and concentrate on exposing the frailties of other translators. (19)

Fortunately Kannemeyer's seminal and still unsurpassed study *Op Weg na Welgevonden* (1970) provided a means to transcend the egotistical pursuit of doing justice to – or improving on – the original and arrive at a more sober procedure. Kannemeyer's structural exposition was not available to Eglington; consequently, while Eglington's choices were always intelligent, frequently creative and sometimes inspired, the novel's structure was not fully evident to him, so that he did not fully grasp "the complexity of the structure of [the] work and the way in which the various levels interact" (Bassnett 83). Nonetheless, Eglington's work does help bring the contours of the source into sharper relief. As Parks writes, "Comparison of the differences between original and translation provides material for reflections that lead straight to the heart of a writer's poetics. Equally, a thorough critical analysis of an original text gives a translator a better sense of what it is he should be translating" (200).

As Grossman states:

In the process of translating, we endeavor to hear the first version of the work as profoundly and completely as possible, struggling to discover the linguistic charge, the structural rhythms, the subtle implications, the complexities of meaning and suggestion in vocabulary and phrasing, and the ambient, cultural inferences and conclusions these tonalities allow us to extrapolate. This is a kind of reading as deep as any literary encounter can be. (9)

Consequently I decided to first analyse critically *SD*, with the aid of the abundant (predominantly Afrikaans) critical literature around Leroux, attempting to "take into full account the overall structuring of the work and its relation to the time and place of its production" (Bassnett 85); I would only then then produce my own translation based on the interpreta-

tion I had formed (Bassnett: “The translator is, after all, first a reader and then a writer and in the process of reading he or she must take a position” (83)); and finally, I could evaluate and justify my strategy against Eglington’s translation.

The following account therefore reflects on my creative, performative interpretation compared to Eglington's creative, performative interpretation, comparing and evaluating select representative passages within a critical framework. It also turned out to be a hard-won appreciation of the technique of Etienne Leroux.

### *The Ritual of the Seven Days: Images, Themes, Situations*

Kannemeyer provides the following plot summary of *SD*:

The novel tells the story of the seven-day visit of Henry van Eeden, a young, innocent and ignorant man, to the estate of the rich Silbersteins, in order to meet his fiancée Salome, whom he does not yet know, and to become familiar with his future in-laws' life-style. In the course of his seven-day visit, he spends the mornings – accompanied by Jock Silberstein – being introduced to the highly industrialised farming operations, and every evening he meets groups of people at parties who, in effect, represent different levels of society, periodically revealing yet another facet of modern man and his problems. Apart from these external experiences there is a strong focus on Henry's inner development. Although he arrives at Welgevonden as 'a flawless little robot', as 'the angel-faced young man' with the 'silver soul', he has to undergo a process of initiation in the course of seven days. For instance, he has to lose his innocence and become aware of the inextricable intertwining of good and evil, the anonymity of Existence, chaos and loneliness, in order that he will be worthy of meeting Salome. (*A History of Afrikaans Literature* 108-109)

As simple as the plot may be, the structure is another story:

The large variety of material poses the very real danger that the novel, which is divided into seven days, each of which covers one day of Henry's visit to the estate, could become a mere stringing-together of different episodes which in a chronological order relate to the experiences of the main character. Leroux addresses this problem by using very skilfully a fixed pattern in every chapter, a series of images, themes and situations which – often in altered form – circulate through the book, as well as parallel situations in and direct links between the different chapters, giving the whole a ritual flavour<sup>8</sup>. ... [T]here are often subtle deviations from the basic pattern, in that certain circulating themes, situations or characters reach full development in different chapters, gaining prominence at those points. In addition,

<sup>8</sup> This “fixed pattern” recalls the strategies of Calvino (b. 1922), Perec, Queneau and other Oulipean writers.

Leroux also makes frequent use of parallel scenes that bring about a certain balance or polar tension between the two sections of a chapter: one scene usually involves Jock and Henry in the morning and the complementary scene takes place in the evening during one of the parties. (*A History of Afrikaans Literature* 109-110)

In *SD*, then, content and form are dynamically inseparable. It is incumbent on the translator to discover the form of the text, as constituted by the author's sign usage and brought to light through interpretation. Iser comments: "Therefore striving for a better understanding does not imply that the interpreter will reveal the objective meaning of the foreign or strange speech; instead, a better understanding implies bringing to light the author's sign usage, a usage that he is never aware of when producing his texts" (46).

These observations bring into play Bassnett's strictures against translating sentence by sentence as opposed to translating with awareness of the function within the whole of each narrative unit (word, sentence, paragraph, image): the circulating images, themes and situations, parallel situations and direct links between chapters constitute "a series of interlocking systems, each of which has a determinable function in relation to the whole, and it is the task of the translator to apprehend these functions"; however, if "the translator takes each sentence or paragraph as a minimum unit and translates it without relating it to the overall work, he runs the risk of ending up with a TL text ... where the paraphrasable content of the passages has been translated at the cost of everything else" (Bassnett 121-122).

Further exacerbating this risk is the three-fold significance inherent in Leroux's use of *image* (*beeld*). As Malan states:

Die worsteling met verskillende aspekte van teenwoordigheid ontwikkel sedert [*SD*] tot 'n sleutelfaktor van die ondersoek na subjektiwiteit in Leroux se romans. Teenwoordigheid verkry by hom die betekenis van "werklikheid" ... maar ook van 'n metafisiese teenwoordigheid en van 'n "presence" in die sin wat Derrida dit gebruik, d.w.s. as absolute sin of waarheid. In [*SD*] word al drie begrippe in die term *beeld* saamgevat. ("Die krisis van die subjek" 60)

Eglinton's translation is by no means a case of "paraphrase at all costs", but Leroux's "exceptionally tight" text is also exceptionally unforgiving – a nod in the wrong place is likely to have profound structural repercussions which will in turn impoverish the translation by

diminishing its interpretative scope.

I begin with a consideration of the paratext and opening paragraphs.

Genette states: “[T]he paratext is ... a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that ... is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it” (1).

Smuts emphasises the importance of Leroux's treatment of the paratext, or “voorwerk”. Blurring the traditional boundary between paratext and narrative, Leroux obliges the reader to consider the paratext when evaluating and interpreting the text, not only in itself (as preparing the reader for what is to come) but also as an intertext in the Welgevonden trilogy, as well as the nine-novel cycle culminating in *Na'va* (132).

Consider the title. For Smuts, the title *Sewe dae By Die Silbersteins* contains the symbolically charged number seven, which activates a mythological field of reference by virtue of association with the biblical myth of Creation, places the emphasis on a series of temporal units within a limited duration, suggests a “Joodse wêreld”, and creates the expectation of an open-ended chronicle (“want die kroniek streef in sy wese na voortsetting en nie na afronding nie”) (119). Although these facets are captured by Eglington's title *Seven Days at the Silbersteins*, the rendering of “by die Silbersteins” as “at the Silbersteins”, as one might say “at the Smiths”, emphasises location (the Silberstein residence, Welgevonden) rather than the social intercourse that “with the Silbersteins” suggests. Consequently, Eglington's title precludes an interpretive possibility identified by Smuts: given that “die Silbersteins” is a collective concept, it is possible that the visitor(s) will remain an outsider, while the Silbersteins as a group remain insiders on the basis of their being related and their shared location in space (119). For this reason, my new translation is entitled *Seven Days with the Silbersteins*.

Turning to the front matter of the text: after the bastard title, the title page repeats the title, author's name, publisher, and place and date of publication. Smuts draws attention to the unorthodox spelling of the author's surname (ordinarily 'le Roux'), which alerts the (Afrikaans) reader to the fact that it may be a pseudonym – a possibility confirmed overleaf,

in the colophon, by the assertion of copyright by S.P. le Roux, or Stephen le Roux as he was generally known. This transparent pseudonym, which does not attempt to conceal the author's identity, prepares the reader for the subtle interplay of appearance and reality in the text itself (Smuts 119). None of the English translations allow for this possibility because none of them mention S.P. le Roux, an omission restored in *SDW* (80).

The interplay of appearance and reality is carried further by the disclaimer on the following page: "Daar bestaan nie 'n plaas soos Welgevonden nie. Alle karakters is denkbeeldig. Die gebeurtenisse is onwaarskynlik." As Smuts points out, unlike conventional disclaimers, this one does not state that the events are fictitious but merely "onwaarskynlik" (improbable, unlikely, implausible) and therefore *not* impossible or without any basis in reality. "Denkbeeldig" activates the concept "denkbeeld", meaning "idea" but literally "thought image"; within "onwaarskynlik" the elements "waar" ("true"), and "skyn" ("appearance") are conspicuous. The suspicion arises that the reader can expect a world populated by shadowy characters, of an ironic interplay of being and appearance (120-121). Moreover, "alle karakters is denkbeeldig" can be construed both unambiguously (all characters are fictional) and ambivalently (the character that one imputes to others is imaginary, including the character imputed by others to oneself). This view is borne out by the treatment of self-as-image in the novel. See, for example, Sir Henry Mandrake's fury at dying without acquiring a self-image in Chapter Four, and the image of Henry created by the "watcher in the shadows" after the Walpurgisnacht episode.

This quality of subjectivity is reinforced by the motto, an extract from the body of the text which, according to Smuts, implies "dat die waarheid waaraan hy sy werk gemeet wil hê, sy eie waarheid is" (123).

The difficulty of rendering these nuances into English is considerable. Unfortunately the pictorial quality of "denkbeeldig" and "waarskynlik" is lacking in such equivalents as "imaginary" and "improbable". Consequently, the translation in *SDA* is somewhat flat: "No such farm as Welgevonden exists. All the characters are imaginary. The events are improbable." Furthermore, the introduction of the definite article in the second sentence, "all the characters", does not allow the above-mentioned ambivalence of reference. I have amended



this and endeavoured to restore the ironic tone by emphasising the possibility that the happenings just *might* be real after all, as follows: “There is no such farm as Welgevonden. All characters are imaginary. The events are of dubious authenticity.”

Following the disclaimer comes the by-no-means-innocent dedication to the artists Marianna and Alexander Podlashuc. As Smuts states, as the dedication is the only place in the book where the real author, S.P. le Roux, can address the reader directly, it harbours a hidden message. The Podlashucs were related to the owners of the Bellingham wine estate. Welgevonden Riesling comes in triangular bottles with triangular labels (*SD* 12); Bellingham wines were the only South African wines produced in triangular bottles with triangular labels (Smuts 121). This covert pointing to a real-world state of affairs completely undermines the disclaimer, subtly developing the already established interplay of appearance and reality. Hence the dedication's typographical prominence in *SD*, all capitals, in a large font across two lines; in *SDA* it appears in sentence case in a small font on just one line, with “aangedra aan” rendered modestly as “for”. In *SDW* the large font and capital letters have been restored, with “aangedra aan” rendered in all its pomp as “dedicated to” (81).

After the dedication, the contents page. Here, according to Smuts, the chapter headings activate the topics of sex, religion, politics, death and fulfilment, among others (122). In some headings, the irony already present in the “disclaimer” is reinforced by the association of incongruous ideas (“Fuga van Geestelike Herbewapening, Apartheid en Beplanning”) and ironic alliteration, which, as Van der Walt points out, if read “deur klankverband van teenstrydighede,” unites two opposing concepts (“Kaperjolle van die Kunstenaars”, “Ballet van die Boere”) (66). In *SDA* “Ballet of the Farmers” loses the alliteration in “Ballet van die Boere” (*SD*); *SDW* preserves it with “Ballet of the Boers”.

The title “Die Koms van Salome” is rendered as “The Advent of Salome” rather than “The Coming of Salome” (*SDA*). I prefer the elevated (religious) register of “advent” to “coming” because of the multiple associations that the name “Salome” evokes. As Malan has shown, Salome, meaning “peace”, is the Greek translation of the name of the Shulamith who yearns for her lover in the biblical *Song of Songs*, and who also represents a parallel to the Shekina of the Kabbalah, often represented as the feminine aspect of God, with whom

the Kabbalist (or alchemist) seeks union in the *hieros gamos*. The seven veils of Salome represent the progression from ignorance to enlightenment (*Misterie van die Alchemis* 61-62). Of course, Salome also refers to the biblical figure, who, after captivating Herod with an erotic dance, demanded the head of John the Baptist on a platter, as dramatised in Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* (1891). "Salome Ideal" was also a cigarette brand available until the 1940s; its packaging reflected the decadence associated with Wilde's play. Thus the name "Salome" activates the apparently contradictory elements of the erotic, the spiritual, the decadent, the commercial and the criminal all at once. As such, "The Advent of Salome" is a subtle example, as "The Ballet of the Boers" is a crude one, of a syzygy or alignment of incongruous elements, as found in the alchemical *conjunctio oppositorum* as reclaimed by Jung,<sup>9</sup> the dislocations of the Surrealists,<sup>10</sup> or the serious humour of Jarry's pataphysics, in which "the universe, in all its syzygistic movements and crystalline form, produces, as if by chance, unexpected alignments of fragments of meaning which, in pataphysics, are generally in opposition" (Hugill 14).<sup>11</sup>

It is crucial to pay attention to Leroux's use of syzygy, or the conjunction of opposites, as a structuring device in *SD* (and elsewhere), as the following close examination of the novel's opening will make clear.

These six paragraphs set the scene before Henry actually meets the Silbersteins. Images and themes already implied in the paratext are developed in rapid succession. The following compares extracts from *SD*, *SDA* and *SDW*.

The first sentence of the novel contains two noteworthy aspects.

Die Van Eedens het gevoel dat dit haas tyd is dat hulle enigste seun in die huwelik moet tree met iemand wat in ander opsigte hulle stand waardig is. (*SD* 9)

The Van Eeden's felt that it was about time for their only son to marry someone who, in other respects, was worthy of their standing. (*SDA* 9)

<sup>9</sup> Jung speaks of "the realm of the syzygies, the paired opposites, where the one is never separated from the Other, its antithesis" (*Four Archetypes* 45).

<sup>10</sup> As Breton declared: "Everything leads us to believe that there is a certain point in the mind where life and death, the real and the imaginary, the past and the future, the communicable and the incommunicable, are no longer perceived in contradiction to one another" (qtd. in Bataille 20)

<sup>11</sup> Shattuck states that "for Jarry syzygy also represents the rule of prose style that a word must transfix a momentary conjunction or opposition of meanings" (xvii).

The Van Eedens felt the time had come for their only son to marry a person worthy of their class in other respects. (*SDW* 84)

The tense in the first paragraph is different from the subsequent text: "het gevoel" situates the action *in illo tempore*, the once-upon-a-time of fairy-tales (the arranged marriage being a common fairy-tale motif), alerting the reader to the fantastic quality of the following narrative; the tense used from paragraph two and throughout the remainder of the novel is the historic present, typically rendered into English as the simple past. Thus there is a sense of a timeless beginning brought into the present in the second paragraph by a verbal shift into the historic present and concretised by means of everyday items such as J.J.'s personal accessories (his pipe, tobacco, silk handkerchief and scarf) and the Riley sports car driven by Henry van Eeden.

Second, whereas the phrase "in ander opsigte" occupies a normal position in the original Afrikaans sentence, Eglinton has shifted the phrase to after the pronoun and set it off with commas. The puzzle, of course, is simply: In *what* "ander opsigte" is the person whom Henry is to marry worthy of "hulle stand"? The solution is given by Jock Silberstein: "Ek is ryk en ek is net so trots op my prestasie van rykdom as jy op jou geslagsregister" (*SD* 17). Salome is considered a worthy match for Henry because the Silbersteins are rich, part of the economically dominant class of predominantly English-speaking capitalists, while the Van Eedens have the connections to prosper in a South Africa politically dominated by Afrikaans families. *SDW* endeavours to preserve these nuances by using the past-perfect construction "had come" to signify remoteness and by rendering "hulle stand" as "their class", signalling that the Van Eedens enjoy high social status by virtue of their social class rather than some other status-enhancing social attribute, while restoring the phrase 'in other respects' to a less jarring position.

The following sentence is a prime example of how apparently innocuous expressions take on a special significance within the total context of Leroux's fiction:

Die jongman is, goddank, wereldwys genoeg grootgemaak om te beseef dat liefde slegs as 'n laaste instansie op die spel kom. (*SD* 9)

The young man had had, thank God, a sophisticated enough upbringing to realise that love should enter into the matter only in the last instance. (*SDA* 9)

The young man, thank God, had been brought up worldly-wise enough to know that love comes into play only in the last resort. (*SDW* 84)

The key expression here is “dat liefde slegs as ‘n laaste instansie op die spel kom”. The *SDA* rendering “enter into the matter” misses the opportunity to extract the full charge of “op die spel kom”. “Spel” carries a connotation of gambling that, interpreted through the length and breadth of the novel, carries a freight of associations. It will suffice to mention two of these to make the point.

First, the gambling image anticipates the final chapter of the novel. On the morning of the seventh day Henry makes an important spiritual wager: “Jy moet natuurlik geloof hê. Dit is eenvoudig so. Jy moet jou toeweging aan die onsienlike maak” (*SD*). Thereafter the long-anticipated meeting with Salome takes place. The second-last sentence of the novel runs: “Jy dobbel met jou geloof” (*SD* 156). (“You gamble with your faith.”) The presence of gambling imagery in the first and last paragraphs, in the *second* and *second-last* sentences, is an extraordinary symmetry typical of what Kannemeyer calls “die besondere hegtheid van die struktuur van die roman” (*Op weg na Welgevonden* 9). By eliminating the gambling metaphor from his second sentence, Eglington foregoes the opportunity to set up an equivalent parallelism in his translation.

Second, the subject of free will versus (Calvinist) predestination establishes a sub-text that recurs throughout the text. The “spel” metaphor placed in a sentence about social conditioning is the nucleus of this dialectic. *SDW* preserves the gambling metaphor and consequently the aforementioned parallelism.

The third sentence introduces the name of the bride:

Die naam Salome is genoem en na openhartige oorweging as aanneemlik verklaar.  
(*SD* 9)

The name Salome was mentioned and, after frank consideration, she was declared acceptable. (*SDA* 9)

The name Salome was named and, after frank deliberation, declared acceptable.  
(*SDW* 104)

Here *SDA* has an element absent from *SD*: the personal pronoun, *she*. This domestication prevents the translated sentence from performing the same function as in the source text. For whereas the emphasis on the acceptability of Salome *qua* name rather than that of Salome *herself* may strike the careless or uninitiated reader as a quirk and nothing more, this elision actually plays an important role in foreshadowing the function of the name Salome as it plays out in the text. Who is Salome? Does she really exist? The identity of Henry's fugitive fiancée, "die ontwykende Salome," rapidly becomes a puzzle that perplexes Henry (and the reader) throughout the text; nor is it ever satisfactorily resolved. Salome's physical appearance is never once described. "Salome" is an overdetermined signifier that yields no tangible signified, although the very absence of a signified impels Henry's progress through the pages of the novel. Consequently, the insertion of the personal pronoun spoils this effect by presupposing Salome's material reality.

The self-reflexive irony of the paratext recurs in the next sentence:

'n Oom van die betrokke spruit is gekies om die nodige aanvoorwerk te doen en, waar nodig, behulpsaam te wees in hierdie delikate kwessie van 'n sosiale kontrak teen die agtergrond van onvoorspelbare menslike verhoudinge. (*SD* 9)

An uncle of the scion in question was chosen to do the necessary spade-work and, where necessary, to be helpful in this delicate matter of a social contract against the background of unpredictable human relationships. (*SDA* 9)

An uncle of the sprig in question was picked to pave the way and, where necessary, lend a hand in this ticklish question of a social contract set against a background of unforeseeable human relations. (*SDW* 104)

The key term here is "aanvoorwerk". Although "spadework" and "aanvoorwerk" are completely equivalent at sentence level, "spadework" is too powerfully visual an image to do what "aanvoorwerk" can do. It so happens that the effect of the word in the original Afrikaans sentence has a peculiarly self-referential quality: Johl, for example, uses *aanvoorwerk* as a technical term denoting Leroux's use of the paratext in such a way as to emphasise

“die dinamiese verhouding tussen teks en verhaalstrukture” (4). J.J.’s “aanvoorwerk” is directly preceded by his author’s “aanvoorwerk”!

Furthermore, “aanvoorwerk” refers not only to the role allocated to J.J. van Eeden in the ritual of the seven days at Welgevonden: it also indicates his essential function as an element in the pattern of the text. Like some John the Baptist, J.J. the roué has to *pave the way* for Henry because to live in the world, Henry has to become a man of the world like his uncle, intimately acquainted with the knowledge of evil. (Even the pine scent J.J. emits from his person anticipates the pine scent that trickles from the lion heads in Henry’s bathroom at Welgevonden, where he takes his purifying baths.)

The second paragraph picks up on the theme of dualism adumbrated in the paratext with a syzygistic opposition between “geluk” and “behendigheid”:

Henry bestuur die Riley met ‘n argeloosheid waarin dit moeilik is om geluk van behendigheid te onderskei. (SD 9)

Henry drove the Riley with a guilelessness in which it was difficult to distinguish between happiness and skill. (SDA 9)

Henry drove the Riley with an artlessness in which luck was hard to tell apart from skill. (SDW 104)

Here “happiness” does not set up the intended opposition. The omission is significant because the opposition recurs in various places. During the scene of Henry’s sexual initiation, for example, tremendous emphasis is placed on the initiatrix’s “vaardigheid” (SD 120), her technical erotic skills. The idea of Henry’s luck, on the other hand, is developed in various ways, most notably in Chapter 6, in which determinism (predestination) and chance (luck) are telescoped in a tremendously ironic paragraph: “Eintlik is Henry baie gelukkig. Sommige mense behoort tot die uitverkorenes” (SD 140).

The pairing of opposites as a formal structuring device is concretised by the gateway to Welgevonden. Kannemeyer states that the two great white-washed pillars stand for Boaz and Jachin, the pillars that symbolise the paradox of good and evil in the Kabbalah (*Op weg na Welgevonden* 95); they also resemble the “paradigmatic figure” of Unity and Nothingness

to which Nicolas of Cusa refers in his *De Conjecturis*.<sup>12</sup>

This static formalism assumes a more dynamic quality in the sixth paragraph, when J.J. and Henry meet the Silbersteins:

In die voorhuis hou almal op met praat as die twee inkom – daardie oomblik van belangrike stilte wanneer die raakste opsommings gemaak word en balans getoets word na die denkbeeldige middelyn tussen onbeskofte onverskilligheid en onderdanige eerbiedigheid. (*SD* 11).

Everyone stopped talking when the two men entered the drawing-room – that moment of portentous silence when the most accurate summings up are made and a delicate balance is sought for the imaginary line between rude indifference and subservient respect. (*SDA* 11)

In the voorhuis everyone stopped talking when the two of them came in – that instant of pregnant silence when people sum each other up most nicely, feeling for balance along the imaginary axis between crass indifference and fawning subservience. (*SDW* 85)

The “middelyn” is a balancing point between two extremes, rendered in *SDW* as “axis” to accentuate connotations of rotation, symmetry, political alliance and composition (*Merriam-Webster*: “an implied line in painting or sculpture through a composition to which elements in the composition are referred”). This is important because the figure of the axis is a guiding metaphor by which to interpret the text. Just as Jock's guests must find a balance between the opposites of incivility and flattery, so must Henry henceforth continually negotiate the paradox of good and evil – and so, too, must the reader's interpretation be guided by the symmetrically ordered oppositions encountered throughout the text. Examples given by Kannemeyer to illustrate the point include Brutus, the thoroughbred bull symmetrically divided into red and black parts, who is contrasted with the tulip garden, symmetrically di-

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<sup>12</sup> “Imagine a cone of Light which protrudes into the darkness, and a cone of darkness which protrudes into the light [...] Note that God who is Unity is as it were the base of light; the base of darkness is Nothingness. Now it is between God and Nothingness that we have to think that all creatures take their place” (qtd. in De Santillana 54). Henry's shuttling between the extremes of Good and Evil (“God and Nothingness”) en route to self-knowledge also resembles the interpretive paradigm of the travelling differential, as expressed by Rosenzweig: “Our voyage of exploration advances from the Noughts of knowledge to the Aught of knowledge” (qtd. in Iser 120).

vided into red and yellow; the row of Coloured women workers in white uniforms on the white wine side of the bottling plant, contrasted with the row of white women workers in red uniforms on the red wine side; and the farmers arranged in an abstract black-and-white composition, in contrast with their wives dressed in all the colours of the rainbow (*Op weg na Welgevonden* 26).

As mentioned in Chapter One, Leroux emphasised the role of the reader in interpreting his texts. In this he echoed Ricoeur's view that "the sense or the significance of a narrative stems from the *intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader*. The act of reading thus becomes the critical moment of the entire analysis. On it rests the narrative's capacity to transfigure the experience of the reader" ("Life in quest of narrative" 26).

There are sufficient clues in the paratext and opening of *SD* to orientate the attentive reader towards such a transfiguration. While the same cannot be said of the reader of *SDA*, for the reasons given above, it is to be hoped that in *SDW* the signposts are clearer.

### **Keywords**

It is characteristic of Leroux's technique in *SD* that certain key words are repeated throughout the narrative. The different contexts in which the words are encountered lend different nuances to their interpretation, frequently creating an effect of reciprocal irony.

If "no translation can be absolutely faithful, and every act of translation affects the meaning of the translated text" (Genette, *Palimpsests* 214), then the translation of key words becomes singularly important. J.M. Coetzee elaborates:

The necessary imperfection of translation – brought about in the first place by the incapacity of any given target language to supply for each single word in the source language a corresponding single word that would cover, precisely and without overlap, the denotation of the original and its major connotations to boot – is so widely accepted that the translator becomes accustomed to aiming for the best possible translation rather than a hypothetical perfect one.

But there are occasions where less than perfect translation of a key word can have serious consequences. ("Roads to translation" 216)

An exemplary case is provided by an epithet that recurs throughout *SD* in association with



one of its most important characters. On meeting the Silbersteins for the first time, Henry encounters “‘n slank vrou” (*SD* 11), who proves to be Mrs Silberstein. Given the broad range of reference commanded by the word “slank” – slim, slender, svelte, even sylphlike—it is easy to imagine Mrs Silberstein, “haar hals swaanwit, haar borste half ontbloot” (*SD* 11), but it is less easy to choose the single English word that will precede her name heraldically on her every subsequent appearance. For the formula “die slank Mrs Silberstein”, applied to her on every single occasion of her appearance, functions like a Homeric epithet, the “wine-dark sea” or “ox-eyed Hera”.

The formula is rendered in *SDW* as “slender Mrs Silberstein” (86) rather than “slim Mrs Silberstein” (*SDA* 11): “slender” has the same syllable count as “die slank”; “slim Mrs” has an unwelcome tongue-twister effect (repeat “slim Mrs” aloud a few times); and the word “slender” has a more verbally lascivious connotation in keeping with the overtly sensual character of Mrs Silberstein herself.

The following two examples have somewhat more dramatic consequences.

### *Stag or Reindeer?*

Elize Botha remarks that *SD* incorporates “‘n ryk ondergrond van verwysings: psigologies, mitologies, religieus, filosofies ... opgeneem in 'n nuwe verhalende geheel” (“Etienne Leroux” 593). Sources ranging from Jung to classical mythology and the Kabbalah must be taken into account by the translator. Indeed, as Kannemeyer relates, the classically educated Eglington knew full well that *SD* teemed with such references and wrote to Leroux enquiring as to his sources, to which Leroux somewhat unhelpfully referred him without further explanation to the *Greek Myths* of Robert Graves (*Leroux* 426).

As previously mentioned, the reader's task is facilitated by Leroux's helpful signposting of the numinously significant. Symbols are frequently pointed out, such as when J.J. comments on the resemblance of the door-knocker to a womb. Here the translator may achieve the desired effect even without knowing whence the symbol stems or its semantic field; the perspicacious reader will pick up the reference nonetheless. However, infelicitous translation of such keywords can obscure the meaning.

A prime example of this occurs in Chapter Two. Awakening from his afternoon nap, Henry gets dressed and is confronted by a weird object on his bedside table:

Toe hy op die punt is om te loop, sien hy dat iemand op die tafeltjie langs sy bed, waar die konfoor vroeër in die dag was, iets neergesit het wat lyk soos die kop van 'n takbok. By nadere ondersoek blyk dit wel 'n nagemaakte kop van 'n takbok te wees, met horings, glasoë en alles kompleet. (*SD* 35)

He was about to leave when he noticed that on his bedside table, where the coffee urn had stood earlier that day, something had been put that looked like the head of a reindeer, complete with horns and glass eyes (*SDA* 35).

As he was about to go, he saw that someone had put something on the bedside table where earlier the konfoor had been: it looked like a stag's head. Closer inspection revealed that it was indeed a fake stag's head, complete with antlers and glass eyes. (*SDW* 108)

It is noteworthy that *SD* contains two sentences with two separate mentions of the object (“...wat lyk soos die kop van 'n takbok. By nadere ondersoek blyk dit wel 'n nagemaakte kop van 'n takbok te wees ...”), whereas *SDA* fuses them, mentioning the object only once (“that looked like the head of a reindeer”). This cancels out the comic effect of Henry’s double-take (he has to look twice, not only because the object is so weird, but because he is short-sighted). However, for present purposes, the chief interest lies in the word “takbok”.

The *Tweetalige Woordeboek* offers the following English equivalents: “deer, stag; wapiti; the back-translation of “reindeer” is “rendier”. The unusual choice of “reindeer” instead of “stag” or “deer” therefore requires justification. However, far from being a creative interpretation that opens up a range of meanings that other equivalents do not, “reindeer” actually limits the interpretative possibilities open to the reader, specifically with reference to the mythological (Jungian) substratum, as Jung and Von Franz's account of the symbolism of the stag makes clear.

Jung and Von Franz write: “The stag is a well known medieval allegory of Christ, and in the Saint Graal it is related that Christ occasionally appeared to his disciples in the form of a white stag accompanied by four lions (the four evangelists)” (258).

The reference to Christ is borne out by an allusion made by Jock in Chapter Three.

Expounding on the similarities between the solera system and the individuation process, Jock says, “Ons het geen beheer oor die resultaat van die gisting nie; ons kan slegs die Yeso byvoeg om te help – en die res is in die hand van die Skepper.” Kannemeyer points out that Leroux’s unorthodox capitalisation (“corrected” to *yeso* in the first South African edition of the English translation, restored to *Yeso* in subsequent editions) suggests the name of Jesus (*Op weg na Welgevonden* 97), for which the reader has been (subconsciously) prepared by the stag symbol.

Jung and Von Franz continue: “The stag knows the secret of self-renewal, for according to Honorius of Autun when, from time to time, it is feeling old, it swallows a snake and from the venom of the bite loses its antlers and grows itself a new pair” (258).

Considering the importance in the novel of the theme of rebirth, both in the case of Henry as an individual undergoing an accelerated individuation process and Leroux’s concern for the problem of rebirth in Western civilisation as a whole, the pertinence of the stag’s “secret of self renewal” is clear enough.

The stag possesses a frightening, uncanny dimension: “On the bowl known as the vessel of Gundestrup there is a representation of the God Kerunnus, a god with stag’s horns, whose chief attribute is the stag. He is a god of vegetation and death, of the communal meal and the intoxicating drink through which communication with the otherworld is established” (Jung and Von Franz 258).

This eerie quality is echoed in the Witches Sabbath in Chapter Six, *Walpurgisnacht*, which features up-to-date variations of “the communal meal”, “the intoxicating drink” and the “communication with the otherworld”, while Black John, as performed by J.J., bears a strong family resemblance to Kerunnus himself. This intra-textual parallel is underscored by the design of the “konfoor” (a combination of brazier and urn) that Henry sees on waking on the morning of the second day, before the “takbok” episode: “Die handvatsels skarnier in die baardpunte van twee sataniese gesigte en die koppie ... is so groot soos ‘n bakkie” (*SD* 26). If the satanic faces anticipate Black John, they are also not dissimilar to Kernunnos; and could the unusual dimensions of Henry’s coffee mug be a veiled reference to the Gundestrup cauldron? Attributing this to deliberate intent on Leroux’s part may strain credulity,

yet the interpretation once made is absolutely consistent with the material.

Jung and Von Franz say further that the stag “shows the hunter the way to his beloved, with whom it is identical” (258). This statement has particular resonance: for as the artists go about their antics in Chapter Two, Henry, having left his mask in his room, first meets, then loses the company of, a young woman, strongly suggested to be his beloved, Salome, wearing the mask of a “takbokkie”, or doe. The structure of irony in this passage (Henry as (headless) stag being led on by his beloved as doe breaks down completely when “reindeer” is paired with “little reindeer”, as is the case in *SDA*).

Jung and Von Franz add that the stag “also appears in legends as the summoner of the dead and entices those who hunt it to the land of the dead, forever” (258). Henry acts as “summoner of the dead” both in Chapter One, when he attempts to imagine what it is like to be dead, and in *Walpurgisnacht*, when the image of the dead Sir Henry Mandrake appears to him in his food.

Leroux's work even shows traces of “the custom of the *cervulum seu vitulam facere* ... a New Year's play in which people clothed as stags and hinds acted obscenely” (Jung and Von Franz 259). The New Year's play of obscenely acting stags and hinds is echoed twice, by the capering artists in their various animal masks, and in the *Walpurgisnacht* orgy, literally the stag night before Henry's wedding. Then, Henry is all too recognisably “the *Hirsnarr*, the stag jester” (Jung and Von Franz 259): he is literally stag and fool at the artists' party and plays the fool unwittingly every evening when he appears for the evening party in the wrong clothes. Only at the very end, like some Parsifal having endured a myriad ordeals, does he (perhaps) enter into the presence of the Beloved.

Jung and Von Franz conclude: “In alchemical symbolism too, the 'fugitive stag' (*cervus fugitivus*) appears as a symbol of Mercurius and of the soul in matter” (259). The notion of the “fugitive stag” not only recalls, in a *mise-en-abîme* of Salome's performance throughout the text, the “fugitive doe” among the antic artists, but also offers a further possibility: that the “fugitive doe” that Henry is pursuing is his future, individuated self.

Whatever the merits of these various interpretative possibilities, they are all cancelled out when “talbok” and “takbokkie” are rendered as “reindeer” and “little reindeer”.

### **In Alle Erns: *Structure, Sound and Meaning***

A second example that bears out Coetzee's point about translating keywords is the passage dealing with the donation of Brutus the bull to Henry and Salome in Chapter Three. Not only does this tour-de-force of irony successfully combine the framing devices of ballet and photography with painfully farcical political satire, but it is developed within a style of language that carries Leroux's predilection for rhythm to dithyrambic heights.

In a discussion of translatability, Genette states: "A minimal variant of *traduttore traditore* grants to poetry and withholds from prose the glorious privilege of untranslatability. The root of this holy writ is buried in the Mallarmean notion of 'poetic language' and in Valery's analyses of the 'indissoluble' union in poetry of 'sound' and 'sense'" (*Palimpsests* 214). He goes on to cite E.A Nida: "Anything that can be said in one language can be said in another, unless the form is an essential element of the message"; and Blanchot: "The meaning of the poem is inseparable from all the words, all the movements, all the accents of the poem. The poem exists only in that total structure, and it disappears as soon as one attempts to separate it from that form it has received. What the poem signifies coincides exactly with what it is" (*Palimpsests* 215).

Why should the task of prose translation include the creation of an "art of language" that necessarily preserves "the meaning of the poem" in Blanchot's sense? As previously mentioned, Leroux's writing practice was informed in the first instance by rhythm, not usage or syntax. This accords with Grossman's comments on translation in relation to performance and sound. Grossman follows Manheim in maintaining that translation is "a kind of interpretive performance, bearing the same relationship to the original text as the actor's work does to the script, the performing musician's to the composition" (11). Elsewhere, in an important statement of what fidelity in translation means, Grossman comments: "A translator's fidelity ... is to context. Good translations ... are not necessarily faithful to words or syntax, which ... can rarely be brought over directly ... to somehow replicate the original. This is the literalist trap, because words do not *mean* in isolation" (70-71).

Leroux's translator, following Grossman, is obliged to "use analogy to recreate signi-

ficance, searching for the phrasing and style in the second language which *mean* in the same way and *sound* in the same way to the reader of that second language" (71). This includes paying attention to Leroux's allusions to performance and dance, as they appear in the first four chapter titles ("dans", "kaperjolle", "ballet", "fuga").

A close examination of the passage in question read against Eglington's translation will clarify these points, the passage being, in my opinion, stylistically the most challenging section of the text, for two reasons. First, as Kannemeyer shows, the high frequency of diminutives, the tableaux that the farmers and their wives form during the party and the photo-shoot, and the widespread (ab)use of technical balletic and musical terminology conjure up the world of ballet (*Op weg na Welgevonden* 73-74), in conformity to the rhythm of the prose. Second, an important structural function is assigned to a single word: "erns".

Preceded by a description of a firework display in which the words "WEL-GEVONDEN QUALITY WINES" appear in letters "so groot soos op die doek van a inryteater" (*SD* 62) (signposting the theatricality of what is to come), the passage begins with a build-up of sound, like an orchestra tuning up. The name Brutus is repeated by the different sets of assembled guests: first the men, then the women joining in, and finally the whispering of the young women, whose "rokkies styg in fouetté as hulle van die een na die ander draai en Brutus, Brutus fluister" (*SD* 63). The transition from tuning up to the "ballet music" is marked by a switch to rhyme: "Is dit Brutus? Kan dit wees? Is dit waar? Vra vir Giepie Ollenwaar" (*SD* 63) – immediately followed by the appearance of Giepie Ollenwaar, elsewhere referred to as "die hoëpriester van teling" (*SD* 67) (the rhyme on "waar" is therefore not insignificant: Oom Giepie is expected to come out with the truth).

This subtle but marked switch in rhythm is not preserved in *SDA*: "Was it Brutus? Could it be? Was it true? Ask Giepie Ollenwaar" (*SDA* 63). *SDW* preserves the rhyme by introducing a phrase: "Oh la la. Enquire of Giepie Ollenwaar." The pseudo-French "oh la la" is in keeping with the way in which the skirts lift up "in fouetté". This last phrase, which introduces the ballet theme that builds up to an absurd climax before Oom Giepie's grotesque speech, is paraphrased in *SDA*; the ballet theme is therefore not introduced and the efficacy of the "overture" reduced.

Oom Giepie himself is described with a welter of diminutives: “kettinkie”, “oumans-beentjies”, “skouertjies”, “baadjie”, “borsie”. The intention is not so much to portray him as being of diminutive stature, but to create an emotional attitude towards the old man, to emphasise his adorability, the quality that makes him beloved of the company of farmers – the diminutives could equally be applied to an infant surrounded by adoring women, just as Oom Giepie, toothless as an infant, is harassed (“betas, beklou, betrek, bevroetel en beneul” (SD 63); the alliteration underscores a certain familiarity) by the “aanvallige boerinetjies”. This quality of adorability is underscored later in the passage in the description of “die geliefde beeld van die geliefde teler teen die agtergrond van sy geliefde bul” (SD 67). It is therefore desirable to preserve the effect of the Afrikaans diminutive. This is not as simple as it seems.

Chapter Two provides a good illustration of this difficulty. Henry wakes up to find a “konfoor” (coffee pot and chauffer) on his bedside table together with a “koppie” (SD 26). If diminutives always indicated physical diminutiveness, the translation would be straightforward: “little cup” or “small cup”. However, this “koppie” is “groot soos ‘n bakkie”! A “bakkie” is generally a small bowl but a cup larger than normal size can hardly be translated as a “small cup”. The point is that Afrikaans diminutives frequently express an emotional attitude towards objects and people without reference to dimension. As such, endowing Oom Giepie with a “little paunch” and a “small chest” is not going to bestow the requisite adorability upon him. I have endeavoured to amend this by using words that evoke an analogous emotional attitude, while retaining the alliteration:

There he stood, Giepie Ollenwaar, in the middle of the hall, with his gold chain over his *tummy*, his *little old legs* in black trousers, shoulders crooked under his jacket, pigeon chest pouting behind the starched shirt front, toothless mouth agape in pure delight, the crow amidst the captivating lassies who *pawed, pulled, prodded, pinched and pestered* him to come out with the truth. (my italics; SDW 134)

I render “boerinetjies” as “lassies” both to elicit an equivalent emotional response (generally well disposed and somewhat patronising) and draw attention to their youth and vitality, in a way that “farm girls”, as “boerinetjies” is mostly rendered in SDA, does not. This helps especially with the ridiculous climax to the “ballet”: “Boerinetjies *bras croisés*, boerin-

netijies *en l'air*, boerinnetjies in arabesque, boerinnetjies dansend *la grâce sautée*, boerinnetjies in pirouette, boerinnetjies *sur les pointes*, boerinnetjies aanbiddend *demi-bras*" (SD 67). Here, SDA overcompensates by rendering "boerinnetjies" as "elfin farm girls" (SDA 67).

Another transitional rhyming passage ("hier" ... "vier" ... "Silberstein" ... "Oppenheim") heralds the appearance of the two Misses Silberstein with Brutus the bull, to the jubilation of the crowd. Dries van Schalkwyk whips the assembled farmers up into a frenzy with a speech alternating between impish humour and utter seriousness. Now Leroux deploys one of his incantatory key words. Now is the time for "erns".

After making a silly joke, Dries, in a prelude to his homage to Oom Giepie, dispels the levity: "In alle erns ..." SDA provides a perfectly natural choice: "But seriously ..." But did Eglington watch Leroux closely enough? Four short paragraphs later: "Erns, erns, erns vir Dries met die wit lig in sy oë en die liefde in sy hart ... Erns vir die dinamiek, erns vir die gebrokenheid, erns vir die geduld ... Erns vir die toeval ..." (SD 64-65). No fewer than seven repetitions of the same word in the same paragraph. Clearly (since there are synonyms for "erns" in Afrikaans) the repetition is intentional. Why, then, does Eglington render this as follows: "Quiet now, quiet, quiet – for Dries ... Quiet now for dynamics, for brokenness ... Quiet now for chance ..." (SDA 65)?

The original paragraph admittedly sits oddly in the text. Dries begins his speech in quotation marks but the second paragraph, which appears to be direct speech, lacks quotation marks, as does the third. The paragraph in which "erns" is repeated seven times comes after some further applause. It has the effect of focusing attention on the reaction of the crowd to Dries (the "erns" is "vir Dries", not Oom Giepie): the crowd responds with utter seriousness to the varied, and manic, moods of Dries, the fanatical cattle breeder. However, the choice of "Quiet now" in the first translation achieves a different effect: it is as though an appeal for respectful silence is being made to the crowd (but by whom?). The idea that the crowd is hanging on Dries's every word, the image of the utterly serious expressions on the faces of the crowd (consisting of staid farmers, florid farmers' wives, and their ballet-dancing daughters) is therefore lost, with an overall loss of comic effect. (This loss of effect is



compounded by the choice of “dynamics” for “dinamiek”, invoking music instead of dynamism.)

Therefore *SDW* uses “gravity” (chosen instead of “seriousness” for the sake of a sharper rhythm) and maintains the thread between the first note of gravity (“With due gravity ...”) and the abovementioned paragraph: “Gravity, gravity, gravity for Dries ... Gravity for the dynamism ... Gravity for the accident that defies reason – for the uncertainty, the doubt, the disillusionment, the frustration, the flitting butterfly dream of creation” (136).

Nor is this the last use of the “erns”. After impishly describing Brutus’ secret imperfection (“Ek weet nie of oom Giepie my sal skiet, maar...” (*SD* 65)) Dries switches back – “... met erns, met blitssnel erns” – to a eulogy of Brutus. (Here *SDA* adheres to the serious tone (“... seriously, with lightning seriousness”)<sup>13</sup> but does not build on anything.) The Afrikaans text builds up into a veritable Dionysiac frenzy in which “erns” develops into “entoesiasme” – “enthusiasm” in the sense of the Greek “enthousiasmos” (“divine inspiration”, from “enthousiazein”, “be inspired or possessed by a god, be rapt, be in ecstasy”). Unfortunately “enthusiasm” lacks the force, today, of such equivalents as “ecstasy” and “rapture”; I have settled for “rapture”.<sup>14</sup>

Then Oom Giepie takes the stage, to the accompaniment of the previously mentioned balletic paroxysm, and makes an incomprehensible speech; the frenzy subsides and everyone lines up in orderly fashion for the group photograph, obedient to the commands of the photographers: “Erns asseblief” (*SD* 68). Finally the group in all its variety, “oortroon deur die kolossale bul... behaal ... die vereiste patron van erns” (*SD* 69) – at which, in grotesque counterpoint, the spell is broken by Brutus, Henry’s bovine counterpart, who signals “sy swygsame protes na bowe aan” (*SD* 69) in an echo of Henry’s imitation of Job’s outcry to God in the “kamer van afsondering”.

The problem presented by the multiple, rhythmic, ironic repetitions of the key word “erns” is therefore clear: although “erns” and “gravity” do not sound or mean in exactly the

<sup>13</sup> I suspect that “blitssnel erns” is an untranslatable cultural reference to the “ligte, liggende erns” of Van Wyk Louw: “Die erns self was wel altyd byna onopgemerk ’n gas in die geselskap, maar watter lieflike maskers kan sy dra ... die ligte, liggende erns.” (5)

<sup>14</sup> Similarly, “enthusiasm” lacks the zeal implicit in the title of Vertov’s musically structured cinematic paean to Soviet industrialisation, *Entuziasm* (1930).

same way, they perform precisely the same structural function. Therefore, in *SDW*, structural unity is privileged above all other concerns and “erns” is rendered as “gravity” throughout the passage.

### *Sustaining the Image*

In this final section a key motif, the image of the vortex, is examined, taking into account its structural function in *SD* and tracing the extent to which it remains visible in translation.

The vortex motif is first encountered on the first day, in Mrs Silberstein's dance:

Die slank Mrs Silberstein het op 'n heel besondere wyse daarin geslaag om van Jock ontslae te word. Sy het meteens haar hoof op sy linkerskouer laat rus, haar lyf ledemaat vir ledemaat teen syne gedruk en hom, op die maat van die musiek wat ongemerk in tempo toegeneem het, gewil om haar al in die rondte te draai, teen die beweging van die klok, totdat hulle naderhand met verblindende snelheid één geword het in die kringloop. In die warreling kan mens haar hare sien waai soos 'n swart spreid uit die vortex van hulle bewegings terwyl die twee gesigte, manlike en vroulik, eers kenbaar is en dan onsydig word. Rond en rond, wilder en wilder beweeg hulle totdat die bewegings afneem en verflou en in die middel van die draaikolk die powerede manlike bruut meteens materialiseer en tot stilstand kom, terwyl sy self langzaam die maalstroom om hom voltooi, al wyer en wyer, tot voor J.J. wat met regte tydsberekening, en op pas van die veranderde maat, haar in sy arms neem en walsend op die vloer verdwyn. (*SD* 20-21)

Slim Mrs Silberstein had succeeded, in a quite remarkable manner, of ridding herself of Jock. She suddenly rested her forehead on his shoulder, pressed her body against his and, to the measure of the music which had imperceptibly increased in tempo, compelled him to spin her round and round, anti-clockwise, until at last their dazzling speed merged them together in the spin. Her hair could be seen waving like a black scarf from the vortex of their movement; the two faces, male and female, were at first recognisable and then became neuter. Round and round, more and more wildly they moved, until the movement decreased and flagged and at the centre of the vortex the poor masculine brute suddenly materialised and came to a standstill, while she herself slowly finished whirling around him, in widening circles, until she reached J.J who, with perfect timing and to the changed measure, took her in his arms and disappeared, waltzing (*SDA* 21).

Slender Mrs Silberstein had found an extraordinary way to give Jock the slip. Suddenly resting her forehead on his left shoulder, she thrust her body against his limb for limb and, to the rhythm of the music, whose pace had picked up imperceptibly, coerced him to whirl her around and around, widdershins, until at last

with blinding speed they spun into one being. In the swirl her hair looked like a black fan fluttering from the vortex of their movements as the two faces, male and female, at first mutually distinct, became unsexed. Round and round they went, wilder and wilder, until the movements abated, ebbing until, in the eye of the whirlpool, suddenly the wretched male brute materialised and came to a standstill, while she leisurely completed the maelstrom around him, spiralling outwards until she ran into J.J., who, with exact timing, and to the rhythm of the new beat, took her in his arms and waltzed her away onto the floor and out of sight. (*SDW* 95)

Read sentence by sentence against *SD*, *SDA* lacks certain signposts as to how the scene should function:

Die slank Mrs Silberstein het op 'n heel besondere wyse daarin geslaag om van Jock ontslae te word. (*SD*)

Slim Mrs Silberstein had succeeded, in a quite remarkable manner, of ridding herself of Jock. (*SDA*)

Slender Mrs Silberstein had found an extraordinary way to give Jock the slip. (*SDW*)

Here the main issue is rhythm. In *SD* the fluent syntax allows the reader swiftly to get through the sentence and proceed to the next part of the dance; in *SDA* an awkward phrase set off with commas slows the rhythm down.

Sy het meteens haar hoof op sy linkerskouer laat rus, haar lyf ledemaat vir ledemaat teen syne gedruk en hom, op die maat van die musiek wat ongemerk in tempo toegeneem het, gewil om haar al in die rondte te draai, teen die beweging van die klok, totdat hulle naderhand met verblindende snelheid één geword het in die kringloop (*SD*).

She suddenly rested her forehead on his shoulder, pressed her body against his and, to the measure of the music which had imperceptibly increased in tempo, compelled him to spin her round and round, anti-clockwise, until at last their dazzling speed merged them together in the spin. (*SDA*)

Suddenly resting her forehead on his left shoulder, she had thrust her body against his limb for limb and, to the rhythm of the music, whose pace had picked up imperceptibly, coerced him to whirl her around and around, widdershins, until at last

with blinding speed they spun into one being. (*SDW*)

In *SD* the detail, omitted in *SDA*, that it is precisely Jock's left shoulder that Mrs Silberstein rests her head upon signposts the "sinister" quality of the dance.

The phrase "ledemaat vir ledemaat" provides a very graphic image of the intensity of Mrs Silberstein's sensual control over Jock and adds to her characterisation as a witch. Its omission in *SDA* not only deprives the scene of a powerful erotic overtone, but also detracts from certain of Jock's subsequent utterances in her regard: references to witchcraft: "Sy kan op vyftig maniere die aiguillette knop"; naked sexual torment: "Lilith!"<sup>15</sup> In addition, the ridiculousness of Jock's affair with Professor Dreyer's dumpy wife is in direct proportion to the intensity of Mrs Silberstein's erotic aura: it is up to the translator to ensure that each contrary is at maximum pitch.

The presence in *SD* of alliteration ("maat ... musiek"; "tempo toegeneem") and half rhyme ("wat ... het") drives the rhythm; in *SDA*, the vowels drag ("measure ... music"; "imperceptibly increased in tempo"). Then there is the prosody of "teen die beweging van die klok", which, having the same syllable count as the adverbial "al in die rondte te draai" (instead of using a shorter phrase like simply "teen die klok"), emphasises the rhythm of the dance while insistently drawing the reader's attention to its "sinister" direction. The flatly literal "anti-clockwise" does not attempt to match this prosody; it also misses the opportunity to capitalise on that "linkerskouer" and emphasise the direction of the movement. "Anti-clockwise" on its own lacks any sinister connotation; "counter-clockwise" does not improve matters much. Fortunately "widdershins" has explicit pagan connotations, so while in *SDW* the dance does not replicate the original, the sinister quality is saved.

The dynamic image in *SD* emphasises the dancers' becoming one (*één*), literally illustrating the conjunction of opposites like a figure-ground vase, and prefiguring the ultimate union of Henry and Salome. In *SDA* the focus is lost in a sort of kinetic blur. *SDW* restores the emphasis on unity, enabling the scene to be read against, for example, the bottling plant scene in Chapter Four, when the red and gold bottles of wine are mechanically (and parod-

<sup>15</sup> Jung describes Lilith as "a satanic correspondence to Sophia" (*Answer to Job* 37), Sophia or Wisdom being one of the attributes of Salome.

ically) united to receive their labels from the iron hands, in the same way that Henry and Salome will receive a new “label” (and commercial value) when they are married.

In die warreling kan mens haar hare sien waai soos ‘n swart spreid uit die vortex van hulle bewegings terwyl die twee gesigte, manlike en vroulik, eers kenbaar is en dan onsydig word. (SD)

Her hair could be seen waving like a black scarf from the vortex of their movement; the two faces, male and female, were at first recognisable and then became neuter. (SDA)

In the swirl her hair looked like a black fan fluttering from the vortex of their movements as the two faces, male and female, at first mutually distinct, became unsexed. (SDW)

Here SDA condenses “warreling” and “vortex” into “vortex”. Quite possibly the translator thought that one vortex was enough for this sentence: why belabour the point? However, in SD, “warrel” emphasises the nature of the dancers’ movements, while “vortex” emphasises that *their dance is taking place within a vortex*. SDW restores this dual emphasis.

Furthermore, the weight carried by the dynamic image of the male and female faces losing their sexual difference cannot be emphasised too strongly. The reduction of a sharply delineated binary image to a formless blur is a condensation of the concept of the withdrawal of Good and Evil into “formlessness” and “facelessness”: “the formlessness of evil”, “the facelessness of Being”; the notion is to be encountered frequently in Jock’s subsequent perorations, as accompanied by the learned commentary of Dr Johns and Mr Justice O’Hara. It is also the forerunner of a number of literally and figuratively “two-faced” images, from the twin devils on Henry’s bedside when he wakes up on day two, to the irreconcilable ambiguity of the little old woman and her harlot-virgin daughter on the morning of day seven. In this light I feel that “mutually distinct” does a better job of emphasising the duality of the

two faces *as faces* than “recognisable”, which risks suggesting that it is the spectators’ ability to recognise Jock and Mrs Silberstein as individuals that is at issue, rather than the binary opposition that the withdrawal of their male and female identities obliterates.

Rond en rond, wilder en wilder beweeg hulle totdat die bewegings afneem en verflou en in die middle van die draaikolk die powere manlike bruut meteens materialiseer en tot stilstand kom, terwyl sy self langsaam die maalstroom om hom voltooi, al wyer en wyer, tot voor J.J. wat met regte tydsberekening, en op pas van die veranderde maat, haar in sy arms neem en walsend op die vloer verdwyn. (SD)

Round and round, more and more wildly they moved, until the movement decreased and flagged and at the centre of the vortex the poor masculine brute suddenly materialised and came to a standstill, while she herself slowly finished whirling around him, in widening circles, until she reached J.J who, with perfect timing and to the changed measure, took her in his arms and disappeared, waltzing. (SDA)

Round and round they went, wilder and wilder, until the movements abated, ebbing until, at the still point of the whirlpool, suddenly the wretched male brute materialised and came to a standstill, while she leisurely completed the maelstrom around him, spiralling outwards until she ran into J.J., who, with exact timing, and to the rhythm of a different beat, took her in his arms and waltzed her away onto the floor and out of sight. (SDW)

This passage offers the opportunity to capitalise on the connotations of “afneem” and “verflou” in relation to the hydraulic vortical images of “draaikolk” and “maalstroom”; “abate” and “ebb” are both more suggestive and concrete with regard to nature imagery than the somewhat flat “decrease” and “flag”. The latter especially, with its anthropocentric overtone of “flagging spirits”, detracts from the sense, introduced by the previous sentence’s image of becoming-faceless, that the dancers have entirely lost their humanity, turning into forces of nature.

It is unclear why SDA abandons the image of “completing the maelstrom” —Leroux’s imagery makes it clear that Jock has emerged from the vortex stripped of potency and humanity (reduced to a “poor masculine brute” in anticipation of Brutus the silently bellowing bull, in Chapter Three), while Mrs Silberstein remains as powerful a force of nature as ever, with the ability to keep the vortex going (“complete the maelstrom”) on her own terms

("leisurely"). Finally, the translated sentence ends weakly because it follows the original sentence too closely: "walsend" has an adverbial function; "he waltzingly disappeared" would sound odd, and the clumsy compromise of splicing "disappeared" off from "waltzing" invites the reader to imagine J.J. continuing to waltz after having disappeared.

Why all the fuss about the vortex? Kannemeyer has shown that it is a key structuring device: the vortex of Mrs Silberstein's dance anticipates, and must be read against, the vortex form of the labelling scene in the bottling plant on the morning of day four (*Op weg na Welgevonden* 74). Red and white wine bottles on different conveyor belts glide "tot by 'n sentrale punt waar hulle skielik swenk en 'n sirkelgang begin, rakelings by mekaar verby, al nouer wordend met die teken van Ubu, beurtelings verenig op dieselfde band, tot by die naaf waar 'n goue bottel en 'n rooi bottel in sy naaktheid vir 'n oomblik skitter en dan deur twee ysterhande omvat word" (*SD* 74) to receive a label. The spiral motion of the bottles recalls Mrs Silberstein's dance, but in the opposite direction. Mrs Silberstein moves counter-clockwise, withdrawing from Jock in ever-widening circles; the bottles spiral inwards until they receive the "House of Silberstein" label at the centre of the vortex. This procedure is described in erotic terms: "Dis 'n vaardige beweging wat geen minnaar kan nadoen nie; dit duur slegs 'n sekonde, dan maak die hande oop en is die skaamte bedek deur 'n etiket van Welgevonden." According to Kannemeyer, the personification and eroticism refers back to Mrs Silberstein's dance with Jock (*Op weg na Welgevonden* 30), while the mechanical quality anticipates Henry's sexual initiation by the young prostitute.

Kannemeyer points out further that the exact meaning of these two scenes in relation to each other can only be clarified with reference to the "teken van Ubu", Ubu being Jarry's Père Ubu, "die prototipe van die karikaturale burger wat afwisselend gekenmerk word deur sy dwaasheid en boosheid, sy lafheid en sy onbedwonge heerssug", who appears as chief protagonist in *Ubu Roi* and other plays. The sign of Ubu itself refers to the *Grande gidouille* – the spiral that appears on Ubu's belly (31) (see Illustration 1).



*Véritable Portrait de Monsieur Ubu.*

*Illustration 1: Jarry's drawing of Ubu. Source: Wikipedia.*

Kannemeyer also reveals that the Ubu-spiral reappears with reference to “die kalidoskopiese kamer van pataphysique met die teken van Ubu” and maintains that Leroux explicitly links the spiral with Jarry’s concept of “pataphysics”, a sort of science “wat uit die humor en selfs die grap ontstaan”, thus a science of comedy, as it were, culminating in the disintegration of the human being in its various dispositions, as experienced one after another in life. From these disintegrated elements springs another life that pushes past the absurd and offers humanity a new integral dimension (*Op weg na Welgevonden* 31).

Hugill supports Kannemeyer's assertion by saying that “the *gidouille* has become a general symbol of pataphysics, not least because drawing the spiral in fact creates two spirals: the one that is drawn and the one that is described by what is drawn. This echoes the plus-minus, or that which is and that which is not, in simultaneous existence. In pataphysics, mutually exclusive opposites can and do co-exist” (6).

A prime example of the coexistence of mutually exclusive opposites occurs in the *Walpurgisnacht* episode. After smearing himself with hallucinatory ointment, Henry experiences both “die herhaling van die ambisies van die gevalle engel: EK IS teenoor die vernietigende versag van God” and “'n algehele vernietiging in homself ... die ontmoontlike EK IS NIE” (*SD* 130).

It therefore seems Kannemeyer is correct in saying that Leroux connects the sign of



Ubu and the concept of pataphysics in the two aforementioned scenes. As Kannemeyer describes, the bottles in the fourth chapter spiral independently of each other (in a disintegrated fashion) towards the centre in order to receive a label, a “uniform” that gives them a new dimension. Mrs Silberstein, on the other hand, moves away from a condition of order (“burgerlikheid”) until she ends up in front of J.J. in a completely “disintegrated” manner. The bottles follow an orderly sequence; Mrs Silberstein’s dance is chaotic, a fact emphasised by its counter-clockwise direction – the direction of death and evil in traditional mythology. This alternation between order and chaos effected by the Ubuesque movements is the basic structural pattern of the whole of Chapter Four, culminating in the multiracial gathering of the fourth day (*Op weg na Welgevonden* 32).

In this last passage, the scene of “Spiritual Rearmament”, the vortex motif recurs in the guise of a conga line. Vortex references are dispersed throughout the scene, but the link with the Ubu room is clearly established in the first instance because the movement of the crowd is described in the same terms as the aforementioned spiralling bottles that glide “tot by 'n sentrale punt”: “'n Hele groep het nou 'n conga-ry gevorm en hulle beweeg al in die rondte tot by 'n sentrale punt” (*SD* 87, my emphasis). To signal the affinity between the two scenes, precisely the same phrasing should be used in both. In *SDA* the phrasing differs only slightly (the bottles move “to a central point”; the group of dancers moves around “towards a central point”) but the effect of identical phrasing is nonetheless lost.

The next link comes a few paragraphs on: “Sy wys na die sirkelgang wat die hele kamer betrek en aan hulle pluk om deel te word” (*SD* 87), rendered in *SDA* thus: “She indicated the circle of people who filled the room and tugged at them to join in” (87). “Sirkelgang” is precisely the same word used to describe the motion of the bottles (“... hulle swenk en 'n sirkelgang begin”): the suspicions of the attentive reader, alerted by “tot by 'n sentrale punt”, that something significant is taking place, are now confirmed. The translation should also establish a link between the two scenes with preferably identical phrasing. In *SDA* the bottles “swerved and began a circular course”, but “the circle of people” does not work as hard as “sirkelgang”: the sense of circular motion is not reinforced, the link not clearly established. Furthermore, “sirkelgang” has a depersonalised quality whereby the people are

reduced to pure movement (like Mrs Silberstein and Jock becoming one being in their dance); in *SDA* “the circle of people” lacks the sense of mechanical unity. *SDW* combines the sense of circular motion with a vortical image that also refers back to Mrs Silberstein's dance, linking the various vortices together: “She pointed at the maelstrom filling the whole room and plucking at them to join in” (157).

Henry is now sucked into the vortex of a cosmopolitan conga line. The specific nationalities are iterated, each on a separate line – a typographic quirk that draws attention to their individuality, like the individual bottles before their encounter with the iron hands. Then: “Die conga-ry bereik die middelpunt en ontbind in 'n chaos van begrip” (*SD* 88). This sentence completes the figure of the conga line as vortex. The contrast between the disintegration of the conga line and the orderly “integration” of the bottles by the iron hands calls for interpretation. Apartheid, an ideology which sought to preserve the “individuality” of races, is reflected in the bottling scene; however, the fact that this orderly procedure takes place precisely beneath “the sign of Ubu” is an uncomfortable reminder of the greed and destruction underlying such order-obsessed projects as apartheid and Auschwitz alike. On the other hand, the conga line scene reflects the new world order towards which Henry is moving, a world informed by an ideology of equality that tends to cancel out differences, yielding conceptual formlessness, “'n chaos van begrip” that echoes the pataphysical concept of equivalence: “In a world of particulars, no one thing is more significant than any other: they are all equivalent” (Hugill 162).

This interpretation is not possible in *SDA*, in which “begrip” is rendered as “understanding”: “The conga line reached the hub and dissolved in a chaos of understanding.” *SDW* preserves the “chaos van begrip”: “The conga-line reached the centre and disintegrated into conceptual chaos” (158).

The final appearance of the vortex motif in the “Spiritual Rearmament” section underscores its relationship with the sign of Ubu. After the excitement of the conga:

'n Stilte daal op die vertrek, die bewegings verstar tweeledig in prente van segregasie en integrasie, figuratief en nie-figuratief, in blokke van goed en kwaad, in fragmente

waar goed en kwaad onsigbaar inmekaar geweef is, in 'n mosaïk wat met die conga-ry die sirkelgang na binne vorm, in die Ubu-drol van lewende gesigte na bo verhewe. (*SD* 90)

Silence settled on the room, all movement arrested to contrasting pictures of segregation and integration, figurative and non-figurative, to blocs of good and evil, to fragments where good and evil were invisibly entwined, to a mosaic which, with the congo-row, turned the circle inwards, to the Ubu-turd of lifted, living faces. (*SDA* 91-92)

Silence descended on the room, the movements petrified into binaries, into pictures of segregation and integration, figurative and non-figurative, into blocks of good and evil, into fragments where good and evil were invisibly interwoven, into a mosaic that, with the conga-line, formed the spiral circling inward, into the Ubu-pschitt of uplifted living faces. (*SDW* 161)

Here, in extremely condensed form, Leroux shows his writerly hand with an image that exemplifies his use of alternating polarities to drive his narrative and call attention to his narrative structure at the same time. *SDW* accentuates this dual tendency this by using “binaries” to foreground the “tweeledig” aspect of the imagery. Furthermore, *SDW* makes the connection with Ubu more explicit in two ways. First, the spiral imagery, implicit in “die sirkelgang na binne” but not necessarily in the *SDA* expression “turned the circle inwards”, is made explicit (“the circle spiralling inward”). This reminds one of Ubu's *gidouille*, or belly spiral (as mentioned previously), which in turn helps make sense of the expression “Ubu-drol”. This seems to refer to the word “merdre”, the famous opening line of *Ubu Roi* and a deformation of the word “merde” (“shit”). To draw attention to this reference, *SDW* uses Connolly and Watson-Taylor's seminal translation of “merdre”, namely, “pschitt” (Jarry 21). This conveys the literal meaning of “drol”, while also furnishing the reader with a clue as to the syllable's extra-textual significance. At the same time it points back to the intra-textual, vortical Ubu references as mentioned previously in this chapter. Consequently I feel that the “Ubu-turd” of *SDA* is insufficiently explicit in this regard.

Overall, Eglington's handling of the recursive vortex motif reflects a sentence-by-sentence approach rather than one informed by an appreciation of the structural qualities of the images employed by Leroux to create a tight unity within a text infused by the same spiral

motion that “runs seamlike through pataphysics, evoking its energy, timelessness, headiness, absurdity and self-contradictions” (Hugill 7).

## CONCLUSION

### Reading Leroux today

Responding to the question of what function and importance Afrikaans writing might have in the 1980s, “deze tijd van spanning en geweld”, Ester distinguishes between three writerly functions. The *Zola function* brings to light facets of social reality that would otherwise remain hidden, unmasking social appearances, exposing social injustice and enlisting the emotions so as to engage the reader with the events described; Ester mentions Brink as being read in Europe “vanuit die verwachting”. The proscopic *Orwell function* attempts to extrapolate future events from the present; Nadine Gordimer's *July's People* and (possibly) J.M. Coetzee's *The Life and Times of Michael K.* are examples of this type. Ester says that the *Kafka function* brings to light phenomena that have withdrawn from the surface of social and political life: “die zich aan de waarneming via de oppervlakte van het sociale en politieke leven onttrekken ... die voor het gevoel een uitermate belangrijke rol spelen, maar die niet door de zeef van het geordende menselijke bewustzijn weten door te dringen” (105-6).

Leroux falls squarely within the Kafka category. What Todorov has to say about Kafka's *Metamorphosis* applies equally to *SD*: “One might certainly suggest several allegorical interpretations of the text; but the text itself offers no explicit indication which would confirm any of them” (172).

Both Kafka and Leroux produced what might be termed post-fantastic literature. As Todorov explains, the fantastic novel of yesteryear, in which the reader is confronted by a supernatural event that threatens to destabilise the otherwise given, natural world, is replaced, after Freud, by texts in which (Todorov quotes Sartre) “there is now only one fantastic object: man. Not the man of religions and spiritualisms, only half committed to the world of the body, but man-as-given, man-as-nature, man-as-society, the man who takes off his hat when a hearse passes, who kneels in churches, who marches behind a flag” (173); now the reader is confronted “with a generalized fantastic which swallows up the entire world of the book and the reader along with it” (174).

Small wonder that such writing is anathema to advocates of committed literature.

However, with the demise of apartheid, the committed texts of yesteryear are steadily losing their relevance. As Cornwell explains:

The problem with texts that perform the politically useful function of supplementing history ('committed' literature, *littérature engagée*) is that they are in a sense incomplete without the history that they are supplementing: they require a real-world context coeval with and identical to their representations in order to perform their referential-cum-ethical function of bearing witness. Once that context is removed ... it is as if the text is deprived of a crucial and even life-sustaining support. This seems the most obvious explanation for why so much South African writing dating from the decades of oppression and resistance now seems irredeemably dull, stale, flat, clichéd, melodramatic, or sensational—dead, or just plain bad; of continuing value, like a corpse in a mortuary, only as a source of forensic evidence for the crime of which it is the product. (8-9)

Jean Sévry raised the same issue three decades ago in an interview with J.M. Coetzee:

J.S.: What I feel about South African literature in most cases, it's so closely associated with a realistic situation that the tale gets stuck in the situation, and with very little use of the metaphor, which is not the case with Etienne Leroux. And I feel that your work is a prolongation of this trend: one can read your novels as South African stories, but in fact I think they could take place at any time, anywhere, and that is rather uncommon in the history of South African writing; but I don't know whether you'd agree with that?

Coetzee: I certainly do agree that Leroux chose an interesting avenue for getting away from precisely the phenomenon that you have described: of being so closely stuck in a particular social and historical situation that as soon as history moves even a centimeter, very little of the book is left. I think Leroux chose an interesting avenue for getting away from that particular mode of realism. It is quite right that the mode that I have chosen is very similar to what Leroux has been doing, but at the same time I say I don't find any affiliation between Leroux and myself. I didn't get there by reading Leroux. (qtd. in Ester 109)

Leroux does, however, appear on the reading list Coetzee gave his students during his tenure in Texas (Kannemeyer, *Coetzee* 177).

Ester states that Leroux's work has a singular way of combining various approaches to reality in such a way that they undercut each other. Constantly distancing himself from the claims the various approaches have on the real, Leroux unmasks his own images as ima-

ginary images of reality. The reader is addressed on different levels of understanding which tend to undermine each other, eliminating any fixed point of reference. Leroux unmask reality as a manipulated reality, or, more neutrally, as imaginary. He does not provide social commentary that might offer a new perspective on humanity and history and that would provide “objective certainty” from a valid world view. Nor can salvation or redemption (“verlossing”) in Leroux be viewed as having genuine religious meaning: they are highly suspect concepts, pointing to human manipulation and not in any sense referring to the restoration of universal order (Ester 110-111).

Therefore, Ester claims, Leroux's work can be compared with that of Coetzee because it suspends univocal interpretation and is therefore unclassifiable, offering the reader only the appearance of the ability to neutralise the complexity of his imaginary representations into overarching social commentary. This can be done only in bad conscience, because it would be to attribute univocal meaning to a text with an open structure allowing for several interpretations simultaneously (111).

Against the univocal approach, one may invoke Iser: “Interpretation is an act of translation, the execution of which depends on the subject matter to be interpreted as well as on the context within which the activity takes place. Consequently, there are only variables of interpretation, conceived as iterations of translatability, and there can never be such a thing as *the* interpretation” (145).

Here Botha's remarks regarding *SD* are apposite: “Die roman bied nie moralistiese oplossings aan nie, hou eerder aan die leser die onsekerheid van morele keuses oor” (“Etienne Leroux” 594).

The reader stands in the same relation to Leroux's text as Henry van Eeden to the world of *Welgevonden*. Consider Henry's confusion in the face of the “warboel van standpunte,” the contradictory perspectives offered by his guides (Leroux's term is *meturgeman*, the person charged with interpreting the Hebrew of Scripture into Aramaic for the congregation), namely the gnostic Jock Silberstein (for whom evil is a positive force in its own right) and the peripatetics Dr Johns and Mr Justice O'Hara (for whom evil is *privatio boni*, deprivation of good). Henry's ultimate response is to resist the temptation to embrace a particular

worldview and develop his own approach to reading his environment. Jock's aggressive modernity can be contrasted to Henry's ultimate strategy of "geslepenheid" or cunning in the knowledge that "die natuur met sy oorvloedige bronne van skoonheid die uitweg bied wat jy self verkies" (*SD* 141). In other worlds, the world is a text that demands creative and performative interpretation.

It is for such reasons that Leroux remains eminently readable in a post(anti)apartheid world. As Cornwell remarks, quoting Thornton, "South Africa today is neither a colonial nor a postcolonial polity but a postmodern one. In this perspective, apartheid was a postcolonial system that, with its ambitious policies and social engineering and its aggressive administrative drive was 'a form of rampant modernism,' and 'post-Apartheid is therefore postmodern'" (5). If Cornwell is correct in saying "anyone familiar with the kaleidoscopic and often bizarre collage of styles, identifications, traditions and practices that constitute contemporary South African culture will recognize the unmistakable stamp of the postmodern" (5), then they will also recognise it in the bizarre, kaleidoscopic world of *Welgevonden*.

Yet *SD* should not be read solely within the confines of South African reality, but universally, as the author intended. It has often been remarked that *Welgevonden* constitutes a microcosm of society under apartheid. What remains is to relate that relationship to the relationship between apartheid and the world.

In an unpublished text written during the 1970s Leroux predicted, "Apartheid will still be in the order of the day—but not based on the pigmentation of one's skin; rather on the position one has in the hierarchy of the year 2000" (qtd. in Kannemeyer: *Leroux* 541).

This insight is extended globally by Land:

For the purposes of understanding the complex network of race, gender and class oppressions that constitute our global modernity it is very rewarding to attend to the evolution of the apartheid policies in the South African regime, since apartheid is directed towards the construction of a microcosm of the neo-colonial order; a recapitulation of the world in miniature. [...] World opinion discriminates between the relation South African whites have to the blacks they employ, and the relation North American whites, for instance, have to the Third World labour force they employ (directly or indirectly), because it acknowledges an indissoluble claim upon the entire South African land-mass by a population sharing an internationally recognized national identity. [However,] the Third World as a whole is the product



of a successful – though piecemeal and largely unconscious – 'bantustan' policy on the part of the global Kapital metropolis. (57)

Apartheid has become a global metaphor in films such as Blomkamp's *District 9* and *Elysium*. In a review of the latter, Mueller writes: “[T]he overt authoritarianism of apartheid bi-politics (where blacks were denied citizenship, had their movement strictly controlled and had a life expectancy at least a decade shorter than whites) hasn’t been abolished. Instead, it’s been globalized, covered with a thin neoliberal veneer of market and meritocracy.”

Pilger states: “The racist theory of 'separate development' has followed a line that runs from De Beers’s earliest monopolies to Marikana today. It is inspired by a global order of 'free markets' upheld by force. [...] The murder of 34 miners by the South African police ... puts paid to the illusion of post-apartheid democracy and illuminates the new, worldwide apartheid of which South Africa is both a historic and contemporary model.”

In the light of these remarks, far from being the imaginary site of an escapist fantasy irrelevant to the South African liberation struggle, Welgevonden can now be read as the microcosm of a world in which “racism ... is the real condition of persistence for a global economic system that is dependent upon an aggregate price of labour approximating to the cost of its bare subsistence, and therefore upon an expanding pool of labour power which must be constantly 'stimulated' into this market by an annihilating poverty” (Land 76).

It is perhaps in this sense that Jock Silberstein's enigmatic statement to Henry, upon entering the bottling hall at Welgevonden, is best understood. In a scene with a row of Coloured girls in white down one side and a row of white girls in brown down the other (reminiscent of Tretchikoff's *Black and White*<sup>16</sup>):

“Apartheid,” said Jock Silberstein. “Complete apartheid. Whatever the opinion of the world, it's closer to the spirit of the times than people think. It's an individual contribution to the whole, conserving the underlying identity so as to reach the general goal.” He gave Henry a cheery smile. “I find it poetic” (SDW 144).

<sup>16</sup> A caption in Lamprecht states: “In 1959, at the height of apartheid, Tretchikoff produced *Black and White*, which showed half the face of a white woman and half the face of a black woman, their features matching exactly. The painting raised a storm of controversy in South Africa” (44). In *SD*, the “simboliek van die orgidee op die trap, die vars druppel water, die vergane tooisels en die sigaretstompies” (15) clearly refers to Tretchikoff's *Lost Orchid*, with its orchid, drop of water, faded ribbons and cigarette butt (see Lamprecht 204).

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## **PART TWO**

Etienne Leroux

# SEVEN DAYS WITH THE SILBERSTEINS

Translated by Greg Penfold

*There is no such farm as Welgevonden.*

*All characters are imaginary.*

*The events are of dubious authenticity.*

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DEDICATED TO  
MARIANNA AND ALEXANDER PODLASHUC

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*"We're not alone," said Jock Silberstein.*

*"Our sense that we share a collective stake in the fate of humankind grows stronger every day. Loneliness is the nostalgia, the pain we feel in witnessing the false image of the individual disappear piece by piece with the expansion of our new insight."*

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Dance of the Rich*

#### I

The Van Eedens felt that the time had come for their only son to marry a person worthy of their class in other respects. The young man, thank God, had been brought up worldly-wise enough to know that love comes into play only in the last resort. The name Salome was named and after frank deliberation declared acceptable. An uncle of the sprig in question was picked to pave the way and, where necessary, lend a hand in this ticklish question of a social contract set against a background of unforeseeable human relations. The uncle's name was J.J. van Eeden, bachelor and boulevardier; the young man's name was Henry.

Just then they were heading for the Silbersteins, where they were to spend a week. J.J. was wearing a tweed suit with accessories: pipe, tobacco, silk handkerchief and scarf. He gave off a fragrance of pine needles. Henry drove the Riley with an artlessness in which luck was hard to tell apart from skill. The Boland landscape of vineyards, mountains, trees and convivial streams all added to the décor. They rapidly drew near the estate overlooking a valley.

The entrance gate was formed of two massive white-washed pillars flanked by white-washed ring walls like two arms wrapped around the Silbersteins' earthly possessions as far as the horizon. The name of the farm was set inside a stainless steel frame; in Gothic iron letters there appeared the legend: Welgevonden. The way to the house was tarred, winding calculatedly between old Cape Dutch slave quarters on one side and old Cape Dutch stables on the other. The doors looked like stinkwood, the roofs were newly thatched and raised, the stepped gables were rounded at the top and adorned with grape motifs, putti and cornucopia. The gable of the main house itself was a poem of scrolls, waves and whitewash. There were intriguing nooks and walkways leading nowhere, and quaint old wooden ladders hinting at lofts, and colossal concrete blocks with crossbeams

for vine trellises, and heavy wooden doors with heavy bronze knobs and ornamental knockers. There were huge palms, cypresses, oaks, loquat trees, peach trees, beeches, rubber trees and walnut trees. There was bougainvillea, cascading red and purple over low walls that materialised unexpectedly and ran abruptly into cast iron lanterns. There were footpaths meandering inaccessibly under overhanging greenery, an ivy-covered tennis court with a roller in the corner, tattered net, faded lines and a completely overgrown pagoda, and there were artistic little fountains of irregular shape with pixies and crazy little walls. The Riley came to a stylish halt and J.J. and Henry got out, slightly disoriented, the way one all too often feels upon arrival at someone else's place – a moment of introspection, of discouragement, of what am I doing here? Where am I going?

A keyhole escutcheon with a leaf motif shone against the front door in the late afternoon sun. "Looks like a womb," said J.J. He lifted the heavy dragon knocker and rapped on the door with just the right amount of firmness, neither too peremptory nor too discreet – as befitting a man of class attuned since infancy to the refined musicality of self-announcement.

First the top door half opened and a young Coloured woman, her starched cap and white fichu making her small, thin, half Asiatic face look even thinner, looked out high-spiritedly at the two men who with proper nonchalance were blinding themselves in the rays of the setting sun. Then the bottom door half opened and they strolled under the baroque fanlight into the hallway where a singular domestic panorama caught their furtive attention for the instant before they would turn right into the voorkamer on the heels of the sideways-skipping little maid. Glazed blue and white brick tiles stretched the length of the hallway up to a bay window admitting violet light through elegant panes. Four Persian carpets, finely woven of silk, intensely floral, covered the whole floor: square, oblong, square, oblong. A yellow-wood Cape armoire, top curve carved with feathers, stood against the wall on the right; a concavo-convex wall cupboard on the left; a small Epstein sculpture on a low table further on and then, with Quaker simplicity, a pair of riempie chairs on either side.

In the voorhuis everyone stopped talking when the two of them came in – that instant of pregnant silence when people sum each other up most nicely, feeling for balance

along the imaginary axis between crass indifference and fawning subservience. In a corner chair, arms folded on her lap, sat the ugliest woman Henry had ever seen. A square jaw, adorned by a black mole from which curled a solitary hair, took aim at him from under the gun sights of two ebony eyes that fixed him and were to track his every movement for the rest of the evening. Beside her stood a slender woman in a black evening dress with silver sequins, her throat swan-white, her breasts half bare, her eyes bright with intense pleasure, as with outstretched arms she approached J.J. and draped herself around his hand.

“J.J.,” she said. “At long last. Are you tired? Are you thirsty?” She took a glass filled with light white wine from a nearby table and handed it to him. “You’ll be shown to your rooms in a moment. But first a little drink. Do you prefer red or white? I’ve had too much already, but what else is there to do at this time of the evening, when the sun is going down and boredom descends upon one ... Is *this* Henry?”

Henry was introduced to Mrs Silberstein. The Alice-in-Wonderland duchess snarled something from her chair and he was introduced to old Mrs Silberstein. She clasped him with both hands, pulled him closer and abruptly let go. “You’re short and skinny. I thought you would be taller. Good-for-nothing little goy.” “Mama! Mama!” said slender Mrs Silberstein, still cleaving to J.J., “Jock ... Henry,” and Jock stepped up, six foot four, elegant in tails, his features ruddy, his hands broad yet soft as they clasped Henry’s with the sensitivity of a pianist. “Miss Silberstein, Miss Silberstein,” and two mousy little women bounced up and down on their chairs in a far corner, surrounded by bottles, made merry by light wine they were drinking from their glasses like water.

“So,” said Jock. “Now you’ve met the whole Silberstein *ménage*.”

“Except for Salome,” said one of the little women and they doubled over on their chairs, tickled pink.

“That’s true,” said Jock and he put an arm around Henry’s shoulder, who felt like a child being embraced by its father. “Come sit next to me.” He peered out of the window. “Is that your car? Very nice.” He dug Henry in the ribs and suddenly went quiet.

J.J. and slender Mrs Silberstein, in the ring of light beneath a Martinus Smith candelabra, were enjoying the wine and each other’s company, while the others – the duchess with baleful eyes, the two drab little women with jolly poses – followed Henry’s every

move and response.

"It's a beautiful home," said Henry.

"Bought it fifteen years ago from the original owners," said Jock. "Spent a fortune just to sort the place out. Do you like the wine?"

He picked up one of the bottles; it was triangular with the name Welgevonden Riesling printed on a triangular label.

"Welgevonden wines are coming back into their own. We sold this same Riesling cheaply in an ordinary bottle and there was no market for it. Now ... " he put the bottle down, "in a triangular bottle and at four times the price, it's flying off the shelves. It's the psychological approach. Advertising, advertising and gimmicks, and then you can do a place like Welgevonden proud." He looked at Henry with approval. "I'm glad you appreciate old Cape Dutch homes. So many young people find them too inconvenient. We're trying to establish a way of life – like in the old Cape. A liberal way of life, stimulating and refined. We have guests every evening, you'll see tonight. Every evening of the week. This place is alive. Something, something is alive." He made a gesture. "Something is alive and as long there is life, Welgevonden will live. Nothing must ever stop running; there must always be something on the go. Listen! Do you hear that?" Henry heard a machine droning in the distance. "It's a big diesel generator for the lights. We get electricity from the city, but it's supplemented by our own plant. Welgevonden must always have something in operation. That's Welgevonden's heart beating. When that engine stops, another one starts up. It pumps out the swimming pool, cleans the water and refills it. When the pump stops, ventilators in the roof start to circulate the air. When that stops, the bottling plant starts up in the cellars, and so it goes on." He glowed with pleasure. "You must come round the farm with me tomorrow. The tractors make a racket, the brewery roars, the trucks bellow, the milk cans rattle, the waters murmur, the little birds chatter, Welgevonden's workers sing ... Wait, listen!" From the garden came a peacock's deathly scream. Jock drained his glass and slammed it down on the table. Then he lapsed into a brooding silence, shoulders hunched, chin resting on hand, elbow leaning on knee. "Goy," said the duchess. "Oh, shut up mother," said Jock. The two drab Misses Silberstein got more and more drunk and giggled musically. J.J. and the slender Mrs Silberstein ex-

changed calculating looks. Henry toyed with the wine and peered around the room.

He was twenty-seven years old and already trammelled in a pattern he neither could nor would control. Apart from love, he believed in everything: the value of religion, beauty, nature's influence on people, the state, the liberal conscience, the future of humanity, the imperishability of symbols, good order, courtesy, charity, security and the human species as the pinnacle of divine creation. It was time for him to marry, have children and perpetuate himself. Lovelessness is superseded by universal compassion; love is selfish. Henry van Eeden was an immaculate little robot, intentionally created by a sex act and properly conditioned. He was going to be coupled with Salome and all he knew of Salome was what J.J. had said: she had dark eyes.

Someone tapped him on the arm. It was Jock. "Sarie will show you to your room." He followed the serving girl down the hall to a room where a copper bed with hangings stood dead centre and a solitary wardrobe of Cape Flemish make awaited his clothes. She opened the window blind by pulling on a small chain that set in motion a catch *à la Provençale*. She pushed the frame up and the bushy garden blocked the view. She stood in the doorway, swaying, waiting, and, when he said nothing, she shut the door quietly behind her and trotted back to the Cape Dutch kitchen.

"A genial young man," said Jock.

"Well brought up," said slender Mrs Silberstein.

"Stylish and slender," said the two drab Misses Silberstein.

"Short," said the duchess. "Impotent."

"Seven days," said J.J. "That should be enough."

They clinked glasses.

"The guests will be here any minute," said slender Mrs Silberstein. "We have just enough time to get changed."

She looked longingly at J.J.

The voorkamer drained out and filled up again when a horde of serving girls in starched blue dresses and starched fichus, fine-featured, toothless, began tidying up, shifting things



back into place, polishing, sweeping and then bringing in all sorts of hors d'oeuvres : olives, fruit, clinking goblets, chicken, turkey, fish rolls, asparagus, herring and caviar.

In his room Henry had put on a tail suit and lit a cigarette. Outside the light-engine roared with thumping diesel noises. He sat bolt upright in a stinkwood chair and watched without any outward display of emotion as a bee struggled to escape through the window pane.

## II

A light rap on the door to announce that the guests had already gathered and Henry found his way to the transformed voorkamer, dazzlingly lit and filled with a bustling throng. He appeared in the doorway and everyone stopped talking. They looked at the young man with the angelic face in his black tails, cigarette in left hand, right hand calmly at his side. Everyone was wearing ordinary clothes: slender Mrs Silberstein in English tweed and flat shoes, the duchess with a headscarf and a shawl across her shoulders, Jock in a hacking jacket, J.J. jacketless with a silk scarf tucked into his shirt, the other guests relaxing in everyday casual wear. Then they all started talking again.

The Duchess clawed at Henry's arm. "*Sefer nashim, Hilkot issure biah ve-kaleë behemah.*"

She gave him a pointed look and vanished in the crowd.

He kept hearing the name Salome but he looked up there were usually several girls together, all of them with dark eyes.

He ended up with a group of men who escorted him to the bar in the corner where they poured themselves a stiff brandy each (Welgevonden Special). Somebody got Indian Tonic mixed up with soda, but everyone put the taste down to a particular quality of the house brandy – piquant, bitter-sweet, a subtle something in the aftertaste. They sniffed at the balloon glasses.

Henry was introduced to Dr Johns of Bishops court, Mr Justice O'Hara of Bishops court, Sir Henry Mandrake of Bishops court. They discussed water-skiing, tuna fishing, cricket and Margaret Armstrong-Jones. Women joined them and were embraced. Someone

served olives and asparagus; someone else, frikkadels; a third, chicken and turkey. Henry danced with an Italian contessa (six years in the country) who bashfully admitted to having six children. "How wonderful," said Henry. "I feel like a rabbit," she said. "Bloody *schmuck*," the duchess whispered in his ear and tickled his cheek with her mole. They roped him into discussing art: Tretchikoff and the rest. Someone explained to him the symbolism of the orchid on the steps, the drop of fresh water, the faded ribbons and the cigarette butt. Pleasure is even more fleeting than the lifespan of a plucked flower, the existence of a drop of water. A drunken blonde girl dragged Henry back to the dance, teased him with her gyrating pelvis, smeared his collar with rouge, prepared herself (through him) for someone else, quizzed him about Salome and vanished into the arms of a luxuriantly moustachioed rugger-bugger whose only talk was of fishing, sport and sex.

"*Nebelah*," hissed the duchess and drifted away into the stir.

One of the drab Misses Silberstein motioned for him to come and sit beside her.

"Salome," she said, "likes flowers and the veld. Early in the morning, when the dew is still on the grass, she walks in a light dress like a nymph across the valley. She loves animals and sings like a nightingale. She is delicate and timid like a little wild animal. Speak to her too coarsely and she'll be gone with the morning wind."

The other drab Miss Silberstein approached coyly and proceeded to fill his other ear with little whispers.

"Salome is soft and vulnerable. Treat her gently, initiate her with love ..." She suddenly stopped talking and brought her hand to her mouth. "Initiate her with understanding into the country of ..."

The two Misses Silberstein suddenly began to giggle and, giggling, withdrew into a drab cocoon.

Henry had a way of tugging at his ears; first one ear, then the other. But he only did it when plunged in meditation, like now. He was on the verge of apprehending death – not completely, but only by way of a vague intimation. It didn't arouse a feeling of dread; he simply began to wonder what it would feel like not to be there any more. He tried hard, but he was always present to himself: he saw his own corpse, the grave, the grief-stricken

family and he had a sense of time passing. He tried to imagine what it would be like to arrive in heaven. A graceful state of perfect harmony. Then he thought about how disappointing it must feel when, *in extremis*, you close your eyes and wait, but nothing happens. Both ideas were difficult, too much for him at that moment, and he returned to the land of the living, who had become a great deal rowdier.

"Why aren't you mingling with the guests?" asked Jock, who had come and sat beside him, shoulders mountainous in his Harris tweed jacket. "Why aren't you drinking?" He gave him a glass of brandy. "Have you met everyone?" He pointed out a man expounding a load of witty nonsense to an appreciative audience. "Mr Justice O'Hara is a great friend of mine. He's an outstanding jurist but a philistine, alas. All of them, my friends here, are good at what they do and rich with it. Do you think it's a scandal to be rich? Do you question their integrity? Do the rich lack all integrity? Life isn't as simple as that. I see you need to get rid of certain fixed ideas." He was being quite aggressive. "Come, tell me – does good family count for more than wealth? What do you mean by good family? People who have been serving the community for generations? People who jealously guard certain codes of etiquette and taste within their own circles?" His aggression had now abated. "Do you think we're vulgar? I'm rich and I'm just as proud of being rich as you are of your lineage. That's your first lesson. You have to get used to riches and the rich."

"I was thinking about death," said Henry. "I've got nothing against you or your guests." He was suddenly feeling the heat and wished he could take off his suit.

They walked together through the welter of tweed.

"You look a bit out of place in your tails," said Jock, "but it sets you apart, makes you look more interesting. I suppose you're an individualist."

"No," said Henry. "It was purely a misunderstanding."

"Who would you like to talk to and what about?" asked Jock. "About bloodlines, castration, purity and impurity, harm, divorces, feasts, first-born children, inheritances, intermarriage between different ethnic groups, leprosy, marriage, murder, food, the poor, prostitution, the cultivation of beards, slave labour, theft, trustees, religion ... ? Just name the topic and I'll find someone here and now who'll give you the necessary information to

the best of their ability, which isn't trifling when you consider there are so many people here who have achieved success in their various professions. And, mind you, have been materially rewarded for their expertise, too. Or would you prefer your expert to be poor? In that case, maybe later in the week." Someone plucked at Jock's arm. "It's been nice chatting. We must talk again," and he left Henry stranded in the middle of the floor, where a drunken but fragrant woman of advanced years passionately flung her arms around the young man.

Jock came back and whispered something in her ear. She turned back to Henry, linked arms with him and walked with him to the window, from where they looked out at the floodlit garden.

"One inhabits the land of the living, one mustn't dwell on death all day," she said. "Life is so interesting. Take my husband for example – that one over there in the corner, the one with the white beard, Sir Henry Mandrake. Sir Henry and I have been all over the world: Hong Kong, Hawaii, Greece, Majorca, Venice and Capri. We've seen all the finest artworks and Sir Henry is an avid collector although he doesn't appreciate the latest abstract works. Sir Henry has led a full life and he has a heart condition. Dr Johns is our family doctor and he has told me in confidence that Sir Henry must be careful. Death is around the bend, but do you think Sir Henry's going to sit all alone in a corner, like somebody we know, full of morbid thoughts? Look at him." Sir Henry had his arm around a slender young woman. Her eyes were dark; her complexion was creamy; she looked like a Madonna. (Was it Salome?) Sir Henry's face was blood-red; the veins on his temples were purple and swollen; he gasped for breath; his eyes were wild; his movements jerky. "Life and life again, that's Sir Henry's approach. Death, where is your sting?" She regarded the young man with great solemnity. Her bone structure was impressive; an expert had fashioned her make-up into a beautiful mask that slowly began to disintegrate as the tears started flowing: first the blue under the eyes, then the rouge on her cheeks, then the powder crumbling everywhere. "O, the gloominess of youth!" She grabbed his arm. "Live! Live! Dance and be merry; the whole world is waiting. Life, life, life!" And she hid her face in his chest while her Junoesque hair-do slowly began to unravel and combs, clips and pins one after another spattered the floor like drops of water.

Henry put his arm around her and looked up to see the radiant visages of slender Mrs Silberstein, J.J. and Jock gaily and approvingly beckoning him from beside a fireplace, complete with yellow-wood screens, across the room.

Some time later, when he was alone in the middle of the room once more, with another glass of brandy shoved into his hand by some passing guest, someone caught his attention. Mr Justice O'Hara, with Dr Johns.

"Jock tells me you're profoundly interested in leprosy," said Dr Johns. "Isn't that a little morbid?"

"And adultery, murder, impurity, prostitution and theft," added Mr Justice O'Hara. "Unusual interests for someone at your time of life, I must say."

"To begin with leprosy," said Dr Johns, "I won't bore you with the medical side of it. The chances of your ever contracting or even encountering it in this part of Africa are extremely slim. It's obviously the moral and psychological sides that interest you."

He cleared his throat and smoked and drank a little before resuming. "According to Moses Maimonides, it has been clearly established by the sages of old that leprosy is a punishment for calumny. The sickness commences in the walls of the house. Should the transgressor desist from his calumny, the goal is attained. Should he persist, the disease spreads to his bed and furniture; should that fail to scare him off, the disease attacks his clothing and body. Since leprosy is contagious, the person is ostracised and the goal is attained, the calumniator rendered harmless. I think there is tremendous wisdom concealed behind this *ratio*."

"Very interesting," said Mr Justice O'Hara, and they looked at the walls of the voorkamer, at the impure guests in their little groups, at their moving mouths drawing the disease down from the walls and into the furniture. They fingered their clothes and suddenly it seemed as though the whole place was teeming with lepers. "The whole world," said Mr Justice O'Hara, "the whole world is tainted by impurity."

"Purification is effectuated by means of cedar wood, hyssop, scarlet thread and two birds. The reason for this, as set out in the Midrashic proverbs, is obscure and not entirely plausible."

By now, Dr Johns and Mr Justice O'Hara had forgotten about Henry and kept up their discussion of the topic as they headed for the bar.

### III

Henry sensed that a sudden change had come over the house: the people were still talking, dancing and chattering, but somehow the hubbub had taken on a different quality. It felt to him like a gramophone winding down. He couldn't shake the feeling and stood with his head cocked, listening intently. Then suddenly he realised what had happened. The diesel-light-machine had stopped. But the quality of the sounds altered rapidly again and, albeit in a different key, life returned. Another engine had started running out in the garden, with a faster rhythm, more revolutions per minute – the pumping equipment that had taken over from the lighting device and was going to pump out the swimming pool, filter the water and pump the pool full again.

Now the brandy was beginning to affect him and Henry found himself more readily joining in with the rich in their performance. He danced with slender Mrs Silberstein and adapted himself to a rhythm that she subtly intimated to him. She told him about Jock, who didn't always understand her and drove her to distraction with his spells of demented jealousy. He left leprous Mrs Silberstein and danced with the dark-eyed Madonna who looked as fresh and lovely as a lily. "Are you Salome?" he asked as she willingly gave herself into his arms. Unexpectedly she started laughing, softly at first while repeatedly biting her lips, then more loudly and musically as the emotion got the better of her. "Oh, Henry!" she said, helpless in the grip of her giggling fit. Next moment he danced with another dark-eyed maiden who in scrupulously proper fashion, with a more contained rhythm, haughtily constrained him to enjoy a more classical tempo. He dared not ask *her* and left her in the silence of sober consummation. He danced with a succession of dark-eyed feminine forms with skin as white as milk or brown as old wood who led him

through all the nuances of the dance, enchanted him with all sorts of sensual movements, tantalised him with endless combinations of personalities, with brazen decorum lured him to their erotic heavens. He bumped into J.J., this time alone, while Jock pressed slender Mrs Silberstein bear-like to his chest and danced her protesting away.

“Which one is Salome, J.J.?” Henry asked.

J.J. didn't hear the question properly; he was following slender Mrs Silberstein with his eyes.

Henry had to repeat the question.

J.J. could not believe his ears. He laughed out loud and nudged Henry in the ribs.

“You're really something,” he said. He eyed Henry as though seeing him for the first time. “Why are you wearing tails? It's a bit ostentatious. It's hardly the time or place for eccentricity.”

Slender Mrs Silberstein had found an extraordinary way to give Jock the slip. Suddenly resting her forehead on his left shoulder, she thrust her body against his limb for limb and, to the rhythm of the music, whose pace had picked up imperceptibly, coerced him to whirl her around and around, widdershins, until at last with blinding speed they spun into one being. In the swirl her hair looked like a black fan fluttering from the vortex of their movements as the two faces, male and female, at first mutually distinct, became unsexed. Round and round they went, wilder and wilder, until the movements abated, ebbing until, in the eye of the whirlpool, suddenly the wretched male brute materialised and came to a standstill, while she leisurely completed the maelstrom around him, spiralling outwards until she ran into J.J., who, with exact timing, and to the rhythm of the new beat, took her in his arms and waltzed her away onto the floor and out of sight.

Jock lumbered up to Henry and put his hand on the young man's shoulder.

“She's obsessed with counting things,” he said. “She cannot weep. She knows fifty ways to tie the aiguillette.” He anxiously searched Henry's face for understanding, and then disconsolately turned his back on him.

But Henry had seen the fear in his eye and was weighing it up seriously, as he was wont to give all phenomena his undivided attention. As strange as it might sound, fear was, besides love, one of the emotions he knew least. Dread, yes: that feeling which some-

times grips you for no reason, springing from deep inside an unconscious world, which makes no sense – that, but not fear, because fear requires an object of danger, and if you’ve had a sheltered upbringing, lack all ambition, and are girded by the security of worldly possessions, bolstered by your reason and protected by your God, you can avoid all objects of danger. It must be added that Henry knew nothing of war or any other form of violence, had never been threatened by any disaster, had no idea of the subtle menace of the modern state, nor any belief in the devil. The Lord and love were practically synonymous: to laud something meant to love it too. Henry *believed* in his God and all that meant for him was: God was there to protect him. To that extent he was as innocent as a child and shared the child’s ignorance of love, his faith confined to bare belief. Henry was going to be coupled with Salome in marriage and, as slender Mrs Silberstein had rightly remarked: “His ignorance must be annihilated. How else dare he marry?” And how else to be corrupted than meet as many people as possible?

Somebody was blocking his way. The duchess. He tried to strike up a conversation with her about the pleasant party, the charming guests, the Silbersteins' interesting lifestyle, but she stood squarely in front of him, immovable as a rock, her little eyes trained on him with unwavering hatred. She was the only constant factor in the unpredictable crowd, with her veldskoened feet planted wide apart, her peasant’s face at home beneath the milkmaid headscarf, her scorn real and consistent. He halted suddenly, oddly reassured by the simplicity of her sole obsession. Here at least was something uncomplicated and comprehensible. He saw she was struggling to find the right word, and then it came:

*“Schlemiel!”*

By now most of the guests had stopped dancing and were moving from group to group to share their latest dazzling inspirations. Lady Joan appeared beside Henry and linked arms with him. She was a little unsteady on her feet and used him to prop herself up while punctuating the talk with sympathetic movements. Meanwhile her mask had been fixed so that only her eyes and lips moved.

“I have spoken about you with Sir Henry and it would be our pleasure if you came to visit us at Shangri-la.” She smiled at the duchess. The mask furrowed and relaxed.



“Young people are very important to Sir Henry. Young people are his life. The company of youth rejuvenates him.”

“Ah!” said Sir Henry, appearing maskless beside them, his face creased and crumpled. He bowed in the direction of the duchess. “Mrs Silberstein.” The bow-tie around his neck vividly matched the colours on his face. “Ah, Mrs Silberstein, what a lovely party.” He nodded at Henry and something in his tired, smoky eyes stirred at the sight of the fresh-faced young man. He pointed and wagged his finger to and fro.

Dr Johns and Mr Justice O’Hara, white as lepers, also joined them.

“The young Mrs Silberstein and Mr van Eeden ...” Dr Johns started gossiping, but fell silent as he noticed the duchess.

“Dear guests!” Jock’s voice suddenly rang out above all the other voices and he rapped his knuckles twice on a sixteen-legged yellow-wood agterhuis table.

The drunken, cultured clatter subsided into a cultured, disciplined silence.

#### IV

“Dear friends,” said Jock, “it may already have occurred to you that we are assembled this evening not purely for good company, but to celebrate the union of two delightful young people.”

He smiled in the direction of Henry, now encircled by a group of blushing, laughing girls.

“I mean, of course, Salome and Henry.”

Everyone nodded benevolently at Henry and began clapping softly. Slender Mrs Silberstein and J.J. also joined Henry.

“It is conventional on such occasions to praise the virtues of the couple, but I am not going to do that. I am going to draw the couple’s attention to the virtues of their good friends present here tonight. But I am not going to enumerate these virtues; I merely ask them to keep their eyes, hearts and minds open. I shall merely say: Salome and Henry, look around and take notice of your friends.”

Everyone flashed pearly smiles at Henry, encircled by the girls.

Jock rapped on the table again and two serving women opened the door. A bit of a shuffle and then the drab Misses Silberstein appeared with an enormous cake between them on a platter. They carried it across to the sixteen-legged table, put it down carefully and disappeared sheepishly into the background. Atop the cake stood two figurines, male and female – two faceless dolls representing Henry and Salome. Egged on by the growing group around him, Henry went up to the table to receive a silver knife proffered by Jock, then turned around to identify his life partner for the first time. He looked at the dark-eyed girls, at slender Mrs Silberstein, J.J., Lady Joan, Sir Henry and all the others and he waited for his beloved to step forth. But all of a sudden the whole giggling gaggle assailed him and in a trice the cake was sliced up and divided among all the girl friends.

Everyone clapped him on the shoulder to express their good will and he was kissed on the cheeks, mouth and temples by lips proficient in every possible emotion. Then the party resumed and Henry was left alone with a piece of cake on which a decapitated girl was already melting into icing sugar.

Now the party grew crazier, because it was nearing the end. Henry was invited to all the hot-spots and fleshpots, provided with a list of businesses where he could find the best fishing tackle, motor boats and scuba gear, tipped off on gold shares and horses, and overloaded with addresses should he ever have the urge to meet again (with many a promise in many a dark eye).

Sir Henry admonished him to forget about his death wish; Dr Johns, his morbid interest in disease; Mr Justice O'Hara, his obsession with every form of social deviance; and Jock, his prejudice against the rich. At one point, while everything was still raucously carrying on, he went briefly to the bathroom and returned to find the hall empty. The voices of the last departing guests sounded from the garden. He was about to leave when he saw the duchess sitting alone on a chair, hands folded on her lap, her black little eyes fixed on him.

*"Schmorrer!"* she said to him, but she was tired, sleepy, old and worn out. Her eyes had dimmed and she was on the verge of losing consciousness.

In his room, right in the middle of the double bed, sunk deep in foam rubber, the young

man lay in the light of a phallic candlestick resting on three legs which, turned in hexagonal, top-shaped and spiral sections, culminated in a flat bronze base, from which the same design was repeated, terminating in an artificial candle with fake wax, plastic flame and electric light. The house was still, and from the garden came the pulse of the faster engine as it finished pumping water into the pool. All at once the noise stopped and the stillness of the house spread to the garden.

Someone was moving in the hall. He heard light footsteps, the rustling of a dress. He stood up and opened the door. Right across from his room, another door was closing. He saw a girl's leg, the swish of tweed, part of an arm. Suddenly, all movement petrified. Invisible, they sensed each other and were caught in an endless moment. Then time flowed once more and the door was gently shut. He was about to go back inside when something further on down the hall caught his attention. Slender Mrs Silberstein had surfaced from somewhere and was running through the hall in a see-through nylon nightie. She might as well have been naked. At the end of the corridor, Jock waited for her, striped blue in his pyjamas. His face was blood red and his mouth wide open.

"LILITH!" his voice boomed in the silence.

The young man smoked a final cigarette and took himself off to bed. Suddenly another engine started up – with slower, hypnotic sounds. And in the roof, slowly at first, then faster, two giant blades turned to drive the warm air outside through numerous vents.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Antics of the Artists*

Henry woke up around eight to be greeted by two bronze eyes staring him in the face. Someone had placed an ornate brass konfoor on his bedside table. The handles were hinged to the beard-points of two satanic faces; the cup he presently was to fill with coffee was the size of a soup dish. After giving it a lengthy inspection, he turned the spigot and filled the cup. It was excellent mocha coffee and he drank two cups one after the other.

All the household machines had ceased their clamour and the whole of Welgevonden was producing an industrious racket. Trucks, heavy machinery and all sorts of unidentified devices attached to the wine trade roared in the distance. Voices could be heard in all directions, inside the house and out. He decided it was time to get up and went to the bathroom, where two huge black lions' heads overhung an inlaid plunge-bath like a tiled well. He pressed the buttons on the lions' muzzles and they spewed two streams of water, hot and cold, from their gaping maws. The bath was brimming in no time. As he floated about in the water, he took in the gradations of the room's white, black and bottle-green colour scheme. Returning to the bedroom, he found that meanwhile his food had been brought in. Once he had finished eating and got himself dressed, he went outside and met Jock on the stoep – dressed farmer-fashion in khaki shorts, shirt and veldskoens.

“Come,” said Jock, “I want to show you a bit of our farming business,” and he took him by the arm.

They walked past the house, under overhanging eaves, across wooden bridges, alongside little streams, between outbuildings and then unexpectedly past another wing of the house, all the while strolling up a road which led to the source of the din, up on a distant hillside: a cluster of buildings housing the cellars and industrial machinery. As they drew nearer, a great many trucks drove past with pyramidal stacks of wine and brandy cases. All the trucks were green, of exactly the same make, and the drivers wore identical yellow uniforms. The name “Welgevonden” appeared on every possible surface.

In front of him Henry perceived an object that shone so brightly in the sun he couldn't make it out at first: it looked like a wide white flame shooting skywards. A while later he saw it was a giant steel tank. The tank was surmounted by a galvanised roof welded to the structure with silvery iron bars. Alongside it, once they were up close and the metal seemed to move almost as it shimmered, Henry noticed a ladder leading high above to where a sort of lookout platform swayed in the air.

"This tank is sixty foot high and fifty foot across," said Jock as he began to climb. "It's the biggest of its kind in the entire world." He had to yell over his shoulder while the wind tore at them more violently the higher they climbed. "We use it to store distilling wine," he bellowed. "From here it's pumped automatically to the non-stop distilling plant." And still they continued to climb as Jock's shirt flapped in the wind and he kept having to press his hat more firmly to his head. After reaching the lookout platform, they leaned against the rails to catch their breath. The vista was not only breathtaking, but decidedly terrifying.

"Come," said Jock, removing his hat and leading Henry to a bench. A telescope was mounted beside it; he started winding the screws. "At night I use this instrument to look at the stars. By day it's handy for seeing all that's going on. I can even see right into the rooms of the house." He smiled and the wind tousled his hair. "I would like you first to take notice of the gables of the house and outbuildings. There are eight kinds: early straight, concavo-convex, late straight, baroque, late straight with fishtail cap, Flemish, late straight with Baroque cap and stepped." He had finished setting up the telescope and sat back down on the bench. "Do you fancy looking at the gables, or should we rather establish what's happening in the rooms? The rooms rather, right? Me first? That may be best, so I can see if everything's set up properly. It's a very sensitive instrument." He brought one eye up to the spyglass and kept the other one open, as befitted someone with experience. He moved the spyglass to and fro and then focused on a point. He stared long and intently at something, then leaned back, chin on hand, as the headwind ruffled his hair.

Henry also peered through the telescope, but it took some time before he could discern anything and then suddenly J.J.'s face was right in front of him. The ends of the R.A.F. moustache stuck out on either side, moving like wings as he deeply inhaled and exhaled

the morning air. His cheeks were puffy, his eyes bulged, his hair fell across his forehead, and now his chest beneath the floral dressing gown was exposed as two womanly arms came from behind and encircled his body. Slender Mrs Silberstein's face appeared above his shoulder, tilted to one side and nestling up against his neck.

"Do you know much about witchcraft?" asked Jock.

"No," said Henry and looked up; the telescope was still fixed on the tableau, which suddenly vanished from the naked eye's field of vision.

"You've got so much to learn in such a short time," sighed Jock. "Or, let me put it this way: you've got so much to learn and unlearn. All those things protecting you. Your ignorance, your innocence, for instance. But you can't go through life like that. Life's not that simple." He lit his pipe with difficulty and was about to throw the match at the open tank when he thought better of it and replaced it in the box. "That false state of grace ends for us all at some or other stage. It's the tragedy of the human condition that one day without warning you have to become aware of the darkness in the human heart, and, despite yourself, mind you, familiarise yourself with good and evil."

Henry pondered this as he lay back on the bench and gazed up at the drifting clouds which looked like small ships sailing straight down at him.

"I think I can tell good apart from evil," he said.

"Then you must be an angel." Jock interlaced his hands behind his head and also gazed up at the clouds, which were now shoaling like an armada. "Evil, according to your faith, is the breach of holy law; the law is the rules grounded on holy authority. For the angel, everything is summed up in the small word *serviam* – the complete, all-encompassing sense of dependence on the Creator. For man, in line with his natural limitations, the laws are summed up by the Ten Commandments."

"I know the Ten Commandments," said Henry. The conversation was already boring him.

"All the explicit rules ... Is the conversation boring you?" Jock gave Henry a hard stare from above his pipe.

"No," said Henry.

"I thought as much," said Jock. Suddenly he leaned forwards. "The problem is just

... How can I put it? The problem is just that in his arrogance man cannot always tell self-interest apart from the holy plan. You can't wash your hands in innocence; evil is a power growing not only in magnitude but also in form. That's why ignorance is so dangerous. Not because knowledge of good is lacking, but for the equally grave sin of lacking knowledge of evil."

Henry gave no sign of his growing impatience; he politely suppressed it. He did exploit a lull in the conversation to have another hasty look through the telescope. No sign of J.J. and slender Mrs Silberstein. He moved the instrument a fraction to the right and found himself inside a different room. A naked girl was admiring herself in a mirror. She stretched her arms out sideways and glanced over her shoulder, then lowered her arms and stood still. Once she looked straight at Henry and he saw her dark eyes and black hair. She was as slender as a nymph. He wanted to ask Jock if she might not be Salome, but he dared not for the sake of propriety and because Jock was finishing a sentence.

"... and it's the tragedy of adulthood that you've got to lose your innocence, and rather be ruined by evil than live in innocence, that you've got to get acquainted with the devil before you can enter the gates of heaven."

By now the wind was blowing so hard that they decided to go. Before climbing down the ladder, they looked down at the colossal tank where a lake of distilling wine rose and fell in waves.

Abruptly, Jock spat into it.

"It doesn't matter," he told Henry. "Alcohol's the best disinfectant there is. But just think ... " He spat again. "Somebody here and overseas, maybe in China, Japan, England or America, will drink an infinitesimal bit of Jock Silberstein's spit." He looked expectantly at Henry. Henry spat too. Jock clapped him on the shoulder. He laughed out loud and his laughter was lost in the wind. "Just think: Jock Silberstein and Henry van Eeden's spit spread around the world! It's a bond between us, don't you think?" And they began to descend carefully, for the wind had become very strong.

This time they took a different way back. Jock had suddenly lost all interest. "I'll show you the distillery and the cellars tomorrow," he said to Henry. "Right now I fancy a swim."

They had to go through a plantation where a cool road separated the dense pines. After a while they turned off and followed a path through the pine needles to the house. The sun was completely hidden and the branches carved grooves in the blue sky as they stirred in the wind. The matted needles were spongy underfoot and a wonderful pine scent arose from the trodden soil.

"Isn't it wonderfully secluded," said Jock. His chin was up and he walked with such a spring in his step that Henry struggled to keep up. "And isn't seclusion hard to come by! Only your bathroom, a solitary forest, some hard-to-access place offer any escape. Nowadays one is obliged to live alongside one's fellow man."

Suddenly they found themselves at the plantation's edge and from there they crossed a meadow where a few Swiss stud cows grazed. Molehills caused them to stumble now and then and made the going difficult. At the wooden fence they heard the thudding of hooves. Henry looked up and was just in time to see horse and rider silhouetted against the sky: the forelegs bent, the mane, the silky chestnut hide, the slender girl in jodhpurs, white shirt and riding cap in which her dark hair was bound up, her small face pressed against the horse's neck. It was as though they wavered for a moment in the air – and then the horse landed on the soft grass, stumbled slightly as the elegant rider righted herself, and next moment disappeared towards the trees.

"Was that Salome?" asked Henry.

Jock looked at the place where they'd last seen the moving speck.

"Hard to say. Maybe it was Salome; maybe not. I wasn't paying attention."

This time they were on a road again, close to the house. A truck raced past, showering them with dust.

"Have you noticed," said Jock, "they don't even know who I am. They don't know who the master is, because the master is invisible. Do you think I should wear a uniform?" He smiled at Henry. "Welgevonden is a super-machine and nobody is indispensable. We are one great organism, a super-democracy functioning with technical perfection. The individual human case has become a clinical notion; humanity is an abstraction; we all work together in the laboratory as a team." He laid a hand on Henry's shoulder. "Welcome to the organism, Henry."



Henry looked up at the face above him.

“But I already feel at home, Mr Silberstein.”

Jock paused for a second and regarded the young man intently.

“I do believe you're already part of the scheme. It's uncanny how quick the young are to sacrifice their individuality.” He started walking again. “You've just got to get shot of your innocence. You've first got to get a proper understanding of the devil's true nature and original sin. Thorough knowledge of good and evil is called for at this time. It's not as simple as it used to be; you've got to learn to forget about concrete images and become familiar with abstract form.” They were now approaching the garden and forced their way with difficulty through the overhanging growth. “Remember,” said Henry, holding a branch aside for Henry to pass first, “we no longer care about the individual and the face he prepares for the world, but anonymous humanity in general.” Jock struggled to get his big body through the dense brush. Sometimes Henry couldn't see him at all, he only heard cracking noises from behind. “Eternal truths are not transferred from one era to another automatically – they have to be discovered anew in every epoch. There is a new Self every time and ours is faceless.” A twig snapped and Jock appeared, face ruddy with exertion. But his voice boomed on unremittingly. “No time to waste on the persona you present to your family, friends and acquaintances. No, sonny. There are no more illusions. We've been eating the fruit of knowledge this past decade. You, I, Salome ... all of us acknowledge the individual out of courtesy, but we probe behind the collective mask. In a different way we ask: who are we?” Now he was walking out onto the lawn from where they could see one side of the house. “The new era has begun. The splendid individual is a corpse on the garbage heap. The carnival is over!” He gestured at the house. “The old Welgevonden is no more – the Welgevonden that gets the Monuments Council so excited. There is a new truth, of which we are getting a slight inkling only now. It's just a pity that I sometimes ...” He fell silent abruptly and shook his head. “Have you brought your swimming costume? Quick, go change. I'll see you back here in five minutes.”

By the time Henry, after a search, had found his room, finished putting on his swimming costume and gone outside, he couldn't find Jock again. After another search he discovered

the swimming pool. It was built to Olympic standards and the water was clear blue. A whole crowd of girls in the skimpiest of bikinis lay in the sun on one side, making conversation in various degrees of oxidation – from light bronze to dark copper. He was surprised to spot the two Misses Silberstein, hideous to the eye but, nothing daunted, wearing bikinis too.

He stood irresolutely for a moment and felt every eye fix itself on him. One of these girls with brown hair and dark eyes must be Salome. He felt it was time for him to make some sort of approach to his beloved. He decided on the only solution. He gazed at the group of girls and yelled suddenly: "SALOME!" It was as though his voice had slammed into the faces turned statically towards him, as though he was screaming with his mouth against a wall that made no echo, as though he had never screamed at all. It was ghastly, the silence, and he stood alone while inside him a foreign emotion wavered at the point of birth. Then, unexpectedly, one of the girls repeated: "S-a-l-o-m-e", and then "Salome, Salome, Salome!" rippled from the row of mouths like pretty little echoes.

"Where have you been all this time?" asked J.J.

Shamelessly flaunting a pot belly, swimming trunks lost below his navel, he lay beside slender Mrs Silberstein, whose trim physique rivalled the youngest and most beautiful of the girls.

"You and Jock," repeated Mrs Silberstein. "Where have you been all this time?" She laughed out loud. "Did he show you his telescope?" She beckoned Henry. "Come sit here." And, when he had sat beside her ... "Did you spy on Salome?"

Jock appeared some time later: an impressive figure with an athletic build, a web of muscles that every movement multiplied; he jack-knifed into the air from the highest diving board, hung motionless and plummeted into the water where he disappeared without a sound.

A slave bell heralded the lunch hour.

A veritable little blackamoor pulled on a short rope to strike the clapper against the bell, which with metronomic regularity tolled seven times.

The guests approached the house in a group and dispersed in ones and twos

throughout the rooms. When the same little man (a Malawian from Blantyre with no permit and sharply filed teeth) clashed the two metal disks of a cymbals and made a deafening noise of uncertain pitch, they amassed in the dining room beside a fully laden table where slender Mrs Silberstein showed everyone to their seats, all the while taking care that J.J., spruce and spicy, sat down right beside her.

Nobody said grace aloud, but there was a moment, once food was served and plates were piled to overflowing, when everyone paused to genuflect before his or her gods, god, or nothing.

Slender Mrs Silberstein had sat Jock on one side of Henry and on the other, a lovely brunette who watched him warily the whole time.

“According to our Jewish faith, all evil is negation, but I view it as one of two positive, diametrically opposed forces. And I consider all misery to be the product of ignorance: ignorance not only of negative and positive properties, but also ignorance of equilibrium, the two contrary poles that balance each other.” Now he gestured at Henry with a silver fork (the crest of Welgevonden's previous owners scrupulously preserved upon it). “Beware of your jealously guarded innocence; your spiritual hymen that you preserve like some foolish virgin. A blind man is always stumbling and causes harm to himself and others. Ignorance destroys; innocence is blindness of the spirit.”

He put his knife and fork down and began to clean his teeth with an ivory toothpick.

“With knowledge shall the lion and the lamb lay down together.”

Despite the profusion on his plate, he had exercised moderation and left the rest for servants, cats and dogs.

“Don't think of me as a Jew,” said Jock. “I am an apostate. With you and Salome, it'll be the final sell-out: humanity without the frippery of race, total anonymity. It aggrives old Mrs Silberstein. You might have noticed that she's not exactly brimming with enthusiasm?”

“Yes,” said Henry.

“Don't let her get your goat.”

He lit a cigar.

“Speaking of Salome, why are you so standoffish towards her? I've hardly seen you together at all. Or is that the modern way of courting? I must admit it seems a bit sterile to me. And Salome as *shegal* as you could wish.”

Before everyone got up for coffee on the stoep, Jock admonished them to make the most of their afternoon nap, as the evening party would exact a great deal of energy.

## II

Henry had slept like a log and woke up towards evening with the distressing thought that he had no idea what form the party would take. He put on his dressing gown and went to J.J.'s room, where he found his uncle: pink from the bath, freshly shaven and as chirpy as a cricket.

“Well, well, little Henry,” he said. “And how goes it with Salome, hmmmm?”

“I don't know her at all,” said Henry.

“Oh hoooo!” said J.J. “All those philosophical discussions! Best leave them for Jock Silberstein. As far as your uncle is concerned, my boy, there's only one way to get to know a woman.” And he gave Henry a wink.

“Actually I've come,” said Henry, “to find out what sort of party it's going to be.”

J.J. raised his eyebrows, struck a camp pose, knees together, one hand on hip, index finger of the other hand slanted against his cheek, and said: “Artists, sonny.”

Like all macho Philistines, he thought artists were effeminate, if not downright queer.

Back in his room, Henry decided the safest course would be to follow the example of the guests the night before. Knotting a paisley cravat around his neck, he heard the light machine give a few thumps before reaching the right rpm. As he was about to go, he saw that someone had put something on the bedside table where earlier the *konfoor* had been: it looked like a stag's head. Closer inspection revealed that it was indeed an artificial stag's head, complete with antlers and glass eyes. The object was made of rubber and feather-light despite its bulk; the reason being that it was hollow. Henry inspected it from all angles and put it back on the bedside table. By now it was dark outside and he decided it

was time to join the other guests.

Arriving at the voorkamer, he found the place empty, all the chairs and couches draped in white covers. He found one of the Coloured serving girls and asked where all the people were, at which she signed for him to follow. She padded lightly through the hall, round corners, through sun-rooms to the world outside, and he had trouble keeping up with her because he kept stumbling whenever they passed through unlit areas. At last they reached the lawn and Henry was dazzled by an unexpected scene. Beside the swimming pool, all sorts of lights had been set up among the trees, flowers and shrubs. On the grass, changing from colour to colour, moved objects that looked like animals – an entire zoo of fauna. Drawing nearer, he saw they were men and women: swimming costumes underneath, but animal heads where their faces should be.

They all stopped moving and talking at once when he appeared beneath the light and a whole gamut of animal faces directed their muzzles and their glass eyes at him: bears, lions, pigs, buck, lizards, geckos, frogs, cats and dogs. Then they started clapping, and a giant bear said: “Welcome, Henry. Welcome in our midst.”

A doe in a silver bikini appeared and went to stand in front of Henry while the lights glared on her. The silver shone and focused his attention on the voluptuous sacrum, acetabulum, pubis and coccyx. She linked arms with him and her tiny antlers barely reached his shoulders. They made a lovely couple, the two of them, like something from a fairy-tale, the handsome young prince and his forest bride.

“Ah,” said Silberstein the bear. “How lovely! But where are your antlers?” He didn't wait for an answer. “Mingle with our guests, you two.” And he threw his arm around a passing cat with slender legs who struggled in vain to free herself from his clutches.

She was stepping lightly alongside him and her hand lay still in his. She followed him completely, as though they were dancing, and he could feel the movements of her limbs against his. They sank away in the grass and beside the swimming pool their images were reflected in the blue water. Unspeaking, they wended their way in and out amongst the guests and the tableaux of their antics. But what do you say to your beloved if she has no face? He drew her more closely to him still and found the bodily contact communica-

tion enough for the time being. Even if they spoke now, the conversation, with the accidental revelation of the accidental personality of the accidental instant, would be trivial compared with this deeper physical connection. So they did not speak and Henry and Salome walked in harmonious silence through the enchanted landscape.

But it wasn't long before they were accosted by two old owls. Two bellies swagged lazily over swimming trunks, old men's kneecaps knocked together, and legs untouched by any sun gleamed white in the light.

"Ah! Mister van Eeden," said one. "You must be astonished to see us here?" He bowed to the doe and turned again to face Henry. "But we of Bishopscourt are not unacquainted with the arts. Who do you suppose will buy the paintings of this bunch of young painters if not us? It's quite true that we usually buy only when the artwork is recognised as such, but we pay in hard currency for our lack of foresight."

A brimming glass of champagne vanished somewhere under the beak and reappeared empty. Two enormous owl eyes goggled without moving at Henry.

"Jock Silberstein, though, says you're interested in the idea of good and evil. Now, I must say, for someone of your years, you have an unexpected" (he emphasised the word) "and profound preoccupation with the human condition in all its ramifications. It does you credit." A peahen with nice legs claimed his attention but lost it when she was lifted onto a lion's back. "There are in fact a few more of Jock's views that I would like to criticise and I hope you will agree with me."

Henry nodded and pulled Salome closer to him. There's nothing better than clandestine caresses in the face of convention.

"Jock's description of *malum* as deprivation accords with the Christian outlook," said the owl. "Evil is then a *privatio boni*. But when he talks about the two contrary poles (good and evil) that balance each other, he errs."

He turned his head towards the other owl, which was following the discussion intently with eyes like saucers.

"He also confuses the issue," he went on, "by insisting on thinking of evil as something positive. Would a normal person with knowledge of good and evil be so stupid as to chase after evil for the sake of evil? There is a theory that Satan himself, in his revolt

against God, demanded equality with the Creator, insisting, in addition, that ordinary mortals gain their salvation through *him*. He wanted to be the sole source of good."

Henry felt Salome pull away from him slightly; the glass eyes of the doe's head were turned towards the other guests. But now the owl's voice was growing louder and commanded his attention.

"Evil therefore remains negative, by our Christian lights, and is by no means the ineluctable contrary pole of good. Satan does not form part of any mystical *quadratum*." He looked at the other owl and the pair of them, standing opposite each other, looked like two stuffed animals in a museum.

By now it was clear to Henry that Salome was trying to prise her arm away from his. He wrestled to prevent the withdrawal of his beloved and remained absorbed in that effort while the mellifluous voice occupied a different part of his attention.

"*Privatio boni*," declaimed the owl, "recognises the *reality* of evil because it robs the natural goodness of God's creation of His goodness. Hence the extreme danger of ignorance. Jock Silberstein is right in that respect alone. Otherwise I'm afraid that he awards too many positive attributes to evil, that he considers the Devil to be the source of all evil and even insinuates that it was created by the shadow side of God."

With a sudden effort the doe had jerked free of Henry and was now moving rapidly away through the multitude. He watched her legs flashing, the small body appearing and disappearing amongst all the others; he tried to follow her, but the owl was gripping his arm like a vice. In despair he watched her go; she looked back at him once as though expecting him to follow and in doing so walked straight into the arms of a tiger who hoisted her up, danced her around in a circle and disappeared behind a shrub.

Now the other owl had got hold of him.

"Then there is the question of ignorance and innocence," said the other owl. "In my profession we have to be circumspect with words. What does Jock mean by 'ignorance'?"

The two owls on either side of Henry had taken possession of him. They walked up to a little table bearing a few bottles of champagne. Three glasses clinked against each other, two glasses were drained below beaks, and the second owl, voice somewhat muffled under all the feathers, resumed the discussion.

“Innocence with respect to evil means that the individual cannot be held accountable for the evil within him. But that is a *contradictio in terminis*, because evil is part of human nature. The devil was merely the first to fall. Human beings are *a priori* responsible and guilty.” He peered at the other owl as if expecting to be contradicted, then went on. “Thus when an innocent person is spoken of, an ignorant person is actually intended.”

The owl arranged himself on the grass and the others followed suit.

“Suppose people lack knowledge of evil; how does that affect their responsibility?” The owl pondered the problem with his beak in the air and let his beak drop, imagining himself back on the legal bench. “Not a jot. Ignorance is no excuse. In that respect Jock is right and innocence (ignorance really) is spiritual blindness; people are responsible for their deeds.”

Evidently the two owls were relishing their conversation. Sometimes they brought their heads close together the better to speak and listen, for their voices, coming from behind the masks, were completely disembodied.

“And yet,” said the owl, “ignorance with respect to good is a cause of evil at the same time. To the same extent ignorance of evil betokens precisely the same thing. Ignorance does not alter the existence of good or evil. Thus ignorance of good and evil can have precisely the same outcome.”

Henry searched in vain. There were any number of buck shapes, but no little doe.

“Knowledge of good alone implies ignorance of evil and can lead to evil. Knowledge of evil alone implies ignorance of good and can lead to evil just as well. Knowledge of both good and evil, the ability to tell them apart, as Jock says, can possibly lead to salvation. Human beings, owing to their limited powers, can tell them apart only up to a point. I’ll give Jock that much.” The owl turned to face Henry. “Jock ought to say: ... and it’s the tragedy of adulthood that you’ve got to lose your ignorance, and rather be ruined by evil than live in innocence, that you’ve got to get acquainted with the devil ...”

Henry was convinced he’d just seen the doe beside the swimming pool; first he’d seen her bikini flash silver above the owl’s shoulder, then he glimpsed the fluid motion of her legs as she ambled towards the swimming pool.

He sprang up suddenly, beyond the hands stretched out to block his way.



"Where are you off to now?" asked the one owl. "I was just getting to an interesting point: the difference between moral and amoral evil."

"Maybe later," said Henry and he hastened away as the four motionless glass eyes leered behind him in the electric light.

Slowly the eyes turned towards each other and glittered maliciously as the philosophical discussion was jovially resumed.

### III

Henry was sure she was waiting for him, because she was walking around aimlessly and her eyes kept gleaming in his direction. He was already within speaking distance when a woman's hand softly and firmly made him change course. A cat's head, which accorded grotesquely with a slender body and slender legs, smiled in his face – a smile that, like the yellow eyes, never changed.

"I'd like to talk to you, Henry," she grinned. "Let's have a little chat."

She led him to a bench beside the swimming pool. As they sat there, the water lapped against the sides of the pool and the guests whooped in the distance.

"I want to talk to you about Salome," she grinned. "Do you mind? You won't hold it against me?"

"No," said Henry.

"Salome complains that you don't pay her enough attention," she grinned. Fine teeth glowed white on either side of a small red tongue. "She says that whenever you're with her, you get into all sorts of philosophical discussions with other people and don't even bother to talk to her."

She put a slender arm around his shoulder and grinned.

"Look, Henry, there are certain basic things between a man and a woman that you mustn't neglect. Everything has its place and time and I accept that man and wife must share each others' interests, but ... Don't you think the caring moments, the intimate chats, the small tokens of affection are important, too? Of course it's natural, when a young man and a young woman are just about to ... "

She fell silent and grinned.

“Naturally ... “ said Henry.

“And then there's by far the most important side of the relationship between man and woman. The erotic. It must not be underestimated. It's a basic motive, or else marriage would be ridiculous, not so?”

She stroked his arm and grinned.

“A woman likes to be desired by a man, even if he does keep superficially aloof. But she wants to know, she wants to feel, that the man is prepared to foresake all other concerns – for those moments of intimacy that are theirs alone. Look, it's not as though she expects him to be dragging her to bed all day long. Excuse the banality.” (She grinned.) “But she wants to feel assured that those moments of intimacy between man and woman are strong enough to overwhelm potentially everything. It's the most personal contact two people can ever have and everything ... every theory and precept is reduced to empty words before this reality.”

She grinned and tapped him under the chin with a slender forefinger and a sharp, red nail.

Suddenly an ass's head appeared between them.

“Hello, hello, hello!” came J.J.'s voice.

His stomach and legs looked even whiter in the electric light; his body hair correspondingly darker. He adjusted his head.

“Couldn't you get anything else for me?”

“It's Jock. He doles out the masks.”

The cat stood up, linked arms with him, folded herself around him, looked up at his face and grinned.

The antics around the swimming pool were becoming increasingly rambunctious.

Someone had switched on a radio and the artists were improvising a dance to a kwela beat. During his search for the elusive Salome, Henry joined a group discussing in a high-flown way the keen wit of Coloured humour. Someone else was doing an impression of “Gatiepie van die Gabou” and the rest all followed the score with the insight of connois-

seurs. When they became aware of Henry's presence, they fell silent and fixed their many-coloured eyes on him.

"There's a gentleman among us," said one.

It struck Henry that he was the odd one out and he suddenly grasped the absurdity of conventional appearance.

Everyone had brought their own wine, a kind of claret sold by the gallon for next to nothing in big glass jars – the trademark of their parties. Henry looked around everywhere and saw everything except a doe. An emotion compounded of anxiety and jealousy had taken root within him. It was a strange mixture of feelings for him and he even drew a sort of pleasure from it. He knew his emotions by the tastes they evoked; this one was bitter-sweet and tasted like sour figs. His myopia also contributed: everything looked distorted; sometimes it was as though he saw Salome, he spotted her together with someone, then he realised it was something else entirely. Two pairs of legs on the grass beside a shrub, a girl's moving legs and the rigid legs of a man, pricked him with consuming suspicion, but the question remained unanswered as in his night-blindness he lost sight of the place and found nothing but grass and coloured lights beside a honeysuckle bush. In the midst of the swelling din, he was becoming more and more of an outsider. He came to feel increasingly as though there was something wrong with *his* appearance: the ridiculous little human head, the mobile human eyes, the limbs clothed for no reason.

"Ah, morbid thoughts! Morbid thoughts! Morbid thoughts!" came a ribald cackle in his ear, and there she stood, the tigress, with the black bikini and long legs on which the first blue veins of age were spreading, with the great canines and yawning mouth which, like a megaphone, amplified the voice so that it boomed. "Ever the melancholic! Oh, how I wish you could pluck the true fruit of joyous living with Sir Henry and me!" She swept her hands towards the dark heavens. "The blue oceans, the faraway beaches, the exotic palms, the tropical flowers, the wine, the Mediterranean air, the pagan gods, the alabaster statues, the vineyards, the music, the warm love, the dark eyes, the sensual pleasure of every swooning moment ..."

She rocked to and fro, transported by her thoughts, and then let her hands drop.

"Sir Henry and I don't believe in any god; we find your world dull. But what there

is to pluck, we pluck ... Can't you *feel*, can't you *understand*?" And suddenly she embraced him out of sheer high spirits, but her mask got in the way and nicked Henry above the ear.

Suddenly she was the picture of concern. She produced a handkerchief from somewhere and dabbed the spot repeatedly without any practical result. Then she flung her arms around his neck and her voice altered.

"Most of our friends are dead. Now there are only old people left waiting to die. But there are still a few of us here and there, like spots of light spangling the world – in villas in Capri, on little islands, on a ship in the East, in a gondola on the Grand Canal at fiesta time."

Suddenly she rested her animal head against his forehead and wounded him again while her whispering voice came past his ear as though from a cave.

"Do you know that Sir Henry and I have a death pact? Should sickness or an infirmity of age overwhelm either one of us, the other is to put an end to it. There are so many ways to quit this world. It's not really a problem, is it?"

The tigress head straightened up again and turned towards the guests, where her tiger mate, carrying a light silky snake in his arms, tottered laboriously to a marble bench.

"Sir Henry feels at home tonight," she said. "Artists are eternal."

Sir Henry had released the little snake and she rolled off his lap as his hands dangled impotently at his sides. A few concerned people approached, gathered round him, but after a while they dispersed. Meanwhile Sir Henry had risen to his feet and was leaning against the bench. Then he let go of the bench, slowly stood up straight, and the tiger head raised itself proudly, if a little shakily.

Next to Henry the tigress's eyes were fixed on her mate: tender and compassionate behind the mask, maybe, but in the light ruthless as a predator tracking its prey. She waved to Sir Henry, who picked up on her presence for the first time. It was as though a new, desperate vitality had entered into him, and he hobbled and hopped laboriously up to a passing group where an Amazon of a leopard girl served as object and prop for his embrace.

Then Henry was alone again and he proceeded with his quest. Sometimes he attached himself to a group of artists, partly out of curiosity and partly to find a resting

place before setting out once more through the coloured lights, in the haze of his half-blind world, chasing after his fugitive doe, or her ghost. In all the conversations he heard only one topic (apart from witty calumny spurred by professional jealousy) – the cult of all things black, obsession with the cathartic effect of poverty, hatred for order, commitment to vigorous anarchy as symbolised by the raw awakening of the black man in the stylised West, yearning for the audacity of chaos, the intensity of violence, the stimulus of the primitive on the painted skin of civilisation. They carried within themselves feelings of guilt for their own sated culture; nihilism before the ruins of their crumbling gods; godlessness in the stillness of the Great Silence; formlessness beside the grave of the departed New Era; uncertainty before the nature of Being. Among the neglected girls with their scanty bikinis and the sinewy legs of the men, among everyone wearing the grotesque animal heads that formed their collective mask, moved Henry, a complete outsider in his quest for Salome.

Suddenly, someone suggested they all go for a midnight dip, without clothes, as befitted this universal yearning for the beginning. They stripped in the shadows, and without their bikinis they all looked practically the same. It was as though the white skin where the bikinis had been now formed new bikinis. They streamed towards the swimming pool and leapt exuberantly into the water, which suddenly grew noisy at the abrupt onslaught. It splashed against the sides of the pool and whirled in blue waves above the beams of the underwater lamps. The whole swimming pool was filled with animal heads, so that it seemed as though the jungle had been ambushed by a tidal wave. It was a second Flood, under floodlights.

Then the light-machine stopped working. And in the shrubbery, coughing, spluttering, the next machine started up. It droned faster and faster and the water slowly began to subside. First the men's upper bodies appeared, then the breasts of the girls, then their legs spattered with droplets like minuscule diamonds, and eventually they were all standing in the dry land of the empty swimming pool as though in an open grave. They had all stopped shouting and laughing and looked dejectedly at each other. One by one they struggled up the ladders to the poolside where they put on their skimpy bikinis in the re-

motest shadows. And then, with a hiss, from way up high, fountaining from a dolphin's mouth, a thin jet of water slowly, leisurely, began to fill the swimming pool.

#### IV

Over and over Henry searched for Salome and found her among all the half-naked figures, lost her, and with hindsight wondered if he had ever seen, found and lost her at all.

In the distance, Jock had begun speaking beside a sixteen-legged agterhuis table. Henry couldn't hear everything, but the words "happy couple" reached him through the uproar. Two little duikers in black bikinis brought flowers. Everyone clapped. Something flew through the air and surfaced on the water: blue and pink patterns, flowers that formed the letters S and H and, rocking on the rising water, floated for the rest of the chaotic night.

The party broke up randomly.

When Henry entered his room, he found an enormous elephant in his bed, wearing a cotton nightie with a collar round its neck, trunk swaying to a fro like a pendulum almost brushing the floor. Presently Jock appeared and together they helped the intransigent figure to its feet; they led it, reeling, to the next room, laid it on the bed and with considerable effort removed the heavy mask. The little black eyes opened, saw Henry and pronounced a Semitic curse.

Henry lay beside the phallic candlestick and waited for the footsteps in the hall, the rustling of a dress, the creaking of a door, the ritual of the captive moment – but nothing happened.

Only the water-machine came to a standstill, Welgevonden's heartbeat broke off and started up again with the life-giving whisper of fans expelling the sated air for the rest of the night.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *Ballet of the Boers*

#### I

When Henry woke up, the little birds were singing in the trees outside his window. It was one of those Boland mornings when the whole environment collaborates to forge the memory of a sunny day that will replay in perpetuity as “one sunny morning” ...

The coffee from the konfoor was perked up by a shot of Benedictine, the curtains were drawn wide and all the enchantment of the day had infiltrated the room. In the bathroom, he made a new discovery: he pressed one of the lions’ eyes and a fine jet of pine scent turned the water green. Khaki shorts, shirt and a sombrero had been placed conspicuously beside his clothes. Dressed in that fashion, he found Jock waiting in the garden, hands clasped behind his head, face raised to the sky and breathing deeply to sample the pure air.

“Very nice!” he said, with an approving glance at Henry’s outfit. “And now we can continue our inspection of the farm.”

They passed the flaming steel tank without a second glance. They patiently avoided the green trucks, then watched three thousand fat juicy German merino lambs waiting in pens to be taken to market. After that they headed for the cellars. But first they were accosted by a guard who inexorably insisted upon seeing a name badge or some other form of identification. This necessitated entering his small office, where an enormous picture of a baobab hung on the wall.

The entire window sill was blanketed with pot plants growing so wildly they almost entirely blocked out the light, permanently shrouding the small room in gloom. Not having name badges, they had to fill in some forms. Then the guard dialled a certain number. He treated them with the utmost contempt. Waiting for an answer, he sat on the edge of the desk and snipped dead flowers from the plants with a pair of secateurs. Suddenly

he listened intently, read out certain details on the completed forms and replaced the receiver on its base. Slowly, ponderously and carefully he filled out an entry permit, glowered at them from under dark eyebrows and motioned for them to go in.

“Doesn’t he know who you are?” asked Henry.

“Of course,” said Jock. “I gave him the job myself. But the old-timer is extremely scrupulous. He’s a stickler for regulations and tolerates no exceptions. Unfortunately I forgot my identity card.”

“But why all the permits?” asked Henry.

They were now walking down a passage that looked like a tunnel and their footsteps sounded hollow against the damp walls where greenish moss clung to the stones.

“To keep unauthorised people out, of course,” said Jock. “There is an original reason for every regulation. The more complex the system, the harder to determine the precise reason for every regulation. In time, regulations turn into dogmas, verities that admit no further discussion.”

They turned into a narrow side passage, frequently encountering white-clad men who, with the humble devotion of priests in a temple, were joining in the ritual of fermentation and fulfilment, who, with the pipettes, flasks, barometers and other holy instruments of their office, were guiding the spirit of the wine to ultimate individuation.

They reached a cellar where a series of casks lay like coffins in the gloom.

“Here we have a replica of Spain,” said Jock with the same devotion as his priests. “Here the *mosto* lies and ferments until the sugar has all gone and the *añada de vino* appears. It takes from twelve to eighteen months and, like the Calvinist soul of man, some are predestined for perfection and others for bitter ruin. We have no control over the outcome of the fermentation process; all we can do to help is add the *Yeso* – and the rest is in the hands of the Creator.”

From there they walked down another narrow passage, where the moss was greener, the temperature even, the only sound their footsteps troubling the decorous silence, until they reached another cellar.



“And here is the Criadera,” said Jock. “The fermentation is complete. This is the nursery where each kind ages according to its nature.”

Some casks bore the signs of Palma, others the single stripe of Raya, the two stripes of Dos Rayas and the cross of Palo Cortado.

“In a manner of speaking,” said Jock, “this is paradise. The bitter fruit has been purged. Here every soul abides according to the nature of its perfection.”

Now the narrow passage led far down into one of the biggest cellars. Here the casks lay row upon row in three tiers, each bound to the other from top to bottom.

“This is the completely integrated wine,” said Jock. “Each row represents a particular year, following the solera system, close to the earth. Here lie the endless combinations of Palma, Raya, Dos Rayas and Cortados. The combinations are tapped from the soleras at the very bottom, then each layer automatically refills from the younger layer above. It’s the ultimate achievement, the reconciliation of all the elements, the centre of balance, the true Self in every case.”

In the light of the cellar, Jock, despite his farmer’s garb, looked like a hierophant guiding his followers in the secrets of the Mystery.

“Something happens in these cellars,” he declaimed, his voice booming against the walls, “similar, perhaps, to what transpired in the mysteries of Eleusis in the caves, or in the mysteries of Attis and Cybele, or in the true believer’s complete assimilation to his symbols, or in the artist’s moments of vision, or in the soul of one who with perfect insight reaches the place of reconciliation, grasps the *complexio oppositorum* in the *conjunctio oppositorum*, experiences life in God.”

They departed from the cellar, and as they made their way back to the surface, the mystic light in Jock’s eyes gradually made way for the complexity of the everyday, which alternates from moment to moment and sensation to sensation.

They walked past a large building where a crowd of Coloured workers were busy. Everyone was in high spirits and the atmosphere had changed from supernatural to mundane. The workers impudently gazed at Henry and Jock with the superior insight into

human weakness that destroys all class distinctions and brings everyone down to the level of ordinary humanity: competence in matters of sex, love, satisfaction of material needs and the capacity to survive life's rat race. A young Malay woman looked Henry straight in the eye and laughed abruptly when he looked away.

But Jock led Henry past them. Next came a smaller building, dwarfed by two objects resembling giant locomotives. Great heaps of coal were piled on either side of the building. The ovens were open, and black workers with shiny, sweaty faces were vengefully filling the smouldering guts of the colossi.

Jock strode into a small room interwoven from side to side with copper pipes. He shut the door behind him and a clinical silence reigned in the cramped retreat. He looked at Henry, gestured with a finger, and suddenly turned open a steam-cock. An infernal whooshing filled the place, blotting out all other sounds. In the corner to one side stood an iron hammer. Jock picked it up and pounded a piece of steel with mighty blows so that the protesting hammer rebounded with lightning speed while the muscles in his arms bulged to curb the iron. But there was no sound besides the whooshing. Jock leapt up and down in a frenzy, flung away the hammer, kicked the walls, punched the pipes with his fists – and still there was no sound apart from the steam dominating everything and which, as they got used to it, created a silence of its own.

Now Jock turned the steam cock off and instantly his voice reached Henry, clear as a bell.

"This is my isolation chamber," he said. "In this din lies perfect silence." He seized Henry's arm urgently and drew him closer, one hand on the steam-cock, his voice enraptured under the influence of his unique drug. "Would you mind joining in? When I open the cock, I want you to shout as loudly as you can. Swear, curse and weep as you please – cry out loudly as once you could only cry out in your thoughts, like Job lament your undeserved human lot, because here you are addressing your Creator directly; nobody else can hear you." His eyes were white with the bright light of fanaticism. "Here you're alone like you've never been before, but it's not the impotent voice of your thoughts, it's the full, bodily voice screaming at Creation; it's you yourself in full command of your own senses;

it's you, Job, bawling out the question to the Almighty all over again. It's your right, as a human being, to register your protest with all your might in the liminal world of silence that isn't silence."

Suddenly he opened the steam-cock, the whooshing took over, drowned out every other sound and crossed over into the new silence stemming from monotony. There was only Jock's mouth opening and shutting. Henry could see the veins bulge in his neck – his mighty chest swelling with the might of his inaudible shrieks. His eyes were raised to the roof, his arms bent in the air, his whole body shuddering in soundless discharge. At first Henry was dumbstruck by this singular confession, then, in this silence that stupefied the ear, something inside him awoke – a feeling of total isolation, as though he was standing in a desert landscape, in the solitude of the wilderness, and in this separation there welled up from deep within the primal scream, the yearning, the unleashed protest at his impotence, the lamentation of his loneliness, the free, unwonted formulation of his deepest desires, the voiding of his very heart. He felt moisture on his cheeks and realised it was tears. Wiping them off with his hands, he discovered his mouth was hanging open. Something tingled in his throat, in his chest, in his lungs, and he realised he had surrendered himself to the process. Only now did he begin to think and formulate the nature of his sighs and his protest, but he soon realised that conventional formulation was unnecessary. Certain words, certain concepts, certain sounds, quite what he was uncertain – he screamed them at the heavens; only the kernel of feeling surfaced, the inchoate thoughts came and went and no one knew what phenomena were manifesting. It was more than mute desire, longing or lament, for it was articulated beyond the limits of conventional articulation. It was completely uninhibited expression without the strait-jacket of self-judgement, for he knew not what he said. It was the greatest, most all-encompassing communication with the Almighty that he'd ever had.

Exhausted, purged, he gasped for breath and saw Jock suddenly bring his finger to his lips. Then the steam-cock was closed and the other silence took over, interrupted only by their breathing. They looked at each other, but with the sensibility of people who have shared an experience, yet remain separate; with the camaraderie that stems from full parti-

icipation, yet retains a kernel of inviolable secrecy. It was perfect brotherhood, and they departed from the sanctum in total silence.

## II

They wandered in sunshine back to the house. Henry kept glancing covertly at the big man ebulliently striding out beside him and visibly rejoicing in the magnificence of nature. His shirt was unbuttoned and his chest exposed. Holding his hat he drew attention with broad sweeps of his arm to everything that pleased his eye. His thoughts gushed out; as though his pleasure was immediately translated into words. When they found themselves in the middle of a clover field, during their short cut to the house, he abruptly spread himself on the ground.

"Let's rest a while," he said to Henry, "we'll lose each other in the crowd soon enough."

Now Henry could have a good look at him. He remarked to himself that Jock's eyes were not always the same colour. This time the blue was darker. His limbs and facial features were all somewhat larger than life. This accorded with his emotions, which also overstepped the normal boundaries. He lay in the grass, chewing on a grass halm, and Henry sensed that this moment of rest and leisurely conversation foretold an equally deep silence that would rapidly come over Jock again.

"Remember what I said yesterday?" asked Jock. "About the facelessness of being?" He rolled onto his back and looked up at the sky. "It's because the individual has lost his dramatic image. There are too many people in the world. There's a palpable indifference to the fate of the individual; compassion exists only for the group, the greater whole." Now he lay flat on his back, unsettled by his thoughts. "There are no individual characters any more; we are all merely conduits. Do you know Salome, for instance?"

"That's what I've been trying to find out since I got here," said Henry. "I don't know who Salome is. Nobody's told me who she is yet. I've been searching for her for two days already."

"Precisely," said Jock. "Nobody really cares about the integrity of the other's char-

acter. We're an assemblage of faces and we realise the futility of trying to find out anything about the multifaceted patterns. The true self is total, part of the nameless masses. Each of us is merely a conduit for the torrent of accumulated knowledge. It's an oppressive thought. We no longer have one single image of any kind at all." Suddenly he sat upright. "Henry! Henry! Think of it! Think of the catastrophe of the individual person disappearing the closer we draw to the truth of being!" He clasped his enormous hands together and wrung out his thoughts. "Do you feel the loneliness, the aloneness?" He gazed anxiously into the face of the young man at his side, afraid that his message would be lost in transmission. "Do you know what this aloneness and loneliness are?" He held Henry by both shoulders. His words came gently and emphatically. "It's just the opposite. We're not alone. Our sense that we share a collective stake in the fate of humankind grows stronger every day. Loneliness is the nostalgia, the pain we feel in witnessing the false image of the individual disappear piece by piece with the expansion of our new insight. So we always hark back to the past, whenever we are being born into a new era. Your quest for Salome is doomed to failure."

Suddenly he stood up and started walking, propelled by that internal factor that was always driving him on. His pace was now so fast that Henry struggled to keep up.

The complex set of buildings that was Welgevonden loomed up ahead.

"Welgevonden is already a parody of the old culture. Reality is us together here: the roaring machinery, our collective efforts, our parties and the chaos of our thoughts."

He picked up his pace even more and Henry began to lag behind.

"Remember, Henry, that we have lost our images. There are no more individuals. There is only the caricature of Jock, Salome, all the others and yourself!" Now Henry only made out certain words. "Salome ... Henry ... Jock ... There is no ..." And Henry was left alone as Jock vanished among the trees surrounding his colossal home.

Now Henry was alone, dawdling his way between the walls and through the garden in search of the denizens of Welgevonden. He was stuffed with a jumble of viewpoints and burdened with so many theories on the essence of being human that everything coalesced in a multitude of patterns in which he, and everyone he knew, continually changed im-

ages like living cells under a microscope, expanding and contracting with amorphous elasticity into endless congeries. The surrounds themselves were the mirror image of this lack of constancy: one moment the façade of the building looked like this, the next it became an entirely different place. Eventually he completely lost his sense of direction. He blundered into walls that ran into other walls and reared up into mighty gables in alternating patterns: then he was dazzled by reflections from windows admitting light into unknown rooms, empty of unknown people. Everywhere, there were extraordinarily fashioned chimneys that made the complex house look completely different every time: from the right-angled block type surmounted by four small pillars capped with a stone slab to another with intricate spiral volutes – all fluctuating with a bit drawn from this one and a bit drawn from that into unhinged dipsomaniacal combinations dreamed in chalk and stone.

Suddenly the bell rang. Somewhere behind the nightmare walls the little black-amoor was summoning the denizens of Welgevonden to table. Henry went in and out of doors, through rooms still warm from recently departed humanity, where the echo of their fellowship still hung in the air and half-completed movements left a trace in recently disturbed objects. But the sound was deceiving. It lured him from one change of direction to another and led him in utter despondency up to a great door which he opened half-heartedly to discover without warning the assembled guests.

They sat there in the twilight gloom, all the friends and the still fluctuating unknowns who as a pattern were not unknown, on either side of a tremendously long stink-wood table with a white table cloth forming a gleaming ground for the silverware. The Silbersteins and their friends on either side of the silver: light silver meat dishes in arrow-straight array, dark-silver salt and pepper pots, heavy Welgevonden-Huguenot silver forks and spoons and horn-handled knives with serrated silver blades, and chunky, black-flecked antique silver dishing up spoons beside bowls of vegetables, salad, rice, curry, maize and something piping hot in round silver basins. They sat there, upright and stiff, prepared for the assault on the midday meal, young and old, with fatalistic hedonism, in their epicurean defiance of the sun and the humidity, prepared to undergo gastronomic torture in this climate that casts a mild enchantment while chastising the body and com-

pulling the soul towards the one, the only, ineffable God.

"Henry, you're late," J.J. dutifully admonished his nephew. He whispered jestingly to the slender Mrs Silberstein, who with pale hand ushered the future son of the house to an empty seat beside her.

Henry looked at the girl beside him. She was certainly the prettiest of them all, and he had noticed her before, this one, so sophisticated and well groomed, such a model of refinement and calculated aloofness, with such haughty confidence, and so perfect a figure, features and toilet, that you would search in vain for any sign of irregularity, weakness or uncertainty with which to bolster your own self-confidence.

Outside, the magnificent morning sun had become an evil fireball transforming the sky into a furnace.

Jock referred to the party that lay ahead, and the afternoon nap. This time he explained what sort of feast it was: their friends the farmers, and he smiled at Henry.

Just like the previous afternoon, Henry fell into a dreamless sleep and awoke when the light machine was already running. After the adventure of the bath and discovering that the lion's other eye dispensed a heather scent, he began once more to worry about the night's dress code.

There were no peculiar objects in the room, and he concluded that it wouldn't be a costume ball. He tried to solve the problem while sitting on the bed in his underwear and smoking. One's first impulse was to say that their choice of clothing was unpredictable, determined by the caprice of local custom; then again you could rationalise and find some clue in the nature of their vocation. The rich, for example, were known for the artlessness of their attire; the artists, for their unconventionality. But what about the farmers? The conservatism of an ordinary suit might be the most plausible solution, but he was immediately on his guard because he had recently learnt that life has a logic of its own that seems illogical on the surface. And yet, on closer examination, there was a simple and plausible explanation for everything. No, a suit would be too obviously ordinary; casual wear did not match their world view; anything exotic like masks and fancy dress was too daring for their way of life. But what about ordinary farm clothes like the ones he and Jack had worn

that morning? From a practical perspective, it was the best choice if it came to a braai; more subtly, it was quite piquant, with that dash of self-mockery everyone has for their own occupation; all things considered, it was significant that precisely those clothes had been placed in his room.

So Henry donned the khaki shirt and shorts, rolled up his sleeves and made his way to the party. He moved in the direction of the voices, opened the voorkamer door and found the guests in the brightly lit hall, immaculately turned out in dinner jackets and evening dresses. As the voices died away at his appearance and everyone gazed in mute astonishment at the outlandish object, all at once it dawned on him: Of course! The farmers are the aristocracy of the land.

### III

The duchess looked particularly formidable sitting there in her chair, trussed up in a tight black evening dress gleaming with mother-of-pearl buttons. A tiara rested on her forehead; she had just emptied a glass and was grappling with a sosatie when she noticed Henry and stopped eating at once. The two drab Misses Silberstein, in winsome pink evening frocks, filled the role of hostess, darting about with a sort of overbearing elation – a bit more, come now, a bit more! - until the guests' plates overflowed with boerewors, braaivleis, chestnuts and milk tart. And then there was slender Mrs Silberstein in blue, hair hanging over her shoulder, her eyes (Henry remarked for the first time) violet. The contingent of dark-eyed girls was supplemented by blue-eyed farm lassies who seemed as though they'd never been in the sun. The farmers and their wives were on the robust side, in their demeanour a certain dourness, reinforced by their elegant attire, intolerant of any deviation from their standards. All the same, Henry noticed that the Welgevonden brandy was flowing freely. The wine had hardly been touched.

He felt decidedly ill at ease in his farmer's garb and he kept feeling the pressure of cold, judgemental eyes. A woman remarked in passing: "Must be one of those artists" – and she turned her broad, corset-hardened back on him in disdain. Consequently it came as a great relief, which even got the better of his surprise, to find himself standing before



Mr Justice O'Hara and Dr Johns, who, rocking back on their heels, cigars in mouths, drinks in hand, bid him a hearty welcome.

"Ah, Henry!" said Dr Johns. "The eternal individualist!"

Over his shoulder Henry could see the harsh face of farmer staring at him with cold-blooded grey eyes, .303 fixed on its target.

"Are you surprised to see us here?" asked Mr Justice O'Hara. He blew a thick smoke-ring into the endless void. "If you think about it correctly, our homes in Bishops Court are small farms by comparison with ordinary plots. The cultivation of our shrubs, trees and other plant varieties demands the same amount of dedication, albeit perhaps on a smaller scale. Besides, some of our best friends are farmers."

"Where is Salome?" asked Dr Johns.

Henry gestured towards the dark-eyed girls and Dr Johns gave a sudden affable wave across the room.

Mr Justice O'Hara cleared his throat and gave Dr Johns a significant look. Dr Johns took Henry confidentially by the arm and the trio moved conversing among the guests.

"Now, Henry," said Dr Johns, "let me admit that both Mr Justice O'Hara and I were distraught last night when you so abruptly left us in mid conversation." Henry gestured, but Dr Johns forestalled him. "Mr Justice O'Hara and I immediately realised that some of our arguments may have appeared naive to you." He coughed uneasily.

"If you will allow us, we would gladly explain certain aspects in greater detail," said Mr Justice O'Hara. He looked anxiously at Henry, and Henry nodded.

"To begin with," said Mr Justice O'Hara, "I spoke of man's knowledge and choice of good and evil without taking the question of free will into consideration. Dr Johns has advised me that you might well be a Calvinist and accept the Augustinian doctrine of predestination. In which case I must apologise." He bowed slightly to Henry. "God in His wisdom ordained that some inherit eternal life through the deed of Salvation, while the rest ... " He gestured. "*Et hoc dicitur reprobare.*" Mr Justice O'Hara smiled. "In which case Jock's obsession with knowledge hardly applies, does it?"

Two farmers had joined their group and were listening attentively.

"Jock is something of a Thomist in that respect," said Dr John. "But we don't want

to hurt any feelings, although Mr Justice O'Hara is inclined to accept St. Thomas' definition of free will: God as first cause that sets everything in motion; human will as immediate cause of human action ..."

Two more farmers had joined the rest and looked significantly at each other. It sounded like familiar ground.

"But," continued Dr Johns, "there is still one particular question I would like to put to Henry." He turned to face Henry while the curious farmers drew nearer. "If you accept the proposition, *praescientia meritorum non est causa vel ratio praedestinationis*, if God willed all ..."

Mr Justice O'Hara interrupted him with upraised hand.

"But both groups accept it, Dr Johns."

Dr Johns was somewhat taken aback and one of the farmers smiled broadly. Another had just lit a cigarette. They were ready to take sides as soon as they could understand a word.

"Of course," said Dr Johns, "if you take the teaching of the sovereign divine will to the extreme conclusion of the supralapsarians, you can ask yourself: did God plan and create evil?"

He was now looking directly at Henry and everyone followed his example. Above the black suits and white shirts shone the faces: the severe lines of the farmers and the mobile traits of the learned denizens of Bishop's Court.

A silence followed and then one of the farmers, his long face looming over a rosette, answered: "The answer is in Job."

Dr Johns clapped him on the shoulder. The man grinned broadly and would defend the doctor for the rest of the evening.

"Precisely," said Mr Justice O'Hara. "What is the answer?"

"The answer," said Dr Johns, "is that God is super-rational and that our limited understanding cannot grasp God's will."

More farmers had joined them, in silence at first but ready to air their opinions now that one of their fellows had broken the ice.

"That," said Mr Justice O'Hara, "is a logical evasion."

Henry was being pushed ever closer to the periphery and eventually he could only hear the voices.

“And yet Augustine denies that God's foreknowledge of evil necessitates evil,” Dr Johns continued.

The farmers' faces moved to and fro before this game of theological ping-pong.

“That is why I believe in the mystery of free will,” said Mr Justice O'Hara. “From free will arises the risk of evil and evil is a negation, a negative power. God created good alone.”

Henry kept moving back while the elegant farmers showed their enjoyment of the dispute and swept him aside, bobbing on the black tide of their evening finery.

“And yet,” said the invisible Dr Johns, “if free will depends on God's original willing, as Thomas Aquinas claims, free will is limited and illusory.”

“That's the mystery!” roared Mr Justice O'Hara, his voice losing itself in the noise of buzzing spreading out around them, as two swarms formed around the two points of contention.

“Knowledge drives you nuts,” said a farmer calmly, immediately airing an opinion based on faith and not knowledge.

Suddenly Henry heard someone snort beside him: it was Jock observing his quarrelling guests with a broad smile.

“Their problem,” he whispered to Henry, “is that they see evil as something negative and are too afraid to admit duality in the godhead.” He shrugged his shoulders and with a gleam in his eye moved forward to join the fray.

Out from behind his back, a woman's hands covered Henry's eyes. “Guess who,” said Lady Mandrake. “Did you think it was Salome?” she asked as she removed her hands. She gazed at the assembled farmers and they listened to Jock's voice, louder than all the rest. “The believers!” said Lady Mandrake. “They bicker and bicker ... It reeks of the cloister and you can feel the hard Protestant church pews.” She looked around the room and linked arms with Henry when she spotted the bar in the corner. “Women on one side, men on the other side,” she said as they moved through no-man's-land to the watering hole.

The argument had rearranged the pattern of the room, as Lady Mandrake had rightly remarked. On one side the farmers formed an abstract composition of white and black, their various faces a surreal contrast of eyes, noses, mouths, teeth and ears. On the other side were the farmers' wives in full pomp, with flowing rainbow colours, glittering ornaments, and the kaleidoscope of facial features that arises with breath-taking beauty and falls away with the grimace of old age.

"Where is Sir Henry?" asked Lady Mandrake abruptly. She had drained her glass and was looking anxiously around the room. In the farthest corner was a black spot, the only one in the garland of farm lassies. Lady Mandrake sighed with relief and poured a second glass. "Sir Henry and I don't spend our time worrying about all the tedious problems of the world today. We believe in the abundance of all living things, the magical process of growth, change and maturation, the sorrow of time past and passing, the warmth born of love for all that is living." She looked lovingly at her black spot who did not stay still for a moment, bouncing among the girls like a rubber ball. Suddenly she inclined towards Henry and whispered: "I want to tell you about a promise that I had to make Sir Henry. Sometimes I weep when I think of his courage, but then I feel proud again." The tears came readily and she wiped them away with the corner of her handkerchief. "Sir Henry made me promise not to let the doctors use any pain-killers when his time comes. He wants to be fully conscious of every sensation, he wants to experience life right up to the end. Isn't that beautiful?"

Lady Mandrake caught sight of her hostess and waved with her handkerchief. She gave Henry a peck on the cheek and walked towards Sir Henry. Suddenly the rubber ball appeared revitalised: it moved up and down and to and fro the closer she came, faster and faster with nervous vitality.

Henry grew aware that the dark-eyed young woman who had sat beside him at the dining table was helping herself to a glass of wine. He hastened to help her. He proffered a cigarette and held a lit match at the ready. Narrowing her eyes, she lit the cigarette, then threw her head back and sent the smoke into the room.

"Thanks," she said.

They looked askance past each other and now and then into one another's eyes.

“It’s a splendid evening,” said Henry, prepared to start a civilised conversation about all things impersonal and innocuous.

She smiled and dragged on the cigarette,

Henry looked over her left shoulder and saw the duchess in the middle of the floor. She was moving with great concentration across the floor in her stiffly elegant dress. Her feet shuffled scarcely six inches at a time, one hand dangling at her side, the other resting on a pearl necklace at her breast. From time to time she smiled at the guests with gold teeth, first this side and then that side, as neutral as a metronome. She had just left her chair and was heading for another part of the room. Determination oozed from every pore. She made her stately way through the crowd and reached her goal: another chair facing the direction from which she had just come. She gathered up her dress, turned around and sat down without looking. She caught sight of Henry and her features tensed. Her fixed stare clamped down on him.

Henry smiled at the young woman and she smiled mechanically in return. Meanwhile they had taken a short step away from each other and were both still smoking.

He looked over her right shoulder and saw the two drab Misses Silberstein having a fine row. Each had a tray of cream cakes arranged in all sorts of patterns. First they put the trays down and waved their hands at each other. Then they picked the trays up again and carried on the argument with a variety of head movements. Abruptly the argument ceased and they went in opposite directions towards the divided guests.

By now, Henry and the young woman were far enough from each other to have broken all contact. He spotted J.J. and slender Mrs Silberstein making for an open door. Mrs Silberstein looked refreshed, but J.J. seemed tired and there were rings under his eyes. When Henry looked back at the young woman, he found that she had disappeared.

The light machine had stopped running and the swimming pool was being pumped out and refilled again.

Two of the farm lassies attached themselves to Henry, plaits over shoulders, hands on hips, feet in ballet position *sur la demi-pointe*.

“We hear,” said one of them, “that you and Salome are going to get Brutus.”

There was envy in their eyes.

“Is it true?” asked the other one.

Henry shrugged his shoulders and looked out the window. He didn't understand a word they were saying.

Illuminated as usual, Welgevonden's grounds stretched out into the night and now for the first time he saw the neon lights in the background. Far in the distance, in big letters, like titles on the billboard of a drive-in theatre, the stream flowed in red, green and blue: WELGEVONDEN ... QUALITY ... WINES. First in an arc, then in a straight line: WELGEVONDEN ... Q A TY ... WI ES.

The two farm lassies had disappeared, but others had replaced them at the bar. The men were still arguing in the background. Henry was being surrounded by girls who smiled at him, came closer and said shyly: “Enjoy Brutus.”

The refrain had spread throughout the room. Brutus. Brutus. And it had penetrated through to the men, who repeated the name. Brutus. Brutus. One after another, they abandoned their hobby horses and joined their wives so that the composition of the hall was balanced and Brutus, Brutus came from everywhere at once. The girls' dresses rose in *fouetté* as they turned to one another and whispered Brutus, Brutus. Was it Brutus? Could it be? Was it true? Oh la la. Enquire of Giepie Ollenwaar.

There he stood, Giepie Ollenwaar, in the middle of the hall, with his gold chain over his tummy, his little old legs in black trousers, shoulders crooked under his jacket, pigeon chest pouting behind the starched shirt front, toothless mouth agape in pure delight, the crow amidst the captivating lassies who pawed, pulled, prodded, pinched and pestered him to come out with the truth.

Dr Johns and Mr Justice O'Hara were the only ones who, blithely unaware, carried on disputing the questions of good and evil and free will.

At once, when Jock clapped his hands, everyone stopped talking and listened to the

“Dear friends, we are gathered here today ...

“Da-da-dum to celebrate the union ...

“Salome ... Henry ... Silberstein ...

“A gift fit for Oppenheim ...”

And then came the moment, as he rapped on the sixteen-legged agterhuis table, and

the doors swung open, that the lovely Misses Silberstein, bashful on either side of the massive head, demurely attached to the nose-ring by two cords, appeared, encircled by horns, with the bull. Winsomely they walked to swelling cheers, whistling and stamping while the bull grew bigger and bigger as first the buffalo neck came out, then the tremendous muscles swelling with every slow clop of the colossal hoofs, then the strong round belly brushing past the doors on either side, then the bulging thighs and the plump, gleaming buttocks below the table-broad back – until room and guests were dwarfed by the complete phenomenon of the majestic beast.

BRUTUS! BRUTUS! BRUTUS! shrieked the girls and the farmers stamped around the floor as boom-boom their hand-claps found a drumming rhythm.

So it continued for five minutes and silence fell reluctantly and then completely for everyone to behold the beast in silent rapture.

And Henry noticed for the first time that the front half of the bull was red and the back, pitch black.

Jock called on Dries van Schalkwyk, secretary of the Red-And-Black Ollenwaar Cattle Stud Association, to say a few words and there he appeared with his brush-cut head, to shouts of hey, Dries! laughing with horse teeth (hey, Dries!), sunburnt red, ill at ease in dress suit, collar and scarf, to present Oom Giepie (applause: fortissimo), Mr Silberstein (forte), Salome (piano), Henry (pianissimo) and BRUTUS (cacophony!) to the guests.

“Is there anyone here tonight who still hasn't heard of Brutus?”

Guffaws, noise and “I haven't!” yelled a young wag, who was playfully pulled down by the men and pummelled by the girls.

With due gravity; the greatest respect for Oom Giepie Ollenwaar who (his hands on Brutus' silky shoulder) has reared this breed for the good of all South Africa. This animal, Brutus, magnificent in two colours – this stud bull, pure-blooded with butter-fat descendants ... astronomical! Meat quality ... super grade A! Colour-fastness ... from nose tip to midriff, from midriff to tail – measure it, exactly equal! This father of the black-and-reds, presented – mind you –presented to the happy couple, Henry and Salome Silberstein.

*Applause. Applause. Applause.*

I was there, Oom Giepie, when Brutus ... How much was it? Eighty thousand? A

hundred thousand rand bid at the Veenstra company's cattle auction and you turned it down.

*Appl. Appl. Appl.*

Gravity, gravity, gravity for Dries with the white light in his eyes and the love in his heart, and for the madness and utter dementia flourishing in every creature. Gravity for the dynamism, gravity for the infirmity, gravity for the patience, the wild dreams, the happiness and the ecstasy. Gravity for the accident that defies reason – for the uncertainty, the doubt, the disillusionment, the frustration, the flitting butterfly dream of creation.

“But let us examine Brutus more closely, this animal, this ... “

– with a gesture, when feelings surged and words failed to describe this paragon of breeding.

Silence. Shared silence. And plucky recovery.

As you will note, dear friends, the black and red have exactly the same surface area, and the two colours are separated by a straight line precisely, precisely, mind you, in the middle of the body. The black is spotlessly black; the red is spotlessly red. The slightest blemish is a disqualification. Isn't that true, Oom Giepie?

He turned towards Oom Giepie who, arms folded, seated on a walking stick and shaking his head, eyes narrowed, cautiously gave his approval.

And now, friends, I want to let you in on a little secret!

He suppressed his delight with difficulty, winked at the farm lassies, put his arm around Brutus' shoulder, clapped his hand to his mouth, frowned and held his cropped head askance.

I don't know if Oom Giepie will shoot me, but ...

Wait for it ... Wait for it as scattered laughter broke out and skirts rustled blindly.

But ... Brutus has one little flaw. Here (the hand moved from the shoulder to a spot between the ears), here, if you look closely, you will see a small white spot the size of a ten cent piece.

Now the secret was out in the open; the open secret of Brutus; the dash of perfection-thwarting deviation that made everyone, now relaxed, burst into peals of laughter,



gently nudging Oom Giepie all the while.

But friends ...

With gravity, now, with lightning-fast gravity, with light and love ...

But, despite that one small blemish, this animal contains many positive qualities.

The hides of Brutus and the Ollenwaar breed, characteristic of the black-and-red, Oom Giepie's breeding secret – the hide beneath the hair is complementarily red and black; black under the red, red under the black. By way of illustration, appropriate to this occasion, a nice gesture ...

A light was brought closer, a powerful floodlight connected to a standard lamp cable, and there shone the letter S in red on the black, and, the light shifted, the letter H in black on the red.

Clip-clop-clop on the floor, the thunderstorm of fervour that grew and grew,

But friends ...

and grew and grew and grew

But friends, please, friends!

and grew

Friends! Not just dual purpose, milk and meat alone. Please, friends! But dual-purpose meat! Finer grain in the red, coarser grain in the black.

*Fervour, fervour*

Truly, friends, is there any doubt ... this breed ... butter-fat four point six... phenomenally fecund ... eats anything ... constantly gains weight ... !

fervour for Oom Giepie seated on his stick, head bowed, fervour for Brutus, stately in the light, imperturbably chewing the cud, *natura sui generis*, calm ...

The bent arm, the wristwatch, the finger on the watch face – and the silence fell in awareness of the approaching end.

Then there was the final quality, the mystery, for which even Oom Giepie could give no explanation. Length of vocal folds? A determined structural deviation? Who knew? But Brutus, the Ollenwaar breed, our beloved black-and-reds, the beast that does not bellow. Bellows, yes, but at a pitch beyond our human hearing. Is that a fault?

NO!

Is it a deviation to be despised?

NO!

Is it a blot on the breed?

NO!

Does Oom Giepie deserve the mockery of jealous breeders?

NO and uproar. Again NO and uproar as hey, Dries! Hey, Dries! forged his way back (hey, Dries!) between skirts, arms and silky-soft locks that rendered him completely invisible.

Boom-boom, the drum-beat, and tap-tap, the footfalls, and speech! Speech! for Oom Giepie who slowly raised himself with the support of two strapping young farmers until the limbs shook off the stiffness of the old position and adjusted to the stiffness of the new position and the high priest of breeding, stiff with well-deserved riches, haltingly entered the ring of light before his fantastic beast. The eyes of Brutus, the deep, soft eyes of Brutus directed at the little eyes of his creator, the bond between man and beast, the reciprocal and yet one-sided knowledge, the silent communication, and finally the beloved image of the beloved breeder against the background of his beloved bull.

*Lassies bras croisés, lassies en l'air, lassies in arabesque, lassies dancing la grâce sautéé, lassies in pirouette, lassies sur les pointes, devout lassies demi-bras.*

And then tableau.

Oom Giepie's message:

Dear friends. Once again here we have proof of unsurpassable candour that cannot be felt by premeditated deviant efforts that our policy through proofs substantiated in this work of creation of breeding in the form of foreseeable prospects and developed in calculated prospects can be through the working out of infallible known powers at our disposal.

He took a sip of water.

A balanced, palpable, living, unsurpassable animal as small evidence in these provisions cited on grounds of available powers as positive and negative coupling and gradual development from the source serves as further proof of sources drawn from creation.

He paused for a moment.

Then he resumed.

These provisions cited, balance our understanding and available powers into talents on a rock-solid background. And I call especially on the young. Through proofs substantiated in the work of creation it serves us as an example of foreseeable results from positive and negative couplings. And in closing, I wish to thank my gracious host and hostess, and, I think I speak for us all, convey greetings, red-and-black greetings from the breed society. I thank you.

Skirts lifting, skirts swaying. Young legs milk-white in the light, plaits swinging like ribbons. Teeth, eyes and lips gleaming in ecstasy. Up and up and up with the skirts until the panties flashed into view and then, heavens! whoops! hands clapping, down again.

Photographers, crook-backed like wolves in dark evening dress, cropped up all over and crept hunched over with the creeping barrage of their flashing cameras.

A shot of Oom Giepie and Brutus beside a snow-white thigh for *Farming News*.

A call for Oom Nicolaas van Linden, chairman of the agricultural union. He was put beside Oom Giepie. And a call for the father of the future bride, Jock Silberstein. Positioned on the right. For Salome Silberstein. Salome! Salome! There was a stirring among the dark-eyed girls but Salome didn't come, she was afraid of the bull. A call for Henry, surely he wasn't scared! And he appeared, inappropriately dressed and so made to stand right at the back, alone, alongside Brutus. And then for hey, Dries! Hey, Dries! and he was amicably jostled, laughing wildly, onto his knees in the second row. For Mrs Gertruida van der Riet of the Women's Agricultural Union in the second row. Mrs Fransina van Staden, convenor of the show committee, in the second row. Abraham Albertse, information officer, leaning sideways in the third row. Barend Gouws of the grounds committee, standing to the side in the third row. Wynand Harmse of the awareness committee in the third row, also standing to one side. And the farm lassies? Ah! Wolf whistles for the farm lassies! Spread out like a quilt at the very front, and back, back, back went the photographers. Quiet now! Be nice! A great flashing of teeth, a detonation, and in supernatural light the cover shot for *Farming News* was born.

Silence, please, friends! Stay where you are! Another one for the official organ of organised agriculture. Let's have some gravity, please.

And as a group, in their black suits and white shirts, with the dashing simplicity of

their formal wear set off by the elegance of feminine finery, enlivened by the rainbow of modest farm lassies, presided over by the colossal bull, his eyes blinking slowly in the light, they all achieved the requisite pattern of gravity. In anticipation of the giant camera's second flash, silence fell over the room. And suddenly, as the lenses brought the images closer together, and the shutter speed was set to a fraction of a second, and the living figures had already taken on the fixity of the photographic image, the enormous flanks began to move, the chest swelled as the lungs expanded, the two-toned skin rustled as thousands of muscles began to move, the horns were thrown back, the shiny nose reared up at the roof, and in shuddering abandon, Brutus supersonically, inaudibly signalled his mute protest to the heavens.

From the back of the hall, unaware of the silence and the camera's flash of creation, came Mr Justice O'Hara's voice: "Evil came with with the fall of the angels. A will was opposed to the will of God. It was a moral evil. A shock went through the universe and affected the whole world. Perfection shattered into a thousand pieces. Lucifer shot through the firmament like a star ..."

And the light flashed through the whole place. The shutter closed in a fiftieth of a second and beyond the reach of the human ear the voice of the beast bellowed and bellowed and bellowed.

#### IV

That night, when the new roaring sound took over and the ventilators whirled the invisible dust through the vents, and the voorkamer was empty, but still warm from the people, and the windows were wide open to expel the reek of the beast – while the moon came out from behind the clouds and Welgevonden's walls cast their shadows across the lawns, light footsteps sounded in the hallway, and somebody knock-knocked at Henry's door. But he was fast asleep, the soft sounds were beyond the reach of his senses, and all he heard was the terrified cries of all those voices that were inaudible during the day.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Fugue of Spiritual Rearmament, Apartheid and Planning*

#### I

“If you believe the astrologer Raphael, today is the last day for good,” said Jock Silberstein when he found Henry in the garden the next morning. The dew gleamed in the sunshine; cheerful distant voices drifted on the morning air. “How glorious,” said Jock as they stood on a hill overlooking the sun-drenched vineyards. “How could you ever describe it?” he added, as they gazed at a solitary pine-tree beside a granite boulder spreading its branches against the blue sky, the heather in the valley, the arum lilies along the stream, and the sorrel standing out against the lucern. Jock seemed even bigger this morning: the dynamic sovereign in his demesne; the golden god of Welgevonden.

“The first four days are intended for good,” he said. “The fifth and sixth, for evil. And on the seventh day, good triumphs once again.”

This time they were visiting the viticultural laboratories. Henry was introduced to Professor Dreyer from the research department. “Possibly the top wine connoisseur in the country,” whispered Jock. “They say he can tell the cultivar, year and terroir of any wine blindfolded.”

Professor Dreyer was a tall sombre man, deacon of his church and a teetotaler, and Henry sensed, as he held the samples up to the light and described their various properties, that his love was limited to the essential. As he inspected the wine, holding the glass up at an angle so that the colour was refined by the alchemy of the sun, it was not the shades of gold and amber that he saw, nor the romances of love and wine, wine and conversation, thought and wine, wine and fancy, but only a coloured liquid, with its own kind of perfection and a beauty distilled to abstraction. When they were leaving, after greeting all the assistants (brush-cut postgraduate agriculture students mad about rugby, target shooting and girls), as they were making their way outside through row upon row of test-tubes and chemical apparatus, Henry caught sight of professor Dreyer rapt in contempla-

tion, test tube in hand.

"There's your man of the new being," said Jock. "Even our idea of beauty has lost its form."

"And now," said Jock a little later, "I want to show you Welgevonden's prize."

He led Henry into a garden where Dutch tulips divided a courtyard into two symmetrical colour fields. The yellow on one side and the red on the other blazed in the sun at exactly the same height in a model of aesthetic precision.

"Is this the type of beauty you prefer?" asked Jock.

Even the outlines of the buildings hemming in the courtyard were a model of mathematical design.

"Think it through," said Jock. "Is the wanton combination of colours, the haphazard growth and decay, the random asymmetry in nature really more attractive?"

They looked all around, and suddenly, in a flash of insight, Henry was filled with a sort of emotional susceptibility to the beauty of planning, in which every single colour and especially the design, like the wine for Professor Dreyer, yielded a unique satisfaction.

"Simplicity," said Jock. "Perfection. There isn't one unhealthy plant. Years of research have been dedicated to cultivating the perfect plant."

They looked left and right, and the plants threw back their bright red and yellow: silent from the right and silent from the left.

"Think of the old man who gives out the permits," said Jock. "Remember him? The one with the room full of crazy plants? We picked him up in the Cape. He looked after the garden at a little Catholic church in one of the suburbs. He brought his plants with him to his office and the plants are uprooting him. His head is like an adding machine whose numbers have been shuffled so that every calculation is chaotic. But his fidelity to rules, his love of permits, his refusal to make an exception for the boss, all testify to his unconscious drive towards the mathematics of planning. He's already a different person. One of these days he'll quit tending his plants and dead-heading the flowers. He'll chuck it all out the window soon enough. Through filling in forms, he'll reach it all."

Jock went to sit on a bench with a novel hourglass design.

“One of these days we'll give him a computer,” said Jock. “A gorgeous machine for every sort of form and calculation. Once he masters it, he'll become ever more engrossed in the combinations it can reach. It's deeply satisfying as you follow the instructions and discover all kinds of absolutely congruent relations. There are more combinations than the human brain, with its loose associations, could ever dream up.”

Jock clapped his hands together and his eyes lit up.

“I foresee that the old boy will have hours of pleasure and still reach our calculated goal.”

Identical veins branched in every flower around them: a light green colour corresponded with the proportionate distribution of sap. And the colours were consistently red, consistently yellow.

“When people improvise,” said Jock, “they lose their grip on the material in the process. The flame of inspiration guides our thought, but something is lost in the conflagration. We need to find equilibrium, balance – a touch of the machine within humanity. It's a fantastic adventure.”

He eyed Henry closely but the completely negative expression on the young man's face told him nothing.

They left the garden and entered one of the buildings.

## II

The building had been designed by an architect from the Cape who had endeavoured to preserve the spirit of the Cape Dutch style in the modern factory design. They now entered a great bottling hall illuminated by large old mullioned Dutch windows; the floor was of Batavian stone and the ceiling yellow-wood, with heavy cross-beams. Jock pressed a button and all the windows opened. He pressed another button and they slowly slid shut.

“This hall,” he said, “is where all the red and white wines are bottled.”

Glass tubes sprouted from the walls on either side. They were coupled automatically onto bottles that came gliding, lengthways on a conveyor belt, to be jerked perpendicular for the moment of contact when, filled precisely to the neck with red and gold, the upright bottles vanished down a tunnel in the wall.

On the side of the white wine stood a row of Coloured girls dressed in white; a row of white girls in brown uniforms stood on the side of the red. It was unclear what they were doing. Their hands moved; they manipulated the bottles; they adjusted instruments and were engrossed in a type of work that the uninitiated witness could only guess at. But there was a rhythm in the movement of their hands – a skill and assurance suggesting long practice.

“Apartheid,” said Jock Silberstein. “Complete apartheid. Notwithstanding world opinion, it's closer to the spirit of the times than people think. It's an *individual* contribution to the whole, conserving the underlying identity so as to reach the common goal.” He smiled cheerfully at Henry. “I find it poetic.”

The glittering empty bottles were pleasing to the eye. They glided up like gleaming ships from over the horizon, reared up to the sky, and filled up with colour. The sunlight through the windows sparkled on the glass as the last bottles vanished inside the catacombs.

“How do you get the bottles so clean?” asked Henry.

“It happens in another room earlier on,” said Jock? “Would you like to see?”

They had to go back to a room full of steam and chaos. Black men in blue uniforms moved in disorderly fashion among the stills where dirty bottles were pushed about on trolleys and dumped in a big aluminium tank. Some of the men had yellowish complexions and spoke with the clicking sounds of Xhosa; others were very dark, their voices booming with the music of deepest Africa. Even the disorder held some sort of appeal: the undisciplined trolleys, the apathetic collisions, the gleeful white teeth and the total lack of any sense of time. Outwardly regimented by their identical uniforms, they moved at minimum wage tempo, inwardly carefree. Muscle was what counted in this room.

“They've got stamina,” said Jock. “That's their value. Stamina in futility as well.”

When Jock and Henry appeared, all of them stopped work and just stared. The tank



emptied; Jock gave Henry a nudge.

“Fancy seeing the labelling hall?” asked Jock. “It’s especially colourful.”

It was a circular hall at the centre of the building. Bottles came gliding on conveyor belts from various tunnels opening all around the walls. In cheerful shades of red and gold as though along the spokes of a wheel they glided up to a central point, where they made a sudden swerve and began to spiral, grazing past each other, into the sign of Ubu, united by turns on the same conveyor belt up to the hub, where, momentarily, a golden bottle and a red bottle shone forth in their nakedness and were embraced by two iron hands in a deft motion no lover could emulate. A second later, the hands let go and the shame of nakedness was concealed by a Welgevonden label, busy with colours and designs around a central theme: the House of Silberstein. Then a small platform shifted away and the bottle disappeared down into a tunnel.

“To the different cellars,” said Jock, “to be packed and shipped.”

A lone man in white stood beside a big machine up on a ledge; otherwise, the place was deserted. The man did nothing but look around, occasionally pressing a certain button.

Jock looked at Henry.

“Do you find it cold and unfeeling?” he asked. “Would you prefer the old methods – grape-treading, the personal touch?”

“I find it beautiful,” said Henry. “I could stand and watch for hours.”

Jock towered over Henry, yet despite the difference in their height, their personalities were equally matched, each conducting itself with its own strength.

“There is something of this Welgevonden in you,” said Jock. “The echo you return is pure and bright.” He started walking and held the door open for Henry. “All you’re missing is contact with the chaos that engenders order.”

Outside the building, all was silent; they crossed a lawn.

“You must have knowledge and experience fear,” said Jock. “The one cannot exist without the other.”

And now they left the lawn for larger spaces where trees and dwellings dotted the landscape.

"If you learn to know fear," said Jock, "then Welgevonden will bolster your true inner certainty with routine. Then the priesthood of Welgevonden will be yours."

Heading for one of the group of cottages, they passed the gardener's little office once more. They could see him sitting at his desk: a massive cream adding machine with handles, buttons and crank-handles occupied the entire surface. The gardener sat stock still, squarely facing the machine, and stared straight ahead. It was as though he and the machine were silently sizing each other up.

"I see they've given him the machine already," said Jock. A bit further on: "It's not that the machine is going to purify him; it's only going to cover up the uncertainty and dread. This silence is what the whole world is moving towards: the protection of specialisation and order. Of course it's temporary and the eruption is on its way." Jock threw his hands up in the air to mime the apocalypse.

They were now nearing the group of cottages and turned right towards a pretty cottage covered in ivy, picturesque among the trees. Jock unexpectedly stood still.

"Look, Henry. How can I put it?" He paused. "You have to undergo the catharsis of the whole, grasp the reconciliation of chaos and order, be reborn with knowledge and fear." He started walking again, up to the cottage, and knocked on the door. They waited a while and nothing happened. Jock knocked again, harder this time.

"There's a friend of mine in the Cape," he said, straightening his tie, "Julius Johnson, the great industrialist. He's being hunted by a madwoman who's trying to blow up his factories. She wants to annihilate order to conscientise people to chaos and so speed up the process of rebirth." He produced a comb from his pocket, looked in the pane of glass above the door and began to comb his hair. "The poor soul's got it all back to front. Order is essential for rebirth. Order will always be a part of us; it's inseparable from the new nature of things. Indeed, it lies at the root of abstract art and all experiments in the avant-garde in every area. Transformation absolutely does not come from destruction. It's Welgevonden, philosophers, priests, artists, writers ... " Now he had the comb in his mouth and mumbled as he rubbed to flatten his eyebrows. "All these products of Western

civilisation." The comb had returned to his inner pocket and he knocked for the third time on the door. "Not the shenanigans of the bush-babies beyond our borders. The New Order is subtler than the unsubtlety of mere chaos and mere order." He stood up straight: six foot four, red-haired, square-shouldered, lightning in his eyes. "We need knowledge, faith, fear, trust, pride and courage. We'll show them yet, in this Republic of ours ..."

The door opened, a short, plump, blue-eyed, black-haired woman appeared and he became a naughty overgrown boy who clasped her by the arm, pressed a crooked kiss to her temples and led her exuberantly inside to a cosy sitting room.

"Mrs Dreyer," said Jock, his arm around her bare shoulder, she leaning close against him, their faces beaming at Henry from two different heights. And behind them, through the frilly pink curtains, the sun played on a glass menagerie, on a scene of middle-class furniture, on the warmth of everyday joy and suffering.

Mrs Dreyer worked herself free and intimated (prattling all the while about the weather, the flowers, the house and the things of every living day) that she would make them tea. She vanished into the narrow passage through the bead curtain heading for the kitchen, with Jock in tow. Henry could hear the clinking of porcelain crockery as well as the softer shuffling sound of human movement punctuated with pregnant silence. Alone in the cosy room, lulled half asleep by the sunshine, enfolded in the arms of an ornate easy chair, his snooze kept being interrupted by Mrs Dreyer bringing in first the serving tray with the tea-cups, then the cake tray with Marie biscuits, then the side plates with little knives and forks. Every time her clothes were a little more ragged: the blouse loosened and buttoned up in haste, the skirt with new patterns of creases, the ribbon in her hair flapping with every movement, until it disappeared altogether. The more she unwound, the merrier she looked: a petite package unravelling like a cotton boll in the blissful wind.

And then Jock appeared, jacket off, hair tousled and cheeks flecked with warm orange stripes. He was carrying the teapot with its red knitted tea-cosy.

They drank tea convivially in the sitting room while the little birds whistled in the trees. Their conversation was soothingly empty, merely a prelude to what was bound to come.

Henry decided to be off and he thanked Mrs Dreyer for "the lovely cup of tea and

hospitality.”

“Salome was here just now,” she said at the door. “If you hurry, you’ll catch her outside.” She was impatient for him to leave; she glowed with a pink romantic aura; her eyes were with soft with desire and she projected her own sweet expectations onto the two young people.

He turned his back on the picture: the cottage, the green front door, the ivy, the hollyhocks, the jolly little woman, the red-haired giant behind her – on the domestic scene that was the immediate prelude to gay adultery in the cosy room behind the window with the pink curtains.

### III

Alone, Henry wandered away from the picaresque episode towards the orderly factory, across the fallow land where nature permitted lucerne, creepers, weeds and wild flowers to choke the paths – away, away, with his private thoughts forever ignorant of the responsibility of personal choice, uncomplicated amidst all the clashing demands for him to take sides, empty but endowed with the power to attract the new without classifying it nonetheless. He could still feel the sun on him, he looked up at the empty blue sky and he recognised something of the same wispieness he had in himself. He looked down and saw someone that might have been Salome: a girl, hazy in the distance, and she was pretty, for all that he couldn’t make her out properly, for her movements were harmonious, coordinated and musical, as befits all well formed beings.

He followed her slowly and dreamily, the distance between them diminishing by turns as she stopped, either to turn around and (invisibly to him) look in his direction or with or without reason patently wait for him.

They were now approaching the factory and she picked up her pace past the small office where the gardener suddenly pressed .00 on his colossal adding machine, looked carefully at the numbers and, once she had passed by, let fly with 34269-. He rammed the tabulator home, and when Henry made his appearance, yanked the boom and got 65731\*.

Dejected, yet stimulated by the occult mysteries of numbers, he stared at the machine, cleared it back to 00\* and, once Henry had also passed by, picked up his bible-manual to read more about this god.

The plants rejected the light and obscured the letters. He looked up with eyes in which new interests had driven out old loves. He decided to eradicate at least half of the foliage from the window the following day ...

And now Henry thought Salome looked different: no longer the nymph of the heather, but slender and rich, the daughter of Welgevonden's master walking between the neat white walls and the hothouse tulips in red and yellow. Even in the haze of his myopic vision, the wavy outlines contained the after-image of an original form. It was Salome, the replica of Jock and slender Mrs Silberstein, the chemical combination of two beings who together had created not exactly greater perfection than the sum of the originals, but something new that, in combination, was perfect in its own way.

Bright red, bright yellow as one after another they walked through the garden: first for Salome with her full-blooded movements, the House of Levi reborn in Welgevonden; bright yellow and bright red for Henry, with the satin sheen of pure satinet, for the goy with the silver soul.

The young students, gathered around a rapt professor Dreyer, the wine like tinsel in his hand, stiffened like puppets at the entrance of Silberstein's dark-eyed daughter. Then they let go their test-tubes, swarmed around her and gestured with the vast energy of their youth. – But she stood beside the professor with the short jacket, grey tie, grey skin and grey eyes, which, sexless and oblivious to sex, could only see – not gold, not warmth, not romance, but *purity*.

Shortly afterwards Henry came in. He saw no sign of Salome, only the professor whose wife was squealing her fulfilment at that moment.

“She went that-a-way,” said one of the students and pointed at the door leading to the first room.

Through the steam-room now, where the black workers, their tank empty, their trolleys tied in a knot, just sat and stared, into the next room – where her skirt swayed, and her striding legs were caressed by the hem of an underskirt,

while the door on the other side slammed shut and the hands of the white and brown girls struck and struck like cobras at the long row of red and white journeying to and through tunnels

– up to the kaleidoscopic chamber of pataphysics with the sign of Ubu

– and Salome was not there.

The man in the white jacket pressed a button

– and Salome was not there, only the Silberstein estate, as Henry moved back through wild nature toward the outline of buildings where the blackamoor clanged the dinner bell at the braai-place.

Braaivleis in the sunlight while the Xhosa cook's hat unstarched and imploded like a flopped *soufflé*. Braaivleis and beer in the sunlight together with slender Mrs Silberstein, her blue dress spread out on the grass, her eyes shaded by a sun hat broad as a wagon wheel, lulled from her ease into a doze by the babble of paramour Van Eeden who lay flat on his back, hands behind his head, translating his amorous inspiration *sotto voce* in the sun.

Braaivleis, blue sky, beer and the idleness of a sunny afternoon as the knots of guests paired off in the separate rooms of their whispered conversations. Braaivleis bones, beer cans and long shadows as one after another they wandered off to cool dark rooms, cool grass beside little streams of water, cool overhanging willow branches as cicadas droned, and ladybirds flitted from three- to four-leafed clover and in this chance occurrence two people suddenly found a reason to let themselves go.

Interim moments between bird chatter and sudden silences when the timid plucked up courage in the exhausted air as though they themselves were not involved. Silence and heat when experts discovered novelties in the old game. Heat and silence when slender Mrs Silberstein stretched out like a cat and the ginger moustache quivered wildly erect as the old rake went blind with pleasure. Heat, sunlight, silence, while the giant Silberstein took delight in the arms of the daughter of man. Sunlight while the grey professor perceived indescribably nuanced new essences in the silence of his empty laboratory. Heat as the gardener in his small office, meal forgotten, realised with a shudder the astounding

possibilities of his machine. And silence, as Henry drifted away in the isolation of his bedroom into the darkness of a deep sleep that carried him off into an almighty nothingness – a nothingness in which Welgevonden rested like a negative and everyone and everything was present, presently to appear in full colour when he regained consciousness.

There was something hidden in nothingness that, already born, awaited the light. Voices, thoughts and forms in a magical liminal world only the prophetic gaze could grasp. Adventures of love and hate and all the old emotions awaiting the silver soul of someone like Henry who, lacking a distinct personality or philosophy of his own, did nothing but wait and wait and wait. Something in steel tanks, and bulls, and wine, and bottling, and four-leafed clover mixed with tulips, and crackpots with Frankenstein machines, and the mystery play of good and evil revived parodically in Bishopscourt, and adultery, sex, religion and the nascent spirit of a new era. A new chaos was brewing. The strength of a new order and the glimmering of a new opposition.

But it was for someone like Henry. And the fleeting Salome.

#### IV

Henry felt fresh and glowing after his sleep. At first he lay in bed looking up at the gilded roof as his energy accumulated. Then he went to the bathroom where he made an interesting discovery. The room seemed twice as large as before. Someone had opened sliding doors and revealed the rest of the space. The new part was a sort of sitting room furnished with precious Chippendale chairs around an ottoman covered with towelling.

First he bathed in a stream of warm and cold water, plashing from the lions' mouths, scented with the perfume from their eyes, and then he lay on the ottoman to dry beneath a steady flow of regulated air. At some stage he went to sit on one of the chairs and he found it all pointless until it occurred to him that this room was designed for intimate company. There was a small carafe of Welgevonden wine on one of the side tables, wonderfully cool and seductive. He drank some of it and started feeling more cheerful as he studied the regalia for the evening.

To dress for the anonymous guests ... He favoured the neutrality of an ordinary

suit, but in the latest fashion: narrow collars, long-cut trousers, raglan shoulders, broad cuffs, the tie a dash beneath an Edwardian knot, the top two jacket buttons done up. He had some more wine and noticed the sun sinking between the trees outside his window.

Later in the corridor he encountered the same maidservant as the evening before, but he barely recognised her. There were flowers in her hair and she was dressed like a Malay bride. She motioned with a cheerful smile for him to follow her.

The house was empty and he thought: the festivities must be outside, but he found the garden empty too and she led him somewhere he had never been before. In the middle of a circular clearing between the trees he saw what must be the biggest rondavel in the world. The windows were like false teeth flashing in the sun all around and a tremendous hubbub of voices and music filled the evening air. He went through the door and steeled himself to defy them, as in the past, with his incongruous clothing. And he saw the greatest mishmash of clothing and colour imaginable. Skin colour as well. There were Indians, blacks, whites, Chinese, Coloureds and albinos. The various outfits included remarkable designs in national costume, giving the total impression of those colourful confections you see at Malay weddings and fêtes. And everyone was fit to burst with friendliness. People with teeth: false and natural; white teeth with rubies; white and yellow teeth; white teeth with two dark holes where the front teeth were missing on purpose. Friendship everywhere grinning at death: teeth until death; passion gaps; gravestones of sex, religion and good will. People with thick, curved, sybaritic lips; people with thin lips that opened and redoubled their frigidity; people with spit between their teeth and lips that slurped love; people counting on good, come what may; people with teeth shamelessly exposed – exhibitionism of the heart; schmaltz with gums and teeth triumphantly crossing the colour bar. The good Lord is our Buddy: His teeth grin over the horizon like a sublime edifice. Teeth of understanding, love, affection, weakness, iron, silver fillings, Dada paper, longing. Teeth in the rondavel from Welgevonden; from the Republic of South Africa; from Jesus Christ who loves us all. Teeth, teeth, teeth and teeth until everything has gone dull and teeth, teeth, teeth until everything has died away in idleness because we seek COURAGE and STEEL STRENGTH and FAITH and SELF SACRIFICE and it's more than teeth, teeth, teeth ...



"Perhaps," said Dr Johns, "you are surprised to see us here."

"We of Bishops court," said Mr Justice O'Hara and gestured at the many-coloured throng. He smiled at Henry. "But consider it well, are we of Bishops court not renowned for our enlightened minds and liberal thought? Behold the intellectual bonds between the university and the esoteric hill, spiritual cobwebs spanning the enchanted valley."

"You jest, Your Honour," said Dr Johns to Mr Justice O'Hara.

"A smile," said Mr Justice O'Hara, "in these times ... " and Dr Johns laughed with a full set of teeth, cunningly fashioned in the city workshop of his colleague Dr Koch of Killarney, Bishops court.

They stood on a sort of platform which gave them a clear view of the circular room. A dance was taking place in which each group started in the pattern of its national costume, held the differentiated pattern, went over into a chaos of motion and ended fully integrated – a hazy spectacle for myopic Henry but like a Jackson Pollock in its colourfulness: breath-taking in its dazzling randomness.

"This rondavel's roof," said Mr Justice O'Hara, tapping an empty glass against his teeth, "I mean the woodwork and the thatch, weighs 55 tons."

They looked up at the roof and then down at the crowd, who regained the gradations of race with the next movement. Gigantic arrangements of proteas bedecked the walls. Music blasted from hidden loudspeakers.

"A wonderful experience," said Dr Johns. "Listen!" Everyone had started singing. In singing they moved again through the liminal landscape of transition and a new form of abstraction was conjured up. "Listen," said Dr Johns. "They're singing the song of Spiritual Rearmament, but each in their own language."

"It reminds me," said Mr Justice O'Hara, "of an ecumenical gathering of Protestant churches that I attended once in Leiden. Everyone sang the hymns in their own language. As Dr Johns says, it's a stimulating experience. – One world united in spirit."

"It's reminiscent of the Catholic Middle Ages," said Dr Johns, "were it not for the sectarian divisions of the modern era. I mean," (as the dancers regained the tableau of integration), "I mean the total absence of nationalism, the unity of culture and faith."

"Ah!" said Mr Justice O'Hara. "But what precisely is the basis of uniformity here?"

Can you tell me that, Dr Johns?"

"Perhaps Mr Van Eeden ... " said Dr Johns respectfully.

"But first a little drink," said Mr Justice O'Hara.

Their glasses were filled with estate wine. They regarded Henry expectantly.

The music had suddenly stopped, giving way to gracious applause as white teeth flashed everywhere in the light.

Henry raised his shoulders and said: "It's difficult to explain ..."

Mr Justice O'Hara clapped him on the shoulder.

"Splendid! Splendid! Mr van Eeden. You have touched on the heart of the matter.

Where and what is the myth that will unite them? What does the new being look like?"

They had now linked arms with Henry and chatted as they moved through the crowd. They were soon accosted by someone who introduced Mr Justice O'Hara to a former leader of the Mau Mau. Dr Johns asked what his religion was and they went on to discuss the Nigerian concept of God. Did they recognise a duality in the godhead? Perhaps Mr Van Eeden, a particularly erudite young man, could provide the necessary information – but Henry had vanished without trace from among the races.

He felt all alone amidst all the exuberance, good will and love. He yearned for Salome and he wondered whether he was destined to meet her that night. The aimlessness of his wandering attracted the attention of Jock Silberstein, who as host immediately noticed the apocryphal movement in the midst of his well intentioned guests.

"Henry, Henry; little brother, little brother," he said as he put his arm around him. He listened to the light machine stuttering into action and after a while, once he felt reassured by its tone, continued. "Do you *ever* search for anything? Is it possible for anyone to be so neutral?"

Henry pondered the question for a moment but couldn't think of a suitable answer.

"It's part of human nature to seek," said Jock as they walked on. "Unless, of course, unless you've found and grasped the essence. But can we really say that at this stage?" He laughed back at the laughing guests. "Do you know the nature of the *bonum* and the *malum* yet? Have you accepted dualism yet?" He shook his head. The place was warm and droplets of sweat were forming in his red hair and on his temples. "Do you have a concept

of formlessness yet? Is it possible that you have no interests and are not searching for anything?"

The repeated question demanded an answer from Henry, because Jock was now standing in front of Henry and pinning him down with his blue eyes.

"I'm searching," said Henry. "I'm searching for Salome, but I haven't seen her yet."

"It's true," said Jock, nodding in agreement. "It's true, you're searching for Salome."

Then he caught sight of Professor and Mrs Dreyer. He bowed as befitted a host, with a touch of the *grand seigneur*.

Professor Dreyer, ash-grey even in his black dress suit, as a teetotaler a mere employee without his wine, as a person nondescript in his everyday dreariness, bowed awkwardly back at his master while his wife, banal in green crepe de chine, giggled at her little secret.

"Does it make me a paragon of evil, my adultery?" asked Jock with a light shudder as his fat lover performed her last wiggle-waggle before she and her ash-grey husband made a social disappearance. "Is evil sanctified by custom?" He pondered the rhetorical question and forgot about Henry, who had in any case walked on and lost his host in the process.

He found the duchess's teeth like prison bars before him. Tonight, *noblesse oblige*, she was *laughing*. Hair tied in a tight bun behind her head, silk scarf fastened with diamonds around her neck, head thrown back, eyes screwed tight, she grinned her good will at the goy, at one with the spirit of spiritual rearmament.

"Oh, lovely evening, colourful evening, dancing, ecstatic evening!" she incanted defiantly, Lady Mandrake, flaunting her mystification in a world that was foreign to her.

"Oh, Henry," she lamented her loneliness and rested her head on his shoulder. "Oh, Henry!" she sighed on the barren isle in the sea of guests lapping lovingly against them.

On the other side of the rondavel they saw Sir Henry, but tonight he looked tired, old and blank. He sat lonely on a couch beside an Indian woman in a glittering sari whose purely intellectual interests were restricted to the topic of human rights. Loveless he sat there in the sterile world of group love.

"Oh, Henry," sighed Lady Mandrake and led him to the bar where they were

served with estate wine.

A Kenyan tricked out in immaculate dress suit and dassie-skin headband danced past them. (The dance had started up again.) He saw Lady Mandrake, made a few complicated passes, and sang the chorus: "Don't point your finger at your neighbour because your thumb is pointing at you!"

He looked straight into the cold face of a disintegrating civilisation, at a museum piece that accepted the tourist gaze unfeelingly, at a history book with strange pictures, at a piece of furniture in a dusty attic, in dust returning to dust.

He danced on and whoop! recognition by a young woman who whoop-whoop! understood the new rhythm.

"Oh, Henry," said Lady Mandrake. But all at once her voice had firmed up. "Doesn't Sir Henry look finished to you? Doesn't he look ill?"

They both looked at Sir Henry who felt their eyes on him, looked despondently at the Indian woman, and with tired fatalism let his chin sink to his chest.

Lady Mandrake raised her glass.

"*Hasta la muerte!*" she said, and all at once her voice, words and bearing had turned ominous.

## V

Henry kept on going. With every pace, as white, black and eastern faces carouselled into view, the integration-segregation pattern switched, the colours blurred, the image congealed for the tiniest fraction of second, vistas repeatedly came alive from two different perspectives.

He was accosted by a short man who, unshaven, out of place and hopelessly lost, was nonetheless spurred on by his obsession.

"Where is he?" he asked.

Henry now recognised the gardener.

"Mr Silberstein, where is he?"

The short man looked at the many-coloured people, but he showed no trace of in-

terest or surprise. He spotted Jock Silberstein in the distance and forged a path between a black African and a Canadian. He was the only one who was not laughing. His stubbly chin jutted forward purposefully, concentrating exclusively on the only world that held any meaning for him.

A whole bunch of revellers now had formed a conga-line and were circling in towards a central point.

“Choo-choo!” they sang. “The train of happiness. Off to Hallelujah Boulevard!”

Henry also saw the two Misses Silberstein. They had never looked so high-spirited.

“Choo choo!” they sang and swayed their little bodies.

He stopped in front of a dark-eyed girl and he wondered cursorily if she was Salome. She was quite stunning and spoke to him of love. She had already reached the nirvana of spiritual rearmament. Sex, religion, goodwill and altruism came through her speech in waves and her true personality had drowned for good in the sea of universal compassion. A love zombie, with her white arms and dark eyes, bloodless crusader in the field, the banners of leukaemia fluttering over the fray.

“I used to compare myself with everybody else,” she said. “I always felt inferior and often superior. But now ...”

She pointed to the maelstrom filling the whole room and plucking at them to join in.

“But now I've cast the evil from me. In repentance I've asked for forgiveness, I've inspected myself sincerely and laid myself bare.”

Then she smiled, a smile that did not light up her face but was merely a form, a red circle around tombstones, which solved the struggle between good and evil once and for all through complete withdrawal into the formlessness of the Great Togetherness.

Dr Johns and Mr Justice O'Hara joined them, their attention attracted in passing by the word “evil”, but they were destroyed by her arrogance and detachment – their academic world of books, wine and wit exposed as the new philistinism, themselves mercilessly exposed as right-wing and beyond the pale.

Now Henry wasn't walking forward any more; he was swept along irresistibly on the current of spiritual rearmament, forced into the rhythm of love, incorporated into the

great protoplasm, and squeezed out into a conga-line consisting of an

Indian,  
Canadian,  
Swede,  
Mauritian,  
Swiss,  
Mexican,  
Sierra-Leonean,  
Congolese,  
Matadian,  
Swazi,  
Brazilian  
and Burmese.

The conga-line reached the centre and disintegrated into conceptual chaos. He was transported this way and that by a lyrical abandon which threatened to trample the individual to the raucous music of the band.

Where *had* Jock found all these people?

Boom-boom went the drums, and someone screamed in Henry's ear:

"Lookin' for a cat in Caux!"

Henry saw a "gone" ducktail who, totally lost, had wound up at the wrong party.

"Gimme a chick from Banana!" the ducktail screeched.

He looked from one person to the next, his stove-pipe legs trembling like reeds in the wind.

"Glory Hallelujah!" he shrieked. "Dig that rhythm!"

"Ecstasy! Ecstasy!" fluted the small voice of Lady Mandrake as she stood, stock still and dead drunk, gazing uncomprehendingly at all the fun.

Henry saw the gardener. He had managed to corner Jock.

"Look, sir," said the gardener urgently while scratching at a pustule on his ankle.

"A man's got to have a future."

He seized his master by an arm with a vice-like grip.

"I understand the machine. Give me a chance. I have a wife and six children. We have to live."

Love tore them apart and Henry and Jock had a moment together alone.

"He's fibbing," said Jock. "He's only got one grand-child who lives with them."

A Liberian blew a toy trumpet in Henry's ear.

"He wants the job of the man who presses the buttons at the bottling plant," said Jock.

"Is it hard to press buttons?" asked Henry. "I mean, does it demand much scientific calculation?"

"I don't know," said Jock.

"Make him an assistant," said Henry. "He's harmless in any case."

"With a gorgeous uniform," said Jock. "Gold and silver and green."

It was as though they were spitting into the tank together.

Someone rapped on the sixteen-legged agterhuis table. The chairman was announcing the speeches. Everyone dispersed into panoramic groups. They listened in silence although the speaker kept being interrupted by deafening applause.

"I'll work hard," said the gardener. "In work is pride. I won't watch the clock."

Jock patted him reassuringly on the shoulder.

A former leader of an African National Union now held the floor.

"The truth," he said, "has been revealed to me by the spirit of spiritual rearmament ..."

"Day in and day out," said the gardener. "In the small hours of the morning ..."

(Nobody saw Julius Jool, arch-communist, superciliously surveying the proceedings. Coincidentally a hermaphrodite, he/she sat like a proletarian Morgenthau and awaited for the eventual reaction to *his* universal order. His work was already done and he patiently awaited the fruits of his labour.)

Speeches and applause followed on each other so swiftly in the contagious frenzy that even the sequence became chaotic and words and cheers fused in fraternal cacophony. Meanwhile Henry had ended up on the dais again after bumping into J.J. and

slender Mrs Silberstein on the way. Just like lady Mandrake, they looked somewhat out of place – like two selfish sinners, in fact, completely unproductive.

Messages were now being read aloud from people with colourful but totally obscure names, from heads of defunct but still impressive offices – messages embellished with the lustre of Hollywood stars, elevated by the nullities of formidable statesmen, and messages lent respectability by a priest's habit, the missionary zeal of an Upsida clergyman and the self-sacrifice of a Vassar virgin chastised during her peace mission somewhere in Africa.

It was getting late and Jock Silberstein rapped on the sixteen-legged agterhuis table to demonstrate, amidst the universality, the importance of the individual instance. It was an important occasion. He himself felt unworthy; so he had delegated the announcement to someone who might provide a symbolic translation of the spirit.

And the albino came forward. He with the totally colourless skin, the sport that revealed the truth. And they all cheered virtuously as for the first time the white-eyed, white-haired white-black man got the attention that according to all arguments he deserved.

“Dear friends,” he read from the white sheet of paper, “we are gathered here to celebrate the union ...”

He spoke in measured tones and kept looking up at the audience.

“Henry ...”

And Henry came forward, picked out by a spotlight, and took up a position against a backdrop of proteas.

“Salome ...”

Short of the intervention of a *deus ex machina*, he must surely see his beloved now. And, down there, amongst the saris, evening dresses, cotton frocks and blankets, there was already a movement ...

But ...

It was the gardener taking the opportunity to storm the stage, waving his arms and colliding with the guests, “Mr Silberstein, I call upon all present!”

Silence descended on the room, the movements petrified into binaries, into pictures



of segregation and integration, figurative and non figurative, into blocks of good and evil, into fragments where good and evil were invisibly interwoven, into a mosaic that, with the conga-line, formed the spiral circling inward, into the Ubu-pschitt of uplifted living faces.

The gardener spotted the albino and violently shoved him aside.

This was the albino's big moment. He had memorised the contents of the paper by heart; he had waited the whole night ... Rage welled up within him; the contemptuous gesture affected him like a stigma on his colourless skin. Tonight he had seen himself as part of the greater whole; without racial bonds, without countries, without language or tribal gods, he had felt that he belonged in this greater whole and experienced, paradoxically, in the universal togetherness, the emotion lying at the root of apartheid. And, exalted by his rage, he did something unthinkably daring for someone who for years had been conditioned to be destroyed or ostracised as an aberration – he raised his hand against colour and shoved the gardener back.

A disapproving noise came through the hall.

Both gardener and albino, spurred by the urge towards expression, tried to force their way forward and ended up in a stalemate position, their hands and arms interlocked like wrestlers.

Then they both began to talk at once.

The gardener: All I ask for is the right to work and act ...

The albino: A joyous day for Henry and Salome Silberstein ...

The gardener: To make a contribution with the machine ...

The albino: We shall not refer to their good qualities, but ask them to look to their friends ...

The gardener: And to use this knowledge in the task that everyone is entitled to ...

The albino: To keep their hearts and minds open ...

The gardener: To analyse everything with knowledge and the machine ...

The albino: And to be aware of who their friends are.

The rondavel's double doors swung open and the two drab Misses Silberstein, expecting to enter at the propitious moment but blissfully unaware of the row, entered the

room with the cake. One wore a sari, the other a ceremonial blanket from Tangaland. They smiled and waved at the guests, they danced the high-life, carried away by the thrill of the moment. They deposited the cake charmingly on the sixteen-legged agterhuis table and choo-chooed in opposite directions to long predetermined positions where each made a curtsy to the astonished guests.

Emblazoned in light, everyone froze in position and at that very moment, for the first time in many years, Jock Silberstein's light machine stuttered, the lights flickered on and off, and darkness fell while the swimming pool was being pumped out.

## VI

In the big house the ventilators suddenly started up. The giant blades whirled the dust against the ceiling. All the lights in the estate were dimmed; the moon was behind the clouds; solid objects were merely shades of darkness. The guests stumbled blindly through the gardens towards their cars parked somewhere in the labyrinthine grounds.

And then the horizon lit up with a bright glow. In the township, built by Jock Silberstein especially for his workers, one of the churches was ablaze. As a school and then some of the administrative buildings joined in the conflagration one by one, the garden was lit up and the guests found it easy to locate their cars and withdraw as quickly as possible.

Only Julius Jool (coincidentally a pyromaniac), alibi secured, his own private party just begun, ran with outstretched arms towards the light.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Death of a Pagan*

#### I

The first thing Henry saw when he opened his eyes was that the room was dark, the gilded patterns on the old-fashioned ceiling (angels, maidens, Pan with his flute) outlined more sharply – as though in this sort of light the work of some forgotten artist (from Europe in days of yore) came more into its own. And then he noticed Jock Silberstein, with rings of ash around his eyes, his khaki shirt patched with sweat, legs scratched, nails torn and bloody.

“What a godforsaken night,” said Jock, taking a sip of his Chartreuse-flavoured coffee. “Armoured cars around the location. Journalists buzzing around like flies. Only a third of the workers at the distillery and the bottle washing plant. Never seen such heaps of bottles. And Professor Dreyer’s threatening to resign.”

“Is it because of Mrs ... ?” Henry asked cautiously.

“He says he can’t concentrate with all the noise. He says it gets on his nerves. And half his students have gone off as volunteers to guard the buildings.”

Through the window they could see a column of smoke.

“The fires have been dowsed and everything is calm, but heaven alone knows – it’s a *gevalt*.” Jock paced up and down the room. “In a few days it’ll all be back to normal, but the post-mortems are still to come. Whose fault was it? Why? What’s the matter? There’ll be plenty of answers, but the *malum* will sweep like a cloud above it all and nobody will be able to put his finger on a single truth.”

He waved his hands and scoured the room as though he’d find the truth cached somewhere between the furniture.

“There’s a conflagration of evil and it’s essentially formless.”

Moving through the chairs, his great figure like that of a hunter in the bush, Jock opened the doors of the wardrobe, completely filled with Henry’s clothes.

“There’s a conflagration of evil but we’ve lived in the light for too long, forgetting

the colour of darkness.”

He turned around and saw Henry, hands folded behind his head, negative and quiet on his bed.

“Get up, sonny!” He rummaged in the wardrobe and hauled out last night's suit, crumpled and creased from all the commotion. “You must come with me – today I'll show you that for us, truth is existence and has nothing to do with moral speculations on its nature.” He threw the bundle onto the foot of the bed. “Truth is because we feel it so. Our churches do battle within this relativity.”

Now he was casting about for a shirt.

“The terrain is no-man's-land, and therein lies the power of good as well as evil. Evil is too positive just to feed off good alone; it's got a dynamic life of its own.”

He observed Henry getting dressed, not bothering to wash or shave, with the haggard look of someone who'd seen better days.

“I'm afraid the balance has been disturbed, Henry,” said Jock, picking out an unmatching tie without bothering to check. “On account of the soothing influence of the good, the downright indefeasibility of the *summum bonum*, the banner of light beneath which every Tom, Dick and Harry fight, Satan has been misprized.” He watched Henry drag the comb through his hair and then realise with a start that he hadn't yet put on his shoes. “There's a conflagration, Henry. An inverted conflagration of evil which we all feed the more we move into the light.”

The light was dim. (Perhaps on account of the smoke.) – A haze hung over the landscape.

“In the hubris of our firmest conviction lies our downfall,” said Jock as they walked out. “And that's why I invest hope in someone like you, who neither seeks nor chooses.”

They walked directly toward the township. The column of smoke was a beacon in the distance beyond the factory. It was muggy and Henry soon began to sweat; he felt his body getting clammy under the suit, dirt caking in his beard. The sun was behind the clouds, but, in conjunction with the haze, they grew aware of an inexplicable light you experience once or twice in your life during a solar eclipse. The atmosphere was close and Henry felt himself someone who in a moment of despair comes to the conclusion that the

human race dwells in a hostile world, that all beautiful phenomena mask an unpalatable reality, that life is ruthless, that everything is meaningless (or its meaning is beyond our comprehension).

He looked at the dark clouds, yet there was no sign of rain. Jock Silberstein's factory, his entire farm, looked insignificant. It could all turn to ash at any moment. Work had ground to a halt. Moss gathered; haggard figures flitted spectrally through the ruins. Order is brittle: it could collapse at any moment. A violent bloody bedlam might wipe everything out overnight. A new order could arise only to be eclipsed in turn on some paltry day. For what do we fight and struggle? And Henry, in his crumpled, sweat-sodden suit, deeply miserable, felt how he himself was perishing along with everything else.

They walked past the factory which, solid as ever, defied the smoke from the hill, used the smoke to magnify itself, looming from the fog like one of Kubla Khan's castles. The steel tank was a silver saucer in the air, floating on the clouds. The outbuildings and cottages looked European in the foggy smoke. They went over the hill and down to the township that Jock Silberstein had built for his black workers. The Catholic church, school and administrative buildings were frameworks sketched in charcoal – abandoned at a stage where becoming and decomposition were indistinguishable. Only the smoke and ash betrayed the moment, and the gathering multitude, whose muffled voices and aimless movements attested to the destruction. It was as though, after the night's eruption, everyone was searching dully for the consistent pattern they themselves had disrupted.

A few Saracens had pulled up in a V at the entrance to the township. Some soldiers were sitting on the armoured vehicles with Bren guns on their knees, watching in amusement as a few wide-eyed piccanins formed a circle around the armoured cars. A single police van with a single prisoner was parked some distance away. It was Julius Jool there behind the bars: brimming with confidence, basking in the limelight as from time to time he dramatically sketched the Africa sign in the air. The other agitators and thugs who had assaulted workers on their way to work had already been driven off, but the thin line trudging toward the factory under police protection was meagre and would increase only later on.

Then there were the assembled faces: Bantu faces that to whites all looked alike, lips

and eyes that, depending on your experience, were happy, crafty or cruel. Inert faces merely watching, wholly impassively awaiting the call, perhaps, to further demonic outbursts – or for the order: to work! Faces that would burst into laughter the moment someone stumbled over a beam and broke a leg. Or merely hated. Or wanted to lay their hands on Jock Silberstein's factory and his wife. Or wanted to live in his house. Or wanted to open all the casks. Or merely moved together when the call came.

Last night the women had whistled and the impis cavorted in bare chests and flannel trousers. Racial memories reignited in the flames. But whose hand had set fire to the little church where father Kostelanitz used to listen to confessions with one ear while sketching with the other hand? And who had torched the school where Josef Ukulele used to lead the singing? And who had harboured what dark grievances against old man Groenewoud who patiently, day after day, had to elucidate the dogma of regulations in his administrative office?

“Who? What? And why?” asked Jock.

“There are so many answers,” he told Henry. Go ask the police, the reporters, the politicians and the ecclesiastics. Someone trod on someone's toe and a fight broke out. Give them the vote. It's the awakening of black consciousness. A proletariat on the march. The ways of the Church are slow, but the Church will overcome.

“Is this the face of evil?” Jock asked and pointed at the faces before him. “Is this the face of evil?” he asked, pointing to himself. “Is this the face of evil?” and he waved at the curious onlookers flocking together outside and devouring everything with their eyes.

“Not so long ago I knew the devil,” said Jock, “but I don't know what he looks like anymore.”

As they began walking, he said: “People knew the devil according to the image he assumed. But with deeper understanding of true being, reality in the abstract, the devil too became anonymous.” He stood still for a moment. “But remember, sonny, if the devil vanishes, God vanishes too.”

He looked back, and in the distance they could see the smoke-enveloped township. From that perspective nothing moved, everything seemed petrified to the naked eye: the people, the Saracens, the black masses, the trees, the houses, the ruins. Only the smoke

moved slowly and the sun grew dark.

“Jesus, Henry,” said Jock, “I’m not trying to be funny. What’s the good of asking questions and listening to the apologetic explanations every other person gives you? A child is dead. Two policemen. Three women and sixteen black men. Father Kostelanitz murdered in his church, mutilated and eaten before his legs were incinerated. And was this done in the devil’s name? Then it would make sense, wouldn’t it? Then one would know. Then you’d have something to fight against. But even the ecclesiastics take sides. What else can they do if we’ve lost our images?”

Something exploded in the distance: first they heard the sound, then they saw a pillar of smoke rise into the air. Where the masses now were moving, the pattern came back to life. The individual figures were still static. There was only the column of smoke in the air and the masses moving in waves. But it was too far to see in which direction they were flowing.

Jock seemed completely unimpressed by the scene. He looked at the column of smoke as it grew ever bigger. “Look, Henry, there are various images of God. But what does the original look like? We don’t know. There is an original behind our images, but it’s inaccessible. We have come to know the divine essence through our images.”

Another explosion shook the earth and a second column shot up beside the first. It was now clear that the masses were moving in two directions. Shrill whistling pierced the air. Some of the Saracens started moving.

“We still have images,” said Jock after a while. “We supplicate them automatically day after day. But they’re second-hand images. Images so spent they’ve become false, they’ve lost their meaning, so we’re left with only the abstraction *for which we have to find an image all over again.*”

The tumult had subsided. Once more unmoving order had set in. The motionless panorama beneath the smoke columns blended with the landscape, blended with the grey light, and somewhere in one of the trees a dove began to coo.

“It’s odd,” said Jock. “We’ve become so familiar with our images that we discard them and penetrate to the deeper essence of abstraction. And the closer we get to it, the closer to the impersonal truth, the more lost we feel.”

The third and final explosion of the day interrupted his monologue. The Presbyterian church, however small and insignificant it might be under the two pepper trees, had now also made its modest contribution to disintegration.

“This stage,” said Jock, turning his back on the chaos, “this stage of formlessness is when evil is at its most dangerous and people are at their most confused. I mean, it makes no difference if you can't always make out the good. At least it's harmless. But tomorrow an invisible Satan can become your visible God.”

And on their walk back they found themselves before the house of Professor Dreyer.

## II

Jock knocked on the door and smiled at Henry, winking as though to reduce his illicit romance to a bit of harmless fun. They waited for a second, the door opened and Professor Dreyer himself appeared before them. He was wearing last night's suit trousers and a casual jacket. His wing collar had been taken off and only the copper stud now held the bow-tie in place around his Adam's apple. Just like Henry, he looked ragged, but his eyes had a mutinous glint and his entire demeanour was eloquent with the defiance of someone lodging his justified complaint from a position of strength.

“You may perhaps ask, Mr Silberstein,” he began formally (a bantam cock before the giant). “You may perhaps ask why I am not at work. But I have reason for complaint. *I recently made a discovery ...*” and he paused as a bitter smile appeared and he experienced, on this, his day of revolt, the pleasure of pinning the great, rich Jock Silberstein down with his lawful grievance. “There is a reason,” he said, “and you, as master, by virtue of your status, cannot escape your responsibility.”

Professor Dreyer had his own jargon – a series of esoteric symbols that only his fellow experts understood. It had the advantage of accuracy, precision and clarity. But outside of this language, he was a child, burdened with the clichés of common speech.

“When I first came here, Mr Silberstein,” he continued, “when my wife and I came here, and I could exult in the work that I love, we felt (well housed as we are in your hous-



ing scheme with which I have no complaints, except for the sewage system that does not drain as well as could be desired ... Now, for that I have an explanation, and I think the health inspector will support me. There is a layer of clay beneath the surface that prevents the water from dispersing evenly from the septic tank, with the result that it reaches the surface too quickly ...)"

He hesitated for a second and struggled to rein in a secondary grievance that threatened to supplant his primary grievance.

"Where was I?"

For the second time in this house Henry saw Jock become an awkward, oversized boy, shamefacedly hiding his embarrassment by shifting from one leg to the other while straightening his tie and ruffling his hair.

"Your responsibility, Mr Silberstein," said Professor Dreyer, the original grievance gradually overcoming him again. "Your responsibility as regards an injustice done to me."

With a dramatic pause he fixed his ashen eyes accusingly on the authority which, thank God, was now embodied before him, the Master in person being infinitely preferable to some unknown impersonal power, the malefactor always hidden in the fog.

(It was strange to see Professor Dreyer in this role. Nothing remained of the detachment with which, in his private world of research, he managed to achieve a certain dignity peculiar to people who – through total dedication to duty – set aside all trifles and triumph over their petty-mindedness. Now Henry saw Professor Dreyer without the distinction of his special expertise, just like last night at the party, only more close up. He saw, alas, the incompleteness of the unfinished person, the product of specialisation, the technologist's brilliance an accidental trait in the make-up of an otherwise utterly conventional, aggrieved man.

"I was on the point," Professor Dreyer blurted out, impulsively divulging his jealously guarded secret, "of solving the problem of perpetual fermentation."

(Like all the dear old crackpots with their *perpetuum mobile*.)

"Thugs broke into the laboratory. Some of your own workers, Mr Silberstein. And guzzled it all. DOWN TO THE LAST DROP! Imagine! People in your service, Mr Silberstein. Your workers. Do you expect me to sacrifice a lifetime's work for barbarians who are

*allowed* to get completely out of hand? A situation you permit, Mr Silberstein, with all your parties (I was there last night) where there is no colour bar?"

Professor Dreyer really had no interest in politics and would have worked for President Nkrumah himself as long as he was left alone and provided with the necessary facilities. With all the reproach that his ashen eyes could muster, he fixed his gaze on his employer, who all at once began to smile, only to stop smiling abruptly when Professor Dreyer said:

"And may I add, incidentally, that my spouse, Miemie, was raped last night."

And at that very moment Mrs Dreyer appeared in the doorway, hair spreading out over her shoulders, a Brunhilda in a red dress wrapped tightly around her body and beneath which her irrepressible breasts swelled rambunctiously. She raised her arms aloft dramatically and let them fall again.

"Oh, Jock! Jock!" she whispered. "God help me. What could I do?"

A bewildering scene ensued. Mrs Dreyer refused to call the police. Professor Dreyer insisted that Jock Silberstein make reparations and added (with a crafty smirk) that in future he might provide better amenities to compensate for inconvenience caused. And after many promises and consolatory words, Jock and Henry left the cottage, which the smoke haze was rapidly enveloping.

"It happens every year," said Jock as they walked on. "She gets raped every year when I start losing interest. (Was I a bit stand-offish last night?) It's also a sort of defence against Professor Dreyer. It's back to tea and adultery in the mornings from now on." He frowned abruptly. "But it's the first time that *he's* also made demands."

Without realising it, they'd once again begun to head back to the township and now found themselves slap-bang in front of the great multitude beneath the cloud of smoke, before the impassive black faces merely staring out ahead of them: old women, young women with lobola value, housewives with little ones hanging on their necks, men with the blankets of the tribe over their shoulders – everywhere, from all directions, passive but prepared for peace or chaos; the unpredictability of life exactly predictable for this strange phenomenon that had popped out like a genie from a cloud of smoke.

More than likely all sorts of measures were being taken to restore order: houses

were being searched for weapons, instigators rounded up, temporary administrative structures set up – but these activities were all invisible from outside. And still the two crowds, spectators and participants, waited patiently and intently on either side of the borderline of Saracens and police. It was as though everyone was preoccupied with private thoughts, and, awaiting leadership, passed the hours in silent contemplation. The busiest of all were a clump of journalists labouring with their ubiquitous cameras and peculiar imagination to create a world for their readers – an unreal world modelled on circulation requirements, a world half familiar and half strange, a world in which every word and event was pregnant with meaning, a world wedded to the fantasy of the fourth estate – all with a tedium and monotony in which sensation repeatedly jerked readers out of their apathy.

“As a Jew,” said Jock suddenly, “I am perhaps more readily attuned to the vagaries of a sometimes benign, sometimes ruthless, sometimes moral, sometimes immoral Old Testament God. That's why I can't accept the teaching of evil as *privatio boni*.”

He gestured in the direction of the factory and they left the township.

“Imagine evil regarded merely as degrees of negativity! No wonder Satan is so dangerous.” He pointed back over his shoulder. “Did we see Satan today or did we not?” Nothing could distract him from his over-riding concern. “In the Middle Ages he was a physical threat; today we try to think him away to the extent that they want to leave him out of the Catechism. Do you think he was created by humans? He was an angel created by God. Whether he, or humankind, fell through free choice, and whether God is responsible for this exercise of will – we can talk about that tonight or tomorrow night. But he is here, Henry. The shadow side of God in the cloak of light.”

They had now gone down the hill and were approaching the factory in order, as Jock said, “to determine the extent of the damage in one fell swoop”.

Something flashed in the distance. It moved in and out of the trees and was then illuminated in full colour as it moved towards them across level ground. It was the garden-er in a uniform of gold. Evidently the fantastic garb had been ready for some time – the artistry with needle and sewing machine that had gone into the richly embroidered uniform stood out at once. And his face! The beaming countenance justified the lustrous gear

completely.

“Mr Silberstein!” he greeted his master, nodding good humouredly at Henry.

He had no further grievance.

They walked to the factory together, went through the tulips and reached the room empty of Professor Dreyer. A knot of students were playing cards and sprang to their feet when Jock Silberstein entered the room.

In the bottleshaving plant a handful of black workers barely had room to move among the piles of bottles. Even so they were patiently dumping trolley upon trolley of bottles into the tank. Everyone was calm. There was also no indication that even a quarter of the day's work would be completed. As Jock and Henry came in, the labourers stopped working and watched, and the last trolley duly came to a halt.

In the room where the Coloured and white girls took care of the bottling, everything was going well except that only a single bottle came sailing down the conveyor belt and, as though on some remote railway siding, only sporadically did a full bottle disappear into the catacombs.

In the Ubu room, the fantastic mechanism spun on undisturbed, but there was no pattern. Because of the sporadic supply of bottles, the iron hands often clacked together in empty space and a crumpled label fluttered to the floor.

Meanwhile, the gardener had mounted the platform hastily and positioned himself beside the man in the white uniform. At this stage, as an apprentice really, he was not allowed to press any buttons yet. However, he kept his eyes peeled and nodded his head whenever a familiar object or process appeared for the umpteenth time.

Most of the time, when the man in white pressed the buttons, nothing happened.

A sunbeam had come in through the old Dutch windows as they were leaving the room. They saw the gardener before the machine, wreathed with rays, surrounded by shadows, by chiaroscuro, like a Rembrandt. The sun blazed on the gold, the darkness teemed with colour, his white hands moving as though he were playing an organ. You could even hear the music if you listened to your imagination. But nothing happened. The iron hands were still clacking together and the colourful labels fluttered from light to shadow, creating a play with the colours of the gardener's uniform. The Ubu room had be-

come a cathedral, the machine an altar, the movements a ritual in a silent, formless religious ceremony. And there was the devotion, the seriousness, the complete submission, and the moment replete with invisible significance.

### III

Jock and Henry found themselves back in the eclipse. They walked on aimlessly up to a point where they came to an abrupt halt. The pillar of smoke was now a mushroom cloud, a simulated nuclear blast covering the whole horizon, and nothing stirred.

Suddenly Jock began to stride purposefully ahead and Henry had to run to keep up until they reached the confession room where Jock opened all the cocks and filled his lungs for the scream of ecstasy. But only a gentle soughing leaked from the damp pipes and there was nothing left over for them, nothing.

"It's nearly dinner time," said Jock. They walked faster and, upon reaching the steel tank, Jock suddenly stopped. He looked longingly at the platform swaying in the fog. They climbed the platform but couldn't see anything. Now, however, they were above the cloud. It was a foul cloud that made their eyes water and left them stranded in the heights. The lake of distilling wine was now a troubled mass pitching to and fro. Jock lit his pipe and deliberately threw the match into the tank. Nothing happened and they slowly climbed down to resume their walk across the molehills, through the binary plantation, and among the Swiss stud cows.

Clop, clop, clop went the hooves and now they saw the elegant rider glide over the fence, the small lithe figure clasping the chestnut hide, rider and mount as one in an exuberant leap that described a semi-circle and then slowly tumbled in a heap onto the soft ground. Hooves and shoes whirled above the veld as rider and horse slowly rolled to a stop with untold maimed and broken legs. Jock and Henry rushed across to the scene. There she lay beside the horse, the dark-eyed girl in interrupted ecstasy. Jock knelt beside her. Henry stood over her and they looked at the black eyes brimming with tears. Painfully she pulled herself together, and she abruptly sat upright, combing the fingers of one hand through her hair.

“Are you hurt, Elsie?” asked Jock.

She shook her head, and now they were three as they walked back to Welgevonden for the midday meal.

There was a little man-made lake, fed by a stream alive with trout. Some of the guests had ventured out on boats and were now also returning to the house. Some way further they saw a snow-white gazebo of flowers, Corinthian pillars stained with red flowers, beneath which slender Mrs Silberstein, draped in classic white, stood hand in hand with J.J. And behind them the blue mountain, peaks caressed by a creeping cloud of smoke which suddenly, driven by the wind, made every outline fine and suggestive like a scene from the Golden Age.

“Where are we having lunch today?” Jock asked the dark-eyed girl.

She said she wasn't sure herself, but that they must wait for the blackamoor's bell.

Meanwhile they drew nearer to the house. More guests had arrived and the crowd ambled through the gardens and the flowers. Against the background of the day there was a certain decadence to their attitude and demeanour: the pleasure in the moment, the indifference to events which they were powerless to affect in any case, the effort and care put into their appearance so that the women were all beautiful and the men dashing. (Apart from Henry and Jock.) It was as though they were passing through a garden in Firenze while the plague ravaged the valley, as if they were princes and princesses from Boccaccio who, sequestered in their sparkling conversation, surrounded by beautiful objects, hunger satisfied by the finest food, thirst quenched by the subtlest wines, hoped the *Flagellum Dei* would overlook them. Growing numbers of beautiful young women and limber young men processed beneath the trees, across the lawns and through the pergolas. As befitted a good host, Jock did not tell them that his entire farm had ground to a halt; as befitted guests of Jock Silberstein, they refused to entertain the belief that Welgevonden might be in peril.

On entering the entrance hall, they stood back and waited for the hostess and host to show the way. They were led from room to room in a search that did not seem to be a search at all. The conversations continued, the movements were calm, the rhythm fluid.

But still the blackamoor's bell stayed silent.

The two Misses Silberstein darted from room to room and rejoined the guests without accomplishing anything. The slender Mrs Silberstein's lovely voice murmured quietly in charming conversation. The duchess, a shawl around her shoulders, peered impatiently into every room. Jock Silberstein mastered his embarrassment with an effort as he kept encountering tokens of his riches, but no food. Salome had to be somewhere among all the high-spirited girls with their lively conversations, because her name could be heard continually through all the babble. Salome, Salome. In one room they found cigarettes, salted peanuts, almonds and cashew nuts. They lingered there for a spell and for the first time discussed last night's events collectively – in a nonchalant tone just as futile as serious debate. In the meantime the nuts vanished to the last crumb and the air filled right up to the ceiling with cigarette smoke. In one of the entrances they had to pass the marble statue of a jet-black horse. It was Jock's beloved, late lamented stallion Saturn, who had won the Metropolitan no fewer than three times. Saturn at full gallop as the crowd went wild ... ! They mounted the stairs, appeared on the balcony (there, on the other side, smoke bubbled over the hill) and returned to a room with an empty table.

"I am afraid," said slender Mrs Silberstein, "that the Malawian from Blantyre has also joined the rioters."

"And the cook, too," said the duchess.

"But surely not the Coloureds," said one of the guests.

"Thank God for the Coloureds!"

"But the cooks are Xhosas," said slender Mrs Silberstein, upon which the guests courteously intimated that they were not planning to have a big lunch, given all the festivities at the Silbersteins lately.

And so Henry found himself back in his room after Jock had reminded everyone of the evening party, assuring them that everything would be completely under control by then; a prediction that proved to be correct because the cooks had already begun turning up early in the kitchen since the township, now under police control, had attained the uninteresting appearance of order.

Towards midday, Jock Silberstein's factory was back in full swing. Professor Dreyer and the rest were all at their posts. The conveyor belt was loaded with bottles and the iron hands slapped one label after another squarely into place. The man in the white overcoat was now in charge of pressing the buttons and the gardener sat beside him in his faded finery, entrusted with pressing one single button when every gross was done, in that way promoted to higher numbers, with secret ambition awaiting the day he might press the one button that encompassed an entire load, and later perhaps, on a platform of his own, in a uniform of the angels, a button that embraced the whole harvest.

#### IV

A fitful siesta, sweat soaking the pillow as the humidity in the room increased. All the windows and doors were shut to keep out the smoke. On the horizon sunbeams filtered through the artificial clouds, making for an early dusk. Henry went to the bathroom and opened the whole orchestra of taps, aspersed himself with all the perfumes and stretched out on the ottoman, drinking cool wine and contemplating what uniform to wear for the evening party.

The guests, as Jock had remarked earlier, would for the most part be intellectuals: journalists, free thinkers, men of the cloth – indeed, everyone who felt at home with that appellation but would, with typical modesty, deny it at once. With that the secret of the dress code became clear: all were free to dress as they pleased, because in the world of pure thought, apparel was no more than an interesting accident. By way of reaction, after the discomfort of wearing a suit without grooming himself properly beforehand, Henry put on close-fitting black trousers, a flowing silk shirt in the Spanish style, with a cummerbund around the waist, and soft veldskoens – an ensemble that afforded him a free and easy feeling, his body glowing from the bath, a modest but masculine cologne adding spice, wholly founded on the classical fiction, *mens sana* ...

He found the guests easily: they were assembled in one of the big lounges, the hum of their conversation a clear indication. He opened the door and entered without being noticed, for appearances counted for nothing with this crowd, only personality, reputation and notoriety.



And once again he found himself, as in the past, an eccentric object. The men were all dressed in black suits, white shirts and silver ties. Silk handkerchiefs for appearances, clean handkerchiefs for tuberculosis, pearls for tie pins, fine leather shoes for black silk socks. Crystal glasses with Mmmmmmm! Welgevonden Claret 1944 cradled in bone-white hands, lightly, appreciatively – to be refilled repeatedly, for a gentleman knows how to hold his drink.

And the women. Tall, slender and dark with sharp eyes lacking any resonance – basilisk eyes stiffened by knowledge, taking thousands of readings through thousands of prisms. Sexless but sexually liberated model figures out of *Vogue* and *Harper's*, with long legs, narrow waists and breasts only good for nourishing dwarves. Women trammelled in intelligence and sex – burning with *furor uterinus*, but each one punished on the cross of her own discord. And there were a few lesbians, perhaps the most beautiful of all – the only ones with prism-free eyes, the only ones with warmth and love wasted, sadly, on a parody.

Unlike the farmers, who were characterised by their more conventional attire, and their women, somewhat more floral, these men and women formed little groups for a collective cerebration.

There were however some other figures who, like Henry, stood out from the rest: Sir Henry and Lady Mandrake; he in old-fashioned, elegant style, swallow-tail coat and lapel-button to show off his orders of knighthood; she in black evening dress with Medusa face, displaying timeless classical simplicity. And then there were Mr Justice O'Hara and Dr Johns – two somewhat slovenly figures in contrast with the creaseless elegance of the intellectuals; the picture of two wine-bibbing classicists steeped in the *humanoria*. "Henry! Henry! Henry!" they welcomed him delightedly to complete a triangle in their profound colloquy.

As they spoke and, as in the past, embroiled him in their opinions so that he became their unspeaking accomplice, Henry looked over their shoulders and saw Sir Henry and Lady Mandrake. It was the first time the two of them were staying together. Sir Henry moved with effort, his smile for the indifferent guests (who didn't know him) a grimace of pain versus will, of will battling with pain, a tragedy of will doing futile battle with pain.

He targeted the girls with the prismatic eyes, waved the magic wand of the seductive word, laboriously flexed his old man's flirtations, went through a grotesque mime of the *bon vivant*. Lady Mandrake held him by the arm and never left his side. She also smiled at the guests, but with an expression much like a mother giving away the punchline to her child's feeble jokes: laugh! Whose gestures mirror all the gestures of her tiresome child, who maintains the travesty blindly and with insight all at once. But behind the caricature, if you looked straight into the eyes (as Henry was now doing), there was icy, adamant resolve, the other kind of madness, the quiet kind that bestows calm upon the eyes of all martyrs, murderers and saints.

"Ah!" said Dr Johns. "Tonight Henry feels at home with all the intellectuals."

Mr Justice O'Hara also good-humouredly nudged his arm. They laughed discreetly and winked, not disrespectfully, at Henry.

"Jock tells me," said Mr Justice O'Hara, "that today you discussed the disappearance of the images of good and evil. By images I assume Jock is referring to those pictures that come into one's consciousness from the indescribable contents of the Collective Unconscious, correct?"

Henry nodded and Mr Justice O'Hara gave Dr Johns a meaningful look.

"Can we also draw the conclusion," asked Dr Johns cautiously, "that you and Jock accept a Taoist view of dualism, the reconciliation of opposites, the *summum bonum* and the devil, as the ultimate attainment, the realisation of the true nature of the divine order?"

He looked expectantly at Henry, prepared for a vigorous debate, but Mr Justice O'Hara's fervour brooked no reply.

"And in what manner, then, do you accept the *enantiodromia* of Heraclitus? If the opposites are continually in motion, can the opposites ever be reconciled? If there is continuous motion, can there ever be harmony?"

"Maybe," said Dr Johns, "if I may speak for Henry, at certain times when the images of Satan and Christ are equally strong in the mind."

Henry was saved by Jock Silberstein who, immaculately dressed, put an arm around him and introduced him to the guests. But here the threat was greater. It was expected that he first show signs of intellectual maturity before being admitted to the fold.

"It's our fault as whites," said Henry in response to a question about the previous night's events. "We must learn to let go of our old, fixed ideas. We must look at ourselves. Learn to think courageously."

The silver ties now flashed in his direction. The light broke up inside the prisms and overwhelmed him with a myriad colours. Their cordiality proved that with his *mea culpa* he had found the right key.

Later Jock told him: "My guests find you a worthy consort for Salome," and he smiled mockingly.

The two drab Misses Silberstein, hands behind their backs, listened with due reverence whenever they were trapped in conversation because of their relation to the host. Of slender Mrs Silberstein and J.J. there was no sign. The duchess had gone to bed early because her old age was bothering her.

Henry moved from group to group and listened to their exchange of thoughts.

"I gather a child was shot dead in the riot," someone said.

"White or black?" asked a journalist, ears pricked.

"A white child."

The journalist evaluated the information for newsworthiness. A simple choice.

"What a pity," he said, holding out his glass for more wine.

"Not a white child, an albino," said someone else.

The journalist slowly drank his wine, his eyes now clouded by uncertainty, his subsequent movements the epitome of indecision. He was a young reporter; it was his first assignment; he carried out his instructions to the letter; he knew the management of his newspaper.

At one point he drew the attention of one of the guests, a social anthropologist, one of the right sort.

"Tell me, doctor, if an albino is born to black parents, could such a person be described as black?"

Henry joined some clergymen enthusiastically discussing an ecumenical conference in New Delhi. One of them had attended thanks to American funding. They were enthusiastically finding formulas and cobbling dogmas together for the sake of a greater whole. It

was necessary to think cosmically, the churches must unite, the terrain must comprehend economics, politics and all other aspects. The formula expanded; the clergymen were all agog at the new extent of their domain, the programme was starting to look like the manifesto of an international socialist movement. One of them advocated the reinstatement of demonology and angels, but this was of lesser importance. A new Protestant dominion was in the making, a spiritual colonisation, a religious U.N. to free the world. All at once the poorest would become powerful, it was superior missionary work with all the prestige and the adventure – no longer would anyone be cloistered in a tiny community with a handful of souls to cultivate. It was Marxism in reverse. Who knew, perhaps one day the two extremes would be reconciled. The poor Republic! And they smiled. The poor Republic labouring under the illusion that the Almighty smiled upon its endeavours. It wasn't a single people that counted, but peoples. Not a single soul, but souls. It was time to learn to think big.

Henry felt alone without the people he knew. He wondered if one of the girls might be Salome. He watched them closely and found them identical. She was completely hidden right in front of his eyes.

But a while later (Dionysus peeping from every bottle) the party began to change. There were no visible signs at first, but slowly the vine leaves began to stir and the ecstatic god flexed his muscles. The first hints were that all opinions were tolerated; the tyranny of knowledge was gone. The girls warmed up; slowly, slowly the Dior bodies relaxed, they unwound defencelessly. Something went wrong with the black suits and silver ties; the exclusive dresses wilted, and Welgevonden roared like old times. And then, as though the change had spread through the entire building, slender Mrs Silberstein appeared with J.J. at her side (R.A.F. moustache satanically erect); the duchess, grumbling but hale, was squarely and solidly present.

Drunkenness was on the increase among the intellectuals, except for the men of the cloth, for they had their own kind of drunkenness. Everyone forgave everyone everything. There was no debauchery; everyone was perfectly proper: the only decadence lay in the emancipation of thought without dialectical limits.

While everything was literally in uproar, and everyone freely perpetrating unpun-

ished thoughts, Jock sidled past Henry and whispered to him (although it was unnecessary):

*"Omne bonum a Deo, omne malum ab homine."* And then, louder: "Humanity has taken God's shadow side upon itself. Don't you think that we are tacitly rebelling against good if we always have to shoulder the responsibility for evil?" He smiled at his guests, who were sinning in thought and speech. "Following the example of Christ, who saw good in the sinner, have we not perhaps gone too far and – clutching at straws – seen too much good in him?" He tapped Henry's shoulder with a heavy hand. "God wished only to restore the totality, the whole."

And at that very moment it happened.

Sir Henry and Lady Mandrake had moved to the middle of the almost deserted floor. Drunken conversation tends to take place in little groups on the side, allowing the middle to form a hiatus for exhibitionism. Slender Mrs Slenderstein and J.J. were doing just that right now, dancing alone and groping each other. But there was plenty of space left and lady Mandrake and Sir Henry had just come to this open space because Sir Henry was in urgent need of air. He was clearly having some kind of attack, but at this stage it could easily be managed and prevented with pills. Lady Mandrake had a wine glass in her hand, fizzing with Welgevonden champagne, and she dropped a few pills into it. She offered it to Sir Henry but he refused to drink. She spoke to him gently but firmly. He looked wildly around the room and found that nobody was paying him any attention. Then he seized the glass and gazed futilely at everyone once more. Their eyes were blinded by esoteric conversation. He brought the glass to his lips, drank the champagne and with a dramatic gesture threw the glass down, shattering it against the floor. One of the girls saw, pointed it out to her friend, and they smiled forgivingly. Sir Henry remained standing bolt upright for a moment, head raised up, eyes fixed on the ceiling of yellow-wood beams.

His death began before he was prepared. His mouth was open for parting shots of wisdom. His spirit had vanquished his body for an instant and thousands of thoughts were shooting through his mind. It was a solitary drama playing out in a single mind. There are summits lost in cloud, there are singular epiphanies. But there's also the loss of

speech when nothing wants to work, when all the muscles slacken and cramp. And then there's the second stage of apathy, when you stop trying, when your great spirit atrophies to nothing and you, alas, cry out without a sound.

Lady Mandrake had gone to sit beside him, cradling his head on her lap. His eyes were open wide and his mouth opened and shut. Dr Johns approached, took his pulse, left the room and returned with his doctor's bag. But when he produced the needle and syringe, she forestalled him.

"No," she said calmly. "Sir Henry is dying and he doesn't need any painkillers. It's his wish. He wants to experience life right up to the last moment." She pressed her husband's face closer to her. "Sir Henry believes in life. He's had a full life. It's the end and I can't take the end away from him."

Dr Johns looked around helplessly, not knowing what to do. Only force could separate lady Mandrake from her dying husband. Meanwhile the intellectuals had drawn near and observed the scene without panic but also, like Dr Johns, without knowing what to do. The intellectual girls were prepared to help, but they were more used to situations in which they were petitioned by the weak: the defenceless street urchin, the persecuted, the needy. As an agnostic and an individualist, Sir Henry, in his suit (Lady Mandrake his calm and implacable mouthpiece), demanded the right to die in private. The journalists and men of the cloth were accustomed to death in all its forms. They found this form strange, unnatural, sinful – and anti-social.

Sir Henry's eyes moved from one person to the next. It's hard to read the look in someone else's eyes without accompanying words. Without circumstantial clues, wrath, hate, pain, sorrow and suffering all look the same. At first his eyes were wild but then they gradually faded. His mouth moved in vain. His hand clung to his wife's. Then the eyes slowly glazed over and eventually lost all expression. The mouth stayed open as though he'd uttered something at the final moment.

Lady Mandrake stayed sitting with her husband's head on her lap, her eyes fixed on the circle of people gathered around. One of the intellectuals misinterpreted her stare, blind with sorrow, her entire person withdrawn in silent suffering, and he asked louder than he would have otherwise: "Who is he?"

Lady Mandrake suddenly looked up at him.

“Who is he?” she repeated. “His name is Sir Henry Mandrake and he was born in Glasgow in 1880. Sir Henry is dead; his spirit is no longer here. His image only persists inasmuch as his personality remains present in the memories of his living friends.

“Perhaps Sir Henry belongs in a different era,” Lady Mandrake continued as though engaged in genial conversation. “But is that true? Does one ever belong to a particular time? Does one ever know the nature of such a time? One has one's memories only and they really are so unreliable.”

The guests kept to their places and it was as if they, like the crowd in the township, were also trapped in a state of motionless observation and reflection. Some found Lady Mandrake theatrical; others found her bizarre.

She looked down at the little man with his head in her lap. He looked like a little doll there on the floor. No doubt about his age now. A grotesque little wax figurine who in another century, another setting, another zeitgeist, might have been honoured with a lofty elegy: with dim, flickering lights, a purple cloak draped over his shoulders, a solemn, deeply felt ritual signalling a faith in images. Now Lady Mandrake sat in the bright light, illuminated by knowledge (earthly and spiritual) and she said:

“I wish you could have seen him when he attended the first performance of *Pelléas et Mélisande* at the Opéra-Comique. The gleaming top-hat and white gloves. The limber body and the exceptional smile. And the time he was love with Liane de Lancy and everyone was enchanted when the heavenly couple began dancing as they gazed into each other's eyes. He was an enterprising man, Sir Henry. He drank his first mint julep in 1895. He climbed the Matterhorn in 1904. All 14,782 feet of it, and then got drunk with the Swiss in the snow. He was an intimate friend of Ellen Terry and Irving. He knew Max Beerbohm in the days before he went to stay in Italy. He knew everyone: Diaghilev, Pavlova, Lydia Kasht and Mordkin. Nijinsky and Karsaniva danced in his room. Pavlova successfully resisted his advances. Sir Henry was one of the very first to guffaw at the works of Cézanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh, Matisse and Picasso. Sir Henry had it all: money, looks, *joie de vivre* and restlessness at a time when such things were not counted as defects.”

Lady Mandrake smiled at the stark image on her lap.

"I wish you could have seen him," she said. "The ubiquitous Sir Henry. The young man with the light in his eyes."

Suddenly she stopped as though her mental image and the motionless relict in her lap were too difficult to reconcile.

"Sir Henry on a skiff in the great river. From Aswan into Nubia. He saw the yellow sands, the solitary acacias, the herons in flight, the inhospitable desert. Sir Henry endured the heat to see the temples of Philae. He defied the cold night on the sand to wake before the four seated figures of Ramses in Abu Simbel at first light. And the temple of Sebua where they all, one after another, left their spoor: the Nubians, the Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the Copts, the Muslims – and then Sir Henry." She smiled at the silently watching intellectuals. "I wish you could have seen him," she said. "But then he got a bit older. Sir Henry in the *tablancillo*, the great amateur *revistero*, the bullfight connoisseur, the *aficionado* drinking sherry from a leather flask and waxing lyrical about Juan Belmonte. Manuel Granero dying in Madrid and Sir Henry weeping along with the crowds. Felix Rodriguez with sword aloft – and Sir Henry. Sir Henry with a *fiera* in the ring and in the bed. Sir Henry the personal friend of Joselito."

All at once she stood up and carefully laid Sir Henry's head down on the floor. For a moment she was as quiet as the guests, then she said: "Sir Henry is to be buried tomorrow. There will be no service and no friends."

The guests suddenly stirred, ready to go home, but Lady Mandrake forestalled them.

"It's Salome and Henry's party," she said. "I know there's still something to be taken care of and I'm sure that Sir Henry, if he were here, would have liked everything to carry on as normal."

The guests looked at each other and then at the person charged with delivering the speech. He found the situation unpleasant but realised that he would have been in dereliction of duty to demur.

He stepped forward and began: "Dear friends, we are here ..."

Towards the end of the speech he mentioned the gift. The guests had all made a contribution and the cheque in the envelope would go (he was sure Henry and Salome



would wholeheartedly approve) to the dependents of the natives injured in the riot.

They left the room, one after another. Only Jock and Henry remained. Jock laid a blanket over the small figure in the middle of the floor and switched off all the lights except for one still burning dimly in the corner. Lady Mandrake had already gone home. Henry took one last look at the half-dark room, at the formless little bundle in the big hall, at the dot inside vast Welgevonden. And it was as though he could still hear a voice, the *curriculum vitae*, the *modus vivendi*:

“Red wine and Gruyère with Lord Beauchamp in the Embassy Club.”

“In ecstasy before Caravaggio and Botticelli.”

“His passion for Neapolitan women.”

“In Flanders fields with Rupert Brooke at his side.”

“In a gondola during the fiesta.”

Henry shut the door, then opened it again. He looked inside once more. It was his first brush with death. There lay the small heap wrapped in a blanket on the floor. No. Sir Henry – *grotesca* – with the *capote* around his legs – in the *redondel*.

## V

Going back to his room he passed the hall where the marble horse reared up in the dark. Was there a black rider on the black horse? Saturn on his stallion, harbinger of the plague. Was there a blue flame on Sir Henry's lips when he died? Saturn and Aquarius. There were four planets in Aquarius at the moment. Was that a snake Henry saw in the passage? A bat flitted right past him. The fruit on his bedside table was rotten and a fat worm wriggled from an apple. Poisonous fungi at the foot of the oak tree outside his window. Flies on the ceiling. Birds flew outside in the dark. Wind whispered through the passageways of Welgevonden. There was a black cloud in the valley. Crows circling in pairs. Dogs going mad. Jock Silberstein's sheep dying in their pens. Falsehood, hate, jealousy and immorality were rife. The diagnoses of Forestus Alcmaronius were everywhere. Someone knocked on his door, a gentle woman's knock. *In peste Venus pestem provocat!* And Henry lay still in his room while the wind howled.

In his mansion Jock Silberstein paced restlessly from room to room. Ahasuerus in the darkness.

In the voorkamer lay his guest, brain and medulla spinali collapsed, kidneys shrunken, bladder void, spleen discoloured, lungs attached to the pleura, green spots on his left cheek. A man of advanced years, with white hair, staring eyes and gaping mouth; his appearance wholly ominous and malevolent.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Walpurgisnacht

#### I

The sky was overcast and the fog lay low on the ground. In the distance the mountain seemed to be floating through the sky. And there was something in the weather that made you shiver with cold when you took off your jacket, only to stifle you with heat the moment you put it back on. Jock was waiting for him outside, cutting a somewhat dissolute figure in his khaki clothes, and at first they walked without talking in an unknown direction.

At an old well, the same age as Welgevonden itself, they came to a stop. A derelict hand-pump, overgrown with nettles, green with mould, presided forlornly over the pit. The handle was raised as though it had just been working, and Henry involuntarily pushed it down. A creaking sound came from the wreckage and he pumped furiously until water appeared – lukewarm from the depths, clogged with silt and rot. The water was blue, the colour of the plague, but it was the blue of old blood mixed with fresh blood, reeking of lymph from rotten carcasses – remnants dumped at the bottom once the flesh-craving that comes with sorghum beer and wild dancing had been sated.

“This well has been poisoned,” said Jock. “Here stands the sinner,” he said mockingly. “The scapegoat who murdered the Holy Child of Trent, who brought about the plague.” He gave Henry a sudden smile. “But today you're the ones who feel it, aren't you? Your people are guilty in the eyes of world. The black finger from the pit is pointing at you. Welcome to the ranks of the elect,” and he put his arm around the shoulders of Henry, his future relation.

They walked on through molesting flies, mosquitoes and midges. Frogs sat on top of each other. Putrefaction barred their way. Blood appeared on their hands.

“It's *leucoma dispar*,” Jock reassured him. “Butterly faeces that takes on the shape of the Cross.”

They walked further, until they reached one of Welgevonden's outlying districts where guests seldom came: a place where cottages with asbestos roofs were tucked away among woods, heather, silver trees and proteas.

*"Accademia d'amore,"* said Jock, and the girls appeared: the white-lipped, dark-eyed daughters of God-knows-who, in thin black skirts exposing the white curves of their legs to all comers – for the savage urges of simple people by choice, but also prepared for the complicated types, for the guilty ones (Freud be thanked) grasped their true nature, accepted it, and masochistically gave themselves over to the weakness from which there is no escape.

Jock disappeared inside one of the cottages. Henry was accosted by a thin girl who, half naked, awaited his inevitable surrender. She took him to the voorkamer and served tea. She took him to the bedroom and washed herself meticulously, expecting him to do the same. Bodily purity (Palmolive soap) and neatness were her watchwords. She waited for him (ennobled by work) on the pale bed. No respecter of persons, she waited, like all the others had waited through the centuries, but nowadays clinically, with discretion, and a good grasp of things – the stuttering beginning, the excuses, the impotence of beginners, the story of daily frustration, the task like any other task, which would always devise some self-sanctifying fiction. She with her white face on the pillow and Henry passive at her side: the youthful alma mater and the negative student. The technique was like any other form of technique: there were rules and methods which seemed difficult at first but came automatically with practice. That was her little lesson. She taught it like a fitness instructor. Some performed better. Others not so well. Champions were rare. All could develop a certain degree of skill.

The dead light against the walls, against the ceiling, on the horizon through the window. The cloud swelling out from an inexhaustible source of cumulus there, behind; the evil formlessly filling the world. Where was Jock Silberstein? Where was everyone? And he looked into her eyes, so dark that nobody could tell if they were they dark blue or dark brown. The pallid child of the unknown soul and unknown thoughts, with her skill born of a specialised ripeness, the rest of her personality a sideshow to this proficiency in the

sport of Venus.

Welgevonden and the rest of the world are filled with artistry; the complete human being has broken up into the fragments of its former constitution: pure beauty, uncontaminated reason, unadulterated power, unpolluted spirit and untainted body. Gone for good the all-encompassing sensibility. We know too much. The critical single cell in the organism is quick to prove the falsity of the troubled whole. We observe each other from our specialised niches. We await the wherewithal to discover a new synthesis.

What was on Henry's mind as the young girl of the pallid face and white lips adroitly and impersonally initiated him into her particular mystery? Was there a yearning for a time that might be only an ancestral memory, for the security of an observable pattern of good and evil which, now visibly, now palpably, fought their eternal duel – while at this moment, with complete detachment, he was experiencing the purely technical side of love? Did he realise there is no going back, that complete transformation is required, that new life-giving symbols must be found for old truths?

Maybe all these things, for your deepest feelings and yearnings are inconceivable (just like your sense of the evil investing the whole world without your being able to put a finger on anything). – All these things, maybe, as, despite himself, she pushed him into ecstasy.

But where was Jock Silberstein?

Henry found him in one of the cottages talking to a little old lady, the spitting image of the granny in the adverts for Mazawattee Tea.

“Ah!” said Jock, “allow me to introduce you.” And he introduced Henry to the little old lady while eyeing the young man with a mocking smile. On the wall beside Henry was a mirror. The face within the mirror and the face without were two faces. One looked younger and the other older, and both said equally little. The smile vanished, for Jock was left none the wiser. The initiation was complete, but there was nothing to suggest it. Youth is faceless. Truth is formless.

The little old lady gave Henry a nod. The silver spectacles perched on the tip of her

nose and she regarded him amiably with soft eyes which in their short-sightedness had adopted a vague look of benign wisdom. She was busy knitting something. It looked like a jacket of the most brilliant green imaginable. Her basket held balls of wool in every colour: red, silver, yellow and blue. After a while the door opened and a girl came in. She was wearing one of those starched skirts that waver just above the knees, ready to shoot up at the first sign of movement. On high heels she minced to the little old lady and bent forward to kiss her on the forehead. The miniskirt flew up, showing silk socks, white thighs and white panties fringed with fine lace. She went to sit beside the little woman, hands on her lap, dark eyes fixing Henry with keen interest, and he noticed she was the same girl he had just been with.

Now the little old woman was thanking Jock Silberstein for a favour he had done her husband. The raise had come in very handy, seeing they were their grand-daughter's only support. She was certain her husband would give of his best. He was committed to his work heart and soul. He practised every day. Despite his advanced years, Welgevonden would find that he was inestimably valuable. And she knitted and knitted without looking at the needles. This she had added in a different colour wool.

The girl vivaciously struck up a conversation with Henry. "I'm going to the Cape next week," she said. "There's a great future." Her ambition was boundless. "I might go overseas as well," she related further. "Once you're in the Cape and you meet the right people ..." She folded her hands around one knee. The skirt rode up and she decently smoothed it back down. She told him she had a whole list of addresses. "Well-off men," she explained. She said "well-off" as though it betokened good character.

The little old lady smiled at her grand-daughter and carried on knitting without let-up. Now she had added a third colour, a bright yellow. In no time she had knitted at least nine inches.

Henry was obliged for the second time to drink tea, prepared and presented by the girl with the flounced petticoat. It was a homely scene and she fulfilled her duties like a model child. She was the picture of domesticity and the granny looked at her proudly as the jacket visibly grew with new colours.

Somewhere a bell rang. The girl frowned and shifted about uneasily. The granny's

eyes fixed her in silent command. Jock Silberstein stood up abruptly and took his leave. He and Henry were escorted outside and waved farewell to from the garden gate. The little old lady still had the knitting in her hands. She peered short-sightedly over her spectacles at the two men disappearing behind the shrubbery.

“Not long now,” she said to her grand-daughter, “then Jock Silberstein won't be the boss of his own property anymore.” She knitted imperturbably on and shook her head slowly to and fro. “Your grandpa already has one of the most important jobs. He has a key post in the Great Machine. They think he doesn't know, but he knows. He's found out a lot of things already. There are things Jock Silberstein doesn't know about. One fine day, before he knows what's hit him, *he* will have to obey your oupa's orders.”

And she looked at the girl with dull brown eyes in which the Light shone in a different fashion – as though burning with radiation. A corn cricket had come onto the stoep and crept grotesquely towards them. The little old lady lifted up her little boot and slowly ground its life out. The bell rang again and she nodded to her grand-daughter.

“Madam always rings for me,” grumbled the girl.

“Think of your grandpa, my child,” said the little woman. “Keep at it and keep at it, work and work. Hard work will be rewarded.”

She walked together with the girl who went to her room, took off the skirt, as well as the brightly coloured underskirt and gossamer panties, and stowed it all carefully in her wardrobe. Dressed in a floral frock, she kissed her granny and ran lightly through the garden to the cottage in the middle.

The little old woman peacefully carried on knitting and then she finished the front of the jacket. She took out the knitting needles and held the garment up to the light. In the fog surrounding the house, it blazed with all the colours – glowed with a light all its own, like the light in her eyes.

“Have you ever seen so many corn crickets?” asked Jock. They were walking through the valley, feet squelching into boggy ground, and a sickly heat beat down upon them. A bit further they reached a dry spot, covered with grass. Jock went to sit on it. But he had hardly sat down than he stood up again. They walked restlessly. Sometimes, as they were going through the woods, filmy cobwebs brushed them and they irritably

slapped where they felt something crawling on their legs or bodies. Henry nearly stepped on a fat adder: a fat, lazy creature iridescently poised for a dazzlingly beautiful death-strike. But Jock bludgeoned it to death. The crushed mouth gaped open and the fine teeth stuck out like herring-bones. They came across a dead sheep. Its stomach was swollen up like a balloon, red blood frothed from the mouth, the mud and dung churned to slush where the animal had gone through its final convulsions. A sour smell pervaded the area. When they got downwind, the stench hit them. As though all the plants were rotting. The broken-off tree stump was brittle inside; bugs were crawling from it. They arrived at a cemetery, ringed by a mossy wall, the graves sunk into the ground.

“It belonged to the original owners,” said Jock. Henry marked the longing in his voice – the longing to belong, to be able to allude to dilapidated graveyards. He looked at Henry suddenly and in his imagination he saw Salome satisfied by the goy. In the same instant they heard hoof beats, and through the black fog, in the distance, they spotted the little rider on the bay – the speck in the gloaming that glided gracefully over an obstacle and vanished. They waited for something – for a repetition of the previous day, but the hoof beats died away.

Sometimes they seemed to be walking by night; sometimes they seemed to be walking by day. One moment the sun was obscured by clouds; the next it blazed above their heads. And down below the germs of a thousand diseases festered. Jock's face was distorted – perhaps because of the harsh heat and the effort of propelling his bulk through the bog. They passed the township where everything was quiet and where the burnt-out houses grew moist with a black sweat. They went further and mounted the hill. There was a gap in the mist; Welgevonden's factories and houses sweltered far below and moved as though in a mirage. Blue lakes were conjured up by the heat. Beads of sweat trickled down Jock's face. Smoke went up someplace where someone was maybe burning something – but it looked like the smoke of people burning in Mühlhausen and Nordhausen for the glory of God and Christendom. They reached the chamber of confession and Jock opened all the steam-cocks and bellowed out his fear. They went to the tulip garden and for Henry it was as though the two colours had become drab and dull. Jock, as he walked, turned off the path and trampled destructively through the flowers. And unexpectedly they arrived



at the room where professor Dreyer stood at the window with test-tube in hand. He was so absorbed that he failed to see Jock. Joy radiated from him. Inspiration crackled in the drab space around him. He was pinned down in a supernatural light. His student's brush-cut heads bent low over the paper on which they were busy tracing symbols. The workers were singing and the bottles arced into the silver tanks with a splash. The girls' hands picked up speed and the trains sped through the tunnels. Like castanets the hands in the Ubu room clapped. And up above, on the platform, beside the organ-machine, the gardener's uniform coruscated, his hands aloft, waiting, waiting for the ultimate, soul-filling moment. Henry and Jock, struck by the bearing of the harmless virtuoso, hesitated, waited – and then saw the lightning-fast movement as the stubby fingers came down and an entire shipment vanished soundlessly into the cellar.

They left the building and were instantly lost to sight in the black fog on the way to the house of Welgevonden. In one of the fields their path was blocked by Brutus: a bestial head looming up in the haze, the red forequarters gigantic before them, the black hindquarters out of sight. They flinched, somewhat afraid, for Brutus was now free to roam, surrounded by heifers lowing unseen in the distance. The beast's muzzle was open and he struck the ground with his hoof. But all sound was swallowed by the damp grass. The jaws opened and shut – and the beast vanished as unexpectedly as he had appeared.

They reached the house and found the guests all on the stoep. An oppressive atmosphere held sway, as in a seaside hotel when the rain buckets down and casual beach visitors suddenly find themselves cooped up as strangers. Harmless bickering turned menacing; intriguing little ways began to irritate; mild flirtations took on the appearance of something serious. The amusing young man squeezing all the women was a real threat; the women found their men tedious, they laughed at a gigolo's lewd antics. The married men were forced into roles for which they lacked the stomach. Grimly they endured all sorts of idiotic little games where kisses were stolen behind furniture; reluctantly they were obliged to hear secrets being shared; stolidly they had to play along with little challenges made over and over again; involuntarily they partook in a puerility that manifested without warning. All manner of outlandish dance steps were essayed as with high fidelity a record player sent the latest jazz into the air. It was the men who suffered the most, for

they had to improvise and the women only had to follow. It was the hour of the extrovert: the young travelling salesman who had racked up his experience in hotel rooms; the company junior being tutored by the petite blonde typist; the scoundrel with his treasure casket of feminine acquaintance. And the self-made man, the one who keeps a grip on his wife with money and status, now stripped of both, was suddenly brought up short by a home truth. The women looked resentfully at the swag-bellies of their men and burst into peals of laughter as, shuddering suggestively, the athletic young nitwit did the twist. There were no corners where witty repartee or deep philosophising could impress. In the wan light of the stoep, on the stage with its norm of entertainment value, the women waited as cows and heifers await the young bullocks in the field.

The slender Mrs Silberstein and J.J. were in their element, shamelessly at the forefront. Jock Silberstein was nowhere to be seen. The two Misses Silberstein stood hopeful and giggling in a corner, drawing each other's attention to all the goings on. The duchess peered at everything with the grandam's cruelty and wisdom. Henry looked at the dark-eyed girls. He was young and handsome enough not to feel threatened. He sat in a corner and witnessed all the antics with uncomplicated interest while wondering which one of the sex kittens was his beloved.

When the mealtime was announced and the guests commenced the luncheon formalities, the spectacle came to an end. The middle-aged and rejected came back into their own. The social structure was restored. The previously rejected recovered their positions of power and tortured their women by turns with indifference, cutting remarks and haughty silence. The gigolos faded into the background – a black mark against their names when they showed up in the office on Monday, expense accounts curtailed next time they went on company business.

Jock described the evening's gathering: a witches' sabbath, and he smiled as he said it, leaving his guests free to think what they pleased, free to believe or not to believe – free to give free rein to their imagination.

It was quiet and peaceful in Henry's room. He lay in bed, the covers pulled up to his chin – safe below the gilded ceiling, surrounded by wealth and strengthened by the freedom Jock Silberstein allowed his guests in that dying hour of the day. There were thick walls and a sturdy door to seal him off from everyone: he was alone in his cell inside the colossal labyrinth. Something stirred within him. A cryptic script began to form on the clean skin; osmosis through a porous partition. It was too soon to say what it meant. He was already beginning to miss a state of grace that was passing away. He was becoming something other – something inevitable he'd always been able to evade with intentional ignorance. He realised that the process was running its course, that the blank page was being filled with all sorts of figures, that there was something within him striving to make the figures legible. It was with longing that he tried to think back to the lost paradise where everything was insubstantial – the thinness of blue air, the complete meaninglessness of infinitude. He could already feel the limitations fencing in his perceptions for the first time. He mourned the loss of his aloneness. He welcomed the sleep overwhelming him, which was to replace his lost paradise in future. Unbeknownst to him, he was already undergoing the Fall: the loss of grace, the birth of consciousness, the twilight of perception, the curse of distinction.

Outside it was already dark and he had to switch on the light to get dressed. He chose his clothes carelessly. He felt dwarfed in the big bathroom as he combed his hair. Everything glittered. The lion heads drooled droplets onto the tiles so that a green scum formed inside the bath. The neon light above the mirror made his face look unnaturally white and cast shadows all around – black stripes of debauchery, as artificial as stage make up.

On entering the passage, at first he listened to the familiar din for a clue as to where the meeting place was, but the house was as quiet as a graveyard. Following a hunch, he arrived in the same voorkamer where they had gathered the first night. All the guests were there, but they were remarkably sober. The lights were faint and it was hard to distinguish between the different faces. Dr Johns and Mr Justice O'Hara joined him from the shadows on either side. Almost immediately they begin to apologise for being there.

“Perhaps our presence as scientist and jurist is hard to reconcile with this – ah – sort

of gathering," said Dr Johns.

"Well, this is our reasoning," said Mr Justice O'Hara. "You must acquire knowledge of good and evil. Knowledge is an extension of consciousness. It leads to the discovery of the self."

"Put it this way," said Dr Johns. "Jock says that more is expected from us than the mere ability to distinguish between evil and good; we must take on the risk of the whole: the mystery of the combination. We must make the negative and the positive aspects visible in order to find the true centre."

Meanwhile Mr Justice O'Hara had gone to one of the tables and was returning with a tube that he carefully opened along the way.

"Suppose that Jock is right," he said, "that the balance has been disturbed, that the neglected shadow has come forth in a different guise, then it is our duty to exorcise it: to bring it to awareness, to see and confront it. The shadow and the light must become more distinct."

He had now managed to open the tube and a yellow ointment was exposed to the light. He offered it first to Dr Johns. Dr Johns took some of the ointment with his middle finger.

"All our energies are squandered," he said, "on our hopeless efforts at distinction when we fail to appreciate the shadow. We differ from Jock only where he says we will have to learn to live with the shadow, that one must perceive the whole in the rebirth, that one must abide in the creative darkness of God's will – beyond the compass of good and evil." Suddenly he took off his shirt and starting smearing the ointment on his body. "After Satan fell, Jahweh separated from his angel. We believe that after the light of Christ will come the darkness of the Antichrist; Satan's revival before his eternal doom." He had finished smearing himself and returned the tube to Mr Justice O'Hara.

"We believe," said Mr Justice O'Hara as he repeated the process and smeared himself thoroughly, "that it is better to see Satan as the people of the Middle Ages did than be subjected to his invisible attacks."

"And in fact we agree with Jock in many respects," said Dr Johns as he took the tube from Mr Justice O'Hara and offered it to Henry, "except that we view evil as a negat-

ive power and not as the dark side of the Creator.”

Henry also took off his shirt and smeared the last of the fatty ointment on his body. He noticed that all the guests were doing the same. Even the women. In the distance the duchess was the picture of a matriarch: her paunch, withered breasts and weathered body. The dark-eyed girls frisked about like nymphs of the valley. But nobody was interested in other bodies just then. There was an unnatural detachment akin to the sort encountered in nudist colonies: a conscious disregard of sexual difference.

“It's difficult to ascertain the contents of this ointment,” said Dr Johns, “but I presume there are elements of the *Umbelliferae Conium*, as well as species of the *Solanum* genus. As it happens, some of those combinations that the witches used in their concoctions and which are absorbed by the skin. We should experience a certain reaction very soon.”

Jock joined them. His red chest hairs flamed in the dim light.

“God is the Great Unconscious,” he said. “There the archetypal images do battle. Heaven and hell lie within ourselves, and further back, in infinitude. The Antichrist is the shadow side wreaking vengeance, formed by the complexity of our psyches.”

The lights suddenly grew dimmer – and the shadows lengthened.

“The struggle between the great powers is within us,” he bellowed. “We are created in His image.”

And abruptly it was dark.

There was no sound.

For the first time in his life, Henry felt the first inklings of fear. It was just for a moment, but it had hovered over him invisibly and lightly brushed him like the beat of a wing.

It was as though Mr Justice O'Hara could see inside him.

“Remember, Henry,” he said in the dark, “everything is taking place inside you. If you are afraid, you fear yourself.”

“But, alas,” came Dr Johns' voice from his left, “the victims of sin are those most inclined toward perversity – the pious no less than the unbelievers – the seekers who are burdened with a wealth of spirit.”

“And therein lies Henry's immunity,” said Jock Silberstein from close by. “The man who doesn't seek.”

The room was absolutely quiet. No-one moved and there was no sound. Henry waited for something to happen, but nothing happened. He thought of all the stories of witchcraft he had heard as a child and he felt the excitation of unknown adventure. Something had indeed happened deep within him without his knowing. That he did not seek also suggested that he accepted the religious order too easily and could easily fall prey to curiosity, and, following hard on curiosity's heels, the temptation of other possibilities and flights of fancy. But, more than this, that in his negativity lurked the secret desire for vindication – the rebellion against God and order, the thrill of the satanic adventure – the repetition of the fallen angel's ambition: I AM as opposed to God's annihilating authority.

And again it seemed as though Mr Justice O'Hara could see Henry's innermost thoughts.

“Arrogance is the worst sin of all.”

And now, for the first time, Henry started feeling something definite. A deathly terror seized him. For a single moment he was wiped out and knew a different kind of solitude. He crossed the threshold of a hell inside himself. He was in a room without any echo. No judgement, no salvation. Complete detachment. No psychic currents clashing. Nothing but cosmic silence. And, worst of all, an enduring awareness. It was as though, in the fleeting moment, he experienced within himself a universal annihilation: the impossible I AM NOT.

But it lasted a mere fraction of a second, and then came the saving ecstasy at the root of evil. The insight of the bygone moment vanished before the conflagration now taking place – the feeling that he was soaring through the air, over woods and lakes, across the whole world, to return tingling to the place of covenant. The exuberant feeling was so satisfyingly extravagant that he was prepared to offer up the already forgotten feeling of aloneness as a prize. Little Henry Faustus making a pact with the devil to rid himself of negativity.

In the room a green light had abruptly begun to glow. Black John, stark naked, with scaly body and long, lavishly swinging arrow-headed papier maché tail, stood on a sort of

dais and laughed at the guests as the pinions of an R.A.F. moustache came erect in proper satanic style. The light brightened and now in its circle could be seen a slender, naked female figure bestriding a goat: one hand clutching a horn, the other swinging a cat by the tail. The sight afforded endless amusement and everyone bent double with laughter while the tortured animal's screams vanished in the din. Then the light abruptly dimmed. The guests, bundles of green in the half dark, fell over each other to get to the central figure. They made deep mock bows, lisped the honorifics "*grand seigneur*", "*nostre dieu*", "*dominus deus*" as they had been taught and kissed him most filthily. It was the women above all who lost control and brought to light a plethora of perversity. Everyone received a bite on the bare arm and they delighted in comparing their witch marks, wholly painless for the moment. At the climax the green light was turned off and it stayed dark until complete silence descended on the room.

"Odd," said Mr Justice O'Hara, "we are at the place of covenant; something is tingling inside me; I am ready, but I don't *feel* the presence."

"Perhaps it's too soon," said Dr Johns.

"The material question," said Mr Justice O'Hara, "is not whether things occur, but whether one sanctions the occurrences – whether you have the will to belief."

"It's true," said Dr Johns, "you must have the same faith in evil as the author of *De Magorum Daemonomania*."

A different light had begun to glow in the room: a dull red that evoked the impression of fires burning in the background. The figure on the rostrum was in a sitting position, manhood exposed in the red light, arrow-headed tail curled around one leg, a whip of horse hair in his hand.

"Ah! It's time for the recital," whispered Mr Justice O'Hara.

One after another the guests emerged from the ruddy dark – hardly recognisable in their semi-nudity. Henry felt as though he kept recognising someone he had seen at the various parties. The avowals were like inverted confessions: exaltation of sin, celebration of perversity. A slender young woman, the light playing on her figure, a voluptuous ideal of thighs, breasts and suggestive attitudes, face elevated to the light, related how with de-

ranged passion she was driving her husband and her lover to impotence. A plain young woman, bony and unattractive, described a subtler knot: how through exemplary behaviour she was goading her beloved to realise his own sins. A blonde girl of angelic mien, unapproachable as a marble statue even in her nakedness, described the conflict within her lover between masculine and feminine and how she constantly directed his attention to the flaw he was doomed never to defeat. They described all – not as though they were describing evil, but as though they were only predisposed to do good. The voluptuous one wanted only to give physical satisfaction, the plain one wanted only to save her lover's soul, the blonde wanted only to make her lover perceive his own flaws for his own good.

One after another they came. Those who sinned in body as well as those who sinned in thought and word. The meaning of good was inverted entirely: concepts of love, chastity, truth, freedom and order suddenly turned devilish – sometimes becoming indistinguishable from evil – sometimes, worst of all, completely meaningless, devoid of content and excruciatingly inane. They came, men and women, young and old – from every vocation. Artists struggling with conformity, journalists struggling with truth, the rich struggling with riches, farmers struggling with breeding, idealists struggling with colour, intellectuals struggling with freedom of thought. They gave witness with deep conviction in the name of the good they were destroying; eloquent in the red light before the satanic figure they stripped old truths of meaning; with zealous abandon they pulverised every form of noble struggle into vacuous everydayness.

One among them who failed to convince, who may have dissented in his meditations and inverted faith, was immediately flogged by the figure. It soon turned out that the torment was a form of self-punishment and that dissent was perhaps the subtlest form of recital.

Right at the end, the apparition sprang up from his throne and savagely lashed out left and right so that the naked figures cringed in pain and rolled all around the floor. The light steadily grew dimmer and dimmer while the madness heightened and Black John indulged his sadism to the thrilling lamentation: “Mercy! Mercy! Pity, Master. Mercy!”

Then it grew pitch dark and silence fell.



"It's odd," said Dr Johns. "I'm not especially susceptible tonight."

"It's as though," said Mr Justice O'Hara, "and I say this with great reluctance, even sin has lost the – uh – punch it used to have."

"It certainly has," said Dr Johns. "To tell the honest truth, I find it rather tedious."

This time a blue light glowed and it looked like the moon shining on an altar. A priestly figure in toga, hood and paraphernalia stood with his back to the altar and mumbled some or other incantation. He held an article of clothing tightly in his hand. He was dressed in black from head to toe. A young girl was ushered in by two other priests. The blue light set off the whiteness of her body; her hair fell loosely over her shoulders while she moved as though in a dream. And yet there was something familiar about her movements – her whole look and deportment. She smiled suddenly, mouth squarely open, teeth sparkling in a deliberate grimace, head tilted towards the invisible people. And now the resemblance became clear: it was a beauty queen on stage. Her dimensions were of the requisite standard; everything was true to the provocative ritual: the trance before the eyes of the crowd, the blind ecstasy, the false image of the virgin maiden, the illusion of chastity in the youthful curves, the parody of innocence, and then, as the charade continued, the collective rape.

Helplessly she was led to the altar, vulnerably she was laid down upon it, submissively her hands sank to her sides, defencelessly she awaited the sovereign.

The light faded abruptly and a chorus of keening women's voices filled the room. Then everything went quiet.

"I am afraid ... " said Mr Justice O'Hara.

"Perhaps we are getting old," said Dr Johns.

"Or perhaps," said Mr Justice O'Hara, "the tedium has claimed us too."

This time little lights of many colours blazed all around. They grew brighter and the rest of the room was revealed: banqueting tables all around the wall, Black John already seated at the head, and the slender witch with the love mark on her shoulder at his side.

"Do you know the procedure?" Dr Johns asked Henry.

"The recital," said Mr Justice O'Hara, "the sacrifice, the repast, and then the ..."

But he was interrupted by Dr Johns, who pragmatically pointed out to him that they should hurry to find decent seats.

The hall now had the look of a grill room in an elegant hotel: the lights soft and colourful enough to assist tardy imaginations, the waiters' heads all adorned with horns to illustrate the theme, the wine and food specially prepared to facilitate one of the deadly sins.

Everyone was there; even old Mrs Silberstein, arms akimbo, shoulders modestly shawled – just like all the women. Half naked, they seemed little different from a conventional gathering of this sort. The scanty coverings, the soft, colourful lights, the assistance of shadows, all served to evoke a high-class brasserie. They could shed their attire with the slightest of movements if need be.

“Strictly speaking,” said Dr Johns while pouring a glass of champagne for Henry, “this should be a hellish, undrinkable brew. And ...” (as with gourmandise he tucked into a roast duck), “the meal should consist of rotten corpses and garbage. I refer here to Dr Montague Summers. But, as Dr Charles Williams rightly explains, everything depends on the individual’s particular imagination. Everything happens inside ourselves. Those who yearn for the most delicious food, receive it; those who dream of hell find foulness in their food.”

Mr Justice O'Hara dug Dr Johns in the ribs and urged him to be silent. Henry had still not eaten anything. As a matter of fact, he had not said a word all evening. The two old men looked at him longingly. They remembered a time when they too had been susceptible and could participate exuberantly in the struggle.

“Perhaps we are immune to the ointment,” said Dr Johns.

“Perhaps we should increase the dosage next time,” agreed Mr Justice O'Hara.

Henry himself said nothing. On the table before him he saw Sir Henry's corpse. Around him he heard the whispering of demons. He waged the struggle in total isolation.

For the entertainment of the crowd, a show was being put on in the middle of the floor. It was the erstwhile maiden from the altar doing a strip-tease. “Take it off!” cried the guests. Few knew she was a married woman with three school-going children. She performed successfully in various nightclubs.

Champagne gushed gaily. The lights faded imperceptibly. The last part of the Sabbath had arrived, but it took place unremarkably and naturally. It was the final stage – uninhibited intercourse where Satan, the Ape of God, strove in vain to become flesh. By virtue of his sole, all-determining limitation, his lust grew apace, but now as the lights gradually faded his only recourse was the sterile act. As the din increased and garments pattered on the floor in the dark, and the succubi and incubi commenced their riotous jubilee, he tried again and again, as he had through all the years, to conceive the fruit himself and through his followers. But all he achieved was the act itself. And in revenge – in longing and revenge – he made the act as cruel and unsatisfying as possible; he let his witches get knotted, he tormented everyone with lust and frustration, he stirred up promises of ecstasy that were never fulfilled.

Little by little the soft lights took on all the colours of the rainbow. The orgy had begun as a dance party to the accompaniment of macabre progressive jazz in the background. At first there was nothing to distinguish it from an ordinary party: one by one the couples had left their seats and gone through the first dance turns, the young improvising energetically, the old more slowly and in the style to which they were accustomed. The degeneration had occurred according to the familiar formula – the exchange of partners, the suggestive movements, the exposure. The single most important contribution to the dissolution was the perception of universal approval; indeed, the feeling of total freedom; disclosure without sanction, criticism or mockery. Black John was at the head; with perfect timing he led them through all the nuances of demonic liberation. Unlike his Adversary, in his process he adapted the rhythm of dissolution to the tempo of the middle-aged. Black John possessed a special insight – youth is more sympathetic toward evil; maturity is the greatest stumbling block to sin. The cult of youth was his creation; the stray sheep of his flock was the adult individual. Satan was not represented by the Holy Child, but the man of the world. He did not seek out children but awaited the final product.

In the rainbow lights, in the graduated dissolution of the dance, he led them past the stage of self-criticism (the most difficult moment) and suddenly let everyone go downhill in their own way. The music sped up, the lights faded even further. Garments waved

and succubuses and incubuses swarmed lustfully from the shadows. Every colour of light and every masking shadow was an incitement to procreation. Just as with the banquet, the experience was located in the individual psyche. While the naked figures fell over each other and fruitlessly found contact, the sensation alternated from marvellous pain like birth pangs to overwhelming feigned pleasure. The spinster underwent the affliction of *“une extrême douleur”*, the aloof woman the brutal pain she secretly desired. The young nymphs, on account of their youth, delighted in the frequency, variety and breakneck pace of transient sensation. The husband found his succubus and revenged himself on his wife; the woman found her incubus and revenged herself on her husband. Together with Satan they took revenge on their companions' imperfection – the lack of attention, the lack of love, the monotony, the bitchiness, the doubts stirred up by the other, the personality broken by the other, the tedium of their mutual knowledge.

Tomorrow, after personally and vicariously undergoing all the acts and realising for the umpteenth time that it was all for nothing – that it was an utter travesty, that he could never procreate, that his seed was barren, that his venom was restricted to the deed and the bearers of the deed – tomorrow, Black John would leave them to their own devices so that they could suffer as he had suffered and he would leave them with the evil attendant on frustration: refined diseases of the spirit, obsessions, psychoses – the only children begotten from his intercourse.

At the centre moved Black John, like a film star surrounded by his fans, tormented by his reputation. Some there were who demanded the unholy caress at his hands alone, as cruelly as possible. Everything he did afforded endless rapture; cries of pleasurable pain accompanied his least action. Artificial or natural – the standard of success was inverted: he was the great failure who had turned failure into triumph. But he seemed somewhat bored through it all.

“Everything bores me,” said Mr Justice O'Hara, giving Satan's attitude his seal of approval.

“There's nothing new,” said Dr Johns. “You can find it all at any party and in any club.”

*“Et Verbum Caro factum est,”* Mr Justice O'Hara said, banishing a succulent succubus

menacing him with her embrace in the half dark.

Whether it was the content of the words that repelled her or the Latin accent, nobody would ever know.

Active but utterly uninterested, Black John advanced upon the debauch. Nowadays there was a clinical approach to sin that (and he mutilated a fragile disciple in passing) diluted the deed. His witches' Sabbath took place every day in the absence of damnation. Today's priests used a new incantation for their exorcisms. Black John's last trump was

"I'm bored," said Mr Justice O'Hara.

"Actually I've lost interest in sex," said a voice beside Dr Johns and it did not belong to the judge.

"The *maleficium* can be much better served in other fields," said Mr Justice O'Hara and searched the darkness in vain.

"The churches are expanding and mission work is flourishing. There are more sects than ever."

"When the ordinary Sabbath vanished, the witches' Sabbath vanished too."

"Satan is the Ape of God."

"Satan is an aesthete and a freedom fighter," said Dr Johns, but he could not see his friend or the speaker.

Like all festivals, this one ended without any pattern. Friends and companions failed to find each other, or found each other, or found each other partially and vanished in their hurtling vehicles to seek death on the early morning roads. At least four had found love and were taking things further with increasing tenderness somewhere in nature. In the light of new knowledge, nobody could point to the party as the moment of damnation. Nobody knew whether they were destined for heaven or hell. There was indeed great interest, but few answers one way or the other. Satan had made a mockery of his own witches' Sabbath. Life was extremely complicated. The churches were adapting to the people and becoming just as complicated. The formless cloud hung over everything. All they knew was that there was a certain tension, a tendency for all sorts of allergies to develop – a kind of obsession with all sorts of things, a feeling that you would shortly explode unless something happened soon. They raced the night home. Nothing of real

meaning or importance had happened. There was a feeling of evil, mounting tension, madness building up inside you – but where was the sin?

### III

Henry had stayed behind in the hall alone. Garments were still scattered here and there on the floor – a blouse, a cloak, a pocket handkerchief, an unknown object, soft and light as down as he picked it up and let it fall again. Longing, homesickness, remorse and helplessness had coalesced into something he could not yet define but that he was to feel increasingly in the future. The fear of a moment ago had vanished quickly, but it reverberated in this feeling. The sharp pain of fear had burnt up in the ensuing ecstasy, and now, following on the ecstasy, came this smouldering fire that would go cold very soon.

Last night he had seen the little bundle lying where the altar was now. He remembered the events of the day and night, but it was the events of the night before, the beginning of the chain reaction, that were most vivid in his memory. And perhaps, too, it was because Sir Henry and he had had the same name. He could never forget the expression on the face: the rage before death.

He walked through the room and went to stand beneath the light that still retained the manifold colours of the final stage. He cut a lonely figure and he was oblivious to the presence of someone standing in the corner of the room watching him. The shadows were at their darkest there and, himself irradiated by the lights, he couldn't see a thing.

So he and the invisible watcher lingered in the hall for a spell.

Sir Henry's image had existed merely in Lady Mandrake's thoughts, he reflected – and for him as he had seen it through her. The temporal image existing solely in the shared train of thought of kith and kin.

Sir Henry's rage preceded the ultimate invisibility, because he could not find an image of himself.

The pagan had died, thought Henry, in the absence of an image of the loved or loathed sinner. There was merely a sketch by Lady Mandrake – but there was nothing for Sir Henry himself.

Tonight he had felt afraid when there was nothing. The fear vanished when the figure appeared and the ritual began. The echo of the fear remained in the realisation that it was all a travesty.

Beneath the light Henry looked around the darkened room.

It was as though the invisible figure was speaking to him.

“And, as far as humanity is concerned, in annihilating my image, they also annihilate His. But in my imageless condition I have more experience than Him. I have found my counter-spell to His magical formula: *Et Verbum Caro factum est*. In my invisibility, my kingdom is at hand. Imagelessness, close to abstraction, is where my fifth column moves. The dead images are teeming with the maggots of my demons.”

But there was no invisible image talking to him.

The watcher in the shadows was a dark-eyed girl witnessing the young man wage an invisible struggle against something. With every day of the week her love for him had grown. At first it had touched her lightly, then irritated her. Love had returned, stronger than ever. She had already annihilated herself in complete surrender. She had fashioned an image to which she had given all. Now she looked at the young man with love and tears in her eyes. Now he lived for her as Sir Henry had lived for lady Mandrake. She would fight like a tigress to preserve that image.

In fact Henry was extremely fortunate. Some people belong to the elect.

The seventh day at Welgevonden had dawned. In the distance it was already first light. It glowed on the horizon; it gathered on the plains behind the mountains. The light gathered and broke in a wave across the mountain. The peaks grew tall above the shadows of the valleys. The entire landscape of the mountain slope was revealed. Now the changes came more gradually and less dramatically. But steadily, hour by hour, came the light, and together with the light all the colours.

We all dwell in a beautiful world. Everyone has a paradise in this landscape born anew every day.

But suddenly it is bright. All illusions vanish. Just like the intensity of darkness, the intensity of light has a revelation of its own.

Meanwhile Henry had fallen sleep. So, too, had the watcher in the dark.

In her dreams, she also knitted him a cloak of every conceivable colour.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *The Advent of Salome*

#### I

When Henry woke up, he got dressed quickly and rushed outside. Today he had to be alone. He had not sought anything, he had made no demands. Without any invitation, they had wrecked his paradise. He walked onto the estate and avoided all the places where Jock Silberstein usually awaited him.

After all he did have reason to be thankful: that at this moment, this day of good, nature with its gushing springs of beauty offers the expedient of your choice: oblivion should you so desire, albeit fleeting; reconciliation but also the hope that the situation will change, for, behold, everything is still flourishing and life is all around; energy and force of will to fight even powers mightier than you, as others before you fought under different circumstances – there is something heroic in this splendid landscape; its beauty is indestructible. In this light with music in your ears, at this hour of the morning ...

He was now acquainted with formlessness; the silence and the fear. He would have to live with it. At some stage or other, in an unguarded moment, without warning, it would return. His innocence was ignorance; his ignorance false innocence. Now he could see, but he was not satisfied. The fact that he could see, however, did provide a certain measure of security.

In the interim, an inspection tour of the Silberstein domain was in order. Thus did a general survey the battlefield before hostilities commenced. You must know it all – every square inch of ground. And you must get to know the enemy, too, disguised as he is point blank before your eyes. You must be able to distinguish the camouflage, see through the dissimulating screen. You must develop cunning: you must never, ever confront this enemy in his true guise. Cunning is the word, formless as he is – and you must draw your powers from something that nowadays has also lost its form. There is no contact, no communication with anything you have ever known. You must treat things you once believed

in with suspicion; but you must also have faith, stronger than ever, in an object of power that has yet to take form and is doing battle just like you, in total sympathy with you. This much you must believe, or else nothing remains.

He reached the cottages among the proteas and silver trees, the scene of his initiation. The pale-faced girl was in the garden picking flowers. Her arms were filled with pig lilies, the wind moulded her flimsy dress against her legs. She waved and beckoned him towards her. The door opened and the little old lady came out. They overwhelmed the young man with their spontaneous welcome. Would he come in for just a second? They had a little present for him. He stood amidst the heather and the flowers as the girl trotted along inside. The stoep had a rose window, divided into panes of many colours. Through it could see the landscape and in the blue trees, red fence, yellow clouds and green mountains he relived an age he had already forgotten but that now emerged from nowhere – a world of his early youth, at the ready to conjure up a maiden, a knight and a thing of darkness around every corner. The colours were bright but simple; there were no nuances. It was like a colouring book: black for the monster, gold for the knight, blue for her eyes, red for her lips, green for the field where the sacrifice was brought. And now the girl came out and proffered the gift.

“Salome and I used to play here a lot together,” she said.

It was a knitted jacket of strong, thick wool, brown as autumn.

The little old woman's eyes were friendly, the all-seeing mommy.

He turned away from the emblematic scene: the cottage, the little garden, the granny and the child – the *good* final memory, the scene on the tea-tin. The wind now blowing softly against him blew on them as well when his back was turned. The girl's skirt lifted up and she was wearing nothing underneath. The granny's eyes went black with madness. The pig lilies were earmarked for the brothel. The wind blew again and he looked back. They stood there still, her dress brilliant as a cobweb in the sun, the flowers in her arms like a bride's bouquet, the little mother benignly at her side. And the wind blew and blew sketching over and over scenes of the maiden and the flowers, the harlot and the flowers, the mother and the maiden, the witch and the witch-girl.

Cunning strolling through the pleasure garden. Cunning while everything was un-

seen. Cunning while forms became visible and lived in illusory images. Henry, during his walk, had lost his blindness, but they had not taught him how to see. Like someone blind since birth who is suddenly able to see – but how is he to know a tree is not a human being? Do not trust any trees. Do not be in the least surprised if a stick turns out to be an adder. It was merely a stick lying there, and he picked it up, a fat round fig branch that flexed pleasantly around his hand, which he used to beat the grass as he continued on his walk. He did see a snake: a lightning-fast yellow cobra that slithered in and out of the grass and materialised unexpectedly in an open space. Henry smashed it with the fig branch and the copper body coiled up in the sun until abruptly it stopped moving. Of course it could have been a mole snake, a good, harmless creature that exterminated rats and other vermin. Its head wasn't hooded, or was it? But the creature was dead and nobody was to know. He picked the snake up with the stick, whirled it around like a sling and off shot the copper body through the air.

The package in his hands was a bother. He decided to put on the jacket, and it fitted well. He stuck his hand in his pocket and felt a slip of paper. He took it out and read 83-7569. Was it a telephone number? Or was it the number of the wool?

“It was a cobra,” said a voice behind him. “A rare Cape cobra. Incredibly fast and venomous but of interest to the collector even so. Do you suppose we'll find it if we look?”

Henry saw a little man in plus-fours, eyes concealed beneath a cap, pale-skinned as a city-dweller and somewhat incongruous in the veld, like all scientists whose work compels them to leave the study.

“You must be surprised to see me here,” said Dr Johns, “but I often go for a walk in the early morning, especially after an evening like last night. Do you think it's possible to track the snake down?”

They searched among the heather and the grass. Dr Johns was always spotting some extremely rare plant: a vygie; a family of protea; a flower with the shape of a miniature bell, rose-coloured and completely hidden in the shrubs. And at last they found the cobra, head smashed, body snapped in two places.

“What a pity,” said Dr Johns and picked the snake up. He held it up to the light and put it in his pocket. “And yet, if you *must* kill a snake, this one is the most important. It's

incredibly dangerous and its venom is deadly. On the other hand, this region is inhabited by a harmless snake that looks just like an adder, a creature with the most splendid colours, and they are completely harmless. I admire your ability to identify the deadly variety with such ease."

They walked on.

"A splendid jacket," said Dr Johns. "An unusual colour."

Henry explained that he had received it as a gift from the little old woman and her grand-daughter (and he gestured in the direction of the cottages in the distance).

"An exemplary girl," said Dr Johns. "She is a great friend of Salome. Her parents died early and she lives with her granny and grandpa. She is studying sociology through a correspondence college and works in her free time. Her granny is a remarkable woman, she writes tracts for the secret society of Sion. The grandpa is a bit dull and unimaginative. You must recall the incident a few nights ago when he assaulted the albino."

They were now nearing the township. Everything there was calm and quiet. A few native women greeted them and said "Morena". One of them, an uncanny apparition with shrivelled skin and sly eyes, shuffled closer and fingered Henry's jacket. She spoke a salad of Afrikaans and Xhosa. She greeted the husband of Salome. She wished that he went well. And that he would have many children. And that the mealies would always bear four heads. And that the rains would come at the right time. She mentioned a gift. Henry received it: a lustrous clay pot, fired black and glazed. She clapped her hands together and received the money palms up, counted it swiftly palms down. Long may he live, the owner of Salome, the prince of Silberstein.

Dr Johns took his leave and told him that Mr Justice O'Hara was not feeling quite himself after the banquet.

Henry recommenced his walk, but found it difficult to carry the clay pot properly – there was no grip and there was always the fear that one of the legs would break if you took hold of them. He left the native village and was soon alone in the gorgeous veld. Jock Silberstein practised conservation farming and every indigenous plant variety flourished in the marshland, in the natural ponds and on the hillsides. There wasn't a cloud in the sky and every colour pressed to the fore in brilliant shades. An entirely neutral calm reigned

here. Here the strife between good and evil was thoroughly invisible. The breeze had subsided and there was no movement. Even when he lurched against or trampled the plants, they moved listlessly and settled back slowly, or remained crushed in a posture of complete rest.

But then he did indeed notice a movement in the distance: a female figure silhouetted against the horizon one moment and melting into the landscape the next. Walking slowly they drew closer together and he remarked first the outlines, then the suggestion of features, but everything remained indeterminate – her age, her colour, her claim to beauty. It was a woman, faceless as in your dreams, and a composite of all women. If it must be Salome, then this impending meeting was as he had expected, a slow crystallisation, the birth of form from formlessness.

The moment was so significant that he hesitated for a second, somewhat astonished at the abrupt consummation of his quest, but then suddenly he recognised her, Lady Mandrake, and he hastened to meet her.

“Henry,” she said, “how nice to see you here.”

The sunlight showed her no mercy and gave the mask a tawdry look. It baked it hard and ugly but in so doing augmented its effect. Lady Mandrake herself was so well hidden that the openings of her eyes were two slit windows with the real person peering out from behind.

“I have returned to Welgevonden,” she said, “because Sir Henry spent perhaps the happiest of his last days here. Sir Henry has ceased to exist and he is gone, but he continues to make demands for as long as his body is in view. How would you bury him?”

She stood right in front of Henry, the woman inside the bedraggled figure, the two slits of her eyes fixed on him urgently.

“Would you have buried him in some glen of Welgevonden, with a lily in his arms, coffined in embuia, with a simple stone of black marble for a marker?”

She produced a small copper container from beneath her cloak.

“I have cremated Sir Henry”, she said, “and now he's everywhere and in any form.”

It was difficult to imagine Sir Henry inside the copper container. She still could not decide how to render him completely invisible. She asked Henry about a suitable place to

scatter the ashes. They walked together through the veld and looked at a pond, a dense woods, a sand dune, but could not decide. And then the wind came up again, it shook them and as the movement grew offered the solution. Sir Henry disappeared from view in a myriad dots: he landed on a flower, on the water, in the lake of low wine, on the roof of Welgevonden and, in infinitesimal fragments, through space onto places unknown. There were now eighty years' worth of images of Sir Henry. Sir Henry had not gained an image himself that night in Welgevonden. Henry saw a whole series. Lady Mandrake retained just one: the young aesthete in Paris, London, Capri, Venice – a young man, like the young man standing before her, and she gave him a gift in remembrance of Sir Henry, a ring with a flamboyant stone. She went off with her image which was utterly false, for Sir Henry was everywhere; he was dispersed among the countless dots that had vanished in the sunlight.

Heading for the factory now, clad in his jacket, ring on finger, pot in hand, he reflected idly on all the advice Mr Justice O'Hara, Jock and the rest had given him in the course of the week. He could remember little of what they had said; so much had been thrashed out, so much chaos and so much knowledge disclosed to him, and yet, at the centre there was a drab, universal void. *But* beneath the surface there was a milling and a churning, a continual pressure of something against something else. Provided you were only aware of it, provided the drabness did not lead you astray. And then there was Salome. The prospect made him tingle. He would see her this afternoon or this evening. He was committed to the hilt. Together with her, against this perilously neutral background, he would set out to find the enemy. At the very least he would not be alone. And following in the train of fear, which he already knew, he would experience love.

Suddenly he grew weary and put the clay pot down on the ground. The jacket was hot and he unbuttoned it. He stuck his hands in the pockets again and felt another object that he had initially mistaken. It was a sort of post card. On the back was written: 83-7569. On the front was a photo of a naked girl in an erotic pose, the familiar pallid face screwed up in earnest concentration. He looked at it at length and was suddenly startled by the thunder-clap of hooves. A cloud of dust obscured the sun. The clamour grew and then he saw Brutus at the head of the herd. The heifers frisked and capered behind, tails awry,

hind legs in the air, muzzles to the ground. And before them bellowed the two-toned monster. The sun glittered on his hide, his muscles bunching and cresting with every mighty puff. He brushed past Henry, the points of his horns projecting like swords to each side. The herd vanished over the hill, invisible in the cloud of dust cloud, which vanished in turn. In the silence that followed, for a moment only, Henry felt the admonition of fear. But it too vanished and he continued with his walk in the sunny landscape.

At the cottage he was stopped by Mrs Dreyer. She must have seen him from behind the rose curtains, for the door opened and she wiggled out to meet him.

Henry! Henry! O happy day! She had felt she must congratulate him *personally*. Too bad Professor Dreyer was not there ... And Salome like one of her own children! Two *happy* young people. Oh, love, love, love! She was mutton dressed as lamb: frills, ribbons and a sweet little petticoat. And she brimmed with zest for life. A little fooling around first, slyly hinting at oh-what-a-wonderful-adventure, and then, sentimentally, the gift, in all simplicity, for an *exemplary* couple. She had wrapped it in brown paper. Henry thanked her and, a little later on, unwrapped it. It was a small green book, "from Mr and Mrs Dreyer" – *Cruden's Concordance*. The book fitted well in the left-hand pocket of the jacket and his hand was left free to carry the clay pot.

And now he had reached the factory. Coming from the opposite direction, he arrived in the Ubu room first. He immediately sought out the gardener and saw him alongside the man in white, the two of them together before the great machine. But it was the gardener who dominated the entire room. The uniform was indescribable: as though every colour in existence had been blended to create a new colour. It truly was a uniform for the angels. In its brilliance it outshone the rays of sunshine striking it. The gardener sat stock still all day long, a source of continually flaring energy. He ignored the man in white's every effort to communicate. Girls continually popped in from the adjacent room to gawk at him, but he was as impassive as an Olympian deity. His face was marble-hewn, his eyes upraised to the machine. It was as though he were waiting for an act of creation, his insides all tensed to the utmost, waiting for the final nuance, the monadic advance, the transition from nothing to something, the form-endowing regeneration from the universal ... And at the very moment that Henry came in and scrutinised him, his gnarled fingers

came down onto the single button allotted him.

And nothing happened.

It was an indescribable moment. It was the complete yielding of creation and nothing happened. The old man pressed the button and nothing happened.

But he did not believe it. He knew, he was sure: an entire harvest was incorporated in the process.

Henry walked quickly to the next room. He looked back one last time and saw the old man in shadow. Without light his jacket was grey and the man in white appeared more prominent. But it was all an illusion. When the sun shone on that jacket again, all the colours would blaze as though the whole world were involved in the conflagration. Although the button was a dummy, the red and white juice of all Welgevonden's wonderful grapes, and all the products of the cellars where the seasons were rehearsed, and all the sunshine and warmth, and the sparkle, and the drunkenness and the exuberant joy, were new-born in that single movement. The only reason nothing had happened was because everything was invisible.

In the adjacent room all the girls looked up when he came in. Their hands moved automatically, independently of their thoughts, like piston rods of flesh and blood, while their eyes fastened on him. All the attention embarrassed him, the way the girls regarded the future bridegroom: the singular combination of resentment, longing and banal speculation. Encumbered by the clay pot, he made his way with difficulty through the narrow gallery and kept colliding softly with legs and thighs. Just as he was about to reach the door, he was intercepted by two girls. Dark and blue eyes, mobile lips, and women's voices with all sorts of accents, in addition to incomplete sentences broken off by giggles, brought home to him that room two also had a gift for Salome's intended. It was wrapped in green paper. He was expected to unwrap and display it. Caught off guard, he performed the required action. It was a pair of embroidered black nylon panties, with a small, gleaming silver lock hanging by a pink ribbon from the front. (Suppressed laughter as the bottles glided past.) One of the girls presented it. And then, in the silence that fell as a prelude to the next surprise, another girl gave him a second gift. This time it was a bulky bundle of papers of



various colours that he peeled off layer by layer until he reached the core: a small box glued firmly shut. Surrounded by the coloured paper, tricked out in his jacket like a clown, with eager female figures pressing up against him, he opened it and produced a silver key. And now there was no end of hilarity.

Henry considered the laughing girls. He could leave with his tail between his legs. He could also join in their vulgarity. Certain demands were made on him: it was the lot of the heir of Silberstein.

He brought the key to unlock the lock, to satisfy the expectation. It was repulsive, but it had to be done.

Too late he realised that the key would be either too big or too small. He could already hear the mooing of the herd as he went through the motions. And then, in the din, the silence returned – the isolation in noise that he had felt with Jock in the confession room, and, on its heels, the admonition of fear that vanished the moment he began walking, taking all his presents to the room where the black workers washed the bottles.

There, he found calm; the tempo was leisurely and everything was coming to a halt, little by little. There would also be no presents.

He walked past the stranded trolleys and staring faces.

The gift, the clay pot, had already been given – and paid for.

He hesitated for a moment and decided to visit Professor Dreyer. It was as though they were expecting his arrival. The students mobbed him and gave him a firm handshake. But the professor himself was still at his old place – aloof at the window, impervious to noise. This time he had a glass test-tube within which a green liquid oscillated slightly. It moved around the glass, an eddy of curious green. Henry went and stood beside him; he had never seen that particular colour before. Sometimes it resembled the green of leaves at the advent of spring; but, as the liquid stilled, it changed by degrees to the dark green of summer. Completely motionless, without a trace of sediment, as though a shadow fell across it, it darkened and the colour intensified – it drew something from the darkness and gave the illusion of depth; it drew something from the light and shone outward. Then the professor moved the test-tube again and for a moment all the colours of spring were there, as the movement accelerated the white of winter too, and, as the vortex

reached top speed and then abated, the process was repeated from the beginning: the light, cheerful green born again.

Professor Dreyer noticed for the first time Henry standing beside him and he saw the look of interest in the young man's eyes. One of the students whispered something in his ear. He cleared his throat and expressed best wishes on behalf of everyone. Then he looked around rather haplessly. None of them had thought as far as a present. Suddenly he recalled the young man's interest. Here he had seen something corresponding to his own world. He picked up a piece of cotton-wool from the table, wrapped it carefully around the tube (having corked it first), put it in a box and presented the gift. And now he recognised Henry; in a flash all the associations formed and he immediately began talking about the sewage system at his house. Chattering all the while he accompanied Henry to the door. He had a mock-subservient attitude toward the future master of Welgevonden. He alluded to all the money needed for research. Where would the Silbersteins be without the contribution of this room? Here were the pioneers who cultivated the land, unravelled secrets, flung wide the gates to the utopias of the future. The drab little man followed Henry outside the door, took leave of him sadly, flattered him, gauged his interest, worked him over, cultivating him provisionally – he was soft, you could see that.

Through the tulips and then Henry was free of the factory. He found the box awkward to carry. He took out the tube and put it in his top jacket pocket. It was quite large and protruded – a glass tube that with every shake of the walk rehearsed the changing of the seasons.

How calm and peaceful Welgevonden looked! The Silberstein farm. An Afrikaans farm in the sunlight – well found in peace and quiet. Cinnamon doves cooed in the trees; waters sounded in the foreground. He deposited his presents on the grass and had a short rest; a while later he moved on. The lookout tower flamed in the distance; one after another, the manifold roofs of the house began to take form. The trees of the forest were motionless and then, all of a sudden, the pine needles began to sough. In the distance he heard the beating of hooves. They hit the ground at breakneck speed, a flirtation with death climaxing in a prodigious leap – the horse and rider soaring heavenward. Contact with the

ground was soft and a muffled and silence fell.

The lorry tracks were deep ruts in the road and the vehicles huddled around the corner, yellow and green alongside the peacefully grazing stud cows. The foreman-driver with his crew, wearing their neat uniforms, waiting in order of seniority, formed an implacable barrier; well built men with hard faces, sleeves rolled up above bulging arms, eyes hardened into searchlights. Even in offering the gift, collected by the union, they looked menacing. It was a miniature of one of their trucks, meticulously replicated in steel and sprayed with Duco paint. Words were kept to the bare minimum as Henry accepted the heavy gift, and then one by one they turned away, mounted the monsters, gunned the engines, and thundered away while Henry turned completely invisible in the dust and heat of their sirocco.

Weighed down by all the good intentions, it was with an effort that he now approached the house. Hobbling, he chose the most obscure paths by which to seek the refuge of his room.

In the narrow passage, unavoidable, he saw the duchess. She stood squarely before him, eyes trained on the many-coloured jacket, the clay pot, the nylon panties, the test tube, the glittering ring, the toy truck and the pocket book. And then she smiled, the Yiddish mama.

*"Der Meshugeneh ...!"* she said and shook her head.

*"O, the foolish child!"* and kissed him on the cheek.

## II

Sleep in this room where his day was split into two – where for the seventh time now he shut himself off from the world in preparation for the evening's revelation. But this time he lay awake and bid a sad farewell to every second that brought him nearer to the one moment from which there was no escape, when he must look them in the eye, when he must accept his beloved's visibility.

Because it is impossible, he thought, that even love should also be invisible.

In wrestling with sleep he thought about God who set fear and love as two insepar-

able requirements.

In struggling against the thoughts denying him sleep, he was still discovering new “truths” that he distrusted nonetheless. Where did conscious thought end? When did the archetypal images creeping from pre-sleep begin? And when was one closest to the truth of being?

Henry's thoughts churned incessantly and he was oblivious to the fitful sleep that had taken possession of him. Even when he woke up, and felt the shock of rational perception, he retained the impression of having been conscious the whole time.

Somewhere in the house the blackamoor rang the bell. Normally this happened at noon, but now it was ringing for the important functions of the evening. For Henry there was no hesitation, no racking his brains over the uniform – the seventh night was the elegant finale, the push to a peak inherent in human nature, the climax that made all motion acceptable.

He bathed first and opened the orchestra of taps; he revelled in the sight of the spurting lion heads; he drugged himself elatedly with all the sensual essences; he splashed down in the bath and floated with his head back in the water, eyes fastened to the gilded roof.

There were moments when silence overcame him, when he simply observed and when he was deeply moved by an unexpected glimpse of beauty amidst all this vulgarity.

He drank some wine from the carafe. He dressed himself slowly and knotted his bow-tie with a touch of asymmetry to thwart perfection. He lit a cigarette – and suddenly the thought of what was to come overwhelmed him. A certain numbness suffused his limbs. But something was tingling. He could not think clearly, yet he felt capable of great deeds. He did not expect any special revelation, any great truths, but ... There was a certain rhythm that was absolutely true, a tempo of impulsive acceptance that brought you closer to the invisible truth.

Suddenly he became aware of a sound that penetrated even inside his room. It had begun as something in the background that now came into the foreground. It was inexplicable if you tried to reduce it to a single object, but explicable once you realised it was the

collective sound of a gathering of people. There was a shuffling with a particular rhythm, a certain vocal musicality, a completely formless whole of motion that nonetheless gave the impression of an approaching climax, even though no distinct process of ascent could be discerned.

He combed his hair, squirted in some eye-drops, flicked all the dust from his suit, and hid himself behind flawless neatness. As bodily pure as possible, as spiritually armoured as could be, he went to face the clamour.

In a hall, the existence of which he had not suspected, he saw the multitude, dressed the same as him. The place was fringed by black curtains, row upon row of tables sporting flower arrangements were bedecked with hors d'oeuvres and softened by candle light. There was a platform with a single table, two chairs, a snow-white cake and gigantic palm frond arrangements on either side. Below the platform a band played various tunes. They began with "The Continental". Then they switched to "Lullaby of Broadway". Jock and slender Mrs Silberstein had already taken front row seats. She wore an evening gown of pure gold. Her eyes glittered more than ever. A person could vanish in that blue. Jock was big, elegant and formidable in his tail coat: Silberstein's undisputed sovereign. Beside him sat J.J., libertine and law unto himself, with all the signs of well-bred dissipation, his enormous moustache that somehow was not ridiculous, and the only person for whom bags under the eyes bestowed status. And next to Mrs Silberstein, the duchess, shoulders wrapped in a shawl on account of her age, calmly resigned to the inevitable. And then there were the Misses Silberstein, two autumn leaves faded by the first frost.

The orchestra had now begun with "The Way You Look Tonight".

It coincided with Henry's appearance, as alert as anxiety itself beneath the spotlight trained on the stage.

The guests were already enjoying the sparkling Cuvée. They numbered eight hundred: judges, advocates, doctors, professors, prominent farmers, artists, intellectuals, select non-whites, and Welgevonden staff members. One small group only picked up on Henry's appearance and lightly clapped their hands before reaching for the next glass. The others imitated them without noticing a thing.

Jock gave Henry a special smile. There was a mocking gleam in his eye.

The band had swung into "Wishing for a White Xmas".

A mountain of gifts lay before the platform. The clay pot, the nylon panties, *Cruden's Concordance*, the many-coloured jacket, and the miniature truck had been added conspicuously to the pile. Even a test-tube of colourless liquid.

Abruptly the band stopped.

The silence called everyone to order.

And then the orchestra struck up with "You'll Never Know".

All eight hundred got to their feet at Salome's advent.

At the far end of the hall she appeared with her retinue, virginal girls with dark eyes.

It was an impressive procession. Slowly they approached in time with the music.

Henry also stood up. In the distance he saw the movement towards the platform. The crowd ganged together and joined in the procession. It was a mass forward motion.

The one in the middle was her. There was no stopping the movement. It was a sort of unavoidable crisis, this movement towards him. Alone he waited, eyes screwed tight to see his beloved appear rapidly within his field of vision,

And then he felt the now familiar fear. And together with the fear a feeling that must be love.

The cortège came closer and closer. It was an enormous formless cloud there before his eyes, a wave poised to break, wavering before the mighty blow that would shatter the whole into a myriad shards.

One must just not look at the crowd. You must ignore the clamour. You must forget about the hall, the candles, the champagne, the piled gifts, the crowds of people. You must be able to give yourself over completely to the whole, anticipate the wave, seize the individual drop as it rises above the spray.

Naturally you must have faith. That's simply how it is. You must submit to the unseen.

He looked up and saw how the mass burst into his field of vision; how the unit dissolved into its elements; how individual figures took on form and became visible.

### III

Suppose you are alone in a great hall. You raise your hands for your beloved. You are dressed in a uniform. You are fearful, but you have faith. You gamble with your faith. In your angelic uniform you step forward, you raise your hands, and with complete confidence you await the image of truth following in the train of love.

## Glossary of Afrikaans Words

The translated text retains the following Afrikaans words because of their close association with the Cape-Dutch atmosphere of Welgevonden. They will be familiar to South African English readers – some are naturalised items of South African English vocabulary – with the exception of “konfoor”. Although strictly referring to a chauffer, the konfoor that greets Henry's eyes in Chapter Two is understood to be a coffee urn resting on a chauffer. Such combinations are now sought-after collectables and can be found listed by antique dealers for high prices.

**Agterhuis:** back (part) of a house, back premises

**Braaivleis:** braai(vleis) (<Afr.), roast/grilled meat, grill, barbecued meat

**Konfoor:** chauffer, brazier, fire-pan.

**Oupa:** grandfather, grandpapa, grandpa

**Riempie chair:** chair made with riempies (hide thongs)

**Stoep:** stoep (SA Eng.); verandah, porch

**Voorhuis:** (*obs.*) vestibule, hall, front room

**Voorkamer:** hall, reception room

(Definitions have been adapted. Full entries are provided in the *Pharos English-Afrikaans Dictionary*. Cape Town, Pharos Dictionaries, 2005.)



## APPENDIX: SOME TYPES OF CAPE-DUTCH GABLE

The eight gable types mentioned by Jock Silberstein in *SDW* (101) are taken directly from Walton, seemingly also Leroux's original source, especially considering that the eight varieties mentioned appear on the same page. Leroux would probably have consulted the 1952 edition. (See Illustration 2.)

Illustration 2. Source: Walton, James. *Homesteads and Villages of South Africa*. Pretoria : Van Schaik, 1965. Available: <https://digital.lib.sun.ac.za/handle/10019.2/321>



